



# Outdoor Education

## PO POLSKU



# GUIDE

Introducing outdoor education to the curriculum –  
kindergartens, primary and secondary schools.

# SPIS TREŚCI

Introduction	1
Outdoor education – the experiential learning	5
Vision of Outdoor Education in Poland	10
The place of Outdoor Education in the curriculum	12
Progressive learning through experience	18
Comprehensive planning of outdoor activities	21
Involvement of parents and guardians	27
Outdoor study spaces	28
Travel experiences	29
Recognizing achievements	31
Teacher education and professional development	33
Health and safety rules in outdoor education	35
Conclusions	45

## INTRODUCTION

Dear Teachers, Dear Directors of Primary and Secondary Schools!

Despite the availability of cheap, effective and safe methods of outdoor education, the collected data from our country show that the Polish curriculum lacks space for Outdoor Education (R. Michalak and T. Parczewska, „Absence of outdoor education in school education „). Changing the state of affairs requires action on the part of the management, teachers, employees and government. For this reason, our Polish-Finnish team has created a toolkit to implement Outdoor Education in the curriculum of Polish primary schools, secondary schools and kindergartens. This set consists of 3 interrelated elements:

- 1) the guide „Outdoor Education PO POLSKU. Functioning of outdoor education in the teaching system of schools and kindergartens „, containing practical information, tips and ideas for teachers and OE practitioners in Poland,
- 2) a set of 20 Outdoor Education educational scenarios,
- 3) a set of tools for measuring the increase in competences under Outdoor Education (OE), i.e. „OE Student Self-Assessment Cards“ and „OE Teacher Self-Assessment Cards“.

The above set of tools contains the most important information for principals and practitioners on the implementation of outdoor education into the existing curriculum, in relation to the core curriculum. Our team tried to ensure that, in addition to the general information and theories contained in this guide „Outdoor Education PO POLSKU“, there were practical examples of introducing outdoor activities in the form of 20 sample lesson plans and practical examples of methods for checking the current level of outdoor competences of the student and teacher.

Outdoor lesson scenarios are a tool that the teacher can use in their practice as a ready topic for lessons or as an inspiration to create their own

lesson plans. The key to success is understanding the idea of creating a model for outdoor activities. Each scenario should contain appropriate elements, such as: information for the student / parent, safety rules, introductory task, main task and summary. Each scenario should also include topics:

- referring to the core curriculum,
- developing transversal competences (group work, communication skills, creativity) and
- developing physical competences and relations with nature.

## **HOW TO WORK WITH INNOVATION:**

STEP 1 Begin your work with innovation by reading this Guide, based on Finnish and Scottish outdoor education guides.

STEP 2 The next step in working with innovation is to get acquainted with example scenarios of outdoor lessons that teachers of various subjects (biology, geography, history, technology, graphics, PE) can use in their work. Kindergarten teachers are particularly dedicated to scenarios 2, 4, 5, 9, 13, 19. Primary school teachers are particularly dedicated to scenarios 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 16, 20, and secondary school teachers, scenarios 1, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18.

STEP 3 The next step in working with innovation is planning your own outdoor activities using one or more model scenarios, or preparing your own / your own original scenarios, based on model scenarios. It is recommended that the planning and development of scenarios take place in interdisciplinary teams. For example, a biology teacher with a PE teacher or a drawing teacher can work on a lesson plan. Working in teams: teacher-teacher or teacher-external expert (e.g. an employee of the State Forests) not only helps to maintain safety rules during field classes, but also has a positive

effect on the process of acquiring the so-called transversal competences. A ready plan of single or cyclical activities in the field should be each time presented to the management of the educational unit and officially approved by it.

STEP 4 The last step in working with innovation is to conduct lessons in the field: occasionally (ad-hoc) or cyclically (e.g. in the form of a project in which subsequent lessons are a continuation of previous lessons). At this stage, both principals and teachers can use a very simple but useful tool to test the competency level of Outdoor Education (OE), both at the student and teacher level, namely the "OE Student Self-Assessment Charter" and "OE Teacher Self-Assessment Cards". It is recommended that the tool is used on the same group of respondents at least twice: the first time before conducting the first outdoor activities, and the second time - after the end of the OE classes.

I encourage you to familiarize yourself with our tools.

Katarzyna Jämsä - president of the Finnway Polska Foundation





## OUTDOOR EDUCATION - THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Children's experiences of learning outdoors are often remembered for a life-time. There is talk all over the world about the need to integrate science and outdoor activities.

The subject of outdoor education became popular at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, when in many countries around the world the number of urban populations began to exceed the number of rural residents. Experiences, whether through play in the immediate area or through adventures in further away parts of the area (e.g. in the forest, in the countryside), can provide accuracy and depth to the curriculum in a way that is difficult to achieve indoors, by involving all the senses in the teaching process: touch, smell, hearing and even taste.

