



BROADENING AND DEEPENING OUTWARD BOUND'S IMPACT ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

MODELS AND PRACTICES OF COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL-BASED PARTNERSHIPS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Outward Bound's regional Schools have over 400 partnerships with local schools and community-based organizations. These partnerships promise a broader reach so more students benefit from Outward Bound's innovative approaches of promoting inclusion and diversity, bridging and building relationships, and developing social-emotional skills. Understanding and documenting the similarities and the differences among these models is key to broadening and deepening Outward Bound's impact nationwide. This white paper aims to answering the following questions:

- Are the existing partnership models a viable solution to Outward Bound's goals of expansion, increasing diversity and integrating practices into large public and youth-serving systems?
- What would the expansion look like for Outward Bound and its regional Schools and how could it be supported by specific research and funding strategies?

Using information from in-depth interviews and surveys of all schools, a review of administrative and programmatic records, and data from student outcomes and observations, this report describes the landscape of strategic partnerships among Outward Bound's regional Schools.

KEY FINDINGS

- Outward Bound USA collects information on group and open enrollment courses in several national databases. Using these databases, results indicate the vast majority of Outward Bound programming (87%) derives from group enrollment courses and open enrollment courses make up about 14% of programming at Outward Bound. When we compared staff practices that were observed in group and open enrollment courses, there was little variation between the course enrollment types. This indicates a similar level of quality across these course types. These observations were focused on practices supporting social-emotional learning and conditions for learning. Across schools, group enrollment students were more racially and linguistically diverse than open enrollment students. Group-enrolled students were more likely to be Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC) and speak a language other than English at home.
- Across all 11 Outward Bound regional Schools, a total of 418 partnerships were reported including 128 community-based organizations, 11 districts, 266 public, private, and charter schools, and 13 post-secondary institutions. Using a typology that describes five degrees of bridging intensity between partner organizations, Outward Bound partnerships span the entire intensity spectrum from self-contained to unified partnerships, and the majority of partnerships fall into the associated and coordinated types. Regardless of partnership type, we found that forming partnerships with intentionality is most critical to successful efforts.
- In regards to Outward Bound's programming, several themes emerged in interviews with Outward Bound regional Schools: (a) we found that a lack of clear program models complicates partnering with schools and community-based organizations, (b) Schools reported that achieving programmatic

alignment that meets the needs of students and also the Outward Bound School and partner organization is challenging and (c) Schools reported that a shift toward serving more group enrollment students will require intentional changes in staff composition and organizational trainings.

- We deepen our findings with detailed field reports done on five Outward Bound Schools: Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School, Thompson Island Outward Bound Educational Center, Northwest Outward Bound School, Voyageur Outward Bound School and Philadelphia Outward Bound School. We describe each one through the lens of their partnership efforts, successes and challenges. Whenever possible, we introduce quantitative data as well as results from interviews.
- Many Outward Bound Schools (45%) had evaluation reports, and all discussed data collection attempts for key partnerships and programs. Based on a review of this existing research and interviews with Outward Bound Schools, we offered several recommendations for future research strategies to Outward Bound USA and its regional Schools, including (a) developing a consistent and specific program model for evaluation and research efforts, (b) increasing Outward Bound's national capacity to support research, and (c) moving towards more rigorous research designs to show the impact of Outward Bound's Program Model.
- The regional Outward Bound Schools have used a variety of strategies to fund programs for schools and partner organizations. Successful strategies included accessing local government funding, including partners in the fundraising process, and diversifying funding sources. As the network looks to scale, there are opportunities to strengthen fundraising through leveraging existing data, clarifying the national brand identity, defining consistent program models, and working together to form national partnerships.

A large proportion of Outward Bound's programming is already dedicated to community- and school-based partnerships. Results demonstrate that Outward Bound regional Schools are already making a significant impact on the students they serve. Expanding these partnerships has great potential for growth of OB, and the youth that are being served. Further, these partnerships provide an opportunity for Outward Bound to fulfill its mission of greater access for all students.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has spurred enormous disconnection and isolation among young people. When many out-of-school time programs closed or were offered remotely, their role in maintaining young people's optimism and social connections in a safe and supportive way became even clearer than before. Outward Bound places youth in outdoor environments that foster group-based, experiential learning, providing an antidote to the COVID-19 crisis.

“Post-pandemic, let's think long wins. Let's talk about depth.”

- Kim Glodek, Director of Education and Partnerships, Philadelphia Outward Bound School

Over the past few years, Outward Bound's network of regional Schools has grown their partnerships with local schools and community-based organizations, spreading their educational philosophy beyond wilderness environments to more traditional classrooms and out-of-school time contexts. These partnerships promise a broader reach so more students benefit from Outward Bound's innovative approaches of promoting inclusion and diversity, bridging and building relationships, and developing social-emotional skills. In an interview for this paper, Josh Brankman, Executive Director of Outward Bound, described: “We are growing, because we truly have something of value...and there is a focus on making sure that Outward Bound is far more representative of the communities [we serve] across the United States.”

A number of Outward Bound Schools already have long-standing, successful partnerships. For example, Philadelphia Outward Bound School has a deep relationship with the School District of Philadelphia, Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center partners with Boston Public Schools to offer an evidence-based science curriculum, North Carolina Outward Bound School does day programs and expeditions with the Atlanta Public School system, and NYC Outward Bound Schools provide a character and leadership development program to a citywide network of public schools. These Outward Bound Schools have developed models for strategic partnerships and programming that can be replicated and scaled to expand student reach.

At the core of these models is a shared educational philosophy, yet each school's specific strategy and outcomes vary significantly. Understanding and documenting the similarities and the differences among these models is key to broadening and deepening Outward Bound's impact nationwide. Further, a research strategy has been introduced through the Learning Lab to establish an evidence-base for these programs and partnerships. This guiding plan would add rigor and efficiency as these partnerships grow.

APPROACH

Using information from in-depth interviews and surveys of all schools, a review of administrative and programmatic records, and data from student outcomes and observations, this report describes the landscape

of strategic partnerships among Outward Bound’s regional Schools. The report starts with summative data on group and open enrollment courses at the national level. Then, we provide a brief review of the literature on partnership typologies and discuss Outward Bound programming. To provide further detail on the state of these partnerships and programs at the regional School-level, this report includes five field reports. Finally, themes from interviews are summarized. A research and funding strategy is discussed at the conclusion of the paper. Taken together the paper is answering the question of whether the existing partnerships are a viable solution to Outward Bound’s goals of expansion, increasing diversity and integrating practices into large public and youth-serving systems. If the answer is positive, then we need to answer a second question, what could the expansion look like, and how could this be achieved?

FINDINGS ON GROUP AND OPEN ENROLLMENT COURSES

OVERVIEW

There are two primary ways students enter into Outward Bound programming. One way is through open enrollment courses that students and their families seek individually. These are often outdoor and adventure-oriented learning experiences. Examples include 28-day Intercept programs where students canoe, backpack, and rock climb in the Boundary Waters or 30-day Pathfinder Courses in which students rock climb and backpack in the High Sierra. These courses are often accessed via the Outward Bound USA’s [website](#) by the students and their families themselves.

The other way a student enters Outward Bound programming is through group enrollment courses. These courses are created through partnerships with schools and community-based organizations. Partner schools might include an entire school district or an individual school, college, or university. Similarly, community-based organizations include a broad category of parks and recreation, cultural and arts, and youth-serving organizations. Usually, these partner organizations are comprised of students that know each other or are an “intact group,” which is why these are called “group enrollment” courses. These organizations work with Outward Bound to provide learning opportunities, such as a one-day ropes course, that focus on specific learning goals, such as teamwork and perseverance. These learning experiences are often not one-time events. Rather, in many cases, they are sequenced learning experiences, such as a one-day ropes course followed by a five-day expedition. Some regional Outward Bound Schools use their own enrollment type terminology. Hurricane Island Outward Bound School has “recently started referring to group [partners] as ‘educational partners,’ rather than ‘groups’” because group enrollment is less descriptive.

“You know, open enrollment courses are great [and] give students a different experience, but for Outward Bound to seep into the educational culture across the country, [group enrollment is] powerful and we need to prioritize that.”

- Andrew Spofford, Director of Outward Bound Professional and Educational Partnerships, Hurricane Island Outward Bound School

Outward Bound USA collects information on group and open enrollment courses in several national databases. We examined three data sources:

- (1) The first is a database called Outward Bound IncidentAnalytix that collects OB data reported from the Outward Bound regional Schools on course delivery and safety incidents every trimester. Outward Bound IncidentAnalytix data is representative of all students on Outward Bound courses. These data include measures by regional Schools on total student enrollment, student program days (SPDs), and course length.
- (2) The second database measures staff social-emotional practices using the Outward Bound's Domains of Thriving (OB-DoT) Observational Tool. The OB-DoT is an observational tool in which staff from regional Outward Bound Schools are trained and certified to identify 12 social-emotional rubrics on a four-point scale, ranging from "little to no evidence" (1) to "consistent evidence" (4). Ratings of 1 and 2 are below standard and ratings of 3 and above are defined as "good" and "excellent" quality. Staff observe an Outward Bound course for the entire day (for a one-day program) or for 24-hours if it's an expedition. Schools select which courses they want to observe. In 2019, 57 observations of courses were conducted across Outward Bound regional Schools. Results from the OB-DoT Tool provide an indicator of the quality of the Outward Bound courses.

Table 1. OBOS Outcomes

| Social-Emotional Outcomes |
|-------------------------------|
| Assertiveness |
| Perseverance |
| Group Relationships |
| Teamwork |
| Self-Awareness |
| Social-Responsibility |
| Physical Confidence |
| Self-Regulation |
| Progression |
| Structure |
| Exploration |
| Staff & Student Relationships |

(3) The third database is the Outward Bound Outcomes Survey (OBOS). The OBOS database includes measures of demographics, program characteristics, and social-emotional outcomes developed by PEAR (see Table 1 for a full list of outcomes). A retrospective-pretest-posttest survey is used for these measures where students are asked to report on their attitudes, beliefs and feelings at the end of the program and at the same time, retrospectively, report about their attitudes, beliefs and feelings prior to the program onset (T. D. Little et al., 2020). The OBOS is collected from a sub-set of students selected by Outward Bound regional Schools. These data are reported monthly, and annual reports are provided to the regional Schools and to OB USA. The OBOS includes a dashboard that the OB regional Schools can access in real-time to monitor their student outcomes data.

COURSE DELIVERY

Using 2019 data from Outward Bound IncidentAnalytix, we examined the percent of total students in open and group enrollment courses (Table A1). The vast majority of Outward Bound programming (87%) derives from group enrollment courses and open enrollment courses make up about 14% of programming at Outward Bound. Within each enrollment type, Outward Bound regional Schools offer an assortment of course lengths. At minimum, courses can be a partial day, but some schools also have extended courses of a month or longer. The majority (63%) of group-enrollment courses are one-day courses (Table 2). Typically, group-enrolled students participate in courses between one and five days.

Table 2. 2019 Outward Bound Incident Analytics Group Enrollment Courses by Length

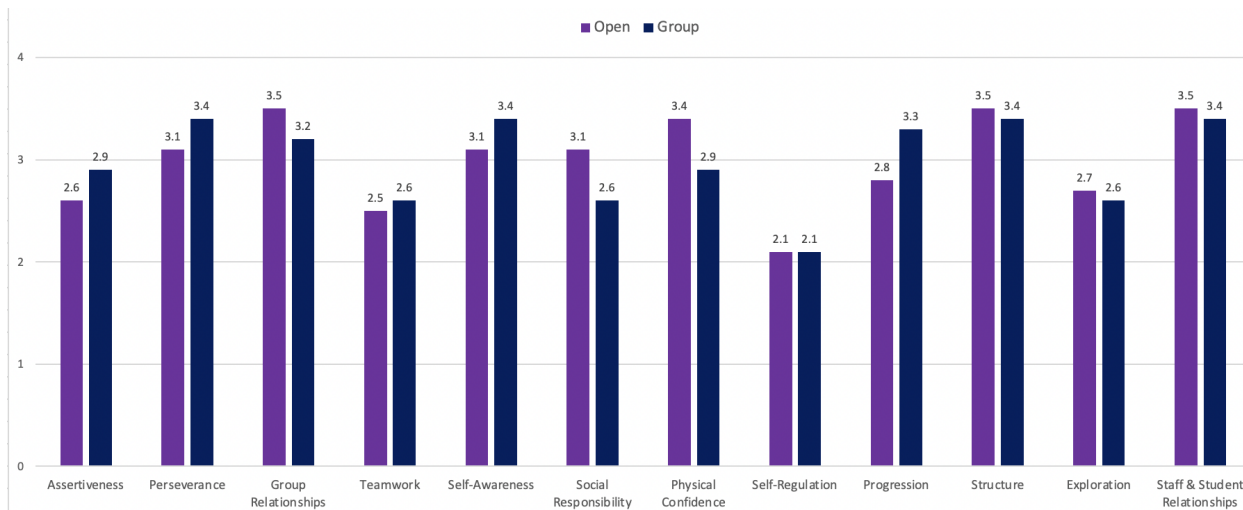
| Outward Bound School | Course Length (Days) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Total |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-------------|
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 20-75 | |
| Chesapeake Bay | | 115 | 2 | | 2 | 25 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | | | 1 | | 150 |
| California | 1 | 43 | 3 | 2 | 21 | 14 | 4 | 6 | | 1 | | | 2 | | 1 | | 1 | 99 |
| Colorado | | 3 | 1 | 9 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | | | | | | | | | 31 |
| Hurricane Island | | 1 | 3 | 2 | | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 21 |
| North Carolina | | 88 | | | 46 | 42 | 19 | 7 | | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | 2 | 215 |
| Northwest | | 4 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 | | 8 | 5 | | 1 | | | | 2 | | 1 | 31 |
| NYC | | 92 | 8 | 11 | 7 | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | 120 |
| Omaha | | 109 | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | 110 |
| Philadelphia | 10 | 187 | 2 | 1 | | 36 | | 2 | | | 2 | | | | 7 | | | 247 |
| Thompson Island Education Center | | 62 | 37 | 8 | | 4 | | 1 | | | | | | | | | 1 | 113 |
| Voyageur | | 99 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 11 | 3 | 8 | | | | | | | | | 1 | 131 |
| Total | 11 | 803 | 58 | 36 | 91 | 145 | 33 | 41 | 9 | 7 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 10 | 2 | 7 | 1268 |

Omaha Outward Bound School, NYC Outward Bound Schools, and Voyageur Outward Bound School almost exclusively delivered one-day experiences; these learning experience are sometimes one-day Insight programs and at other times are elements of a learning experience that includes many time points. Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center delivered one- and/or two-day group courses. Some schools have a set course length for their group-enrolled programs. For instance, Philadelphia Outward Bound School and Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School delivered either one-day and/or five-day programs and North Carolina Outward Bound School offers one-day and/or four-to six-day programs. Other schools, like Hurricane Island and Northwest Outward Bound Schools, deliver courses of a wide range of lengths and do not appear to have set course lengths.

