

**INCLUDING YOUTH WITH  
DISABILITIES IN  
OUTDOOR PROGRAMS**

**Best Practices, Outcomes, and  
Resources**

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Steve A. Brannan  
Ann Fullerton  
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# Foreword I

by Connie Coutellier  
Director of Professional Development  
American Camping Association (ACA)

The American Camping Association (ACA) is proud to have been a part of the National Inclusive Camp Practices Project (NICP), a nationwide study of inclusive programs that led to the writing of this book. In 1956, the president of ACA, Herbert Sweet, had “Better Camping for All” inscribed on the fireplace mantel of the new ACA national office building. As an organization, ACA continues to value the world, the people who live in it, and the contribution individuals can make to their society. ACA believes that the camp experience is essential to every child’s growth and education. Before the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 became a law, many resident and day camps accredited by ACA worked hard to provide programs specially designed for children with disabilities. As part of such efforts, new ACA Standards were adopted in 1974 for camps serving children with physical disabilities.

As social values and culture changed and people became more sensitive to providing life experiences for all, more children with disabilities were given opportunities to go to camp, helping fill a major unmet recreation experience for many such individuals. The 1993 new ACA Standards for camps, reflecting the passage of the ADA, signaled another shift in social values regarding the need to mainstream and give people with disabilities, not just the same societal experiences and privileges as those without disabilities, but to do so in the same settings and programs along with everyone else. As children were mainstreamed in school and other community settings, they also wanted to go to camp with their friends. Although every camp is different and there is a continuum of service options, all children and their parents should have the right to choose the camp that best meets their individual needs and interests. Today, for many parents and their son or daughter with a disability(s), this means having full access to traditional camps and programs in their locale.

Many books have been written about the excellent steps that have been taken to adapt programs to meet the needs of children with disabilities, but little has been done to specifically study the inclusive practices and outcomes or benefits to all youth involved in such programs. Using the results from their NICP study, the authors of this book help verify the benefits of including youth with disabilities in traditional outdoor programs, and give us practical information on best practices and ways to evaluate outcomes for all participants in inclusive outdoor programs.

Inclusion should be a thoughtful process. Just stating that your camp mainstreams campers may meet the letter of the law, but does not necessarily provide a quality inclusive experience for campers and staff. A major key to the success of inclusive outdoor programs is thoroughly understanding the importance of identifying and measuring purposeful outcomes and evaluating the benefits for both the participants with disabilities and those without disabilities. It is important that the NICP research found growth in outdoor skills and personal and social development for participants of all abilities. Today, boards, funders, and parents not only want to know what the benefits of your program are, but also want you to be able to prove your program does what it says it does (i.e., accomplishes its goals for youth).

This book will provide camp and outdoor education professionals with best practices for promoting and achieving inclusion, and particularly for facilitating social interaction and other growth outcomes among participating youth. Five camps from across the country are profiled with a description of their own process of program development, operation, staffing and training, communicating with parents, and maintaining a camp community that values inclusion. The resources for planning and evaluation will also give you practical tools to help measure the impact and effectiveness of your inclusive outdoor program.

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## || Including Youth with Disabilities in Outdoor Programs

Remember, when we contribute to the lives of the children and adults who participate in camp programs, we, in turn, encourage them to contribute to those who are part of their lives and to the world in which they live. This book is about celebrating human differences through inclusive outdoor programs. It is an important contribution to the ACA vision for the camp experience... enriching lives, changing the world.

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# Foreword II

by William A. Hillman, Jr.

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Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education,

1968-86; Consultant, camping and leisure education, 1987-present,

Institute for Career and Leisure Development

In a letter to his son written October 2, 1747, the Earl of Chesterfield said “Courts and camps are the only places to learn the world in.” This work, *Including Youth with Disabilities in Outdoor Programs*, is the culmination of over a quarter of a century of practice, research, teaching, and writing by Steve Brannan, the book’s editor, senior author, and principal investigator of the National Inclusive Practices Project (NICP) study underlying much of this work. Over this period, Dr. Brannan has conducted research, taught and has written extensively in leisure education, outdoor education, camping, and recreation for individuals with disabilities. He has perhaps inadvertently followed the thoughts that the Earl of Chesterfield uttered over 250 years ago.

Brannan and his fellow lead authors and NICP researchers Joel Arick, Ann Fullerton, Gary Robb, and Mike Bender are a multidiscipline team of professionals whose combined expertise greatly contributes to this publication. They have addressed the concerns and beliefs regarding the experiences of individuals with disabilities and their nondisabled peers in outdoor education-recreation settings over the last decade. Most significant is that this seminal effort is based largely on our country’s first nationwide study of inclusive practices and outcomes to be conducted in the camping and outdoor education realm.

This book also reflects an advancement in research and literature regarding the broad spectrum of camping and outdoor education/recreation that is and should be afforded to persons with disabilities. In the mid 1950s, descriptive camping articles on integration started to appear in several professional journals while research efforts remained demonstration in nature.

The recreation, therapeutic recreation, and special education fields started to take a serious look at the overall effects of camping and outdoor education on those individuals with disabilities when the federal government opened the door to provide funding through PL 90-140, Physical Education and Recreation for the Handicapped, in the research and training areas.

As early as 1972, The Program for Physical Education and Recreation in the then-Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (presently Office of Special Education Programs) was funded. Research and training projects soon followed, such as: Project Explore (Expanding Programs and Learning in Outdoor Recreation and Education) directed by Dr. Brannan at Portland State University; Project REACH (Resources for the Expansion & Advancement of Camping for the Handicapped) conducted by Dr. Dennis Vinton, University of Kentucky; Project TORCH (Teaching Outdoor Recreation Skills to Children with Handicaps) coordinated by Gary Robb, Indiana University; and Project STRETCH (Specialized Training in Recreation Education for Trainers of Children with Handicaps) spearheaded by the American Camping Association. These and other projects relating to outdoor education, recreation, and camping were the precursors to the in-depth research on camping and outdoor education for persons with disabilities sponsored by the Institute for Career and Leisure Education (ICLD)’s research team (i.e., Brannan, et al.) from 1993-2001.

From 1993-96, under the auspices of the ICLD, Brannan’s research team was formulated and investigated camper outcomes nationwide in American Camping Association (ACA) accredited specialized camps serving children, youth, and adults with disabilities. The findings from this study, the

National Camp Evaluation Project (NCEP), stimulated the same team from 1997-2000 to conduct the National Inclusive Camp Project (NICP) research being presented in this book.

The evolution of both federal involvement in camping for people with disabilities and improvement of research methodology related to these fields has resulted in important outcomes and practices on inclusion that are reflected in this work. We are now living in an increasingly diverse society that values inclusion of all peoples. This book's attention to normalized outdoor experiences in which youth of all abilities participate together is timely, realistic, and futuristic.