Learning outdoors can be fun, creative, and often demanding, but full of adventures also, and can help children and young people understand the world in terms of human-to-human relationships, and the relationship between humans and nature. Children and young people can learn through experience and develop as confident and responsible citizens who value and appreciate the spectacular landscapes, natural and cultural heritage of their country.

A journey through education for every child in Poland should include a series of planned, high-quality educational experiences, also in the open air. The outdoor teaching program improves the transversal competencies of children and young people through learning in the open air, and should be designed to help teachers and educators in teaching and developing partnerships with communities, including the voluntary sector.

Outdoor activities should be planned so as to provide students with progressive and sustainable outdoor learning opportunities and to integrate them into the curriculum and core curriculum. Children's experiences learning outdoors are often remembered for a life-time. There is talk all



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## **INTERDISCIPLINARY**

Learning outdoors contributes to the implementation of the overarching strategic goals of Polish education, moving towards interdisciplinary education. Learning outdoors encourages students to understand the interdependencies and relationships between curriculum areas. This awareness promotes lifelong learning and develops critical thinking skills.

## **CROSS-CUTTING COMPETENCES**

Outdoor activities offer excellent opportunities to shape, improve and use a wide range of transversal skills – such as communication skills, teamwork, creativity and entrepreneurship – often overlooked by standard education in a school or kindergarten building. Becoming aware of the newly acquired skills can fundamentally change peer relationships and staff perceptions, leading to deep rethinking, regarding for example changes in attitudes towards peers and teachers, and attitudes towards life's expectations and successes.

## **INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS**

Outdoor educational activities effectively eliminate social divisions and can help build stronger relationships between participants in outdoor activities and build relationships within and between entire local communities. Some educational organizations have treatment programs where outdoor learning plays a central role. Kids and adolescents have the opportunity to develop their risk assessment and risk management skills while making individual and group decisions that are necessary in natural outdoor conditions.

## ECOLOGICAL RELATIONS

Frequent and regular outdoor learning encourages children and young people to experience the natural and built heritage, and to be involved in the protection of the local environment. The villages, forests and urban areas of Poland provide ideal conditions for children and young people to understand the global importance of the issue of sustainable development and show how personal decisions of individuals and local groups can contribute to the development of a more ecological Poland, but also of the whole of Europe and even the whole world.

## PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Learning outdoors is healthier – it can lead to habituation and lifelong enjoyment of recreation. Activities such as walks, trips and lessons outside are ideal for the physical and emotional well-being of children and adolescents, and contribute to a healthier Polish school. Poles have a good reputation for adventure and outdoor activities such as mountain climbing and have achieved international success in canoeing, sailing and skiing.

This document presents the integral role of outdoor learning in the curriculum, and provides examples of how to incorporate outdoor education into the existing school and kindergarten education system. The document provides inspiration for teachers, educators and their partners in Poland who plan and use the external environment to provide natural learning and teaching conditions that are relevant, lively and motivating. The management and staff of educational units at all levels of education of children and adolescents can find tips in this document on how to best create and use opportunities for spending time outdoors and how to optimally use the natural environment to support the provision of experiences in the natural world of science.





## VISION OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION IN POLAND

Our Polish vision of learning outdoors is based on examples of good international practices, incl. from Finland, Scotland and Japan and is as follows:

- All children and adolescents participate in a progressive series of creative outdoor activities that are clearly part of curriculum
- Schools and kindergartens provide all children and young people with regular, frequent, fun and ambitious outdoor learning opportunities during the pre-school and school education process.
- Teachers and educators incorporate outdoor learning into the curriculum to make outdoor learning a natural reality for all children and young people.

A rational outdoor education program should offer all children and young people the opportunity to have first-hand enjoyment, experience the world outdoors, whether at school, in urban green spaces, in the Polish countryside or in the wild. Such experiences motivate our children and adolescents to become effective learners and develop as healthy, self-confident, entrepreneurial and responsible citizens. Well-structured and well-planned outdoor learning helps to develop inquiry, critical thinking and reflective skills – skills necessary for our children and young people to cope with the social, economic and environmental challenges of living in the 21st century. Outdoor learning connects children and young people with the natural world, with our architectural heritage, our culture and society, and encourages them to take an active attitude and a real commitment to shaping the world around them. The basic values of Outdoor Education in Poland are in line with the long-term key concepts of outdoor education developed in

Scotland, Scandinavia and Japan among others.

Challenge, joy, relevance, depth, whole-person development and an adventurous approach to learning (Adventure Education) is the basis of outdoor pedagogy.

The external environment encourages staff and students to see themselves and each other in a different light, building positive relationships and improving self-awareness and understanding of others.

The long-term goal of Outdoor Education is partnerships between school staff, with other educational institutions and with various organizations.

Working relationships that contribute to the professional development of teachers and educators allow for the development of clear pathways for the delivery of experiences and outcomes in an outdoor education program.

The implementation of such a vision of implementing Outdoor Education in the Polish pre-school, primary and secondary education system will contribute to the well-being of our children and youth, and will enable them to become resilient, responsible citizens and successful lifelong learners who value our Polish landscape and culture and contribute effectively to the development of our local and global society.



