

Education Outside the Classroom: Schools' Use of EOTC Guidelines (October 2011) : 23/08/2011

Overview

In 2009, the Ministry of Education revised its publication: EOTC Guidelines: Bringing the Curriculum Alive, Learning Safely.

Following the release of the revised guidelines, the Education Review Office evaluated how well schools were using them in their provision of Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC) activities, and how they used EOTC activities to support teaching and learning of the national curriculum, and to promote continuous improvement of education and safety. This report of the evaluation is for schools to use in developing and reviewing their EOTC programmes and activities.

ERO surveyed schools that had been reviewed 12-15 months earlier, and selected some schools to visit because of their involvement in a range of EOTC events. These were schools that included EOTC, as a regular part of the school's curriculum, to enrich learning for students and provide opportunities for students to develop personally and socially. They connected their EOTC programmes to The New Zealand Curriculum through the curriculum's vision, values, principles, key competencies, and specific learning areas.

The selected schools usually had an overall EOTC plan that provided progressive development of EOTC experiences as students moved through the school. In the planning process teachers identified student needs and tailored EOTC to address these. These schools specifically considered Māori and Pacific students, those with special needs, and the capacity of families to meet the costs involved.

In most of the selected schools there was an agreed understanding of the responsibilities of people in key roles. Boards recognised their legal responsibility for the safety of students and staff. Principals provided professional leadership, and allocated resources to make sure activities supported learning and were carried out safely.

Eighty percent of secondary and 40 percent of primary schools surveyed had a designated EOTC coordinator. Most of the principals and EOTC coordinators in the selected schools had relevant training for this role and were aware of the revised Guidelines. These coordinators usually had responsibility for developing and documenting safety procedures and templates, for identifying and managing risks, for supporting teachers, and for checking that procedures had been followed.

In the selected schools, most teachers had relevant experience, training and qualifications for the EOTC activities they led. Inexperienced teachers were paired with experienced teachers to develop their knowledge and confidence. Teachers were responsible for documenting the learning objectives and curriculum links with particular EOTC events and activities. Schools used a range of volunteers to support EOTC and set up procedures to make sure their involvement was useful.

The selected schools used outside providers for events that required particular expertise, experience or equipment. Teachers selected suitable providers and worked with them to design activities to match learning intentions and student needs and interests.

The selected schools were aware of risks involved in EOTC activities. They managed potential risks through the use of comprehensive guidelines, robust procedures, detailed planning templates, and monitoring that these were followed.

Most of the selected schools had used the EOTC Guidelines to review and amend their current procedures and templates. They had used the guidelines more often to improve safety than to improve connections between EOTC and learning.

When the selected schools reviewed EOTC, the review usually focused on procedures, school templates, and the safety of particular events, rather than the effectiveness of individual events in promoting learning, or the overall EOTC programme across the school. The reviews were often informal and were not always documented so they could be used in future planning. Most schools identified outcomes or benefits for students but these were usually assessed informally.

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Introduction

The Ministry of Education recently revised its guidelines for Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC) to incorporate national and international developments and best practice in outdoor education. The revised document, EOTC Guidelines: Bringing the Curriculum Alive^[1] (the Guidelines) was distributed to schools at the end of 2009.

The primary purpose of the Guidelines is to support teaching and learning of the national curriculum, which includes The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC)^[2] and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa.^[3] The EOTC Guidelines focus more on learning and less on safety and risk than earlier guidelines. A key message is that the level of risk management and amount of paperwork should be in proportion to the level of risk associated with the type of EOTC activity. The intention of the Guidelines is to promote continuous improvement of education and safety.

This evaluation investigates how well schools are using the EOTC Guidelines in their provision of EOTC, how well their EOTC activities complement the curriculum, how well they plan for the safety of EOTC activities, and how well the revised EOTC Guidelines support teaching and safety. This report gives examples of effective EOTC teaching and practices that support safety. The report also identifies where the effectiveness and safety of EOTC could be improved.

[1]

Ministry of Education (2009) EOTC Guidelines: Bringing the Curriculum Alive. Wellington: Learning Media.

[2]

Ministry of Education (2007) The New Zealand Curriculum for English-medium Teaching and Learning in Years 1-13. Wellington: Learning Media.

[3]

Ministry of Education (2008). Te Marautanga o Aotearoa. Wellington: Learning Media.

What is EOTC?

Education outside the classroom is curriculum-based teaching and learning activities that go beyond the walls of the classroom. It includes any curriculum-based activity that takes place outside the school ranging from a museum or marae visit, to a sports trip, field trip, or outdoor education camp.

Experiences outside the classroom reinforce learning by enabling students to make connections between what they have learnt in the classroom and the world beyond the classroom. EOTC experiences also give students opportunities to demonstrate the key competencies identified in The New Zealand Curriculum; particularly managing self, relating to others, and participating and contributing.

