

# BEST PLACE

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## OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION CONCEPT PLAN

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April 2002



Saskatoon Public School Division

## FORWARD

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“Where is the best place for teaching and learning?” This question is at the heart of the Out-of-School concept plan. It recognizes that teaching and learning cannot be accomplished entirely within the school building. Out-of-School Education is grounded in current educational literature, research and best practice. This methodology provides a systematic approach to pedagogy that all educators can practice to one degree or another. The philosophical base and framework for action provided in this concept plan will guide efforts to provide the best possible education for all children and youth in our schools.

This concept plan has been ‘built on the shoulders of giants’. It forms the foundation for our continued commitment to student learning and community enrichment through out-of-school education. In the words of Rene Baxter, former Director of Education in the Saskatoon Public School Division, “Out-of-school education has a rich heritage in the Saskatoon Public School Division. This heritage continues in Best Place: Out-of-School Education Concept Plan.”





## INTRODUCTION

In his keynote address at the 2000 Saskatoon Public School's Winter Institute, John Abbott, President of the 21st Century Learning Initiative, suggested a series of changes to our current model of education. His address, entitled "*Battery Hens, or Free Range Chickens: What Kind of Education for What Kind of World*"?, emphasized that Western education has become removed from the real world and young people today are in dire need of more involved and relevant learning. He describes the traditional structure of classroom education as largely "upside down and inside out." Drawing on an extensive research base, Abbott (1997) claims that, "the accumulated evidence shows that schools alone are incapable of equipping children with the attitudes, skills, and behaviours necessary for a rapidly changing society" (p. 2).

The significance of this message was not lost on the Out-of-School Education Concept Plan Committee who quickly realized the importance of such an influential message. It is not that Abbott's ideas on change are necessarily new, but rather, because such an important educational leader was providing a powerful endorsement for what the Saskatoon Public School Division calls Out-of-School Education. Taking students beyond the school to enhance the teaching and learning experience has, for many years, been a powerful and important method of instruction in the Saskatoon Public School Division. Consequently, the number of out-of-school excursions have grown and blossomed as educators have pursued teaching and learning in the "best place" possible.

In 1989, Max Abraham led a writing team that assembled the first Saskatoon Public School Division Out-Of-School Education Concept Plan; a document that clearly established the rationale and methodology for Out-of-School Education and posed a number of recommendations. In 1999, a new project was initiated to revise and update the educational platform of Out-of-School Education, and to generate new ideas, opportunities, and recommendations. The fact that our school division is supporting a new foundation document is an extraordinary endorsement of the importance of Out-of-School Education.

The success of this document, however, will be measured by the degree to which it serves to communicate the potential of Out-of-School Education to both educators and the general public. This endeavour will depend on the ability of teachers to first understand the philosophy of Out-of-School Education, secondly, to put these ideas into practice, and finally, to articulate the advantages of "best place" for both students and parents. Educators must recognize that Out-of-School Education is simply good pedagogy, and can be practised [to one degree or another] by any teacher. What is equally important is to realize that Out-of-School Education is not something teachers add to an already busy repertoire, but rather, is something to help them do what they already do - just in a different place.

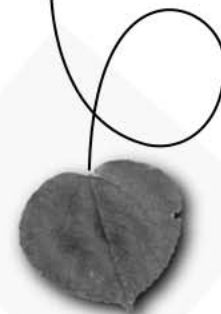
On behalf of the Out-of-School Education Concept Plan Committee, I respectfully submit a document that I hope illuminates this degree of understanding.

Kim Archibald, B. Ed., M. Ed.  
Project Leader.

## INTRODUCTION

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*Educators must recognize that Out-of-School Education is simply good pedagogy, and can be practised [to one degree or another] by any teacher.*





## **WHAT IS THE OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION CONCEPT PLAN?**

*It is a document that articulates the educational value of Out-of-School Education*

## **INTENT AND PURPOSE**

*It is based on the belief that the responsibilities of the school cannot be accomplished entirely within the school building*

## **METHODOLOGY**

*This project embodies a comprehensive view of the preferred future for Out-of-School Education in the Saskatoon Public School Division.*

## **WHAT IS THE OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION CONCEPT PLAN?**

The Concept Plan is a document that articulates the educational value of Out-of-School Education, and provides a philosophical and operational framework for Out-of-School Education in the Saskatoon Public School Division. The significance of this document is twofold. First, it highlights the importance of understanding the pedagogical basis for Out-of-School Education; secondly, it proposes a series of recommendations that provide the direction and leadership required to guide the growth of Out-of-School Education in the years to come.

## **INTENT AND PURPOSE**

Out-of-School Education, as it is defined and portrayed in this concept plan, is based on the belief that the responsibilities of the school cannot be accomplished entirely within the school building. Furthermore, it is the position of this concept plan that mainstream public education needs to embrace the ideals and principles of Out-of-School education in an attempt to:

1. maintain existing Out-of-School Education programming;
2. advocate new and enhanced Out-of-School Education opportunities, and;
3. provide leadership in the process of educational reform.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This Concept Plan has been developed in collaboration with the Out-of-School Education Curriculum Committee, and incorporates the efforts of many dedicated educators - both past and present. The strength of the Curriculum Committee continues to be the community of individuals who annually maintain the dedication, momentum, and vision of Out-of-School Education through participation in sub committee projects.

Plans for a new Concept Plan began during a general discussion of the Out-of-School Curriculum Committee in October, 1997. It was at this meeting that concern was raised for the need to provide future direction and leadership. On the encouragement of then Deputy Director Rene Baxter, the committee embarked on a project that would embody a comprehensive view of the preferred future for Out-of-School Education in the Saskatoon Public School Division.

At the 1998 Saskatoon Public School Division's Teachers Institute, David Wipf, Wayne Dyck, and Max Abraham facilitated a panel discussion for 32 interested participants. A summary of their presentations, suggestions, and discussions were recorded and provided a pool of ideas that signaled the need for a new Concept Plan. By the spring of 1998 a steering committee [David Wipf, Wayne Dyck, and Marcia Klein] developed a survey that was distributed to a representative from each school in September of 1998, and the resulting feedback was collated by David Wipf. This collection of accomplishments and suggestions was then presented to a meeting of school representatives in October and the ensuing dialogue provided a series of recommendations that would set the direction for the new Concept Plan.

With the endorsement of the Board and the Department of Division Services, a proposal was submitted in the spring of 1999 to hire a project leader to research and write the new Concept Plan. Kim Archibald was appointed to this position for the fall semester of the 1999 - 2000 school year. The responsibilities of this half-time position included conducting a literature search, collaborating with a steering





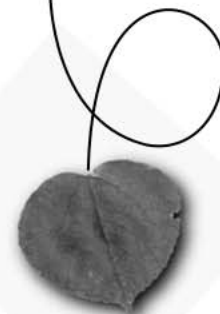
committee, providing progress reports, making presentations, and preparing a final draft document on behalf the Out-of-School Education Curriculum Committee.

During this time, many progress reports and presentations were made to explain and highlight the rationale for the writing project itself. With each new audience, feedback was received that would prove to have an impact on the writing process. With each presentation came the opportunity for interest groups to voice questions and suggestions. The following is a list of those stakeholders whose participation is an indication of the breadth of endorsement that the Concept Plan project has received:

- October 8, 1999 - System Inservice Day - Teachers & Administrators
- November 2, 1999 - Ad Hoc Meeting of interested Principals
- November 24, 1999 - Principals Meeting - Elementary & Secondary Principals
- December 10, 1999 - Division Services Meeting - Consultants & Coordinators
- February 22, 2000 - Teachers Institute - Teachers & Administrators
- February 22, 2000 - Board Meeting - Trustees, Director & Deputy Directors
- February 12, 2001 - Restructuring Committee - High School Review - Teachers & Administrators
- March 27, 2001 - Curriculum Committee Planning Meeting - Teachers & Administrators

The final product represents the efforts of many individuals over a period of more than three years. Most notably, it highlights the significant efforts, expertise, and encouragement of the Out-of-School Education Concept Plan Steering Committee. This group included Max Abraham, Kim Archibald, David Derksen, Noreen Jeffrey, Louise Jones, Marcia Klein, Howard Sproat, Scott Thompson, and David Wipf. In addition, the final draft recognizes the considerable contribution of Gail Mehr and John Laverty for the final formatting, and Vernon Kiss for his valued feedback as external reader.

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## **DEFINING TERMINOLOGY**

### **OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION:**

*Out-of-School education is the extension of teaching and learning beyond the school classroom.*

### **OUTDOOR EDUCATION:**

*Outdoor education is education which is in the outdoors, about the outdoors, and for the outdoors.*

### **ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION:**

*Environmental education is about touching people's beliefs and attitudes so that they want to live sustainably.*

### **EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION:**

*Experiential education is a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skills, and values from direct experiences.*

## **DEFINING TERMINOLOGY**

### **OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION:**

The Out-of-School Education Curriculum Committee defines Out-of-School Education as the extension of teaching and learning beyond the school classroom (Abraham, 1989). The term serves as both a philosophical platform and as an instructional methodology: teaching where lessons can best be taught, and learning where lessons can best be learned. Out-of-School Education encompasses the goals of three major educational movements: Outdoor, Environmental, and Experiential Education. The term Out-of-School Education is unique to the Saskatoon Public School Division and has been selected for its ability to portray a wide spectrum of educational opportunities.

### **OUTDOOR EDUCATION:**

Outdoor education may be best described as an umbrella term which includes all activities and processes which rely, at least in part, on the natural environment and which are oriented to enhancing the individual's achievement in a variety of educational objectives (Hanna, 1991). Perhaps the most scholarly definition of outdoor education continues to be Donaldson's (1958): Education which is in the outdoors, about the outdoors, and for the outdoors. This definition clearly establishes where the learning will take place, the topic to be taught, and the reason for the endeavour.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION:**

Environmental education, as defined by Saskatchewan Education (1974), is the process of recognizing values and clarifying concepts, in order that students may develop the skills and attitudes necessary to understand and appreciate how people, their culture, and their biophysical surroundings all interrelate. Palmer (1998) adds that environmental education is about touching people's beliefs and attitudes so that they want to live sustainably, providing sufficient information to support these beliefs, and to translate attitudes and values into action.

### **EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION:**

*The Journal of Experiential Education* (Luckmann, 1999) defines experiential education as a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skills, and values from direct experiences. It refers to learning by doing or experience, and is often synonymous with adventure-based activities and outdoor pursuits; however, experiential education can also mean any form of pragmatic educational experience. Ford (1990) adds that in many ways, outdoor education may be viewed as experiential, especially when the learning takes place through direct experiences.

## **PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES**





## PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

What is required to educate knowledgeable and responsible young people in today's world has been firmly established: "students need to be able to think critically, be creative, work productively with others, and be able to solve problems" (Archibald, 1997, p. 9). Working from this premise, the task of educating students cannot be based on standardized routines, approaches, or content. Rather, it should actively involve students in the construction of their own knowledge and should do so in a manner that requires holistic and experiential opportunities. However, a better-balanced approach in education will more likely occur when schools are encouraged to re-examine conventional school paradigms and develop meaningful out-of-school experiences.

Out-of-School Education is based on a set of ideals and principles that combine the strengths of outdoor, environmental, and experiential education into one philosophical approach - the spirit of which is captured in these words:

**That which can best be taught inside the classroom should there be taught, and that which can best be learned through experience dealing directly with native materials and life situations outside the school should there be learned (L.B. Sharpe, 1943).**

Sharpe's position is significant for two reasons. First, it provides a solid philosophical base. Secondly, it suggests that Out-of-School Education is not a separate discipline or subject, but rather, creates the need to consider an integrated or interdisciplinary quest for knowledge. Also implicit in this statement is the significance of the outdoor environment in the educational process. Consequently, Out-of-School Education is best described as a concept that incorporates the activities, and processes that rely, in part, on the natural world, and are achieved through the integration of direct experiences.

Out-of-School Education has an inherent and unique ability to integrate numerous domains of learning. When students are actively engaged in the real world, the acquisition of knowledge takes on a new sense of importance and relevance. In fact, many out-of-school activities provide an opportunity to be both physically and academically active at the same time. Out-of-School Education provides the opportunity to explore "affective" learning and allows teachers to expand on students' interests, appreciations, attitudes, values, self-esteem, self-concept, and interpersonal skills. This emotional development in young people implies that care and attention must be given to the basic human needs of recognition, caring, acceptance, identity, security, freedom, and achievement. These perspectives remind us that the world is saturated with complex problems that require a combination of affective, spiritual, physical, and cognitive skills to solve.

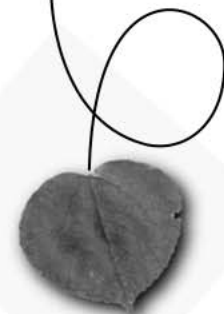
## OUTDOOR EDUCATION

According to Hanna (1991) outdoor education "includes all activities and processes which rely, at least in part, on the natural environment and which are oriented to enhancing the individual student's achievement in a variety of educational objectives" (p.2). From this definition we gain an appreciation for the wide variety of educational experiences that occur when teaching and learning takes place in the outdoors. Formal efforts to educate young people outdoors can be traced back to the early 1920's and over that time outdoor education has grown to include a wide variety of interpretations. Even to veteran educators, outdoor education means many things - some say it is a place while others consider it a topic. It was L.B. Sharpe (1957) who first suggested that the outdoors be viewed as a formal laboratory in which the goals of education could be achieved by providing

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## OUTDOOR EDUCATION





*When teachers purposefully leave the classroom to obtain first hand observations and experiences, it enriches and complements the content areas of the school program.*

*“Outdoor education is education in, about and for the out-of-doors” (Ford, 1992, p. 963).*

*This definition clearly establishes where the learning will take place, the topic to be taught, and the purpose of the endeavour.*

direct experiences with the natural environment. Julian Smith (1963) later added that outdoor education is capable of incorporating subject matter from the established disciplines with the goals of education. Thus, outdoor education is clearly considered curriculum based. Both Hammerman (1973) and Swan (1974) strengthen this position by suggesting that when teachers purposefully leave the classroom to obtain first hand observations and experiences, it enriches and complements the content areas of the school program. Consequently, the meaning of outdoor education grew to incorporate a broad spectrum of curriculum opportunities and to include both the natural and urban environments.

Because of this broader perspective, the focus changed to incorporate a wider range of global issues and the terminology shifted to include the expression “environmental education”. This shift is significant because it is symbolic of the change in emphasis from the natural environment to a broader consideration of the impact of human activity on a global scale (Hammerman, 1987). This shift is also significant because most of the confusion around terminology is due to the manner in which one applies the terms outdoor or environmental education. Although the two are often used interchangeably, environmental education ultimately provides a somewhat different perspective.

The most scholarly definition of outdoor education continues to be based on the writing of Donaldson & Donaldson (1958): “Outdoor education is education in, about and for the out-of-doors” (Ford, 1992, p. 963):

**In** suggests that outdoor education happens in any outdoor setting, from a school yard in an industrial neighborhood to a remote wilderness setting. These kinds of locations are conducive to first hand experiences, to direct contact with the topic, and to participant interaction and socialization.

**About** explains that the topic is the outdoors itself and cultural aspects related to the natural environment. Anything can be taught - mathematics, biology, geology, English language arts, history, social studies, political sciences, art, or physical skills - but learning occurs through the context of the outdoors. [With the goal of stewardship in mind] Outdoor education provides an opportunity to learn about culture, including . . . social issues and decisions that alter or determine use of natural resources.

**For** tells us that the purpose of outdoor education is to implement the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains of learning for the ecosystem itself. It means understanding, using, and appreciating the natural resources for their perpetuation. (Council on Outdoor Education Position Statement, 1989, p. 31)

This definition clearly establishes where the learning will take place, the topic to be taught, and the purpose of the endeavour. Consequently, the strength and simplicity of the definition provides a theoretical framework that not only allows the educators to establish a strong philosophical platform, but provides a source of direction and inspiration. Therefore the words in, about, and for, implicitly provide the answers to the questions where, what, and why.



## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

In 1962, Rachel Carson’s book Silent Spring issued a warning to the world about



the startling and unexpected consequences of pesticide use. In conjunction with a growing understanding of the impending international environmental crisis, her writing served to galvanize both the scientific and educational communities into action. In 1970, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources created a definition that has stood for over thirty years.

Environmental education is the process of recognizing values and clarifying concepts in order to develop skills and attitudes necessary to understand and appreciate the interrelatedness among man[sic], his culture and biophysical surroundings. Environmental education also entails practice in decision-making and self-formulation of a code of behaviour about issues concerning environmental quality.

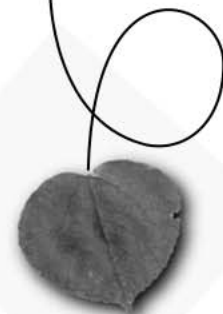
Hence, a global effort was initiated to recognize the complexity of problems [over-population, poverty, and pollution] that underlay the causes of environmental destruction. The difficulty in this endeavour, however, began with the inherent lack of knowledge about the earth's ecological systems. With the beginning of agriculture, a fundamental change occurred in the relationship between the earth and the human species. As industrialization and urbanization grew, people became disconnected from the land and cultural priorities changed. Consequently, resulting world views no longer centered on the need to understand nature, but rather, focused primarily on the perception of human need(s).

Environmental education, therefore, not only serves to expose the ecological crisis, but exposes the cultural expectations and doctrines that fuel the degradation. As a result, the teaching of environmental education is difficult because it must consider the complexities of economic, political, and social perspectives. The recent acceleration in technology has only heightened the sense of urgency and the education of children appears to be one of the few viable solutions. Today, environmental education operates on local, national, and international levels. The importance of supporting environmental education was first recognized by the United Nations at the 1975 Belgrade conference and later endorsed at the Tbilisi conference in 1977. As a result, three statements were created that serve as the foundational aims of environmental education:

- (i) To foster clear awareness of, and concern about, economic, social, political, and ecological inter-dependence in urban and rural areas.
- (ii) To provide every person with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes, commitment, and skills needed to protect and improve the environment.
- (iii) To create new patterns of behaviour of individuals, groups, and society as a whole, towards the environment.

Thus, environmental education was seen as having the ability to create informed citizens who have the capability of changing the way they act in an effort to improve the environment. Indeed, it is the perspective of "action for the earth" that distinguishes the more neutral dimensions of outdoor education compared to the value-laden political perspectives of environmental education. Recently, a number of variations on the theme of environmental education have evolved to reflect these "deeper" dimensions. Ecological education, earth education, biodiversity education, and global education all provide slightly different views from which to initiate some form of action. However, developing knowledge and respect for the earth continues to be the basis of each perspective.

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Palmer (1998) suggests that humans must develop an attitude of ownership for the earth that in turn creates a level of awareness and understanding that recognizes the connection between humans, other living things, and the physical environment.

Environmental education, in its broadest sense, is about 'empowerment' and developing a sense of 'ownership', improving the capacity for people to address environment and development issues in their own communities. It is about touching people's beliefs and attitudes so that they want to live sustainably, providing sufficient information to support these beliefs, and translate attitudes and values into action (p. 274).

*The goal of environmental education is not to overwhelm the learner, but rather, to encourage a depth of understanding that will ultimately lead to a "new global ethic" of caring or stewardship for the earth. The development of this ethic in public schools is crucial.*

Therefore, the goal of environmental education is not to overwhelm the learner, but rather, to encourage a depth of understanding that will ultimately lead to a "new global ethic" of caring or stewardship for the earth. The development of this ethic in public schools is crucial.

Environmental educators approach this daunting task by challenging learners to ask questions, explore possibilities, and consider choices regarding the future of the earth. According to a 1999 Saskatoon Public School Division document, Respect For The Environment, values and attitudes for the environment evolve along a continuum of awareness, connection, responsibility, and commitment. By spending time in natural or built environments, learners gain an awareness for the environment. By increasing the frequency of opportunities and experiences, more connections are established. As students progress through a series of experiences, there is a greater likelihood of developing a sense of responsibility, and ultimately making a commitment to address environmental concerns. Therefore, fostering personal connections with nature provides the foundation for the educational process.

In the teacher's guide Respect For The Environment Teachers' Guide, Klein and Stephanson (1999) suggest three principles that educators should consider:

- Environmental awareness education is a continuous process that uses a variety of learning resources, including both indoor and outdoor experiences.
- Environmental awareness education acknowledges the affective areas of human experience, the attitudes, values, and commitment necessary to build an ecologically responsible society.
- Formal education must foster an understanding of the impact of humans on our natural environment and target the importance of environmental interdependence, with humans seen as an integral part of the natural world.

