



## Outdoor Education Advisory Working Group

### MINUTES

**Friday October 11, 2024 9:00 am – 3:00 pm**

Clark County Wetlands  
Meeting Room  
7050 Wetlands Park Ln  
Las Vegas, NV 89122

**1. Call to Order 9:01am**

**2. Roll Call**

Kendal Scott - present  
Andrew Snyder - present  
Julie Bless - present  
Brandi Cuti - Absent  
Carrie McGill – present, on phone  
Joe Girdner - Present  
Sean Thorton - Absent  
Melanie Erquiaga – present, online  
Roz Brooks – present at 9:09 AM  
Senator Julie Pazina - Absent  
Senator Carrie Buck – present  
Assemblyman Toby Yurek - Absent  
Assemblywoman Erica Mosca – present  
Astyn Wielkie – Absent  
Grace Angel - Absent  
Cherese Jones – Present at 9:21 AM

**3. Public Comment**

No public in room  
Online Jimmy Lau Reno Public Affairs resource advocates AB 124. Needs more funding. Less than neighboring states. Requests \$500,000 a year with this BDR and up to \$750,000.

**4. Approve Minutes from 1/30/24**

Kendal moved for approval.  
Joe Girdner seconded  
Motion passes, minutes are approved.

**5. Public Survey Results – Mark Damian Duda, Responsive Management  
Survey of Knowledge of Environmental issues**

- The report has been distributed to the group ahead of time.
- Thanks to Kendal and Roz with their efforts
- Just awarded USFW grant
- Provided background on Responsive Management experience, past partners and research
- Overview of Study Methodology – survey research in support of Nevada’s outdoor education curriculum. 1 study with Classroom teachers, community members, administrators (n = 487). 1 study with students in both English and Spanish (n = 216). Data collected May-August 2024.
- Survey Topics – importance of spending time outdoors and various outdoor experiences, what are obstacles/needs for outdoor education, infrastructure support.

#### Key findings:

- 99% Extremely and very important to spend time outdoors for children/youth.
- 75%+ green ballot initiatives/referendums pass
- Kids didn’t think it was as important as the adults did.
- 75% of kids want to spend more time outdoors/field trips
- Most teachers and students felt that going outdoors improved mood
- Support or oppose restricting student participation in recess/school day breaks for poor behavior or academic behavior – over half oppose
- Adults want them to learn, kids want to play
- Outdoor learning AND Outdoor education – 92% support
- Groups that would benefit from outdoor education – mostly At-risk youth (86%), Urban youth (86%), Underserved populations (79%), English language learners (60%), Rural youth ( )
- Features/facilities – Shade and trees most important to both teachers and students
- Students: How interested are you in participating in these activities – spending an hour outside and PE classes for outdoor skills (biking, fishing, hunter ed) most interested in
- Resources and Coordination: Teachers and Administrators overall not very familiar with outdoor education lessons, programs, resources. Prepared lesson plans was found to be most beneficial to have.
- Funding: Federal and State grants most supported as a source for funding -> Next is Public-private partnerships -> then Economic Development dollars -> Corp school adoption -> workforce training dollars
- Reason to not use school yard (teachers/Administrators): Time -> weather -> lack or training/safety concerns, comfort level was the lowest reason
- Concern of safety of outdoor learning and education (teachers/Administrators): 25% Extremely to Very concerned, 27% somewhat concerned, 19% slightly concerned
- Interest in volunteering (parents and community members) 51% very to somewhat interested

#### Questions?

- Mosca – Thank you for data.
- None online
- Mosca – How do we compare to other states? High levels of support for this work. Be aware of nay sayers. This survey asked the people what they want. Results show support for outdoor education. Surprised by the high request for shade. Speaks to the dry qualities of the state. Major support and concern of outdoor ed and the relationship between kids and their natural environment.
- Cherese Jones – did we get demographics for gender, age - Yes
- Bobby Jones - Is it safe to say that the urban vs rural kids most benefiting from time outdoors an assumption of stakeholders more than anything playing out in the data? - Yes, there is a big

difference between rural and urban views. There tends to be more of a utilitarian value for the outdoors from rural areas, whereas more holistic value from urban areas.

