

Prince, Heather ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6199-4892> (2017) Making sense of the sensory outdoors. In: European Institute of Outdoor Adventure Education and Experiential Learning (EOE) International Seminar, 28 June - 2 July 2017, University of St Mark and St John, Plymouth, UK. (Unpublished)

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Making sense of the sensory

Sensory activities in the outdoors build on young people's curiosity yet their justification in terms of content or process in relation to learning, pedagogy or a wider understanding of issues is less well recognized. This presentation will explore meaning making of sensory activities for educators and young people in formal mainstream school curricula, through the objectives of increasing environmental awareness and physical activity, changes in behaviours, knowledge and attitudes. It will examine whether through experiencing nature, young people will actively seek a relationship or connection with it. The balance between cognitive objectives and pedagogical approaches of exploration, inquiry, experience and communication will be explored for optimizing outcomes, supported by case studies of outdoor experiences and research. The presentation will also provide examples of activities using the senses in the outdoors with young people that address understandings of disabilities and seek to develop more egalitarian relationships, and which begin to co-construct narratives of diversity, equality and inclusion.

Author Biography

Heather Prince is Associate Professor of Outdoor and Environmental Education and Principal Lecturer in Collaborative and Experiential Learning at the University of Cumbria. She is particularly interested in innovative and inspiring pedagogies to enhance student experiences through active outdoor and experiential learning with research connected teaching.