



# WOODCOOKIE

*a newsletter from Friends of Outdoor School*



## The Outdoor School Employment Model Gets a Refresh



For much of the history of Outdoor School in Oregon, the work of educators has been temporary and seasonal. Most students attend either in the spring or the fall of the year, and programs have staffed up each season to be ready to greet and teach students. That model is changing as state funding for Outdoor School has stabilized and programs expand to reach more students for more days.

For the past two years Friends of Outdoor School has convened a statewide roundtable of Outdoor School leaders and educators to work together on issues related to staffing. One of the major challenges that has come up in those meetings is the seasonal nature of Outdoor School work. It makes it difficult if not impossible to offer health benefits to employees, takes significant time to hire and train staff each season, and limits the ability to provide ongoing professional development so that educators can better serve students.

Last year Straub Outdoors converted some of their positions from seasonal to year-round, and this year Northwest Regional Education Service District (NWRESA) and Multnomah Education Service District (MESD) are making the move toward year-round positions for their instructional staff. Programs in southern Oregon and the Willamette Valley are also hoping to work toward year-round positions for their educators.

*“Not only will year-round staff be able to continue to develop skills throughout the year, but they will also be able to provide additional touchpoints for families, students, and teachers to extend the Outdoor School experience. One of the most exciting aspects of having year-round staff is the ability of our team to extend the Outdoor School experience for high school students by providing events and leadership opportunities throughout the year.”*

*- Jennifer Basham, Senior Outdoor School Program Administrator MESD*

With the additional work time, educators will spend more time in classrooms to build stronger relationships with students; work more closely with high schools to expand leadership opportunities to more high school students; and deepen professional development to meet the ongoing needs of children at Outdoor School.

Seasonal work is, of course, appealing to some employees, but the ability to work seasonally is often only available to people with other employment, family resources, or fewer outside demands. Outdoor School leaders hope that, by offering regular, stable employment, they will be able to attract a broader pool of applicants that will enrich the programs and the student experience.



*“Friends of Outdoor School was instrumental in building the framework for a shift to include permanent Outdoor School Instructors. They collaborated on the planning and implementation of the process. I know that the support from Friends of Outdoor School helped make these positions happen this year!”*

*- Jennifer Basham, Senior Outdoor School Program Administrator MESD*

***Our Shared Vision: Outdoor School is a place where every child can belong.***



## **Gather Round: Friends of Outdoor School Hosts 3 Roundtables**

Friends of Outdoor School has been convening several statewide roundtables for the last two years to address the needs of Outdoor School as a community: a High School Leadership Roundtable; a Staff Support Roundtable; and a Seasonal/Program Staff Roundtable.

The High School Leadership Roundtable's purpose is to work together to create high school leadership programs that create a sense of belonging and connection to place for youth, empower youth with skills and confidence to create a healthy positive future for themselves and their communities, and where youth leaders reflect the communities they serve. Roundtable topics have included incorporating youth voice in program planning, hearing from high schoolers about their experiences, and learning from high school staff about ways we can better support high school leaders at Outdoor School.

The Staff Support Roundtable is working together to create a workplace that: provides fair compensation to staff at all levels; educates and engages staff with professional

development and career pathways; is an inclusive, welcoming place and a positive experience for staff where all have an increased appreciation for and understanding of the planet we live on, making a positive difference for current and future generations; and that values, supports and celebrates staff and their talents, input, and experience. Topics have included finding creative ways to offer health care to seasonal staff, sharing ideas about staff onboarding and training, and collaborating with summer camps to help folks find off-season jobs.

As the staff support roundtable progressed, we noticed that very few seasonal staff members attended. We decided to start an affinity space just for the seasonal/student-facing staff to discuss their specific needs and ideas in a safe, collaborative space. The Seasonal/Program Staff Roundtable is now planning a statewide conference directly related to their work. This group has made incredible strides in advocating for their needs and shifting Outdoor School toward a more equitable staffing model.

## **Welcome to the Board, Carla!**

Our newest board member, Carla Coleman is the Administrative Assistant for Gray Family Foundation. Carla's primary expertise is in development and communications. She has more than 17 years' experience in the non-profit space working with organizations such as the March of Dimes, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, The Trust for Public Land, and most recently The San Francisco Education Fund as their Development Associate.

Raised in Texas, Carla moved to Oregon from San Francisco in 2019. Carla loves the outdoors and when she is not tending to her garden, you can find her taking hikes or walking trails with her dog. Welcome to the board, Carla!

### **Get Ready for Willamette Week's Give!Guide**

We're excited to announce that Friends of Outdoor School has been chosen to participate in Willamette Week's Give!Guide again this year alongside 231 other wonderful nonprofits! Check out the updated [Give!Guide website](#) to see some of the fun stuff we have in store for you this year!





## More than One Way to Advocate

Friends of Outdoor School advocates to help broaden the positive effect of Outdoor School for children. Often when we talk about advocacy we are thinking of work in the political sphere, but most advocacy is about bringing people together to affect positive change. We recently worked with the OSU Extension Service Outdoor School Program to advocate for changes in Oregon’s science learning standards. The result is that the science standards connect better to Outdoor School learning, making it easier for schools and teachers to integrate Outdoor School into classroom learning.

In 2014, when NGSS was adopted in Oregon to outline what students will learn in science, much of the content that is best suited to teach at Outdoor School was placed in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade standards. Many 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers told us that Outdoor School no longer connected to what they were supposed to teach. They were frustrated and worried.

Last fall, when we learned that ODE was preparing to revise the standards, we reached out to our contacts there. They were happy to work with

us and invited us to submit a request for consideration to fix this problem. We connected with teachers across Oregon to help us better understand the problem and craft a set of recommendations for changes.

We were thrilled when ODE announced their revisions. Schools and districts now have flexibility to move the content most suited to Outdoor School back into sixth grade science. According to ODE, “districts engaging in Outdoor School may choose to build a coherent integrated course sequence that shifts 7<sup>th</sup> grade life science standards focusing on ecosystems to 6<sup>th</sup> grade.”

Outdoor School was never meant to be an experience disconnected from what students were studying in class. This revision to the Oregon science standards allows teachers to make more meaningful connections for students between classroom instruction and Outdoor School. We are grateful for the help we received from the community of 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers who informed this important change.



## Save the Date

Mark your calendars, we’re having a concert! As you may know, our friend Tyler John Hartman has been donating the proceeds of his album “Dad Camp Covers” to Friends of Outdoor School all year. He’s already donated almost \$1,000! He’s finishing out the year by doing an all ages benefit concert for Friends of Outdoor School!

Join us at the  
**Center for Native Arts & Cultures**  
 at 6pm on November 17th, 2022

for a fun-filled evening of food, friends, and some great music! Buy your tickets at: <https://bit.ly/TJHxFODS> or scan the QR code below.



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## How to support Friends of Outdoor School with your spare change!

Turn your spare change into tax-deductible donations to Friends of Outdoor School. We've partnered with Round4Good to bring an easy way to round up your everyday purchases to ensure all Oregon kids have access to an equitable Outdoor School experience! Use the link below or the QR code to learn more and register. Contact [Sophia@friendsofoutdoorschool.org](mailto:Sophia@friendsofoutdoorschool.org) with any questions. <https://bit.ly/Round4Good>



## Donate through your workplace

With the changing leaves comes an opportunity to support Oregon kids through your workplace. Talk to your employer about supporting Friends of Outdoor School through your paycheck or go to <https://bit.ly/3tcarr8c> to see if your employer will match your donation.

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