

# Lost at Sea

## Outdoor education and enterprise skills for the world of work?

by Richard Hathway



*"Young people need to be equipped with the creativity and adaptability to thrive in an ever changing world."*

*"We need to start young - to enthuse our children with optimism about what they can achieve in life."*

*"Scottish business knows our future depends on our children. The Schools Enterprise Programme harnesses the enthusiasm of Scottish businesses to support every primary pupil in Scotland having the chance to participate in enterprising experiences, linked to the curriculum."*

Wendy Alexander, Enterprise minister



The importance of teaching Enterprise Skills to children has been highlighted by both the Scottish Executive and the private sector. Outdoor activities can give primary age children many learning outcomes that can connect school to the wider world. Using resources from the Enterprise Council, a partnership of Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre, Stramash (Argyll and Bute Council, Outdoor providers) and Careers Scotland worked together to highlight several foundation skills that young people need to acquire if they are going to be successful in the world of work. We felt strongly that these foundation skills could be explored and developed through

outdoor activities. By providing a platform of team challenges and physical tasks the children could actively engage in these skills.

These foundations skills include:

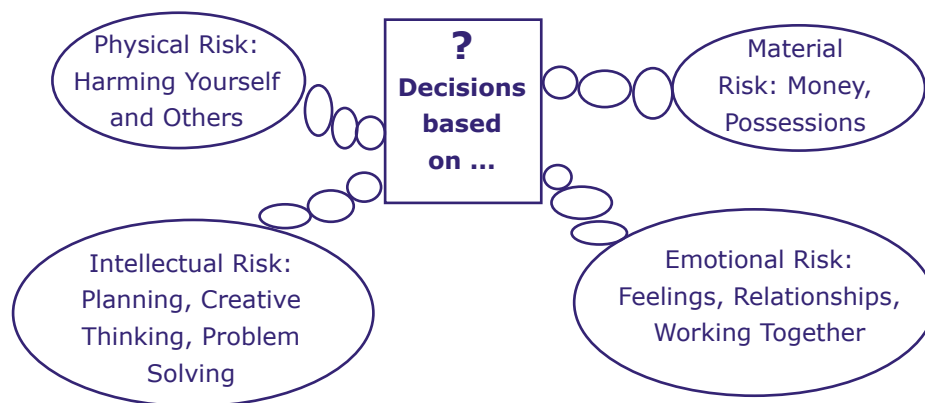
- Risk Taking
- Decision Making
- Communication Skills
- Working With Others
- Problem Solving
- Creative Thinking
- Planning
- Reviewing Skills
- Negotiating Skills
- Presentation Skills

The result is the creation and delivery of outdoor challenge days based on learning foundation skills for the world of work and to encourage enterprise in young people. This outdoor challenge day has been delivered at remote schools in Argyll and Bute for the last 2 years, including Mull and Islay with great success and also at Ardroy OEC as part of a normal activity programme. The aim of this article is to explain the background and rationale of this outdoor challenge day.



Before the outdoor challenge day, a team of instructors meet the children for about 2 hours and complete a range of frontloading activities. This frontload presentation is often done a couple of days before the challenge day or as an evening activity. Firstly the children look at pictures of successful business people and decide what key skills they need in order to be successful at their jobs. The children are given flash cards with the foundation skills written on them and try to place them in order of importance. They soon realise that each skill is as important as any other. We explain these are "career resilience skills" and whatever career you choose, you will require these skills in order to be successful. The frontload presentation

One of the activities involves looking at newspapers - the children have to find examples of people taking risks in their daily lives. They cut out their chosen picture and stick it on a large sheet of paper and it is labelled with the four types of risk. At the end of the session the children give small presentations to the rest of the group on their findings.