STAFF PRACTICES

Using data from the Outward Bound Domains of Thriving (OB-DoT) Observational Tool, we examined staff practices on group and open enrollment courses (Figure 1). In 2019, 25 observations of open enrollment courses and 32 observations of group courses occurred across all regional Schools. In order to compare group enrollment courses to open enrollment courses, we excluded all one-day courses since no observations of one-day open enrollment course were conducted, and we examined programs with a course length of 5-15 days. This sample of observations included 14 group courses and 11 open enrollment courses. The sample was not large enough to examine statistical differences; however, these data are useful for reporting preliminary trends.

Figure 1. 2019 OB-DoT Staff Practice Ratings by Enrollment Group



The overall pattern of data indicates these courses had “evidence” or “consistent evidence,” meaning good or very good quality of five of the 12 social-emotional rubrics, including: Perseverance, Group Relationships, Self-Awareness, Structure, and Staff & Student Relationships. When we compared group to open enrollment courses across these five rubrics, there was little variation between the course enrollment types, this indicates a similar level of quality across these course types for these rubrics. Similarly, when we looked at Self-Regulation, the rubric with the least amount of evidence (i.e., “little to no evidence” to “weak evidence”), we also see little variation between course enrollment types.

Nevertheless, we found that open enrollment courses had higher levels of Physical Confidence and Social Responsibility practices. Specifically, high levels of Physical Confidence is indicative of: (a) students showing awareness of how to take care of their physical wellbeing, (b) students gaining the skills to engage in physical activities, and (c) students taking their own responsibility for their physical wellbeing or motivation to engage in physical activity. High levels of Social Responsibility is indicative of: (a) students trying out roles that support the group, (b) students considering perspectives of the group, their larger community and/or the environment, and (c) students understanding that success of the group requires all group members to support each other. Group enrollment courses had higher levels of Progression. High levels of Progression is indicative

of: (a) clear learning goals, (b) staff reinforcing skill building, and staff creating a series of activities that further skill development.

In addition to the quantitative data provided by the OB-DoT Tool, the observations of courses include a qualitative component. In the field report section of this paper, qualitative results from these observations are included for Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School, Northwest Outward Bound School and Philadelphia Outward Bound School. These results provide a detailed snapshot of the social-emotional practices used by staff in Outward Bound programming.

Overall, these findings suggest no indication a better or higher quality experience for open or group enrollment students. The differences that do appear are likely related to course length and not from differences in staff practices.

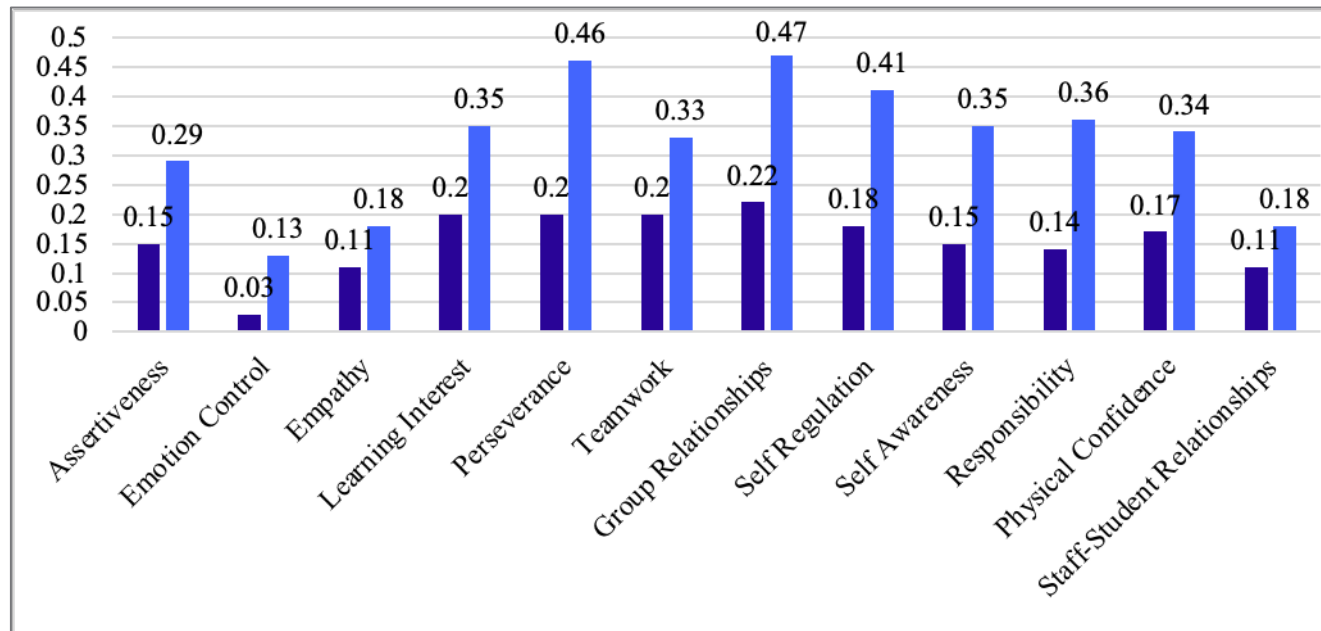
OUTWARD BOUND STUDENT OUTCOMES SURVEY DATA

Using the 2019 Outward Bound Student Outcomes Survey (OBOS), we compared the demographics of group ($n = 2,358$) and open ($n = 2,742$) enrollment students' (Table 3). Across schools, group enrollment students were more racially and linguistically diverse than open enrollment students. Group-enrolled students were more likely to be Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC) and speak a language other than English at home. The largest represented group-enrolled racial groups included Black, multi-racial, and Latinx, and fewer than half identified as white.

A comparison of students' 2019 OBOS retrospective pretest and posttest results revealed variations in social-emotional outcome measures by enrollment type (Figure 2). Following program participation, on average, students in both enrollment types ($N = 5,032$) had improvements across all 12 OBOS outcomes. Figure 2 presents average outcome difference scores by enrollment type. Using an independent-samples t-test (Table A2), we found that open enrollment students ($n = 2,724$) had significantly higher increases across all 12 OBOS outcomes compared to those enrolled through a group ($p < 0.001$). Despite these significant differences, when analyzing effect sizes, Perseverance was the only outcome with a moderately substantial result. We also looked at interaction effects (Table A3) and found that Assertiveness, Emotional Control, Empathy, Perseverance, Learning Interest, Teamwork, Responsibility and Physical Confidence had significant effects by age, race, gender and enrollment type (see Table 2A for detailed descriptive data). These effects suggest that it is not just enrollment type, but also demographic differences, that likely explain the differences in outcomes across group

and open enrollment course. More research is needed to explore these findings to understand the implications for Outward Bound programming and research efforts.

Figure 2. 2019 OBOS Student Outcome Mean Difference Scores by Enrollment Group (all differences are significant)



In prior work, Hattie et al. (1997) highlighted course length as a potential confounding variable affecting student outcomes. To identify the effect of course length on student outcomes, we conducted comparisons across enrollment groups for programs of 5-10 days (Table A4). An independent samples t-test examining 5-10 day programs revealed significant differences in retrospective student outcomes by enrollment type for 11 of the 12 outcomes ($p < 0.05$). These outcomes included: Assertiveness, Emotion Control, Learning Interest, Perseverance, Teamwork, Group Relationships, Self-Regulation, Self-Awareness, Responsibility, Physical Confidence and Staff and Student Relationships. Across these 11 outcomes, open-enrolled students had significantly higher mean scores than group-enrolled students.

OBOS results from 2019 also highlighted the sheer variety of primary course activities across schools (Table 4). Course activities included backpacking, base camping, canoeing, mountaineering, rafting, rock climbing, sailing, sea kayaking, and semester-long activities, with the majority of students participating in backpacking and basecamp activities. When disaggregating these results by enrollment type, primary activity differences become more prominent among schools. Backpacking and base-camping activities overwhelmingly compose group enrollment programs. Comparatively, open enrollment programs vary more widely. Though the majority of such programs consist of backpacking, a considerable number include canoeing, mountaineering, sailing, and sea kayaking activities.

Table 3. 2019 OBOS Student Demographics by Enrollment Group

| | | % | Primary Language | | | Gender | | | | Age (yrs.) | | | | | Race | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|-----|-----|------------------|------|---------|--------|-----|-----|------|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-----|------|------|------|-----|-----|------|------|--------|
| | | | N | Eng | Not Eng | F | M | NB | T | ≤11 | 12-13 | 14-15 | 16-17 | 18-23 | 24+ | B | NA | A | CI | L | ME | PI | W | Mult i |
| CBOBS | Gr. | 281 | 92.1 | 7.9 | 53.0 | 45.5 | 1.1 | 0.4 | 11.2 | 26.4 | 40.6 | 19.6 | 2.2 | 0 | 46.4 | 0.8 | 1.1 | 0 | 11.0 | 0 | 0 | 25.1 | 13.7 | 1.9 |
| | Op. | 226 | 96.8 | 3.2 | 33.2 | 65.9 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.9 | 41.2 | 33.6 | 22.6 | 1.8 | 0 | 7.9 | 0 | 5.3 | 1.3 | 2.6 | 0 | 0 | 69.1 | 2.0 | 11.8 |
| COBS | Gr. | 98 | 94.7 | 5.3 | 45.8 | 53.1 | 1.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 37.5 | 40.6 | 20.8 | 1.0 | 6.3 | 0 | 2.1 | 14.6 | 12.5 | 0 | 0 | 51.0 | 11.5 | 2.1 |
| | Op. | 444 | 93.4 | 6.6 | 29.0 | 70.8 | 0 | 0.2 | 0.5 | 19.1 | 32.5 | 39.9 | 7.8 | 0.2 | 1.6 | 0.9 | 4.0 | 0 | 6.3 | 0.2 | 0 | 75.9 | 9.1 | 1.9 |
| HIOBS | Gr. | 118 | 88.0 | 12.0 | 51.6 | 58.5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3.4 | 22.0 | 61.0 | 12.7 | 0.8 | 12.0 | 0 | 0.9 | 0 | 6.0 | 0.9 | 0 | 69.2 | 9.4 | 1.7 |
| | Op. | 376 | 95.5 | 4.5 | 32.3 | 66.6 | 1.1 | 0 | 0.3 | 19.7 | 34.3 | 31.4 | 12.0 | 2.4 | 5.9 | 0.2 | 2.5 | 0 | 4.6 | 0.4 | 0.2 | 74.1 | 10.9 | 1.3 |
| NCOBS | Gr. | 382 | 94.8 | 5.2 | 46.8 | 53.2 | 0 | 0 | 0.3 | 13.5 | 61.5 | 19.9 | 4.5 | 0.3 | 10.6 | 0.3 | 8.5 | 0.3 | 1.9 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 70.9 | 6.1 | 1.1 |
| | Op. | 519 | 94.1 | 5.9 | 38.2 | 60.4 | 0.6 | 0 | 0.8 | 1.9 | 43.2 | 45.3 | 9.3 | 0.2 | 10.3 | 0.4 | 3.2 | 0 | 7.3 | 1.2 | 0.2 | 67.5 | 8.7 | 1.0 |
| NWOBS | Gr. | 266 | 58.4 | 41.6 | 57.8 | 41.8 | 0.4 | 0 | 1.2 | 34.7 | 47.5 | 16.2 | 0.4 | 0 | 6.9 | 0.4 | 12.0 | 0 | 37.1 | 0.4 | 2.7 | 23.2 | 15.1 | 2.3 |
| | Op. | 356 | 93.6 | 6.4 | 30.6 | 69.4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.0 | 38.0 | 53.0 | 7.1 | 0 | 1.4 | 0.8 | 5.9 | 0.3 | 3.1 | 0 | 0.3 | 78.2 | 8.5 | 1.4 |
| OBICA | Gr. | 131 | 76.3 | 23.7 | 52.0 | 48.0 | 0 | 0 | 8.0 | 36.0 | 26.4 | 18.4 | 6.4 | 4.8 | 10.8 | 0.8 | 19.2 | 0 | 13.3 | 1.7 | 0.8 | 30.8 | 18.3 | 4.2 |
| | Op. | 277 | 93.8 | 6.2 | 29.6 | 68.2 | 2.2 | 0 | 0.7 | 34.8 | 36.2 | 23.2 | 4.3 | 0.7 | 1.8 | 0.7 | 7.3 | 0.7 | 5.1 | 0 | 0 | 70.7 | 11.4 | 2.2 |
| OOPS | Gr. | 184 | 87.3 | 12.7 | 39.8 | 59.1 | 0.6 | 0.6 | 1.7 | 36.5 | 21.5 | 21.5 | 18.2 | 0.6 | 24.3 | 0.6 | 4.1 | 0 | 13.6 | 0.6 | 0 | 44.4 | 11.2 | 1.2 |
| | Op. | 31 | 80.0 | 20.0 | 71.0 | 29.0 | 0 | 0 | 6.5 | 45.2 | 25.8 | 22.6 | 0 | 0 | 23.3 | 0 | 3.3 | 0 | 16.7 | 0 | 0 | 23.3 | 30.0 | 3.3 |
| POBS | Gr. | 390 | 88.7 | 11.3 | 39.6 | 59.4 | 1.0 | 0 | 2.1 | 10.3 | 47.2 | 33.0 | 6.4 | 1.0 | 25.9 | 0.3 | 9.6 | 0 | 5.4 | 0.3 | 0 | 46.1 | 11.1 | 1.3 |
| | Op. | 138 | 97.5 | 2.5 | 32.8 | 65.0 | 2.2 | 0 | 1.5 | 58.8 | 20.6 | 14.0 | 5.1 | 0 | 5.2 | 0 | 6.0 | 0 | 3.7 | 1.5 | 0.7 | 67.9 | 12.7 | 2.2 |
| TIOBEC | Gr. | 431 | 85.2 | 14.8 | 49.2 | 50.8 | 0 | 0 | 7.5 | 82.5 | 7.0 | 3.0 | 0 | 0 | 6.1 | 1.5 | 19.0 | 2.0 | 5.6 | 0 | 0 | 53.3 | 8.6 | 3.8 |
| | Op. | 31 | 70.4 | 29.6 | 41.9 | 58.1 | 0 | 0 | 3.2 | 93.5 | 3.2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 32.1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50.0 | 0 | 0 | 7.1 | 3.6 | 7.1 |
| VOBS | Gr. | 77 | 64.8 | 35.2 | 41.1 | 57.5 | 1.4 | 0 | 0 | 9.2 | 38.2 | 36.8 | 15.8 | 0 | 22.1 | 0 | 7.8 | 0 | 24.7 | 0 | 0 | 16.9 | 22.1 | 6.5 |
| | Op. | 344 | 93.1 | 6.9 | 33.7 | 64.5 | 0.3 | 1.5 | 0.6 | 7.3 | 28.9 | 39.9 | 23.3 | 0 | 6.1 | 1.5 | 4.9 | 0.6 | 6.7 | 0.6 | 0 | 70.4 | 5.8 | 3.4 |

Note: Gr: Group Enrollment; Op: Open Enrollment Eng: English; Not Eng: Not English F: Female; M: Male; NB: Non-Binary; T: Transgender
 B: African-American, Black; NA: American Indian, Native American, or Alaskan Native; A: Asian, Asian American; CI: Caribbean Islander; L: Latino or Hispanic; ME: Middle Eastern, Arab; PI: Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander; W: White, Caucasian (non-Hispanic); Multi: Multi-race (students who selected multiple race options); and NL: Not Listed
 NYCOPS data were not included in this table as the school only has group-enrolled students.