Schools are responsible for ensuring their EOTC activities are carried out safely. School boards have a responsibility under the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) ^[4] to provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students (NAG 5) and, as employers, to the health and safety of employees, students, and other visitors to the school, under the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992.

[4]

National Administration Guidelines

<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/Schools/PolicyAndStrategy/PlannirRelevantLegislationNEGSAndNAGS/TheNationalAdministrationGuidelinesNAGs.aspx>.

Methodology

Evaluation Questions

Data Collection

Findings

The findings of this evaluation are presented in five sections:

- Use of the EOTC Guidelines
- EOTC practice and events
- Practices and elements that contribute to effective EOTC
- Outcomes for students
- Areas for development.

The first section reports on the extent to which schools are using the Guidelines to plan their EOTC, and how well the Guidelines support schools in their planning. The section is based on information from both the survey and the visits to schools.

The second section presents examples of effective EOTC practice either across a school or related to particular EOTC events. The examples, identified during the school visits, illustrate good practice both in educational aspects of EOTC and in safety.

The third section describes some key practices and elements identified during the visits, and the fourth reports outcomes for students.

The last section identifies some gaps in planning and some situations where risks to safety could arise.

Conclusion

Three-quarters of the schools surveyed had used the revised EOTC Guidelines and most of the remaining schools were aware of them. Schools had found them most useful for clarifying legal responsibilities, planning EOTC activities, and providing information about codes of practice and best practice. Around half the schools had reviewed their policy and procedures and one quarter had made changes as a result. Secondary schools were more likely than primary schools to have done this.

Most of the visited schools valued EOTC as an important part of the school's curriculum. These schools used EOTC to support the curriculum and extend student learning. Some schools had a school-wide plan for EOTC that was based on student needs and interests and provided progression as students moved through the school.

Effective principals promoted the value of EOTC, and made sure robust procedures were developed and followed so that EOTC was carried out safely. In most schools, there was an agreed understanding of the roles and responsibilities of those involved.

EOTC coordinators usually had appropriate experience and knowledge to carry out their role effectively. Teachers were expected to have relevant training and knowledge for the activities they led, and most schools provided support or mentoring to develop these where necessary. Teachers used outside providers where necessary to access particular expertise or equipment and planned activities with them to meet the learning intentions.

Schools were more likely to have reviewed the safety of their EOTC events than the outcomes for student learning and the effectiveness of the programme as a whole.

Appendix: Self Review: Indicators of Good Practice

These indicators are based primarily on the EOTC Guidelines, together with other indicators of good practice.

EOTC - Indicators of quality

Level	Indicator
School context	• The principal and/or senior management value and promote EOTC across the schoolStaff who have taken EOTC or risk management courses • EOTC plan provides opportunities for Māori students to enjoy education success 'as Māori' – affirm identity, language and culture • The school considers equity aspects (Pacific, other ethnic groups, special needs, culture, affordability) • Parents/whānau are involved in ways that enhance learning outcomes and strengthen relationships between home and school • Parents/whānau are encouraged, through EOTC, to be involved in their children's learning
Role and responsibilities of the board	• The board understands its legal responsibilities for safety of EOTC • The agreed policy for EOTC reflects good practice in the Guidelines • The board considers and approves EOTC events at an appropriate level of risk • The board receives appropriate and useful reports of EOTC activities and their outcomes • Incidents are reported to the board, and procedures are reviewed
The principal provides effective leadership for EOTC	• The principal or EOTC coordinator ensures there is a shared understanding of how EOTC can support the curriculum and learningResponsibility for coordinating EOTC in the school is allocated to appropriate staff (relevant knowledge, skills, experience) • The principal supports the coordinator and adequately resources EOTC

	• The principal or EOTC coordinator ensures staff understand the importance of safety and are familiar with safety guidelines and procedures • The principal uses appropriate strategies to build teacher expertise and confidence in EOTC (eg working alongside an experienced leader, professional learning and development) • The principal and/or senior management value and promote EOTC across the school
Designated EOTC coordinator carries out role effectively	• The coordinator has relevant experience and professional learning and development in EOTC • The coordinator has a strong belief in using EOTC as an effective part of pedagogy to support teaching and learning • The coordinator ensures educational objectives and learning intentions of planned EOTC events are clear and appropriate • The coordinator appropriately assesses the core competence of staff (eg teaching, relevant knowledge and experience, communication skills, leadership, risk management, problem-solving ability) and approves their involvement • The coordinator ensures activity leaders understand their responsibilities for safety for each activity • The coordinator ensures supervisors and assistants who support EOTC activities are informed, trained and supervised appropriately • The coordinator ensures hazards are identified, and mitigations planned • The coordinator ensures every student has access to a currently qualified first-aider • The coordinator ensures equipment and first aid kits are appropriate and available • The coordinator ensures students understand their responsibilities for their own safety and the safety of others, eg through developing an appropriate code of conduct with them
Role and responsibilities of staff	• There is shared understanding about how EOTC can support the curriculum and learning