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# || Preface

The promise of inclusion for all of our nation's citizens, including persons with disabilities, is increasingly being realized in major areas of life (e.g., work, school, leisure). Still, inclusive programs are relatively new, so continued advocacy is important if persons with varying abilities are to be included in the mainstream of society. Educational programming in our schools over the last decade has evolved so that increased numbers of students with and without disabilities now participate and learn together in regular classroom settings. Recreational programming in our nation's communities is also embracing inclusion, but has not demonstrated the same level of change ensuring that individuals with disabilities recreate together with their peers without disabilities (Schleien, Ray, & Green, 1998). Gains have also been made in traditional outdoor programs (e.g., camps, outdoor schools), but such efforts to increase inclusive opportunities especially for persons with severe disabilities are still too limited (American Camping Association, 2001; Brannan, Arick, Fullerton, & Harris, 1997; Smith, Austin, & Kennedy, 2001).

This book, *Including Youth with Disabilities in Outdoor Programs*, addresses the need to further inclusive efforts by adding to our knowledge base effective practices on including young people with disabilities in traditional (regular) camp and school outdoor/environmental education programs. Multidisciplinary in focus, this publication is designed for a wide range of professionals, students, and others in human services disciplines who are interested in outdoor programs that incorporate inclusive practices.

The lead authors are all experienced educators and researchers and their contributions to the fields of camping, outdoor/environmental education, and leisure education span over 30 years. The lead authors and other contributing authors to the book are practicing professionals and collectively represent the fields of camping, outdoor/environmental education, general recreation, therapeutic recreation, adaptive physical education, general education, special education, and educational research.

Of special significance, this book is largely based on nationwide research conducted by the main authors who served as co-researchers from 1997-2000 in studying 14 traditional resident camps and outdoor schools that *include* campers and students with disabilities in their programs. The National Inclusive Camp Practices (NICP) project was the first in-depth study in the United States to describe such programs and to also determine that such programs have a positive effect on the growth and development of participants with and without disabilities (Brannan, Arick, Fullerton, & Harris, 2000).

Consequently, this book is unique in that it is outcome-based, using the research findings as a basis for the inclusive concepts, practices, and resources proposed by the authors. Developed from the study's results, comprehensive coverage is given to *Best Practices* identified in the study that foster successful inclusion in outdoor programs (e.g., philosophy, mission, instructional accommodations, staff training, parent communications).

The overall purpose of this publication is to provide a practical guide and resource that will assist various users in the study, planning, implementation, and/or evaluation of inclusive programs serving youth with and without disabilities. The primary goals of this book are to:

1. fill a major void that exists in today's literature relative to awareness, understanding, and appreciation of best practices, outcomes, and resources for including youth with disabilities in traditional outdoor programs.
2. validate the positive beliefs and values underlying organized outdoor programs for youth, and the importance of well-planned inclusive programs in promoting the social, skill, and character development of youth with disabilities (and without disabilities).
3. provide a multidisciplinary book that serves a wide range of professionals and other users across various settings who are interested in inclusive outdoor programs:

- (a) for the professions of organized camping (resident and day), outdoor and/or environmental education, general education, special education, adventure and experiential education, general physical education, adaptive physical education, general recreation, therapeutic recreation, and other related fields.
  - (b) for user groups such as educators, researchers, students, administrators, practitioners, and other groups of consumers in camps, centers, elementary-secondary schools, colleges, universities, community agencies, and professional associations.
4. promote efforts by professionals to assure that youth with disabilities are afforded increased opportunities to be fully included with peers without disabilities in traditional or mainstream outdoor programs.

A flow chart is presented in Figure 1 to assist readers in understanding the organization and nature of the book's content. An overall perspective of the book is provided by presenting each of the major areas of content with their related chapters. Figure 1 illustrates the logical progression of the book's content. Starting with Part I, Foundations, which includes Chapter 1-3, the reader is directed to the ensuing parts (Part II-V) and their related chapters. All parts of the book are organized in a logical sequence for user understanding and consideration. The illustration also helps the reader to appreciate the importance of all major areas of content and how each one contributes to achieving a more complete knowledge and appreciation of inclusion for outdoor programs.

In **Part I, Foundations (Chapters 1-3)**, the aim is to provide an overall understanding of the philosophy, purpose, research, legal basis, history, and benefits of inclusive outdoor programs proposed for youth with and without disabilities. **Part II, Best Practices for Inclusive Outdoor Programs (Chapters 4-5)**, builds on the NICP research results in proposing major practices or approaches that should be considered in developing and operating inclusive outdoor programs. Included in this discussion are curricular practices in both recreation (camp focus) and natural science-based (outdoor school) that support individual youth to successfully participate in the program. In **Part III, Profiles of Inclusive Outdoor Residential Programs (Chapters 6-10)**, camp directors describe the development and operation of five inclusive outdoor programs (four resident camps and one resident outdoor school). Practical information and examples of inclusive accommodations for campers/students with varying disabilities are included. Program profiles demonstrate how different organizations/agencies incorporate inclusive practices at their particular site to meet the needs of youth with and without disabilities. **Part IV, Outcome-Based Evaluation and Research and Future Perspectives (Chapters 11-12)**, stresses the importance of evaluation and methods for conducting outcome-based evaluation, with practical examples of instruments and assessments profiled for individual youth that illustrate the outcomes each camper/student may accrue from participating in inclusive outdoor programs. This is followed in Chapter 12 with a comprehensive coverage and discussion of the NICP research results, including both quantitative and qualitative data on youth outcomes. Administrators, researchers, and students will find the data especially helpful in understanding the research methodology and related findings, justifying inclusive program development, expanding their own evaluation and study, etc. The **Epilogue**, the final section of the book's narrative, provides some final thoughts on the NICP results and implications for the future of outdoor programs. **References** specific to the book's narrative conclude Part IV.

**Part V, Resources**, includes practical information on inclusion that is recommended for various users of the book by its various authors. Included are professional journals and periodicals, national organizations, instruments and data summary forms, sample job descriptions, sample camper information forms, and a listing of key persons and inclusive camps the NICP study from that could also serve as potential resources for interested readers.

The organization of the book also includes quotes by counselors and parents of campers/students with and without disabilities. The quotes were randomly chosen for distribution throughout the book (e.g., beginning of each chapter). Similarly, photos of youth participating in outdoor activities are randomly integrated in the book's chapters and sections. Both the quotes and photos are intended to humanize the book, visually demonstrate the values of outdoor programs for youth, and help further efforts to include youth of all abilities in outdoor programs.

