

**Announcing the Character Education through Outdoor Education
Pre-Symposium Session at the Seventeenth Biennial Coalition for Education in the Outdoors
Research Symposium**

**CEO Research Symposium: February 6-8, 2026
YMCA's Blue Ridge Assembly Conference Center in Black Mountain, NC, USA
(<https://blueridgeassembly.org/>)**

Pre-Symposium Session: Friday, February 6, 9:00 am-1:00 pm

Facilitated by Pete Allison (Penn State University)

Character has a long history in outdoor education. – sometimes contested, sometimes popular, sometimes unpopular! Character has also been used in a wide range of meanings and morphed into different terms to fit a variety of socio-political and cultural contexts. Terms such as personal and social development, personal, social and emotional learning, and non-cognitive skills are just a few examples. Kurt Hahn, one of the founders of outdoor education, was committed to influencing character in young people and saw it as a moral responsibility of those involved in education (formal and non-formal) in large part because he was concerned about the decline of civic society and wider trends of international peace, or otherwise, between countries.

Notwithstanding semantics of terminology, it is abundantly clear that character, or components of it, is essential and has gained increasing attention in the last decade. The popularity of Angela Duckworth's work on Grit, Carol Dweck's work on Mindsets and David Brook's book, *The Second Mountain* are all examples of a growing interest in different forms of character.

In the UK the Jubilee Center for Character and Virtue have led over the last 15 years significant developments in both theory, policy and educational practices in Character Education. Similarly, Wake Forest's Educating Character Initiative (ECI) has grown at an exponential rate.

This 4-hour pre-symposium session will provide an overview of current conceptual approaches to character education and recent research. One example that will be detailed is a recent four-year study of Outward Bound as a Character Building Organization emphasizing cross cultural approaches, similarities and differences (supported by the John Templeton Foundation). The session will provide ample opportunity for dialogue around character, character education outdoors and potential implications for research and practice.

Registration Information

Please consider arriving on Thursday evening and engaging in this focused pre-symposium session. Additional fee of \$50 (including lunch Friday). Registration information is available via the symposium coordinators at [2nd Nature TREC](#)

Schedule and Presenters

Information about the Coalition for Education in the Outdoors including previous symposia Book of Abstracts and Open Access copies of Research in Outdoor Education can be found at the [CEO website](#). The tentative symposium schedule and list of presentations is available at [2nd Nature TREC](#)