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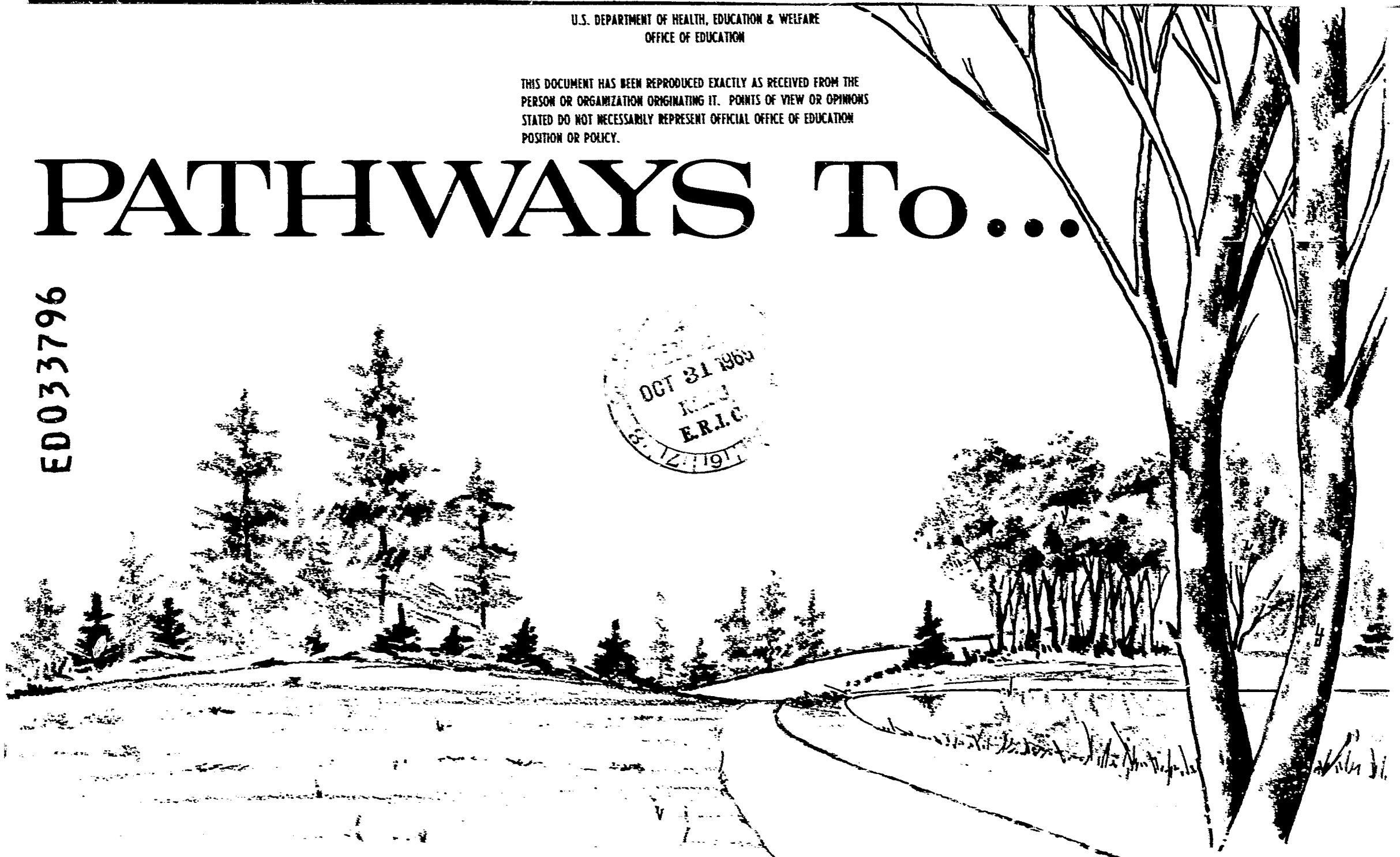
Abstract

Outdoor education in the educational curriculum has become increasingly important because of the rapid extension of urbanization and modern technology. It is the school's responsibility to educate citizens for the worthy use of leisure time and to use and enjoy natural resources, man-made resources, or combined resources. Properly conceived, outdoor education can contribute significantly to the quality of educational offering as well as improve teacher-pupil relationships. Some resources that can enrich the teaching-learning process are school grounds, buildings, telephone and flag poles, streets, gardens, farms, mines, and camp areas. Since it is a less formal approach to learning, pre-trip planning and preparation and post-trip follow-up are important. Specific objectives must be carefully planned to meet the needs and interests of the pupils in the school and the community. The teacher must enjoy the out-of-doors and be willing to learn. Specialists in various areas may also contribute to aspects of the program. (CM)

PATHWAYS To...



