

“TAO Education, Inc”

Education exists in numerous forms: the academic classroom, travel, life experiences, and outdoor adventures. A group of professional educators and highly trained outdoor guides in the North Lake Tahoe area decided to pursue the opportunities of outdoor educational adventures by providing them to students and schools. Thus, the creation of the Teachers’ Association for Outdoor and Adventure Education, better known as TAO, established itself within our community.

Using adventure to capture student attention, TAO Education, Inc combines physical and cognitive development to promote effective environmental education. Integrating classroom learning with outdoor components boosts self-esteem, a life-long appreciation for the environment and learning, accompanied by personal growth through shared awareness.

Over 1000 students in Tahoe, Reno, and the San Francisco area have participated in TAO’s adventure activities. Long-term relationships with schools and youth organizations are maintained to effectively accomplish the integration of students’ outdoor experiences within their schools and communities.

Their incorporation as a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization allows use of charitable funds and grants to provide services to a wide spectrum of students at low or no cost. TAO Education follows the philosophy that exposure to outdoor education is essential for all kids, regardless of expenses. In the past, such opportunities and experiences are rare, if non-existent for low-income populations. Occasions for getting into mischief arrive when students feel they have nothing better to do. Exposure to environmental adventures opens doors that would otherwise remain closed to such students.

A few examples of outdoor education experiences include, but are not limited to:

- *Snow safety training combined with skiing or snowshoeing
- *Rock climbing, ropes courses, and other group challenges
- *Local hiking trips guided by expert naturalists
- *Kayaking and water study on Lake Tahoe
- *Overnight camping trips incorporating any of the above activities.

All adventures involve small group instruction with a typical ratio of 1 to 6, but never exceeding 1 to 12. Age and interest level drives group creation. Engaging students to feel a greater connection with their school and community is instigated to a new level through the completion of TAO’s 10-15 different programs, which cater to the individual needs of its participants. Leave No Trace, environmental awareness, geographic land study, journaling, team-building activities, individual time and decompression during campfires are just a few of the concepts promoted on adventure excursions.

Coordinating with the Tahoe-Truckee Unified School District and other local educational programs is TAO’s current focus. Derek Larson, President, in conjunction with Mark Keim, Program Director, seek to include teachers and their classes by influencing,

affecting, and contributing to their lives in beneficial ways. For more information on the Teachers' Association for Outdoor and Adventure Education, please visit www.TAOeducation.org, or call 530-550-7252.