

Isabel Duxbury - Hours Log Reflection  
Evergreen State MiT Application  
09/30/22

My time spent working with students in the field during my tenure at Straub Outdoor School absolutely shaped my interest in teaching. There is a long history of teachers in my family but I had never considered the profession for myself until I began my work with this particular non-profit. I began to see how I could use my own natural leadership abilities and passion for ecology to gently guide students to draw connections between themselves and the natural world. During my time at Straub I found that many students initially expressed discomfort and even distress when faced with an outdoor learning environment. This was particularly pronounced amongst students belonging to marginalized groups most affected by poverty or pandemic related issues. Imagine two students arriving for the first day of outdoor school. The first student shares an apartment with their family, in an unsafe neighborhood, so they tend to spend most of their time indoors. The second student lives in a house with a spacious backyard in an affluent and safe neighborhood. Spending a full school day exploring the temperate rainforest in the rain might be understandably more daunting for the first student. Physical fitness as well as access to suitable outdoor apparel and footwear also seemed to be highly correlated to levels of disposable income in the home. With so many barriers to getting outside and exploring nature, it was no wonder to me that my students were struggling to become accustomed to an outdoor classroom.

It is easy to recognize that there is a need to increase accessibility and inclusivity of outdoor education, and the field of Earth and environmental sciences in general. I am passionate about holding space for young people to rekindle their connection with the natural world. I hope to encourage my future students to think deeply about their relationship with the Earth, as this will be a necessary skill during a period of extreme ecological crisis. By allowing my students to discover their place in the larger Earth system, I hope to break cycles of environmental injustice that have stripped power away from oppressed peoples.