## OUTDOOR EDUCATION PLACE IN THE TEACHING PROGRAM

Outdoor Education is part of the so-called experiential education learning, based on experiencing the world – teachers intentionally engage students in direct experience and focused reflection in order to expand knowledge, develop skills, explain values and develop the ability to contribute to their community. According to Gilbertson's description of the outdoor education model, Outdoor Education includes 3 elements:

1. Development of physical skills
2. Interpersonal development or development of educational skills
3. Development of ecological relations (relations with the environment)

Children and adolescents have the right to a curriculum that includes outdoor education, and it is the responsibility of schools, kindergartens and their partners to provide opportunities to experience theoretical knowledge in practice.

The postulates of the curriculum of educational units explicitly encourage them to „increase the scope of conducted experiments and observations, increase the share of lessons conducted in the field“. These postulates also say that increasing the size of field lessons will favor the social development of students (e.g. integration of groups of students). A „subject correlation“ is also desirable, e.g. subjects such as nature / biology, chemistry, geography or PE.

In all postulates, it is expected that the emphasis will be placed on the core curriculum, which is why it is a key element when planning the implementation of outdoor education to the curriculum of Polish schools and kindergartens.

Apart from the fact that outdoor education should refer to program goals, it should be noted that the context of the place is very important in Outdoor Education, e.g. local contexts, cultural and historical contexts (e.g. the history of the place where the classes are held). It is therefore very impor-

tant to carefully plan outdoor learning so that outdoor learning is, on the one hand within the curriculum, and on the other hand that it uses natural contexts that are reflected in many experiences only possible through outdoor education.

Teachers should learn to use the potential of learning newly acquired information and new challenges in the external environment. Learning outdoors, field visits and contributions from external participants (e.g. experts) enrich the subject matter and make them attractive. Outdoor learning opportunities exist in all areas of the curriculum, including topics such as entrepreneurship, sustainable development education and global citizenship. Learning outdoors is part of a wide range of practical approaches to skill development.

When building the curriculum, it should be remembered that outdoor education, i.e. a practical approach to acquiring knowledge in the learning process, should not be perceived as an alternative form of providing education. Outdoor Education should be considered as part of an integrated learning process within a subject area or within subject correlation (interdisciplinary). Various outdoor learning experiences offer opportunities for the natural development of transversal competences, i.e. learning skills in areas such as communication, creative problem solving, teamwork and entrepreneurial thinking. Learning outdoors can also significantly contribute to the development of basic competencies such as literacy, numeracy, health knowledge and many others.

There are various forms of content in the literature used in outdoor education: spoken word, charts, maps, timetables, tips, instructions. In the field of science in outdoor activities, such as mathematics, commands are used, such as measuring length or angles in the field, calculating altitude, or calculating travel time.

In terms of health and wellness, there are opportunities for planning physical activities that improve emotional well-being and mental health. All educational institutions in Poland can use various practices of implementing out-



door education into their curricula, depending on their abilities and needs. Both management, teachers and other stakeholders should be aware that education in the field can be carried out in any subject and at all levels of education. Many topics in education can be transferred outside with a little thought and creativity.



## THE MOST POPULAR IMPLEMENTATION METHODS OUTDOOR EDUCATION IS:

### a. PROJECT METHOD

- allows you to choose the content of the core curriculum taught in the field; the choice may be made by the teacher alone or in agreement with students and / or other teachers, within subject correlation
- allows you to create a schedule of outdoor activities and define short-term and long-term educational goals; depending on the needs and possibilities, tasks can be performed in blocks of time, e.g. for a week, month, semester, year-round or cyclical (e.g. once a month)

### b. OBJECTIVE TRIPS METHOD

- allows one to supplement the current topics of the lesson with practical knowledge from one or a group of subjects
- allows students and their parents to get involved in the preparation and implementation of field activities (previously announced exits or departures)

### c. AD HOC METHOD

- allows you to organize shorter or longer outdoor activities within or within walking distance of the educational institution
- allows you to minimize or eliminate the costs of field learning
- allows for quick reaction to changing weather conditions (e.g. hassle-free postponement of outdoor classes)



Learning outdoors offers students many opportunities to deepen and contextualize their understanding of topics within the curriculum areas, and core curriculum. Therefore, outdoor activities should not be treated superficially by educational units and in isolation from other program works, but should be used wisely and systemically.

Many international documents confirm the positive impact for children and adolescents of introducing outdoor education to schools and kindergartens. For example, the Scottish document „Curriculum for Excellence“ emphasizes that: „Children understand much more what they do in practice outside. Everything looks very good in books and talking about phenomena in class is important, but when children experience knowledge outside, it is much more real for them and helps them understand all the information they hear or read“.



## PROGRESSIVE LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE

All aspects of the curriculum can be studied externally. The sights, sounds and smells outside, the closeness to nature, the excitement that most children and adolescents feel, the wonders of nature and curiosity all serve to strengthen and stimulate learning.

