



Outdoor School for All

Expanding access for all students in Washington state

Chase Buffington

Cispus Learning Center Director, AWSL

PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Improving Instruction, Closing the Gap

What do you get when you mix some silly songs around a campfire, pH testing of a mountain stream, tracing the outline of a Big Leaf Maple and learning to identify a Douglas Fir tree?

Answer: An abundance of laughter and ideas going off in young minds, appreciation of where one fits in the world, and a great big dose of critical thinking skills.

We, at the Association of Washington School Principals, know the magic and discipline of hands-on science learning because we've been doing outdoor school for decades at Cispus and Chewelah Peak Learning Centers. We've seen young people's eyes light up when they make connections with the world, with their peers, and with themselves. Outdoor school catches kids at an important time in their lives and gives them insight and experiences that are hard to duplicate in the classroom.

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This winter, the Washington School Principals Education Foundation helped launch “Outdoor School For All,” with the goal of funding universal outdoor school in Washington. Modeled after Oregon's successful efforts, it has sparked a coalition of educators, community leaders, and others to ask the governor and the Legislature to fund outdoor school. OSFA was active in the 2020 session, seeking funding for a baseline study of current programs in our state, as well as demand for expanded offerings. As we met and contacted legislators, we found a lot of positive interest in outdoor school. Over the next year, we will continue to grow the OSFA coalition and make our case. Washington state has long been a leader in outdoor education.

Want to know more or get involved for the 2021 session? E-mail info@outdoorschoolforall.com.

CISPUS

“It is a critical moment, the time for self-discovery, and the chance to create positive social structures to be ones that bond and empower. For fifth- or sixth-graders, I hope to give them support and allow for their imagination to unfold, that their peers around them can embrace nature, and quality time amongst classmates working to celebrate success and failures that take place. From this, resiliency and understanding can turn into empathy. That is outdoor school, a bigger-than-any-of-us moment, the turning of the tide for many. I want that opportunity for them all to be protected, to be secured.”

— Chase Buffington

“ And then there are the evenings, watching it snow while sipping hot chocolate with your classmates! It is the perfect space to apply social-emotional learning objectives to science education.”

CHEWELAH PEAK

“Outdoor school can take on a different appearance here at Chewelah Peak. With an elevation of 4,000 ft, we have the opportunity to offer a snowy winter camp experience. Students gain a new appreciation of where the water that they use throughout the year originates. They study snowpack and look at the varied levels that make it up. They see the conditions that create avalanche risk. Snowshoe hikes provide a view of nature that is unique. Finding animal tracks in the snow can be exciting, particularly the deep holes

that our local moose population leave. Late afternoons “after school” is a great time for making snow angels and snowmen. And then there are the evenings, watching it snow while sipping hot chocolate with your classmates! It is the perfect space to apply social-emotional learning objectives to science education.”

— Bill Barnes



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