



*You want to leave students
unsupervised in the outdoors?
Are you crazy?*

Chris Patalano and Chris North

First some definitions

- Supervision- a person overseeing a group within a distance that they can communicate without the aid of technology
- Indirect supervision- a person overseeing a group cannot directly communicate and needs an aid to do this (ie two way radios/mobile phone)

Direct supervision is important

- Teachers owe students a “duty of care” (Education Act)
- The removal of supervision is not justified by pedagogical, legal or moral reasons (Davidson, 2004)
- Adequate supervision would have avoided fatalities particularly in boys around cliff tops and water (Brookes, 2004)

Arguments supporting indirect supervision

- I puzzle over why it's OK to flip from direct supervision one day (the course is on) to no supervision the next (the course is in recess)(Allan, 2005)
- Injury, evacuation, and near-miss rates are no different during indirectly supervised student experiences
- And indirectly supervised experiences provide a focal point for learning relevance much earlier in a course (Sibthorp, Gooking & Nathan, 2008)

This Research

- Question: What do students perceive the benefits or draw-backs of unsupervised experiences?
- Methodology and Context

Preliminary Results

- Most students were not very experienced in the outdoors

Students felt that they:

- Learnt more skills without a teacher
- Were more involved in group discussions
- Took on more active roles
- Did not track their progress on the map
- Learnt more about themselves and their group
- Felt safe without a teacher
- Would not go off-track alone but would if they were in a group

Preliminary conclusions

Assuming a high focus on safety systems:

- Indirect supervision does seem to provide important perceived benefits for students.
- A sound argument can be made for the continued use of such experiences as part of a balanced course offering.

Final year honours research project

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References

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