**Case Study: Urban camp (in school grounds)**

**What we focused learning on and why:**



The urban camp is one component of the year 12 outdoor education course. This year the class has 13 students, of whom about half are international students. Some of the international students have very limited or no outdoor experience. The school has an extensive outdoor programme, so the local students have had a wide range of outdoor experiences, including camping prior to year 12.

Outdoor education takes place over four periods every week; one on Monday, two on Wednesday afternoon and the fourth on Thursday morning. This allows the class to leave the school grounds on Wednesday for activities. About once a month they go on an overnight excursion. A focus of outdoor education for this year group is to explore the local environment.

**What we planned (focusing inquiry):**

The urban camp (in school grounds) is the first overnight experience for the students and happens in week five of the first term.

For the urban camp the key learning outcomes are to:

* Make students aware that risk is not just associated with outdoor pursuit activities, but they need to think about safety in all aspects of their outdoor experiences.
* Introduce and / or reinforce skills and knowledge of setting up tents and outdoor cooking (Link to cooking on trangias activity)
* Build a positive and supportive culture within the group.

In groups of three, the students plan a gourmet meal which they cook for themselves and a guest. They watch a movie in the evening (*The River Wild*). In the morning they have breakfast, pack up and are ready for school at 8.15am. The other students often do not even realise a group has camped at the school.

The focus is on building a positive and supportive culture in this environment. Some of the trips the students do later in the year are demanding and the students are required to provide a lot of support for each other.

**Safety considerations:**

The school is a thoroughfare for foot traffic (see below for how this is managed). Using the stoves, cooking and managing people around the stoves is a major safety consideration, especially as a number of the students are not familiar with the stoves. The arrival of the guests can create a distraction for the students as they are trying to finish cooking their meals. There is a discussion with the students (prior to the arrival of the guests) about how they will greet and entertain the guest until dinner is served.

**Supervision**

The outdoor education teacher and one father supervise on this camp. The outdoor education teacher specifically requests a father as parent-help for the urban camping experience because of the potential for unwelcome visitors at the school site. A trip of this nature falls into the activity type of ‘On-site in the school grounds in higher risk environments’ (EOTC Guidelines, 2009, p. 26-27). Check the requirements of your own school policies when planning such learning experiences. *See the* [*EOTC Guidelines, 2009*](http://eotc.tki.org.nz/EOTC-home/EOTC-Guidelines) *for further information.*

**Parent help**

Parents help on a number of the outdoor camps and programmes run by the school. The selection process involves a parent writing a letter detailing the skills they bring with them as parent help. These applications are reviewed by the senior management team who make the final selection in consultation with the outdoor education teachers. Parents are given clear guidelines of what is expected of them while at camp. Staff have to be confident that the parents understand that their first responsibility is to the staff and the whole group, not to their child. Parents provide the same health and dietary information as the students. They sign a form agreeing not to drink alcohol while on camp. Parents are involved in all of the daily planning and debriefs while on camp.

**Consent and communication with parents and students**

Parents give blanket consent for the outdoor education programmes at the beginning of the year. Health, dietary and emergency contact information for the students is gathered at this point. Parents and students are asked to update this information before each overnight excursion. This data is collected for staff, parent help and students. Copies are kept in the school office and also with school staff on the outdoor programme. Programme staff are given a laminated sheet with relevant (e.g. health/dietary/emergency contact) information for students on a specific programme.

The year 12 outdoor education class leaves the school grounds most weeks for an activity. The outdoor education teacher emails parents on Monday to tell them what their child will be doing that week and if they need any specialist equipment. The teacher sends a text message to students to remind them of what they need and where to meet for each week’s practical class.



**What we did (teaching inquiry):**

The Deputy Principal talks to the students at the beginning of the urban camp about some of the issues they have to be aware of while camping in the school grounds. The school sits between the CBD and a large suburban area, which contains a number of boarding houses and half-way houses. The school makes a convenient short cut between these two areas. There are no fences or signs to keep trespassers out.

She reminds students they are more at risk from unwelcome visitors in this environment than in most of the other outdoor environments they will find themselves in. The students identify some strategies to manage this while on their urban camp.

The students have a budget for their meal. They walk down to the supermarket to do their shopping. On their return to the school grounds they pitch their tents in the quad and beginning cooking in their groups of three on stoves. The guests arrive at about 6pm and they eat dinner together. After the guests leave (about 7pm) they clean up and then watch a movie.

**What happened (learning inquiry):**

All assessment that occurs at this point is formative assessment focused both on specific skills such as using stoves and pitching a tent, on skills associated with managing themselves in this environment, and working together. For a number of the students this is their first experience of camping out in tents and cooking in the outdoors (this pertains particularly to the international students).

Cooking for a guest was introduced as a way to focus the students’ attention on this activity, put some pressure on them to produce a high quality meal within a specified time frame and to encourage them to be creative about their meal planning for future trips. Cooking for a guest encourages the students to be innovative and creative in their menu planning. It also requires student to communicate effectively and delegate tasks to ensure they produce a meal within the specified time frame.

**Further information, links and resources:**

EOTC Guidelines, 2009: <http://eotc.tki.org.nz/EOTC-home/EOTC-Guidelines>