Table 4. 2019 OBOS Student Counts by Primary Activity

| Outward Bound School | Primary Activity | | | | | | | | | Total |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|----------|-------|----------|------|------------|---------|--------------|----------|-------|
| | Backpack | Basecamp | Canoe | Mountain | Raft | Rock Climb | Sailing | Sea Kayak | Semester | |
| Chesapeake Bay | 95 | 281 | 27 | | | | | 104 | | 507 |
| Group | | 281 | | | | | | | | 281 |
| Open | 95 | | 27 | | | | | 104 | | 226 |
| California | 306 | 23 | 8 | 8 | | 54 | | | 9 | 408 |
| Group | 46 | 23 | 8 | | | 54 | | | | 131 |
| Open | 260 | | | 8 | | | | | 9 | 277 |
| Colorado | 222 | | 48 | 137 | 135 | | | | | 542 |
| Group | 17 | | | 10 | 71 | | | | | 98 |
| Open | 205 | | 48 | 127 | 64 | | | | | 444 |
| Hurricane Island | 192 | | 51 | | | | 244 | | 7 | 494 |
| Group | 44 | | 16 | | | | 58 | | | 118 |
| Open | 148 | | 35 | | | | 186 | | 7 | 376 |
| North Carolina | 804 | | 41 | | | | | 56 | | 901 |
| Group | 330 | | 19 | | | | | 33 | | 382 |
| Open | 474 | | 22 | | | | | 23 | | 519 |
| Northwest | 87 | 244 | | 208 | 46 | | | 37 | | 622 |
| Group | | 244 | | 10 | 12 | | | | | 266 |
| Open | 87 | | | 198 | 34 | | | 37 | | 356 |
| NYC | 576 | | | | | | | | | 576 |
| Group | 576 | | | | | | | | | 576 |
| Open | | | | | | | | | | |
| Omaha | 72 | 110 | | | | 33 | | | | 215 |
| Group | 72 | 79 | | | | 33 | | | | 184 |
| Open | | 31 | | | | | | | | 31 |
| Philadelphia | 328 | 184 | 16 | | | | | | | 528 |
| Group | 198 | 184 | 8 | | | | | | | 390 |
| Open | 130 | | 8 | | | | | | | 138 |
| Thompson Island Education Center | 59 | 379 | 11 | | | | | 13 | | 462 |
| Group | 33 | 379 | 11 | | | | | | | 431 |
| Open | 26 | | | | | | | 5 | | 31 |
| Voyageur | 144 | 68 | 192 | | | | | 17 | | 421 |
| Group | 9 | 68 | | | | | | | | 77 |
| Open | 135 | | 192 | | | | | 17 | | 344 |
| Total | 2885 | 1289 | 394 | 353 | 181 | 87 | 244 | 227 | 16 | 5676 |
| Group | 1325 | 1258 | 62 | 20 | 83 | 87 | 58 | 41 | | 2934 |
| Open | 1560 | 31 | 332 | 333 | 98 | | 186 | 186 | 16 | 2742 |

CONCLUSION

In sum, a review of group and open enrollment course in Outward Bound's three national databases reveals that Outward Bound's regional Schools mainly offer group enrollment programs, which serve racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse students. These courses tend to be one or four- to six-day programs and include backpacking and basecamping, which in the case of many one-day programs includes team-building and challenge course activities. We found that staff used practices that built the social-emotional skills of Perseverance, Group Relationships, Self-Awareness, Structure, and Staff & Student Relationships. While students report changes in all social-emotional outcomes, their results are quite different depending on open and group enrollment. These differences could be due to difference in lengths of these courses or the different types of activities available in open and group enrollment courses.

FINDINGS ON EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS

PARTNERSHIP DATA 2019

Through surveys and interviews with representatives from each school, we identified the number and type of existing partnerships across Outward Bound regional Schools (Table 5). 2019 data are reported as the coronavirus pandemic affected the most recent number of partnerships through the system. It is important to note that partnership types vary depending on region and the program format, complicating cross-school comparisons. For instance, some Outward Bound schools may consider public charter school partnerships in their “public” or “charter” count, depending on the structure of a specific public school system, and those that collaborate with entire school districts may also count individual school partners within that larger partnership.

“When I say ‘partner,’ it could be a public school, it could be a public school district, it could be another youth-serving nonprofit, it could be a club”

- Josh Brankman, Executive Director of Outward Bound USA

Across all 11 schools, a total of 418 partnerships were reported including 128 community-based organizations, 11 districts, 266 public, private, and charter schools, and 13 post-secondary institutions. These partnerships are largely developed on the regional level with only a couple of national partnerships represented in these data. Some Outward Bound Schools, like Philadelphia and NYC partner primarily with individual public and charter schools. For California, Voyageur, and Hurricane Island Outward Bound Schools, community-based organizations make up the greatest proportion of their partnerships.

Table 5. 2019 Partnerships Across Outward Bound Regional Schools

| Outward Bound School | Partnerships | | | | | | Total |
|----------------------------------|--------------|----------|--------|--------------------|---------|------|-------|
| | CBOs | District | Public | Schools Charter | Private | Uni. | |
| Chesapeake Bay | 20 | 0 | 20 | 12 | 13 | 0 | 65 |
| California | 32 | 2 | 5 | 27 | 12 | 0 | 78 |
| Colorado | 7 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 23 |
| Hurricane Island | 9* | 1 | 2 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 22 |
| North Carolina | 3 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 40 | 8 | 62 |
| Northwest | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| NYC | 0** | 0 | 12 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 13 |
| Omaha | 6 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 |
| Philadelphia | 12 | 1 | 45 | 15 | 10 | 0 | 83 |
| Thompson Island Education Center | 5 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 14 |
| Voyageur | 30 | *** | *** | 4 | 5 | 5 | 44 |

Notes: Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) * 4 of Hurricane Island Outward Bound School’s 9 CBOs partners are considered “Pinnacle Partners.”

** New York City Outward Bound School partners with schools and EL Expeditionary Learning.

***Voyageur Outward Bound School partners with public charters and academies.

PARTNERSHIP TYPOLOGIES: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Partnerships that bridge students' time in and out-of-school can improve student academic outcomes, social-emotional development, health and well-being (Little et al., n.d.). When successful, these partnerships are often mutually reinforcing, providing consistent messages across settings and opportunities to practice important skills while leveraging resources for a deeper or broader impact (Schwartz et al., 2020). These partnerships offer educational experiences to students beyond those of traditional academic settings. Because these experiences can be more hands-on or experiential and occur across a wider variety of contexts, such as the outdoors, they are often more engaging and motivating for students (Expanded Learning Opportunities Guide, n.d.).

Outward Bound is a national non-profit educational organization that plays a unique role in the landscape of out-of-school time. Outward Bound's outdoor education program spans traditional classroom-based character education and wilderness-based expeditionary learning with a focus on "providing access and opportunity for every student to lead a life of purpose and compassion" (Internal Communication, 2021). Outward Bound's educational approach is focused on the development of social and emotional skills in outdoor environments. The "Outward Bound Process Model" delineates the "key ingredients" of Outward Bound's programming that are central to these learning experiences (Pearson, n.d.). Specifically, the model outlines the process of skill mastery in which students are placed in a novel and challenging physical and social environment with a set of problem-solving tasks to further their social-emotional skill development (Orson et al., 2020; Walsh & Golins, 1976). Traditionally, Outward Bound programming occurs in a small-group context, requiring goal setting, collaboration, and problem-solving among the whole group and individual members.

Through partnership growth, Outward Bound's network of regional Schools promises a broader reach so more students benefit from Outward Bound program participation. Dan Hoffman, Director of Operations at Philadelphia Outward Bound School described Outward Bound partnerships as: "Multifaceted—We have community partners that are programmatic. We have community partners that are like resource shares. We have community partners that are planning partners." These partnerships come in many forms and involve different roles and resources, including programming, paid or volunteer staffing, in-kind goods, funding, and research and evaluation services (Little, P., n.d.). These partnerships often require trust, communication, and a common vision (Anthony & Morra, 2016).

In order to have a way to describe and characterize partnerships, Noam (2003) theoretically classified partnerships using a typology that describes five degrees and of bridging intensity between partner organizations (Table 6):

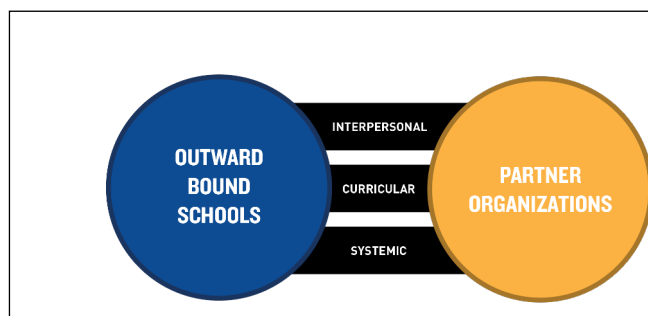
- **Self-Contained:** In this type of partnership, there is limited collaboration between the Outward Bound School (OBS) and the partnership organization (PO). Although the OBS provides opportunities for supplementing curricula and developing skills not emphasized in the PO, its separation from the PO limits the opportunities for condensing efforts and reinforcing its impact.

- **Associated:** In this type of partnership, OBS engages with the PO on some level, but the connection is loose. Basic familiarity exists between the two partners, but bridging efforts are typically one-sided.
- **Coordinated:** In this type of partnership, OBS has a designated liaison dedicated to bridging efforts with the PO and/or aligns its curriculum with state education standards. Although most staff are uninvolved in PO engagement, OBS and the PO exchange vital information that guides their respective decisions.
- **Integrated:** In this type of partnership, OBS engages in a systemic and/or institutional relationship with the PO. OBS and the PO see each other as key partners in accomplishing their goals, but achieving the consensus and compromise needed for this level of inter-institution integration is challenging.
- **Unified:** In this type of partnership, OBS and the PO are nearly indistinguishable; OBS may be located on-site or incorporated into an extended school day. Staffing and resource demands make this partnership type rare.

Further, these five partnership typologies can occur at multiple levels: Interpersonal, Curricular and Systemic (Figure 3):

- **Interpersonal:** The communication and information flow is between OBS and PO staff.
- **Curricular:** There is curricular and content alignment between OBS and PO.
- **Systemic:** There is a formal collaboration effort between OBS and the PO that lead to shared systems (e.g. governance, funding, transportation).


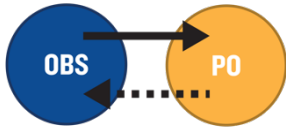
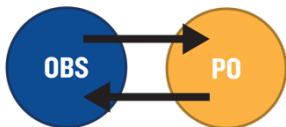
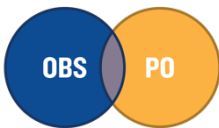

Figure 3. Levels of Partnership Bridging



The purpose of this bridging typology is not to assign value or promote a particular type as an ideal. Rather, defining the spectrum of intensities provides a method of conceptualizing partnerships in a sustainable, realistic, and contextualized way and to track their development. Each Outward Bound School must meet the unique needs of their regionally-specific student populations. This bridging paradigm provides a framework for describing the variation among Outward Bound partnership strategies that is both flexible and standardized. Consequently, seemingly disparate partnerships and schools can be compared, common themes can emerge, and universal learnings can be shared.

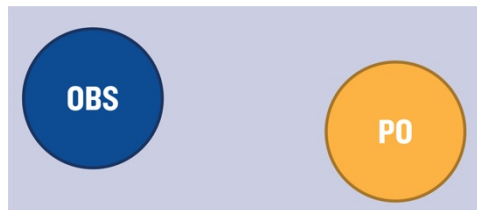
Additionally, bridging typologies provide a model to represent the changing nature of partnerships. New partners may begin programming at a lower level of intensity with the intention of scaling up over time. Partnership types can evolve and progress depending on a partners' needs and limits at a given time.

Table 6. Partnership Types

| Type | Description | Benefits | Disadvantages |
|---|---|---|--|
| Self-contained (Lowest intensity) | There is very limited collaboration between OBS and the PO.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OBS can supplement PO curricula. • OBS can provide opportunities for youth to develop skills that are not emphasized in the PO. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange of information about the jointly served youth is limited. • The partnership is seen as a one-off relationship or is time-limited. • The PO may frame OBS as a competitor. |
| Associated (Low intensity) | OBS has a role for PO engagement in mission without a strong connection to the PO.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OBS and the PO have a basic familiarity with each other. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Onus of bridging falls on OBS. • The loose connection is often due to the PO's limited responsiveness to OBS's efforts. |
| Coordinated (Moderate intensity) | OBS consistently communicates with the PO and/or has a dedicated staff liaison with the PO.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PO provides informative and evaluative data that guide OBS's decisions. • Aligned curriculum mediates OBS-PO interactions. • Liaison mediates OBS-PO interactions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority of OBS staff are uninvolved in partnership bridging efforts. |
| Integrated (High intensity) | OBS engages in a systemic or institutional relationship with the PO.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are deep structures to support bridging: curricular continuities, shared goals, and information flow. • OBS and the PO may have overlapping leadership positions. • OBS and the PO see each other as key partners in achieving goals. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving the consensus and compromise needed for high degree of integration between OBS and the PO is challenging. |
| Unified (Highest intensity) | OBS is indistinguishable from the PO.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OBS' programming and progression align with the PO's schedule; it may be part of extended school day. • OBS may be located near the PO or on-site. • OBS can supplement academic content. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blurred boundaries between OBS and PO staff can limit staff capacity. • If the PO is struggling to engage students or meet academic goals, this relationship type is difficult to achieve. |

OUTWARD BOUND'S PARTNERSHIP TYPES

Through in-depth interviews with representatives from Outward Bound regional Schools, we were able to get a fuller picture of how partnerships are typically established and maintained. We organized the information gathered during these interviews using the typologies introduced above. We found that these various partnerships range from low to high intensity.