*Environmental education, therefore, is not a separate discipline and its educational potential lies in its ability to enrich a number of existing curricula through an interdisciplinary approach.*

Furthermore, these principles must be considered in light of an understanding that opportunities for integrating environmental content are available in all courses at all grade levels. Environmental education, therefore, is not a separate discipline and its educational potential lies in its ability to enrich a number of existing curricula through an interdisciplinary approach. As Regnier (1995) so aptly reminds us,

Many schools offer a fare of copy sheets, note taking, and reading for plot and character in a mode borrowed from industry that offers shades of reality but not in its vivid presence. In these schools, students learn about trees through characteristics, which they can





abstract. They can learn for example that: one tree plus one tree is two trees in math, to calculate the length of a tree's shadow in geometry, the species, genus, phylum, and order of a tree in biology, and the tree's chemical processes in chemistry. None of this learning offers the experience of a tree, of forests, of living with trees, of forest life, of living in forests, and of being one with forests (p. 405).

The levity of this passage not only embodies the spirit of environmental education, but begs the educator to consider the vast potential of experiences outside the school building that might encourage a greater degree of knowledge and understanding.

## EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

According to Carver (1996), experiential education is the leading of students through a process of learning that makes conscious application of the students' experiences. In experiential education certain pedagogical principles stand out. First, learning activities and rewards are understood by the students as being authentic, meaningful, and relevant in their lives. Students are able to identify reasons for participating in the activities. Secondly, students must be actively engaged [physically and/or mentally] in the process of learning. Thirdly, educators must create activities that provide opportunities for students to build understanding by drawing on first hand experience. Finally, experiences that allow students to interact with specific learning situations provide the mechanisms for reflection and connecting experience to future opportunity. Carver concludes,

Experiential education promotes the development of student agency, belonging and competence by introducing resources and behaviors that allow for active learning, drawing on student experience, authenticity, and connecting lessons to the future in a learning environment that usually values caring, compassion, responsibility, accountability, individuality, creativity, and critical thinking (p.12).

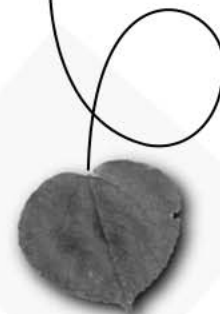
The foundations of experiential education date back to the early part of the century and share a common philosophical base with an educational movement originating with John Dewey. Dewey's writing consistently advocated that an experiential component should be part of any curriculum. Dewey (1938) insisted that "the fundamental unity of the newer [progressive] philosophy is found in the idea that there is an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education" (p. 7). Dewey argued that the quality of the experience is the key, and consequently it becomes the teacher's task to arrange for the kinds of experiences which do not [repel] the student but rather engage the student's interest. Dewey emphasized that teachers must shape experiences by utilizing the surroundings [physical, social, historical, economic, occupational] that exist, and extract the dimensions that will contribute to the planning of a worthwhile experience. Dewey, however, reminds us that it is this special ability, on the part of the teacher, that makes experiential learning a more difficult endeavour to conduct than to follow the systematic patterns of conventional education.

Perhaps it is the theoretical base of experiential education that allows us to best appreciate the philosophical platform of Out-of-School Education. The teacher becomes the facilitator who creates learning experiences that motivate the learner to be an active participant in his/her education. Dewey insists that experiential teaching and learning must be well planned, and most importantly, connected with the curriculum. Therefore, it is the knowledge, insight, and expertise of the teacher

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*Thus, experiential education is considered better balanced (holistic) in the sense that it addresses students in their entirety - as thinking, feeling, physical, emotional, spiritual, and social beings.*

## THE ELEMENT OF RISK: ADVENTURE EDUCATION

*According to the philosophy of Out-of-School Education the responsibilities of the school cannot be accomplished entirely within the school building. Therefore, the element of risk must be recognized and accepted as part of all out-of-school excursions - big or small.*



that is instrumental in organizing the experience for the benefit of the students. The teacher must be alert to see what attitudes are being created, and to judge what attitudes are actually conducive to continued growth. Thus, the sequence of learning is educational if it continues to arouse curiosity, strengthen initiative, and establishes a sense of independence and responsibility that carries a person over future obstacles and challenges.

Thus, experiential education is considered better balanced (holistic) in the sense that it addresses students in their entirety - as thinking, feeling, physical, emotional, spiritual, and social beings (Carver, 1996, p. 9). Experiential learning begins where the learner is rather than where the teacher wants to be. It also views the process of learning as being equally important to the product of learning. Patterns of experiential learning are not reductionist, but rather, depend on connecting different forms of knowledge with integrated and/or interdisciplinary strategies. Experiential education usually takes place outside the classroom and often in an outdoor or natural setting - or incorporates shared experiences imported into the classroom. Learning is based on the relevance of direct experiences rather than on abstractions, and students are given the responsibility to construct knowledge rather than depending on the experiences and thoughts of others. Lindsay & Ewert (1999) insist that identifying these salient characteristics and opportunities of experiential learning allows one to highlight the underlying commitment to personal and individual growth that is central to the philosophy of experiential education (p.13).

## THE ELEMENT OF RISK: ADVENTURE EDUCATION

According to an old saying, "The greatest risk in life is never taking one." Although the common sense value of this message has merit, the element of risk is a topic of serious concern for all who view out-of-school experiences as an important component of education. First of all, teachers must understand that all excursions possess a certain level of inherent risk. Whether it is a walk to the local firehall, participation in initiative tasks, or winter camping, each activity has risks that must be recognized. Secondly, teachers must understand that risk is a necessary and important ingredient of adventure excursions. Finally, we must understand that the management of risk is an inherent responsibility for all educators when planning field trips that protect students from undue risk.

According to Taylor (1997), the word risk has many connotations and "is dependent upon one's age, intelligence, and experience; what may be perceived to be a risk by one person, may not be perceived a risk by another" (p. 9). In education, this is particularly true because educators must balance the interests of learning with the interests of safety for each group of students. Traditionally, the indoor classroom and school building have always provided the greatest degree of safety and consistency. However, according to the philosophy of Out-of-School Education the responsibilities of the school cannot be accomplished entirely within the school building. Therefore, the element of risk must be recognized and accepted as part of all out-of-school excursions - big or small.

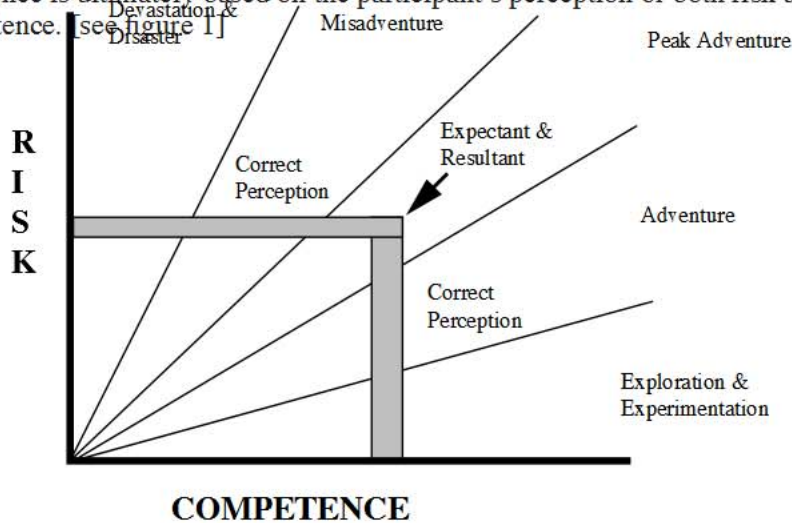
The greatest source of literature that deals with risk in an educational context is in the field of adventure education. The obligation, therefore, is to use this body of knowledge to help understand the role and responsibilities of the educator in order to manage the level of risk associated with out-of-school excursions. Various terms have been used to describe the outdoor adventure experience; however, it is the inclusion of risk within an educational framework that helps distinguish it from the traditional idea of outdoor education. Risk is considered the potential to lose something of value, and is an inherent part of every out-of-school excursion, whether the loss be physical, emotional, or material. Nevertheless, Hanna (1991) claims that "humans have always been risk-takers" and the potential benefits of adventure



education can far outweigh the risks involved if properly managed (p.1).

To qualify as an adventure, there must be a degree of uncertainty where the outcome is unknown or the setting unfamiliar. For the student there must be a perception of danger and it must appear possible to influence the outcome in a manner that provides hope for resolving the uncertainty. The real or perceived threat of physical, mental or social injury generally emerges when there is a loss of control over the possible outcome of an activity. This loss of control may be precipitated by personal weakness, lack of experience, poor or incorrect decision making, or possibly unforeseen circumstances. Conversely, experiences which provide the competencies [skill, knowledge, attitude, confidence, and experience at solving problems] to successfully deal with the demands of the situation create a heightened and new-found sense of confidence, control, and competence. Theoretically speaking, therefore, the adventure experience becomes a “state-of-mind” and teachers utilize this concept as a tool in which to achieve educational objectives.

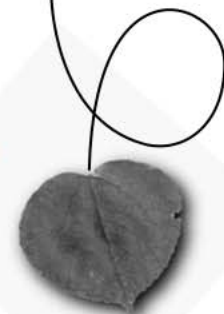
Consider the example of a student who canoes in whitewater rapids for the first time. The student is likely tentative and afraid. The teacher can ensure that this particular challenge has a minimal level of risk, and knows that success should be easily and safely attainable. The discrepancy between what the teacher and student think, creates a dichotomy in the mind of the student. Resolving this dilemma and attempting the challenge may require considerable encouragement from the teacher, but ultimately the choice remains with the participant. If one assumes, for the moment, that the student overcomes his/her fear and accepts the challenge, it then becomes the teacher’s responsibility to use the anticipated or perhaps unanticipated outcome in a constructive manner. Priest and Martin (1990) remind us that the teacher acts as a gate-keeper who helps participants understand that the adventure experience is ultimately based on the participant’s perception of both risk and competence. [see figure 1]



**Figure 1:** The Adventure Experience Paradigm by Simon Priest and Peter Martin

Priest and Baillie (1987) suggest that the responsibility of making such educational decisions must ultimately depend upon the process that determines if the risk is worth taking. Whether dangers originate from perils, hazards, the environment, or human beings, they all need to be accurately assessed by the teacher. This requires a significant level of foresight and anticipation, which is based on the teacher’s ability to consider a multitude of “what if” scenarios. Consequently, teachers must be alert at all times and cannot afford to overlook a peril or underestimate a hazard. After

*The adventure experience becomes a “state-of-mind” and teachers utilize this concept as a tool in which to achieve educational objectives.*





*Teachers need to assess the experience level of the students and plan excursions that are congruent with the student's age, level of competence, motivation, and level of desired risk-taking.*

*Consequently, the strength in providing safety guidelines is first of all, the understanding that the element of risk is an inherent and accepted dimension of all out-of-school excursions, and secondly, that guidelines provide direction for risk management that ultimately lead to a higher degree of safety for students.*

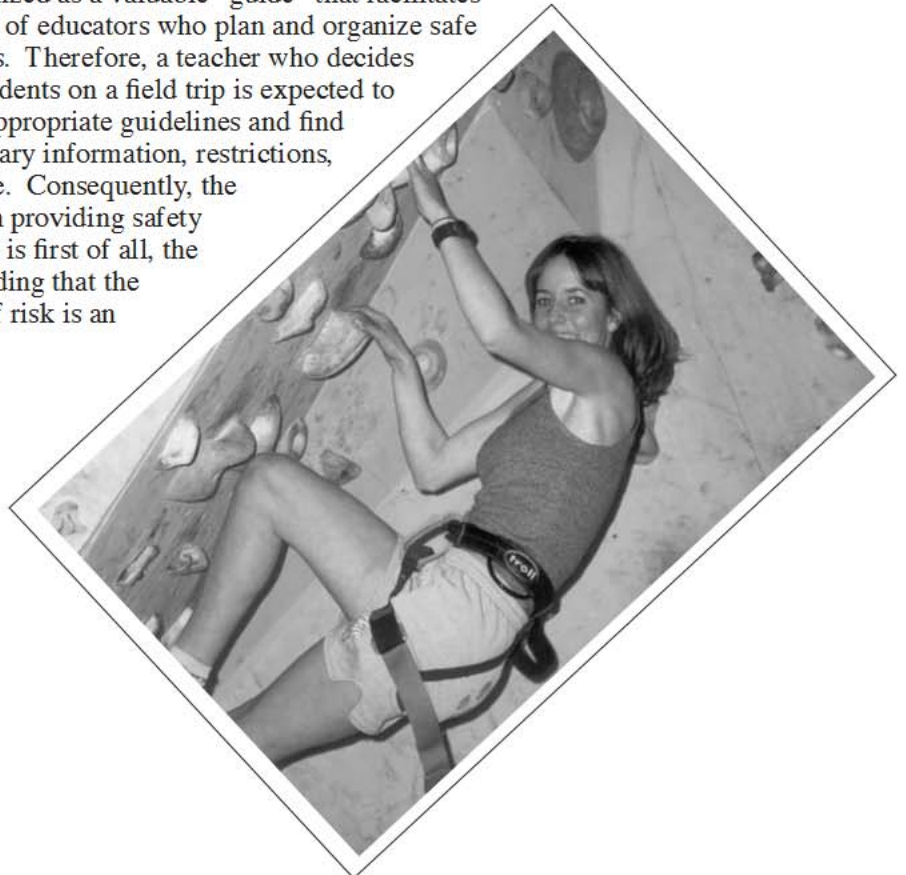
the dangers are assessed, the teacher must then calculate the probability of risk and the level of potential harm. This type of judgment can only be obtained through experience.

To better safeguard students, well-defined and responsible plans for risk management should be prepared and followed. Risk management or defensive planning involves a mix of anticipation, training, implementation, and evaluation. Teachers need to assess the experience level of the students and plan excursions that are congruent with the student's age, level of competence, motivation, and level of desired risk-taking. In addition, an appropriate and adequate level of expertise, leadership, and supervision must be ensured. Even though much of risk management depends on the professional judgment of the teacher, the documentation of policies, the preparation of comprehensive release forms, procedural guidelines, and a risk management plan help to ensure that teachers scrutinize their programs, activities, and students.

In an effort to ensure these safeguards the Saskatoon Public School Division has created a series of guidelines outlined in the document Outdoor Safety and Travel Guidelines. Dating back to the expansion of field trips and camping excursions in the 1970's, teachers and administrators have been working together to provide both regulations and advice for teachers who practice the methodology of Out-of-School Education. The fact that school divisions from across Canada request copies of these guidelines is a testament to the collective expertise of teachers and is a tribute to the calibre of research, training, and experience that are reflected in the following documents:

- Travel and Safety Guidelines
- Camping Guidelines
- Canoeing Guidelines and Instructional Handbook
- Waterfront Guidelines
- Cycling Guidelines
- Safety Handbook for Physical Education

Although these guidelines do impose certain restrictions, they are recognized as a valuable "guide" that facilitates the efforts of educators who plan and organize safe excursions. Therefore, a teacher who decides to take students on a field trip is expected to read the appropriate guidelines and find the necessary information, restrictions, and advice. Consequently, the strength in providing safety guidelines is first of all, the understanding that the element of risk is an





inherent and accepted dimension of all out-of-school excursions, and secondly, that guidelines provide direction for risk management that ultimately lead to a higher degree of safety for students.

### ALIGNMENT: GOALS & VALUES - SASKATOON PUBLIC SCHOOL DIVISION

Reflecting on the goals and values of the Saskatoon Public School Division, one is immediately struck by the overwhelming similarity and overlap with the ideals and principles of Out-of-School Education. This striking alignment of ideas provides another strong reason for adopting Out-of-School Education as a pivotal component of our school system. Experiential based education is a style of learning that incorporates a layer of relevance and personal meaning that connects cognitive skills with affective attitudes, appreciations, and intrapersonal skills. The affective domain of learning is the hallmark of Out-of-School Education, and it is affective learning that provides the link to a powerful group of principles and values that are universal amongst human cultures.

Within public education there is an underlying ideology of equality and a spirit of moral conduct that encourages learning for the greater common good. Rather than serving the interests of any particular religious or political entity, the public education system serves to provide quality education to a cross-section of the community that includes people from all walks of life. The following goals and values of the Saskatoon Public School Division reflect these ideals.

#### GOALS

- Academic Development
- Personal Development
- Social & Cultural Development

#### VALUES

- Respect
- Responsibility
- Excellence
- Joy

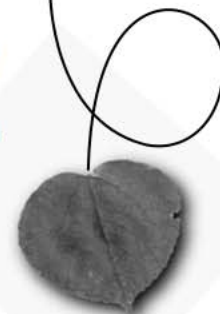
Public education, therefore, plays a key role within our society to provide the educational opportunities that are inherently based on a value system interested in sustaining a healthy, caring, and flourishing community. As a result, the pedagogy of public education must reflect these goals and values, and must purposefully incorporate these ideals in the day to day experiences of school children. Values education is public education.

Although the realities of this endeavour are daunting, it is precisely these tacit learnings that are the “stuff” of public schools, and one of the best strategies to facilitate this can be found in the philosophy and methodology of Out-of-School Education. Knapp (1989) believes that in order to integrate the affective domain of learning into mainstream education, one must attempt to humanize the curriculum. This implies that the context of learning must be sensitive to the needs of people, and attention must be given to the basic human needs of recognition, caring, acceptance, identity, security, freedom, and the power to achieve goals. Out-of-School Education,

### ALIGNMENT: GOALS & VALUES - SASKATOON PUBLIC SCHOOL DIVISION

*The affective domain of learning is the hallmark of Out-of-School Education, and it is affective learning that provides the link to a powerful group of principles and values that are universal amongst human cultures.*

*Out-of-School educators “believe that teaching the whole student is more important than merely teaching subject matter”.*



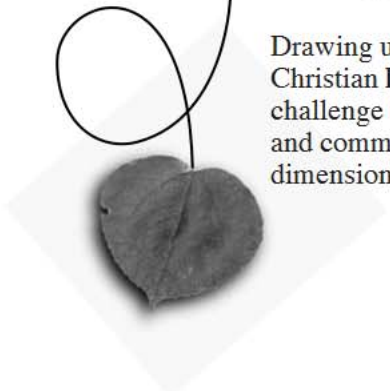


*With the recent outpouring of literature in brain research the importance of the affective or emotional/social domain of learning becomes even more significant.*

*Patterns of learning are established only through the experiences that are considered relevant, meaningful, and purposeful by the learner.*

*Motivating students to learn is therefore a serious curriculum issue and "what's worth knowing" must be established in the context of real life - here and now.*

*Experiential education is unique in its ability to challenge the learner to explore issues of values, relationships, diversity, inclusion, and community.*



therefore, is concerned with including the affective domain and in doing so, maintaining a better balance with all domains of learning: Out-of-School educators "believe that teaching the whole student is more important than merely teaching subject matter" (p. 41).

With the recent outpouring of literature in brain research the importance of the affective or emotional/social domain of learning becomes even more significant. Based on a synthesis of current research, there appears to be a strong correlation between what is currently understood about learning and the intricate connection between emotion and cognition. Neuroscientists are now telling us that emotion drives attention and attention drives learning and memory. Conversely, little information is remembered when there is no emotional connection. Patterns of learning are established only through the experiences that are considered relevant, meaningful, and purposeful by the learner. Damasio (1997) and Sylvester (2000) suggest that emotion is the most important component of our mind's survival kit. The unconscious processes that regulate emotion create the conscious processes that are central to the educational process. According to Sylvester, one's unconscious emotions are,

...something akin to a thermostat [that] determines when a specific challenge is sufficiently important to activate the several systems that focus attention and develop appropriate responses. Emotion, centered principally in a small set of subcortical brain systems, is our biological thermostat and central to cognition and educational practice (p. 20).

Caine and Caine (1998) consider four principles when determining the connection between emotions and cognition:

1. The brain is innately motivated to search for meaning.
2. The search for meaning takes place by patterning.
3. Emotions are critical for patterning.
4. Complex learning is enhanced by challenge and inhibited by threat.

