

New green slogan: Catch them young

Web posted at: 11/24/2007 2:59:47

Source ::: The Peninsula

Doha • “Catch them young” was a renowned environmental education expert’s instant reply to the query on “how to make people to be good stewards of the planet earth”.

Kenny Peavy, a renowned environmental education expert from the US, said that students, from their very young age, must gain knowledge of environment and become familiar with the local flora, fauna and ecological relationships. Therefore, Environmental Literacy must be included right from their early education system.

A teacher at the International School of Kuala Lumpur, Peavy has worked extensively in ecological field studies ranging from water quality and aquatic entomology to ichthyological survey. He was here to deliver a lecture at 'EduCare Symposium' hosted by American School of Doha (ASD), on Environmental Education.

“Students must develop a personal connection and a sense of belonging to nature through hands on, experimental outdoor activities immersed in nature, right from their childhood. They must be equipped to face the future challenges in this fast-changing world. Teachers, parents and corporates must play a vital role in shaping up the students,” he said.

Schools must regularly host workshops for parents, introduce elective courses in natural history, create environment-related CAS hours, set up recreational outdoor clubs and there must be a ‘week without walls’, Peavy said.

Peavy, who stressed the need for schools to regularly involve themselves in community services, wanted them to engage a local scientist or a committed environmentalist as an environmental education coordinator.

“It is sad that our environmental education is still confined to picking up litter and recycling paper and soda pop cans. Children need to get muddy to understand the nature of mud; they need to get uncomfortable at times, to understand what comfort is,” he said.

Modern education’s problem of teaching environmental education stems from humanity’s deliberate attempt to distance itself physically and psychologically from Nature. “We have become far too dependent on books, believing absolutely in the power of the printed word even when Nature presents us with lessons to the contrary.”



Kenny Peavy, a renowned environmental education expert.

Providing data of a recent survey on how often a child plays in a natural area, Peavy said the average student is spending less than a few hours a week outside. Even then, that time is mostly spent playing sports on manicured lawns, and in artificial playgrounds, riding bicycles or skateboards over city streets or listening to CD players while walking to and from a closed wall school.

Peavy holds a Masters of Science in Science Education from Montana State University. In 2001, Peavy was recognized as 'Volunteer of the Year' by the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream programme for his efforts in training citizens in water quality monitoring. In 2003, he was awarded a Ford Motor Company Eco-Grant to serve as founder and first chairman of the Malaysian Nature Guides.