Learning outdoors forms a healthy foundation in the early years of life, and there are many examples of good practice through activities in local areas. Providing a progressive range of sustainable outdoor learning experiences can mean maximizing the use of local contexts and using repeat visits at different educational levels to add depth to the overall experience.

From the learner's point of view, each visit, also in the same place, will offer a different perspective, enrich the curriculum and ensure greater coherence. For example, a visit to a local farm at grade 2 level of a school – will have very different results from a visit to the same farm in grade 7 of primary school. Likewise, education on environmental activities by foresters will have very different outcomes if visits are made in Grade 1 of primary school and Grade 4 of primary school.

Creative, long-term planning of outdoor activities will allow the use of experiences and results in a variety of outdoor contexts throughout the curriculum at different educational levels, weaving a thread of progressive outdoor learning experiences that connect directly to each student's „inner“ experience. When outdoor learning experiences are embedded in the curriculum, this learning cycle will occur naturally, as it is now in most settings in an early childhood education program. In light of more and more regular and frequent outdoor learning, current practice will evolve to an increasing extent using school / pre-school grounds and areas in close proximity to educational establishments.

School grounds are often the first step in education outside. This is a safe step for staff considering the introduction of outdoor education as part of teaching a given subject. The next step, i.e. moving to field learning contexts

in more remote locations, will be easier to do when the teacher gains experience in several activities outside, in the school / kindergarten or in the pre-school premises. Younger children, in particular, can discover and develop a sense of ownership of their school / preschool grounds on a daily basis.

In addition to providing context for learning, the school / kindergarten site can engage local communities as partners – experts in the field who can often provide good sources of knowledge, finance and other resources for development projects that support field activities.

A strategy for school and pre-school properties should always require local authorities to consider how best to use the school / kindergarten and outdoor spaces to create / develop an integral part of the learning environment. Landscape design is as important as designing school and kindergarten buildings. School / pre-school grounds through school asset management plans will help to maximize their potential as an outdoor learning environment.

For example, a playground or a park near the school means that the area can be used for outdoor education or for taking educational breaks. The location of the facilities is important to understand the differences in learning contexts. Rural schools may have many opportunities to visit ‚green spaces‘ on a daily basis and occasionally select urban areas as environmental education sites. In contrast, an urban youth group may choose to visit various surrounding green spaces to balance the range of experiences.

The term „green space“ is now widely used and is often used to distinguish parks, playgrounds and sports fields from areas such as streets etc. Green spaces are also used by young people in rural areas. The broader concept of „green space“ covers the entire undeveloped environment.







## COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Outdoor Education should be planned at all levels of school and preschool education, in various outdoor contexts. Outdoor education requires careful and comprehensive planning and knowledge of the area (reconnaissance is necessary). Comprehensive Outdoor Education planning is essential for all partners to share the vision of the learning journey of children aged 3 to 18 and beyond. It is necessary to present the purpose of field education and safety rules during classes. It is very important to communicate with children, their parents, management and other employees who may be involved in an outdoor lesson.

Communication with partners – experts and supporting organizations is also important. Planning for progressive learning experiences is supported when teachers and educators take full advantage of the previous experiences of children and young people in learning outdoors.

Suggested questions to consider when planning your Outdoor Education:

- Which experiences will have a greater impact on learning, if will be held outside?
- How learning outdoors can be empowering and to deepen learning in curriculum areas?
- Which experiences are best suited to combine indoor and outdoor learning
- How can learning indoors be best preserved, developed or improved by taking advantage of outdoor activities?
- What are the options for combining subjects (subject correlations) in out-

door education, working with the current curriculum?

- How to make the best use of previously tested, proven local visits or ready-made learning scenarios?
- What weather conditions are appropriate and acceptable for a given type of outdoor education, and what conditions are completely unacceptable for a given group of children, place or subject



## AVAILABILITY AND EQUALITY

Managing cultural and social diversity is critical to planning, and this should be addressed well in advance of taking groups outdoors into the field. To assist with planning, details of equality legislation and guidance on how to proceed in different situations can be found on many online resources. It is important that no one is denied the opportunity to participate in field activities through discrimination, prejudice or exclusion on the basis of factors such as race, gender or disability.

Every effort should be made to spot and overcome barriers to participation as early as possible. These barriers will be different for different groups of people, but can include, for example, communication difficulties, physical disabilities, financial constraints, or religious / cultural issues. Planning may require dialogue with individual participants, stakeholders and partners, or the need to seek advice from people who specialize in supporting group equality to ensure that all students have access to the outdoor curriculum. It should be remembered that the right of every child and young person to personal support should be the overriding factor and enable the benefits offered by the outdoor education program. Sometimes planning outdoor activities requires a lot of effort to achieve the goal of creating the best solutions acceptable to all students and their parents.