Furthermore, teachers are urged to recognize three critical elements when teaching for meaning. First, it must be recognized that a learner's state of mind is optimized by providing an environment that is nonthreatening and highly challenging. Secondly, it is important to provide the challenge(s) by immersing the learner in a complex experience. Finally, the teacher serves as more of a facilitator who guides the learner to actively process the experience and construct meaning. The congruence of these principles with of Out-of-School Education is remarkable. Kovalik and Olson (1998) conclude that motivating students to learn is therefore a serious curriculum issue and "what's worth knowing" must be established in the context of real life - here and now:

Armed with the knowledge that input from the senses bursts into the nervous system on its way to the cerebral cortex through nodal points or hot spots of neuropeptides, we must make every effort to heighten the amount of input to these nodal points. We must take students outside the walls of the classroom on a regular basis, at least weekly, to that slice of life that illustrates the concept(s) being studied (p. 36).

Drawing upon the work of John Dewey, Kurt Hahn, and Paulo Freire, educator Christian Itin (1999) insists that experiential education is unique in its ability to challenge the learner to explore issues of values, relationships, diversity, inclusion, and community. It is an orientation to education that acknowledges such important dimensions as primary objectives of the educational process. This is a radical



departure from a traditional paradigm of learning that may recognize social-emotional issues as secondary or peripheral goals of education. This concern for exploring these values-laden dimensions impels the teacher to facilitate the experiential learning process for students. Consequently, Out-of-School Education provides teachers with a front-line strategy in which “learners are engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, politically, spiritually, and physically in an uncertain environment where the learner may experience success, failure, adventure, and risk taking” (p. 93).

When one reflects on the depth of this statement, there is an immediate recognition of the moral basis for Out-of-School Education. Learning becomes meaningful because of its location and personal because of its context. Both outdoor and environmental education incorporate a strong moral perspective by recognizing that education is ultimately “for” the outdoors and stewardship of the planet earth is an ethical responsibility. Teaching about the environment - how it works, what threatens it, and how to protect and conserve it - plays a critical role in transforming the thinking and attitudes of the next generation. Whether learning is in the context of a wilderness or an urban experience, Out-of-School Education is concerned with preparing individuals to participate in a democratic society. As Itin (1999) concludes,

If we want to develop critically thinking, self-motivated, problem-solving individuals who participate actively in their communities, we must have an educational system and educational approaches that model and support this (p. 94).

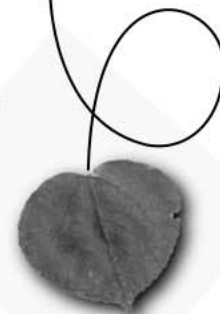
Anderson (2000) believes that the close examination of human values plays a fundamental role in the pursuit of public education. Anderson’s position, which is based on a belief in deep ecology, suggests that education needs to take into account the greater purpose of one’s life rather than simply focusing on obtaining marketable skills that serve the interests of financial gain. He suggests that values education begins by recognizing the importance of educating students for a “calling” rather than just preparing young people for a career. Finding a better balance between these sometimes opposing “world views” puts a new emphasis on the idea that one’s career should grow naturally from the ethical values of respect for nature and for other persons. However, these understandings are contingent on the ability of students to investigate the basis for their own cultural beliefs and value systems. As Anderson summarizes,

Value systems may be accepted without question to the extent that they are not critically examined for any hidden assumptions. The critical examination of dominant value systems is an important aspect of ‘education for a calling’. Not only should education develop life-affirming value systems but it should also avoid teaching those life-destroying value systems whose underlying assumptions threaten human and non-human life (p. 20).

The wisdom of these educational perspectives is considerable - and so they should be. Public education has a profound role to play in the growth and development of young people, and it is this considerable challenge that teachers accept each school year. Out-of-School Education provides a philosophy and methodology that encourages teachers to provide a variety of learning experiences. First-hand educational experiences provide a level of relevance and meaning that allow both teachers and students to explore the complex issues of our day to day existence. Consequently, Out-of-School Education not only encourages the exploration of ethical values [right/

*Out-of-School Education provides teachers with a front-line strategy in which “learners are engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, politically, spiritually, and physically in an uncertain environment where the learner may experience success, failure, adventure, and risk taking”.*

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**ALIGNMENT: CORE CURRICULUM - SASKATCHEWAN EDUCATION**

wrong - good/bad] but is also capable of exploring spiritual values that encourage an inner quest for meaning, love, peace, beauty, and truth.

**ALIGNMENT: CORE CURRICULUM - SASKATCHEWAN EDUCATION**

In 1984, the release of the report Directions by Saskatchewan Education, initiated a new era in education in Saskatchewan. Following consultation with parents, the public, and the educational community the province adopted a new set of goals and initiated a province-wide initiative to base an entire kindergarten to grade twelve educational system on a new Core curriculum. According to Saskatchewan Education (1999);

Core curriculum refers to the components and initiatives of Saskatchewan's educational system that are designed to support all students in their achievement of the Goals of Education. Core curriculum represents a model of teaching and learning in which curriculum, instruction, and assessment are integrated (p. 2).

The following chart outlines the key components and initiatives that comprise Core Curriculum:

Core Curriculum Components	Core Curriculum Initiatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Required Areas of Study</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Instructional Approaches</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Common Essential Learning</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student Evaluation</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Locally Determined Options</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Resource Based Learning</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adaptive Dimension</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Indian and Métis Perspectives</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gender Equity</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multicultural Education</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Special Education</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identity, Language, and Culture</li></ul>

The implications of Core curriculum have been profound and over the past fifteen years Saskatchewan educators have been busy implementing an unprecedented number of curricula that have challenged teachers with an emerging emphasis on a variety of instructional and assessment practices. Within the seven required areas of study (R.A.S.'s), each curriculum has been revised and designed on the basis of six common essential learnings (C.E.L.'s).

Common Essential Learnings	Required Areas of Study
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communication</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arts Education</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creative Thinking</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Health Education</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Independent Learning</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Language Arts</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Numeracy</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mathematics</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Personal and Social Values &amp; Skills</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical Education</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Technology Literacy</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Science</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Social Studies</li></ul>





The challenge of reforming the educational system throughout the province has been great and perhaps the most significant change as a result of Core curriculum has been the shift to a more student-centered-process oriented approach. According to Saskatchewan Education (1999),

The description of an educated person articulated in Directions still reflects what we expect will be the needs of the citizens in the 21st century. We are striving to build and maintain a learner centered school system that emphasizes higher order thinking skills, the desire to engage in change, and the social skills to participate in a diverse society. Our goal is to provide a school system where all children develop to their full potential, regardless of ethnic or racial origin, socio-economic class, gender, or intellectual or physical capacities (p. 4).

Out-of-school Education is based on precisely the same goals, values, and ideals. It is with this understanding that one recognizes the importance of Out-of-School Education as a means of attaining the goals of Core curriculum by providing a methodology that facilitates and contributes to the shift in paradigms. Ferguson (1991) reminds us that an important dimension of this shift is the concept of interdisciplinarity within the required areas of study. As a result, the various revised curricula have been developed with an emphasis on providing relevance, highlighting the interrelatedness of subject matter, and placing disciplines of study in a broader context.

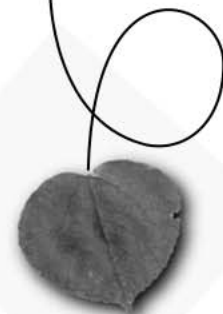
Lang (1986) asserts that "interdisciplinarity is perhaps the most important characteristic of outdoor experiences" (p. 36). He adds that outdoor education can be applied to all traditional subject matter content, "providing an integrative function between and among various disciplines as well as between content and methodology" (p. 36). Increased use of outdoor education may enhance teaching and learning in situations where it is necessary to connect material from more than one subject area, such as in teaching the C.E.L.'s through the R.A.S.'s (Cited by Ferguson, p. 21).

One of the strengths of Out-of-School Education is its ability to cut across curricular boundaries and provide a framework in which teachers and students can find commonalities and connections between disciplines. In fact, the similarities between the common essential learnings and the practice of Out-of-School Education demonstrate a remarkable alignment in terms of an approach to learning. Ferguson (1999) further suggests that not only is the value of Out-of-School Education enhanced in light of the common essential learnings, but that the methodology of Out-of-School Education actually provides a better way of integrating the common essential learnings within the required areas of study (p. 6). The ability to communicate, compute, promote independence, think critically and creatively, acquire technological skills, and appreciate personal and social values can all be better served when educational opportunities occur - across the curriculum - in the "best place" possible.



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## **OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION: AN AGENT OF SCHOOL REFORM**

*The philosophy of Out-of-School Education provides a methodology that will allow a teacher to make this paradigm shift in educational practice.*

## **PERSPECTIVES OF GRADE LEVEL**

### **EARLY YEARS: KINDERGARTEN - GRADE 5**



## **OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION: AN AGENT OF SCHOOL REFORM**

“What is worth knowing?” is a curriculum question and will always be connected to where and how we teach. Consequently, to consider a less conventional model of education, one must consciously break free of the organizational structures, that have historically impeded the restructuring of education. Out-of-School Education programs hope to accomplish this by first highlighting the traditional barriers of space and time. In fact, the walls of a classroom, blocks of time, and bells need not restrict the process. Secondly, curriculum must be able to break free of the barriers imposed by the long-standing categories of subject matter. An approach to learning, which honors and connects the disciplines of knowledge and at the same time provides first-hand experiences, often provides a more natural and personal motivation for students. Since 1981, Saskatchewan Education has encouraged teachers to shift the balance of their strategies from a teacher-centered, content-based approach to a more student-centered, process-oriented approach. According to curriculum theorists this would be considered a shift from a transmission [technical] paradigm to a transactional [practical] or possibly transformational [emancipatory] paradigm of education. The implications of this potential shift are enormous, and the philosophy of Out-of-School Education provides a methodology that will allow a teacher to make this paradigm shift in educational practice. When restructuring education it is critical to understand that it is not the debate over content that provides the resistance to educational change, but rather, it is the overriding traditional philosophies and organizational structures that impose the boundaries. To understand the opportunities of Out-of-School Education is to move beyond these boundaries and recognize that education can often be transformed when teaching and learning moves outside the school.

## **PERSPECTIVES OF GRADE LEVEL**

When one considers carefully the recommendations of this concept plan, there emerges a pattern of implementation that is dependent upon the grade level of students. Although the intent and philosophy are the same at all levels of education, the strategies, context, and manner in which Out-of-School Education is practiced are different. The following is a discussion that will highlight the different perspectives and dimensions of implementation that exist in three general age categories:

- i) Early years: Kindergarten - Grade 5
- ii) Middle years: Grades 6 - 8
- iii) Senior years: Grades 9 - 12 [High School]

### **EARLY YEARS: KINDERGARTEN - GRADE 5**

Interestingly, when one examines the daily challenges and strategies of a kindergarten classroom, they bear a striking resemblance to the initiatives of Out-of-School Education at all grade levels. It sheds new light on an old saying, “Everything I needed to know I learned in Kindergarten”. However, beginning in the early grades, a child’s education begins a progression that involves more structure and more content. Both the school building and the daily timetable increasingly control where and when the learning takes place. If Out-of-School Education serves to reverse this trend, we must encourage a strong repertoire of out-of-school activities especially during the early years.

In an attempt to understand their world, young children have a natural desire to explore their surroundings. This instinctive sense of wonder is supported by Joy



Palmer's (1998) study on emergent environmentalism and "reveals that experiences outdoors (particularly in early childhood) may well be the single most important influence affecting people's thinking in relation to the environment" (p. 204). Early experiences in life create lasting impressions on children forming important attitudes and values for living. Rachel Carson (1956/1990) states that "if a child is to keep alive his [her] sense of wonder, he [she] needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share the joy, excitement, and mystery of the world we live in" (p.55). The role of the teacher, therefore, is to act as the guide who affirms and encourages exploration and learning in nature. Young children can be taught to have respectful attitudes towards small organisms such as spiders and frogs, and to appreciate the diversity and beauty of a pond or prairie or schoolyard as a place to be explored, cared for, and respected.

Generally speaking, the education that young children receive is more holistic, thematic, and experiential than at any other level. Knowledge is most often created using a discovery approach and thematic units lend themselves perfectly to learning activities that take place both in and out-of-school. In fact, the curricula at the primary grade levels specifically suggest teachers use the outdoors for activities such as nature hikes, painting landscapes, exploring the neighborhood, measuring temperature, or classifying objects found on the playground. Environmental action projects like gardening, building bird boxes, habitat enhancement, litter clean-up, or waste reduction can easily be accomplished by primary children. The out-of-school experience can also be enhanced by a wide variety of instructional strategies such as cooperative groups, journals, inquiry learning, learning centers, jigsaws, drama, and storytelling.

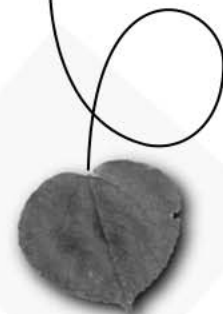
Early years education should establish the foundational attitudes, behaviours, and skills required for all levels of higher education. In doing so, we must encourage learning that takes place outside of the classroom and recognize the importance of relevance and first hand experience. These opportunities must then be maintained throughout a student's schooling. To support the desire of teachers to integrate Out-of-School Education, we must therefore provide encouragement, mentorship, and support necessary to help them reshape their teaching. Teachers must also be encouraged to understand the philosophy of Out-of-School Education to gain the insight and motivation to purposefully change their practice.

Educators need to recognize that an hour spent actively learning outdoors is not an hour that needs to be made up later. Using the outdoor classroom reflects a way of thinking about learning that provides a focus on first-hand experience. Both the playground and the local park are excellent locations to develop these understandings in either a natural or urban setting, and a meaningful outdoor experience can be achieved in as little as ten to fifteen minutes. By revisiting a particular place each season, students begin to know the plants and animals that live there and can learn to observe their surroundings using all their senses. Children can develop a relationship with a place that becomes so special they will want to visit and care for it. For the next generation to develop an attitude of stewardship for our planet, we must allow students to develop these important connections with the earth during their early years in education.

Perhaps it is this perspective of stewardship that allows us to best appreciate the need for Out-of-School Education. Rather than studying leaves and pieces of bark in the classroom, it would be better for children to go outdoors and see the whole tree connected to other organisms in the natural world. When observing the tree and the organisms that live on or near it, students and teachers are encouraged to move beyond the memorization of terms and are invited to engage in a broader understanding of life. Naming and listing facts is only one way to interpret what is found in nature - developing a sense of wonder and joy about nature is another

*The role of the teacher, therefore, is to act as the guide who affirms and encourages exploration and learning in nature.*

*To support the desire of teachers to integrate Out-of-School Education, we must therefore provide encouragement, mentorship, and support necessary to help them reshape their teaching. Teachers must also be encouraged to understand the philosophy of Out-of-School Education to gain the insight and motivation to purposefully change their practice.*





way. Rachel Carson (1956/1990), author of The Sense of Wonder, suggests that we must ensure that a child's foundation is made rich through sensory experiences and affirmations of feelings rather than merely memorizing facts:

It is not half so important to know as to feel. If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impression of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow. The years of childhood are the time to prepare the soil (p.56).

*The early years of education represent perhaps our greatest opportunity in which to integrate Out-of-School Education.*

The early years of education represent perhaps our greatest opportunity in which to integrate Out-of-School Education. If a young student learns to be comfortable outside the classroom and is engaged in a style of learning based on first hand experience, we set the stage for a motivated and meaningful education. From an early age, students will understand that learning is about making sense of their world, and that the process depends directly on their personal involvement. As a result, students will develop a continuum of out-of-school learning skills [reading, writing, researching, listening, speaking] that are relevant and necessary to move confidently into the middle and senior years of school - especially if higher grade levels incorporate further opportunities for out-of-school learning.

## MIDDLE YEARS: GRADE 5 - 8

### MIDDLE YEARS: GRADE 5 - 8

Prior to the middle years, students are generally involved in a more holistic thematic approach to learning. However, beginning in grade five or six, many students experience a transition to a more rigorous content-based approach as students, parents, and teachers perceive the need to prepare for high school. Consequently, middle years children begin to form opinions about their own academic strengths and weaknesses as they move toward a greater degree of independence and self-identity. Middle years students present a significant range in physical and emotional maturity, and exhibit a wide range of academic abilities. It is a particularly tenuous time indeed as young people develop the academic, physical, and social self-perceptions for their future.

*When out-of-school excursions are considered, it is the perceived lack of structure combined perhaps with challenging behaviour that often makes teachers feel reluctant to take students on field trips.*

Generally speaking, the middle years teacher possesses a wide range of abilities and teaching experience. As subject-based knowledge develops a greater profile in the middle years, teachers are often expected to provide a deeper level of content from a wide variety of disciplines. Consequently, middle years teachers often perceive an obligation to provide a degree of subject specialization that subsequently makes it difficult to implement an interdisciplinary approach. Given the complexity of adolescent development, behaviour, and learning styles, teachers often respond by structuring a learning environment that is predictable, organized, and safe. When out-of-school excursions are considered, it is the perceived lack of structure combined perhaps with challenging behaviour that often makes teachers feel reluctant to take students on field trips. The dilemma is simple: if the structure of the classroom is perceived to help manage the behaviour of students, how does one cope with the complexities and lack of structure when teaching and learning moves out-of-school?

*Teachers on system sponsored excursions often discover that Out-of-School Education is a process rather than an event [albeit more complex], and has tremendous relevance, excitement, and educational value.*

One solution to this dilemma has been the development of Out-of-School Education system sponsored excursions that not only ensure consistency throughout our school division, but also provide a strong model of instruction for teachers. These grade-specific excursions have been planned as a direct extension of the curriculum as the teaching process also incorporates both pre-trip and post-trip activities. This approach suggests a deliberate sequence of activities for both students and teachers, the experience is less likely to be viewed as a discrete stand-alone activity. Teachers on system sponsored excursions often discover that Out-of-School Education is a process rather than an event [albeit more complex], and has tremendous relevance, excitement, and educational value.





The middle years teacher who shows a particular interest or who specializes in out-of-school activities is often the same teacher who organizes the outdoor education club or canoeing club at an elementary school. These individuals serve as important role models by involving others and mentoring the skills and attitudes required in organizing safe and meaningful excursions. Even though outdoor education clubs often utilize adventure and camping activities, it is the same basic set of skills and strategies that will allow other teachers to develop the confidence necessary to adapt these activities to their classroom. Unfortunately, many are intimidated by the perceived level of expertise and specialized knowledge that some teachers have - and in the case of leading a canoe trip this is true. Nevertheless, the middle years teacher needs to recognize their expertise as generalists and be encouraged to integrate both curriculum and out-of-school experiences.

Elementary school teachers often joke that students have two favourite subjects; 1) physical education and 2) recess. The simplicity of the humour provides a juxtaposition that leaves us shaking our heads at the obvious. Students love to be active and they love to be social with other children. We can choose to capitalize on the obvious and find a valuable piece of the puzzle of how to educate middle years students. Children at this age are restless and their energy levels contribute to feelings of frustration when they learn in a classroom environment day after day. Thompson (2001) reminds us that, "Most middle years students, however, continue to learn in a traditional structured environment that manages student behavior. The opportunity for cooperative interaction with other students to analyze and interpret meaningful real-life issues as rare" (p. 21). Out-of-school activities break from the routine of content-based learning and enrich the educational process. There must be a greater degree of support for teachers who want to acquire the skills, methods, and attitudes that will allow them to incorporate Out-of-School Education into their teaching repertoire.

John Abbott (1997) suggests that education should put a new emphasis on enabling students to become more resourceful and independent (p.31). Abbott believes that this empowerment must start earlier in the schooling process so that students enter the middle and senior years of education with the expectations, attitudes, and skills to participate in out-of-school opportunities. Students in the middle years are capable of significant levels of physical and emotional maturity, and much of the frustration teachers experience at this level might be alleviated by incorporating active, meaningful, and relevant out-of-school activities. Middle years education is not yet controlled by the traditional structures that can be limiting in secondary education. Middle years represents the epitome of youthful enthusiasm, and students at this age are capable of the active and thematic styles of learning that are typical of Out-of-School Education.

### SENIOR YEARS: GRADE 5 -12

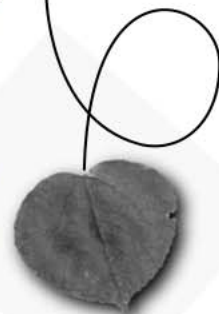
During grades nine to grades twelve, teachers witness an amazing transformation as young adolescents develop the knowledge, skills, and maturity to leave high school as capable young adults. These students have physical, intellectual, and energy levels that often leave teachers in awe of their significant capabilities and potential. The educational needs of these young people are great and to meet the curriculum and programming requirements, the North American high school has developed an elaborate and efficient system of delivery. The conventional high school classroom in combination with daily multi-period schedules, have served as the primary structures to provide control, organization, and delivery of content. However, it is precisely these structures that have prevented high school education from making important changes.

