

## The Four Principles of Outdoor Education

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If our efforts are to serve the cause of outdoor education; if we are to help, rather than hinder, the spread of this movement that is now making great strides across the country, there are **FOUR PRINCIPLES** that we ought to keep in mind. First, that any activity that's done under the name of outdoor education must result in efficiency in learning. It must produce more results than any other method of procedure.

Now, on the thesis of learning, it has been proved without a question of a doubt that we learn most through direct experience. We learn faster, we retain longer and have a deeper appreciation and understanding of those things we get first hand. Now there are other learnings of course that take place, but it might be somewhat like the chicken and the egg—which came first? But certainly there is not full and complete learning until a concept is accompanied by action. There is no separation between thought and action. You have to act to put thought into operation, and if there is an action, then there is a thought behind it, so, the two are necessary and they do take place. Outdoor education brings thought and action back together for sure because as there is experience and direct contact with things, then those things take on more significant meaning and arouse curiosity and arouse the desire for inquest, for research, and for reading and investigation.

But we divide our content in respect to the curriculum of the school, on the basis of where things can be learned, and that which often can best be learned outside the classroom should be learned there, dealing directly with native materials and life situations; and those things which can best be learned inside the classroom should be learned there. It's as simple as that, but to do it isn't quite so simple. Now in this country the first beginnings seemed to take the turn of school camping, and that was most popular and got started and still is very strong. Taking California for example, I think practically every program there is under the name of "school camping," except one they call "Scicon," and that's science and conservation joined together, but it's still listed as a program in outdoor education. Well, the word camping was popular and many used it because people understood it. But there are some who didn't like camping and were ready to question, "Well, we have girl scouts, boy scouts, and these other groups all doing camping in private groups, why should the school do camping?" We had to labor pretty hard to get them to understand that it was not competition; it was in school time; we're talking about what happens in school time and not out-of-school time, although there are some very definite relationships. Well, then I remember to help off-set that I started the term, "camping education," and that helped a lot, but there were many camps then that wanted to be known as educational, so they were tacking on the word "education" so that their program could be educational.

At last we moved on to this other concept which was about 1932 or 33, and that came as a result of trying to enrich the school camping program by using the content and subject matter of the various school grade levels. Some things that ought to be learned are best

experienced right in the classroom; others through direct first hand learning in the out-of-doors. Any research, writing, or laboratory, is certainly better to be held in a controlled situation. And, so, the total subject matter in all levels and areas was divided into two major categories—inside the classroom and in the out-of-doors. The out-of-doors begins just outside the building when the doors close behind you.

Outdoor education comprises all that learning that can be carried on in the out-of-doors. It's as simple as that. It is not a subject, and to use it as a subject I think is using it incorrectly, because it applies wherever learning takes place. It's really a method, too, and it's an environment, it is in the out-of-doors. It has to be an integral part of all areas and all levels of school time. The experience must result in more efficient learning. That would imply that perhaps we are wasting a good deal of time in the classroom—I think probably we are.

The second principle would be that our efforts must result in the joy of living and learning in the out-of-doors. That whatever happens to the person engaging in the educational procedure, it must be a joyous occasion. We can't conceive of any real learning taking place unless there is surrounding it an atmosphere of pleasantness and interest. In 1947 we conducted an experiment in the New York City schools in which we took two classes of children, the fifth grade and the seventh grade, to camp for three and a half weeks of their regular in-school time. There were no classes of arithmetic or reading or writing or geography or anything else. And a corresponding fifth and seventh grade group stayed in school and studied their lessons. Both groups were given batteries of tests to arrive at where they stood in their various subjects. And then at the end of the three and a half weeks, both groups were retested, and obviously the experimental camp group measured way ahead of the group that stayed in school and studied their lesson; otherwise, you wouldn't have had the opportunity to hear about it.

