

## Science class plants seeds of creek restoration

An ongoing project helps students see the practical value of their lessons.

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Gaige Jackman signed up for environmental science because he thought it would be easy.

Three weeks into the class, the 13-year-old says that although it's not easy, "I found out it's a lot of fun."

Since fall 2001, Judson Middle School teacher Adam Matot has led his seventh- and eighth-grade environmental-science students in a cleanup of Pringle Creek as it flows through the school campus.

They have cleared away truckloads of invasive plants and lots of garbage.

Now, thanks to a \$4,500 grant from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, the class will begin purchasing native plants to restore the riparian area along the creek.

Blackberries, ivy and canary grass will be replaced with Oregon grape, sword ferns and willows.

Just about every day that the weather is nice, the class quickly grabs boots, gloves, shovels and rakes and heads for the stream.

With speed and enthusiasm that likely would amaze their parents, the middle-schoolers form teams and wield their tools like pros, attacking the tangle of invasive plants while sparing native trees.

They must prevent growth from coming back in completed areas while continuing to work toward the line of homes bordering the school.

The elective class is about more than stream restoration.

When they're not working on the creek, the students go on field trips to hatcheries and to study healthy streams. They hatch fish eggs in the classroom — Chinook salmon in the fall and rainbow trout in the spring. And they give community presentations on their projects.

On April 19, they'll give an Earth Day presentation at the Oregon Garden.

And there are tests and papers. The students said that the best part of the class is being able to use what they learn — such as the scientific names of plants — right away.

"In most classes you just sit and learn stuff you'll never use," Jackman said.

Many already say they will continue pursuing science in high school and perhaps make a career of it



Adam Matot shows his environmental-science class how he wants them to remove invasive plants such as ivy and blackberries from the Pringle Creek area on the Judson Middle School grounds.



Gaige Jackman, 13, carries a load of invasive plants that his environmental-science class removed from the Pringle Creek area on the Judson Middle School grounds.

"I want to be a doctor," said Dan Keddy, 12.

Others say they like the teamwork and the feeling of giving something back to their school that the class provides.

"I thought it was cool we could come out and clean up here," said Audrey Church, 12.

Jesse Goldfarb, 12, agreed.

"If lots of people can do their part, we can make this place better," Goldfarb said.

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