So entrenched is the structure of the secondary school that concerned educators often feel a sense of frustration in dealing with the issues involved in creating significant change. Miles (1995) points out that the general organization of [secondary] schools is so widely accepted that the structural efficiency is rarely questioned: "It's like

*Out-of-school activities break from the routine of content-based learning and enrich the educational process.*

*Students in the middle years are capable of significant levels of physical and emotional maturity, and much of the frustration teachers experience at this level might be alleviated by incorporating active, meaningful, and relevant out-of-school activities.*

### SENIOR YEARS: GRADE 5 -12





asking a fish to describe water” (p. 43). Change theorists have been documenting the dilemma for over a hundred years and the reasons for such entrenchment are complex - yet obvious once they are identified. On the whole, many secondary teachers rely on traditional approaches and numerous studies have documented the durable continuity in habits, attitudes, and dispositions. Cuban (1992) argues that this conservatism is rooted in the people who are recruited into the profession and that the people who become teachers simply mirror the deep-seated historic and cultural beliefs about knowledge, teaching, and learning (p. 236).

*When secondary teachers recognize the need to provide an excursion they are immediately faced with difficulties that arise because most field trips take longer than the daily time for each class.*

*The crux of the problem is the inflexibility of the daily timetable and the fact that it drives the delivery system of most high schools across North America.*

High school teachers generally operate within an organizational framework that inherently lacks the flexibility required to implement or experiment with large scale alternatives. Out-of-School Education is an excellent case in point. When secondary teachers recognize the need to provide an excursion they are immediately faced with difficulties that arise because most field trips take longer than the allotted time for each class. Because the high school schedule is typically divided into approximately 60-minute intervals, it means other teachers and classes are affected. Consequently, the number of out-of-school experiences often depend on the degree to which teachers and administrators collectively advocate for the importance of field trips and excursions.

The crux of the problem is the inflexibility of the daily timetable and the fact that it drives the delivery system of most high schools across North America. In addressing this concern, the Saskatoon Public School Division’s Collegiate Review [2000] recently indicated that, “there appeared to be a receptivity to having flexibility in the scheduling system. The quarter system, primarily owing to its use by re-entry grade 12 students, was seen as a viable and desirable alternative” (p. 59). The surveys and interviews that supported the Collegiate Review spoke further on the theme of a more flexible delivery system. According to the Review,

participants appear to be receptive to a variety of organizations but wish to approach them with caution. They are prepared to experiment in order to better meet the needs of their communities and students. Also, many teachers felt that there was a need to allow flexibility of delivery within the schools in order to implement more thematic and teacher team approaches to curricula and instruction” (p. 59).

Such flexibility would also encourage a wider variety of instructional strategies, authentic assessment, and transactional approaches that would better serve the spectrum of student learning styles that exist in a typical high school classroom.

In 1996 the National Association of Secondary School Principals sponsored a report which critiqued the present delivery system found in American secondary schools. Entitled Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution, this landmark report served to seriously challenge conventional secondary education and highlight the long withstanding perspectives that prevent high schools from changing:

... high schools continue to go about their business in ways that sometimes bear startling resemblance to the flawed practices of the past. Students pursue their education largely in traditional classroom settings, taught by teachers who stand before row upon row of desks. Mostly, these teachers lecture at students, whose main participation in class is limited to terse answers to fact-seeking questions. High schools persist in organizing instruction subject by subject with little effort to integrate knowledge. Learning continues to be dispensed in tidy 50-minute segments, as if anything worth knowing can be trimmed to fit a precise time frame in the manner that Procrustes





accommodated weary travelers in his one-size-fits-all guest bed (p. 4). The very title of the report, Breaking Ranks, conveys a message that old ways should be changed and alternatives guided by a sense of purpose. One of the strengths of this document is not only its ability to analyze conventional shortcomings but to provide recommendations for effective reform. As a result, it has established six major priorities for renewal that clearly delineate the necessary dimensions of reform. The following are four of the priorities that have a remarkable compatibility with the ideals and principles of Out-of-School Education:

- **Curriculum:** Offering Essential Knowledge, Integrating It, and Making Real Life Connections.
- **Instructional Strategies:** Engaging Students in Their Own Learning.
- **School Environment:** Creating a Climate Conducive to Teaching and Learning.
- **Organization and Time:** Restructuring Space and Time for a More Flexible Education.

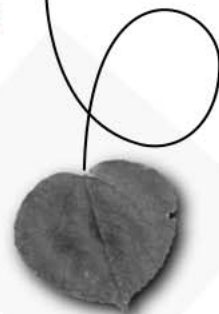
The alignment of these four priorities with Out-of-School Education cannot be overstated, and essentially they validate the role of Out-of-School Education in the process of high school reform. Its strength as a change agent involves the necessity of rethinking the current secondary delivery system - most notably the location of the classroom and the structure of the school day. Educators at all levels must seize the opportunities and initiatives based on "best practice", and work together to implement and actualize new models of scheduling high school classes. Saskatoon's public collegiates have recently experimented with block scheduling and currently three high schools have quarter-semester classes - most notably Nutana Collegiate. Other collegiate programs have also blocked two or more periods to accommodate grouping and/or integrated learning. The Outdoor School Program capitalizes on a full-time integrated program, which incorporates five credits. All of these initiatives illustrate the possible changes to the allocation of time, if we simply modify our thinking to include additional possibilities.

Currently in secondary education, interdisciplinary and/or integrated programming is receiving considerable attention. Increasingly, it is being recognized that by connecting the disciplines of subject matter, students are exposed to a multitude of interrelations that are demanded by real life. According to Jacobs (1989), "Interdisciplinary curriculum experiences provide an opportunity for a more relevant, less fragmented, and stimulating experience for students" (p. 10). This view is shared by Saskatchewan Education, and since 1981 a greater emphasis has been placed on providing interdisciplinary opportunities in the revision of all provincial curricula. Furthermore, Core curriculum suggests that integration be considered as a "preferred alternative" for implementing the content of the seven required subject areas and the six common essential learnings; the two key components of the Core curriculum.

Based on a study completed in a Saskatoon public school collegiate, Janet Christ (2000) documented the experiences and perceptions of 28 students who participated in a grade nine/ten program that emphasized a multi-disciplinary approach. After considerable analysis, she summarizes that students valued their involvement with the 'integrated opportunities' program. Student's observations and comments emphasized that,

They found their learning to be less fragmented and more relevant and more stimulating because they were encouraged to make connections between and within subject areas and to the real world. Additionally, their involvement in the program helped them to develop personally and socially, the principal aims of "true"

*The strength of Out-of-School Education as a change agent involves the necessity of rethinking the current secondary delivery system - most notably the location of the classroom and the structure of the school day.*





integration (p. 136).

Christ's study is highlighted by the fact that the students were able to identify the following instructional approaches that were recognized as being significant within an integrated approach to learning:

- Group work;
- Encouraging student input;
- Hands-on activities, and;
- Interdisciplinary teacher team approach.

*Students felt comfortable, safe, accepted, and part of a community. Students viewed the "hands-on" group activities as an integral part of an approach that naturally incorporated interaction, discussion, and the pooling of skills and knowledge as necessary for the completion of academic projects.*

The students consistently commented about the opportunity to learn in a positive environment where instructional strategies were embedded in an integrated approach that facilitated interaction. Students felt comfortable, safe, accepted, and part of a community. Students viewed the "hands-on" group activities as an integral part of an approach that naturally incorporated interaction, discussion, and the pooling of skills and knowledge as necessary for the completion of academic projects. With professional collaboration being modelled daily, the team teachers provided valuable real life topics, issues, and experiences, that allowed the students to better understand and appreciate the bigger picture.

Whether an individual teacher decides to integrate two or more courses, or perhaps a small group of teachers work together to combine the strengths of subject specialization, the potential exists to better captivate students' interest, and actively engage them in learning. Some of the curricular pairings might include:

- physics and physical education
- English Language arts (ELA) and history
- ELA and social studies
- art and history
- science and math
- work education and science

*Out-of-School Education provides a philosophy and methodology that enables teachers to interpret curriculum through a lens that brings a new spatial dimension to the learning experience.*

Integrated combinations such as these immediately incorporate a shift in paradigm that compels teachers and students to connect different types of knowledge, and thus, provide a reason to make learning meaningful and relevant. As a result, Out-of-School Education provides a philosophy and methodology that enables teachers to interpret curriculum through a lens that brings a new spatial dimension to the learning experience. Therefore, integrated learning is enabled by the opportunity to capitalize on first hand experiences to allow students to make connections in the real world.

On a cautionary note, it is also important to realize that traditional disciplines have served to create knowledge in a manner that promotes the empirical structure of the discipline. We must always remember that part of our responsibility is to honour the integrity of disciplinary knowledge and provide learning opportunities that will contribute to future enlightenment. Academic rigor is a dimension of learning that must always be recognized if students are to understand the dynamic and scholarly dimensions of higher education.





## OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Doug Porteous recalls a story about his father;

Dad was principal at King George in 1932, fifty years before me. He would take his old automobile, his little Model A Ford. Kids would climb on top of it, all over it, about 30 of them, they'd sit in the seats, they'd sit on the roof, they'd sit on the back, and they'd sit on the front, and they would drive out to Yorath Island where they would camp - and so taking kids camping was not new (recorded by M. Klein, 1999).

This gem of a story provides a rich beginning for a historical perspective on Out-of-School Education in the Saskatoon Public School Division. It leaves one wondering how many more vignettes and compelling episodes might we discover if we only had the time to delve more deeply into our local educational heritage. Unfortunately, there is little record of the many teachers who have quietly integrated out-of-school experiences with little fanfare and/or recognition. The smiles, excitement, and happiness of their students were reward enough. This section of the Concept Plan is motivated by a sense of appreciation and heritage, and is intended to honour the special contributions of individuals. In doing so, we acknowledge the risk of excluding certain individuals, but nevertheless, it is our intention to celebrate and recognize the educators who have shared a vision and passion for over 70 years.

It is well documented that schools across North America began to capitalize on the strength of these outdoor experiences as early as 1920. Since that time, outdoor and environmental education have evolved to become important components of mainstream education. In fact, by the 1970's the enthusiasm for school camps and field trips was unprecedented. Our school system too was following this direction and was sponsoring swimming lessons for grade five students as early as 1950. In 1954, Superintendent Clare Hume returned from a conference and proceeded to establish a grade six Pike Lake nature study program that still exists today. In the late 1960's Bonice Korchinski and Carol Howlett formed a high school canoe club at Mount Royal Collegiate and named it the Les Voyageurs. This activity arose from a grade twelve social studies project that focused on the Métis Resistance of 1885. This canoe club flourishes to this day and has provided the springboard for all other Saskatoon schools who recognize the educational value of canoeing trips.

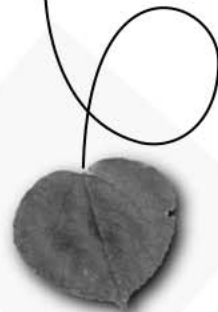
It was also during this era that schools were beginning to camp and trip extensively. A 1973 Saskatoon Public School Division document, indicated that 27 of our 42 schools had participated in school camps. It was at this point that teachers started to build lesson plans, document the organizational requirements of school camps, and develop guidelines to provide safe direction for traveling and camping with children. This quickly created the need for committees of teachers to work together to maintain the momentum and develop the support required to sustain these types of initiatives. The Outdoor Education Committee was formed and over the next few years involved a number of enthusiastic teachers who would provide a tremendous level of system leadership. This list partially includes: Derek Hill, Bob Dilts, Ron Luciuk, Doug Porteous, Don Hibbert, Les Hunt, Carol Howlett, Art Shepherd, Wally Krause, Gord Taylor, Freda Trew, Wayne Kyle, Norm Greaves, Brian Carle, Bill Morris, Dave Cross, Max Abraham, and Wayne Dyck.

The 1970's were unprecedented in the enthusiasm and growth of outdoor environmental education in Saskatchewan, and many Saskatoon public school teachers were involved in leadership roles across the province. In 1972 the Department of the Environment was created, and soon after the Department of

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*It is interesting to recognize that the source of enthusiasm and innovation was largely “grass roots”.*

*Because our teachers have been encouraged to attend educational conferences, complete graduate level research, and travel to other school divisions; we have been able to translate these efforts into a wealth of new opportunities for our students.*

Education developed a number of initiatives to support the new methodology. Saskatoon public school educators Max Abraham, John Brent, Brian Carle, and Arlie Wieler were hired as regional consultants, and Bill Morris, Gordon Taylor and Bill Krynowsky were involved in the early development of curriculum and policy at the provincial level. In 1972, Carol Howlett and Ross Brown helped organize a provincial conference in outdoor environmental education at the Western Development Museum. The fact that over 600 participants attended is a clear indication of the ground swell of interest at this time and the leadership of Saskatoon Public School educators.

It is interesting to recognize that the source of enthusiasm and innovation was largely “grass roots”. In other school divisions, both outdoor and environmental education programs were often led by consultants or technicians. However, within the Saskatoon Public School Division the scope of Out-of-School Education grew from the dedication of teachers to “make it happen”. It is also intriguing to recognize the wide variety of strategies that teachers used to initiate these activities. While some teachers encouraged student participation by forming outdoor education clubs, other teachers believed that all students must have equal opportunity to participate in such activities. Some teachers integrated out-of-school opportunities into their daily teaching routine and others dedicated their efforts in the extracurricular. Teachers also contributed a wide degree of expertise that had been nurtured earlier through prior involvement with environmental scientists, the military, cadets, the Red Cross, Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, or as church camp counselors.

A strength of our school system throughout the years has been the desire to explore and investigate out-of-school initiatives in other centres throughout North America. As a result, we have often been able to capitalize on the pioneering efforts of others. Because our teachers have been encouraged to attend educational conferences, complete graduate level research, and travel to other school divisions; we have been able to translate these efforts into a wealth of new opportunities for our students. The stories and examples of travel, exploration, and discovery are numerous and the resulting benefits for our school system have been immeasurable. In 1974, Superintendent of Schools Mike Kindrachuk was rumored to comment that, “sometimes when you send teachers to a conference you don’t hear anything . . . when you send Porteous and Abraham you have to start changing terminology”.

In the late 1970’s and early 1980’s, the public school system was still very busy with new outdoor environmental initiatives and partnerships. In coordination with Murray Hidelbaugh of Kelsey Institute, teachers participated for many years in an annual winter outdoor education inservice at Kelsey’s Candle Lake Camp. In partnership with the Meewasin Valley Authority and the Catholic School Board a number of educational initiatives were developed to educate children about the ecological basis of the South Saskatchewan River valley. The Beaver Creek program, the Cranberry Flats program, walking tours of Saskatoon, and the Meewasin Valley Interpretive Centre program were developed with the help of Dave Ferguson and Max Abraham. In fact, it was also at this time that the burgeoning number of community resources were collected, documented, and published in a compendium binder called the Out-of-School Education “Yellow Book”. This incredible resource binder [found in all learning resource centers] has received a number of revisions over the years but still owes its early existence to Trish Thurgood, Ruth Sestak, and Basil Hughton.

Wilderness camping and canoeing were also becoming increasingly popular as more and more schools found the resources necessary to involve greater numbers of elementary and secondary students. Canoes, paddles, and tents were only some of the equipment that schools were challenged to either borrow, purchase, or build. It was at this time that teachers in our school system received the accreditation and certification levels necessary to conduct workshops for other teachers in both canoeing and first aid. Judy Acres, Carol Howlett, Paul Imrie, Rob Smith-Windsor, and Wayne Dyck were among the first group of Red Cross Small Crafts Safety





course conductors, and Jim Longstaff, Ron Joorisity, Shelly Ord and Howard Sproat were among the first course conductors for the annual certification course in St. John's First Aid. Teachers also received training and education through an Outdoor Recreation class developed by Howard Nixon and Ches Anderson of the College of Physical Education. Teachers Howard Sproat and Kelly Black taught this university course for many years.

In the mid 1980's the Outdoor Education Committee expanded its mandate to include all activities and excursions that have an educational focus outside the classroom. The new committee was called the Out-of-School Education Curriculum Committee and incorporated an umbrella structure that included four sub-committees:

- Outdoor Pursuits
- Environmental Education
- Community and Regional Resources
- Residential Outdoor Schools

Since that time the Residential Schools sub committee has been replaced by the Brightwater Program and Outdoor School sub-committees. In addition, a Student Leadership sub-committee has also been associated.

Beginning in the mid 1980's and continuing through the 1990's an extensive project was undertaken to revise the outdoor education guidelines and create a new and comprehensive set of Out-of-School Education Travel and Safety Guidelines. These new documents have involved many teachers who dedicated a significant level of energy and expertise. These projects were made possible by building on the previous work that had been compiled by Doug Porteous, Derek Hill, Al Shepherd, and Ed Lepp. The following is a list of educators who contributed to these guidelines:

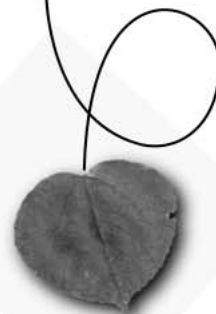
- Travel Guidelines: Terry Kikcio and Kim Archibald
- Canoe Guidelines: Kim Archibald, Murray Taylor, Paul Imrie, Howard Sproat, Terry Labrash, David Mollard, Mike Lucuik, and Jonathan Schwanke
- Canoe Manual: Brian Carle, Rick Bell, Tom McDermott, and Trace Hampson
- Camping Guidelines: Trace Hampson and Murray Taylor
- Cycling Guidelines: Scott Thompson and Dave Derksen
- Waterfront Guidelines: Murray Taylor

These documents continue to be revised and updated by the Outdoor Pursuits sub committee as new knowledge, standards, and activities develop.

In 1989, Max Abraham assembled the first Out-of-School Education Concept Plan. This project was made possible by an Educational Development Fund grant and took approximately two years to complete. This writing project involved a number of key individuals and eventually created a document that firmly established Out-of-School Education as an important teaching methodology within the K-12 public school system. The Concept Plan became a foundational document that not only provided instructional rationale, but offered direction for practitioners, administrators, and policy makers. Two of the recommendations included the development of a residential environmental education centre and a high school outdoor school program - both of which were developed. One of the particular strengths of the 1989 Concept Plan project was the opportunity for teachers to travel, attend conferences, and visit innovative programs in other communities. From these projects came many ideas, but more importantly a ground swell of professional enthusiasm, loyalty, and leadership.

*Beginning in the mid 1980's and continuing through the 1990's an extensive project was undertaken to revise the outdoor education guidelines and create a new and comprehensive set of Out-of-School Education Travel and Safety Guidelines.*

*The Concept Plan became a foundational document that not only provided instructional rationale, but offered direction for practitioners, administrators, and policy makers.*





*Together with The Salvation Army and the Saskatoon Wildlife Federation, an agreement was struck to allow public school students the opportunity to study grasslands ecology just south of the city.*

*This unique [Outdoor School] full-time program has created a tremendous level of attention and has prompted the initiation of similar programs in both Prince Albert and Regina.*

*It is our hope that this Concept Plan will serve to clear the future path for others and honour the individuals on whose shoulders we stand.*

In 1990, our school system entered a three-way community-based partnership, that sponsored the birth of the Brightwater Science and Environmental Education Program. Together with The Salvation Army and the Saskatoon Wildlife Federation, an agreement was struck to allow public school students the opportunity to study grasslands ecology just south of the city. The Salvation Army residential summer camp thus became home for the Brightwater Science and Environmental Centre and has been providing award winning environmental education for over ten years. This project involved many people and exemplifies how community agencies and schools can work to their mutual benefit. During the early negotiations, Superintendent Jake Ens and the Brightwater Advisory Committee played key roles in the development of philosophy, programming, and guidelines. Members of this early committee included Max Abraham, Kim Archibald, Yves Bousquet, Basil Hughton, Louise Jones, Marcia Klein, Halyna Turley, and Gil Wist.

In August 1990, the Educational Development Fund allowed the public school system to hire Louise Jones as site coordinator of the Brightwater centre. Under Louise's leadership and incomparable dedication, the Brightwater Program has flourished and is booked to capacity each year. Numerous partnerships have been created, and as a result, Brightwater continues to provide exceptional opportunities for middle years students to learn from teachers, technicians, volunteer experts, government agencies, and the Meewasin Valley Authority - to name just a few.