## Figure 1 Reader's Organizational Guide

### Part I: Foundations

Focus: Purpose, Research, Laws, Benefits  
(Chapters 1-3)

### Part II: Best Practices for Inclusive Outdoor Programs

Focus: Inclusive Program Development  
(Chapter 4)

Focus: Inclusive Program Operation & Curricular Strategies  
(Chapter 5)

### Part III: Profiles of Inclusive Outdoor Resident Programs

Focus: Descriptions of five Agency-Sponsored Inclusive Outdoor Programs  
(Chapters 6-10)

Chapter 6  
Girl Scouts

Chapter 7  
Camp Fire USA

Chapter 8  
(MESD)  
Outdoor School

Chapter 9  
Camp Fire USA

Chapter 10  
Catholic Youth  
Organization  
(CYO)

### Part IV: Outcome-Based Evaluation and Research

Focus: Strategies for Program Evaluation, NICP research results, & Future Perspectives  
(Chapters 11-12)

### Epilogue

### References

### Part V: Resources

Focus: Recommended Practical Information Sources and Reference Materials

- A. Professional Journals/Periodicals
- B. National Organizations
- C. Instruments and Summary Profiles
- D. Sample Job Descriptions
- E. Sample Camper Information Forms
- F. Programs Studied
- G. Additional resources

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# Part I:

## Foundations







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# Chapter One

## Outdoor Programs and Persons with Disabilities

by Steve A. Brannan

[Mother's comments about the effects of an inclusive camp on her 12-year-old daughter with a disability (mental retardation)]

*There is no place she can be a typical child, except at this camp. It is always hard for her to relate to anything in her environment. Yet at camp, she is in an environment where she is a regular kid with a few extra differences, and different sides of her come out (e.g., like dancing at the campfire). When she arrives at camp, she gets out of the car and waves at her parents to leave (something she does nowhere else). She knows that she belongs while she is at camp. This camp is one of the most important things that happens to her all year round.*

### Beginning Thoughts

Testimonials from parents and professionals greatly contribute to the over-all understanding and appreciation of outdoor programs serving all participating youth. Such personal perspectives and direct observations from parents and counselors are an integral part of this book. Parental judgments, in particular, provide an important type of evidence regarding the positive impact of inclusive outdoor programs on the growth and development of campers and students with and without disabilities. These personal stories and statements from direct observers of youth also reflect and are consistent with recent changes in society that strongly embrace diversity and respect for individual differences.

The impetus for this book largely emanates from the authors' training, research, and personal experiences working directly with children, youth, and adults with disabilities (and their parents) in outdoor programs within each of their respective

professions. The belief that outdoor pursuits can contribute greatly to the growth and development of participants with disabilities spurred the authors to pursue this area of investigation nationwide. This interest led, first, to conducting outcome-based research specific to campers with disabilities served across the country in resident-specialized camp programs and, secondly, to a nationwide investigation of traditional resident-inclusive camp and outdoor school programs and their effects on participants of all abilities. The latter research coincides with the recent efforts to include youth with disabilities in traditional (general) camp and outdoor education programs, a movement still evolving that embodies many of the basic values that guide our country (i.e., human worth, equal rights, freedom of choice).

Even with such efforts, though, the implementation of inclusive practices for persons with disabilities in organized outdoor programs across the country is a relatively new happening, and,

as such, is still largely unrealized (Brannan, Arick, & Fullerton, 1997; Smith, Austin, & Kennedy, 2001). Although inclusive practices are expanding into major areas of living in our society (e.g., school, work, leisure), increased efforts are needed to communicate their contributions and to facilitate their implementation in traditional outdoor programs (e.g., camps, outdoor schools, outdoor education centers, etc.). A review of the literature and related research on the topic of inclusion specific to organized outdoor programs clearly indicates a need to create a greater awareness and understanding regarding inclusion and its potential impact on youth with disabilities (Roswal, Dowd, & Bynum, 1997; Schleien, McAvoy, Lais, & Rynders, 1993; Smith, Austin, & Kennedy, 2001).

### **Celebrating Human Differences**

An underlying philosophy of this book is that each person is unique. This viewpoint proposes that individual differences should be the common denominator in helping each of us to better understand and value our fellow human beings. Not only do persons differ in their human characteristics relative to sex, age, race, ethnicity, and so forth, they are also uniquely individual in terms of their physical characteristics, abilities, interests, values, and potentials. From this perspective, human variability is more truly the norm in our society and, specific to this book, persons with disabilities represent one important area of human variability.

Due in large part to national civil rights and legislative movements plus the advance of a more diverse citizenry, it appears that human differences are becoming more highly valued in our society than in the past. The inclusion of all citizens in society's major life domains (e.g., home, school, work, leisure, community) is part of this societal change and reflects how we respond to and adapt to our greater diversity. Evidence of such change is now demonstrated by the public's treatment of diverse groups of people, such as persons with disabilities, who are increasingly included in the mainstream of their communities and prized for the contributions they make to achieving a richer and more pluralistic society.

### **Outdoor Programs: Past and Present Perspectives**

#### *Traditional Perspectives: General population*

Participation in outdoor programs (or programs in the out-of-doors) is a traditional and popular form of education, recreation, and leisure for our nation's citizens. Collectively, organized resident camp and outdoor school programs provide an important service to campers and students in our country. These programs have been an established part of our culture since the early 1900s, providing away-from-home learning and living experiences to an extensive number of America's children and youth. Use of organized outdoor programs also has broad appeal to various agencies and professionals who strongly be-



lieve in the values and outcomes of such experiences. This is demonstrated by persons in various human service areas (e.g., camping, outdoor recreation, health, education, rehabilitation, special education) who use it as a medium for meeting the needs of diverse populations in our society (e.g., people with disabilities).

*Traditional Perspectives: Persons with Disabilities.*

Strong agreement has existed for years among professionals in these human service disciplines attesting to the positive benefits of outdoor experiences for children, youth, and adults with varying disabilities. A review of professional literature over the years reveals there are many proponents of outdoor programs who declare that such experiences produce desired changes in the growth and development of participants with disabilities (e.g., cognitive, psychomotor, emotional). Across various fields of human service, professionals report that outdoor programming is effective with persons representing a wide range of disabling conditions in numerous areas of development, such as self-reliance, self-esteem, and social skills, and leisure time skills (Brannan, 1981, 1984, 1990; Cassidy, 1982; Compton, 1984; Dattilo, 1987; Ewert, 1987; Frant, Roland, & Schempp, 1982; Havens, 1985; Hourcade, 1977; James, 1987; Nesbitt, Hansen, Bates, & Neal, 1972; Robb & Ewert, 1987; Robb, Havens, & Witman, 1983; Shasby, Heuchert, & Gansneder, 1984; Sugarman, 1988).

*Research Needs Regarding Outdoor Programs*

*Camps and outdoor school programs have, for over 60 years, claimed to provide unique learning experiences for youth that cannot be replicated in the classroom. However, there has not been substantial research to prove or disprove the various claims that outdoor experiences develop, among other things, self-reliance, self-esteem, and social growth among campers and students. Every year, camp and outdoor school programs engage literally thousands*

*of our nation's youth in outdoor programs that complement and support traditional classroom learning. While we have developed many effective instruments to measure academic learning in the classroom, we continue to provide outdoor-based programs only because we know "in our hearts" that they are having a significant impact on youth. It is time that we determine the specific nature of this impact using scientifically validated instruments. (G. M. Robb, personal communication, October 4, 1992)*

As indicated, an extensive amount of literature exists describing and supporting the benefits of outdoor programs for persons with disabilities, but until recently, a major portion of such information accumulated over time within various disciplines is often based on what researchers commonly term as being *soft* data. In part, this indicates that there has been a void of well-designed research using validated instrumentation to determine the actual effects or outcomes of outdoor programs (e.g., resident camping, day camping, outdoor/environmental education, adventure/challenge) with persons who are disabled. In general, such a void makes it difficult to clearly substantiate many of the popular and commonly held beliefs that outdoor programs provide significant benefits to individuals with disabilities.

