

Outdoor Education Council Meeting - April 13, 2026

Meeting call to order 1:00 PM

Roll Call

Present

- Department of Wildlife, Julie Bless
- Division of Outdoor Recreation, Denise Beronio (& Elisabeth Johnson)
- Licensed teacher (1 of 2), Chip Peterson
- Department of Education, Andrew Snyder
- Nature-based educator in underserved communities (1 of 2), Melanie Erquiaga

Absent

- Assemblymember, Max Carter
- School District Superintendent, Joe Girdner
- Senator, Shelly Cruz-Crawford

Vacant

- Licensed teacher (1 of 2)
- Nature-based educator in underserved communities (1 of 2)
- One nonvoting member who is a pupil enrolled in a public school in this State appointed by the Governor

No public Comment

Minutes approved. Motion Melanie, 2nd Chip

Committee Reports

- Outdoor School Designation – Andrew, Joe, NDOR
 - *The Council shall Establish and administer a program to award a designation to: (1) Schools in this State which provide to pupil's outdoor education programs that meet the standards developed pursuant to section 5 of this act; and also utilize STEM framework within public school system to help identify areas of emphasis to create a points system. Determine things like content, outdoor infrastructure needs, policy implementation, etc. As Categories are determined the council will also create attributes to complement the categories.*
- Outdoor Teacher of the Year – Julie, Melanie, and Joe

- *The Council shall Establish and administer a program to award a designation to: (2) A teacher in this State as Outdoor Educator of the Year.*
- Teacher Trainings – Andrew, Chip
 - *The Council shall Provide opportunities for educators to receive training concerning outdoor education by developing such training or identifying and making available to school’s information 35 concerning opportunities for such training.*
- Tech assistance and Funding – Julie and Chip
 - *The Council shall Provide technical assistance to support schools and school districts interested in developing initiatives for outdoor education. In providing such assistance, the Council shall prioritize schools with the least access to nature. (and) Identify sources of federal money and grants to support outdoor education in this State.*

Outdoor School Designation

Andrew Snyder – Using STEM designation as a framework. Potential categories: Content Integration, Capacity Building, Outdoor Learning Infrastructure, School Policies (that support outdoor education), Community Integration. Under each category is an item/attribute. Then you can earn points based on if you are “Exploratory”, “Developing”, “Established” or a “Model” school. Have not discussed timeline implementation. Tough but possible to launch next year. A next year launch may mean lower applicant numbers. Need to iron out and narrow down attributes in each category before sharing with the group.

Tech Assistance and Funding

Chip – Tech Assistance. Wanting to put together guide of resources that could help answer people’s questions, council members weren’t always needing to be available to help. Also, putting together a resource for funding options. Current state is in spreadsheet form.

Teacher Trainings

Andrew & Chip - Had met with a potential contractor to create a course for professional teacher development. It fell through and had to move in a different direction, as rates were too high. Chip reached out with a couple different organizations, including Sierra Nevada Journey’s and Nevada Outdoor School. Not all on the same page though. Put on slight pause due to NDOR staff vacating of position but will need to start pushing forward again to meet the July deadline. Once course

material is created, Department of Education will put it on Canvas, so it is accessible across Nevada.

Outdoor Educator of the Year

Application is ready to go. Group discussed timeline and committee makeup. Group also went through nomination form and would like to create a grading rubric for the criteria.

Judging panel will be seven members: 2 people from the council, 2 people who represent education (), and 1 representative from each of the following: NDOR, NDOW, outdoor education provider NGO. Two-year terms.

Ideally announce the award in May (when teacher of the year is announced), in future years. This year will be a one-off for timing. Get it announced now.

April 20th – July 1st application window open. Social media push through all channels, NDOW podcast, and press releases.

Motion to approve application and open April 20, 2026 – July 1, 2026, makeup of award committee members, and push out through all channels by Melanie, 2nd by Andrew. Unanimous. Motion passes.

Public Comment – David Beard, Children & Nature Network. Can share the application through their network. Can extend grant deadline to end of year.

Adjourned at 2:08.

Denise & Elisabeth Follow up Action Items

- Meet with Julie to get clarification on the following:
 - Application lists:
 - A \$2,000 scholarship, but the bill says “to provide a nonmonetary award to a teacher recognized as Outdoor Educator of the Year.” Will need to hash that out for how that scholarship funding is applied.
 - Lists public schools but bill does not specify that, (later determined it will be open to all schools including public, charter, private, but not home school).

Nevada Outdoor Teacher of the Year

Nomination Form

The Nevada Outdoor Education Council proudly recognize outstanding educators across Nevada.

The 2026 Outdoor Educator of the Year will receive a \$2,000 scholarship, thanks to the Nature Everywhere initiative, to attend and promote their work in outdoor education and the work of the Outdoor Education Council at a relevant conference.

This award honors educators who demonstrate instructional excellence, innovation, student impact, and commitment to strengthening Outdoor Education in Nevada's communities.

Nominations may be submitted by colleagues, administrators, parents, students, community members, or through self-nomination.

Nominees must meet the following Criteria:

- Formal Teachers with active Teaching Certificates
- Demonstrated achievements in delivering Nevada-focused outdoor education within a K-12 public school classroom setting.
- Promotion in conservation, stewardship, or outdoor ethics
- Demonstrated leadership qualities in outdoor education

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- Meet with Andrew (and maybe Chip too) about:
 - NAAEE – are they wanting to partner with them on this for teacher training?
- Send out Doodle Poll to set up next meetings for the following groups (Council members in blue to keep in mind any quorum/OML issues):
 - Outdoor Education Council meeting for May
 - [Andrew Snyder](mailto:asnyder@doe.nv.gov) asnyder@doe.nv.gov;
 - [Chip Peterson](mailto:peterkm2@nv.ccsd.net) peterkm2@nv.ccsd.net;
 - [Joe Girdner](mailto:jgirdner@storeynv.com) jgirdner@storeynv.com;
 - [Julie Bless](mailto:jbless@ndow.org) jbless@ndow.org;
 - [Max Carter](mailto:max.carter@asm.state.nv.us) max.carter@asm.state.nv.us;
 - [Melanie Erquiaga](mailto:melanie.erquiaga@nevadaoutdoorschool.org) melanie.erquiaga@nevadaoutdoorschool.org;
 - [Shelly Cruz-Crawford](mailto:Shelly.Cruz Crawford@sen.state.nv.us) Shelly.Cruz Crawford@sen.state.nv.us;
 - Not on council but has been invited to meetings: David Beard <david@childrenandnature.org>
 - Outdoor School Designation subcommittee for May
 - [Joe Girdner](mailto:jgirdner@storeynv.com), Storey County Superintendent jgirdner@storeynv.com
 - [Andrew Synder](mailto:asnyder@doe.nv.gov), DOE Education Programs Supervisor, asnyder@doe.nv.gov
 - Sarah Matsumoto sarah@greenschoolyards.org (out of town May 20-22)

- Teacher Training Discussion
 - Shelly Kopinski skopinski@getoutdoorsnevada.org;
 - Melanie Erquiaga melanie.erquiaga@nevadaoutdoorschool.org;
 - Chip Peterson peterkm2@nv.ccsd.net;
 - Andrew Snyder asnyder@doe.nv.gov