- Kendal – encourages everyone to read the survey takers individual notes.

## 6. Focus Group Results – Kendal Scott, NDOR

- Thanks to everyone who helped with the focus groups
- 5 groups with 45 participants - Teachers, school administrators, nature education providers, high school students, UNR students/professors
- Overall desire to address nature-deficit

### Barriers

- Funding
- Transportation
- Unsupportive admin
- Logistical considerations
- Standards alignment
- Understanding of importance
- Reliance on grants
- Lack of local content

### Expressed Needs or important reasons why to have outdoor education by teachers:

- Nearby Nature
- Class Management
- Health – Physical and Mental
- Academic Success – hard and soft skills, *confidence, autonomy, perseverance, leadership* (also noted by teachers as needs from their students)
- Place-based learning – relevancy, purpose, increased engagement
- Stewardship – miss out on experiencing the outdoors, means missing out on understanding the importance of the outdoors

### Questions?

- Mosca – difference between north and south? – Kendal didn't see a difference
- Melanie – similar in rural areas. Do have more open space resources, but don't have a lot of park/green space. Overall – kids are more engaged and have better behavior in class, when they can get outdoors. Need to bridge gap between getting to the outdoors though. Even though more open space is there in the rurals, not everyone can get there.
- Roz – focus groups allowed for more in-depth discussion and flushing out of ideas, but results aligned with the survey.
- Melanie – need more money to support this work
- Roz – safety – we are not living in fear. The majority was not fearful. Don't make a decision based on safety.
- Andrew Snyder – people don't know what they don't know – education will help mitigate that fear
- Chereese Jones – fear of managing the kids in those outdoor spaces?
- Tammy Hadad (sp?) (public) – UNR extension
- David Beard – Children Nature Network – childcare coverage and cost – did it come up?  
Kendal – one comment from
- Chereese Jones – cost of increase in insurance. Cost is on the school per child for “higher risk” field trips.

- Joe Girdner – having a hard time trying to figure out risk. From an admin perspective, doesn't see that much risk in it.
- Melanie – hasn't seen much push back from administrators on safety for outdoor activities.
- CJ Kelly (Public) – UNR Extension – Resources – There is always landscaping, a court space, looking at the issues with the space and turn it into a student project to solve the "problem." First look at resources that ARE available before looking outward for additional resources.
- Chris (public) Linehan – Bureau of Reclamation – Am not seeing any federal partners at the meeting. Most of these ideas being discussed would involve public federal lands. A lot of these resources exist, but you need to tie in those partners.
- Julie Bless – NDOW offers an archery program. How do we get the resources out to those who don't know about them? How do we bridge that gap?

**Recess** at 10:38 AM. Reconvened at 10:50 AM.

## **7. Committee Recommendations Gallery Walk – Erica Mosca**

### Outdoor Learning Infrastructure – Julie Bless

- Support for climate resilient living school yards
- More walking fieldtrips
- Outdoor space
- Prioritizing schools without walkable parks
- Recognize schools that are already doing this
- Access to Federal Funding – potential statewide position that acts as an expert for federal education and Orec grants that can be a resource for schools and districts to use these funds

### Content Integration – Andrew Snyder

- Using the outdoors to do math, science, art
- Giving new teachers ways to integrate into their teachers
- Create a position (Utah Tech has a program)
- Highlight occupations that work outside/workforce development
- Adding partners that already exist

### Capacity Building – Kendal Scott

- Highlight survey results
- Highlight the importance of Administrative support
- Need for more lesson plans and curriculum
- Partner with agencies and organizations that have these resources (ex. SNAP)
- State support through Dept of Education position
- Leadership buy-in
- Recognizing schools that are already doing it
- Be aware of adding to the plate of teachers already full workload
- Having a position would help show teachers how to integrate ORec into their curriculum for each subject.
- Encourage and ask for additional appropriations from the legislature

### Policy – Erica Mosca

- Incentivize instead of mandate down

- Field trips and transportation is important
- Leverage already existing partnerships (UNR Extension, SNAP, 4-H)
- Changing the State's accountability system – schools can choose what category they are designated (ex. purple star school, STEM, STEAM). Make an outdoor Rec designation (Green ribbon schools).
- Increasing the amount of NOER grant funding
- Portfolio of options for schools to buy in to.