Self-Contained

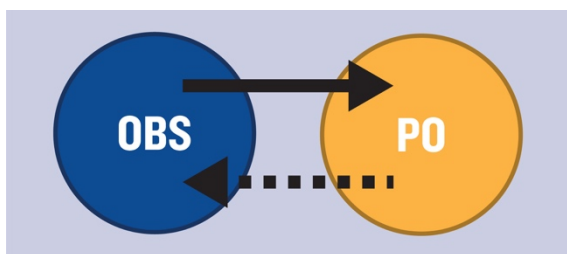
A self-contained partnership is the lowest intensity in Noam's typology. Jason Davis, Denver Business Development Manager,

described what this looks like for Colorado Outward Bound School: self-contained partners "send some kids to us for, two or three days and say, 'hey, we'll see you next year.'" These are often described as "one-off" programs where students come to Outward Bound for a learning opportunity that supplements a larger learning experience within a partner organization. Hurricane Island Outward Bound School Director Andrew Spofford described this sentiment in many their partnerships: "Most of our involvement, even with long repeating clients, is providing that expeditionary experience that may be the 'exclamation point' on a program that [students have] already been a part of." In these cases, Outward Bound provides students with a culminating experience that is reinforced independently within the partner organization. Self-contained partnerships are often more transactional than other types of partnerships.

Whereas other partnership types may include interpersonal, curricular, or systemic collaboration, self-contained partnerships are often best for organizations that are unable to work closely with Outward Bound or at a very initial stage of collaboration. They might not have much capacity for community outreach, focus exclusively on expeditionary learning, or are isolated in location. In describing these partnerships, Josh Brankman stated: "[Are they] as good as a long-term partnership? Probably not, but I also think it would be short-sighted to say that [they don't] have any effect." For instance, miles from a massive urban center, Hurricane Island Outward Bound in Maine uses its self-contained partnerships to reach student with limited access to enrichment opportunities. Self-contained partnerships allow Outward Bound regional Schools to collaborate with organizations and student populations facing significant barriers to access.

SUMMER SEARCH

[Summer Search](#) supports young people in graduating from college on time with less debt. This national non-profit has served 8,000 students in six cities, including the Bay Area, Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, Oakland, and Seattle. Its students are mostly low-income students of color and first-generation college students. A key element of Summer Search is providing experiential opportunities in the summer, making it well-suited to partner with Outward Bound.



Associated

Associated partnerships are one of the most common types of partnerships that regional Outward Bound Schools embark on. Unlike self-contained partnerships, there is a baseline level of connection and familiarity between two associated partners. However, this connection is typically one-

directional, falling primarily on Outward Bound. Bridging efforts are unlikely to go much beyond the interpersonal level, i.e., coordination at the staff level.

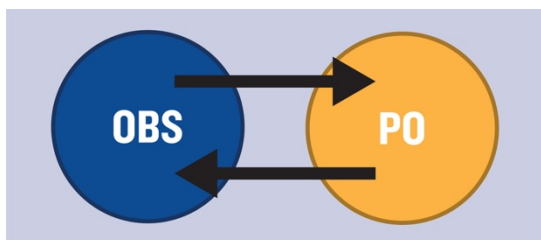
Colorado Outward Bound School's work with Get Outside Leadville (GOL), a community-based organization embedded within the local school district, is an associated partnership. In this program, Colorado Outward Bound serves over 200 sixth grade students over four weekends in two- and three-day programs. A GOL staff member who was formerly an Outward Bound instructor helped establish this partnership, personifying an interpersonal link between the two associated partners.

The onus of deepening associated partnerships often falls on Outward Bound. Kelly Reynolds, Instructional Designer from Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School, found that usually only one person will do outreach and communicate with an associated partner. In cases in which a partner has the capacity for a more involved partnership, other Outward Bound staff may join the team. Curricular bridging may then occur to align learning goals and plan to prepare for and follow-up on students' learning experiences.

Hurricane Island Outward Bound School's relationship with Summer Search also can be classified as associated. Summer Search sends a cohort of rising sophomores from Boston, Massachusetts to Hurricane Island Outward Bound School to participate in a summer leadership experience. Prior to the program, Outward Bound staff travel to Boston to meet with Summer Search students. This exposure helps students get comfortable with Outward Bound so they are not, as Katie Dalbey of the Learning Lab describes: "jumping out of an airplane the first moment they get on course". Sara Chesnutt of Hurricane Island Outward Bound School disputes this claim: "they're still jumping out, but there are parachutes." A pre-trip meeting also gives Hurricane Island staff the opportunity to get an initial understanding of who the students are and what they might need. Sara Chesnutt conveyed that these meetings reduce the possibility that staff might "show up and just roll right into what we do [without thinking of] how different it is for some folks." Traveling to Boston establishes a link between Hurricane Island and Summer Search that would not be present in a self-contained partnership. Because this bridging work is contained to a single event that is the result of Outward Bound's effort, it still reflects a lower degree of intensity than is seen in the next levels of partnerships.

Communication in associated partnerships can be challenging as it is often one-sided. Because many of these partners do not possess the resources or capacity to take on any bridging efforts themselves, the associated partnership reflects their bandwidth limitations. From our interviews, we find that Outward Bound is understanding of the pressures an associated partner faces while holding them accountable for providing the minimal information needed to run a successful program. As BJ Allen, Outward Bound California Director of Student Services, described, "when we stretch too far to accommodate, it tends to make things really challenging for [us]." For Outward Bound Schools, much of the pre-program communication is logistical. A

communication lapse may result in students not being fully prepared, staff not having the information needed to adequately serve the students, and consequently, the students not having an optimal experience. Communication difficulties are sometimes a result of partners being unfamiliar with Outward Bound's systems and processes and vice versa. Having more educators and school leaders on courses as chaperones can overcome these issues and increase a partner school's connection to and understanding of Outward Bound. When that happens, the shift is toward a coordinated type.



Coordinated

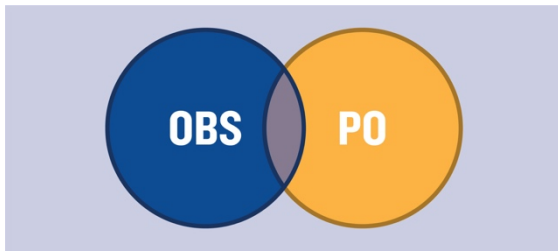
A distinguishing feature of coordinated partnerships is the bidirectional nature of bridging efforts between partners. Northwest Outward Bound School described what establishing this type of partnership looks like: “For two years, we have been building a partnership with the Confederated Tribes of the

Warm Springs and that for sure was a partnership like a 100% partnership – a lot of back and forth, give and take: ‘What do you need? How can we support that? Here’s what we can do.’ A lot of trying to co-create something together.” Coordinated partnerships require a significant amount of organizational commitment to a given partnership. In most cases, there is at least one person at both sites establishing the interpersonal links. However, a team often shares these responsibilities. For Outward Bound, Outreach Managers, Sales and Scholarship Associates, Program Managers, or Instructional Designers may be involved in these moderately intense partnerships.

Bridging often occurs at the curricular level as well in coordinated partnerships. They typically include the creation of joint learning goals. New York City Outward Bound School collaborated with teachers at partner schools to design their sixth- and ninth- grade Crew curricula. School Designers and Program Managers assembled “representatives from a bunch of our [partner] schools to join them and they got a grant. [The] team, together, [created] the sixth-grade curriculum.” With a successful structure in place, a different team replicated this process to create the ninth-grade curriculum. Potential pitfalls of this co-creation process include over-customizing each partnership and taxing organizational resources. NYC Outward Bound's School partners already have the capacity needed to maintain this level of partnership intensity with Outward Bound. Coordinated partnerships are in place in several regional Outward Bound Schools in which concerted efforts to co-create curricula that align with state-standards and partners' learning goals.

Beyond curricular alignment, Outward Bound regional Schools may match organizational values in establishing their coordinated partnerships. Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School uses the Domains of Thriving Tool to align their social-emotional outcomes with partners' goals. This strategy has been particularly effective with St. Paul's School for Boys, a partner that was motivated to use the “whole menu” of Outward Bound programming because of the cohesion with its mission. Whitney Setser, Group Program Specialist at North Carolina Outward Bound School, described a similar process with partners: “[for] most of our partners that are repeat partners, even if it's a second-year or third-year partnership, their goal and intent is to embed Outward Bound learnings into their school. They likely chose us, Outward Bound, because they felt like our mission, our pillars, resonated on some level with their school vision.” With bidirectional bridging occurring

across multiple levels, coordinated partnerships allow organizations to see the ways in which collaborating with Outward Bound can help them achieve their larger goals.



Integrated

Integrated partnerships are more complex and take several years to establish. Over time, shared systems evolve between the two organizations and result in systemic connections between them. Bridging might occur at the district, school, and classroom levels through interpersonal, curricular, and

systemic approaches. Because of their multi-level nature, integrated partnerships can more easily endure staff turnover than other partnership types. If one staff member transitions, other links exist to sustain these partnerships. As BJ Allen from Outward Bound California School described: “the most successful partnerships that I’ve seen from my vantage point are the ones where we have a strong and consistent partner or where we’re kind of built into the culture of the school [so] that even when one partner point-person transitions, we have a new person come in who’s [already] a champion.” She continues by pointing out that what makes for the intensity of bridging is that schools and programs see each other as key partners in achieving their integrated goals. Achieving this consensus and compromise needed for a high degree of inter-institutional and interpersonal integration is challenging, takes a great deal of trust-building and time.

Rather than providing a singular experience, Outward Bound’s programming is used to progress and continue the partner’s own programming in these partnerships. For example, Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center has shared staff with some of its Boston public school partners: “We have staff that are based at the schools. We call it a ‘School Specialist’ role. It’s essentially like having a course director at the school year-round. They’re the ones who came to lead their trips to the island. They work in the schools in partnerships with the science teacher[s]. We get money from those schools for those roles, for having people in the buildings.” At these Boston schools, Outward Bound continues to have a presence even when students are off the island and in their classrooms. Outward Bound is integrated directly into the school’s staffing.

In integrated partnerships, resources, policies, and procedures are often shared. Northwest Outward Bound School’s relationship with the Reynolds School District represents this systemic bridging: “they have a building as part of their administrative campus [that] they essentially leased to us for free. [It’s a space] that we get to use as our base for the Portland hub. [It’s] where a lot of our gear is stored, where our challenge course materials are, and our climbing materials and our props for classrooms – [it] is all in this building, which they give us a value of like, ‘Okay, this is valued at \$30,000 a year,’ and [this value] goes towards offsetting the cost of the programming that we would charge them.” Reynolds School District and Northwest Outward Bound share a physical space that reflects the ways in which they both are committed to and value their partnership.

Many schools described that their integrated partnerships are not just programmatically aligned but have also achieved cultural or climate alignment. Kelly Reynolds from Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School remarks: “Our successful partner is a school that has done a lot of work and it’s in their mission either to be an experiential learning-type of school, or they’re like committed to whole child education or social emotional learning. If that is the value of the culture at the school, then there’s [more] buy-in from teachers, [more] buy-in

from parents, [than a] traditional school.” The high degree of agreement between integrated partners sustains the motivation to continue the partnership over time but requires an enormous amount of trust to achieve.



Unified

Unified partnerships involve the almost seamless integration between two organizations that results in a unified learning experience for students. Unlike all the other partnership types, there is no discernable separation between unified partners. They often share a physical space and are directly incorporated into the regular schedule of activities.

Omaha Outward Bound School’s relationship with the NorthStar foundation is such a partnership. Located within NorthStar, Omaha Outward Bound School provides social-emotional programming to their target population of boys in grades three through eight. In addition to their shared office space, Outward Bound has a high ropes course and indoor climbing wall within the NorthStar facility. While NorthStar and Omaha Outward Bound retain separate branding, the two organizations are nearly indistinguishable: a hallway separates NorthStar programming from Outward Bound programming. While Omaha Outward Bound has additional partnerships beyond NorthStar, NorthStar is their anchor partner. Omaha Outward Bound supports students for seven years in this deep partnership. For instance, one student has “been on every trip we’ve done [and is] going to graduate this spring, but he’s had a deep, embedded relationship with Outward Bound for seven years. There are very few other places [where] you can do that because you don’t have an embedded partner organization with longer standing relationships with the students than we have.” When the highest level of intensity partnerships can be attained, the same students can be supported throughout their entire childhoods.

NYC Outward Bound Schools operates a citywide network of public schools (14 in 2021- 2022) implementing its unique blend of demanding and engaging learning with a focus on community and character aligned with the Expeditionary Learning (EL) Education whole school model, which is rooted in Outward Bound. A central feature is Crew - a signature advisory model where students are led by an adult advisor in developing SEL skills with a strong emphasis on nurturing a deep sense of belonging. Many of these students also participate in adventure and/or wilderness-based programs through NYC Outward Bound Schools, which complement EL’s educational approach. As a result, Outward Bound philosophy is a consistent presence throughout each student’s academic career. Consequently, NYC Outward Bound has developed a unique student-staff pipeline: “Most of our students who are now employees were on longer courses [or were] really good friends with [their] Crew and stayed in touch. Through still being in that network, they found out that we were hiring. [These staff are] really passionate about our students and giving students an experience [like] they had.” Through unified partnerships, Outward Bound can become deeply rooted into student and staff identities.

CONCLUSION

Across regions, Outward Bound partnerships span the entire intensity spectrum from self-contained to unified, and the majority of partnerships fall into the associated and coordinated types. When interviewed, Penny Jeffers, Outward Bound USA Operations Director, reflected that “there is always going to be a spectrum of where schools are” regarding these partnership types. The right relationship “fit” must be found for each partner organization; therefore, there is no optimal or ideal relationship type. Rather, the intensity reflects the unique needs, considerations, and parameters of a specific partnership. Regardless of partnership type, forming partnerships with intentionality and finding the right fit between an Outward Bound School and a partner and having the right understanding of *how to best partner* are more critical. But despite this statement of “allowing all flowers to bloom,” the more intense the partnership is, in our experience the better it will weather crises, reduction in funding or new leadership. Partnerships are inherently complex and disappointment and regression to solely self-centered views of each organization are not rare. OB Schools starting from an individualized, open programming model have forged an amazing variety of collaborations and partnerships in the service of the students they serve, most of whom would not experience the programs through the open-enrollment model. In the process the majority of OB Schools have developed partnership skills and have maintained great partnerships over time. We have found that there is a great deal of competency by leadership and other staff in partnering and providing programming to new populations in new ways. These experiences, many reaching back a decade, bode well for the future of OB’s emphasis to expand the group enrollment, while also maintaining the open-enrollment programs.

FINDINGS ON PROGRAMMING

When discussing strengths and challenges of Outward Bound’s programming in interviews, several key themes emerged. In this section, we will review these themes and discuss their implications for Outward Bound programming.

