

Outdoor Education Offers Diverse Learning Opportunities Students' Literacies Deepened through Experiential and Explorative Learning

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The diversity of Taiwan's natural environment offers a wide range of invaluable educational materials that could benefit the next generation. In recognition of this fact, outdoor education has become a key part of the holistic education that the 12-Year Basic Education Curriculum hopes to achieve. The Ministry of Education places a high value on the quality and depth of outdoor education programs, which aim to bridge the gap between textbook learning and the real-world application of knowledge through the fusion of different disciplines such as history and humanities, academic knowledge, and ecology. The K-12 Education Administration (K12EA), under the Ministry of Education, provides funding to encourage schools to develop activities and educational programs related to outdoor education that are in line with the goals and methodology of Taiwan's 12-year Basic Education. Specifically, the programs can be school-based programs, niche programs, or conducted in a unique geographical location.

K12EA shared that, under the K12EA Funding Program for Outdoor Education in Senior High Schools, schools that carry out outdoor education activities or develop high-quality outdoor education programs are eligible for a grant. In 2021, a total of NT\$16,477,699 was approved for disbursement, which provided a significant boost to schools in elevating the quality of their outdoor education programs.

Stella Maris Ursuline High School (SMHS), located in Hualien County, organized a 3 Day 2 Night Cycling Camp, which embodied the guiding principles of "Initiative," "Collaboration," and "Mutually Beneficial" highlighted in the 2019 curriculum. During the camp, participants gained a deeper understanding of sustainability issues pertaining to the natural environment of eastern Taiwan, cycling as a sport, and the core value of SMHS, "Reverance of God, Love for Mankind". As the students completed the 200km cycling route from Hualien to Taitung, they not only got stronger physically, especially in terms of their muscular endurance

and cardiorespiratory health, but also got a chance to grow spiritually by engaging in a dialogue with their inner selves and appreciating the beauty of their harmonious co-existence with nature.

Chen Kuei-Yueh, a Geography teacher in Taoyuan Municipal Xin Wu Senior High School, is a mountain guide herself. She tapped on her own expertise and organized an expedition to Xueshan, during which she led students on a journey to experience the majesty and beauty of nature. In addition, this outdoor program is also an inter-disciplinary one that incorporates content from subjects such as Geography, Earth Sciences, Biology, Chinese Language, and Life Education, hence providing students with a rich learning experience that departs significantly from their previous learning experiences. The program carried out by Xin Wu Senior High School is thus one that stands out and is immensely successful among the various outdoor education programs and wilderness programs taking place around Taiwan.

K12EA pointed out that outdoor education is an important part of a holistic education program, which is a key feature of the 2019 curriculum. By incorporating knowledge in the humanities, sciences, and general ecological knowledge into outdoor education, students get a chance to be close to nature at the same time they gain in various literacies by undergoing character and moral education, developing multiple intelligences, becoming healthier both mentally and physically, learning to work as a team, and appreciating the beauty of their surroundings.