



**News release**  
**January 5, 2018**

## **Jackson High Environmental Systems Design class *plants* Jan. 9**

*Students replacing blackberries with native species to preserve watershed*

Twenty five students in Gail Walters' Environmental Systems Design class at Jackson High School have dirty hands and hope for green thumbs.

Since December they've hacked and pulled 1,300 square feet of blackberries and other invasive species from land between the high school and Heatherwood Middle School. The area, a designated wetlands, is a living lab for the students in Walters' class.

Students have mapped the area. On Tuesday, Jan. 9, between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., they will add mulch and carefully place 140 native plants they hope will take root and replace the tangled bramble previously crowding out not only other plants but also harming living creatures in the area.

Environmental Systems Design is a class freshmen through seniors can take at Jackson, Cascade or Everett high schools. It's a project-based class including a series of investigations on energy generation, water management and land use. The class emphasizes group collaboration and incorporates environmental stewardship and advocacy.



In this June 2016 photo, students in Walter's Environmental Systems Design class plant a rain garden they sited on the Jackson High campus.

This work caught the attention of [Sound Salmon Solutions](#) (SSS) of Lake Stevens. The conservation agency will document the students' progress and the success of their efforts to clean up an area long gone wild and invasive.

For Walters, this class and what the students experience is a continual joy and labor of love. She has taught the class for seven years and is consistently impressed with students' passion for their world and the creative approaches they take to solving world problems. Their projects over the years have included [installing a rain garden](#), creating videos about overpopulation, designing energy efficient houses and teaching younger students about climate change. In 2016, Walters was named [Conservation Leader of the Year](#) by the Snohomish Conservation District.

---more---

Walters' enthusiasm for the class and her students' awareness of how we can walk gently upon this earth are reflected in what her students have to say about their experiences.

- *"One thing we took away from this experience was that restoration work isn't easy, but when we all work together we can get it done."*
- *"My experience has been pretty good. I have learned different plants can be planted."*
- *"We have learned to keep and maintain an ecosystem and keep it from polluting the ecosystem more. We learned how the plants stop the pollution from affecting us in a negative way and how the ecosystems affect us positively when clean."*
- *"I have enjoyed being outside planting because it's been a cool experience to work outside with other people and making progress so we can grow a wonderful restoration project that the school will cherish for a while and so new kids in the future can see what we have done in the school's environment."*
- *"This whole experience in making my school campus a better and greener place has been such a great feeling. I personally have always loved nature so having Mrs. Walters set up this project for her class has given me an amazing and unforgettable opportunity to make a positive impact."*
- *"This is a great to get involved in the community, and with nature. We worked really hard for hours on how we can make this place right behind us look better and bring more life to our school and into the wetlands. I do it for the community and to help them out."*
- *"I took this class to finish up my senior year with something different than a typical classroom. This project alone has broadened my horizon on the importance of environmentalism. We've learned about invasive species and have become hands on with combatting them. This is an experience I'll never forget and has changed my mindset for the better."*

The concepts of the Environmental Systems Design class are among what the district will include in the expanded **Energy and Sustainability** career pathway programs in the district's fourth high school to open in 2022. Included in the Feb. 13, 2018, Capital Bond request of voters, high school #4, will offset current overcrowding at Jackson High School. Its career pathway program will be one of three speciality career pathways slated for existing high schools in the district.

Portions of Jackson High School are to be remodeled into learning labs focused on communications and information technology. Everett High's vocational building is to be converted into learning spaces for health and medical careers. Cascade High's science building is to be modernized and expanded to include an aerospace and advanced manufacturing learning complex.

---end---

**For more information:**

**[Leanna Albrecht](#), Director of Communications, 425-385-4040**