With the support and encouragement of then Deputy Director Rene Baxter, an Outdoor School Program was approved at Marion Graham Collegiate in 1997. Based on a similar program in Vernon, B.C. [Earthquest], the new program integrated grade eleven biology and physical education and incorporated the strengths of adventure education. Bill Morris and Kim Archibald were assigned as teachers and 38 students participated in the first two semesters. The following year the program expanded to five credits and accepted students from all public collegiates. Based out of Marion Graham, the academic program integrates biology, communications, geography, physical education, and work education. Judy Kiss and Kim Archibald continue to teach in this outdoor immersion program that provides opportunity for 24 students each semester. This unique full-time program has created a tremendous level of attention and has prompted the initiation of similar programs in both Prince Albert and Regina.

Beginning in the late 1970's and continuing to the present day, our school system has understood the importance of providing a consultant to support the initiatives and programming of Out-of-School Education. The significance of the position cannot be overstated and it is through the outstanding contributions of these people that we have been able to achieve much of the programming we value today. However, to recognize the true depth of their work is to understand that each consultant was also assigned many other responsibilities that included athletics, physical education, and lifestyles education. We pay tribute to the following individuals for the manner in which they managed to nurture the growth of Out-of-School Education: Don Hibbert, Rick Bell, Terry Kikcio, Basil Hughton, Gil Wist, Milton Derry, Kelly Bowers, Lee Reimer, and Dave Derksen.

Today, there are many exciting Out-of-School Education initiatives that are being planned and implemented. Phase II of the Brightwater Centre, designing "concept" schools, the graduate programs of teachers researching in the field of Out-of-School Education, and the possible expansion of the Outdoor School Program all serve to maintain the "grass roots" tradition of generating educational innovation in the Saskatoon Public School Division. With each new achievement we expand on the ideas and efforts of those who have gone before us. It is our hope that this Concept Plan will serve to clear the future path for others and honour the individuals on whose shoulders we stand.





## OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION: PRESENT DELIVERY ANALYSIS

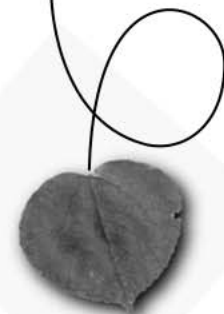
### **Administration:**

Out-of-School Education in the Saskatoon Public School Division is coordinated through a series of administrative positions, committees, and teachers. The initiation of all excursions, which extend beyond the immediate school grounds, begins with the approval of the school principal. Since 1983 teachers have been asked to complete a Form #33 to receive authorization for a student field trip or excursion. [See Appendix B] Form #33 functions as both a trip organizer for teachers and as a formal application that must be approved and signed by the principal. The form organizes the basic prerequisites for the trip and provides an extensive checklist of safety, logistical, and legal considerations. For activities that involve more than one teacher, the principal must designate a staff coordinator or project leader who assumes the formal responsibility of coordinating the activity. When planning out-of-school activities and excursions, teachers are also expected to read and follow the expectations of the Out-of-School Travel and Safety Guidelines.

From a school system perspective, the out-of-school agenda is coordinated and administered by the office of the Out-of-School Education Consultant K-12. A major responsibility of the consultant is to organize the system-sponsored excursions. This task involves booking facilities, coordinating equipment, liaising with outside agencies, and administering the out-of-school budget for all of the system-sponsored activities. A second major commitment of the consultant is to support the work of the Out-of-School Education Curriculum Committee. Together the curriculum committee and the consultant provide a connection to the office of the Superintendent of Curriculum and Staff Development. Through this chain of responsibility, the projects and initiatives of the various out-of-school sub-committees are directed to the administrative level for approval and support. Consequently, the consultant plays a key role in projects such as updating safety guidelines, supporting the Brightwater and Outdoor School programs, developing environmental policy, and implementing the recommendations of the Concept Plan.

## **OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION: PRESENT DELIVERY ANALYSIS**

*Together the curriculum committee and the consultant provide a connection to the office of the Superintendent of Curriculum and Staff Development. Through this chain of responsibility, the projects and initiatives of the various out-of-school sub-committees are directed to the administrative level for approval and support.*



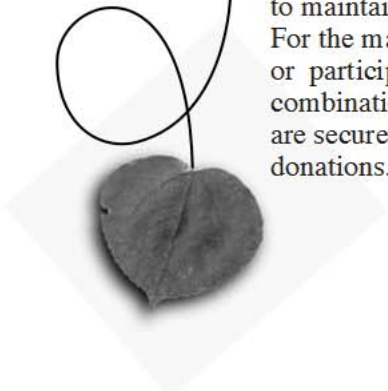


**BUDGET:**

*Out-of-School Education programming in the Saskatoon Public School Division is financed in a number of ways and largely depends on whether the activities are system-sponsored or school-sponsored.*

*School-sponsored excursions receive funding from a number of sources and depend largely on the monies raised at the school level.*

*The funding of school-sponsored excursions raises many issues and each year provides a significant fiscal challenge for schools that advocate for Out-of-School Education.*



**BUDGET:**

Out-of-School Education programming in the Saskatoon Public School Division is financed in a number of ways and largely depends on whether the activities are system-sponsored or school-sponsored. Currently, the Out-of School Consultant coordinates all system sponsored excursions and administered the following budget during the 2000 - 2001 school year:

•	Grades 1 - 8 System-Sponsored Excursions	
	\$49,046.00	
•	Consultant Contingency and Middle Years Leadership	
	2,500.00	
•	Courier Service	
	1,500.00	
•	Equipment Purchase/Maintenance	
	3,000.00	
•	Program Combined Class Contingency	2,000.00
•	Swim Tickets for Special Needs Students	
	800.00	
		<b>TOTAL</b>
	\$56,646.00	

The operating budget for the Brightwater Program is the responsibility of the full time Project Leader and includes the administration of student subsidies, arrangements for seasonal technical support, program development, supplies, and equipment. The 2001 Brightwater budget for both the grade six/seven and grade eleven programs was \$38,150.

In 2000 the Outdoor School Program was staffed at 1.66 teachers and was allocated an operating grant of \$9,300. This grant along with a \$330 student fee is combined to offset the costs of transportation, program development, supplies, and equipment.

School-sponsored excursions receive funding from a number of sources and depend largely on the monies raised at the school level. Each year schools receive a per capita grant specifically for Out-of-School Education initiatives. The following chart outlines how the flat rate per school and per student diem are added together to establish the monetary grant that each school received for the 2000 - 2001 school year:


	Flat Rate Per School	Per Student Diem
Elementary School	\$204	\$3.34
Secondary School	\$650	\$0.54

To supplement these grants, individual schools raise additional monies in order to maintain the slate of excursions that typically occur in most schools each year. For the majority of schools it means that students are either charged activity fees or participate in fundraising efforts. Most often the money is secured through a combination of both fees and fundraising, but occasionally other sources of funding are secured in the form of research grants, corporate sponsorship, and/or charitable donations. The funding of school-sponsored excursions raises many issues and each



year provides a significant fiscal challenge for schools that advocate for Out-of-School Education.

### SYSTEM-SPONSORED EXCURSIONS:

For over 30 years it has been the goal of the Saskatoon Public School Division to provide at least a minimum number of out-of-school excursions for students during the school year. The strategy has been to designate one particular excursion for all students at a number of grade levels. The success of this approach has now evolved to the point of providing system-sponsored excursions for grades one through six. Because of the significant costs involved, the development of fully funded excursions for all grades K-12 has yet to be achieved. Currently, the system-sponsored excursions for grades one to six are fully subsidized for all students. The system-sponsored excursions for grades seven and eight, the Brightwater Program, and the Outdoor School Program are only partially subsidized and therefore, not all students at these grade levels receive these opportunities.

The Educational Consultant for Out-of-School Education administered the following system-sponsored excursions for the 2000 - 2001 school year:

#### GRADE ONE - FORESTRY FARM PROGRAM

All grade one students travel to the Forestry Farm Zoo and spend one half-day with zookeepers and park staff. Students are introduced to a number of native and exotic species of animals with an emphasis on understanding their basic needs and how they adapt to their natural habitat. Technical services and transportation for 50 days cost \$3,500.00.

- Connection to Curriculum: Grade one science.

#### GRADE TWO - GRASSLANDS PROGRAM

All grade two students spend one full day at the fescue prairie site in the northeast Silverspring area of the city. Students study natural species of plants that still grow at this site and gain an appreciation of the prairie as it looked before European contact. Emphasis is placed on appreciating the intricacy of the natural habitats and the impact of agriculture. Technician's fees, teacher inservice, and transportation for 50 days total \$8,275.00.

- Connection to Curriculum: Grade two science.

#### GRADE THREE - MEEWASIN VALLEY CENTRE PROGRAM

All grade three students travel to the Meewasin Valley Centre on Third Avenue and spend one day learning about Saskatoon's early history. The day culminates with students selecting one of three self-guided tours that highlight historical landmarks, and heritage buildings of the city's core regions. Fees for technical services, education kits, and transportation for 60 days are \$5,760.00 in total.

- Connection to Curriculum: Grade three social studies.

#### GRADE FOUR - WESTERN DEVELOPMENT MUSEUM - THRESHING DEMONSTRATION

All grade four students learn about the development of the threshing process during

### SYSTEM-SPONSORED EXCURSIONS:

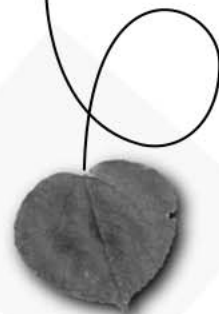
*Currently, the system-sponsored excursions for grades one to six are fully subsidized for all students.*

#### GRADE ONE - FORESTRY FARM PROGRAM

#### GRADE TWO - GRASSLANDS PROGRAM

#### GRADE THREE - MEEWASIN VALLEY CENTRE PROGRAM

#### GRADE FOUR - WESTERN DEVELOPMENT MUSEUM - THRESHING DEMONSTRATION





## GRADE FIVE - BEAVER CREEK PROGRAM

## GRADE SIX - PIKE LAKE PROGRAM

## BRIGHTWATER SCIENCE & ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM

*The Beaver Creek Camp provided an ideal location to base an environmental education program.*

*The summer camp provided the infrastructure to accommodate overnight groups and the combined 160 acre land base provided a composite of prairie micro-habitats and evidence of human activity.*

the early years of grain farming on the prairies. Members of the Threshermen's Club and Boomtown Volunteers provide first hand demonstrations of the old machinery and commentary on the threshing process. The Western Development Museum provides a teacher inservice and resource material. Service fees and transportation for 1,650 students cost a total of \$2,475.00.

- Connection to Curriculum: Grade four social studies.

### GRADE FIVE - BEAVER CREEK PROGRAM

All grade five students spend a full day at the Beaver Creek Conservation area south of Saskatoon. Students are actively engaged in learning about the plants and animals of this region. Depending on the season, Meewasin Valley technicians select from a range of activities, which correspond to either the fall, winter, or spring seasons. The conservation center provides a teacher inservice and education kits for teachers. Technical services and transportation for 60 school days cost \$17,250.00.

- Connection to Curriculum: Grade five science.

### GRADE SIX - PIKE LAKE PROGRAM

All grade six students travel to the Pike Lake Regional Park and spend a day studying the sand dunes, forest, and waterfront areas of the park. Teachers work together with a technician who leads the students in a wide variety of plant, animal, and aquatic studies that explore people's relationship(s) with the ecosystem. A full-time technician is hired for two months each spring and all teachers must attend an inservice. Technician's salary, equipment, transportation, and teachers inservice total \$9,286.00.

- Connection to Curriculum: Grade six science.

### BRIGHTWATER SCIENCE & ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM

In 1990, the Brightwater Science and Environmental Program was created through a partnership between the Saskatoon Public School Division, The Salvation Army Beaver Creek Camp, and the Saskatoon Wildlife Federation. Just 15 kilometres south of Saskatoon, The Salvation Army and the Wildlife Federation owned adjacent properties situated along Beaver Creek, upstream from the Meewasin Valley Conservation Centre. The Salvation Army used the property as the site for a residential summer camp and the Wildlife Federation property had originally been used as the site for a pheasant farm. The creek valley and the grassy/aspen covered uplands [parts of which were never cultivated] of both properties provide a natural setting rich in biodiversity. Camp facilities, garbage dumps, and old farm buildings provide evidence of human impact and are vivid reminders of the complex relationship between human beings and the natural environment. This provided an ideal location to base an environmental education program. The summer camp provided the infrastructure to accommodate overnight groups and the combined 160 acre land base provided a composite of prairie micro-habitats and evidence of human activity.

From the very beginning, the educational agenda was based on a strong philosophical foundation. The success of the Brightwater program is also due largely to the level of interagency cooperation, vision, and educational leadership that led to the establishment of the following goals:

- To provide students with an opportunity to become more aware and appreciative of nature, wildlife, the land, water and air.
- To help students understand the impact of human society on the environment and demonstrate ways of minimizing our destructive impact.
- To help students understand the concept of the ecosystem by looking at interactions among all forms of life in the sandy grassland region.
- To offer a program that is an extension of Core curriculum.





- To enable the students to learn about such concepts as ethical land use.
- To provide students with an opportunity to live in a non-urban setting.
- To emphasize reflection and self-awareness within the context of nature.

Based on Joseph Cornell's "flow of learning theory", the Brightwater Program is designed to lead students through stages of environmental awareness. The Brightwater model suggests that if teachers provide meaningful experiences in natural areas, it will motivate students to take responsibility for the environment and will foster attitudes of stewardship for the earth. The Brightwater program is based on the Saskatchewan Core curriculum and is designed to integrate learning from all disciplines. Educational activities are intended to teach students about nature by involving them in small group projects that emphasize active participation. Using an integrated ecosystems approach, students are involved in numerous field studies that investigate and discover the relationships between plants, animals, and human beings.

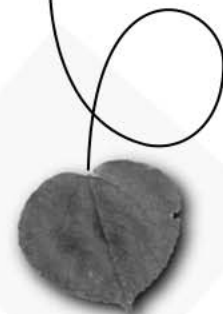
Over 2000 students visited the Brightwater Centre in 2000. Under the guidance of the Brightwater Project Leader, teachers organize and facilitate the learning experiences for students. Teachers must receive inservice and training before leading a class of students on site. This type of professional development takes place in a number of ways and depends largely on the mentorship of new teachers including student teachers and interns who learn from those more experienced. The instructional sequence recognizes three distinct stages and views Brightwater as an extension of the classroom experience. First, there is the pre-visit groundwork that occurs in the classroom to prepare the students for their work in the field. Secondly, there is the on-site Brightwater experience that provides outdoor opportunities that allow students to be in direct contact with nature. Finally, there are the post-visit activities that occur back at the school as teachers assist students to reflect on their experiences and work with the information collected.

The Brightwater Project Leader coordinates all aspects of the educational programming in an effort to provide leadership and technical support, and to arrange for outside resources and expertise. As a result, students are often connected with experts from organizations such as the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, the Devonian Institute, the University of Saskatchewan, the Nature Society, Ducks Unlimited, and the Meewasin Valley Authority. Students are involved directly with the scientific community and participate in conducting environmental studies and the collection of data contributing ecological monitoring, vegetation assessments, controlled grassland burns, and riparian management projects. The programming at Brightwater has become increasingly enriched with the expertise provided by resource people and/or technicians who are either paid an honorarium or volunteer their services. Many of these people would not be available if it were not for the ongoing infusion of grant money and agency sponsorships obtained through the efforts of the Brightwater Project Leader.

In 1996, a group of six school division employees established the Brightwater Endowment Fund under the auspices of the Saskatoon Foundation. The mandate of the fund is to provide support for special Brightwater projects with the investment revenue generated by the fund. Recently, a building campaign fund has been created to support the construction of a major interpretive centre on the new land. When the school division first purchased the Saskatoon Wildlife Federation land in 1998, Bert Weichel of Johnson & Weichel was hired to conduct an independent land use study. This led to a more detailed study and the development of the Environmental Education Site Plan in the fall of 1999. The Site Plan was prepared by a team of

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*The instructional sequence recognizes three distinct stages and views Brightwater as an extension of the classroom experience.*





## GRADE SIX & SEVEN - THREE DAY RESIDENTIAL CAMP

*A residential camp for middle years students is a logistical challenge and requires teachers who are dedicated and parents who are willing to cook, supervise, and provide additional instructional support.*

## GRADE ELEVEN - ONE DAY FIELD TRIP : GRASSLANDS ECOLOGY

graduate students from the University of Calgary Faculty of Environmental Design and outlined the various concept and design scenarios for the new property.

New programming options continue to unfold and new ideas and perspectives are currently being considered. Examples include the recent efforts in recycling, composting, solar energy, and the growing awareness of different cultural perspectives, particularly that of the First Nations. Recognizing indigenous knowledge and technology provides an important opportunity to balance traditional perspectives with the methodology of Western science. Students receive unique opportunities to consider many points of view as they build a more holistic view of the world. It is the goal of the Brightwater program to extend the curriculum in an effort to help young people acquire a greater appreciation for nature and to inspire a new global ethic of caring and stewardship for mother earth.

### GRADE SIX & SEVEN - THREE DAY RESIDENTIAL CAMP

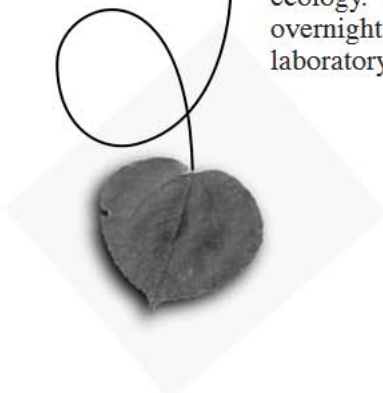
In grades six and seven, students typically spend a total of two nights and three days on site at the Beaver Creek camp. The Saskatoon Public School Division leases this camp from The Salvation Army from September to June and utilizes both the residential facilities of the camp and the surrounding property in order to provide the outdoor experiences required. There is a great demand for these experiences and presently it is booked to capacity. Camp accommodations for students, parents, and teachers include a dining hall/kitchen facility, multi purpose buildings, and cabins. Most activities take place on the immediate camp property and students are able to access different learning stations through a series of established trails.

A residential camp for middle years students is a logistical challenge and requires teachers who are dedicated and parents who are willing to cook, supervise, and provide additional instructional support. The school system presently pays an annual lump sum payment of \$18,000 to The Salvation Army. In addition, The Salvation Army charges \$7.00 per student and teacher per night. Teacher Guides have been created that provide guidelines on the use of the camp and also provide a number of suggested activities, labs, and assignments. Over the years, elementary students have participated in a variety of projects involving the study of native plants and animals. Examples include; plant population studies contrasting undisturbed and disturbed prairie, identification of winter twigs, dissection of insect galls, creek dipping for aquatic arthropods, seed harvesting, vegetation naturalization projects, audio-visual presentations, and the use of computer software and web sites.

- Connection to Curriculum: Gr. 6/7 science/physical education/social studies/ language and visual arts

### GRADE ELEVEN - ONE DAY FIELD TRIP: GRASSLANDS ECOLOGY

Grade eleven students are eligible to participate in a one day field trip to Brightwater. All activities are designed as an extension of the Biology 20 curriculum and are designed to capitalize on the sandy grasslands to study the fundamentals of prairie ecology. Students are bussed from Saskatoon for one day only and do not stay overnight. Learning activities are based from a one room [school house] field laboratory located in the creek valley. Because the sandy grassland is considered a





fragile ecosystem, only one biology class is allowed on site at a time and teachers must book the site through the Brightwater project leader. Groups are encouraged to consider strategies that minimize environmental impact on the site and it is an expectation that no garbage be left at the site. A portable toilet is provided when the high school students visit during the spring and fall seasons.

High school biology classes make use of many locations in Saskatchewan for ecology field trips; however, few locations provide such close proximity to the city and the opportunity to study grasslands, aspen parkland, and riparian ecology all in one place. The areas of natural prairie at Brightwater provide an extremely rare opportunity to study the significance of undisturbed native species. Each high school has a Teachers Guide Binder that provides guidelines on the use of the site and provides a number of suggested activities, labs, and field assignments. Many different activities involving the study of native plants and animals are used including plant population studies, comparison of undisturbed and disturbed prairie, identification of prairie species, soil studies, water quality monitoring, creek dipping for aquatic arthropods, and quiet-time [solo] experiences that promote reflection and sensory awareness.

- Connection to Curriculum: Biology 20 - Ecological organization.

