

Waste Reduction Education at Outdoor Immersion Programs

Frequently asked questions:

- **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 \$58 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 – maybe you even remember your councilor's special outdoor school name – 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 \$57 for each sixth grade student attending outdoor school. The four 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
- OMSI, www.oms.edu/index.php/outdoor-school
- West Linn-Wilsonville School District (program is for WLWV schools only)
- Gladstone School District (program is for Gladstone students only)
- Whitford Middle School, from Beaverton SD (program is for Whitford students only)

- **Is Metro going to operate outdoor schools?**

No. Starting in spring 2009, Metro has contracted with and paid outdoor immersion program providers to provide 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.

- **Why is Metro involved in 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.

- **How many hours of waste reduction education will be paid for?**

Metro will contract with approved outdoor immersion program providers to integrate 6.5 hours (one day's worth of instruction) of waste reduction education throughout the week at outdoor school. Providers will be provided with standard objectives and approved activities and resources for waste reduction education that can be adapted for each outdoor school site.

- **How was the waste reduction education curriculum developed?**

A committee of Metro and ODS educators as well as 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.

- **Who are the approved outdoor school providers?**

Six providers responded to Metro's RFP's issued in December 2008, December 2009 and September 2011. The proposals were reviewed and all six of the providers were selected to participate as approved providers for this program. They are:

- Multnomah Education Service District, www.mesd.k12.or.us/os/OutdoorSchool/Welcome.html (serving primarily Multnomah and Clackamas counties)
- Northwest Regional Education Service District, www.nwresd.k12.or.us/instrserv/noss/index.html (serving primarily western Washington County)
- OMSI, www.oms.edu/index.php/outdoor-school
- West Linn-Wilsonville School District (program is for WLWV schools only)
- Gladstone School District (program is for Gladstone students only)
- Whitford Middle School, from Beaverton SD (program is for Whitford students only)

- **What were the criteria for approving outdoor school providers?**

Outdoor school providers will:

1. provide documentation of how their curriculum aligns with state curriculum standards and benchmarks;
2. provide documentation of how they have included 6.5 hours of waste reduction education into their program;
3. be residential immersion programs that provide a minimum of a three-day immersion program;
4. 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) Students will only receive reimbursement once.

- **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.

- **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
- Multnomah County: Centennial, David Douglas, Gresham Barlow, Parkrose, Portland, Reynolds, Riverdale and Sauvie Island Elementary
- 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.

- **How can I tell if my private school or home is within the Metro boundary?**

Visit the Metro website at: www.oregonmetro.gov and search for “who is my councilor” or go to: <http://www.oregonmetro.gov/index.cfm/go/by.web/id=778>

- **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 spring 2012 is set at \$58 per student. Outdoor school providers will credit schools or school districts the reimbursement amount of \$58 per student when invoicing for outdoor school services, clearly identifying the credit from Metro.

- **How much of the budget will be distributed this year?**

Reimbursement amounts shall be calculated by Metro on a per-student basis at the beginning of each school year and will be based on the amount of funding available from Metro, expected attendance numbers, and estimated cost for 6.5 hours of waste reduction education instruction in an outdoor immersion program. The reimbursement amount payable to approved providers under this program for spring 2012 is currently estimated to be \$58 per student per session.

- **Can reimbursements pay for other outdoor school costs like transportation or lodging?**

No. Reimbursements are only allowed for 6.5 hours of waste reduction education for students.

- **How is this program being funded?**

On May 1, 2008, the Metro Council voted to amend its 2008-09 budget to include funding for the program, paid through an increase in the regional solid waste tipping fee.

- **Why are solid waste fees being used to pay for this program?**

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. Although residents in the metro region are recycling more, the total amount of waste discarded has continued to rise. The solid waste tipping fee helps fund waste reduction and recycling outreach programs that Metro provides for the residents of 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.

- **What results have been seen in the first three years of the program?**

In the past two years, providers have been successfully integrating waste reduction activities throughout the outdoor school day into four different outdoor school programs, reaching more than 36,300 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.