Some of the experiences that they had while living together in camp were most unusual and interesting. We had Roman Catholic youngsters, and Greek Catholic, and we had the Orthodox Jew and the Non-Orthodox Jew and quite a scattering of Protestants from the standpoint of religion, and when we had to deal with the matter of kosher food and getting these different religious groups to understand why one could not eat certain things cooked in the skillet, it was rather revealing. That kind of situation does not happen in the school. It may come up in a discussion of humanities or human relationships, but that is academic. It's not like when you're eating out of the dish or out of the skillet in a group of that kind. They discussed the problem very seriously among themselves. They all seemed anxious not to be unfair to anybody's religion. Well, in the end, Leo, the Orthodox Jewish boy, said "Gee, fellows, if you don't mind, I'll be glad to scramble the eggs for everybody, using my skillet. That is, if it's okay, if you don't mind." They all agreed, so they all had eggs koshered; but they all got a lot more than that.

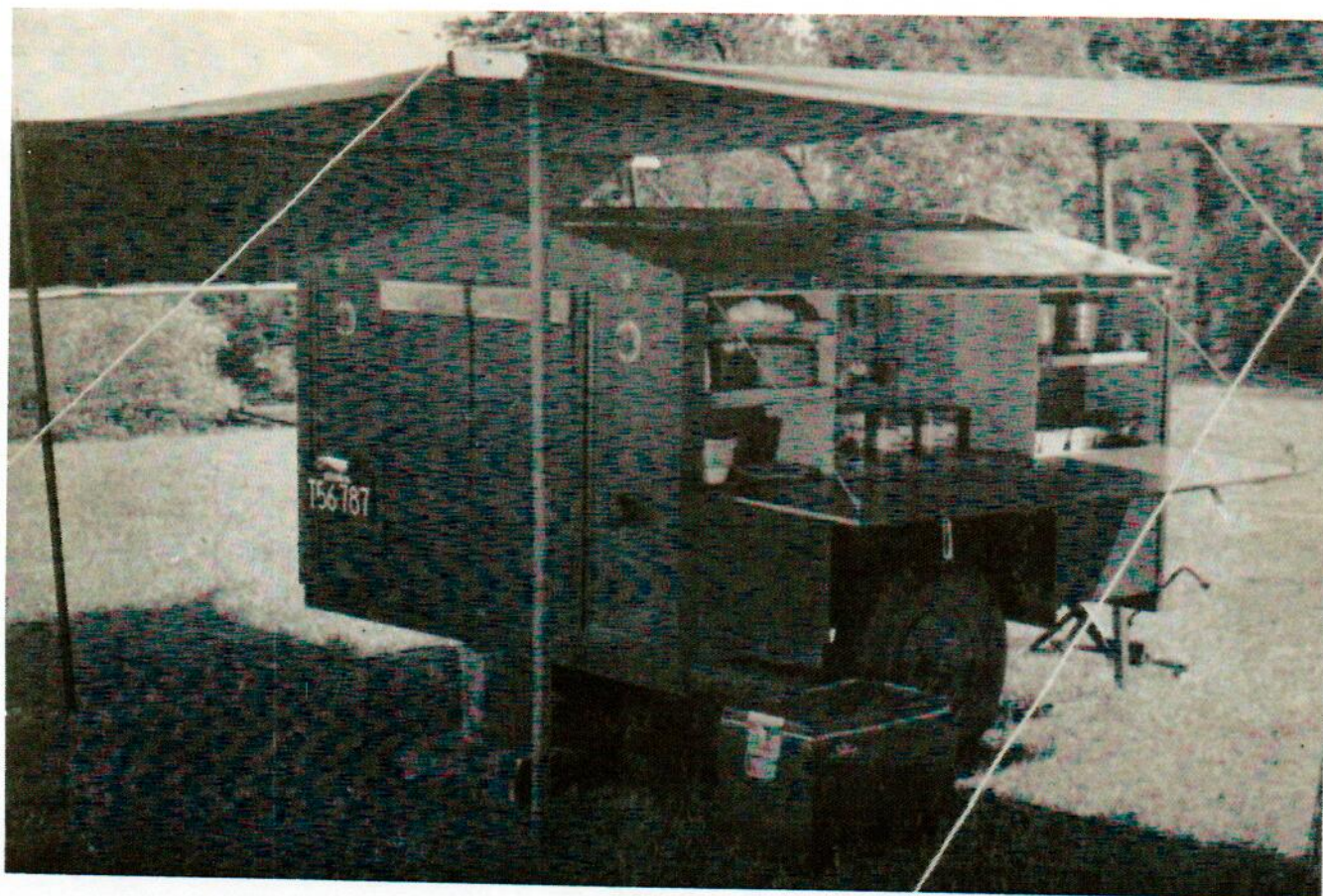
Another illustration would be the English teacher who requested a theme about the sunrise. And the librarian had many requests from practically everyone in class for literature to read so that they could write a theme about the sunrise. I thought that was rather interesting, with the sun rising every day. I wonder how many people have actually seen the sun rise? I know when we had the



