

To the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education

Dear Co-chairs Frederick and McLain, and members of the Committee,

As a native Oregonian and Portlander I have experienced Outdoor School first-hand as a student, high school counselor, staff member, site-supervisor, community member and parent.

I want to thank the Oregon Legislature for its investment in Outdoor School over the last two biennia. This has allowed the opportunity for many children to experience outdoors for the first time, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, ability or socio-economic status. Outdoor school is an integral, transformative experience for K-12 instruction and Oregon's youth.

Today I want to speak to the social emotional learning (SEL) components of students and how Outdoor School (ODS) addresses them.

As a science program, ODS provides state benchmarks in living science. In tandem to that science curriculum is the community building component. Outdoor school provides a safe and healthy social experience for all participants in a climate that allows for respecting individual experiences and points of view while creating unity through a group living experience. This SEL component of the curriculum is intentional and has been a part of the program since its inception in 1966.

At Outdoor School children learn, create, and participate not only in science but in music, theatre, arts, and community building. As schools race to find SEL components to add to their curriculum, Outdoor school has been providing that piece to middle and high school students for the past 55 years. It is a proven program that should continue to be utilized.

For me, the most rewarding part of this program is watching students build their communities with respect and kindness towards each other and translating that human community experience into stewardship of our planet and its resources.

If this year has shown us anything, it is the emotional impact of COVID-19 on students and the various struggles with distance learning and the importance of getting students outside, physically participating in education, and the in-person emotional connection to their communities.

This past year, Outdoor School has adapted in order to continue to provide resources and assistance to schools, parents and families in getting kids outdoors, learning in their hometowns and backyards during the pandemic and I am advocating for the continued funding of this program.

Linn Goldsby, Northeast Portland