Although personal, social, and leisure skills, and other achievements have been widely reported for persons with disabilities as a result of their participation in various forms of organized outdoor programs, validated research results are often lacking to support such claims. Robb and Ewert (1987) reported that gains in the affective domain or social/emotional area (e.g., self-esteem, valuing, interests, social skills) represent the most common area of benefit reported for persons with disabilities participating in outdoor programs with challenging activities, but they also

indicated that validated instrumentation to evaluate and objectively confirm such growth with persons mildly to severely impaired is virtually nonexistent. Major barriers that have traditionally limited research in determining the benefits of various forms of outdoor programs on children and youth with disabilities include: (a) the lack of well-designed, systematic, and programmatic research; (b) the nonresearch orientation of many professionals in outdoor programs; (c) the dearth of well-conceptualized, reliable, and validated instrumentation; (d) the measurement problems inherent in assessing certain populations of persons with disabilities (e.g., youth with communication problems); (e) the limitations related to number of subjects, types of disabilities, and geographics; and (f) the failure to address the generalization of acquired knowledge and skills to home and community settings (Brannan, 1990; Ewert, 1987; Howe, 1984; Iso-Ahola, 1988; Robb & Ewert, 1987; Schleien & Yermakoff, 1983; Smith, Austin, & Kennedy, 1983, 2001; Witt, 1988).

### **Nationwide Studies: Response to Research Needs and Outdoor Programs**

Exceptions to some of the research limitations discussed above exist and include, in part, the recent nationwide investigations by Brannan, Arick, and Fullerton (1998) and Brannan, Arick, Fullerton, and Harris (2000) who reported on nationwide studies of organized outdoor programs: specialized resident camps serving campers with disabilities (i.e., National Camp Evaluation Project, NCEP, 1993-1996), and inclusive resident camps and outdoor schools (i.e., National Inclusive Camp Practices, NICP, 1997-2000). In both studies, the researchers (co-authors of this book) partnered with outdoor program staff to address many of the research needs mentioned above, to include the development and use of validated instruments to evaluate and objectively substantiate growth outcomes for participants (campers) with disabilities in *specialized* camps (NCEP), and for participants (campers and students) with and without disabilities in *inclusive* camps and school-sponsored outdoor/environmental education programs (NICP).

Although both the NCEP and NICP were descriptive rather than experimental studies, they were rigorously designed studies that within their parameters responded to needs in the field and followed professional recommendations to study the growth outcomes of persons with disabilities attending organized outdoor programs. Additionally, the NICP study addressed inclusive practices and outcomes both for youth with and without disabilities. Figure 1.1 provides a summative listing of the research methods employed by both the NCEP and NICP projects that investigated resident outdoor programs and their effects on participants in *specialized* and *inclusive* programs, respectively.

#### *National Camp Evaluation Project (NCEP)*

In cooperation with the American Camping Association (ACA) from 1993-1996, the NCEP studied *specialized* resident camps serving campers with disabilities. This nationwide investigation was conducted across the country in 14 states, and included 15 ACA-accredited resident camps and 2,194 children, youth, and adult campers (subjects) with disabilities. This study employed “best practices” methodology and validated instrumentation at each site in assessing all subjects. The NCEP results revealed that increased independence, self-esteem, social, and recreation skills were predominant outcomes for campers with disabilities who participated in one- to two- week resident camp programs, with one-week programs being the predominant model. Of particular significance, these gains carried over (generalized) to the home environment as judged by the campers’ parents. The NCEP findings also strongly support the use of both professional and parent opinions in determining the significance and impact of resident outdoor programming on persons with disabilities.

#### *National Survey Identifying Inclusive Camps*

Although the NCEP findings on resident outdoor programs are critically important, they were specific to *specialized*, not *inclusive* programs. In responding to national needs regarding the lack of information on inclusive outdoor programs, a co-sponsored NCEP and ACA nationwide survey of traditional camps was undertaken in 1995-1996 to identify ACA sites that *include* campers

## Figure 1.1 Responding to Research Needs: Outdoor Programs and Persons with Disabilities

### Research Methods in the NCEP and NICP Studies

- Used carefully designed, systematic, and programmatic research
- Incorporated both quantitative and qualitative measures to evaluate program effects on camper/student growth
- Studied residential programs and participant outcomes nationwide (geographic representation), included significant numbers of subjects, and studied varying populations of campers/students with disabilities (i.e., different ages, types of disabilities, and levels of functioning (e.g., subjects with mild to severe disabilities)
- Included only residential camp/outdoor school programs with one to two week sessions (primarily one week sessions), plus all programs met desired site and program standards (i.e., ACA accreditation)
- Developed and employed well-conceptualized, reliable, and validated instrumentation appropriate for evaluating the effects of outdoor programs on both the affective (i.e., social/emotional) and outdoor skill dimensions of campers/students
- Conducted research with professional researchers experienced in outdoor programs
- Extended on-site assessments to include home/community by using parents of campers/students to evaluate the impact of outdoor programming on their child (i.e., extent to which positive changes in camper/student behavior achieved during the program generalizes to home and community settings)
- Researched outdoor programs benefits across campers/students with and without disabilities (only NICP study for campers without disabilities)

with and without disabilities in their summer program (i.e., mainstream or regular camps that primarily serve campers without disabilities). Of the 162 ACA-accredited camps surveyed whose membership information indicated they provided inclusive programs, only 31 of the 71 camps responding were judged by the researchers to be inclusive (i.e., campers with and without disabilities commonly attend the same camp session, cabin together, and participate together in the same camp activities). The results of this survey revealed, in part, that inclusive camp programs are beginning to emerge nationwide and that they desire additional information and support to assist them in conducting and evaluating their inclusive efforts (Brannan, Arick, Fullerton, & Harris, 1997). The identification of inclusive outdoor programs from this survey was used as the basis for selecting and recruiting traditional resident camps and outdoor schools for continued research.

### *National Inclusive Camp Practices (NICP)*

Subsequent NICP research in cooperation with the ACA involved inclusive outdoor programs and was conducted across 13 states from 1997-2000. The NICP study focused on inclusive practices and participant outcomes for 742 youth (subjects) with and without disabilities attending 14 traditional camp and outdoor school programs. All sites were selected from the prior NCEP/ACA national survey of accredited outdoor sites/programs that employ inclusive practices (e.g., YWCA, Camp Fire USA, 4-H, Bradford Woods). Incorporating prior NCEP study methods (see Figure 1.1), the NICP research team (authors) used validated measures that included objective assessments and individual case studies in a nationwide effort to identify inclusive practices and determine their outdoor program effects on both groups of youth. A unique data-based assessment used in the NICP research included taking video samples of youth to objec-

tively determine what growth, if any, in social interactions occurs in inclusive settings for all youth studied.