## LEARNING AND TEACHING OUTDOORS

Learning outdoors can be an educational context that encourages children and adolescents to forge empirical connections that lead to a deeper understanding of content within and across curriculum areas, and to meet learners' needs. Outdoor learning, used in many ways, will enrich the curriculum and make learning fun, meaningful and appropriate for children and young people. Outdoor learning can ensure the sustainability of education through initiatives such as working to improve biodiversity on school grounds, visiting local forests, discovering and interacting with the local community, and developing a school travel plan. The favorite part of outdoor activities for many children is free time – a break, e.g. when the group is having a picnic, when there is time for free play, discovering and researching phenomena, and even simply roasting a sausage on the fire.

Learning outdoors has health benefits. Research shows that the use of green spaces or „green exercise“ improves health. Outdoor learning in particular generally results in elevated levels of physical activity. In addition, interacting with green spaces (walking, gardening, etc.) improves emotions, well-being and mental health. The use of new technology as part of a planned approach to outdoor learning adds value to the educational and research outcomes of children and adolescents. For example, digitally recorded experiences can be returned to the classroom and used to reinforce and further develop the experience itself. Photos taken with a smartphone become a resource that supports outdoor learning, enabling the sharing of, for example, emotions or observations with educators, colleagues and parents.



## COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS

Outdoor Education can be best achieved through partnerships. All educational units should cooperate with widely understood partners and share a common understanding and language around the development of the skills of the younger generation through outdoor education. Partnership starts in the early years and can continue until the end of education and beyond. Local circumstances and requirements will always have an impact on the scope for development of a partnership. Careful planning will help determine when and where a teacher would benefit from working with partners or partner organizations to develop and expand outdoor learning opportunities. There are many creative and stimulating ways to experience practical activities that can best be achieved through partners working in the school or neighborhood. Learning center locations can offer a completely different range of partners and different sets of learning outcomes. Partnerships can contribute to making the educational offers of schools and kindergartens more attractive, and thus influence the choice of educational paths made by students and their parents. Outdoor education gives new opportunities for the development of empirical science and the so-called „life“ skills of children and youth, the lack of which in the standard education system is being heard more and more often.

Partners, who can be professionals or volunteers with experience in fields such as outdoor architecture, outdoor adventure education, or forestry schools and forest districts, can offer invaluable technical opportunities, knowledge and guidance. Field-based expert partners can change the way you learn outdoors and naturally make your education more attractive. In Poland, often partner-experts are people working in forest-nature education centers or employees of foundations or associations.

There is a wide spectrum of partnership opportunities – ranging from the possibility of planning and conducting outdoor education through the initiative of children and young people, or planning and conducting outdoor



activities by teachers / staff of educational units, to experiences planned and provided only by partners.

Establishing the nature and mode of partnership cooperation helps to develop a common perception and understanding of the goals of outdoor education and helps in planning the continuous development of cooperation patterns and opportunities, both for educational centers and partners themselves. The goal of all partners should be to constantly improve cooperation methods and jointly create high-quality educational scenarios, providing the possibility of appropriate planning and careful preparation of outdoor educational experiences.



## INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS AND CARERS

Parents provide a distinct perspective for outdoor learning and teaching, which can help or hinder staff planning outdoor education. Teachers should establish contact with parents in order to learn about their attitudes towards education outside, share their views, and for parents to actively support their children's learning.

The support and contribution of parents and guardians of children and young people is very important. Parents are key partners in communicating some relevant information and in helping to prepare children and adolescents for outdoor science. Parents can also motivate children and adolescents to be outdoors while away from lessons, and support teachers and tutors during planned lessons in the near or more distant outdoors, and during trips (even those lasting several days). Parents and guardians should be fully informed about planned outdoor activities and trips in accordance with local procedures. They should also be made aware of the benefits of „spontaneous“ outdoor trips. Good communication is therefore crucial to help parents appreciate and understand the value of learning outdoors and to ensure that children and adolescents are properly prepared in terms of dress, food and what is required for an outdoor program during their field education.



## LEARNING PLACES IN THE FRESH AIR

Outdoor learning takes place in various places – from school grounds to historical sites, from local parks to national parks, from villages to cities, from groves to forests, from traveling experiences in Poland to trips abroad. Each outdoor learning opportunity gives children and young people the chance to discover new places and share experiences. Young people learn by experiencing the real world of humans and nature that surrounds them. Often the students themselves can have very good ideas on how to use local areas for education in the field. These may be areas that were not considered in the planning stage by the teacher, partner or expert.

Asking some of the following questions can help you make decisions about the best places to study:

- What outdoor experiences can be offered in the school / kindergarten or other educational center?
- Who can give advice on what is available locally and in the country? • Where do other schools or centers in the area go?
- Which places can be easily reached on foot to enable learning outdoors in a sustainable and / or regular way?
- Whether the proposed learning contexts are difficult enough for children and adolescents, and whether they refer to the software currently being worked on?
- Which places can you visit multiple times to deepen your learning?
- Which places can you visit at different times of the year to achieve different observations, goals, results?
- Which places can become a base – meeting point and / or refuge in case of bad weather?