CLARIFYING OUTWARD BOUND PROGRAM OFFERINGS

Partnerships are most successful when the partner organizations have realistic expectations, familiarity with programming, and a cohesive vision of Outward Bound’s offerings. Across Outward Bound regional Schools, the variation in course length, format, location, and activity can confuse partner organizations. 2019 data from the IncidentAnalytix reflect the wide range of program offerings (Table 4). Paradoxically, more choice in course format likely distracts partner organizations and makes curricular alignment more difficult.

Conflating program modality with the course’s learning goal is another area of partner confusion. As one interviewee within Outward Bound described, a general attitude among some partners is to look at Outward Bound and think “Sweet, we’re going to go camping and that’s the end.” This mindset reflects a baseline misunderstanding of Outward Bound’s philosophy. Challenging outdoor activities, such as camping, backpacking, and rock climbing are the vehicles for cultivating social-emotional skills rather than the anticipated end goals. The program’s primary activity creates a microcosm in which students can develop new social-emotional skills. Descriptions alone are insufficient in capturing how these unique environments lead to

learning goals that otherwise are not possible in traditional classroom situations. Usually, the model is not fully comprehended until educators or leadership experience an Outward Bound course themselves.

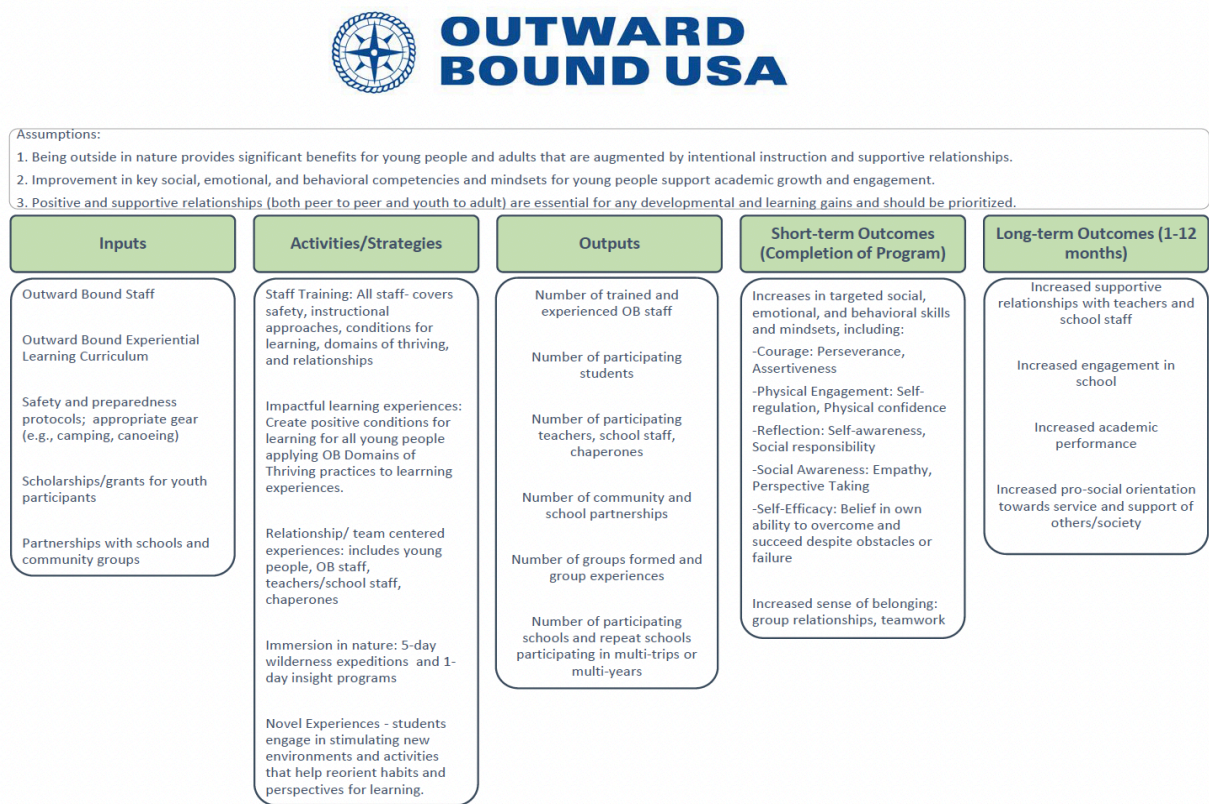
Penny Jeffers, OBUSA Operations Director, described a debate in demarcating what is “in model” or “out of model” for Outward Bound programming. She asked: “does it always have to be in a park? Does it always have to be in nature? Does it have to have a progression or expedition?” Despite a lack of consensus around the program model boundaries, there is clear agreement among most OB Schools that a five- to seven-day wilderness expedition is a critical component to Outward Bound programming for schools and community-based organizations.

Disentangling academic and non-academic outcomes is another programming aspect in need of clarity. Many regional OB Schools described the expedition as an augmentation, extension, or outsourcing of a goal or value of partner organizations. However, the approach differs between partner schools and youth-serving organizations. For partner schools, expeditions often focus on the development of critical social-emotional skills in service to curricular outcomes. In outlining programming goals with their partners, Philadelphia Outward Bound explains: “We’re not claiming to change academics. Where we fall in is the ‘anchor goals.’ It’s all about building community, social emotional learning, peer relationships, responsibility, and communication – those pieces that allow the teachers to have a better connection with their kids in their classrooms, where youth are more likely to communicate with one another, and ultimately, there [are] students taking leadership.” Typically, these expeditions indirectly yield academic results by helping students develop the intermediary skills needed to thrive in school. Effectively communicating this distinction to school partners can be a challenge.

For youth-serving organizations, expeditions are often seen as helping existing peer groups support each other through out key developmental transitions or to improve retention in school. The Upward Bound and Summer Search cohorts are two such examples. In both organizations, small groups of high schoolers preparing for college participate in Outward Bound to learn how to support peers through challenging circumstances. Another example is the AVID cohort. AVID is an organization focused on improving school retention by serving a group of middle schools transitioning to high school. Their Outward Bound programming endows these students with the necessary skills to support each other through this transition. Kim Glodek, Director of Education and Partnerships from Philadelphia Outward Bound School, describes how such “intact groups” feel after their expedition participation: “You’ve got a group that’s bonded. You’ve got a group that you know feels comfortable with each other, they become like a family.”

Standardizing program offerings across Outward Bound regional Schools could alleviate some of the confusion around program offerings. In fact, Voyager Outward Bound School has decided that a six-day Leadership Expedition preceded by a one-day introduction called “Insight Day” will be their standard offering for group courses. Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School is also offering set program packages. Theirs consist of progressions that begin with in-school programming, such as student advisories, a one-day introductory program, a five-day expedition, and a one-day follow-up program. Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School also has developed a logic model that explains their programming with partners (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School Logic Model



Decisions to offer standard programming are made at the regional School level; if one school offers a set course type, this programming will not be the same for the remaining ten regional Schools. Outward Bound USA is interested in supporting schools in making these decisions in a more data-informed way and providing resources that interconnect the regional Schools; however, traditionally Outward Bound USA has had very limited program involvement.

FINDING THE RIGHT FIT FOR PARTNERS

Discussions concerning the programmatic and leadership fit between Outward Bound and its partner organizations are ongoing. These conversations often focus on defining the target student population and the learning goals for the students and mapping how the program experience fits into the student’s broader learning experience. These conversations require immense communication and collaboration between

Outward Bound and the partner organization. For some schools, the shift to offering standard program offerings has helped simplify these discussions.

When developing standard programs offerings, it is critical to adequately assess the needs of the target population of students. For example, Philadelphia Outward Bound found that student retention was a major problem with five-day public school expeditions. Operations Director Dan Hoffman recalled, “50% of the kids showed up on day one and then by the end of the course, maybe 50% of [those initial] kids actually made it through course.” As mentioned above, Philadelphia Outward Bound learned that it was important to use one-day Insight Days as a foray into longer expeditions. In one-day programs, students are introduced to Outward Bound staff and the type of challenges they would experience on future Outward Bound courses. One-day programs expose them to some of the expectations on Outward Bound courses. When these Insight days are combined with the five-day expeditions, students are better equipped and their engagement and retention are promoted.

Similarly, expanding access to include school leadership, educators and, even students’ family in one-day programs helps the greater community understand Outward Bound through their own experience. With a better understanding of Outward Bound, partner organizations and all relevant stakeholders have greater trust in Outward Bound, making collaboration and finding the right fit for programming easier. Another advantage of including educators in programming is that they can play a critical role in the transference of the learning experience. Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School describes the importance of educator involvement in the pre-expedition through post-expedition process. Pre-expedition, teachers with Outward Bound and expedition familiarity can communicate their knowledge to help students set realistic expectations. Post-expedition, teachers can integrate expedition takeaways into their classrooms, incorporating SEL into daily practices and improving the schoolwide culture.

Customization of Outward Bound programming at the program- and instructor-level is a common strategy to match programs to partner needs. This customization requires a large time and resource commitment and does not always equate to a better or higher quality course experiences. In their work with Boston Public Schools, Thompson Island Outward Bound Educational Center has done a high degree of customization to focus its programming on academics. In an interview, they described this transition: “[In] partnering with schools, [we] had to make a switch to academics, [but] Thompson didn’t want to lose that OB-side of it. There was this unique opportunity to layer our field science on it because you’ve got a whole salt marsh.” “Staying in step” with partners and evolving to meet their changing needs can be a labor-intensive process. At the regional and national level Outward Bound struggles to balance being flexible with their program model without sacrificing too much to meet their partner’s needs.

Program quality versus student quantity was another common point of tension reported across schools because partners are often interested in serving as many youth as possible. Dan Hoffman from Philadelphia Outward Bound describes, “we could easily serve 500 students from [a] school, and we can crank them [all] through. It’s getting [the partner] to think about, ‘how do you work with fewer kids more deeply [while] having a continuation?’ and that’s the trick.” A number of regional Schools described how they encourage partner schools to move from thinking of serving a whole grade to serving a targeted sub-set of students who could

benefit the most from an Outward Bound experience. Clearly, both are needed and with the present flow of funds into education and schools, the funding might become available to program more widely and deeply.

Several schools reported that Outward Bound's Domains of Thriving (OB-DoT) framework provides a language for Outward Bound to align its programmatic goals with the goals of partner organizations. With a greater focus on social-emotional skills, regional Schools report that it is easier for partners to understand what Outward Bound does. BJ Allen, Director of Student Services from Outward Bound California, describes OB-DoT as providing the "unifying the language" between Outward Bound and partner schools: "you talk about 'teamwork' and I talk about 'teamwork.' Now we have that shared definition [of] what ['teamwork'] is we're actually going to be hopefully achieving [it] here." OB-DoT is the foundation from which Outward Bound and its partner organizations can bypass differences and confusion to work toward their common vision.

INCREASE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY TO SERVE GROUP ENROLLMENT STUDENTS

Shifting the number of group and open enrollment students has several programmatic implications for Outward Bound regional Schools. As the course enrollments and student outcomes data show, group courses serve more racially and ethnically diverse students, more females, and more students who speak a language other than English at home. Outward Bound Schools need staff that reflect these demographics to best serve the needs of these students.

Changing the hiring process may produce the necessary staff demographic shifts. In overhauling their hiring process, Outward Bound California focused on having the group course staff be "more representative of [the group enrollment] population, so that there is more of a shared identity, some shared life experiences, and a better understanding of those populations." Some schools, such as New York City Outward Bound, have an alumni pipeline staffing their expedition courses. At Hurricane Island Outward Bound School, increasing program access to a more diverse group of students is key to diversifying future staff: "most people who choose to be an Outward Bound instructor do so because they were impacted personally by Outward Bound at some point in their adolescence." Recognizing the relationship between staff diversification and student access is critical to serving the needs of group enrollment students.

Across the regional Outward Bound Schools was a general sentiment that: "we have a long way to go as an organization, in terms of who's on our boards, who's amongst our staff, including our field instructors, and so on." Consequently, many schools described a need for more staff professional development and training opportunities. Philadelphia Outward Bound School described how cultural competency skills are a formal part of their trainings and course prep. Thompson Island Outward Bound Educational Center leverages trainings that Boston Public Schools hold to train staff "on the history of education in Boston; going back to pre-busing, the impact of busing and the impact of that today." While each region serves a unique student population, sharing the resources, strategies, and best practices for producing the necessary internal changes will improve group programming across schools.

CONCLUSION

We discussed several themes that emerged in interviews with Outward Bound regional Schools. First, we found that the range of Outward Bound offerings and lack of clear program models complicates partnering with schools and community-based organizations. Second, schools reported that achieving programmatic alignment that meets the needs of students and also the Outward Bound School and partner organization is challenging. Finally, most schools reported that a shift toward serving more group enrollment students will require intentional changes in staff composition and organizational trainings.



FIELD REPORTS

In this section, we will deepen our findings with in-depth field reports done on five Outward Bound Schools. We describe each one through the lens of their partnership efforts, successes and challenges. Whenever possible, we introduce quantitative data as well as results from interviews.

CHESAPEAKE BAY OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL

The Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School's (CBOBS) Baltimore City Center has built twenty partnerships in their community over the last three decades. These partnerships are a result of the Center's ongoing commitment to cultivating deep relationships with schools. This case study utilizes several sources of data to better understand the Baltimore City Center's unique approach to developing partnerships and how these partnerships have fueled the Center's growth. Qualitative and quantitative data, including survey data, an interview, and a document review, are used. This case study also highlights one exemplary partnership with St. Paul's School for Boys, showcasing the interinstitutional integration that CBOBS can achieve with its partners.

THE KEY ISSUE

To broaden its reach, CBOBS aims to streamline partnerships and programs. About 80% of their 2019 participants were from public or private schools, and they are hoping to eventually forge partnerships with entire districts and grow further into the counties around Baltimore and the D.C. area.

LESSONS LEARNED

MEET PARTNERS WHERE THEY ARE

Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound deploys a strategic outreach approach for developing ongoing and generative partnerships. Partner familiarity, a shared vision, and on-site advocates are key in making these partnerships effective. These outreach practices provide a scalable and replicable partnerships model for broadening CBOBS's reach.

Typically, a potential partnership begins with an initial assessment of fit between CBOBS and the partner school. Understanding a partner's organizational capacity – its specific needs, resources, and priorities – is necessary to establish this match. Realistic expectations and parameters set a sustainable level of involvement, forming a partnership that is proportionate and conducive to the partner's existing structures. This information collection phase builds a comprehensive picture of a potential partner, enabling CBOBS to be responsive to its needs and demonstrate its long-term investment in collaborating. Meeting partners where they are at present lays the groundwork for future growth opportunities together.

“[The] ultimate goal is to [have] our partners finding other partners for us because they like what we do and they want us to grow and become better as an organization. In turn, we can serve them better as a school.”