The overall results of the NICP's research is presented in Chapter 12. The data collected and analyzed indicate that youth with and without disabilities made significant growth in various developmental areas (e.g., self-reliance, social interactions, communication, self-esteem) in resident one-week summer camp and outdoor school programs. *A major contribution of the study is confirmation of the outcomes that can accrue to youth with and without disabilities who participate together in traditional resident camp and school outdoor/environmental education programs that employ inclusive practices.* Additionally, the NICP team studied the programs of all participating sites and produced extensive information on *inclusive practices* that are discussed and presented for use by persons interested in outdoor programs for youth (see chapters 4-10).

### *Emerging Directions and Advocacy for Outdoor Programs*

Significant societal needs still exist to expand inclusive opportunities for our nation's citizens who are disabled, to include persons of all ages, types of disabilities, and ability levels. Such efforts should enable youth and adults with disabilities to participate alongside their peers who are nondisabled in the full range of organized outdoor programs and activities (e.g., outdoor recreation, camping, outdoor/environmental education) offered for the general population in their respective communities (Schleien, Ray, & Green, 1997; Smith, Austin, & Kennedy, 2001).

As previously discussed, there are longstanding beliefs that experiences in the out-of-doors are beneficial for persons who are disabled. Appreciation of these beliefs, awareness that persons with disabilities have traditionally been limited access to such experiences, and recognition of human and civil rights of such citizens are relevant reasons to support inclusive outdoor programs for persons of all abilities. What is particularly stressed in this book, though, is that emerging research is helping to confirm the worth of organized outdoor programs in producing positive outcomes for all participants. This position is especially strengthened by the authors' nationwide research on inclusive camp and out-

door school programs (i.e., NICP), indicating the positive impact such experiences have on the personal, social, and skill development of youth with disabilities. Of added significance, the NICP research also indicates that inclusive practices benefit both youth with and without disabilities who participate together in outdoor programs (Brannan et al., 2000). In concert with the various societal needs and trends on inclusion and the support by recent nationwide research (e.g., NICP study), the underlying purpose of the book is to promote the inclusion of youth with disabilities in organized outdoor programs for the purpose of enhancing the life experience of *all* participants.

The authors' position is that inclusive outdoor programs, whatever their main mission and curricular thrust, can play a major role in our country as models for the expression of human rights, the respect of individual differences, and the development of attitudes and values that honor diversity.

Responding to such needs and research, *Including Youth with Disabilities in Outdoor Programs* should serve as a practical guide and resource to a wide range of professionals and other users interested in inclusive outdoor programs that serve all youth. For all users, the book is intended to help increase their awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of best practices, outcomes, and resources for including youth with disabilities in outdoor programs. The content is comprehensive and multidisciplinary, and offers information pertinent to persons studying outdoor programs and/or working directly or indirectly in this field.

### **Priorities for Inclusive Outdoor Programs**

A discussion of concepts germane to organized outdoor programs that serve youth with disabilities is presented below. The discussion is relevant to inclusive outdoor programs, and because of this relationship, is also relevant to youth without disabilities. These concepts reflect a combination of underlying beliefs and research results that have been gleaned from the literature previously reported and judged as important by the authors through their own observations, teaching, and research in serving persons with disabilities.

### *Collaboration*

Meaningful communication and working relationships among boards, directors, staff, counselors, parents, volunteers, participants, and others are needed for the successful operation of organized outdoor programs. As further discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, inclusive outdoor programs have needs similar to noninclusive ones, with collaboration being an even higher priority when dealing with change (e.g., inclusion) that commonly requires adaptations in philosophy and actions on the part of the individuals and groups involved. On another level, close collaboration is also needed among related disciplines and professionals interested in various aspects of outdoor programs, to include the potential outcomes and practices of inclusive programs serving persons with disabilities. Meaningful collaboration across disciplines and agencies is critically important in guiding various users (e.g., practitioners, educators, researchers, students) and others in understanding and facilitating the inclusion of youth with disabilities in organized camping, outdoor education, and related outdoor programs.

This publication is intended, in part, to help various users acquire a better appreciation and understanding of the importance of a collaborative approach to inclusive outdoor programming. Toward this end, the development of this book employed a *collaborative effort* that involved professionals in the fields of camping, outdoor/environmental education, recreation, general education, physical education, special education, and therapeutic recreation. Such collaboration resulted from the authors' participation together over several years as interested educators and researchers in nationwide studies and training projects involving campers with disabilities. This collaboration also occurred because we are passionate about the potential impact that various professionals, disciplines, and agencies can have on the lives of young people in our country who participate in outdoor programs.

Lastly, this work reflects efforts by an interdisciplinary team of professionals with varying types of expertise and experience in inclusive outdoor programs, who were active participants in the collaborative research that supports the concepts and recommendations proposed. It is

hoped the collective perspectives of the authors will help demonstrate the collaborative spirit that is important for professionals, parents, and other groups to employ in the study, planning, development, and/or evaluation of inclusive outdoor programs.

### *Youth Development Outcomes*

Increased efforts are now being made by various institutions and organizations in our society to foster positive youth development outcomes through community efforts that also include organized outdoor programs. A major impetus for such efforts has been the many problems youth are now faced with in our nation's communities (e.g., poverty, drugs, school failure, unstable homes, violence), the subsequent high-risk behaviors they are demonstrating, and the obvious need for helping them achieve a more healthy development. At the same time in today's world of increased competition, stringent budgets, and performance standards, youth-serving agencies devoted to fostering healthy development (e.g., camps, parks and recreation, outdoor schools, outdoor education centers) need strong justification for their programs. Increasingly, they are faced with documenting the positive growth outcomes they promise for the youth they serve as a major criterion for parent, administrative, and financial support. Fortunately, research and evaluation can play a major role in contributing to the understanding and knowledge regarding the positive impact of outdoor programs on the development of youth (e.g., campers, students).

Youth development that includes character attributes has emerged as a high priority, with extensive efforts being expended to identify, confirm, and measure desired outcomes for our nation's youth through research and evaluation (e.g., North American Association for Environmental Education [NAAEE] and National Environmental Education and Training Foundation [NEETF], 2001; Search Institute, 2000). The Search Institute, for example, is oriented toward advancing the healthy development of children and adolescents through applied research, publications, training, etc., and has developed, tested, communicated, and made available to interested groups their organization's package of 40 developmental assets for young people. Closely related, the ACA, a major national leader in camping, is



accessing resources such as the Search Institute, and pursuing multiple strategies (e.g., research and evaluation, staff training, dissemination) with the goal of helping youth to achieve the positive outcomes this organization believes important to their development and productive adulthood (American Camping Association, 2001).

### *Outcomes-based evaluation*

Although the focus on measurement to determine youth development outcomes is a relatively new trend in organized camping and outdoor school programs, it is an established practice across public school academic programs, especially as a result of the education reform movement with its focus on establishing student achievement standards that require higher levels of accountability and testing. Measurement to determine youth outcomes is most notable in the field of special education (education of students with disabilities) where outcomes-based evaluation (and research) have been in effect for over 25 years. With the passage in 1975 of the landmark legislation of the Education for all Handicapped Children Act, performance-based (i.e., outcomes-based) evaluation has been required under the law for each special education student's individual education program (IEP).

