



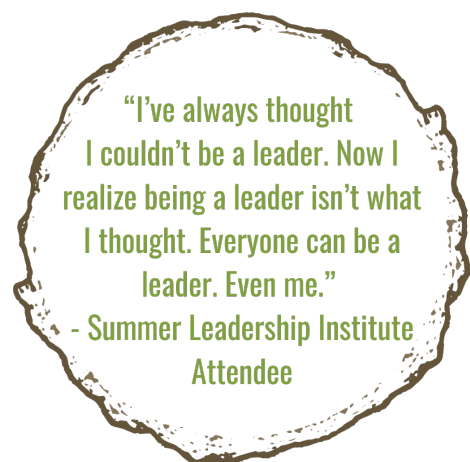
Programs & Places Spotlight

MESD Summer Leadership Institute



For many youth, being a high school leader at Outdoor School can be a pivotal experience. Due to the pandemic many students missed that opportunity, so Multnomah Education Service District (MESD) Outdoor School wanted to offer an experience during which students could learn and grow outdoors.

With support from an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion grant funded by state Outdoor School funds, MESD Outdoor School offered the Summer Leadership Institute this past summer for high school leaders. Over the summer, MESD Outdoor School staff facilitated programming for over 250 students from high schools typically underrepresented at Outdoor School with a focus on BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) students.



*"I've always thought I couldn't be a leader. Now I realize being a leader isn't what I thought. Everyone can be a leader. Even me."
- Summer Leadership Institute Attendee*

The Summer Leadership Institute was a chance for students to explore their leadership skills applied through the lens of the outdoor industry. The exploration helped students see themselves as leaders in the outdoors. Pamela Slaughter, founder of People of Color Outdoors was joined by MESD Outdoor School staff and Darryl Lai from Oregon State University to support students through a journey of self-discovery.

Students spent a week based at Camp Kuratli focusing on a different theme each day. Students started the week with a theme of comfort, working to get comfortable with their space and the team. Next, students focused on empathy, forming teams with a unique set of rules. Each team then sent ambassadors to learn about each of the other teams and their rules. Students later learned that their teams and their rules represent different cultures and their norms. The game helped students to understand what it would feel like to be an ambassador in a different culture.

During the week, Pamela Slaughter shared her experience in the outdoors as a whole and specifically during an excursion to Oxbow Park. As Pamela guided students on a hike through Oxbow Park, she stopped periodically to help students be present in the space and take moments of quiet. They studied unique trees and their shapes, and talked about the importance of old growth forests. Pamela also taught the students about Estella Ehelebe, the first and only woman of color to lead Multnomah County Parks, the agency now known as Metro Regional Government. Estella Ehelebe advocated against efforts to remove trees from Oxbow Park's rare old growth forest. Read more about Estella Ehelebe at: <https://bit.ly/3rlPze6>.

Students culminated their week focusing on affirmation and recognition, and reflecting on their own identities as leaders. Darryl Lai challenged students to use photography as a way of introducing students to potential career paths that interested them. Finally, students nominated their peers for awards recognizing outstanding leadership qualities they studied during the week. To make sure that all interested students were able to participate, students also received a \$150 stipend.

Students were excited to have an opportunity to connect with other high school students and grow their leadership skills.



Falco from the MESD Outdoor School will talk more about the Summer Leadership Institute at our very first Fireside Chat at 5:30 PM PST on Tuesday February 15th. Register here: <https://bit.ly/3KYdpo1>