- Hanibal Gnahoui, Sales and Scholarship Associate, Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School

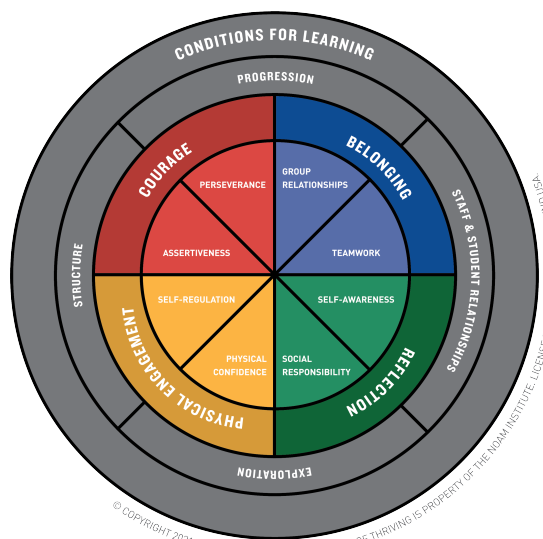
This introduction stage also aligns both parties' values. When CBOBS' philosophy is clearly articulated and easily digestible, partners are more eager to engage. The Outward Bound's Domains of Thriving (OB-DoT) Observational Tool is a framework that provides an effective means of explicitly linking CBOBS to a partner's mission, culture, and desired student outcomes (Figure 5). A common language emphasizes the ways CBOBS produces and/or reinforces the school partner's specific goals and frames their partnership as an active alliance – two parties connected through their shared beliefs and students.

If an interorganizational match exists, CBOBS's partnerships are strengthened by building relationships with the right people within these partner organizations. With a solid connection in place, the success of a partnership is expedited by identifying compatible on-site counterparts. Sometimes this begins with a singular "insider advocate" who can undertake bridging efforts within a partnership. This liaison, often a school-community coordinator, assistant principal, or a particularly influential teacher, is "typically someone who has the ear of the decisionmaker, if they're not the decision maker, and has influence with the students and families because any teacher can be like, 'I love Outward Bound! Let's do it!' But if they don't talk to any parents then things can be challenging." Advocates bridge school leadership, the community, students, and families, maximizing stakeholder reception to CBOBS so a high degree of institutional and systemic integration can be achieved. A partner school with high internal support for CBOBS is likely to already have the deep structures required to support more intensive partnerships. With an insider advocate taking responsibility for developing on-site support, CBOBS can shift its focus from outreach to pre-course planning.

Moreover, CBOBS's educator professional development (PD) programs enhance on-site partnership reception beyond singular champions. PD programs can serve two purposes for partner schools: they prepare staff to be better classroom teachers and Outward Bound program facilitators. For instance, one PD session focuses on reframing student mistakes as learning opportunities, allowing teachers to practice stepping back to let learning happen. These strategies can be implemented in classrooms and on expeditions and one-day programs. There are multiple points at which school staff may be involved in CBOBS' programming and reinforce its impact by taking on a "champion" role:

- **Pre-expedition:** teachers who know about Outward Bound and the expedition can communicate it clearly to help students set realistic expectations.
- **During the expedition:** chaperones attending the expedition can participate as active educational partners. As Instructional Designer Kelly Reynolds mentioned in an interview, some chaperones have their own "side journeys" in which they have a revolutionary personal experience alongside students.
- **Post-expedition:** teachers can integrate expedition takeaways into their classrooms, incorporating SEL into daily practices and improving the schoolwide culture.

Figure 5. OB-DoT Framework



Socializing and educating the school staff involved in Outward Bound programming can equip each grade, and even homeroom, with its own partnership “champion” and allows the Outward Bound philosophy to permeate deeply within a partner school. CBOBS’s PD programs mobilize a network of onsite advocates.

BUY-IN WITH STANDARD SYSTEMS AND MODELS

The OB-DoT framework hooks partners early in the outreach process (Figure 5). It provides a shared foundation that clarifies the congruity between the two organizations and can significantly shorten the “sales pitch” of persuading partners on the merits of CBOBS: “we already have some hearts and minds that say, ‘what [CBOBS does] isn’t ziplining, it’s what they *do* with our students.’” OB-DoT presents CBOBS as able

to produce measurable, explicit outcomes that are likely to reinforce a partner’s existing efforts. In this way, partner schools become more willing to join CBOBS in realizing a common purpose.

OB-DoT offers an efficient means of achieving value alignment and solidifying buy-in; partner schools become motivated to “outsource” the social-emotional learning elements of their curricula by collaborating with CBOBS. OB-DoT’s unifying language highlights Outward Bound’s direct connection to social emotional outcomes and presents CBOBS as the “vehicle” through which partners can arrive at their desired results: “[OB-DoT] is the way in for most schools to get started.” In addition to increasing site receptiveness, consistent framing makes labor-intensive on-boarding processes more manageable. With less time spent on translating their values and philosophy to prospective partners, CBOBS can begin the process of expedition planning and preparation. The power of OB-DoT as a framework lies in its concision – it is both widely applicable and highly adaptable to a diverse set of partner needs.

Streamlining additional systems across CBOBS, such as shifting from customized programs to a standard set, would allow Chesapeake Bay to discontinue laborious “a la cart” offerings without sacrificing the ability to meet a partner’s specific needs and goals. Simplified structures enhance CBOBS’s capacity to exchange information and resources with its partners to maximize efforts towards facilitating successful programming.

GENERATE A SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIP PIPELINE

The amount of initial effort devoted to finding suitable partners makes maintaining relationships with those partners easier. Partner schools often have such a personal connection with CBOBS staff that they even ask for them by name when re-signing contracts – this person’s presence becomes an assurance that the partnership is worth continuing. The multilevel nature of CBOBS’s outreach strategy develops interorganizational and interpersonal relationships, increases trust, and sustains partnerships.

CBOBS's consistent delivery of high-quality programs also supports partnership continuation. Impact reports and report cards demonstrate Chesapeake Bay's track record for achieving desired student outcomes. These qualitative and quantitative data document the ways in which students are positively impacted by participating in Outward Bound: "[An impact report is] an example of what we can present back to the school— something that's visually appealing, that's a great sales tool, that shows outcomes over the course, [and] to our good fortune, the second year's data [can be] even better." Concrete metrics for success motivate partners to remain involved with CBOBS and potentially expand their involvement in the hopes of yielding even greater returns for students over time.

Multilevel relationships and demonstrated results foster self-sustaining partnerships. Continuous relationships mean that CBOBS can depend on certain partners to resign contracts. These longstanding partnerships foster higher levels of interorganizational integration. Ideally, this integration means that successful partnerships can survive despite staff turnover, even in cases in which the on-site champion leaves: "There may have been a good advocate and then they're gone, but the school is used to doing Outward Bound. It [has] become part of [its] culture." When partnership survival doesn't depend on individual staff, CBOBS's energy can shift towards other organizational efforts.

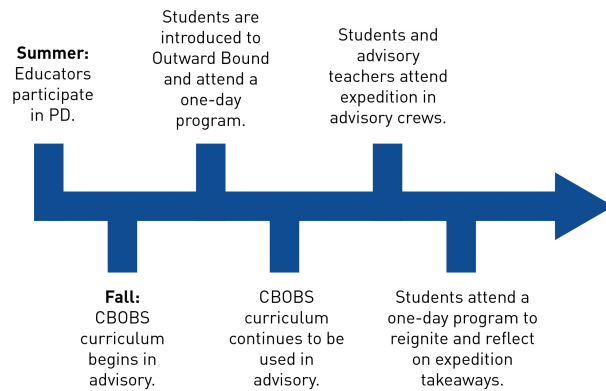
Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound's outreach strategy provides the necessary structure for *enduring* partnerships. Partner schools often choose to *deepen* their engagement with CBOBS over time. They often feel so pleased by their partnership that they refer new partners to CBOBS. In this way, single partners have helped CBOBS grow both in breadth and depth. CBOBS hopes to leverage this referral network into a sustainable outreach model. A partnership referral pipeline would allow them to expand further into the counties and deepen their reach into the city. Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound showcases how efforts with individual partners can generate momentum towards developing an efficient partnership recruitment system.

HIGHLIGHTED PARTNERSHIP: ST. PAUL'S SCHOOL FOR BOYS

[St. Paul's School for Boys](#) is a private, college preparatory school in Maryland for grades 5 through 12. From educator programming to advisory curricula, St. Paul's utilizes the "whole menu" of CBOBS offerings, embedding CBOBS into their culture to fulfill their mission. Their extensive in-school curriculum follows an ideal progression, combining educator PD and student programming to maximize impact (Figure 6).

CBOBS enhances school-wide initiatives to create a cohesive progression through their middle school. St. Paul's "wanted to move away from the 'field trip' experience [to] capitalize on momentum from in-class work, into the expedition field work, and then back to school and into the community." A multi-level combination of student programming via in-school curricula, expeditions, and one-day programs and educator PD integrates CBOBS into the St. Paul's culture.

Figure 6. St. Paul's CBOBS Program Progression



In forming the partnership, the principal at St. Paul's served the initial "champion" role, as he is personally invested in experiential learning. As Director of Learning and Evaluation Katie Dalbey remarked, "[St. Paul's is] the perfect partner in that they have these virtues or values at their school that align nicely with Outward Bound and they have a leader who values experiential learning. Those two things coming together seem to be part of what makes it a great partnership." Educator PD spurred staff buy-in, involving staff across all levels into the partnership. After two successful years of programming with 8th grade students meeting or exceeding SEL benchmarks post-expedition, teachers and parents advocated for the school's ongoing collaboration with CBOBS. The school plans to expand its partnership by developing a routine for 7th graders, doubling the number of program participants so that CBOBS becomes "a long thread through their middle school."

CBOBS did observations of the St. Paul's School for Boys programming in 2019 using the OB-DoT Tool. A certified observer trained to provide both quantitative and qualitative data on the quality of Outward Bound programming conducted these observations. In describing the St. Paul's School for Boys programming in an observation report, Joey Barness wrote:

"This was a group of 8th graders from an all-boys private school. Students knew each other very well coming into the course because they were in the same advisory group at school. Their advisory teacher was the chaperone on the expedition. This school had engaged heavily in BCBOBS character curriculum and had been starting discussions and activities in the classroom about leadership. A month prior to the course the group had come out for an insight day of team building and expedition briefing. Students had not met their actual instructors yet."

A full-day observation was conducted on one of these courses, which included nine students and two Outward Bound staff. The observational tool uses a four-point scale (1 - little to no evidence, 2 - weak evidence, 3 - evidence and 4 - consistent evidence) to measure rubrics that represent best staff practices to support social-emotional development. Overall six out of the 12 social-emotional rubrics received ratings of “4 - consistent” evidence: Assertiveness, Perseverance, Physical Confidence, Perseverance, Structure and Student and Staff Relationships. In addition to quantitative information, the OB-DoT observers take detailed field notes to give instructors feedback on program quality. For example, Perseverance was identified as a strength in staff practices during this observation:

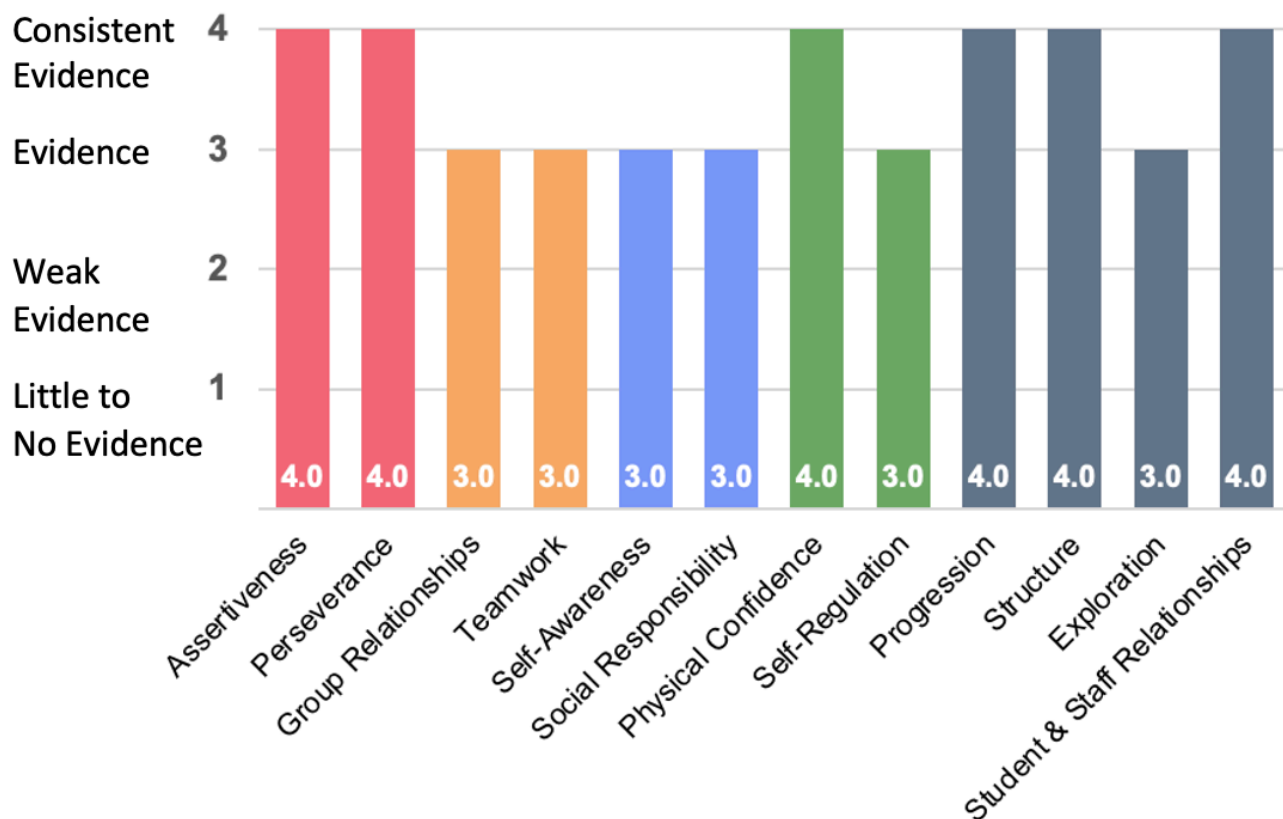
“Assertiveness was evidenced as a strength because student voices were authentically heard and considered by staff. Students were given choices throughout the observation, such as how they would manage their convoy, breaks and time management. Students voiced their goals for the week. During lessons, students were first asked to share what they knew about that material before instructors delivered the lesson. One student shares about his experience with Lyme disease and what he knows about ticks. Students coached each other through belaying and climbing technique. Students decided how well they were doing in the progression of Training, Main and Final as it pertained to specific group responsibilities. Students are also placed in positions to lead each other, especially during the hiking and time management challenge to get to main.”

