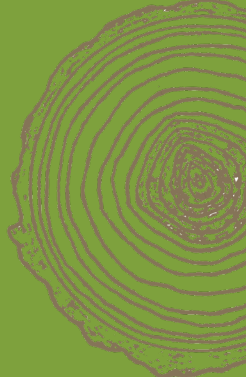




Programs & Places Spotlight

High School Leadership at Rogue Outdoor School

with Dan Prince



How do you recruit high schoolers to be student leaders at Outdoor School when most of the high schoolers in your community have never even been to Outdoor School? For Rogue Outdoor School high school leader coordinator Ilan “Fruit Bat” Sobel, the answer is any way you can!

Take the story of “Shadow,” a first-time student leader. Ilan was getting ready to start an after-school training for prospective student leaders when the librarian introduced Shadow. Shadow had missed the bus and was just waiting around for a ride, so the librarian asked him if he wanted to join the training for Outdoor School. “Sure, I guess.” In the end, Shadow was one of the best leaders at Outdoor School that season.



In addition to the usual methods of setting up a table at Grants Pass High School and pitching Outdoor School leadership, Ilan’s creative recruitment has included a movie night where current student leaders brought friends who hadn’t been leaders before (they chose *Napoleon Dynamite* to watch) and an ice cream social to continue connections beyond the Outdoor School week. Ilan never misses a chance to recruit early: the other day he saw a former student at the farmers market. The student asked when she could come back to Outdoor School and Ilan told her about being a student leader in the 9th grade. “Cool! I’m gonna do that!” she replied.

Ilan has also spent time developing relationships with key high school staff such as career and college counselors and curriculum coordinators to help create pathways for participation. Rogue Outdoor School has key partnerships with Logos Charter School and Ashland Middle School. Those schools actively recruit and train high school leaders to work with their students while they are at Outdoor School.

Once high schoolers get to Outdoor School, they get constant support from Ilan as they learn their role. From helping teach field study activities to leading cabin games, skits, and campfire songs, student leaders at Rogue Outdoor School are integral to ensuring a great experience for the attending students. Training includes scientific inquiry methods, effective cabin management techniques, and how to help students employ observational skills to investigate the world around them. For many of the high schoolers, this approach to science learning is just as new to them as it is to the younger students. As supportive instructional assistants, student leaders gain valuable science methodology skills as well as leadership and youth development skills.

In addition to those rewards, student leaders at Rogue Outdoor School also earn a stipend for their participation (\$100 for a four-day program) and can satisfy their high school requirement for community service hours. All of these benefits are amplified by the way Outdoor School makes student leaders feel. At the end of his week, Shadow shared his own feelings about the value of the experience:

“I know I just got back home and I’m already emailing you but I just wanted to say thank you. This was an amazing experience. I had so much fun and got so attached to the kids. I loved it. I never understood why teachers would say they learn just as much from the students (as) they learn from the teachers until I was in that position... learning more patience and confidence and the feeling of being relied on. I enjoyed every easy and difficult moment I had with them. I can’t wait to see all of you next time.”

I bet he’s glad he missed that bus!