## OUTDOOR SCHOOL PROGRAM

Discussions about an Outdoor School Program originated in the early 1990's and planning was eventually coordinated through the Out-of-School Curriculum Committee. In 1995/96, Outdoor School programs in Vernon, Vancouver, and New York were investigated, and the resulting research provided the background necessary to pilot a half-time program at Marion Graham Collegiate in the fall of 1997. A full-time program began the following year and its educational formula continues to thrive and create a tremendous amount of interest and excitement each semester.

The basic premise of an Outdoor School concept is to combine immersion experiences in the outdoors with the academic expectations of an integrated curriculum. The philosophy is primarily based on an outdoor education model, although components of both environmental and adventure education contribute to its experiential methodology. The goals of the Saskatoon Public School Division's Outdoor School are to provide students with:

- An outdoor learning environment which emphasizes respect, responsibility, and independence.
- Opportunities to develop enhanced levels of self esteem and confidence.
- Knowledge and skills to camp safely and survive in the outdoors.
- Adventure based experiences, which access nature using outdoor pursuits.
- Experiences that foster healthy attitudes towards active lifestyles, careers and recreation.
- Opportunities to better understand the ecological richness of Saskatchewan landscapes and to develop a deep appreciation and responsibility for the natural environment.
- Experiences that provide a sense of community, cooperation, and responsibility to others.

*High school biology classes make use of many locations in Saskatchewan for ecology field trips; however, few locations provide such close proximity to the city and the opportunity to study grasslands, aspen parkland, and riparian ecology all in one place.*

## OUTDOOR SCHOOL PROGRAM

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*What makes the Outdoor School program unique is the context in which education is delivered. Students move to new locations daily where teachers provide the most relevant and meaningful surroundings possible.*

## GRADE ELEVEN - MARION GRAHAM COLLEGIATE

*The Outdoor School is an experience where students participate in a very personal learning environment, build deep friendships, and learn to critique the attitudes and values required to sustain a global community.*

- Holistic educational opportunities which emphasize the interconnectedness of knowledge and a dedication to life-long learning.
- Academic learning that integrates the development of effective oral, written, and visual communication skills and knowledge.

What makes the Outdoor School program unique is the context in which education is delivered. Students move to new locations daily where teachers provide the most relevant and meaningful surroundings possible. Although many experiences do take place in natural or wilderness settings, any other location such as an urban setting can be utilized if the teachers decide that it provides the best possible place for teaching and learning. A major focus of the program is to provide adventure expeditions to the wilderness regions of Saskatchewan's major eco-regions. Students become accomplished campers and outdoor enthusiasts as they develop the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes to travel safely and survive in wilderness areas. This type of programming depends on a significant level of commitment from both teachers and students.

The role of the teacher changes to reflect the manner in which students are learning. A teacher becomes more of a facilitator who structures the appropriate experiences that involve students directly in a process of discovery, participation, and first hand relevance. Evaluation and assessment strategies are also adapted to reflect a more authentic and formative style. To the participants, the program becomes a way of life, and is one of the few educational endeavours to combine academic, physical, and emotional challenges on a full-time basis. The goals of independence and responsibility are reinforced each day as students are expected to initiate connections with community resources in order to fulfill the requirements of group research projects. Students become part of a community as they travel, live, and meet the challenges of their adventure based experiences and academic studies. A realistic sense of responsibility and cooperation is instilled, and students learn to value and take pride in the independence, responsibility, and confidence that develops.

### GRADE ELEVEN - MARION GRAHAM COLLEGIATE

Currently, the Saskatoon Public School Division operates and sponsors one Outdoor School Program. Together, one male and one female teacher are assigned to lead a semester long experience for 24 grade eleven students [48 per year] who are selected from applicants from each of the public high schools. Students earn five academic credits through an integrated education program based on an environmental-earth science theme involving daily outdoor physical activity. The program encourages the development of written and verbal communication skills and provides work related experience with agencies directly involved with wildlife research, conservation of habitat, and environmental studies. The program fee is currently \$330 and a student's successful application must reflect an unselfish, responsible, and mature approach to learning.

Home base for the program is a portable classroom at Marion Graham Collegiate. While the teachers use the room as a logistical headquarters, the students use it as a gathering place that functions as a centre for preparation, planning, debriefings, meetings, presentations, reflection, and socializing. Most of the time students are busy researching a number of overlapping assignments, and must learn to organize group responsibilities, locate productive locations to work, initiate community connections, and manage blocks of independent research time. Students are constantly hiking, cycling, paddling, traveling around the province, or busy working on school assignments that are tied to the integrated curriculum. Students spend approximately 80% of their time away from a traditional high school setting.

Each semester as many as 30 - 40 guest speakers, specialists, and expert instructors are connected with the program and provide enhancement to the learning process. Every four to five weeks students travel to different eco-regions of Saskatchewan and participate in extended excursions which combine outdoor pursuits and biology / geography field work. These adventures consistently push students from their





comfort zones and encourage them to reflect on both individual and group issues. The Outdoor School is an experience where students participate in a very personal learning environment, build deep friendships, and learn to critique the attitudes and values required to sustain a global community.

- Connection to curriculum: Biology 20, Geography 20, Physical Education 20, Communication Studies 20, and Work Education 20.

### **SCHOOL-SPONSORED PROGRAMS:**

The motivation for additional school-sponsored excursions is clear - teachers recognize the educational opportunities of field trips, excursions and outdoor activities that will enhance units of study and help fulfill the curricular foundational objectives. A recent survey revealed that teachers are using an extensive number of locations as destinations for school-sponsored excursions [see Appendix C for a listing of these locations and activities]. The results of this survey help to reinforce the potential that exists, and teachers need only refer to the "Yellow Book" to find the information they may need to begin planning. In fact, many individual teachers have accumulated a considerable repertoire of locations and are often quick to mentor other teachers and share contacts and resources. This type of networking has allowed most elementary schools to develop an extensive annual agenda of excursions. Although the level of involvement in secondary schools may be less, school-sponsored excursions are growing steadily at all levels.

Another significant source of school-sponsored out-of-school activities is through extracurricular activities. In most schools, teachers have worked diligently for years to provide experiences that are provided as an adjunct to the in-school curriculum. Perhaps the best example of this would be the numerous clubs that exist in both elementary and secondary school that provide camping and canoeing opportunities. Activities of this description provide experiences and adventure that are often missing from an in-school agenda and provide powerful experiences for young people. Students learn the importance of developing skills that are related to community living and also get to know their teachers on a different level. Often, dimensions of the formal curriculum are reinforced as opportunities or teachable moments connect new experiences to what students have already learned in the classroom. When outdoor pursuits such as hiking and canoeing are combined with camping, teachers are able to purposefully utilize the element of risk as an educational tool, and thus provide opportunities that allow students to gain a greater degree of confidence and self esteem.

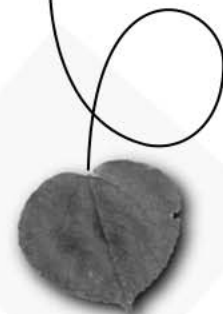
However, Out-of-School Education is not only about camping and the outdoors. Any activity that provides educational opportunities outside the walls of the classroom is equally important. Travel clubs, community service, charity work, environmental clubs, even groups of athletes or musicians who travel to new places are utilizing the same opportunities. The opportunity to ask themselves



### **SCHOOL-SPONSORED PROGRAMS:**

*The motivation for additional school-sponsored excursions is clear - teachers recognize the educational opportunities of field trips, excursions and outdoor activities that will enhance units of study and help fulfill the curricular foundational objectives.*

*Teachers simply need to ask themselves one question - "Where is the best place"?*





## OTHER SYSTEM PROGRAMS

*In the lives of many students, extracurricular involvement provides the most rewarding and meaningful experiences during their school years.*

## WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS

*Work experience programs provide a wide range of educational opportunities that capitalize directly on firsthand experiences in the work place.*

### OTHER SYSTEM PROGRAMS

Other system programs also provide further opportunities to involve students outside the typical school setting or school day. These activities incorporate a system-wide perspective. Although most of these opportunities involve secondary students, there is also system programming at the elementary level. Such programming includes:

- Band and Music Programs
- Inter School Athletics
- Exchange Programs: Quebec, France, Japan, Germany
- Work Experience Programs

Sports and music programs are at the very heart of the extracurricular program in all schools, and it is these activities that often provide the intangible benefits of working with young people. In each of these activities there is a sense of purpose and relevance that creates excitement. It is on band trips, in travel clubs, or teams traveling to a championship tournament that teachers develop personalized relationships with students. It is during these activities that teachers and students work together to form a community of people who are dedicated towards a particular goal, and as a result, internalize the values of cooperation, responsibility, and commitment. In the lives of many students, extracurricular involvement provides the most rewarding and meaningful experiences during their school years.

### WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS

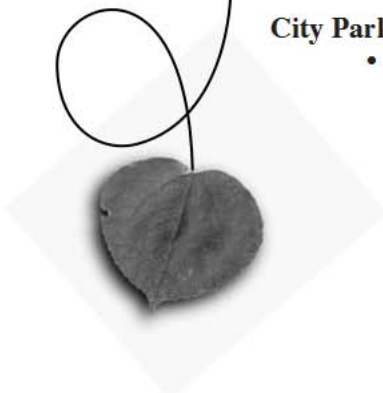
Work experience programs provide a wide range of educational opportunities that capitalize directly on firsthand experiences in the work place. All programs depend on a considerable level of community cooperation and the concept of partnership is the key to success for both the employers and the students of the Saskatoon Public School Division. The following programs provide a blend of theoretical and practical experiences both in the classroom and at the work site(s).

#### **Work Education 10, 20, 30**

- This program is intended to link the workplace and the school for students in grade 10, 11, and 12. The work site component provides a unique opportunity to explore different occupations while the classroom component provides an opportunity to better understand the career development process and the career-specific competencies required by employers. A student can obtain a maximum total of six credits in Work Education, however, one credit, two-credit, quartered, semestered, and integrated options are available depending on the collegiate.

#### **City Park Alternative Program (Work Experience 18, 28, 38)**

- This program focuses on the career development process with a major





objective being to prepare students for direct entry into the world of work - employability is a major focus. The work experiences are provided in the context of an education model that provides an alternative grade twelve standing upon graduation. Students can enter at the grade eight level and work experiences in both the community and the workplace are considered integral in the programming.

### **Life Skills Work Study Program (Work Experience 18, 28, 38)**

- This program provides students with special needs an opportunity to gain valuable work experience. Programming is developed with the needs of the individual student in mind and it is the classroom teacher who establishes specific time requirements, work sites, and job responsibilities. This program is available at Aden Bowman, Mount Royal, and Walter Murray Collegiate.

### **Functional Living Skills Work Experience**

- This program provides work experiences for students with special needs in a group situation with adults who serve as job coaches. Student placements are considered in context of classroom projects, and tend to focus on helping community and non-profit organizations in events planning. This non-credit program is available at Marion Graham and Evan Hardy Collegiate.

### **Academic and Cooperative Opportunities (Work Education 30)**

- These work experiences are designed as special projects for individual academic students who have a specialized skill or particular talent. Students go through an application and selection process and are eligible for a dual credit depending on scheduling restrictions. Currently, Evan Hardy and Walter Murray partner two Biology 30 students with geneticists at Agriculture Canada, and Mount Royal connects two Physics 30 students with Corning Cable Systems. Recently, Aden Bowman has integrated Biology 30 with a work education credit and partners students with research scientists.

### **Outdoor School Program (Integrated Work Education 20)**

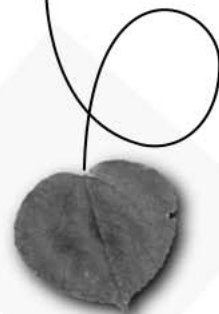
- Based out of Marion Graham Collegiate, grade eleven students [from all of the collegiates] apply for an outdoor immersion program that is based on the themes of environmental and adventure education. Work Education is integrated with biology, geography, communication studies, and physical education by aligning work placements with scientists, researchers, and technicians who work in the fields of environmental science, earth science, paleontology, archeology, and conservation.

### **Youth Internship Program (Work Education 30)**

- Grade 12 students can apply for a work internship program where they select one of the following strands: trucking, metal fabrication, aviation, banking, electronics, or tourism. Students are expected to take four credits relative to their internship strand [two of which are work education credits] and work sites are selected according to their particular internship strand.

### **Take Our Kids To Work Program (Grade 9)**

- This is an annual, nation-wide program designed to allow grade 9 students to go to work for a day with a parent, guardian, or significant adult. Students observe different roles and responsibilities in the workplace,





The cover features a white background with a pattern of brown, dried leaves scattered across it. In the center, there is a rectangular photograph of a group of people standing in a wooded area. The text 'RECOMMENDATIONS 2002' is printed in a black, serif font above the photograph, and 'Out-of-School Education' is printed in the same font below it.

RECOMMENDATIONS 2002

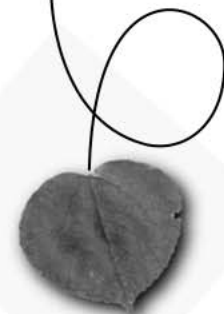
Out-of-School Education



**OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION CONCEPT PLAN:  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations of the Out-of-School Education Concept Plan are a result of an extensive collaboration that included educators from all schools within the Saskatoon Public School Division. These recommendations, therefore, represent the wishes, aspirations, and dreams of a community of educators who advocate that learning opportunities for students need to be based on the ideals and principles of outdoor, environmental, and experiential education. For each recommendation, information will be provided in an effort to provide both rationale and context. The Concept Plan recommendations are as follows:

1. Commit our school system to a new “Global Ethic” that raises the level of environmental awareness, advocacy, and stewardship of the earth.
2. Create a full-time Out-of-School Education Consultant position.
3. Complete the K - 12 continuum of system sponsored Out-of-School excursions.
4. Maintain and expand existing Out-of-School programs.
  - 4.1 Implement phase II of the Brightwater Science and Environmental Centre.
  - 4.2 Expand the Outdoor School Program to include other grade levels.
5. Initiate and pilot “Concept” schools based on the philosophy of Out-of-School Education.
6. Enhance resources, equipment, safety guidelines, and professional development opportunities for teachers.
  - 6.1 The Yellow Book: K-12 Directory of Sites and Resources.
  - 6.2 Student Travel and Outdoor Safety Guidelines.
  - 6.3 Professional Development, Mentorship, and Certification.
  - 6.4 Resources: Transportation, Equipment, and Technical Support.
7. Foster new partnerships with the the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina that encourage teacher preparation in Out-of-school Education.
  - 7.1 Undergraduate Preparation in Out-of-School Education.
  - 7.2 Participation in University and Action Research Projects.
  - 7.3 Access to University Resources, Expertise, and Facilities.
8. Investigate new partnerships with local community agencies, organizations, government departments, and local businesses to promote better learning and enhanced public profile.
9. Recognize the strengths and expertise of Out-of-School Education teachers and





*The strength of environmental education therefore, is its ability to integrate a multitude of interconnected layers and perspectives.*

*It is the position of this Concept Plan that the Saskatoon Public School Division adopt and model a new 'Global Ethic' that will permeate every facet of our school system.*

*Environmental education is about challenging the ideals of our society and exposing the cultural values that perpetuate the degradation of the earth.*



who have become educational specialists. When these teachers leave a school it creates difficulties in replacing the degree of leadership, expertise, and enthusiasm. The challenge becomes our ability to hire, mentor, and support teachers with these strengths. It is crucial to recruit teachers who bring a range of abilities to the school system, and one of the top considerations should include the ability and willingness to teach out-of-school. Staffing innovative or concept schools that specialize in Out-of-School Education will be an exciting step, and will require leading educators. However, it must be recognized that all schools require teachers who possess the strengths to practice Out-of-School Education.

**1. Commit our school system to a new “Global Ethic” that raises the level of environmental awareness, advocacy, and stewardship of the earth.**

Encouraging understanding, awareness, and respect for the environment has been part of the educational picture in North America for over three decades. From the scare tactics and doomsday scenarios of the 1960's and 70's, to the environmental activism of the 1980's and '90s, the strength of environmental education has been its ability to connect the dimensions of politics, socio-economics, and ecology. The strength of environmental education therefore, is its ability to integrate a multitude of interconnected layers and perspectives. Its weakness, on the other hand, is that such an all-encompassing view is often difficult to articulate and/or understand, and in fact, eventually risks losing much of its impact on students. According to Abraham (1989), “the search for ecologically-sound, sustained lifestyles, by instilling an environmental ethic and consciousness in youth who will some day serve as society's leaders, has fallen short” (p. 22).

The environmental sub-committee has provided leadership in environmental education and has served as our school system's “conscience” for over ten years. Many dedicated teachers have worked tirelessly to identify both local and global issues in an effort to highlight the need to integrate environmental education in all areas of curriculum. Efforts to communicate environmentally sound behaviours and attitudes, identifying instructional materials, and developing partnerships with environmental agencies have all been initiated through the efforts of this committee. Of particular note are the ongoing efforts and initiatives to establish school playgrounds as living laboratories for the teaching of environmental principles. Programs such as Destination Conservation provide new opportunities to conserve energy [and money] in all of our schools, and involve students through a direct connection to curriculum.

However, it is more than simply re-examining our approach to waste management or renewing efforts to conserve energy and water. Rather, it is about challenging the ideals of our society and exposing the cultural values that perpetuate the degradation of the earth. Thus, it





specialists when staffing schools.

10. Foster programs that improve and increase intercultural understanding.
11. Promote increased marketing, public awareness, financial and in-kind support for Out-of-School Education.
12. Investigate better strategies to finance Out-of-School Education.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **2. Create a full-time Out-of-School Education Consultant position.**

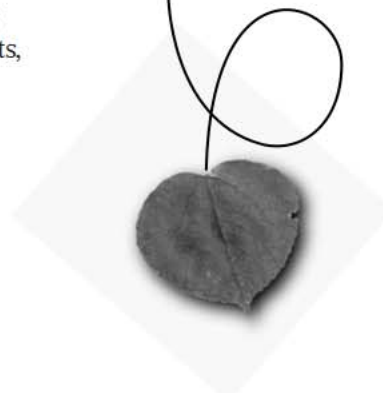
For the past twenty years the responsibilities of the Out-of-School Consultant position have been combined with athletics and/or physical education and/or health/lifestyles. An emphasis on and expansion of Out-of-School Education opportunities requires that a higher priority be given to the obligations and responsibilities of the Out-of-School Consultant.

A full-time Out-of-School Education Consultant's position should include the following responsibilities and duties:

- Coordinate grade specific system sponsored excursions and lead the development of new curriculum based excursions that would complete the continuum of system sponsored excursions from kindergarten to grade twelve. This would involve:
  - Maintaining the scope and sequence of curriculum integrity;
  - Management of budget, equipment, support technicians, and;
  - Development of resource material and support for teachers.
- Liase with the Out-of-School Education Curriculum Committee and five sub-committees.
- Support the growth of Out-of-School Education opportunities by mentoring teachers and developing support materials and resources [i.e. edu kits].
- Liase with Concept Schools, Brightwater, and Outdoor School Program(s).
- Coordinate the required certification programs [first aid, canoeing, etc.] and professional development opportunities for teachers in the field.
- Liase with the College of Education regarding resources, facilities, action research, and preservice training in the field of Out-of-School Education.
- Explore further partnerships with community agencies, corporations, and municipal government [i.e. Harry Bailey Aquatic Center, Meewasin Valley Authority, University of Saskatchewan, etc.].
- Promote increased marketing, public awareness, and support [financial and in-kind] for Out-of-School Education.
- Coordinate and purchase the necessary outdoor equipment and resources required to support outdoor pursuits sponsored at the school level [i.e. canoes, tents, skis, edu-kits, class sets of compasses, etc.].
- Provide professional development and mentorship for teachers by leading students in out-of-school activities [i.e. initiative tasks, nordic skiing, cycling, fescue prairie interpretation, etc.].

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

*An emphasis on and expansion of Out-of-School Education opportunities requires that a higher priority be given to the obligations and responsibilities of the Out-of-School Consultant.*





*The original goal for system-sponsored excursions was to provide at least one quality Out-of-School Education experience each year for each student of the Saskatoon Public School Division at each grade level.*

*Discussions should be renewed in an effort to complete the K - 8 continuum of system-sponsored excursions.*

*In an effort to promote Out-of-School Education at the secondary level, fully sponsored system curriculum-based excursions need to be developed for grades nine, ten, eleven, and twelve.*

*If each grade level were to have a designated system-sponsored excursion, better decisions and connections to specific resources, sites, and facilities could result.*

- Provide system leadership in the implementation of the goals and recommendations of the Out-of-School Education Concept Plan [i.e. writing teams, inservice, environmental ethic, financial restructuring, etc.].

