

Letter to Editor  
*Nugget Newspaper*  
Sisters, Oregon

As the former owners of Camp Tamarack, we encourage everyone who has experienced Outdoor School, or had a child attend one, to contact your state legislators with support for House Bill 2648 and Senate Bill 439. Both of these support Outdoor School for all students. Passing them would provide every fifth- or sixth-grader in the state with the opportunity for a full week of Outdoor School or a comparable outdoor education experience that meets local needs and conditions.

The Sisters School District has a long history of participating in Outdoor School. However, that is not the case for all districts: Today, approximately 50 percent of Oregon's fifth- and sixth-graders are denied the opportunity to experience Outdoor School. Only five of Oregon's 36 counties report 100 percent Outdoor School program participation. Four counties report no participation at all, and eight counties report less than 20 percent student participation.

It has long been recognized that hands-on experiences such as Outdoor School teach collaboration and community-building skills, build self-sufficiency and leadership skills, and drive interest in science, technology and natural resources. All of these help to alleviate the achievement gap in schools — one of the blights on our Oregon education system. Passing either of these bills will provide students with hands-on learning that helps them understand the world through their local communities, connect with their peers, and discover valuable information about themselves.

A solid-waste fee and unclaimed bottle-deposit fund have been targeted as possible funding avenues, both of which stay away from dollars already earmarked for education.

Having seen first-hand the value of Outdoor School, we strongly urge you to contact your legislators ASAP, imploring them to support this valuable legislation (Sen.TedFerrioli@state.or.us and Rep.JohnHuffman@state.or.us).

Eddie and Ted Jones