## DOŚWIADCZENIA WYJAZDOWE

Young people's trips to another place in Poland or abroad for a few days provide an environment in which children and adolescents can explore ideas about individual and group identity. In this context, such experiences relate to educational trips that involve one or more overnight stays where the main purpose is to learn outdoors (e.g. walking in the mountains, forests). Outdoor domestic experiences may include the use of centers with access to natural or specially designed, man-made spaces, adapted to field education. They can be youth hostels, campsites etc.

The national experience is in contrast to the international experience, which has a slightly different purpose. For example, international peer exchanges create additional opportunities for networking internationally and acquiring competencies in intercultural and / or multicultural communication. During the travel experiences, there are also many opportunities to provide experiences that are not easy to achieve in the local community. For example, by comparing and contrasting the characteristics of the Polish community with those living in other regions of Europe or the world, a young person learns to function in new surroundings and to evaluate the characteristics of his own community against other cultures.

In summary, the outdoor education field activities provides unique forms of intense experiences that encourage children and adolescents to engage more deeply in building relationships with their peers and teachers. Additionally, relationship building and commitment building methods can be achieved through self-catering trips. During such trips, children and young people learn to plan and prepare meals together. Buying and cooking food on your own clearly goes hand in hand with promoting healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle.

To maximize the benefits of your travel experience, it is important to carefully plan and prepare your trip. The work undertaken with children and young people before and after departure is the key to the relevance, con-

Spędzanie czasu poza domem daje dzieciom i młodzieży:

- możliwość rozwijania pewności siebie, samodzielności i podejmowania własnych decyzji
- możliwość przeżycia przygody, dzięki odkrywaniu nowych miejsc i nowych środowisk
- możliwość dostrzeżenia korzyści ze zdrowego stylu życia poprzez aktywność fizyczną
- szansę lepszego poznania siebie i swojej grupy
- szansę na refleksję płynącą z naturalnych doświadczeń.

sistency, scope and depth of learning.

Project work on outdoor education should be based on their own previous experiences and / or on the knowledge of more experienced colleagues and educators. Designing optimal educational scenarios and outdoor travel tasks of appropriate quality is an important element acquired by staff only through experience.

The use of the latest technology can support education outdoor trips, enabling children and teenagers to report on their experiences in the form of photos or videos made available through various channels, including social media.

Overall, in order for children and young people to make the best use of their travel experiences, it is essential that educators plan all activities in good time, in consultation with management, parents and students. It is important for educators to be able to identify potential problems related to going further afield and clearly define the subject of the classes, the role of educators and students, their responsibility for teaching and learning, and for observing safety rules.

## RECOGNIZING ACHIEVEMENTS

School and pre-primary education include learning both in institutions as well as outside educational institutions and classes. Learning outdoors provides children and adolescents with new conditions for acquiring and demonstrating their knowledge, and therefore can be used to assess the knowledge and skills of children and adolescents. Assessing learning in different contexts, being outdoors can provide the opportunity to vary the level of challenge according to the needs of individuals and personal, including interpersonal and practical skills. Diverse practical contexts and high-quality interactions, immediate and constructive feedback and time for reflection, contribute to the scope and depth of the assessment processes. In an outdoor program, assessment is an integral part of effective learning and teaching. The evaluation of outdoor learning experiences provides valuable evidence that this form of education accelerates the development of many life competencies that can contribute to the improvement of students throughout the school / kindergarten.

To gauge the progress of an individual, basic skills can be recorded by teachers and educators, and assessed through reports and other tools that should be an integral part of planning outdoor learning experiences. You can actively involve children and adolescents in the process of assessment and self-assessment, by using the „Student Self-Assessment Charter” for example – tools that help to develop the ability of conscious learning and acquiring new competencies. Outdoor experiences that aim to improve the achievement, success and quality of learning of young people are based on key themes of quality indicators that can determine how outdoor activities contribute to the development of the individual learner’s transversal competencies. The resource includes questions and answers in the form of five quality steps that lead to success, or can be used at all stages for identification of progress on the outdoor education program. In outdoor education all over the world, teachers, schools, clusters, local communities and local



authorities took into account various ways of recognizing achievement in outdoor education for students. In outdoor education, e.g. in the field of promoting an active and healthy lifestyle or cultivating cultural heritage, you can reward yourself with awards for achievements or through distinctions and diplomas.



## EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

Teacher education and CPD play a key role in equipping teachers and educators with the appropriate skills to deliver high-quality outdoor learning. During the initial training for teachers, conducted by more experienced, qualified colleagues, educators and partners, the understanding and knowledge of outdoor education and the use of simple and more complex methods and possibilities of teaching children the school / pre-school curriculum in the field significantly increases. Then, further support for the teaching staff through professional development is needed, the role of which is to strengthen faith in their own, newly acquired competencies.

