

# The Development of Non-cognitive Skills Within An Outdoor Leadership Program



## Abstract

## Professional Questions & Rationale

Salter, E. (2014). *The development of non-cognitive skills within an outdoor leadership program* (Unpublished master's professional project). Sierra Nevada College, Incline Village, Nevada.

Salter (2014) has written a guide for outdoor leadership programs to cultivate and structure the development of non-cognitive skills and leadership traits. The non-cognitive skills are identified as: (a) growth mindset, (b) autonomy, (c) self-discipline, (d) resilience and a strong (e) self-worth (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). Each of these skills is developed through activities and expeditions focused on experiential learning activities followed by corresponding self-reflective journaling exercises. The purpose of this guide is to show educators the most effective way to structure each activity and to improve a participant's non-cognitive skills within an outdoor leadership program (Blackwell et al., 2007; Mueller &

### What are effective strategies to construct outdoor activities that develop the non-cognitive skill set when confronted with experiential learning challenges?

The goal for this project is to develop a valid curriculum which helps cultivate the non-cognitive skills of a (a) growth mindset, (b) autonomy, (c) self-discipline, (d) resilience and a strong (e) self-worth for secondary students (Dweck, Walton & Cohen, 2011). This curriculum will aid teachers in creating, reestablishing or guiding their current experiential education program. An experiential education program can be tailored to fit a student's optimal learning experience by cultivating a growth mindset, supporting a belief in a student's sense of belonging in school, encourage students to create goals that reward challenge seeking activities, general engagement in their learning and life. These traits are gaining more and more focus as some of the most important skills in determining the perceived personal success (Dweck, Walton & Cohen, 2011).

### How can the OE program create an optimal learning experience for students to develop a growth mindset and resilience within an OE experiences as well as incorporating the skill in the classroom?

The experiential or outdoor education teacher is able to develop a curriculum which supports the development of these traits by providing students multiple avenues to engage in high-order or long-term goals that the students value. These goals should have a balance between the interest of the student as well as a supportive yet rigorous arena to attempt these goals (Sheard & Golby, 2006). Experiential learning is best suited to the development of non-cognitive skills, whether a play, debate tournament, outdoor trip, learning a music instrument, etc.. The student can begin to cultivate an academic mindset, effortful control, acceptance of critical feedback and a sense of belonging (Shernoff et al., 2003).

### Wilderness Education Association Standards

- 8.1.1 Judgement.** Demonstrates the ability to examine, evaluate, and adapt decisions to maintain the overall objectives...
- 9.3 Risk Management.** A structured approach to manage actual risk, emotional risk and perceived risk.
- 9.4 Leadership.** The ability to accurately self-assess as well as those essential skills concerning or involving relationships..

### Nevada State P.E. Standards

- 1.12.3** Analyze personal performance and apply results for improvement
- 5.8.1** Analyze potential consequences when confronted with a behavior choice.
- 5.12.1** Anticipate and avoid potentially dangerous outcomes and consequences during participation in physical activity.
- 5.12.2** Accept leadership responsibility in a group setting.

### InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards

**Standard #1:** Learner Development. The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences.

**Standard #5:** Application of Content. The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to

**Standard #10:** Leadership and Collaboration. The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to ensure learner growth, and to advance the professional authentic local and global issues.

### References

**Bobilya, Kalisch and Rock (2006).**

The wilderness solo: The effect of intentional design. Research in Outdoor Education.

**Sheard & Golby**

**(2006).** The efficacy of an outdoor adventure curriculum on selected aspects of positive psychological development. Journal of Experiential Education.

**Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider & Shernoff (2003).** Student engagement in high school classrooms from the perspective of flow theory. School Psychology



## Goals

**The primary goal of this website:** Create an effective guide to teach non-cognitive skills for the 21st century student.

**The Secondary goal:** Create a guide for an Outdoor Leadership Program (OLP) to use five non-cognitive skills: growth mindset, resilience, autonomy, self-worth and self-discipline to better develop student leaders.

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