

# Highs and Lows

## Experiential Education through AWSP's Outdoor Learning Centers

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**PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA**

*Creating a Culture, Improving Instruction, Engaging Families and Communities*

In all walks of life, for every human being, we are exposed to challenges every day. Each of us meets these challenges a little differently, at a pace that is unique to us. This is the shared human experience that makes us both individuals, as well as members of a community.

Now, where does this come into play when we speak about outdoor learning centers? Being immersed in the great unknown, surrounded by wilderness and the beauty of

“Being immersed in the great unknown, surrounded by wilderness and the beauty of Mother Nature is enough to cause anyone’s imagination to ignite.”

Mother Nature is enough to cause anyone’s imagination to ignite! Even at night, when the things you can’t see may inspire fear and uncertainty, nature still has ways to help you manage inner anxieties and self-doubt.

I’d be willing to bet most first year educators would describe at least a few of these feelings when remembering their first day of teaching! As outdoor educators, we experience all of these emotions too. Every time we approach a group of students standing in an open field, our minds start to wonder, “Where will we lead them?” “What will they learn?”





“Will the outcome be beneficial?”

Experiential education, in an outdoor setting, can be a rejuvenating experience. It presents a method of perceived risk and to some degree (much like life), allows for failures. The goal we wish to highlight in those moments of failure is to learn from the mistake, rather than dwell on it. Through careful exploration of situations and feelings, we hope to empower students to be their most authentic self within their larger community.

Our programs focus on topics such as:

**Compassion** — sympathy and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others. As facilitators in the outdoors, we acknowledge this. What we keep

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in mind throughout the day is each participant comes from a different walk of life. We believe discovery and authenticity in one’s actions is the driving force in building compassion for others.

**Kindness** — the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate. We aim to help students see the benefit in expressing kindness to others and also to themselves.

**Humility** — a modest view of one’s own importance; humbleness. We believe the ability to admit when you are wrong and ask for help when it’s needed are important skills each student deserves to learn.

**Gentleness** — the quality of being kind, tender, or mild-mannered. Gentleness allows us to listen and gain trust in others.

**Patience** — the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset. We believe patience is an extremely valuable skill to have in today’s fast paced world. Patience allows us to move through life more comfortably.

These are the goals of outdoor learning centers. We work hard to provide not only the space where this vital learning can occur, but also staff who are educated and passionate about connecting students with the great outdoors, their community, and themselves.



If you would like to get more information on a traveling challenges program or get some information about our low and high initiatives here at Cispus or Chewelah Peak Learning Center, please go to [www.awsplearningcenters.org](http://www.awsplearningcenters.org). While you’re at it, check out the Cispus and Chewelah Peak videos on the AWSP YouTube channel. ■

