Being Outside:
CSBSJU students celebrating the beautiful fall weather in Red Wing, Minnesota. They were on a rock climbing and caving trip in Fall 2009.

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Abstract:
It is important for every U.S. citizen to understand that nature offers more than oil for driving cars or trees for making paper. Each individual must see that the outdoors offers a place for learning, adventure, and reflection. To take advantage of nature's knowledge, each city, suburb, town, and community must implement a system that is based on the wants and needs of the local citizens. What is the ideal educational system that will enable children to experience the outdoors, build an ecological relationship, gain physical skills, and work on team building and personal growth? Through research based on personal experience, a review of the history of environmental education in the U.S., case studies which show the benefits of learning in the outdoors, and an examination of three Minnesota programs, a solution was found. The most viable way to enable and encourage children to build a holistic relationship with nature is through community-based Nature Programming, which refers to systems of education, such as nature centers, environmental learning centers, and after school programs.

Research Methods:
The Ideal Nature Programming System is based on a comprehensive literature review of the four pedagogies and different styles of implementation. The history, structure, philosophy, and funding of three Nature Programming systems in Minnesota were studied, including the Lake City Environmental Learning Program, the Red Wing Environmental Learning Center, and the Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center. Much of the research for these came from personal experience as a student and an instructor for the Red Wing ELC, as the summer instructor for the Lake City ELP, and an interview with the assistant director of the Wolf Ridge ELC. These three programs were chosen because they were developed by and for their local communities and incorporate all four pedagogies. They are each the ideal nature programming system for their community.

Conclusion:
Because nature programs are community-based, they require that community members are involved in the planning process and find the initial funding to start the program. By showing parents that nature programming is a safe environment for students to learn about and explore their local environments, they will enroll their children and the program will grow. This holistic, educational approach will develop confident, responsible citizens who care about the natural world and their local communities.

NATURE'S KNOWLEDGE:
ENABLING STUDENTS TO LEARN OUTSIDE

The Ideal Nature Programming System

The four pedagogies of Nature Programming:

- Experiential Education
  Method in which students learn by doing.
- Outdoor Education
  Occurs in backyards, city parks, abandoned lots, rivers, or "wilderness" settings.
- Adventure Education
  The facilitation of healthy risk-taking through activities such as rock climbing or a high ropes course.
- Environmental Education
  Concepts that will help attain an understanding of natural and social systems and how they interact.

The Ideal Nature Programming System

Outdoor Education
Experiential Education
Environmental Education
Personal Growth and Team Building
Adventure Education
Physical Skills
Ecological Relationships

Venn Diagram adapted from Outdoor Education: Methods and Strategies by Gilbertson, Bates, McLaughlin, and Ewert.

Thanks to all of the individuals who have contributed to my love for the outdoors. Keep Exploring.