BETTER EDUCATION

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FORGOTTEN RESOURCES OFFER PATHWAYS TO QUALITY EDUCATION

With constantly increasing urbanization, outdoor education is rapidly becoming a necessary part of the educational curriculum. It is literally the only opportunity for many youngsters to put their feet on the soil and experience some of the rural living from which our culture grew. The demands and stresses of urban life make routine periods of mental and physical recreation and relaxation a necessity for survival. In the environment of our natural resources, close to nature, man finds the rejuvenation he needs. This is evidenced by the growing billions who turn to the out-of-doors annually for hiking, fishing, boating, skiing, camping, mountain climbing, and a host of other activities. The schools have an obligation to educate citizens for the worthy use of leisure time and to use all natural resources wisely, enjoyably and safely and with understanding and respect.

Modern technology, and expanding urbanization place an increasing emphasis upon education within the classroom. However, many valuable resources surround the school in every school district. Some are natural, some are man-made, some are a combination; but all are out-of-doors. The approach to education which can effectively utilize these resources to improve and enrich the teaching-learning process is outdoor education.

All curriculum-instructional areas in general education including the arts, health, physical education, and many cocurricular activities capitalize upon the outdoor resources to vitalize instruction, improve understanding and develop better teacher-pupil relationships. Well conceived and implemented outdoor curriculum-instructional techniques can contribute significantly to the quality of the educational offering.

Outdoor education properly conceived utilizes methods and techniques that involve pupils in the learn by doing concept. This leads to faster learning, better understanding, and greater retention. It provides actual living experiences as opposed to the artificial climate in the classroom. Learning in the outdoors breaks down much of the traditional barrier between pupils and teacher which exists in many classrooms. In properly conceived and implemented outdoor education pupils and teachers see each other as human beings and both communication and understanding improve. Through doing things together, pupils learn to relate themselves with others, a human skill which is vitally important in our present society.

LARGE AND SMALL - NEAR AND FAR

Outdoor education will vary from school to school depending upon its specific objectives, the resources available, and professional competence of the administrative and instructional personnel. The program may include brief excursions of less than an hour, half day outings, all day field trips, a series of all day experiences, extended travel, or resident camp experiences of several days to several weeks. Pupils and teachers at all grade levels from kindergarten to twelfth grade should be involved. Basic to all of these outdoor education experiences are certain underlying principles.

- Outdoor resources are essential to enhance and enrich the teaching-learning process. Some of these resources may include:

- Lawns, trees, shrubbery, and flowers on the school grounds or along the sidewalks.

- Buildings, chimneys, fences, flag poles, telephone poles, streets and parking areas (particularly useful in teaching mathematical concepts).

- Gardens, vacant lots and fields, construction sites, roadway cuts, streams, lakes, ponds, and reservoirs.

- Village or city parks, county parks and forests, state parks and forests, other state and federal lands, wildlife sanctuaries, and beaches.

- Farms, mines, caves, tunnels, quarries, canals, dams, lumber mills, game farms, fish hatcheries, tree farms, and weather stations.

- Camp areas, - private, organizational, county, state, or national.

Outdoor education is a less formal approach to learning based upon participation, doing, and specifically purposeful involvement. This requires that it be a program composed of a variety of activities. Some suggested types of activities are:

- Collecting things such as fossils, leaves, buds, wood samples, rocks, minerals, flowers, seeds, insects, butterflies, moths, wildlife signs, bird's nests, and pine cones.

- Building or making models, terrariums, aquariums, vivariums, diaramas, soil profiles, sun dials, dams, buildings, cooking equipment, fireplaces, sanitary facilities, bird feeders and houses, and trails.

- Measuring - distances, heights, widths, angle, areas, weights, volumes, board feet, work, speed, rate of flow, time diameters, circumferences, numbers and quantities.

- Use of tools and implements such as the ax, paint brush, mattock, shovel, knife, increment borer, cruising stick, paddle, oars, crowbar, cant-hook, crosscut saw, sighting level, spreading board, compass, tape measure, magnifying glass, dip net, microscope, soil auger, telescope, clinometer, barometer, thermometer, rain guage, transit, and sextant.

- Daily duties of living which may demand dusting, mopping, scrubbing, scouring, sweeping, bedmaking, cooking, table setting, and dishwashing.

- Observing - birds, animals, fish, insects, farming, lumbering, sawmill operation, erosion, slil and water conservation practices, stars, planets, moons, meteors, wildflowers, odors, clouds, sunsets, and sounds.

- Projects involving reforestation, wildlife shrub planting, soil testing, weather forcasting, map making, ecological studies, and bird watching.

Pretrip planning and preparation are essential for maximum benefit. Not only should the leaders plan carefully but pupil-teacher planning should be included. Parents should be kept informed and involved. Objectives of the

program should be carefully explained.

Posttrip follow-up is also important. This includes cleaning and storage of equipment and materials, identification and labeling of materials collected, completion of worksheets, research to ascertain facts or answer questions raised by the experience, application of new information to classroom problems, and relationships to be established between field experiences and textbook facts.

