

# C.O.P.E. .

## *Challenging Outdoor Personal Experience*

C.O.P.E. is composed of group initiative games, trust events, low-course events, and high-course events. Some activities involve a group challenge, while others develop individual skills and agility. The events and activities of Project COPE are not designed to be competitive or a race against time, but rather are intended to encourage participants to do their best. COPE emphasizes building self-esteem, developing leadership, and working as a team to accomplish tasks. It provides opportunities for every participant to succeed as an individual as well as a member of a group. The Project COPE program emphasizes these goals:

### **Teamwork**

The COPE experience makes it clear that each individual can accomplish more as a member of a team than by going it alone.

### **Communication**

Project COPE encourages **real** learning of critical listening and discussion skills important for any group attempting to accomplish difficult tasks.

### **Trust**

Participants completing difficult tasks on a COPE course develop trust in COPE staff members, the safety of the course, each other, and themselves.

## **Leadership**

Team members attempting to solve problems on a C.O.P.E. course have many opportunities to develop and exercise leadership skills.

## **Decision Making**

C.O.P.E. requires groups to make decisions by developing one or more solutions to a problem, considering the available resources and alternatives, and evaluating the probable results.

## **Problem Solving**

C.O.P.E. challenges groups and individuals to develop solutions to interesting problems. Participants can then test their solutions and evaluate the results.

## **Self-Esteem**

Meeting the challenges of a C.O.P.E. course allows individuals and groups to develop self-esteem and encourage them to adopt challenging, attainable goals.

# **Features of C.O.P.E.**

## **Noncompetitive**

C.O.P.E. activities emphasize the importance of working together without creating the “winner-loser” dynamic.

## **Nontraditional**

C.O.P.E. encourages the involvement of all team members in all C.O.P.E. activities and events.

## **Risk Taking**

The actual risk of a properly conducted C.O.P.E. program is lower than traditional sports programs, but the perceived risk can be very high. Facing that risk helps participants build self-esteem and trust.

## **Process versus Performance**

C.O.P.E. instructors emphasize the process of decision making and problem solving, and how it can affect the outcome. This process helps participants develop and reinforce skills needed to solve problems in the real world.

## **Adventurous and Exciting**

C.O.P.E. encourages spontaneity, teaches participants how to have fun in a responsible manner and allows them to interact without being restricted by preconceived notions of group behavior.

## **Acceptance of Responsibility**

Participants are encouraged to participate in all activities, but C.O.P.E. staff members and group leaders respect the right of each individual to refrain from taking part in any or all activities or events.

## **Adaptable**

By varying the goal or adjusting limitations, most C.O.P.E. activities and events can be customized to challenge each team and each participant at an appropriate level.

# **Preparing Students for the Day**

A Teacher's Guide to C.O.P.E.

It is extremely important to us that students are able to experience C.O.P.E. in its entirety. In order for this to be effective, it is essential that teachers understand their role when attending the C.O.P.E. facility; as well as understanding how to properly prepare the students for the activities. This knowledge will ensure that the day runs as smooth as possible.

The keys to a successful day outdoors include a sufficient amount of rest, as well as proper nutrition. With this in mind, teachers should instruct their students to get a good night's rest and eat a healthy breakfast before leaving for the facility. Teachers should also emphasize that students dress appropriately for the activity and the weather/season. Since C.O.P.E. involves physical activity, students should be discouraged from wearing jewelry, or bringing walkmans, games, etc. Some teachers have found it helpful to bring spare garments for students to use, should they arrive insufficiently clothed for the day. Teachers may also want to bring cold water and cups for the students, as there are no water fountains at the facility.

It is always helpful if the students have some knowledge of the program, which can be described by teachers in advance of the group's arrival, placing emphasis on the major goals which C.O.P.E. promotes: ***Teamwork, Communication, Trust, Leadership, Decision Making, and Problem Solving***. These goals will be reiterated throughout the day by the C.O.P.E. facilitators, as they are integral to the successful completion of the activities.

When arriving at the facility, the students will be broken into groups, each accompanied by a teacher. In this way, the teachers can act as the leaders for discipline issues; thus allowing the C.O.P.E. facilitators to focus on the entire group and the day's initiatives. Since C.O.P.E. is a guided discovery program, its mission is to encourage students to problem-solve with their peers. Therefore, it is requested that teachers please refrain from assisting the students in solving the initiatives. That assistance, while expediting progress through each activity, actually defeats the purpose of the program. "How" the students work to solve the initiatives is often more important than actually completing the task.

Finally, we suggest that teachers can be supportive of the students through spotting, and encouragement, however we prefer that teachers do not involve themselves as participants, due to time and safety constraints. With all else in order, the day should be an exciting learning experience for all involved!

If you have any questions, please contact us at (401) 351-8700.