Thus, the NICP research team's experience in special education and outdoor program assessment, evaluation, and research lent itself to the study of youth outcomes in traditional resident camp and outdoor school programs that are inclusive. Overall, the nationwide study included the identification of inclusive program practices and their impact on the growth and development of youth with and without disabilities. Thus, this book is *outcome-based*. Of particular importance in determining program impact on youth (i.e., positive outcomes for growth and development), the NICP study used valid and reliable measures to determine the areas of growth achieved by such campers/students. *In short, by employing validated instruments, combining quantitative with qualitative measures, observing campers/students via video, and surveying parents, counselors, specialists, and administrators, the NICP research revealed that positive developmental outcomes accrue for youth participating in inclusive outdoor programs.* A review of the various reports and results from this research in Chapter 12 will help users better understand and

appreciate how research relates to the inclusive practices identified and how they can best utilize such information.

### *Best Practices*

A review of pertinent literature on inclusivity in outdoor programs indicates that the concept of inclusion needs to extend beyond achieving physical access and integration; rather, inclusion needs to focus specifically on inclusive *practices* that foster desired growth and development outcomes for youth with and without disabilities (McAvoy & Schleien, 2001; Roswal, Dowd, & Bynum, 1997; Schleien, McAvoy, Lais, & Rynders, 1993; Schleien, Ray, & Green, 1997; Solis, 2001; Smith, Austin, & Kennedy, 2001). Based on such understandings plus the authors' NCEP and NICP research and their training of professionals in school and outdoor program settings, *Including Youth with Disabilities in Outdoor Programs* employs a comprehensive approach to encompass major factors that determine successful inclusion (see Chapters 4-5). Key elements or *best practices* for the successful planning and operation of inclusive outdoor programs are addressed (e.g., program mission, leadership, staff training, instruction and accommodations, evaluation). These practices specifically relate to the NICP findings and recommendations resulting from studying a select group of ACA-accredited camps and outdoor school programs across the country.

In order to merge theory with practice and meet the needs of a wide range of users, the *best practices* proposed in this book are also presented in conjunction with extensive descriptions (profiles) of how different types of outdoor programs (i.e., summer camp, outdoor school) employ them, with each site reflecting its own particular region, agency, philosophy, curriculum, camper/students, and inclusive approaches (see Chapters 6-10). Since inclusive outdoor programs need tools for measuring their inclusive practices, the NICP project also developed an instrument for counselors to use in determining the kind of, and extent to which, instructional supports or accommodations are needed and used with campers/students in program activities (see Appendix C for the Inclusive Practices Inventory (IPI) and Chapter 12 for the related research results on inclusive practices across all outdoor sites studied).

### *Residential Settings and Youth*

The authors' coverage of organized resident programs in the out-of-doors reflects their basic belief that these types of programs provide living and learning experiences that are powerful and desirable in terms of their impact on participants (i.e., youth outcomes). Although the content on inclusive practices is directed toward inclusive practices for youth in resident outdoor settings, this approach isn't meant to negate the relevance of related day outdoor programs for this population. Rather, such a focus reflects the authors' belief system that mirrors the historical reflections of other professionals, plus the analysis of data from their nationwide research in resident camp and outdoor/ environmental settings (specialized and inclusive). As discussed in Chapter 3, the selection of resident outdoor programs for the NICP study recognizes the dynamics of such programs and their extraordinary potential for impacting the positive growth and development of campers/students they serve (e.g., personal, social, cognitive, life skills).

Similarly, the book's focus on youth doesn't indicate a lesser concern for other age groups. The authors choose to focus on youth as young people of school age rather than including persons in early childhood or adulthood. In other words, the focus on youth is on the early period of an individual's development, or between childhood and maturity. Vigor, freshness, enthusiasm, and flexibility for change are characteristics commonly associated with youth. This emphasis on youth also acknowledges that they are the most popular age group served by camps and outdoor schools today. Of special importance, they are an age group researched by the authors (i.e., NCEP & NICP) who made significant gains in growth, indicating that their developmental level holds promise for program impact.

### *Multidiscipline/Interdiscipline Participation*

An increased awareness is needed in many disciplines regarding the extensive opportunities that exist for using the out-of-doors in promoting the positive development of youth with and without disabilities. Many user groups can profit from educational information regarding the impact of inclusive programming and practices on the development of youth with disabilities, and their respective roles in serving this population.

Since the current level of multidisciplinary involvement in outdoor programs is still limited nationwide, the use of organized *out-of-door programs* as an effective educational, recreational, rehabilitative, and therapeutic medium deserves more attention. Expanding dialogue among professionals across related disciplines is a critically important step in this direction and remains a major challenge, although it's contribution has been recognized for a number of years:

*There is definite need to improve interdisciplinary cooperation and administrative leadership among the various professionals involved in outdoor programs. In terms of "teaming", professionals representing therapeutic recreation, camping, outdoor recreation, outdoor education, psychotherapy, rehabilitation, holistic health, special education, experiential education, and adaptive physical education are all involved in various aspects of outdoor programming, but cooperative program planning, implementation, and evaluation are often nonexistent (Brannan, Roland, Smith, & Rillo, 1983, pp. 1-2).*

Resources for encouraging communication across disciplines involved in the out-of-doors are presented in Appendix B, such as the Coalition for Education in the Outdoors (see [www.outdooredcoalition.org](http://www.outdooredcoalition.org), 2002) whose membership supports biennial research symposiums and proceedings (e.g., 2002 symposium held at the Bradford Woods campus of Indiana University), plus its quarterly publication of the journal *Taproot* covering environmental and outdoor education topics (see [www.cortland.edu/ceo/](http://www.cortland.edu/ceo/), 2002). Possibilities for impacting youth through outdoor programs are limitless and awaiting creative efforts. One major approach various fields or disciplines could take is to utilize the out-of-doors as an effective medium to meet current-day service learning goals for the student populations

they serve (e.g., general education, special education, therapeutic recreation, physical education). The potential is enormous for increased interdisciplinary collaboration and partnerships among related professions that often serve similar populations of youth. For example, increased communication and collaboration among special educators, outdoor/ environmental educators, and camp personnel could be instrumental in improving the coordination and quality of services to youth served in summer camps and school-sponsored outdoor programs (e.g., student IEP development, enhancement, monitoring, etc.).

Table 1.1 presents the major professions, organizations, related professionals, and other users who could benefit from this publication individually and collectively. The listing of user groups and personnel is a starting point and is not intended to be complete. Rather, the table is

intended to demonstrate the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary potential of utilizing outdoor programs to serve youth of all abilities.