WHICH PATH TO TAKE?

One should have a destination or objective before starting on a trip. Here too, one must first decide the specific objectives which are to be served before building a curriculum. There is a great diversity of existing programs and objectives for which they were developed. Selection should be based upon the needs and interests of the pupils in the school and the community. Some possibilities are:

- To create a greater awareness of our dependence upon our natural resources for the basic needs of man - food, water, clothing, and shelter.
- To improve learning by bringing deeper insight, greater understanding, and more meaning through first hand observation and experience.
- To enrich the curriculum through learning experiences that involve outdoor living skills camping, boating, mountain climbing, forestry practices, marine studies, surveying, and gardening.
- To improve the general health of pupils and strengthen their daily health habits.
- To improve human skills.
- To develop a greater understanding of our national heritage of rural living.
- To supplement existing community programs such as recreation, conservation, and beautification.

The available staff is important because each has his own unique abilities, attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Each individual's competence and aptitude should be evaluated carefully to determine his ability to contribute and suitability to function effectively out-of-doors just as he was appraised for his suitability for classroom instruction. The teacher who lacks knowledge and experience in outdoor education should receive appropriate administrative guidance, including proper orientation. A great fund of knowledge about the out-of-doors is not necessary but an enjoyment or love of the out-of-doors and a willingness to learn are desirable traits for all teachers. Self-imposed teacher commitment will result in successful programming in outdoor education.

A comprehensive survey of existing community facilities which contribute to the objectives of outdoor education may identify resources currently unrecognized. School personnel and consultant specialists such as geologists, soil conservationalists, naturalists, foresters, health officers, and farmers should be involved in site analysis for purposes of curriculum planning. Such people have much to offer in helping to discover interesting, educational and unusual features which may serve the curriculum.

Keeping the curriculum objectives in mind and utilizing the knowledge of human and physical resources available, select those areas of learning such as mathematics, art, science, music, social studies,

physical education, language arts, and manual arts that will best contribute to the total education of the pupil.

GUIDEPOSTS FOR OUTDOOR EDUCATION

- Outdoor education should be an integral part of the total school curriculum, operated by school personnel, in school time, and be financed primarily by the school district.

- Curriculum planning for outdoor education should be a cooperative activity involving all of the teachers who may be interested in becoming appropriately involved in this area of education.

- Each part of the curriculum must be especially geared to the growth and development levels of the pupils involved and should progress accordingly as pupils learn.

- A long range, comprehensive curriculum proposal aimed at specific objectives, including every possible activity and instructional level should be developed. Activities should be appropriate to the seasons. This proposal should include plans for gradual implementation. Thus, it may be necessary to modify or to diverge from this master plan to improve the program.

- Instructional content should be predominently learning through doing and observing and should for the most part include experiences not available in the classroom.

- Small group instruction is more effective, therefore, a teacher-pupil ratio of no more than one to ten or one to twelve is desirable.

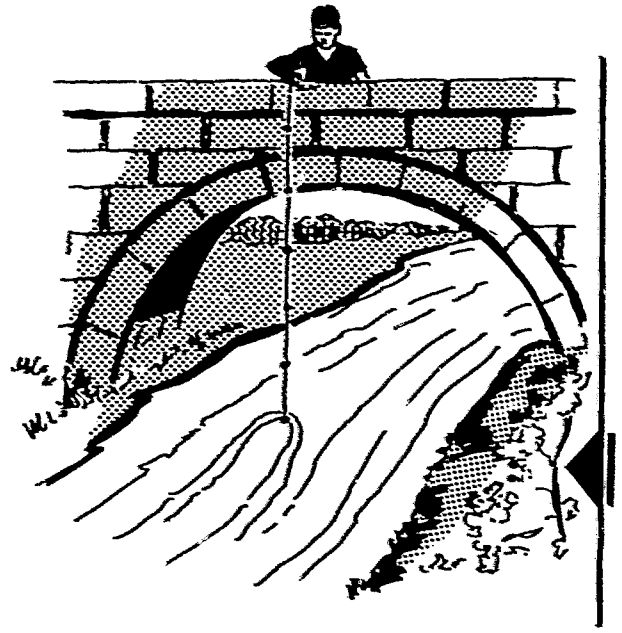
- Teachers involved in outdoor education should possess human relations skills, enjoy the out-of-doors, and be able to articulate their chosen area of instruction to the outdoor environment.

- Specialists should be utilized as resource people to help prepare teachers for the program and to teach certain parts of the program.

- An ongoing inservice education program is an essential part of outdoor education and should be provided to prepare teachers for teaching in the outdoors.

- Library and audiovisual resource material and personnel should be utilized to allow for the greatest learning potential to take place.

- The person(s) administratively responsible for outdoor education must be interested, enthusiastic and committed to the task.



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