youngsters out-of-doors we made a big occasion of it. We got up early and got up to a high hill where we looked out and saw the pre-dawn colors and watched this great event, and that is seeing the sunrise. They wouldn't have to read about it. They would write about it. What they saw themselves.

The third principle would be that the philosophy of outdoor education applies in any situation, in any organization, in any group, wherever learning takes place, because it deals directly with how well we learn, how much retention there is of what we learn, and how much appreciation and understanding come as a result of that learning. And so it could happen in any kind of an organization. In recent years I have been working with a church group, and it's amazing to see what a change is taking place in some of their educational procedures. Also the youth-serving agencies that have a program of education: conservation groups, park groups, any group. The principle of outdoor education applies to many situations. Here in Illinois you have the fifth and sixth grades, and they're doing at most a one- or two-day experience as far as camping is concerned. Now, I think that what we are trying to do is see the increase of participation all along the line. If this philosophy holds true, and it's good for the sixth grade, then it's good for all grades, isn't it? Then we should be figuring in terms of kindergarten, and grow right on through the years and all the grades and find out where the best opportunities for learning can take place at all times. Certainly you shouldn't be without anything up to the sixth grade and then go outdoors for five days. There should be a beginning in the kindergarten and the program should then work up or down from there. I think maybe we might spend more time in the kindergarten, and then take less time as they go higher in the grades. I don't know what the studies would show on that.

But we need to involve the older school youth in this program as well as the elementary grades. Here in Southern Illinois we are starting with a one-day program using a trailer. It holds great promise on a basis of experimentation thus far. A school can have its trailer, and it will go out on this 1,400 acre tract of land which we are now beginning to develop. The trailer is equipped with food on one side and on the other side is equipped for reference materials, field glasses, magnifying glasses, books, reference materials at different levels, and all for that particular group, and it's available and handy. So the trailer can be set out at one place and the school group can come out to it and spend the day exploring and venturing around in that area in relation to the things they are studying about in school. In order to make this a very functional thing, we would like to have other schools build their own trailer and bring it out and leave it. If we had in one week five classes of thirty, and we had five days and a different class each day, 150 school youth could use that trailer and that environment in one week. If we had ten trailers, 1,500 school youth a week would be using those facilities. You can multiply it up as fast as you want. It has a tremendous potential, and the amount of first-hand direct experience accruing to that number of youngsters would really pay off in many kinds of dividends before very long. I would like to increase the travel to see that before a youngster finishes the grades he would have three to five thousand miles of travel as a part of school. I know that may be wishful thinking, but at least we can begin to think about it and talk about it. A high school student should travel ten-thousand miles, and certainly on the college level it would seem that we should provide extensive travel, and some of that probably should be in a foreign country. In the future, education is going to be more and more mobile.





