**BACKGROUND**

- Environmental education (EE) offers a multitude of benefits ranging from individual welfare to broader cultivation of environmental stewardship.
- Expanding access will yield broad and profound benefits for communities historically deprived of such opportunities. And, we need a broad range of perspectives to address the climate crisis most efficiently and inclusively.
- However, the barriers to environmental education disproportionately impact underrepresented communities.

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

What are the barriers to environmental education and what strategies can be employed on a small scale to increase access?

**INTERNERSHIP/METHODS**

- I interned with Fiddleheads Forest School, an outdoor preschool, at the University of Washington Botanic Gardens.
- Throughout the Summer, I learned how to create nature-based curricula and the general elements and importance of EE.
- I conducted 6 informational interviews with experts in the field and asked questions about the barriers various communities face and the solutions to alleviate them.
- I completed a literature review to acquire background information, specifically on how the barriers impact underrepresented groups.

**RESULTS**

![Diagram of barriers to environmental education](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers Addressed</th>
<th>Implementation/Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expanding Existing Curriculum</td>
<td>Supplementary class materials that include environmental elements (See Figure 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Engagement</td>
<td>Community-led programming and meeting people where they’re at (e.g., community gardening events, community-led hikes, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase Anti-racism + DEI Teacher Training</td>
<td>Identify the specific needs of your teachers and community. Utilize online resources (e.g., websites, blogs, and platforms, etc.) Infuse anti-racism and DEI principles into teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively Increase Diversity in Outdoor Spaces</td>
<td>This includes engaging diverse communities in outreach and outdoor activities, hiring leaders from various backgrounds, and ensuring the relevance of educational materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand Definitions of “Nature” and “Environmental Education”</td>
<td>Incorporating urban characteristics in our definitions expands their applicability to a wider array of communities and individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate For and Support Environmental Justice Efforts</td>
<td>Educate yourself on local environmental injustices; connect with community members, activists, and organizations; participate in community action; and be persistent!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOLUTIONS**

- These barriers extend across many communities, each facing unique challenges respective to their cultural and historical backgrounds.
- True representation is reflected in depictions and in practice.
- People aren’t likely to participate, or feel safe, in outdoor settings if they don’t see anyone who looks like them or shares similar experiences to them (Finney 2014).
- Our restricting definitions of “nature” leave out urban characteristics leading people to believe that they need to travel to nature in order to reap the benefits. Our language plays a role in how we think about and apply these terms.

**NEXT STEPS**

- The solutions should be prioritized based on your specific community needs, however, the solutions are most effective when implemented concurrently with one another.
- While this research primarily focuses on small-scale solutions, the barriers identified impact communities on a much larger scale. In order to fully combat issues of equity in environmental spaces, large-scale, structural changes will be necessary.
- Future of Busy Box (Figure 1): The box will be given to a Seattle public school at the end of the year. I intend to follow up with the school to gather feedback from teachers regarding what was effective and what may need improvement.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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