



American Recreation Coalition

*Dedicated to the protection and enhancement of everyone's right
to health and happiness through recreation.*

February 19, 2010

The Honorable Arne Duncan
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Mr. Secretary:

A truly exciting opportunity will be available to the U.S. Department of Education this coming June in Prince William County, Virginia. This opportunity will then expand quickly across the country to involve millions of America's youth – and connect them with your department and your mission.

The opportunity is called "ED OUT." It's a program designed to achieve a number of important objectives including:

- 1) **providing an exciting learning experience in the final days of the school year**, after most of the traditional teaching has been completed;
- 2) **introducing students to careers – including careers in your department – and building an appreciation for how those careers are important to the nation**;
- 3) **challenging the trend toward sedentary, indoor lifestyles** – a trend that has major negative implications for public health and understanding of the environment; and
- 4) **offering students concrete and stimulating ways to keep learning during the summer months** and gain knowledge directly tied to the subsequent academic year's curriculum.

And the program is affordable and scalable. We invite you to join us in this important initiative.

The Prince William County School District has some 80,000 students – it is the **second largest**, the **fastest growing** and **one of the most technologically advanced school systems** in Virginia. The school district's leadership has approached a consortium of federal agencies, national nonprofits and leading corporations with the exciting ED OUT concept.

ED OUT will launch in June 2010 and involve thousands of students in its initial, pilot year — and eventually millions of students in later years – in a day of learning and fun at key nearby public parks, refuges and forests. Children in grades K-11 will spend a day focused on the outdoors and experiential learning. For grades K-2, the day will involve enjoyable outdoor activities on and immediately around the school campus. For grades 3-11, the day will be spent at a nearby public recreation site, where "adjunct faculty" from corporations and agencies will offer curriculum tied to programs in the physical sciences, history, art and more. While at these outdoor "classrooms," students will also enjoy a nutritious lunch and learn about good eating practices and their link to good health from experts at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and public health agencies.



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In addition, each participating student will be provided with a flash drive filled with information, including:

- 1) suggestions for summer break activities, readings and trips specifically addressing the academic program of the next grade, including family trips and activities;
- 2) information about nearby summer fun at federal, state and local sites; and
- 3) links to age-appropriate websites of supporting organizations.

Supporters of ED OUT will assist with development of the flash drive content on a parallel website. They will also help with transportation, meal costs and more. And while the June 2010 pilot will make use of a single primary site, we will also schedule visits by our "adjunct faculty" to additional, traditional classrooms on that day and test a few more concepts of interest to the school system and supporting organizations.

In subsequent years, ED OUT will utilize such nearby sites as Prince William Forest Park, Manassas National Battlefield Park, Leesylvania State Park, Occoquan Bay and Featherstone National Wildlife Refuges, and Quantico Marine Base. And by 2011, we also anticipate expansion of the program to at least three additional school districts in other regions of the country.

We invite you to join Prince William County Schools, ARC, the Forest Service, the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, the National Wildlife Federation and others in becoming a Founding Partner in ED OUT by making three specific contributions to the program:

- 1) identify a cadre of 5-20 DOE staffers to be trained as "adjunct faculty" for 2010, and to stay involved to guide recruitment and training of additional staffers as the program expands in Virginia and elsewhere;
- 2) name an appropriate official from your department to serve on the ED OUT National Leadership Council; and
- 3) provide a 2010 contribution of \$5,000 to a federal Challenge Cost Share Account maintained by the USDA Forest Service and requiring matching non-federal contributions for ED OUT efforts.

We believe that ED OUT is especially appropriate and valuable for the Department of Education. Here is why:

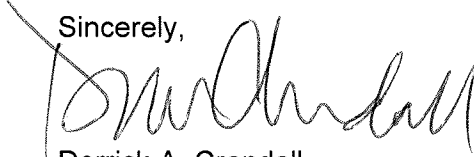
ED OUT shares the Department of Education's mission to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access. ED OUT will provide a platform to expand opportunities for environmental and outdoor education in America's schools. ***Comprehensive environmental education has been shown to improve student achievement across core subject areas and increase engagement in learning.*** Environmental education is critical to providing our students with the knowledge and skills to tackle complex problems, and increasing environmental literacy is a proven way to expand the academic pipeline for STEM subjects and to give students the sense of wonder and excitement so essential to encouraging scientific inquiry. What's more, ***getting children outside and active promotes a healthy lifestyle that is essential to fighting obesity and reducing symptoms associated with attention deficit disorder, depression, and stress.***

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We invite your prompt consideration. We plan a media event announcing ED OUT in early March 2010 in Washington, D.C. and would be delighted to include the Department of Education in that event.

We will be contacting you to schedule a presentation on this exciting initiative. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Derrick A. Crandall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Derrick A. Crandall
Co-Chair, ED OUT Organizing Committee

cc: Peter Cunningham