The OB-DoT Tool also includes a section for opportunities for feedback on areas of improvement. Not all courses, especially one-day courses, can cover all social-emotional rubrics consistently. However, feedback can help instructors identify areas in which they could deepen social-emotional learning. An area of improvement identified in staff practices on this day was Group Relationships:

“Students maintained positive relationships during the observation, however there was little evidence of students building connections through having fun together, exploring common ground, learning about each other’s unique skills or valuing individual contributions. During shoutouts at evening meeting, the majority of shoutouts were towards the group collectively. Shout outs included, “everyone for hiking”; “everyone for setting up tarps”; “everyone for collecting firewood.”

OB-DoT Tool results from a full-day observation can be summarized in ratings across 12 dimensions of staff practices (Figure 7).

Figure 7. 2019 OB-DoT Full-Day St. Paul’s School for Boys Scale Ratings



CONCLUSION

Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School’s outreach practices provide a strategic model for partnerships that can be scaled and replicated to broaden Outward Bound’s reach. In this case study, we reviewed key lessons learned, including:

- Meet partners where they are,
- Accelerate buy-in with standard systems and models, and
- Create a sustainable partnership pipeline.

We also described the relationship with the St. Paul’s School for Boys and shared observational data from this programming. These data illustrate how the OB-DoT framework is used to examine the impact of Outward Bound programming on social-emotional learning.

THOMPSON ISLAND OUTWARD BOUND EDUCATION CENTER

The Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center (TIOBEC) has a symbiotic relationship with the Boston Public School district (BPS) in which they collaborate to co-achieve their respective goals. The Center's embeddedness is a direct result of maintaining deep trust and overlaying frameworks, practices, and values across organizations. Consequently, TIOBEC's cohesive programs directly supplement classroom content and build momentum for school and district initiatives. This case study utilizes several sources of data to better understand the ways in which TIOBEC achieves the high levels of partnership compatibility that fuels its growth. Qualitative and quantitative data, including survey data, an interview, and a document review, are used. This case study also highlights the Center's relationship with Boston Green Academy that embodies the ways in which Thompson Island integrates converging interests.

THE KEY ISSUE

TIOBEC is building capacity so 15% of BPS middle schoolers can eventually experience multiple island touchpoints each school year and a smaller group can engage in summer programming. Increasing middle school participation would create an "automatic feeder" for the Island's three-year high school internship program, thereby developing a program progression that does not require active recruitment.

LESSONS LEARNED

ALIGN PROGRAMS WITH PARTNERS' GOALS

Through BPS's rigorous vetting process for out-of-school time (OST) organizations, the district considers TIOBEC an "exceptional" School-Community Partner. Thompson Island provides high-quality STEM and summer learning opportunities that are aligned with the district's standards and frameworks. TIOBEC is included in BPS's [Opportunity Portfolio](#) and can consistently rely on nine primary public school partners during the school year that it can also draw from for its summer programs. Additionally, TIOBEC collaborates with [Boston After School and Beyond](#), an organization that allows TIOBEC "to match and work with what the needs of the district are." District compatibility presents significant advantages, freeing Thompson Island's capacity for non-recruitment endeavors.

"We've streamlined our model, dug in on building and continuing transformational partnerships with multiple layers in the schools. There's been a long-standing relationship that Thompson Island has been able to build in the district, so we're seeing being a trusted partner play out in different ways."

- Nikki Tabron, Vice President of Education, Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center

To enhance partnership congruity, TIOBEC ensures that its content and practices seamlessly converge with those of its partner schools. It has taken STEM lessons from the [Beetles Project](#) at the [Lawrence Hall of Science](#). TIOBEC staff work directly with teachers so that the Island’s academic framework and progression blend with the district’s to “integrate [the magic of OB] and bring kids out.” Programs on Thompson Island offer a multi-year sequence to expand hands-on field science learning. Connections, the Island’s flagship program, links academics, social-emotional learning, leadership development, and service, allowing student-teacher relationships to take place outside of the parameters of a typical classroom. Figure 8 details how TIOBEC’s curriculum is matched to science learning standards and SEL competencies.

The island itself is well-suited to match partners’ diverse goals. It provides “a 204-acre extension of the science classroom [with] different ecosystems and environments...[to] on what [middle school science teachers] are doing in the classroom and [brings] it to life in a physical way for the students.” STEM content has always been its focus: there is a “unique opportunity to lay field science on [the island] because you’ve got a whole saltmarsh or drumlins.” The landscape is a catalyst for unforgettable learning experiences.

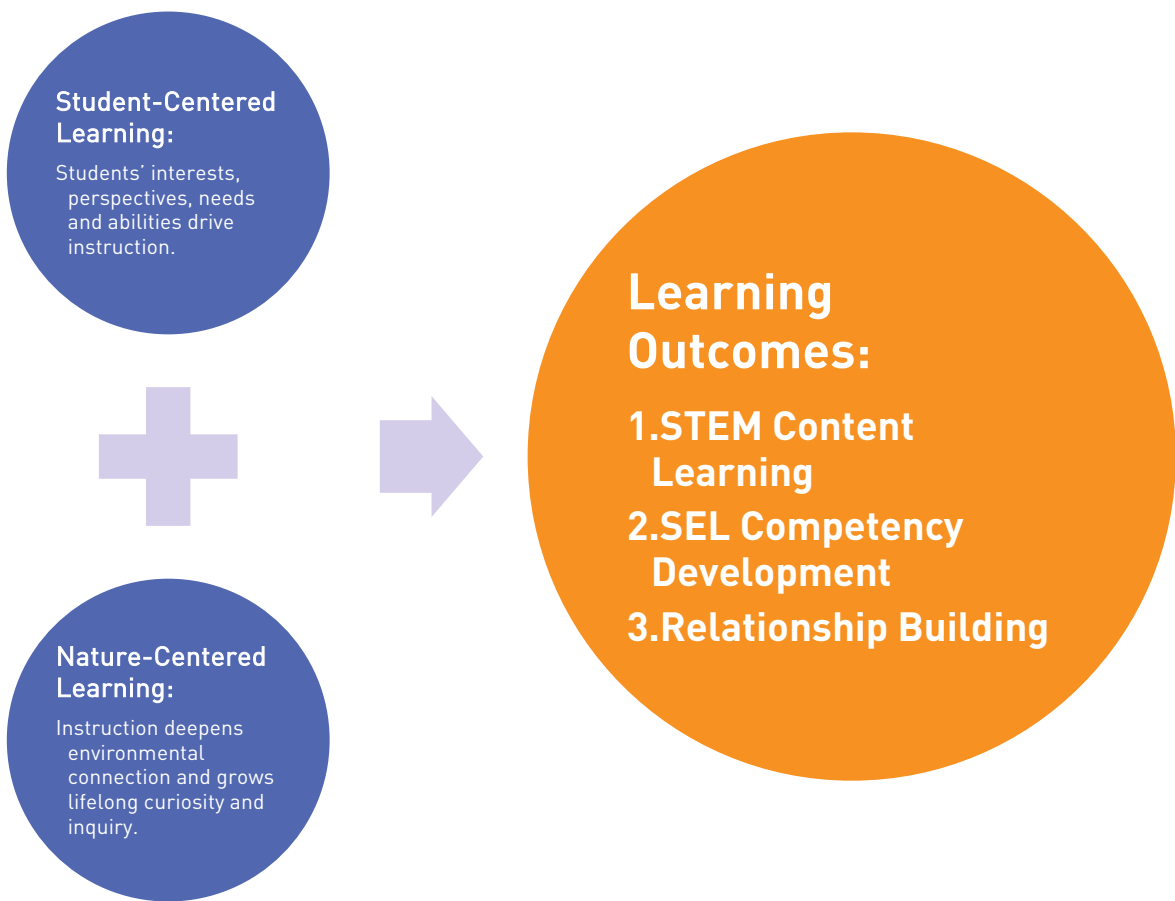
Figure 9 presents TIOBEC’s conception of outdoor learning.

Figure 8. TIOBEC’s STEM-SEL Congruity

| STEM Principle (Strang, 2019) | Student Opportunities to Develop SEL Competency |
|--|---|
| Direct Engagement with Nature | Self-Awareness: construct understandings from firsthand observations. Self-Management: become mindful of environmental impact. Social Awareness: develop empathy and respect for the natural world. Relationship Skills: learn collaboratively through exploration. Responsible Decision-Making: connect with surrounding landscapes and communities. |
| Equity, Inclusivity, and Cultural Relevance | Self-Awareness: build a positive cultural identity. Self-Management: listen to group members’ contributions and perspectives. Social Awareness: value others’ lived experiences as a source of expertise. Relationship Skills: create an equitable and inclusive learning context. Responsible Decision-Making: surface issues related to power, privilege, and justice. |
| Scientific Thinking | Self-Awareness: think critically through explanations, observations, and reflections. Self-Management: set goals and track tasks for scientific investigations and projects. Social Awareness: build common understanding rooted in a range of perspectives. Relationship Skills: ask questions and design investigations collaboratively. Responsible Decision-Making: make informed decisions about one’s relationship to organisms, landscapes, and human communities. |
| Discussion-Based Learning | Self-Awareness and Self-Management: monitor participation and contributions. Social Awareness: consider new perspectives and appreciate learning from others. Relationship Skills: share ideas, come to new conclusions, and deepen conceptual understanding through discussion. Responsible Decision-Making: use evidence and reasoning to weigh impact of various solutions to social or environmental problems. |
| Learning Cycle-Informed Instruction | Self-Awareness: reflect on skill gains, improvements, and learnings. Self-Management: acquire patience for iterative, sequenced, and scaffolded learning. Social Awareness: access prior knowledge and connect content to lived experiences. Relationship Skills: discuss discoveries with peers and generate new ideas together. Responsible Decision-Making: design investigations to figure out complex problems. |

In this environment, learning loss can be addressed without sacrificing the recreation and adventure that mark time away from school. However, the pressure to meet academic requirements can be at odds with outdoor engagement: “We’ve got this whole island, but kids are tied [to completing] these academic components.” Overemphasizing academic outcomes creates tension in maintaining TIOBEC’s distinguishing features. Additionally, melding SEL, academics, and Outward Bound’s philosophy leads to staffing questions: “do you have somebody who’s a specialist? Do you train everybody in everything?” While Thompson Island fulfills the varied aims of its partners, time and staffing limitations can make doing so challenging.

Figure 9. TIOBEC’s Conception of Outdoor Learning



EMBED OUTWARD BOUND INTO PARTNER SCHOOLS

TIOBEC’s extensive partnership bridging efforts have led to it being an “island” in the geographic sense only. Rather, it has chartered numerous channels to cross Boston Harbor. TIOBEC coordinates and, in some cases, unifies with its partners across multiple levels.

Notably, Thompson Island has blended staffing positions with two of its primary partner schools. These School Specialists are school-based course directors: they lead these schools’ island trips, collaborate with science teachers, and are present in the school building throughout the year. Shared staff ease the flow of information

between partners, shaping curricula and activities in both spaces and merging students' experiences across multiple contexts.

HIGHLIGHTED PARTNERSHIP: BOSTON GREEN ACADEMY

[Boston Green Academy](#) (BGA) is a public, in-district charter school in Boston that serves 500 students from 6th through 12th grade. With an explicit emphasis on sustainability and career readiness, BGA prepares students "to be leaders in the green sector in Boston and beyond." From middle to high school, the school scaffolds developmentally appropriate opportunities to support its students' gradual independence.

Each fall, middle schoolers have a multi-day expedition and return to the island the following spring. However, BGA students don't just come to Thompson Island, TIOBEC is physically present in classrooms. An Outward Bound School Specialist is based at the school, working alongside science teachers in the classroom. The close incorporation of TIOBEC and BGA has resulted in reciprocal relationships and shared structures, goals, and staff.

During the pandemic, BGA utilized virtual TIOBEC programming to build school community in remote settings. As one administrator noted, this programming helped "build the sense that [BGA] is a special and fun and engaging place to be." Integrating BGA with Thompson Island has proved to be far greater than each entity's individual efforts, especially in times of uncertainty.

These positions afford tremendous benefits for both organizations. For TIOBEC, they help transition to summer programming: "the teacher whose classroom we're in is also our teacher that works with us for our summer Connections program, so there's a lot of overlap back and forth." Partner schools also see these roles as vital to their functioning, especially during COVID-19-related school closures: "When the pandemic hit, our [School Specialists] were still partnering with our science teachers. They were able to do programming [and] partner with other organizations that were working in schools." The School Specialists carry TIOBEC's philosophy into schools, creating bidirectional links from the classroom to the island and beyond. These staff overcome physical and organizational barriers between the two organizations by tightly weaving TIOBEC and the partner school together.

In the absence of overlapping staff, TIOBEC remains deeply incorporated with its partner schools. Thompson Island becomes "this place where [students] can build relationships, focus on developing community, and enhance academic learning." Its impact continues long after students return to their classrooms, and TIOBEC's culture directly seeps into its partner schools. For instance, some students adopt the practice of "flagging in" instead of raising their hands, and teachers return with a new sense of their students' potential. Regardless of any physical TIOBEC presence in schools, its impression on students, teachers, and classrooms is indelible.

TIOBEC is so interconnected with some Boston public schools that its partnerships are frequently leveraged in school marketing materials. Student opportunities at TIOBEC draw enrollment: "With school choice in Boston, we're a part of the way that schools sell themselves." Partner schools and Thompson Island

are motivated to maintain their relationships – they have become integral parts of each other and ensuring each other’s sustainability and growth.

EMPHASIZE CULTURE AND EQUITY WORK IN TRAINING

To understand the forces shaping its students, TIOBEC utilizes its partnerships to inform its professional development opportunities. Thompson Island staff receive the same trainings on Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices and transformative Social Emotional Learning as BPS staff, often learning directly alongside them. These cross-organization trainings develop shared protocols, policies, and practices. In effect, as students navigate many contexts throughout the day and year, they are exposed to adults implementing consistent strategies to improve equity and cultural proficiency.

To give staff a sense of how the past molds the present, they also learn “the history of education in Boston, going back to pre-busing [and] the impact of busing.” Beyond externally-focused trainings, TIOBEC also prioritizes developing its organizational awareness to clarify its mission and vision. Thompson Island has its own “JEDI” staff trainings, adding the element of Justice to the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) framework. In practice, this means internally considering “what is the journey that we need to go on?” to understand “who we are, where we’ve been, where we’re going” and evolve individual and organizational practices.

TIOBEC is mindful that it is situated within a complex social and cultural web and not a vacuum. Rather than be constrained by existing hegemonic structures and systems, TIOBEC aspires to be part of collective efforts to improve conditions for youth across all contexts. This work begins with asking:

- Who are the students that TIOBEC serves?
- What are their needs?
- What has been their historical experience?
- Who else is working to achieve the same ends?
- How can they combine their efforts to achieve them?