**RECESS/Lunch** – Break at 11:39. Reconvened at 12:53 PM

**8. Decision Points (for possible Action)** – Erica Mosca, Kendal Scott (started recording again at 1:18 PM)  
 \*Please note that the meeting recording restarted after this discussion had already begun.

Recommendations for the report

- Highlight survey results of how important outdoors are
- Encourage administration to support outdoor ed and to utilize their existing resources
- Barriers: acknowledgement
- Need for lesson plans/curriculum – increasing visibility around existing resources
  - Partner with outside providers, organizations
- Include what other states are doing
- Background research
- Outdoor education specialists in every school – utilizing existing support positions for this
- More field trips, especially utilizing nearby nature
- Vision for long-term goal: every school has a living schoolyard, outdoor classroom spaces that can be used for the rubric
- Recognize the need for maintenance and upkeep resources for infrastructure
- Survey shows that the public is open to different ideas for funding
- Utilize existing resources – public/private partnerships
- Leverage federal funds – work across state lines or within the state with other agencies
- Council/network could identify landmarks to work towards each student experiencing (regionally)
- Integration with the Portrait of a Nevada Learner
- Student involvement in schoolyard development – used for a rubric
- Importance of living schoolyards for accessibility and equity
- Developing an outdoor special course or elective – include outdoor workforce development
- Take normal content areas outside
- Provide research of benefits of recess (behavioral, mental health) – There is public support for 35-45 minutes of recess/physical breaks per day – make sure that it is for all grade levels. Students have a Right to outdoor time during the day – rubric has schools protecting that right
- Recommend not restricting recess/breaks for academic or behavioral reasons
- Landscape analysis to utilize existing resources – maybe a task for the Dept of Ed position or a council
- Field trips are important experiences – discuss survey and focus group results
- Tourism could support state park field trips
- Children's outdoor bill of rights as a potential tool for schools – rubric/menu
- Outdoor education specialists in every school – utilizing existing support positions for this

## BDR Concept

- AWG's chosen BDR Concept: Creating a sustained council or network to support outdoor education efforts
  - Creating/managing incentive program
  - Develop or highlight opportunities for training for educators
  - Create a technical assistance program to support schools/districts developing outdoor education initiatives
    - Prioritize schools with the least nature access (opportunity zones)
    - Support schools in finding and utilizing funding for this work
  - Incentivizing outdoor education through an Outdoor School Certification
    - Creating a designation for outdoor school recognition - Creating a framework for outdoor school designation
    - Includes Curriculum – standards alignment
    - Include climate resilient living schoolyards as a standard
    - Optional outdoor education specific standards
    - Various tiers based on a developed rubric – use a menu of options
    - Monetary award for recognition – goes toward the next tier of the designation
    - Outdoor educator of the year award
    - Identifying model schools
- Recommended BDR: Creating a position within the Department of Education
  - Integrate all content areas and provide support to schools and teachers
- Recommended BDR: Increase funding for the NOER grant program
- Motion to approve AWG chosen BDR concept and report recommendations – Motioned by Erica Mosca, 2<sup>nd</sup> Andrew Snyder. Motion put to vote. Motion carries. BDR concept and report recommendations are approved.

## 9. Next Steps

- Submit a BDR concept
- Kendal will work on putting the report together based on what was talked about today
- Will send out to the group for review
- Goal to get final report out to Legislature before their final round of BDRs are due, end of November.

## 10. Public Comment

No public comment.

## 11. Adjournment at 1:59 PM

Attendance: Kendal Scott, Elisabeth Johnson, Erica Mosca, Carrie McGill, Melanie Erquiaga, Carrie Buck, Cherese Jones, Julie Bless, Andrew Snyder, Joe Girdner, Roz Brooks, David Beard, Chris Linehan, Tammy Haddad, CJ Kelly, Mark Duda, Jimmy Lau, Derik Knak, Rachel Pringle, Trystin St. Denis, Bobby Jones, Luke, Christi Cabrera, Robyn Orloff, Diana Rossell-Eddy, Kevin Nelson.