### **3. Complete the K - 12 continuum of system sponsored Out-of-School excursions.**

The Saskatoon Public School Division first created a system-sponsored excursion over thirty years ago. Since that time new excursions have been added and currently there are system-sponsored excursions for grades one through six. The original goal for system-sponsored excursions was to provide at least one quality Out-of-School Education experience each year for each student of the Saskatoon Public School Division at each grade level. These excursions have proven successful because; a) they are based on a strong connection to curriculum; and b) the Saskatoon Public School Division believes that all students are entitled to at least a minimum standard of quality out-of-school experiences. Consequently, these annual excursions have become an important and anticipated component of the education that K - 6 students receive each year.

Early in the development of the Brightwater program it was decided that both grades six and seven students would participate. However, because the Brightwater Centre is now booked to capacity, many grade seven students do not receive a system-sponsored excursion. The Brightwater Program has been a resounding success story and its model of environmental education is highly respected. The fact that many students do not receive this outstanding opportunity signals the need for a review of its grade designation. For example, if Brightwater were designated only for grade six students and the Pike Lake Program for grade seven students, it would only leave the development of excursions for kindergarten and grade eight students. Regardless, discussions should be renewed in an effort to complete the K - 8 continuum of system-sponsored excursions.

At the high school level there are currently no system-sponsored excursions. The one partial exception is the provision for grade eleven biology students to use the Brightwater Centre. This decision continues to enable grade eleven biology teachers to capitalize on the close proximity of the Brightwater Centre, and provide field studies in grasslands ecology. However, the grade eleven program receives considerably less support in terms of transportation, technician support, and programming - compared to other system-sponsored excursions. In an effort to promote Out-of-School Education at the secondary level, fully sponsored system curriculum-based excursions need to be developed for grades nine, ten, eleven, and twelve.

One related issue that needs to be raised is the concern among teachers that occasionally field trips are not planned as an extension of curriculum. This concern is based on the difficulties that arise when students experience a particular excursion repeatedly, and perhaps out of context. The Batoche historical site is likely the best example. Because this facility provides an exceptional historical resource, and is close in proximity, it becomes over utilized. Teachers not only require other options and possibilities for school-sponsored excursions, but may require assistance in coordinating excursions that maximize the experience for students. If each grade level were to have a designated system-sponsored excursion, better decisions and





connections to specific resources, sites, and facilities could result.

#### **4. Maintain and expand existing Out-of-School programs including the Brightwater Centre and the Outdoor School concept.**

The challenge of the Concept Plan is not only to provide the rationale that will strengthen Out-of-School Education programming, but to inspire the development of new opportunities. Two such initiatives include the Brightwater Science and Environmental Program and the Outdoor School Program.

##### **4.1 Implement phase II of the Brightwater Science and Environmental Centre.**

Currently, the Brightwater Science and Environmental Program is based at The Salvation Army Camp south of Saskatoon. In 1998, the Saskatoon Public School Division purchased 23 hectares of land adjacent to the Salvation Army property, and is now planning a new phase in the Brightwater Centre. The key advantage in owning this land is the opportunity to develop extended educational programming that can still be combined with the facilities of The Salvation Army residential camp. It also allows for the possibility of re-addressing a partnership with the Department of National Defense who own property directly to the east.

In Spring 1999, a study was sponsored in conjunction with the University of Calgary, to explore the options of developing the new property as the focal point of the Brightwater Centre. The study was conducted by a team of graduate students from the Faculty of Environmental Design, and the finished report An Environmental Education Site Plan: For the Saskatoon Public School Division, Beaver Creek, Saskatchewan, was submitted in December 1999. At the heart of the site plan is a solid understanding of the Brightwater philosophy and an integration of objectives and requirements obtained from the Project Leader and the Brightwater Land Planning Advisory Committee. The methodology of the Site Plan included the following steps:

- Analysis of the site [natural, cultural, and aesthetic factors];
- Identification of issues with neighbouring lands;
- Creation of multiple design scenarios;
- Assessment of site opportunities, and;
- Selection of a design scenario that best reflects the Brightwater philosophy and program requirements.

Consequently, the site plan proposes that the development of all future buildings, facilities, land use principles, and educational programs be designed to revolve around a common "homestead" theme. Combined with the rich history of this property, this theme will provide an exceptional opportunity for students to study both the complexities of natural spaces and the impact of human culture, technology, and agriculture - in short, the essence of environmental education. A series of recommendations outline three phases of development, and each of the following phases is designed to provide the flexibility necessary to suit programming and budgetary considerations.

1. Short term recommendations are intended to guide immediate use of the site. It will require minimal capital expenditure and

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focus on human use, access management, facility improvement, alternative technology, and site restoration.

2. Medium term developments provide a transition phase that lays the foundation for the long-term. This scenario focuses on restoration of disturbed areas, retrofit of facilities, and preparation for an overnight facility.
3. Long term recommendations focus primarily on the development of a building facility and the surrounding lands on the north prairie. A secondary focus is continued restoration of remaining disturbed riparian areas.

The recommendations of the Environmental Education Site Plan should be supported and the Saskatoon Public School Division should work towards implementing these recommendations as soon as possible.

*The recognition and excitement created by the Outdoor School Program is a strong indicator of the potential and impact of Out-of-School Education.*

*Because of its significant departure from conventional education, expanding the Outdoor School concept will require careful consideration and planning.*

#### **4.2 Expand the Outdoor School Program to include other grade levels.**

Currently, the Saskatoon Public School Division sponsors one Outdoor School Program based at Marion Graham Collegiate. The program is open to all grade eleven students who attend public collegiates. The Outdoor School Program provides an educational context where immersion experiences in the outdoors are connected to the academic expectations of an integrated curriculum. For the participants, the program becomes a way of life that combines a distinct physical challenge with the cognitive and affective domains of learning.

Since 1997, the program has created a wave of interest and excitement. Rarely does a week pass without a request for information from other educators, parents, and students. Teachers of the Outdoor School regularly speak at conferences, teacher institutes, workshops, university classes, and other schools. Educators from across Canada have travelled to investigate the program and recently both Prince Albert and Regina have initiated programs based on the Saskatoon model. The recognition and excitement created by the Outdoor School Program is a strong indicator of the potential and impact of Out-of-School Education.





Consideration should be given to expanding the Outdoor School concept. The precedence and experience gained from the current program can now inform the exploration of expanding to other grade levels. Because of its significant departure from conventional education, expanding the Outdoor School concept will require careful consideration and planning. As in the original program, it will require the input of many educators and should always maintain a system wide perspective. Special attention must be paid to the curricular focus, the sequence/progression of outdoor experiences, and the funding required to support students from all neighborhoods.

##### **5. Initiate and pilot “Concept” schools based on the philosophy of Out-of-School Education.**

It is timely for individual schools to adopt and integrate the methodology of Out-of-School Education as an educational cornerstone. The premise of such a move is based on the belief that a sequence of educational experiences can be designed across a number of grade levels in one school that focus on teaching in the “best place” possible. This does not imply that the instructional approaches, philosophies, or traditions that have previously existed at a particular school will be abandoned. Rather, it means that Out-of-School Education will be integrated into the “best practice” of the school on its inherent ability to provide balanced and relevant experiences for students.

Out-of-School Education is not a new concept; however, to base an entire school on this approach would be. Based on the precedent established by the Outdoor School Program, the staff and administration at one elementary School have recently tendered a proposal called an “Innovative School Project”. In doing so, the staff considered many perspectives that included; the size of the school, commitment of teachers, support of the surrounding community, and the endorsement of administration. It is recognized that this project will require teachers who are willing to take the necessary risks, and parents who are willing to become involved on a regular basis. It will require dedicated funding and will be an opportunity to practice pedagogy that is based on current educational literature.

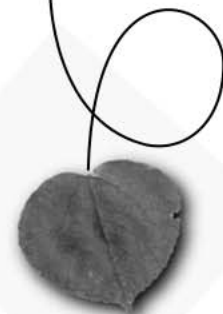
In combination with the school’s current mission and belief statement, it is proposed that the organization of the school and the instructional practice be based on the following set of principles:

1. Ensuring students’ academic growth is an important aspect of our work and *raison d’être*;
2. Ensuring which can best be taught inside the classroom should be taught there, and that which can best be learned through experience dealing directly with native material, the built environment, and life situations outside the school should there be learned;
3. Integrating of subject matter across the curriculum;
4. Applying the best (research-based) pedagogical practices for students (e.g. teacher’s utilize a balanced literary approach and other techniques to teach reading; application of cognitive science; use of experiential and manipulative approaches);
5. Committing to a deep level of collaborative planning and work as the cultural norm;
6. Committing to living an environmental ethic.

As one principal states, “it is simply time to create a school that is affirmed by

*It is timely for individual schools to adopt and integrate the methodology of Out-of-School Education as an educational cornerstone.*

*“It is simply time to create a school that is affirmed by central office to be a pilot site for education that is on the cutting edge of educational research and which can demonstrate for other schools some ways that this research can be applied in a real world setting”.*





central office to be a pilot site for education that is on the cutting edge of educational research and which can demonstrate for other schools some ways that this research can be applied in a real world setting”.

*The Yellow Book and other future compendiums must be viewed as an invaluable and necessary tool for all teachers, especially for those who are just beginning to explore opportunities outside the school building.*

*Out-of-School Education presents a wide variety of situations that can range from a hike to a nearby park to a wilderness canoeing expedition. The risks of each activity must align with the safety considerations that are deemed reasonable for each particular activity.*

*The Saskatoon Public School Division has provided outstanding leadership in this field for over 25 years and must continue to update wisely, research thoroughly, and involve our best teachers.*

## **6 Enhance resources, equipment, safety guidelines, and professional development opportunities for teachers. These include an examination of the following:**

### **6.1 The Yellow Book: K-12 Directory of Sites and Resources.**

Since 1987 the Out-of-School Education Curriculum Committee has produced a directory of activities, sites, field trips, speakers, and community resources that is designed to assist teachers in locating out-of-school experiences for students. This collection of resources has been filed in a single large yellow binder in each school and is known as the “Yellow Book”. Teachers from kindergarten to grade twelve can refer to this directory and find curriculum-based activities and excursions that provide students with different places to learn. Hundreds of hours were donated by teachers to create and revise the Yellow Book; an outstanding contribution of expertise.

Over time, however, this information becomes outdated and incorrect. Some resources disappear, others change, and many new opportunities develop. Information must be added and the existing data bank must be continually revised. The Yellow Book and other future compendiums must be viewed as an invaluable and necessary tool for all teachers, especially for those who are just beginning to explore opportunities outside the school building. It is important that our school division support and finance the efforts of the Community Resources sub-committee in revising and maintaining the Yellow Book.

### **6.2 Student Travel and Outdoor Safety Guidelines**

With the increase in popularity of outdoor education, the Saskatoon Public School Division began to document guidelines that emphasized important safety considerations and imposed certain restrictions. These efforts were based on a clear understanding that the level of risk increases when students travel from the structured safety of a classroom. Out-of-School Education presents a wide variety of situations that can range from a hike to a nearby park to a wilderness canoeing expedition. The risks of each activity must align with the safety considerations that are deemed reasonable for each particular activity.

The Saskatoon Public School Division has authored a highly respected collection of Out-of-School Education safety guidelines. The fact that many other school divisions request copies of our safety guidelines is a tribute to the calibre of research, experience, and work that has contributed to the following documents:

- Travel and Safety Guidelines
- Camping Guidelines
- Canoeing Guidelines and Instructional Handbook
- Waterfront Guidelines
- Cycling Guidelines





- Safety Handbook for Physical Education

To sustain initiatives in Out-of-School Education, it is important to continue the efforts required to improve these safety guidelines. The Saskatoon Public School Division has provided outstanding leadership in this field for over 25 years and must continue to update wisely, research thoroughly, and involve our best teachers. In fact, it is this ongoing dedication and constant improvement that continues to keep out-of-school educators on the leading edge of their craft. Presently, the Outdoor Pursuits sub-committee is reviewing a number of guidelines [i.e. canoeing] and are contemplating the creation of new guidelines for other activities. It is important that the Saskatoon Public School Division continue to support this work.

### 6.3 □ Professional Development, Mentorship, and Certification.

Because Out-of-School Education implies moving from the structured safety of the school, teachers must be prepared to accept more responsibility. Most interested teachers are enthusiastic and willing to acquire the necessary understandings, skills, training, and expertise. However, because few preservice teachers receive training and/or grounding in the fields of outdoor, environmental, or experiential education, the preparation and knowledge to practice Out-of-School Education usually begins while working as a teacher. Consequently, it becomes the responsibility of the school division to guide the growth of teachers and provide the necessary training and professional development.

During the apprenticeship of a beginning teacher, the impact of veteran educators is profound. Mentorship has, and will continue to be, one of the greatest influences in the career of a new teacher. However, it is not just new teachers who should be the focus of mentorship in Out-of-School Education. It is equally important to consider veteran teachers who are looking for a new approach or style. Therefore, if we hope to influence thoughtful and reflective teachers, and help them develop the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes to pursue the strengths of Out-of-School Education, we need to provide a variety of professional development opportunities, such as:

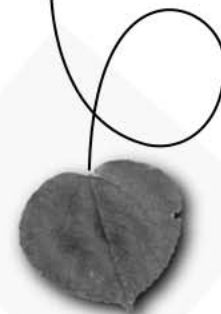
- Inservice
- Training Courses
- Conferences
- Consultant Support
- Structured Mentorship
- Professional Literature
- Administrative Support
- Action Research
- Technical Support
- Certification

The idea of structured mentorship in Out-of-School Education began as an initiative of the canoeing guidelines. Partnerships between teachers were created to help ensure that those who first lead a canoe trip would have previously experienced the multitude of variables that must be considered. This mentorship model is actively used at Brightwater and could easily be adapted so that other teachers might obtain the experiences necessary for safe and effective Out-of-School Education. The Saskatoon Public School Division has consistently encouraged and supported this level of collegiality.

Increasingly, teachers are expected to have greater knowledge, skills and expertise. The list of possible certifications required currently include; first-aid, cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, canoeing, and cycling. To gain this training places considerable demands on teachers' time, energy, and money. For many years teachers have been dealing with these demands through an inconsistent combination of personal expense and school system support. With increasing expectations for more certification, a consistent approach to supporting teacher certification should be implemented. This also means that the school system must continue to sponsor and coordinate all certification courses required by teachers.

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## 6.4 Resources: Transportation, Equipment, and Technical Support.

Organizing field trips, hikes, accommodations, and transportation requires extensive planning, resources, and support. When education moves out of the school building, the web of support required is different than the infrastructure provided for indoor schooling. Over the past twenty years we have recognized the importance of providing computer technology to support indoor learning and committed resources accordingly. If the importance of Out-of-School Education is recognized to a similar degree, a similar commitment in providing out-of-school equipment, transportation, and technical resources is required.

It is clearly understood that Out-of-School Education implies that students move from their classroom to a new location. When students walk or cycle to their destination, travel occurs with little or no cost. However, when students are transported longer distances it requires the use of vehicles, vans, and buses. As a result, transportation often becomes the single greatest expense incurred during out-of-school activities. Regardless, it must be recognized that significant costs are inherent when providing safe transportation for students. The difficulties that relate to this issue therefore, range from the allocation of funds for transportation to the decisions teachers make when pursuing the “best place” for teaching and learning. These two sometimes opposing perspectives, along with others, add to the complexity of finding the resources required for Out-of-School Education.

For over 30 years, the Saskatoon Public School Division has been involved in teaching students to canoe. We have the enthusiasm, the expertise, the traditions, and spectacular lakes and rivers. However, there is only a limited quantity of canoes, paddles, personal flotation devices and associated equipment deemed necessary for safe canoeing. To profile this example is not just a plea for canoes. Rather, the issue is raised to illustrate the equipment requirements for only one of the possible out-of-school activities [i.e. camping, skiing, snowshoeing, kayaking, cycling, skating, hiking, backpacking, swimming, orienteering etc.]. Adequate, up-to-date, and quality equipment must be provided to support the experiences that might range from plant studies in a school yard laboratory to backpacking the wilderness regions of Saskatchewan.

Most teachers require assistance when initiating out-of-school excursions for the first time. Through the Brightwater program we have learned the advantage of providing

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a level of technical support that assists teachers to organize activities - rather than doing it for them. In this way, it helps to ensure that teachers might continue to lead similar activities in the future. However, this approach raises the need for a level of technical assistance that enables teachers to gain the knowledge and experience necessary to then lead students on their own. Both the Meewasin Valley Authority and the Brightwater Program have created edu-kits that provide these type of resources, and along with safety guidelines, handbooks, and other written or audio visual materials, teachers obtain the tools required to move education outside the classroom. In order to continue to provide safe and meaningful out-of-school experiences, we must continue to support this level of technical support.

## **7. Foster new partnerships with the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina that encourage teacher preparation in the Out-of-School Education.**

### **7.1 Undergraduate Preparation in Out-of-School Education.**

Currently in Saskatchewan, preservice teachers receive a minimal exposure to the pedagogy of outdoor, environmental, or experiential education. While the University of Regina offers some undergraduate course work in outdoor education, the University of Saskatchewan does not [except for a certificate program in Ecological Education (CERTEE)]. Consequently, new teachers join the school system with little training or grounding in the field of Out-of-School Education.

For those educators who value Out-of-School Education, it is of concern that university education programs do not provide these important pedagogical underpinnings. In the best interest of the Saskatoon Public School Division, it would be wise to initiate a dialogue with the College of Education at both universities to investigate the possible opportunities in providing the training necessary. It would be mutually beneficial for both institutions to offer undergraduate and graduate level classes in the fields of outdoor, environmental, or experiential education. These university classes would have a significant impact on educational practice for both preservice teachers, and practicing teachers who wish to upgrade their knowledge and expertise.

### **7.2 Participation in University and Action Research Projects.**

In recent years there has been increasing collaboration between researchers and practitioners. Called "action research" these projects often involve a partnership between college professors and teachers. Two of the main reasons for this collaboration include; a) the graduate degree programs of teachers; and b) the Stirling McDowell Research Fund sponsored by the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation.

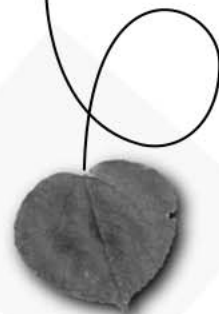
The Saskatoon Public School Division continues to benefit from a "professional leave" program. Typically, these leaves are granted to teachers interested in research at a masters and doctoral level that connects directly to the initiatives of the school system. The benefit that the school division receives from this program is immeasurable. Not only does it ultimately provide better opportunities for students, but creates incomparable leadership, expertise, and loyalty among teachers and administrators.

The Stirling McDowell Foundation provides an additional source of funding that directly influences the research of practicing teachers. Funds are awarded annually to projects generated within the province, and each year teachers in the Saskatoon

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*If the mandate of Out-of-School Education is to provide real life experiences, the University is a treasure house of resources, expertise, and facilities.*

*We must continue these efforts to ensure the growth of long term relationships that will subsequently benefit both the Saskatoon Public School Division and the University of Saskatchewan.*

Public School Division are major recipients. Innovative projects receive financial assistance primarily to offset the cost of research, but often the money provides the additional support necessary to ensure successful pilot projects. This support represents an important consideration when designing and implementing new educational programs. Out-of-school educators need to seize these opportunities when considering new projects or when assessing the effectiveness of recent initiatives.

### **7.3 Access to University Resources, Expertise, and Facilities.**

With the popularity of action research, many partnerships have been established between the College of Education and Saskatoon Public School Division. This type of networking is important, but should not necessarily be limited to just the College of Education. If the mandate of Out-of-School Education is to provide real life experiences, the university is a treasure house of resources, expertise, and facilities. Historically, the school system has developed numerous connections with the University of Saskatchewan - younger children have participated in field trips to the campus, older students have participated in work / research programs, and teachers continue to reconnect for professional development, upgrading, and advice.

The University of Saskatchewan represents many things to our community. To a teacher, the collection of expertise and knowledge is a resource of mythical proportion. Not only are there immense reserves of information, but there are individuals on campus who are world experts. The facilities on campus also provide a source of significant opportunity. Classrooms, laboratories, greenhouses, swimming pools, gymnasiums, agriculture research plots, and the tracts of land which border





the river are just a few of the resources with which our students might connect. As educators, we simply must tap into this incredible resource. It will require many new partnerships between the school system and the university, and like any successful alliance, the partners must first initiate a dialogue that leads to mutual understanding, negotiation, and finally to reciprocal agreement. In some cases teachers can initiate these discussions but often it involves negotiation at the senior levels of administration. We must continue these efforts to ensure the growth of long term relationships that will subsequently benefit both the Saskatoon Public School Division and the University of Saskatchewan.

