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LOtC - 'A Helping Hand'

- The story behind the new OEAP Environmental Learning Cards

In the spring this year the Outdoor Education Advisors Panel (OEAP) released the new Environmental Learning Cards. The aim of the Cards is to provide teachers, youth workers and outdoor practitioners with a series of easy to follow environmental activities that can be undertaken in and around the school, centre or local outdoor setting.

The Cards have been developed out of the successful Outdoor Learning Cards released in 2009 and provide a practical and easy to follow series of activities that are designed to engage young people in environmental learning. All the activities could be undertaken in their own right, however, they will often work best when further adapted and extend to suit specific needs. There is guidance in each Card in support of this.

The Story of the Process from Idea to Production

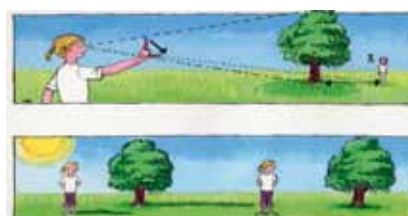
Over a period of over two years, a core team of six professionals in the field met once a season in Nottingham, at the City's narrow boat project HQ. The project was financed by the OEAP, and supported by a wide range of organisations including National Association of Field Study Officers, Field Study Council, Institute for Outdoor Learning, Nottingham City Council

and Countryside Council for Wales. This has been an excellent example of collaboration across the sector

Initially, these meetings focused upon the scope and structure of the Environmental Learning Cards. As meetings progressed the editing of the cards became their focus. Between meetings, team members would work on the development and refinement of the Card's for the next meeting.

An exciting landmark of the project was the arrival of the artist Will Rudling. Will was the original artist for the original Outdoor Learning Cards, thereby ensuring consistency across the two sets of Cards. Will's artwork really brought the cards to life. It has been a fascinating process to describe your card's focus to Will and see him interpret that.

Another landmark event was our facilitation of a selection of the Cards at the OEAP Conference in October 2011. The Cards were very well received and it was immediately



apparent how they would provide an excellent opportunity to support and benefit Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC).

The material that could have been included was vast and only a small selection of activities could be included. It is hoped that these activities will give staff working with young people a range of activities that they would feel confident about leading and applying in their own learning context.

As with the Outdoor Learning Cards there are four themes. These themes cover a total of 26 activities and act as a starting point and will be enriched by your own creativity in applying them to your surroundings and the young people you work with.

AWARENESS & EXPERIENCE

These Cards encourage young people to experience the natural environment using a range of senses and to look at some of its component parts.

EXPLORE & UNDERSTAND

Following on from first steps into the environment comes the desire to explore it further and understand the many relationships that makes it what it is.



SUSTAIN & CONSERVE

In developing an understanding of the environment young people are encouraged to look at their impact on it and to develop a sense of stewardship in their long-term relationship with it.

CREATE & SHARE

Appreciating our time in the environment and expressing how we feel towards the natural world is the focus of the final set of Cards.

The Cards include; Plant Discovery, Literature in the Environment, Measuring Trees, Geology and Buildings, Solar Kettle, Bee Friendly, Minibeast Models and Fire Making.

The format of the Cards includes information for the leader to set up and run the activity. The front is very colourful and visual with an illustration and a brief outline of the activity that will be quick to follow. The back of the card provides more detailed information on running and developing the activity which includes Differentiation & Progression, Review & Evaluation and Leaders notes - Organisation & Resources

The activities are supported by additional information in the form of a Booklet

that sets the context for the pack and outdoor learning in the same way that the Handbook did for the Outdoor Learning Cards. However, there is no accompanying CD but plenty of web links that can be used to follow up and support the activities.

For those professionals involved in the field the Cards provide an excellent focus for training and an outline training course has also been prepared in support of the material, and will be available on the OEAP Training website.

The Cards will be available by the summer 2012 and can be purchased from the IOL online bookshop: <http://www.outdoor-learning.org/Default.aspx?tabid=89&quicksearch=learning%20cards>. ■

Welsh Cards....

We hope that the cards will be widely used in England and Wales. The cards are currently only available through the medium of English but, if there is sufficient interest, we would also like to produce Welsh language versions. If you'd be interested in purchasing Welsh language versions of the cards please contact Joe Roberts at CCW. Information: www.oepatraining.info

Author Notes

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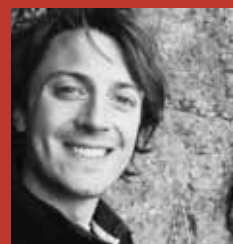
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Photographs: all from the authors

