

...CULTIVATE ECO-CONSCIOUSNESS

SUSTAINABILITY

The human race cannot continue on its present path without dire consequences. The urgency is an Anthropocene Epoch: a period of time when we have damaged our environment enough to threaten a potential life extinction event (as is already the case for many species). The global collapse of climate, planetary warming, rising sea levels, and environmental degradation and more now force demands for sustainable living.

We seem to have two choices: take a defeatist attitude and give up OR transform and re-think education with strong cultural swings toward eco-consciousness and the promise of change. As experiential educators, we gravitate toward the latter approach and are uniquely situated to advance necessary changes in the fundamentals of schooling as we face this litany of existential dangers and environmental degradations.

However, a path forward is unclear, since the radical departure from conventional schooling that is heavily warranted can also be perceived as subversive. Nevertheless, an ambience can be created in group outdoor living that explores ways of being and breaks down the conventions of time, relationships, and living. For example, can we learn to relate to time in a more present manner and with less of a future orientation? Can we relate to others more cooperatively and less competitively? Can we live with a weighted sense of being over doing or having? Can we care and act more for others and the Earth (and especially our local places) than for ourselves? Such qualities can be strongly suggested and experienced particularly in extended travel experiences in wild outdoors places. Consider the notion of “Wild Pedagogies” in EE programs.

WILD PEDAGOGIES

Wild Pedagogies is a newly emerging curricular planning ideology built on outdoor experiential and eco-political education. It involves a striving for thoughtfully guiding student agency (client-centered learning) and a re-negotiating towards a belonging with the natural world with action taken towards sustainable practices of living. Here are six touchstones of Wild Pedagogies.

1. **Nature as co-teacher:** a local environment partners with the principle instructor.
2. **Complexity, the unknown and spontaneity:** embrace the teachable moment; if open to explore, knowledge is wondrously dynamic;
3. **Locating the wild:** seek self-willed land in local urban, rural, and wild places.
4. **Time and practice:** building relationships with nature within established education settings involves a re-negotiation of terms.
5. **Society and cultural change:** education and transformation are always political acts.
6. **Building alliances:** in human communities, social justice works best when concurrent with environmental justice.

Such educational efforts take much time and great patience, while remaining centrally attentive to revolutionary change. All of the above represent lofty aspirations, but one would now be an idealist to consider the status quo in today’s education as a viable option for humanity. It behooves experiential educators to boldly experiment with ways of inspiring clients to explore wild pedagogies and bring eco-consciousness to their learning and change.

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FURTHER RESOURCES

READING

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