

# RECRUITING, TRAINING, AND SUPPORTING HIGH SCHOOL MENTORS

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Outdoor Schools WA

Camp Koinonia

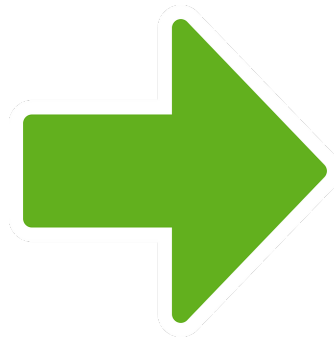
April 2024

# LEGISLATION

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- SSHB 2078, April 2022: (<https://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/House%20Passed%20Legislature/2078-S2.PL.pdf?q=20230413144457>)

*The purpose of the outdoor education experiences program is to develop and support outdoor learning opportunities for 5th and 6th grade students in Washington public schools, with related opportunities for high school students to volunteer as counselors.*



# BENEFITS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND OUTDOOR SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS

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## High School Students

- Growth opportunity
- Chance to impact kids' lives
- Might find their future career!
- Great for resumes and college applications
- Fosters independence
- Encourages stepping outside comfort zone
- Life-changing experience!

## 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders

- See high school students in leadership roles (possibly creating your future high school mentor candidates!)
- See a benefit to staying in school
- Positive interactions with role models
- High school leaders up the "cool" factor!

RECRUITING,  
TRAINING,  
AND SUPPORTING  
HIGH SCHOOL  
MENTORS

Job Description

Recruiting

Plan Training

Obstacles

Support Before,  
During, After

Resources

# JOB DESCRIPTION

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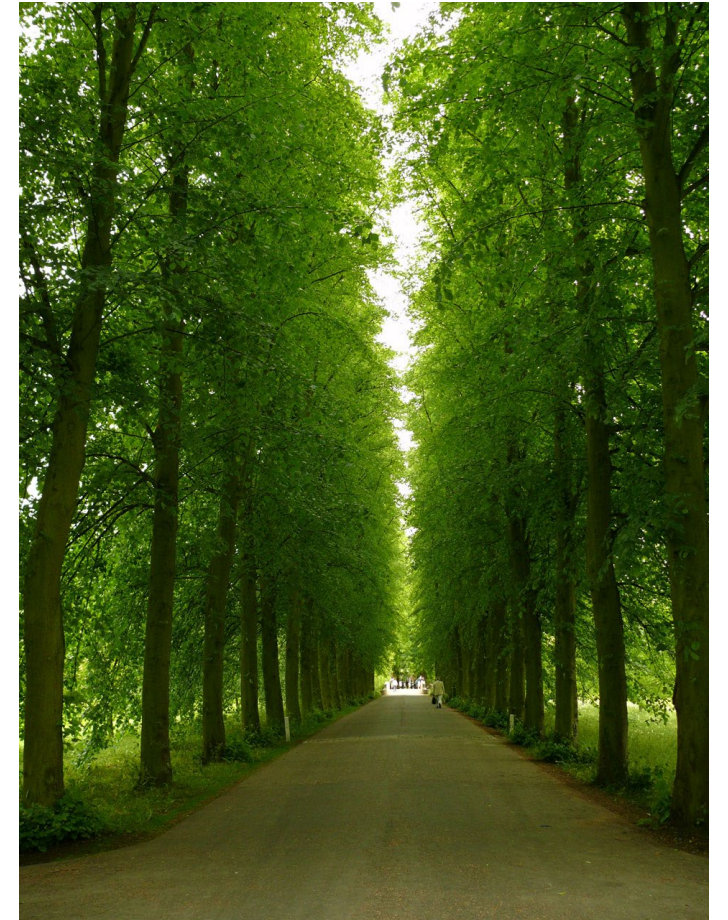
- It is fair to let mentors know what they are getting into!
- Helps to set expectations for everyone. Staff and high school mentors need a clear vision of job responsibilities
- Make sure candidates know their responsibilities regarding missing days of school to be at outdoor school
- Example job description in Resources slide and in curriculum guide



# RECRUITING

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- The ideal: have an advisor from the high school
- Where to find mentors?
  - Outdoor clubs
  - Preservice teacher clubs/classes
  - Student government/leadership classes
  - Ask elementary school teachers to choose former students as possible mentors
- Ask high school teachers to watch for those kids who have teacherly qualities
- Have an application and an information meeting (examples in Resources)
- Over time, recruiting becomes *MUCH* easier!





