

Metro's Waste Reduction Education at Outdoor School Program

Frequently asked questions:

Why is Metro involved with outdoor school?

One of Metro's primary goals is to promote sustainability in our region, including protecting and restoring the environment through waste reduction. Although residents of the metro region are recycling more, the total amount of waste discarded has continued to rise, highlighting the need to educate and engage young people – the decision-makers of tomorrow – in protecting the health of our environment.

Research shows that outdoor science education programs offer students opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in ways that add value to their everyday experiences, showing direct cause and effect of their actions, as well as having a positive effect on their long-term memory because of the memorable nature of the setting. Enhancing the waste reduction education these students receive in an on-site, hands-on environment strengthens the lessons being taught, helping to increase behaviors related to environmental sustainability.

Unfortunately not all schools participate in outdoor school programs because of funding concerns. Providing funding for one full day of education at outdoor school will financially assist school districts to participate and/or encourage them to expand their participation from a three- or four-day program to a full six-day program. In addition, waste reduction education will be taught to sixth grade students throughout the region, inspiring a future generation to protect the environment.

Is Metro going to operate outdoor schools?

No. Starting in spring 2009, Metro has contracted with and paid outdoor immersion program providers to provide 6.5 hours of waste reduction education and activities at outdoor school. Providers meet waste reduction education objectives by using curriculum and activities selected for outdoor immersion programs by education staff from Metro, outdoor school programs and sixth grade teachers throughout the region.

What are the criteria for approving outdoor school providers?

Outdoor school providers will provide documentation of how their curriculum aligns with state curriculum standards and benchmarks; provide documentation of how they have included 6.5 hours of waste reduction education into their program; be residential immersion programs that provide a minimum of a three-day immersion program; offer reimbursements only for sixth grade students (except when fifth grade students attend in a 5/6 grade class or are in a school that does not send sixth graders to outdoor school).

How will this program help me?

- **School district administrators** – Some school districts have been unable to participate in outdoor immersion programs, or have only been able to participate in a short program, because of funding limitations. This program is intended primarily to help those school districts by providing reimbursement for one day of waste reduction education at outdoor school – worth \$65.75 per student. With one day of outdoor school funding, you'll be better able to commit to providing the outdoor school experience to your students and ensure that your district provides the same educational opportunities as other districts around the region.
- **Parents** – If you grew up in the Pacific Northwest, chances are you have fond memories of attending outdoor school as a sixth grader – and you want to make sure that your child has the same opportunity to experience and learn in the great outdoors. If your child's school doesn't currently participate in an outdoor school program or participates in a short program, talk to your school principal about this program. It may be the funding help they need to commit to outdoor school.

Most schools require parents to pay some of the cost but this program may make it more affordable for all families.

- **Teachers** – You’ve seen how excited your students have been to apply scientific knowledge they learned in outdoor school and seen their interest in conservation and environmental issues rise after a week in the outdoors. Enhancing the waste reduction education these students receive in an on-site, hands-on environment strengthens the lessons being taught, helping to increase behaviors related to environmental sustainability. The waste reduction curriculum aligns with state science standards and has been selected by education staff from Metro, outdoor school programs, and sixth grade teachers from around the region.

How do I sign my school up for this program?

If your school is eligible (i.e., located within the Metro boundary) and participates in outdoor school with an approved provider, your school or school district will automatically receive a credit of \$65.75 for each sixth grade student attending outdoor school. The three approved outdoor school providers are:

- Multnomah Education Service District, www.mesd.k12.or.us/os/OutdoorSchool/Welcome.html
- Northwest Regional Education Service District, www.nwresd.k12.or.us/instrserv/noss/index.html
- Gladstone School District (program is for Gladstone students only)

Is my school district eligible for this program?

The following public school districts are currently eligible for reimbursement when participating in the waste reduction education at outdoor immersion programs:

- Clackamas County: Estacada, Gladstone, Lake Oswego, North Clackamas, Oregon City, West Linn-Wilsonville and Boring Middle School from Oregon Trail District
- Multnomah County: Centennial, David Douglas, Gresham Barlow, Parkrose, Portland, Reynolds and Riverdale
- Washington County: Beaverton, Forest Grove, Hillsboro, Sherwood, Tigard-Tualatin

What about schools that do their own programs or students attending private schools or who are homeschooled?

To be eligible for reimbursement, all students must attend an approved outdoor school program. Currently, many private schools and homeschoolers within the Metro boundary register their students in their neighborhood schools temporarily and attend outdoor school with the neighborhood school classes.

What about districts that have schools outside the Metro boundary?

Reimbursable schools, either public or private, must be located inside the Metro boundary and/or have paid into the Metro Regional System Fee or are part of a school district where the majority of its schools are located within the Metro boundary. To see if your private school or home school is within the Metro boundary, visit the Metro website at: <http://www.oregonmetro.gov/about-metro/metro-council/find-your-councilor>

How was the waste reduction education curriculum developed?

A committee of Metro and ODS educators and sixth grade teachers developed curriculum objectives, reviewed and selected appropriate curriculum and developed a plan for assessing effectiveness of the curriculum. Criteria for the curriculum included alignment with state standards and benchmarks for science and social studies and appropriateness for the setting and age of students.

How will schools be reimbursed?

To provide for efficient administration, Metro will reimburse approved outdoor school providers for 6.5 hours of waste reduction education for students from eligible schools based on registration records from the providers. The reimbursement amount for 2015-16 is set at \$69 per eligible student. Sixty-five dollars and seventy-five cents per students are passed on to the applicable school district, with \$3.25 per student remaining with outdoor school providers as an administrative fee. Outdoor school providers will credit

schools or school districts the reimbursement amount when invoicing for outdoor school services, clearly identifying the credit from Metro. The reimbursement rate is determined by using data from the Oregon Department of Education and the Open Books Project to calculate costs for 6.5 hours of instructional time.

How is this program being funded?

Metro's Waste Reduction Education program, including the outdoor school reimbursement program, is funded through regional solid waste tipping fees. The Regional Solid Waste Management Plan, adopted every 10 years, serves as the framework for coordinating solid waste and recycling programs in the region. One of the primary goals addressed by the plan is reduction of the amount and toxicity of waste generated and disposed of in the region.

How will you know if this program is efficient or effective?

Metro staff will work with outdoor school providers to provide curriculum materials; to ensure that best practices in accounting, measurement and outcomes are applied to funds supporting the program; and that results are regularly reported to the community.

In the past five years, providers have been successfully integrating waste reduction activities throughout the outdoor school day into four different outdoor school programs, reaching more than 80,000 students. The program has received high praise from teachers and evaluation results show that, as a result of their participation, students are gaining knowledge about waste reduction concepts and showing a willingness to adopt waste prevention behaviors at home and at school.

For more information please contact:

Kimberly Taylor
Waste Reduction Educator
Sustainability Center

Metro
600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97232-2736
(503) 797-1671
Kimberly.taylor@oregonmetro.gov