



Risk Management Plan Summary

Please share with your principals, colleagues and families as needed.

Educo's Risk Philosophy

At Educo, there are many teachers beyond the staff: the mountains, the hardship of a hike, the sunset on a lake, the silence of a moment alone.

One of these teachers is risk. At Educo, safety and managing risk is our primary concern. However, much of the powerful learning that students experience is born out of the inherent risk in our adventures. It is hard to learn about one's courage and potential without risk or challenge. Risk is a desired and designed element of our adventure programs.

It's important to be aware of the two types of risk: real risk and perceived risk. At Educo, we often create scenarios of perceived risk, where students believe there to be real risks and consequences. In actuality, the experience is designed to highlight perceived risk while reducing real risk. For example, the risk of falling from height seems real in our high ropes course but safety harnesses, safety equipment and trained instructors reduce the real risk of falling.

As with any active play, there are risks that are real at Educo. Generally, these risks have low consequences and are similar to the risks we accept in other sports and activities. For instance, spraining an ankle while playing soccer or getting a scrape while playing on a playground are consequences of the same risks we take during activities at Educo: hiking, running on the field, canoeing, climbing and more. To address the low consequence risk, staff educate and instruct students in safe use of an area or equipment and good physical form in order to develop their physical literacy.

Risks with high consequences are not well accepted by the public. And understandably so! While we want to be on our learning edge in adventure activities and enjoying the adrenaline of heights or swift water, we all want to come home at the end of the day.

At Educo, we plan, train and make decisions about program activities and areas to both assess and mitigate the undesirable and catastrophic risks. Our instructors are trained in risk assessment, risk management and emergency response. We also have organizational policies and procedures that are reviewed and updated by a Risk Management Committee (comprised of board members, staff and knowledgeable community members). While we embrace risk and its role in learning life skills, safety is our top priority.

Why is important for our children and youth to experience risk?

We cannot live in a world free from risk. In fact, to live fulfilling and meaningful lives, we sometimes seek out risk (a new job or a new home). While this can seem daunting, we always have a choice: how we respond to risk, overcome it or create it.



The benefit of risk in play for young children is widely discussed but it's important that children and youth continue to have opportunities to practice healthy risk-taking, especially as they step into adolescence.

In adolescence, we navigate many risks. To name a few: the social risks in stepping out of your peer group and being your authentic self, the physical risks of drugs or alcohol or the mental and emotional risks of trying a job or an activity at which you think you aren't very good.

At Educo, we give opportunity to students to practice risk-taking and to reflect on their experiences:

What were the challenges in facing that risk?

What did you learn about fear?

What was your proudest moment in that activity?

What is a challenge at home that you'd like to overcome?

What does risk teach me? What do you love about risk?

What are my boundaries?

When do I feel empowered to push past my boundaries to have a greater comfort zone?

When do I need to enforce my boundaries? And what empowers me to do so?

Through conscious, hands-on adventuring, students develop resiliency, courage and creative problem-solving for the challenges, no matter how small or big, ahead of them in their life. With experience in healthy risk-taking in their back pocket, youth are ready to reach their potential.

Risk Management Practices & Policies

Educo addresses the complete life-cycle of risk management. Here are the main phases of the life-cycle of risk management that we address:

- 1) **Training:** Staff are trained in activity preparation and planning, facilitation and supervision of each activity, debriefing and emergency response in 2 different ways:
 - 1) All staff complete certification courses with third party professional providers of training for risk management & emergency response skills: wilderness first aid, water safety and lifesaving/lifeguarding.
 - 2) All staff complete in-house trainings with professional trainers ([AdventureWorks!](#) High Ropes & Rock-climbing Wall professionals, ACMG and IFMGA mountain guides and director-led trainings). Staff practice their skills together so they work as a team and are all competent in performing and supporting each other in our local operating procedures for each activity.
- 2) **Site Inspection:** We inspect different areas of our site in a few ways:
 - 1) An Annual Inspection & Accreditation for our High Ropes Course, our Rock-Climbing Wall and our ropes and rock-climbing equipment. Our high ropes and rock-climbing facilities are accredited to the standards of the [Association of Challenge Course Technology](#). Annual inspections and accreditations are performed by [AdventureWorks!](#) professionals.