### **8. Investigate new partnerships with local community agencies, organizations, government departments, and local businesses to promote better learning**

#### **□ □and □enhanced □public □pro□le.**

Not only does Out-of-School Education presuppose leaving the school building, but it also suggests that teachers and students connect with outside people and places. These connections begin naturally when the teacher first decides on a better location to teach and a better place for students to learn. Stepping away from the chalkboard allows the teacher to move from a teacher-centered approach and encourages the teacher to connect with outside resources. Many out-of-school educators have commented that once they begin to utilize outside connections “the possibilities seem endless”. However, at times this step can seem overwhelming and intimidating - especially to begin with.

Consequently, the Out-of-School Education dimension often begins when a teacher first considers the role of outside people and/or places. Next, the teacher must consider the specific needs of the curriculum and foundational objectives, and then decides upon an appropriate strategy that best enables students to grasp specific concepts and knowledge. It is at this point that the teacher might reach for the phone book or directory [Yellow Book] in an attempt to locate an outside resource. Occasionally, it takes just one phone call. In other situations it requires a number of conversations to ensure that the needs of each partner are met. Consequently, out-of-school educators are often surprised with the considerable degree of community support and cooperation available.

The following are examples of community agencies, business and government that serve to provide possible curriculum connections:

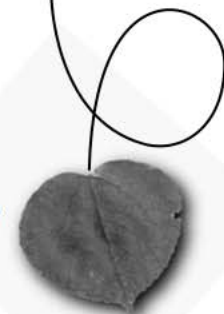
- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| • Greenhouse/Flower Shop | Biology, botany, life science          |
| • Batoche                | History, social/cultural studies       |
| • Ducks Unlimited        | Ecology, conservation, charities       |
| • Hutterite Colony       | Agri-business, religion, culture       |
| • City Police            | Law, trigonometry of traffic accidents |
| • Persephone Theatre     | Drama, Shakespeare, small business     |
| • Prairie Meats          | Food, anatomy, accounting              |
| • Star Phoenix           | Journalism, advertising, community     |
| • Innovation Place       | Technology, entrepreneurship, science  |
| • Labour Board           | Government, work education, unions     |

In the realm of marketing public education, Out-of-School Education helps to bridge gaps in public relations by moving education directly into the community. Discussion, dialogue, problem solving, and networking naturally occur when we start working together on a daily basis. As a result, civil servants, business people, research, and development agencies become connected on a personal level with students and teachers. A good example is our longstanding partnership with the Meewasin Valley Authority [MVA]. Beginning with the MVA's original mandate, the

*Many out-of-school educators have commented that once they begin to utilize outside connections “the possibilities seem endless”.*

*Consequently, out-of-school educators are often surprised with the considerable degree of community support and cooperation available.*

*In the realm of marketing public education, Out-of-School Education helps to bridge gaps in public relations by moving education directly into the community.*





*A teacher's out-of-school journey often begins with one simple decision; to enhance the teaching of curriculum by initiating a field trip.*

*A class of students preparing for a field trip is a project-oriented community of people with a purpose.*

*It is crucial to recruit teachers who bring a range of abilities to the school system, and one of the top considerations should include the ability and willingness to teach out-of-school.*

Saskatoon Public School Division has maintained a solid working relationship that continues to meet the needs of both organizations. We must continue to initiate and foster these partnerships.

## **9. Consider the strengths and expertise of Out-of-School Education teachers**

### **□ □and □specialists□when □staffing□schools.**

The number of teachers who utilize out-of-school activities grows each and every year. A teacher's out-of-school journey often begins with one simple decision; to enhance the teaching of curriculum by initiating a field trip. Teachers develop confidence and expertise with each out-of-school experience, and occasionally choose to specialize in the field of Out-of-School Education by pursuing further training in the fields of outdoor, environmental, or experiential education. Consequently, most schools possess a combination of teachers who exhibit a range of out-of-school abilities. These combinations not only affect the overall tone of a school, but also create a degree of tradition and momentum that makes staffing schools a most challenging affair.

Not only are out-of-school experiences enjoyable for students and teachers, but they create excitement throughout the entire school. A class of students preparing for a field trip is a project-oriented community of people with a purpose. Granted, it requires additional work, but the benefits become obvious to everyone. Enthusiasm is infectious and schools quickly create a degree of momentum that raise expectations within the school and the surrounding community. Both students and parents are quick to appreciate active, relevant, meaningful learning, and it doesn't take long for precedence to become tradition. However, maintaining these expectations from year to year often proves difficult - given the fact that teachers transfer schools on a regular basis.

In each school there are key individuals who have a significant impact within the school. A good example of this is the teacher who leads a school canoe club or organizes the Brightwater experience for grade six students. These are teachers





is the position of this Concept Plan that the Saskatoon Public School Division adopt and model a new 'Global Ethic' that will permeate every facet of our school system. We need to move beyond the efforts of recycling and learn to purchase equipment and supplies with the intent of reducing waste and modeling sustainable behaviour. We must scrutinize environmental board policy (6100)[see Appendix D] in order to create an 'ethic' dedicated to environmental sustainability. Ultimately, we need to recognize the immense educational opportunity that exists by empowering a new wave of environmental responsibility in the children of the Saskatoon Public School Division.

#### **10. Foster programs, that improve and increase intercultural understanding and respect for minorities.**

In Canada, we possess a diverse collection of cultural backgrounds. Learning to understand and respect these differences continues to challenge our society, and public schools provide one of the best opportunities for young people to learn the values required. In schools, social or cultural studies are often limited to interpreting only heritage or the historical perspective of a people. Culture, however, is a complex mix of biology, heritage, and most importantly includes a multitude of factors that contribute to a "way of life" for a people. Abraham (1989) emphasizes that, "The actual study of culture should involve the senses, not just the intellect . . . [and] Out-of-School Education is an ideal avenue for this experiential style of learning" (p. 22).

In Saskatchewan, we have a remarkable mixture of cultures (which include First Nations, Asian, East Indian, African, and European peoples.) Within our community there are difficulties and injustices in our daily interactions, but also opportunities to celebrate and respect our differences. Each year in Saskatoon the Folkfest community festival reflects these efforts and encourages a greater understanding. In our schools we organize cultural fairs and students participate in student exchanges with other countries. Outdoor education clubs experience First Nations culture by listening to the stories of Elders and participating in powwows. Educational opportunities like these are encouraged by the philosophy and methodology of Out-of-School Education.

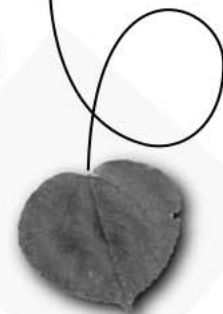
Core curriculum has encouraged new educational paradigms that emphasize the "process" of learning and advocate for student-centered education. Interestingly, the next step in this philosophical progression is to move towards an orientation that nurtures the critical analysis of freedom, oppression, and power. In doing so, teachers encourage students to question one's station in life and critically evaluate the "way of life" for different cultures. If you involve all the senses and not just the intellect, then some of the best opportunities to learn about cultural perspectives would include first hand experiences where students are encouraged to observe and mix with other peoples.

Social studies teachers have always understood the value of traveling with students in an effort to better understand cultural differences. In fact, to appreciate history is connected directly to the understanding of cultures and vice versa. However, the opportunity to travel globally will always remain elusive to most - simply because of location. Nevertheless, the instincts, spirit, and aspirations of these teachers are alive and well in the field of Out-of-School Education. Logistically, there are cultural opportunities within reach and surprisingly some of them exist within our community or close by. Local resources such as Wanuskewin represents a partnership which remains largely untapped.

Some might argue that these activities do little to provide the level of experience and

*If you involve all the senses and not just the intellect, then some of the best opportunities to learn about cultural perspectives would include first hand experiences where students are encouraged to observe and mix with other peoples.*

*It is the position of this Concept Plan that Out-of-School Education provides exactly the experiences required that enables students to deal and cope with the depth of such societal problems and issues.*





*The public needs to better understand the philosophy and methodology of Out-of-School Education. Consequently, the Saskatoon Public School Division must educate the community on the strengths of teaching curriculum in the “best place” possible.*

*In conjunction with the Out-of-School Education Curriculum Committee and the executive level of the Saskatoon Public School Division, the marketing responsibilities must be a shared venture that nurtures community partnerships, encourages support [financial or ‘in-kind’], and ultimately enhances the profile of public education.*

understanding required to deal with the serious problems of racism, bigotry, and the treatment of minorities. It is the position of this Concept Plan that Out-of-School Education provides exactly the experiences required that enables students to deal and cope with the depth of such societal problems and issues. Although our efforts may be limited at this time, Out-of-School Education provides an excellent approach to help initiate a sequence of experiences that facilitate greater understanding, compassion, tolerance, and respect within our global community.

**11. Promote increased marketing, public awareness, and support [financial and in-kind] for Out-of-School Education.**

The public needs to better understand the philosophy and methodology of Out-of-School Education. Consequently, the Saskatoon Public School Division must educate the community on the strengths of teaching curriculum in the “best place” possible. All too often, people [including some educators] conclude that if an activity takes place outside the school building and looks like fun, its educational merit is questionable. Occasionally it may be perceived or even assumed that field trips have little value or simply serve as a break from the real work of schooling. On the contrary, the potential of Out-of-School Education must be taken seriously and educators must be able to articulate this position. The profile of Out-of-School Education needs to be promoted through explicit marketing strategies in order to enhance public understanding.





This Concept Plan provides the first step in initiating this process and serves to provide the pedagogical platform that supports enhanced Out-of-School Education opportunities for young people. A significant component within this process could be the role of the Consultant, who coordinates the efforts of the entire Out-of-School Education community on the behalf of the Saskatoon Public School Division. In conjunction with the Out-of-School Education Curriculum Committee and the executive level of the Saskatoon Public School Division, the marketing responsibilities must be a shared venture that nurtures community partnerships, encourages support [financial or 'in-kind'], and ultimately enhances the profile of public education.

12. Investigate better strategies to finance Out-of-School Education. This will require a restructuring of budget lines, a review of in-school fundraising policy, and the exploration of new sources of financial support and resources.

The traditional school system has developed an "in-frastructure" that supports traditional school based learning. Books, audio visual, subject specific equipment, supplies, furniture, equipment repair, photocopying, etc., all serve to support in-school activities. When educators make conscious decisions to move education away from the conventional mode of delivery, the traditional budget does not reflect the costs associated with out-of-school excursions. For example, an elementary school of 400 children receives a sum of \$1,397 through its Out-of-School Education budget line. Consequently, a school can easily spend its entire budget line on as little as two or three excursions if transportation and/or accommodation were involved. The difficulties increase as the principal, or perhaps a committee of teachers, attempt to allocate these monies within the school. As a result, the lack of funding creates the need for schools to find money elsewhere.

Predictably, schools overcome these difficulties by responding with the iron will to "make things happen". Despite levels of funding, Out-of-School Education flourishes in most schools. Fundraising becomes the front line strategy in most schools and students, parents, and teachers put significant levels of energy into the efforts that provide the specialized equipment, transportation, and accommodations required for out-of-school excursions. The alternative to fundraising is to levy student fees. In this case students either pay each time they embark on a new excursion, or pay a flat activity fee at the beginning of the school year. Most schools recognize the value of having students involved in fundraising.

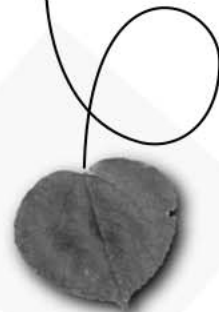
It must be emphasized that this analysis is focused only on the one budget line allocated per school - not the total money designated system wide for Out-of-School Education. The Brightwater Science and Environmental Program, the Outdoor School Program, system sponsored excursions, certification and mentorship programs continue to receive a level of funding that provides the necessary support for some of our finest educational programs. Each year these programs bring the Saskatoon Public School Division significant community recognition and immeasurable public relations value. However, in the day-to-day world at the school level, the situation is quite different. Consequently, it is the position of the Out-of-School Education Concept Plan that school based budgets be examined with the view to better support the financial needs of Out-of-School Education at the school level.

Educational literature has consistently indicated that long term and effective change in education is most likely to occur when decision makers choose to support the "grass roots" initiatives of teachers. Out-of-School Education is an excellent case in point. If Out-of-School Education is deemed worthy, and if the philosophy, methodology, and recommendations of this Concept Plan are supported by the

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*Each year these programs bring the Saskatoon Public School Division significant community recognition and immeasurable public relations value.*

*If Out-of-School Education is deemed worthy, and if the philosophy, methodology, and recommendations of this Concept Plan are supported by the Saskatoon Public School Division, we must then work together on behalf of our students to locate and/or reallocate the financial resources to pay for it.*





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# Appendices

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Saskatoon Public School Division, we must then work together on behalf of our students to locate and/or reallocate the financial resources to pay for it. This is contingent, however, on our collective and creative ability to restructure the support systems [infrastructure] that facilitate educational initiatives based on “best place” and “best practice”.

## APPENDIX A

### **FROM PAPER TO PRACTICE: CONCEPT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

The field of Out-of-School Education provides an approach to learning that begs the educator to consider one very important question; “Where is the best place for teaching and learning?” It is precisely this question that emphasizes the very foundation of the Concept Plan when it recognizes that the responsibilities of the school cannot be accomplished entirely within the school building. Consequently, we now look to the implementation strategies that will allow us to provide more educational opportunities that are “out-of-the-box”.

Implementation must be guided by a thorough understanding of the strength of Out-of-School Education and its inherent ability to provide the “best place” within the context of Core curriculum. Therefore, Out-of-School Education is not considered a special event, but rather, a systemic approach to pedagogy that all educators can practice to one degree or another. Consequently, the methodology of Out-of-School Education must be based on the most current educational literature and research, and must always reflect the ideas of “best practice”. These ideals are reflected in the original purpose and intent of the Concept Plan:

1. Maintain existing Out-of-School Education programming.
2. Advocate for new and enhanced Out-of-School opportunities.
3. Provide system leadership in the process of educational reform.

With these three priorities in mind, the Concept Plan provides both a philosophy and a methodology that enables teachers to pursue the goals and values of the Saskatoon Public School Division. As a reference document it provides the necessary information to assist teachers, administrators, trustees, and the public at large to better understand, internalize, and articulate the ideals of Out-of-School Education. By uniting the community of educators who advocate for more outdoor, environmental, and experiential education, the revision of the Concept Plan not only serves to support the actualization of Core curriculum but provides an effective strategy towards school reform. Consequently, we recommend the following implementation initiatives:

#### **SUPPORT INITIATIVES OF SUB COMMITTEES**

Within the umbrella structure of the Out-of-School Education Curriculum Committee are a number of sub committees that specialize in one dimension of out-of-school programming. To support the direction of the Concept Plan, each of these sub committees will select initiatives from the recommendations that will engage committee members in both short and long-term projects. Consequently, many new developments in environmental education, outdoor pursuits, community resources, Brightwater, and Outdoor School programs will be initiated. The role of the committees, their chairpersons, administrative link, and consultant will play key roles

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#### **SUPPORT INITIATIVES OF SUB COMMITTEES**

#### **CREATE A CONCEPT PLAN PROMOTIONS/ IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE.**





*The public relations value of Out-of-School Education initiatives are unlimited and must be capitalized on.*

#### FORMATION OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION EXPLORATION TEAMS:

#### FORM AN OUT- OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION INSERVICE TEAM

#### SCHOOLS PILOT NEW OUT-OF- SCHOOL EDUCATION INITIATIVES

*...the Concept Plan will be an essential guide for all decision makers.*

in the overall implementation process.

#### CREATE A CONCEPT PLAN PROMOTIONS/IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE.

An ad hoc sub committee of interested educators should be formed to support the recommendations of the Concept Plan. This committee will brainstorm, network, and coordinate its cumulative efforts to support the recommendations of the Concept Plan and the work of the Curriculum Committee. Promotional responsibilities would include raising the public profile of Out-of-School Education, developing new community partnerships, and highlighting the efforts of teachers who practice and/or implement new lessons, units, or programs. The public relations value of Out-of-School Education initiatives are unlimited and must be capitalized on. A key initiative of this committee would be to support and coordinate the efforts of writing teams who will investigate the implementation possibilities at the three general grade categories. Although, this committee will be busy in the short term it must also recognize its long term responsibilities to monitor current developments and attempt to sustain future initiatives.

#### FORMATION OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION EXPLORATION TEAMS:

1. Early Years [K-5] Implementation - Out-of-School Education Possibilities
2. Middle Years [6-8] Implementation - Out-of-School Education Possibilities
3. Senior Years [9-12] Implementation - Out-of-School Education Possibilities

Create a minimum of three teams of teachers who will brainstorm and develop a series of curriculum based integrated or interdisciplinary units that use Out-of-School Education as its central methodology. A number of key individual teachers will be recruited to generate the creativity, expertise, and respect required to construct a series of model lessons, units, or programs that others will use. Those teachers who participate will first develop, and secondly, pilot these new ideas with the support of their home schools. This project will require a substantial commitment on the part of the teachers. Also the school division must provide a significant level of support in the form of release time and resources for these teachers. Three teachers will be selected to coordinate the Exploration Teams and will work closely with the consultant and promotions/implementation committee.

#### FORM AN OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION INSERVICE TEAM

A small group of veteran educators will be invited to serve as workshop leaders in Out-of-School Education. Using the philosophy, methodology, and recommendations of the Concept Plan, the inservice team will develop a series of presentations, inservice, and workshop possibilities that can be delivered to different groups within the educational community. These groups might include the various curriculum committees, the Citizens Advisory Committee, or an entire teaching staff from one school. This team could also represent the Saskatoon Public School Division at educational conferences or at workshops and institutes sponsored by other school divisions. This initiative will depend on the inservice leaders being able to:

1. articulate the philosophy of Out-of-School Education;
2. engage their audience with the potential of Out-of-School Education, and;
3. demonstrate [model] the methodology of Out-of-School Education.

#### SCHOOLS PILOT NEW OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Undoubtedly, many educators will be involved in piloting the initiatives





recommended by the Concept Plan. From the individual teacher who attempts a new unit of study, to a team of teachers implementing an interdisciplinary unit of study, to an entire school deciding to adopt Out-of-School Education as its primary mode of delivery; the combination of initiatives and connections to curriculum will be numerous. Each situation will differ in its approach and each new project will unfold with a different combination of enthusiasm, expertise, and sense of community. Many initiatives will likely be a direct spin-off of the writing teams who will create material that can be adapted by others. The challenge in this endeavour, however, will be to coordinate and support these initiatives so that teachers develop the confidence and sense of direction that empowers them to change. The school based administrative and leadership teams will play a crucial role in this process; and the Concept Plan will be an essential guide for all decision makers.

SYSTEM INSERVICE DAY - OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION - FALL 2003

To support the burgeoning interest in “best place”, Out-of-School Education should be selected as the theme for the fall 2003 system-wide inservice day. This decision would play a significant role in supporting the various initiatives from across the curriculum and highlight the different dimensions that exist at the various grade levels. Such a large scale endeavour will involve all of the Out-of-School Education sub committees; especially the promotions/implementation committee in conjunction with educators who are developing and piloting new programming. Exploration teams would have the opportunity to highlight their work, excursions would be planned to involve teachers directly in experiential learning, and each session would emphasize the potential of Out-of-School Education for all teachers.

Winter Institute - Out-Of-School Education - February 2003

In conjunction with the system inservice day, the 2003 Winter Institute should also be dedicated to the philosophy and methodology of Out-of-School Education. The institute itself should “model” the message of Out-of-School Education by providing all se  
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SYSTEM INSERVICE  
DAY - OUT-OF-SCHOOL  
EDUCATION - FALL

*To support the burgeoning interest in “best place”, Out-of-School Education should be selected as the theme for the fall 2003 system-wide inservice day.*

WINTER INSTITUTE - OUT-  
OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION -  
FEBRUARY 2003

*The “best place” theme for the 2003 Winter Institute would therefore serve to officially recognize Out-of-School Education as a key cultural component of the Saskatoon Public School Division.*









## APPENDIX B









## APPENDIX C









## APPENDIX D