An important task of people involved in teacher education is to motivate and inspire teachers to conduct outdoor activities and show them interesting places to learn outside, encouraging the development of their own Outdoor Education learning scenarios, based on existing outdoor scenarios. Learning to design and plan outdoor learning experiences, and learning to manage and lead groups, will increase the confidence and skills of teachers and educators in the context of conducting outdoor activities.

The opportunities for teachers' continuous professional development, in the perspective of teaching outdoors, can be realized by sharing knowledge with other teachers and educators, by developing a local cooperation strategy with local units and organizations, and by disseminating information about outdoor education, such as the „Guide Outdoor Education in Poland,„. Attention should be paid to the benefits of online technology supporting professional development strategies, and supporting communities of outdoor learning professionals. The active involvement of teachers and educators in the assessment and self-assessment process can be achieved by using the „Teacher's Self-Assessment Charter" – a tool that helps to develop the ability to learn and acquire new competences in outdoor learning.

Teachers who want to establish what in-service training is, from the perspective of outdoor education, can ask the following questions:

- What do I need to know?
- How can I find out more?
- How can I integrate the new form of learning into my practice?
- How can I share my knowledge?



## HEALTH AND SAFETY RULES IN OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Health and safety rules are important for teachers and management, as well as for students and their parents. With careful planning and implementation of outdoor experiences, outdoor lessons can be as safe as lessons in the classroom. Lots of outdoor educational activities pose no more risk than lessons conducted inside buildings. Many educators are concerned about teaching in the field because they will be burdened with a serious risk, due to the inability to eliminate all threats. An important step in undertaking outdoor activities is the use of a risk-benefit analysis of outdoor experiences. Teachers and others taking children and young people outside are in a unique position and need to adopt a supportive outdoor learning attitude that identifies and stimulates creative learning opportunities. In this case, it is worth using the advice and guidance of a health and safety specialist in Poland in order to reduce the risk during outdoor activities, which we present in this Guide.

Children and young people should not be denied experiencing outdoor activities because significant but unlikely threats have not been completely eliminated. A venture in which all risks are eliminated prevents students from developing their own risk strategies and attitudes. So be careful about planning your outdoor activities to eliminate the greatest risks of the endeavor without extinguishing the spark of adventure in the hearts of young people.





By planning and weighing the risks and benefits of outdoor education, take into account:

- How will the risks be assessed and compared to the benefits?
- Are the planned activities appropriate for the selected location?
- Are the planned activities consistent with the guidelines of the manager / supervisor?
- How to communicate with caregivers, parents?
- Could we use our partners' experiences and how?
- Are there any significant examples of good practice which can we use?



## GUIDELINES OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY SPECIALIST IN POLAND

### 1. Tasks and obligations of persons responsible for organizing the departure / trip:

The organizer of the departure of the participants outside the educational institution is responsible for the health and safety of the entrusted participants.

In order to guarantee high quality of services, the headmaster should in particular:

- As a party, agree a contract with a travel company (travel agency) for the organization and implementation of the trip
- Appoint a tour leader from among the school's teaching staff with qualifications appropriate to the implementation of a specific form of tourism
- Appoint guardians to look after the participants of the trip
- Get to know the organizational assumptions and the program of the trip prepared by its manager and approve the trip itinerary, which is tantamount to consent to its organization
- Sign the list of students participating in the trip
- Have the written consent of the parents to participate in the excursion for the underage pupils
- Organize educational activities for students who are not participating in a class trip
- Keep records of the tour after the tour is completed.





However, it should be ensured that the conditions in which you can find yourself with a group of children and adolescents will not endanger their health and life (changing temperatures, storms, strong winds, etc.). It is unacceptable to carry out trips or other activities during a storm, snowstorm and black ice. In this case, there should be a place where, if necessary, you can safely take refuge with the group of participants. These can be shelters that will protect against wind or rain, or other designated places. Entities organizing field classes are required to check the area in which the classes will be conducted in order to have up-to-date reconnaissance of the area and get acquainted with possible threats resulting from field and weather conditions. The tutor of classes and trips is obliged to constantly discipline students / participants and control the number of students in the group.

It is unacceptable to:

- issue people under the care of the school or facility with equipment which may pose a threat to health or life if the school is unable to ensure the conditions for the safe use of this hardware, including a disc, ball, hammer, javelin, bow, sword, sport small arms,
- arrange slides and ice rinks on rivers, ponds, lakes and other water reservoirs-use boats and kayaks in high winds or storms.



## 2. Guidelines regarding the number of guardians of groups participating in outdoor education (in the forest, in the city or any other place outside).

At the moment, there are no clear, hard guidelines as to what the number of caregivers per group of children should be as part of the organization of sightseeing and tourism outings. The field leader is obliged to provide as many tutors for the group as required by the given situation. There should be at least two of them. It is good to take this number as a necessary condition to be met, especially during walks or trips outside the school premises (forests, educational paths, etc.). The younger the children, the more caregivers should be considered. Young children aged 3 to 6 are very lively, they are interested in everything that surrounds them, therefore caring for them requires special attention. They can easily fall over, get cut or even get lost. For a group of children in this age group, I propose to appoint a minimum of three guardians per group of 24. However, if we can afford more caregivers it is highly recommended. For schoolage children from 7 to 14 years of age, the number of tutors during outdoor activities is at least two. However, as always, one should take into account the character and temperament of children and determine whether it is a more disciplined group or a group that requires greater involvement of caregivers. In each case, not only the safety of children and guardians should be taken into account. Also, consider that the caregiver can get injured, and keeping in mind the size of groups, a minimum of two tutors should always be planned.