- 2) Regular in-house inspections of our high ropes course, rock-climbing wall and waterfront equipment. These inspections are performed at a minimum of every two weeks.
- 3) General site inspections for hazards and cleanliness prior to every course. Staff also assess weather and new hazards before engaging in an activity.
- 3) **Informed Consent:** Participants and their guardians need to read, understand and sign a waiver that outlines the risks involved with the activities at Educo. Participants also need to disclose pertinent medical history so staff are prepared to respond to any medical emergencies.
- 4) **Supervision:** During all activities (high ropes, rock-climbing, canoeing, swimming, team-building activities), staff are present to instruct, supervise and respond to any emerging group or individual needs. During the short free time blocks before or after meals, staff are available and close by and students are instructed during orientation on where to find the staff during free time. Students are also given boundaries of play area during free time in orientation. Teachers and parents from the school are invited to be present with the students during free time.
- 5) **Equipment & Safety Procedures:** Participants (teachers, students and/or parents) must wear the protective equipment provided by Educo and follow the safety procedures given during any activity. An Educo staff member will teach these safety procedures to students upon students' arrival at activity site (i.e. high ropes course, rock-climbing wall, dock, etc).
- 6) **Participation:** At the discretion of Educo staff, a participant may be asked to leave the activity site if their behaviour is deemed un-safe for themselves or others. Educo Adventure School and its staff can't manage all the risks on our own. A large responsibility rests with the participants to share in the safety of themselves and others during all activities.
- 7) **Communication:** Educo staff carry means of communications for calling emergency response assistance when they venture further than 500m away from the basecamp. Radios and/or SAT phones are used as appropriate for the area of activity. Our basecamp is set up with emergency communication devices.
- 8) **Emergency Response:** In the event of an emergency, a senior staff is present to lead a first aid response. A manager/senior staff member capable of incident response management is available to manage the emergency incident response, including contacting and working with local emergency response assistance authorities (RCMP, BC Ambulance, Search and Rescue) and arranging transportation for an injured participant to a government medical authority (hospital, paramedics, etc).
- 9) **Review & Revision:** Our board has a Risk Management Committee (comprised of board members, staff and knowledgeable community members) who meet regularly to review and revise our organizational policies and procedures. Our vigilance means we are on top of the latest safety patterns in the industry and that we address any parts of our policy or procedure that become outdated.



Staff Qualifications

(Please review their biographies on our website www.educo.ca)

- All staff hold a minimum 40-hour Wilderness First Aid certification (Senior instructors hold a 90-hour Wilderness First Aid certification) awarded by recognized industry trainers (eg. Slipstream & Wilderness Medical Associates).
- All staff have a Bronze Cross Lifesaving certification for swimming and water activities (specific staff hold a National Lifeguard Service certification).
- All staff complete a custom training in Challenge Course (High Ropes) and Climbing Program Facilitation & Operation from Adventureworks! Assoc. Inc., a national accreditor for High Ropes & Climbing Wall standards.
- All staff complete a custom training for mountain guiding by an accredited Hiking Guide from the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides.
- All staff complete a custom training for rock climbing site management, set-up and take-down by an accredited full mountain guide from the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides.
- Senior instructors hold a Swiftwater Rescue Technician certification (this will not be pertinent to site-based courses - we only do flat-water canoeing with site-based courses).
- All staff have extensive experience working with youth in outdoor environments - all staff have been mentored by experienced, older staff and management over a number of seasons as a volunteer and assistant staff before stepping into roles of responsibility.
- Several of our staff have been trained at the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) while others have been trained and certified through the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides.
- All staff and volunteers are required to pass a Criminal Record Check in order to work or volunteer at Educo.
- All staff drivers hold a Class 4 licence and submit a Driver's Abstract.
- Educo has organizational policy and procedure for safe operations and accident/emergency response.
- Educo has been operating for 47 years and has an excellent track record in safety, prevention, and accident/emergency response.