	• Teachers have a sound pedagogical and knowledge base about EOTC • Staff are knowledgeable about safety guidelines and procedures and understand their importance • Adult assistants are briefed about the activity and given clear instructions on how they can support students to get the most out of the EOTC activity educationally • Teachers involve parents and whānau in ways that enhance learning outcomes for students
School-wide planning for EOTC and safety	• EOTC procedures and systems are documented, comprehensive, clear and reflect good practice in the Guidelines • The level of risk management and paperwork is in proportion to the level of risk associated with the activity • Ratios of supervisor/activity leader to learners are appropriate for the age of students, nature of activity, location and competence of staff and students • There is a register of existing relevant competencies of staff, matched with competencies needed for each planned activity • Roles and responsibilities of coordinator, EOTC leaders, assistants and students for each activity are appropriate and clear • There are processes for selecting quality providers • Joint planning has been carried out with providers where appropriate • EOTC plan shows links with NZC/TMoA and shows how EOTC is integrated with curriculum areas • EOTC plan and charter documents how EOTC provides authentic contexts for learning • School has appropriate procedures and templates to ensure risks are identified, assessed and managed • EOTC templates for planning (eg RAMS, SAPs, etc) are available for staff (eg intranet, shared drive) • Emergency procedures and communications plan are documented;

	• First aid kits and appropriate equipment are provided • Students are advised about appropriate footwear / clothing • Appropriate forms are completed for each activity that reflect the level of risk, eg student lists, parental consent, emergency contact and health profiles • EOTC activities are reviewed and modifications identified to improve safety in future EOTC activities • EOTC plan provides opportunities for Māori students to enjoy education success 'as Māori' – affirm identity, language and culture • Practices reflect the RAMS and SAP tools developed for each activity (included with the Guidelines)
Working with providers	• Agreement between school and provider is clear • Provider meets accepted good practice standards (eg OutdoorsMark, Qualmark) • Process to resolve disputes between provider and school staff in place • Venue checked for safety • Teachers plan with the provider, where appropriate • Teachers are familiar with the provider's programme • Both partners have a clear understanding of the learning goals • Both ensure the activity is appropriate for the students involved • The provider is involved in reviewing the EOTC activity
Use of EOTC to support implementation of the curriculum	• EOTC has clear links with the school's curriculum, unit plans and scheme, learning areas • The EOTC activity or event is part of a planned programme with lead up and follow-up activities (not a 'one-off') • EOTC builds on the existing knowledge and understanding of students • EOTC activities involve sequencing to scaffold learning • Teachers use a range of authentic contexts to engage students

	• Clear learning goals are identified for the activity and shared with students • EOTC activities promote cultural understanding • Teachers have high expectations for students taking responsibility for their own learning • Teachers provide opportunities for students to apply their learning in a practical way • Teachers reinforce messages from the outside provider (if used) • Opportunities are provided for students to work in small groups • Support is provided so that students can work together effectively • Opportunities are provided for students to discuss the EOTC activity and what they have learnt
Carrying out EOTC activities safely	• School staff have a good understanding of their (legal) responsibilities • Reasonable steps are taken to identify and manage significant risks (ie eliminate, isolate, or minimise), and combinations of hazards • The venue/s have been checked for safety • Competence of staff has been appropriately assessed • Appropriate supervision ratios have been decided • Activity leaders and assistants have been trained appropriately and given an outline of their role and responsibilities for the activities • All students have access to a qualified first aider • Necessary safety equipment and/or clothing, and first aid equipment is identified and provided • EOTC learning experiences are aligned with students' capabilities • Activity leaders provide good instructions so that students can safely participate in activities • Students understand their responsibilitiesThe plans and processes are comprehensive enough to deal with unforeseen events, including a Plan B, or cancelling the activity

	• Incidents are recorded in the school's register, reviewed and recommendations made for the future • Incidents are recorded in the National Incident Database where appropriate The school has reviewed the safety aspects of the EOTC activity or event
Student engagement	• Students are involved in planning EOTC experiences • Students show high levels of curiosity and interest • Students work effectively in small groups • Students feel safe to choose to participate in challenging activities (challenge by choice)
Student achievement	• Students understand the purpose of the activity • Students take responsibility for their own learning • Students complete tasks assigned • Students are able to apply their class learning in a new context • Students are able to describe what they have learned • Students reflect on their learning
Use of EOTC Guidelines	• School staff are aware of the Guidelines and have used them • Staff have been able to find key information in the Guidelines • The school's EOTC programme is consistent with the Guidelines • Safety policies and procedures are consistent with the Guidelines • The school has used the Guidelines as a tool for self review • The Guidelines support ongoing improvement • Toolkit and Guidelines are available in hard copy or via the internet or on the school's intranet or shared drive