The structure of the outdoor challenge day is to give the children clear examples of the foundation skills and why they are important in the world of work and their careers in the future.

focuses on two of the foundation skills: Risk taking and Presentation. We actively encourage the children to explore the idea of risk and the advantages and/or disadvantages of taking risks. It is clearly explained that not all risks are worth taking. The instructors promote the fact that risk is not just about physical risk, harming yourself or others. Risk can involve emotional risk, intellectual risk and material risk.

With some creative and joined-up thinking from the staff and other agencies, we came up with a scenario called "Lost at Sea", which the children could actively get involved in. Briefly the scenario is based around the children being ship-wrecked and having to choose items from the boat in order to help them survive.

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The children go on an imaginary canoe journey and they think of all the things that could go right or wrong. They often have very good imaginations for this, including been eaten by sharks. Then the instructors encourage the group to think about all the positive things about going on a river journey and how we could 'squish' all the risks they have come up with. For example the risk of banging your head can be squished by wearing a helmet.

They are then washed up on an island. The storm that sank their boat also destroyed all the radios on the island. The only way off the island is to set off a flare (a water rocket) to alert the post boat. The only flare on the Island is locked in a box. They have to meet 5 islanders and help them to complete a





challenge. If the team is successful the islander will give them a key. One of these keys will open the box to the island's last flare. At each challenge they have to buy equipment, for example paddles, buoyancy aids etc. If they have chosen these items from the boat they don't have to pay for them. If they do not have the item they have to raise money by completing a small team challenge (sing a song, team dance, etc). In the late afternoon all the groups get together on the beach and open their flare boxes and set off the flares. Bringing all the groups together and sharing the same goal for the day has been a very positive outcome of Lost at Sea.

The challenges include meeting the Grumpy Fisherman, and the group has to make a raft from Canadian canoes and paddle to his favourite lobster pot where he has tied the key. Before the group starts building the raft they have to identify the risks of the activity and how they could squish the risk. For example instead of telling them they have to wear buoyancy aids, they identify the risk themselves and then wear buoyancy aids to reduce or 'squish' the risk.

Each challenge provides many opportunities for the foundation skills to be used. In order to be successful the teams must talk to each other, have team discussions and make more decisions than at

any other time during their normal school week. If the group makes poor decisions or has poor planning and they don't complete the activity, then they don't get the key. We have found that having this element of failure has been a very powerful experience. At the end of each challenge the group instructor completes a mini review identifying which foundation skills were used and which skills need to improve. At the end of the exercise all the learning points are brought together in a team review. The instructors can use a variety of review tools, including sentence starters, to invoke discussion on the foundation skills and how they relate to the world of work and the children's lives at present.

**Lost at Sea fulfils National Priorities in Education by helping pupils to explore the foundation skills necessary to prosper in a changing society and to encourage career resilience, creativity and ambition.**

Feedback from visiting staff has been very encouraging and positive. Lost at Sea has provided a springboard for follow-up work back at schools and builds upon previous learning.

**In conclusion:**

There are great educational benefits to be had from multi agency partnerships such as this one between an OEC (Ardroy), local networks, (Stramash - Argyll and Bute Council, Outdoor providers) and other regional or national agencies (Careers Scotland) and we are looking to the future for new initiatives in education and the work place, and how outdoor learning can help to fulfil these objectives.

**Notes**  
 For further information about this programme contact: Head of Centre, Liz Evans, Ardroy OEC, Lochgoilhead, Argyll, PA24 8AA or check out [www.outdooreducation.co.uk](http://www.outdooreducation.co.uk) [www.careers-scotland.org.uk](http://www.careers-scotland.org.uk) [www.argyll-stramash.org](http://www.argyll-stramash.org)

**Author Notes**  
 Richard has been working at Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre for 5 years. He has a background in Secondary history teaching and Sport Coaching, and studied at St Martin's College in Lancaster. His interests are journeying, whether by foot, climbing or paddling. Currently he is the Regional Coaching Officer (Strathclyde West) for the Scottish Canoe Association and a member of Arrochar Mountain Rescue Team.

