

Outdoor School

Statement on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

WHERE YOU CAN BRING YOUR AUTHENTIC SELF.

All means All.

The Oregon State University Extension Service–Outdoor School Program values equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). EDI is essential to who we are, but also to what we do. We acknowledge the historical and institutional barriers that have kept youth from participating in an outdoor school experience and strive to foster positive experiences for all students by exposing and eliminating institutional policies and structures that uphold systems of power and privilege, as well as by providing continuous opportunities for education and self-reflection to our staff and stakeholders.

The voters in the State of Oregon overwhelmingly passed legislation to fund outdoor school for ALL students. The recognition that no outdoor school participant brings just one aspect of their identity to an outdoor school experience is critical to understanding the intersectionality of identities. We strive to create an environment where everyone can feel welcome, safe, respected, and free to participate in all aspects of outdoor school as their authentic, whole self.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion are foundational to our work as the Oregon State University Extension Service–Outdoor School Program. We know this will change the structure of outdoor school. We choose to openly engage in an ongoing process of active learning and growth—understanding that this work requires a sustained commitment. When we make mistakes along the way, we will adapt and continue to learn.



Organizational “Why”

Oregon’s outdoor school programs were developed for and by the dominant culture, and attending outdoor school was a privilege. Voters made outdoor school a right, not a privilege, so the staff, curriculum, activities, and attitudes of outdoor school must now reflect the physical, social and emotional culture of all participants. This systemic-level change to outdoor school programs will be incremental, but it is required to ensure the equitable inclusion of all participating students.



Definitions

Bias: A positive or negative inclination towards a person, group, or community. This can lead to stereotyping. (Thiederman)

Culture: The shared patterns of behaviors and interactions, ways of being and understanding that are learned through a process of socialization. (Oregon State University Social Justice Education Initiative 2017)

Cultural Competency: An ability to successfully negotiate cross-cultural differences in order to accomplish practical goals. It includes the ability to tailor delivery of services to meet the audiences' social, cultural, and linguistic needs (Betancourt et al., 2002) in the planning, implementing, and evaluating of programs, interventions, and education (American Association for Health Education). Four major components to cultural competency are awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills.

- Awareness: It is important to examine diversity-related values and beliefs in order to recognize any deep-seated prejudices and stereotypes that can create barriers for learning and personal development. Many of us have blind spots when it comes to our beliefs and values; diversity education can be useful for uncovering them.

- Attitude: Values and beliefs impact cross-cultural effectiveness because they convey the extent to which we are open to differing views and opinions. The stronger we feel about our beliefs and values, the more likely we will react emotionally when they collide with cultural differences. For example, people of color and white Americans tend to have different values and beliefs about diversity and equity; the differences are, in part, the result of uniquely different exposure to oppression and discrimination.

- Knowledge: The more knowledge we have about people of different cultures, the more likely we are able to avoid stepping on cross-cultural toes. Knowing how culture impacts problem solving, managing people, asking for help, etc. can keep us connected in cross-cultural interactions.

- Skills: One can have the “right” attitude, considerable self-awareness, and a lot of knowledge about cultural differences, yet still lack the ability to effectively manage differences. If we have not learned skills or have had little opportunity to practice, our knowledge and awareness are insufficient to avoid and manage cross-cultural land mines.

Cultural Relevancy: Effectively reaching and engaging communities and their youth in a manner that is consistent with the cultural context and values of that community, while effectively addressing the disparities for diversity and inclusion within an organization's entire structure. (Youth Outside)

Diversity: Psychological, physical, and social differences that occur among any and all individuals; including but not limited to: race; ethnicity; nationality; religion; socioeconomic status; education; marital status; language; age; gender; sexual orientation; mental/physical ability; and learning styles. A diverse group, community, or organization is one in which a variety of social and cultural characteristics exist (The National Multicultural Institute). Diversity is all the ways in which we differ, are similar, and are unique.

Dominant Culture: In a diverse society, the culture that has social, economic, and political power. (Oregon State University Social Justice Education Initiative 2017)

Equity: The guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically underserved and underrepresented populations and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist equality in the provision of effective opportunities to all groups (UC Berkeley Initiative for Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity).

Explicit Bias: A conscious tendency to favor one person, group, thing, or point of view over another. (Oregon State University Social Justice Education Initiative 2017)

Implicit Bias: Implicit bias occurs when an individual consciously rejects ste-

reotypes while simultaneously holding negative associations unconsciously. The theory of implicit bias rests on the idea that much of our social behavior is driven by learned stereotypes that operate automatically—and therefore unconsciously—when we interact with other people. Implicit bias means that racial prejudices (and other areas of diversity) affect individuals' decisions as well as their behavior toward people of other races, whether or not they are aware of it (American Values Institute, 2009, and Open Society Foundations, 2011).

Inclusion: Efforts to ensure that people from diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives are able to participate legitimately in decision-making processes in ways that are responsive as well as accepting and that move the institution forward in its focus on academic excellence.

Intersectionality: The ways in which oppressive institutions (racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, classism, etc.) are interconnected and cannot be examined separately from one another (African American Policy Forum).

Sources:

American Association for Health Education, <http://www.aahperd.org/aahe>

African American Policy Forum. “A Primer on Intersectionality”. Available at:

http://www.whiteprivilegeconference.com/pdf/intersectionality_primer.pdf

Betancourt, J., Green, A. & Carrillo, E. (2002). Cultural competence in health care: Emerging frameworks and practical approaches. The Commonwealth Fund.

Diversity Officer Magazine. “What is Cultural Competence & How is it Measured?”. Available at: <https://diversityofficermagazine.com/cultural-competence/what-is-cultural-competence-how-is-it-measured-2/>

National Multicultural Institute. “Diversity Terms”. (2003) Available at: <https://our.ptsem.edu/UploadedFiles/Multicultural/MCRDiversityTerms.pdf>

Thiederman, Sondra. “Making Diversity Work: Seven Steps for Defeating Bias in the Workplace”.

UC Berkeley Initiative for Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity. “Glossary of Terms.” (2011) Available at: http://diversity.berkeley.edu/sp_glossary_of_terms