***“Teaching children about the natural world should be treated as one of the most important events in their lives.”***

-Thomas Berry

# MENTOR TRAINING PLAN

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- Work with the advisor to determine the following:
  - Structure of training
  - Coordinate with possible site training
  - Brainstorm: What do mentors need to know before outdoor school? Look at the week's schedule and plan backward
  - Some candidates:
    - may drop out
    - might not be a good fit
  - Set boundaries and expectations
  - Make training sessions an opportunity for growth

# POSSIBLE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

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This model was shared by Stephanie Teel, principal in the Longview School District

1. Send out a flyer to the high schools that allows students to fill out a Google form. From there, send invites to those students plus the ones that were recommended by staff.
2. Plan an afterschool training for all students who are interested. Students must attend this training to apply to be an outdoor school mentor. Make applications available at the end of this meeting.
3. Plan a Saturday training that is mandatory for high school students and chaperones. Share about Maslow, liability, and expectations. Take chaperones for training on what their expectations are. While this is going on, the high schoolers will go through the mentor handbook.
4. Set up lunch so that everyone can experience what a meal looks like at your outdoor school site and then have lunch together. Afterwards, the chaperones can leave. The high school students used the rest of the time to learn and practice the skits in front of each other so they could get used to being silly in front of others. They picked out their camp names and made their name cookie.
5. The high school counselors should have one more training. In that training, go over the lessons with some of the teachers. Also, go over songs.



# POSSIBLE BUMP IN THE ROAD: BEING ABSENT FROM CLASSES

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- High school students missing classes and needing to make up work
  - A struggle for some
  - Address and have mentors make a plan
  - Offer assistance
  - Check on mentors' work post outdoor school



# SUPPORT BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER OUTDOOR SCHOOL

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- Be available for questions before outdoor school
- While at outdoor school:
  - Observe and offer feedback and praise
  - Ask other adults to do the same
  - Provide time to gather and connect
  - Provide time to work on homework
- After outdoor school
  - Check in with mentors and see if they got work completed. Offer support
- Make an evaluation on Forms. Give them a chance to reflect and offer their suggestions
- Provide mentors with feedback on their week

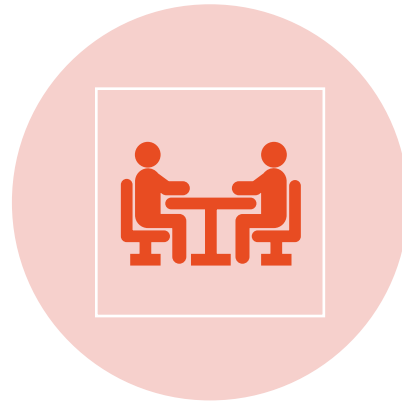


# AND THEN IT IS TIME TO PLAN FOR NEXT YEAR...

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GATHER OBSERVATIONS FROM SCHOOL STAFF, SITE STAFF, MENTORS, AND KIDS



THINK ABOUT WHAT TO ADD TO MENTOR TRAINING. WHERE WERE THE BIGGEST SUCCESSES? TIME TO CELEBRATE! WHERE WERE THE BIGGEST STRUGGLES? WHAT CAN YOU ADD TO MAKE POSITIVE CHANGES?



LOOK FORWARD TO THE NEXT, MOST EXCELLENT OUTDOOR SCHOOL EXPERIENCE!

# RESOURCES

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High School Leaders in Oregon Outdoor Schools, <https://outdoorschool.oregonstate.edu/program-information/planning-for-outdoor-school/high-school-leaders-in-oregon-outdoor-schools/> Great article on why high school students should be included in outdoor school.

Example High School Mentor Permission Form from Camp Waskowitz, Highline School District, <https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1543247993/highlineschoolsorg/fbfzcgjcv29gxm31n4x/OWLPermissionSlip2018merged.pdf> Includes a pre-arranged absence form with room for current grade reports and signatures from teachers.

Developing a Counselor-in-Training Program for Camps, <https://www.amazon.com/Developing-Counselor-Training-Program-Camps/dp/1606792091>  
This is an Amazon link to a program development book. A comprehensive collection of content and activities.

Student Leader Job Description, <https://www.mesdoutdoorschool.org/sl-handbook/student-leader-job-description> example job description from Multnomah Education Service District Outdoor Education program.

Example Application, <https://peechnature.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Counselor-Application-2022.pdf> from Pajarito Environmental Education Center.