The fourth principle is the matter of citizenship. More contact with the out-of-doors and the land must have some effect upon our attitude toward our country and our concern and love for it, and even to the matter of national security. Is there such a thing as nationalism on that basis? There should certainly be some goal that is bigger than the things we have thus far, and bigger than the fear that is held over us of our insecurity. Maybe that is what we are talking about. I'd like to think that our first motive is somehow not fear but the joy of living, the joy of serving. That would make the most worthy citizen. But we have to face reality again, and it could happen that we would suddenly be thrown upon the resources of the open spaces and be denied all devices and gadgets and buttons, and if there were no buttons to push and all the wires were twisted and burned and gone, then we'd find ourselves having to depend upon existence in the out-of-doors, and some would find that very difficult. I don't want to make too much of a point of this. But it is one of the reasons for living in the out-of-doors and learning. We would be helping our country in making people secure in times of adversity, disaster, and panic. That is a by-product of more and more use of the out-of-doors.

Outdoor education is at its most hopeful stage and is growing rapidly. A hundred thousand school youth in California spend at least a week in the out-of-doors as a regular part of school, and probably two-thirds of all the states have the work going in some degree.

I think the future looks exceedingly bright.

## Teachers Can Profit by it, Too

By WILLIAM HAMMERMAN

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Before you understand how we use outdoor education in a teacher-education program, I might take a few minutes to outline very briefly the whole teacher-education sequence at Northern, because I think this is important if you are going to see the full implication of this. Northern has a "block approach" to their teacher-education program, and what I mean by that is during the sophomore year, the junior year and the senior year all elementary education majors take one full semester and devote it to this sophomore block, junior block, senior block. For example, the sophomore block, the theme is principles of human growth and development and principles of learning. And these sophomores will meet with the same seminar instructor for two hours a day for five days a week. That's a total of ten class hours in which they pursue their studies in this area, and for this they get eight or ten semester credit hours. And this is equivalent to other teacher-preparing institutions that probably have a basic human growth and development course, a child psychology course, and perhaps a principles of learning course, only taken three separate times.

Well, as these students are pursuing this study in this seminar, they are also engaged in certain laboratory-type experiences that would go along with their theme for the year. And such laboratory experiences might be visiting schools and studying a child directly, and from this observation they might keep the case record of an anecdotal type. Another type of lab experience that we provide for the sophomores is a corresponding outdoor education experience out at the Lorado Taft field campus. And here they come up expressly for the purpose of becoming aware of the outdoors, being introduced to the concept of outdoor education, learning

how to develop their own senses. We introduce them perhaps to the value of first-hand experiences or direct experiences. Again we provide a corresponding outdoor education experience and when they come to Taft as juniors, they come out with the idea, how can we look at the out-of-doors and find ways to enrich, to enforce, to supplement, to complement the on-going elementary school curriculum? And here they will go through a series of experiences in which they can see how mathematics, language, arts, science, music, recreation can come to life and actually be used in perhaps accomplishing the same goals that we try to accomplish through our regular program. Then as seniors and in this last seminar, so to speak, they take a look at philosophy of education, philosophy of life, the ethics of teaching, and of course here the big laboratory-type experience is nine weeks of fulltime student teaching.

We have a third step in this outdoor education sequence, a third laboratory experience out at the field campus. And this time when the seniors come out, they come out for a full week as opposed to the two and one-half days they spent as sophomores or three days as juniors. And during this week they actually serve as the teachers for the fifth or sixth grade class for a week of outdoor school. They take part in the actual preplanning back in the classroom before the class comes out, they supervise all areas while they are at the field campus, they do all the teaching in the out-of-doors; then when the class returns to its home community, they also conduct the follow-up. In other words, we try to give them the complete experience. And in this way we cannot say that we are teaching outdoor education to them, in that we are not trying to make them specialists. We're simply trying to make them more effective and more efficient teachers, and trying to pass this knowledge on to them not by description necessarily, but by actually giving them a living acquaintance with this topic.