### Proposal: A Holistic Approach to Outdoor Programs

#### Purpose

In closing this chapter, a future approach to outdoor programs that meets the needs of youth of all abilities is proposed. A holistic approach is recommended for serving youth with disabilities in organized resident outdoor programs (inclusive and noninclusive). Such an approach recognizes the wholeness and interrelatedness of experiences that can occur for individuals in planned outdoor pursuits. As indicated in Table 1.1, the dynamic nature of the out-of-

**Table 1.1**  
**Recommended Users of Outdoor Programs**

| PROFESSIONS/ORGANIZATIONS  | PROFESSIONALS/PERSONNEL  |
|--|--|
| <b>Organized Camping</b><br>(Resident & Days Camps, Public & Private, Sectarian & Religious, etc.)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Camp Administrators &amp; Directors</li> <li>• Program Coordinators &amp; Supervisors</li> <li>• TR Specialists, Activity Instructors, Lead Counselors</li> </ul>                             |
| <b>Parks &amp; Recreation</b><br>(Outdoor Recreation)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• P&amp;R Administrators &amp; Directors</li> <li>• Program Coordinators &amp; Supervisors</li> <li>• TR Specialists, Activity Instructors, Lead Counselors</li> </ul>                          |
| <b>School Outdoor/Environmental Education</b><br>(Elem/Middle/HS)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrators &amp; Directors</li> <li>• Program Coordinators &amp; Supervisors</li> <li>• Instructors, teachers, Lead Counselors</li> </ul>   |
| <b>General Education</b><br>(Elem/Middle/HS)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Principals</li> <li>• Program Coordinators &amp; Supervisors</li> <li>• Regular Classroom Teachers</li> <li>• Science Teachers</li> <li>• Regular &amp; Adapted PE Teachers</li> </ul> |
| <b>Special Education</b><br>(Elem/Middle/HS)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Education Directors &amp; Supervisors</li> <li>• Special Education Teachers &amp; Consultants</li> <li>• Instructional aides</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Higher Education</b><br>(Includes all disciplines & professionals listed above & relates to both teaching and research)                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College/University Professors &amp; Instructors</li> <li>• College/University Students</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Community Agencies</b><br>(Non-Profit/For Profit & Public/Private Organizations who sponsor Outdoor Programs for Youth) [YMCA, Campfire Girls & Boys, etc.] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrators &amp; Program Coordinators</li> <li>• Boards of Directors</li> <li>• Instructional Staff</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Professional Organizations</b><br>[ACA, NRPA, CEC, NTRS, AEE, AAHPERD, CEO, etc.]   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative Personnel</li> <li>• Program &amp; Staff Development Personnel</li> <li>• Editors &amp; Publication Personnel</li> </ul>   |

doors allows for and encourages the cooperation and integration of professional efforts in camping, outdoor recreation, therapeutic recreation, outdoor/environmental education, special education, physical education, rehabilitation, etc. because many such disciplines have similar aims for youth (i.e., improving a person's cognitive, social, emotional, physical and/or spiritual development). Instead of compartmentalizing and confining the outdoor program within the parameters of specific disciplines (e.g., education vs. recreation), professionals across disciplines should take advantage of the out-of-doors to *capture and maximize* such experiences for youth, and not be limited by traditional program discipline and philosophy. Since outdoor activities can provide unlimited opportunities in terms of facilitating desired outcomes for youth, a holistic approach to outdoor programming will allow professionals across disciplines to pursue a broader range of experiences that meet the individual needs and interests of participants of all abilities.

#### *Maximizing Youth Outcomes*

It is proposed that desired youth outcomes in general areas of development can be achieved by professionals across related disciplines interested in providing camp, outdoor/environmental education, adventure/challenge, and other types of organized outdoor programs. Such a holistic philosophy doesn't negate emphasizing or entertaining certain program priorities (e.g., natural science curriculum orientation in outdoor school programs) or the importance of location, resources, personnel, and other related factors that can influence program directions. Rather, a holistic approach to organized resident outdoor programs recognizes the potential outcomes common to most outdoor experiences and makes conscious efforts to acknowledge their value and incorporate them into the curriculum so participants will receive a more comprehensive program of living and learning experiences, regardless of program philosophy or orientation.

As previously stressed, it is important that increased interdisciplinary planning, implementation, evaluation, and research occur between professionals involved with organized outdoor programming for youth. Camp staff, outdoor recreation specialists, special education teachers,

outdoor/environmental education instructors, etc., commonly operate independently of each other, even though the outcomes or growth for youth are similar and the same youth are often served across programs. There is already widespread agreement across disciplines that fun, enjoyment, and adventure are common outcomes for youth in all types of outdoor programs and for participants of all abilities.

#### *Integrating Recreation and Education*

Increased collaboration between outdoor schools and camp programs is feasible and especially warranted. Outdoor education programs tend to focus on "learning about" and camp programs usually stress "recreating in" the natural environment, but in both types of programs, youth are participating in educational and recreational experiences. This is understandable because out-of-doors activities encourage the integration of educational and recreational aims. In an outdoor education program, every academic subject related to the natural environment can be enhanced by directing such learning in conjunction with recreation or leisure activities and, conversely, in camp programs, common outdoor recreation activities (e.g., swimming, boating, hiking) can be enhanced through better understanding, appreciation, and care of our natural resources.

Resident outdoor programs, regardless of their program focus (general camping, sports, music, adventure/challenge, spiritual, computers) often take place in a natural environment accompanied by recreation-related opportunities. It is suggested, then, that the "outdoor experience" for youth, regardless of the sponsoring program and its orientation, address multiple goals and objectives through the medium of recreation. Youth attending outdoor school and summer camp programs have numerous opportunities for acquiring knowledge and appreciation of their natural surroundings through outdoor recreation activities. For example, with appropriate planning, youth attending such outdoor programs can gain new understandings about water, soil, animals, plants, and the atmosphere through planned recreation pursuits, such as walks, hikes, games, bird watching, tracking, outdoor cooking, swimming, horseback riding, and boating. As an example, Figure 1.2 is a practical illustration of how discovering the unique characteristic of water (e.g.,

## Figure 1.2 Using Recreation to Achieve Outdoor Education Aims

### Learning About Qualities and Effects of Water

- Wading or swimming in a pool or lake
- Dangling one's foot in the water at lakeside
- Throwing objects across a stream or lake surface
- Drinking hot tea or hot chocolate
- Purifying water from a lake or stream
- Heating water over a campfire
- Paddling a canoe or rowing a boat
- Walking or hiking among wet grass, trees, etc.
- Wearing a jacket at night that collects dew
- Burning wet vs. dry wood for the campfire
- Extinguishing a campfire with water
- Floating on an innertube or flotation device
- Using a bobber and shot when fishing
- Watering the horses
- Putting a fly over a tent to protect it from rain

color, wetness, movement, temperature) can be achieved through recreation-related activities common to many outdoor programs.

Embracing a holistic philosophy enables professionals and others to understand and appreciate the multiple values and outcomes of organized outdoor programs, with special recognition of the potential of recreation as a medium to achieve more comprehensive outcomes for campers and students. Employing this viewpoint, appropriate planning is carried out to achieve the program's primary aims, plus collateral (related) goals and objectives are also addressed to more fully meet the individual needs and interests of youth.