Secondary school groups should also be approached individually. If the trip is planned for several days, more caregivers should be planned. Even if there are adults in the group, they are also looked after by the organizers. This rule applies to everyone who is part of the group. During classes outside the city where the school is located, as well as in the case of using public transport, the rule of 1 tutor per group of 10 participants should apply.



Guardians are required to check the size of the group before setting off from each place of stay, during the journey and upon arrival at the destination point. Participants of the classes may not leave without the tutor's knowledge and must get permission to be away from the group.

The provisions of the educational law do not regulate this issue in the case of organizing sightseeing and tourist trips. This means that documents containing information on the permissible number of participants per one guardian should be specified in internal regulations, in particular in the regulations for trips outside the school / kindergarten.

### **3. Traveling by tram, coach and train – guidelines and recommendations.**

During railway or public transport journeys, the outgoing group should take places in one railway carriage / in one part of the bus. It is unacceptable to jump onto the moving train / bus in order to take seats. While traveling by bus, tram or train, carers must ensure continuous supervision over the participants, and the participants of the trip should not move as it deprives the carers of control over the group.

To check the technical condition of the coach being substituted, for which the borrowing entity is legally responsible, can be requested by any of the interested parties – management, teacher, guardian, or parent, because everyone should care about the safety of people participating in the trip. This also applies to the coach driver – checking his health and sobriety. Always follow these steps when you have any doubts about anything.

Each coach should be equipped with a first aid kit and a fire extinguisher. The bus is usually ordered by the teacher organizing the trip, because s/he has the necessary knowledge about the number of people and other data concerning the preferences of the trip participants.

### **4. Clothing and essentials to take**

Participants of outdoor activities should have appropriate clothing – e.g. trekking shoes or a jacket that protects against the adverse effects of

weather conditions and against biological hazards. In areas where ticks may be present, use blouses or shirts with long buttoned cuffs and a collar, appropriate headgear (e.g. a brimmed hat), long trousers that fit tightly around the ankles, and full shoes. You should also take an adequate amount of food and drink with you in the field. Students and parents are obliged to inform the guardian about any health problems or allergies that may hinder or prevent participation in field activities, in particular about diseases that may lead to a sudden loss of consciousness.

All participants of the tour should adhere to the order of the group when moving around, with those people having less strength and conditioning selected at the front of the column, and those with more strength and conditioning at the end. An adult opens and closes the column.

During outdoor activities, a portable first aid kit is necessary, for which a person appointed by the management is responsible. Before leaving, check the contents of the first aid kit and the expiry dates of the materials it contains. It is recommended that one person trained in first aid should be present during the field activities.

More information on health and safety rules during field education, can be found in sources such as:

- Regulation of the Minister of National Education of May 5, 2018 on the conditions and manner of organizing by public kindergartens, schools and sightseeing and tourism institutions
- Regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of December 31, 2002 on safety and hygiene in public and private schools and institutions



Field safety rules can be presented on lesson plans in the form of legible pictograms:



hat



mobile phone



rucksack



sunscreen



reflective elements



rope



gloves



first aid



trekking shoes



hat



rain jacket



flashlight



water



do not collect

## CONCLUSIONS

Outdoor teaching programs are becoming more and more popular all over the world, which is why now is the perfect time for all teachers and partners in Poland to create, develop and provide outdoor education to children and teenagers. Outdoor Education gives Polish schools and kindergartens new opportunities, enriching the standard curriculum in the classroom with experiential learning.

From school grounds to city streets, from forests to farms, from ponds to field paths, from sea coasts to mountain slopes, Poland has a wealth of outdoor learning opportunities to help children and young people connect with the outside world, and with real world learning in different areas of the curriculum. Learning outdoors enhances learning in the classroom and is a powerful motivator to establish a true relationship with the natural world. Outdoor is often a more effective learning environment than closed rooms. When working in partnership, clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of the partners focuses on the educational intentions and can contribute to continual professional development. Good progressive planning and sustainable outdoor experiences are key to success. Such experiences, from an early age to adulthood, will help our children and adolescents enter further education and then employment in the labor market with the transferable skills required by the rapidly changing real world.

We hope that the materials of Outdoor Education POLISH WAY will guide teachers and partners to define a new vision of introducing outdoor education to all schools and educational institutions. It is the responsibility of everyone involved in outdoor education to recognize the place for outdoor learning within the existing curriculum and plan it accordingly, so that all children and adolescents in Poland can have opportunities for outdoor education as part of their educational journey.

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