

COLEGIUL TEHNIC "GHEORGHE ASACHI" FOCȘANI - ROMANIA



ERASMUS+ PROJECT

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MOBILITIES FOR STUDENTS

3RD HIGHSCHOOL
OF
RHODES - GREECE

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Outdoor Education Toolkit

Creating a Culture of Safety-Mindedness for Grades 9-12

Building Safety-Mindedness: Teacher and Supervisor Preparation

Knowledge Foundation

Ensure all teachers and supervisors understand school board policies, geographic coordinates, route conditions, and trip administration requirements. Documentation and communication are essential.

Skills & Certifications

Verify appropriate competency levels including activity-specific skills, certifications, outdoor food preparation, wildlife encounter protocols, and navigation abilities.

Leadership Capabilities

Confirm wilderness first aid skills, emergency communication device proficiency, risk and crisis management expertise, group facilitation abilities, and positive communication with colleagues and students.

Have teachers and trip guides explored the route before the trip? Have they consulted with park staff or appropriate agencies about recent conditions? These preparatory steps are fundamental to creating a safe outdoor education experience.

Student Preparation: Building Competence and Confidence

Essential Preparation

Students must be prepared and have practiced key skills before departure:

- Packing required gear that fits correctly and comfortably
- Using all equipment properly
- Basic first aid, including using kits and emergency devices
- Identifying potential hazards and prevention strategies
- Knowing how to access emergency resources
- Navigation skills
- Outdoor food preparation

Required Skills & Abilities

Students should easily master:

- Trip coordinates and route/itinerary understanding
- Map review before and during the trip
- Emergency action plans
- Wildlife safety protocols
- Overall risk management through scenario practice
- Group dynamics and individual responsibilities
- Understanding their role in group success



Emergency Planning: Your Safety Net

01

Create Comprehensive Plans

Always develop an emergency risk management plan. Ensure all trip teachers and supervisors understand and feel comfortable with outlined procedures. Trip participants must know their roles during emergencies.

02

Prepare for Downtime

Include simple activities for inclement weather such as watercolor painting or song writing. Consider both extroverts and introverts in the group to maintain positive morale during challenging conditions.

03

Know Your Resources

Be knowledgeable about the site or hosting facility, park office, local police, and campground operators. Understand route or facility conditions before the trip to avoid last-minute surprises.

 **Critical Reminder:** Notify local emergency services of your trip. Leave the trip itinerary with the park office and/or local OPP detachment. Establish emergency measures and telephone numbers before departure.

Communication: The Foundation of Safety



Pre-Trip Coordination

Organize meetings with all teachers and supervisors to review route itinerary, emergency plans, decision-making strategies, communications, menu, participant concerns, and other pertinent matters. Hold a separate meeting with students and parents/guardians to ensure everyone has current information and is comfortable with trip plans.



Medical Awareness

Be aware of students' medical conditions and school board policies on medical conditions, including considerations for carrying emergency medication (epinephrine, naloxone). Review first aid kit contents before the trip, ensuring medications are current and items are readily accessible.



Dietary Planning

Plan all meals considering dietary restrictions of group members. Allow choice during planning so all participants will be well-fed and happy. Review hygiene practices before the trip and address student concerns confidentially.

Personal Reflection and Group Dynamics

Understanding Individual Needs

Before the trip, have students complete a personal reflection on their expectations, goals, and biggest "fears" related to the trip. This helps address worries during group discussions, allowing each student to benefit fully from the experience.

Ensuring everyone is comfortable relieves tensions that might lead to problems with group dynamics or unsafe situations. When students feel heard and supported, they're more likely to communicate concerns and participate actively in maintaining group safety.

Creating Inclusive Experiences

Consider the diverse backgrounds and experiences of all participants. Students who have grown up without access to certain outdoor experiences may need additional awareness training and support. Tailor safety equipment and strategies to reflect the knowledge, experiences, and abilities of your specific student group.



Trust Your Instincts: The Power of Intuition

Pay Attention to Warning Signs

When things don't seem right, stop and take the time required to think things through. Your instincts are valuable safety tools developed through experience and observation.

Consult Your Team

Check in with other teachers and supervisors regularly. If anyone is uncomfortable with a decision, their concern needs to be respected by the group and fully considered when making decisions.

Err on the Side of Caution

If one teacher or supervisor is uncomfortable heading out or continuing further, the group should stay where they are. Safety always takes precedence over completing an itinerary or reaching a destination.

"Prepare ahead of time to get a solid rest the night before the trip! Your alertness and decision-making abilities are critical safety factors."

Key Safety Principles in Action

1 — Before Departure

Consult school board policies and OPASSE standards. Create emergency plans. Assess route conditions. Assemble qualified team. Ensure proper gear and signed forms. Hold parent meetings. Document medical conditions and student prerequisites.

2 — During the Activity

Monitor group well-being and dynamics. Check in with students with medical conditions. Stay responsive to weather changes. Assess and respond to emerging safety issues. Debrief on potential safety concerns with all participants.

3 — After Return

Hold teacher/supervisor debrief to document successes and areas for improvement. Conduct student debrief meeting. Follow up on issues that arose. Celebrate the experience and reflect on its impact on students, teachers, and supervisors.





Creating a Culture of Safety-Mindedness

Individual Responsibility

- Personal preparation and skill development
- Honest communication about abilities and concerns
- Attention to personal safety needs
- Willingness to speak up about risks
- Commitment to continuous learning

Group Accountability

- Shared responsibility for safety
- Supporting each other's needs
- Collective decision-making
- Positive group dynamics
- Mutual respect and trust

Leadership Excellence

- Comprehensive planning and preparation
- Clear communication protocols
- Appropriate supervision ratios
- Emergency preparedness
- Modeling safe behaviors

Safety-mindedness is not about eliminating all risk—it's about understanding, managing, and learning from risk. When teachers, supervisors, and students work together with shared knowledge, clear communication, and mutual respect, outdoor education becomes a transformative experience that builds confidence, competence, and character.

Your Journey to Safe Outdoor Education

100%

Commitment to Safety

Every trip, every time, with every student

3

Key Pillars

Preparation, Communication, Intuition

1

Shared Goal

Creating transformative outdoor experiences

Creating a culture of safety-mindedness in outdoor education requires dedication, knowledge, and continuous reflection. By following these guidelines—preparing thoroughly, communicating effectively, trusting your instincts, and fostering shared responsibility—you create an environment where students can challenge themselves, grow, and thrive safely.

Remember: The goal is not to eliminate all risk, but to manage it thoughtfully so that outdoor education can fulfill its promise of building confident, capable, and conscientious young people who understand their relationship with the natural world and their responsibility to themselves and others.

❏ Always consult your school board to ensure compliance with its policies and procedures for outdoor educational activities.