#### *Holistic Principles*

The 13 principles described below are characteristic of outdoor programs that employ a holistic approach to serving youth of all abilities. It is proposed that outdoor programming that meets the needs of persons with disabilities is an inherent part of a holistic approach. In concert with the holistic theme, the principles below are

not totally independent and often interface. Their development and articulation has evolved over 20 years of service, training, and research by the author in outdoor programs serving youth and adults with disabilities. There is longstanding experience and agreement among professionals across various related disciplines regarding many of these principles. There is also substantial support for various principles from recent research on resident outdoor programs serving persons with and without disabilities (e.g., NCEP & NICP studies). The summative listing of holistic principles is intended to be a rationale, guide, and reference for persons interested in the inclusive, dynamic potential of outdoor programs for serving youth with and without disabilities:

1. *The person is considered in totality or as a whole.* Cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual aspects of one's being are valued and addressed in the program within the parameters of its doctrine or mission. Consideration of the whole person also reflects a respect for the person as a unique human being with in-

dividual differences. A holistic approach to outdoor programming, then, embraces diversity and the movement to include individuals with disabilities in traditional outdoor programs.

2. A “whole” curriculum is needed for the “whole” person. Regardless of discipline and program orientation (e.g., recreation, education, rehabilitation, therapy), each person has individual needs, interests, and abilities related to their cognitive, physical, social, emotional and spiritual self that should be considered, if feasible, in outdoor programming. Outdoor experiences should be recognized for their many values across disciplines, fostering interdisciplinary participation and the provision of more comprehensive learning experiences to meet the individual needs and interests of youth.
4. *The out-of-doors is inherently appealing and therapeutic because of the fun, adventure, joy, and wonderment often associated with experiencing the natural environment.* Direct observations and contact with trees, animals, rocks, streams, lakes, beaches, wind, mountains, and/or deserts are always new, refreshing, and exhilarating. Such opportunities are highly relevant for urban youth, students with disabilities, and other youth groups who are often experientially deprived because they lack opportunities to interact with and enjoy the natural environment.
5. *Exposure to the out-of-doors captures participants’ intrinsic interest in nature and provides the logical setting for developing awareness, appreciation, and care of the natural environment.* Whether through separate classes and/or integrated into more informal outdoor educa-



3. *Resident outdoor experiences, in particular, enable youth to participate in a comprehensive or “total” living and learning environment that deals with life-skill preparation.* Twenty-four-hour living in resident summer camp and/or outdoor school programs commonly include a wide range of experiences and opportunities for life skill preparation that are typically unattainable in home, school, or community settings (e.g., self-help, social, applied academics, recreation, domestic, physical, and work skills).
6. *The variety and stimulating effects of program activities within the natural environment often serve to motivate youth to employ more independent and self-initiated behaviors.* This is extremely important for many youth with disabilities, especially individuals with more severe impairments, who often need increased

motivation in order to approach new learning situations and to expand their repertoire of life experiences.

7. *Social development through resident outdoor programming is a major outcome for many youth.* Extensive opportunities for social skill development are offered through interactions and interdependence with peers and adults as a part of the community life of resident outdoor programs (e.g., cabin living, meals, campfire, cooperative activities). Important interpersonal/social growth opportunities occur for both youth with and without disabilities.
8. *Understanding and appreciation of each person's abilities, interests, potentials, and worth as a human being are furthered.* The more informal, social, and relaxed living common to resident outdoor programs brings youth *closer together* and encourages them to open up and express their individual selves. This *outdoor atmosphere* promotes increased awareness, respect, and acceptance regarding each other on the part of all participants. Across outdoor programs, extensive opportunities occur for positive camper-camper, student-student, counselor-camper, camper-counselor, counselor-student, student-counselor, teacher-student, and student-teacher interactions. New interpersonal relationships develop on-site and often transfer back to the home, school, and community (e.g., new friendships among youth with and without disabilities in the neighborhood or school, strengthened relationships between student and teacher at school).
9. *An outdoor program is an effective medium for employing a multi-sensory approach in exploring, investigating, and learning about one's natural environment (e.g., sight, tactual, olfactory, taste, auditory).* Opportunities abound in the out-of-doors for using this approach and accommodating youth with different learning needs and styles. Many campers/students often need more concrete experiences to enjoy, appreciate, and understand their environment (e.g., a group of trees, a formation of rocks, or a pebble beach invite exploration and the use of various senses). Especially for youth with more severe disabilities (e.g. multiple disabilities), learning about a tree by feeling, smelling, and tasting is an effective and meaningful procedure.
10. *Generalization and transfer of learning are facilitated because campers/students have numerous opportunities to acquire and apply their knowledge and skills to solve interesting and "real-life" challenges in outdoor program settings.* Managing one's own personal needs (i.e., gear, meals, bedding, etc.), employing orienteering skills to follow the correct trail, estimating time to and from an activity, measuring ingredients for meal preparation, describing the smell, texture, and beauty of a tree, and cooperating with peers to perform an outdoor task are all examples of functional activities in which youth apply knowledge, skills and values in different settings and under different conditions at camp or outdoor school.
11. *Outdoor programs enable the schools and other agencies to extend, complement, and reinforce their academic, social, and behavioral goals for youth.* Outdoor programs provide an integrating medium for applying various areas of knowledge and skills deemed important for youth. Although relevant to all participants, outdoor programs have a special significance for youth with disabilities who can further their achievement of school-required IEP objectives (e.g., reading, math, science, behavioral) through applied learning experiences in out-of-door activities. In order to acquire desired knowledge and skills, many students with disabilities need specific and concrete instruction (i.e., functional activities) with extended opportunities for learning. The meaningfulness of planned outdoor experiences is an essential factor in helping motivate these youth (and other youth) to achieve desired growth outcomes.
12. *Character development (self-determination, self-reliance, respect, self-esteem, responsibility, respect, cooperativeness) is fostered through individual and group participation across program activities.* The focus on individuals, providing them opportunities for choice, and ensuring their successful participation are overriding features of programs in the out-of-doors. Activities can be readily adapted to meet each person's ability and interest level and, coupled

with guiding the participant to achieve, helps facilitate personal growth. Each camper/student assuming responsibilities, being considered a valued member of the group, and contributing to the success of the group and the camp community as a whole helps build desired character traits.

13. *Planned outdoor pursuits can contribute significantly to meeting the lifespan needs (e.g., work, domestic, leisure) of all youth, to include individuals with disabilities who often have more limited life experiences in mainstream community programs (e.g., camping, outdoor school, parks and recreation).* A holistic approach to outdoor programs should include using recreation activities to foster leisure skill outcomes for youth

with and without disabilities. Regardless of program orientation (e.g., education, recreation, health, vocational), organized outdoor programs are commonly situated in natural settings in which a leisurely atmosphere prevails and opportunities for recreation activities abound. Thus, outdoor programs have great potential for also serving as an effective medium in educating youth of all abilities to make more constructive, effective, and fuller use of their leisure time. Outdoor programs can play a major role in helping youth acquire leisure knowledge, skills, attitudes, and interests that will have life-long potential.