CONCLUSION

TIOBEC skillfully manages complex and converging interests but achieving the delicate balance between formal learning and enrichment can be challenging. Thompson Island makes a concerted effort to align its programs with the school day without replicating it. A great deal of precision is necessary to keep the realities of TIOBEC and its partner schools compatible *and* distinct. Rather than finding the number of competing interests overwhelming, TIOBEC leverages collaborative mechanisms to satisfy its partners’ goals without sacrificing its own.

Its power to overcome these pressures does not go unnoticed. BPS has been continuously impressed with TIOBEC’s ability to engender youth with the skills needed to become better students, individuals, and community members. In fact, the district has a strong desire to use their collaboration to co-create their futures: “[We’re] working with district leadership to combine and look for funding together...The district said to us, ‘we want [TIOBEC] because you bring credibility to our ask.’ Then we’re able to say, ‘we want

BPS because *you* bring credibility to *our* ask.” TIOBEC exemplifies how the result of individual efforts can go so much further when bound together.

In this case study, we reviewed key lessons learned, including:

- Align programs with partners’ goals,
- Embed Outward Bound into partner schools, and
- Emphasize culture and equity work in training.

NORTHWEST OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL

The Northwest Outward Bound School's (NWOBS) Portland Program has built deep partnerships with three public school districts in their community over the last decade. This case study utilized several sources of data to better understand the Portland Program's approach to their partnerships and their impact on student demographics and programming. Qualitative and quantitative data were used, including survey data, program observation reports, an interview, and a document review.

THE KEY ISSUE

The Portland Program is primarily focused on school- and community-based partnerships. Their goal is to expand these partnerships into other schools and school districts. Expanding NWOBS's reach into other communities would add more parity and equity to their programming.

HIGHLIGHTED PARTNERSHIP: REYNOLDS SCHOOL DISTRICT

LEGACY PROGRAM WITH REYNOLDS SCHOOL DISTRICT SERVES AS A MODEL FOR FUTURE GROWTH

Reynolds School District serves a student population that is 41% Latinx, 33% White, 9% African American, 8% Asian, 8% Pacific Islander, and 1% multiracial. English Language Learners make up 46% of the students and 70 languages are spoken in the school district. Across the district, 72% of students experience poverty and 94% are considered economically disadvantaged. NWOBS's partnership with Reynolds School District was initially established as a connection between Outward Bound and the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program at Reynolds Middle School. AVID is a non-profit organization focused on closing the opportunity gap

ADVANCEMENT VIA INDIVIDUAL DETERMINATION (AVID)

AVID is a non-profit that works in 47 states with over two million students, representing 66% students on free or reduced-price lunch and 50% Hispanic, 23% White, 14% Black, 5% Asian and 7% Other students. AVID is committed to schools shifting "to a more equitable, student-centered approach" by training educators to "close the opportunity gap, so they can prepare all students for college, careers, and life." As a result, the teachers who work with the AVID program focus on relationships and student-centered learning. AVID has several goals:

- Teacher Effectiveness: respect teacher expertise while shifting their approach "instructor to facilitator."
- Student Learning: "empower students to own their learning" through critical thinking, inquiry, and self-advocacy.
- Leadership: provide a "vehicle for principals to change existing paradigms at their school."
- Equity: improve college graduation rates "among diverse and underrepresented demographic groups."

in graduation rates for underrepresented demographic groups. AVID was identified as a NWOBS partner due to their aligned and complementary missions.

Resources are shared between the Portland Program and the Reynolds School District. The school district leases a building to the Portland Program to store climbing and challenge course gear for programming at the schools. Organizational overlap is also promoted through staffing. A Northwest Outward Bound School's administrator has previously been a senior program instructor and served a role embedded within the middle schools. Her intimate knowledge of and dual experience in the district and Outward Bound proved crucial to cultivating and supporting the partnership into its current form. Additionally, the AVID coordinator and main point of contact for the partnership is a former middle school teacher that is also very familiar with Outward Bound's programming. He serves as a liaison for the various schools, the school board, teachers, and Outward Bound.

In describing the partnership with the Reynolds School District, Portland Program staff explain: "NWOBS has worked with Reynolds School District for ten years and served more than 2,000 students over the course of nearly 20,000 Student Program Days (SPD). This relationship is our most developed public school program and has created a strong foundation we can use as we expand our work into other local school districts. We've created curricula that empower the diverse student groups at Reynolds and can also be easily adapted as needed. The Outward Bound program helps these students navigate the challenging transition from middle to high school by creating a continuing positive learning environment, encouraging self-advocacy, and focusing on social and emotional learning. Currently, the program culminates in tenth grade with a graduation and reflection ceremony." The Portland Program's partnership with Reynolds School District starts with the 7th grade AVID students at three different middle schools. As these students transition to a single high school, programming continues into 10th grade. Therefore, the students have four continuous years of programming with NWOBS.

Across various perspectives, there are numerous outspoken advocates supporting the value of the NWOBS-Reynolds Public School District-AVID partnership. One School Board Member is a former district student and alumnus of Outward Bound. Looking back on his own 22-day summer wilderness course, he remarks, "Thanks to the program, I've been able to really gather my thoughts and have a clear mindset of what I want to do. One of the most powerful things that I took out of it is being appreciative and valuing the things that I have. I can only imagine, if we offered an Outward Bound program to [all] these students for a week, for two weeks, for three weeks, how much more valuable that would be for them." An AVID instructor shares, "What Northwest Outward Bound School gives [the students] the opportunity to do is to come together to collaborate, to problem-solve, and to get to know the depths of each other's stories on levels that they probably wouldn't if they were just in a regular classroom." In addition to the enormous amount of anecdotal endorsement, quantitative and qualitative data demonstrate the effectiveness of Northwest Outward Bound's AVID programming.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE AVID PROGRAM

In 2019, Northwest Outward Bound School did three observations of a one-day Insight program with AVID using the Outward Bound's Domains of Thriving Tool (OB-DoT). A certified observer trained to provide both

quantitative and qualitative data on the quality of Outward Bound programming conducted these observations. In a report of the Portland Program's AVID programming for two classes of 7th and 8th grade students from Walt Morey Middle School, the observer wrote:

“For this climbing day students from both classes and both 7th and 8th graders were present. The NWOBS Portland Program has worked with these classes at Walt Morey for several years and many of the 8th grade students present at this day event participated in the same climbing day event last year when they were in 7th grade. Prior to the observation the students had participated in 3 classroom Outward Bound sessions (one day a week for the previous 3 weeks) and they will have 4 more classroom sessions on one day a week following this climbing day. The students had been together in AVID class since the beginning of the school year meeting 5 day a week.”

OB-DoT reports highlight practices that promote social-emotional skills and identify program strengths and challenges. In this example, Group Relationships was identified as a strength of the program:

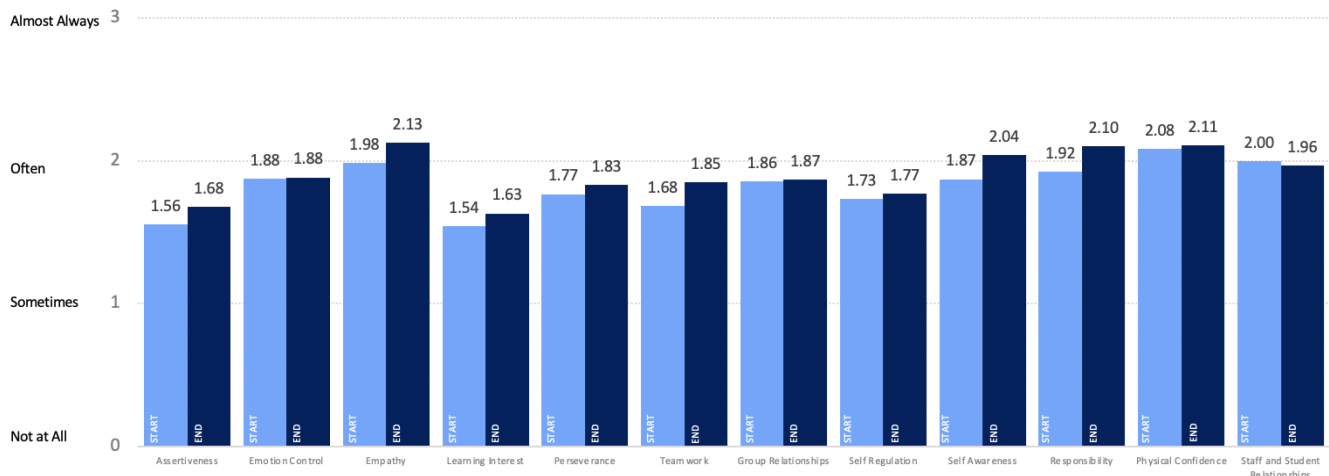
“Group relationships were strengthened in several ways during the day. Staff articulated that the goal of the day was to have fun together and there was a significant amount of laughter and elevated voices from students during the day indicating that they were having fun. Positive communication was also a theme mentioned by several staff during the day and students responded by clapping and cheering for their fellow classmates as well as giving hugs and high-fives to each other after climbs.”

Physical Confidence was named as a challenge area:

“Staff showed equal attention to students who engaged timidly with climbing as with those who had significant comfort and desire for more challenges. However the attention to supporting students to gain specific physical awareness was inconsistent depending on the instructor or student. Climbing technique was modeled but the primary focus was body position while lowering and there was not attention to building physical competence of technique or confidence during that lesson. Students discovered they could ask for blindfolds or take on more challenges and some did but this was not announced as an option to the whole team. Three students did not even put on harnesses during the after lunch climbing time and over the course of 40 minutes 15 more students joined them sitting on the chairs and no longer engaging in the physical activity. This showed a decided lack of physical motivation from half of the class.”

In addition to observations, program quality was evaluated using data from a student self-report survey (n = 15). As Figure 10 shows, on average, these students reported increases in their social-emotional skills for ten of the 12 outcomes.

Figure 10. 2019 OBOS AVID Student Outcomes (N =15)



Student self-report data complemented the OB-DoT observations for the AVID Outward Bound programming, providing qualitative and quantitative data that demonstrate the partnership’s ability to help AVID achieve its student goals.

LESSONS LEARNED

BUILD CONTINUITY THROUGH DEVELOPMENTAL TRANSITIONS

From their partnership with the Reynolds School district, the Portland Program learned that finding the right target population can deepen partnership impact. The Portland Program focuses on the middle to high school transition as their community has found that retention of these students is particularly difficult. This target population also aligns with AVID’s area of focus, as an Outward Bound staff described: “we kind of piggyback on [AVID’s mission and target population] in how we build our curriculum.”

One of Outward Bound’s programming strengths is its focus on group and staff-student relationships. Staff are often very skilled at rapport-building and can help students develop a strong system of support. Through Outward Bound programming, staff provide continuity through students’ transition into high school that teachers or the schools cannot provide themselves.

“We intentionally try to create some instructor staffing continuity as students continue through the program, so that we are able to work with the same cohorts of students over the course of multiple years, thus creating closer relationships and more pronounced outcomes.”

- Paul Taylor, Portland Program Manager, Northwest Outward Bound School

IMPROVE PROGRAMMING WITH TIME AND TRUST

At the beginning of the school year, Outward Bound instructors conduct a needs assessment with teachers to determine the ways in which programming can fit into or supplement their student goals. Teacher and student input inform how Outward Bound staff build their learning outcomes. Over the years, Outward Bound staff have developed trusting relationships with the teachers involved in AVID, the school counselors, and the district administrators. These relationships form the basis for a positive and dynamic environment in which instructors can facilitate high-quality programming for students. The great experiences of past classes over many years have created lasting excitement for future participants.

“I keep in touch with countless Reynolds district Outward Bound alumni and have been honored to write many college recommendation letters for participating students. As an NWOBS instructor, it’s powerful to work with the same students for four years and watch them grow, challenge themselves, and become more confident.”

- Paul Taylor, Portland Program Manager, Northwest Outward Bound School

The program progression covers all district AVID classes from seventh through tenth grade. During the eight-week program, each class meets for one to two hours, culminating in an Insight Day which might include rock climbing or a challenge course that is different each year. Each grade level builds over the four years and, while some students migrate in and out of the classes, the core student groups stay the same. High school juniors and seniors are invited to return for Insight Days to serve as mentors for younger students. Staff find this experience motivates and empowers students of all ages.

ENGAGE STUDENTS THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Outward Bound’s values and curriculum complement AVID’s programming and add value to the student experience. As a NWOBS staff described, “When we come in, the first thing we do is [say], ‘close the books, put your binders away, put your textbooks away, clear the Tables, push the Tables out of the way, let’s create a big open space.’” Adding variety to the learning context increases student engagement. The students participate in more hands-on activities and intentional teambuilding through problem-solving that improve communication skills. In their Outward Bound programming, students learn social-emotional skills in a more focused and explicit way than they would with their AVID programming.

CONCLUSION

Northwest Outward Bound School envisions school partnership expansion as a means to increase program parity and equity. In 2019-2020, NWOBS had partnerships with three different school districts: Reynolds School District, Portland Public Schools, and Methow Valley School District. In this case study, we described the partnership between the Reynolds School District and the Portland Program, which is focused on students participating in the AVID program. We highlighted data from the Domains of Thriving Tool and Outward Bound Student Outcomes survey to illustrate how data capture the social-emotional outcomes of these programs.

We also reviewed several lessons learned including:

- The importance of building continuity through developmental transitions,
- Time and trust are needed to improve programming, and
- Experiential learning engages students.

“We strive to not be an organization that comes in and tells a partner what they need and how we can provide that. Instead, we want to be an organization that comes to a partner asking what their needs are and focus on how to work together to create solutions towards those needs.”

-Paul Taylor, Portland Program
Manager, Northwest Outward Bound
School

VOYAGEUR OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL

Voyageur Outward Bound School's Twin Cities Center (TCC) is a metropolitan Outward Bound basecamp located in Saint Paul, Minnesota. TCC was built for community youth and young adult leadership education. It operates on a partnership model and works with local metropolitan schools and youth-serving nonprofits to meet partner goals for student skill and leadership development.

VOBS' Twin Cities Center (TCC) has forged more than twenty consistent community partnerships and creates access to student-centered, life-changing programming through relevant curriculum, high quality instruction, and robust foundation and donor support. VOBS vision is grounded in the understanding that more compassionate and resilient students create a more compassionate and resilient community. VOBS enacts their student-centered, positive growth approach to experiential education with community partners in the Twin Cities. TCC programming, like all Outward Bound programming, is assets-based, meaning that equity is integral to program design, content and delivery. TCC solidifies this commitment to equity through community partnerships and programs. TCC works to learn from partners and students and to understand their educational goals in order to support relevant and effective student learning. VOBS and TCC recognize that students have valuable experiences, myriad strengths, and unique skills to develop and share with one another and the world. Difference is valued and celebrated. Inclusion, cultural curiosity, and cultural humility are fundamental to instructor facilitation and student learning.

"We partner and we are a partner. VOBS is a reliable, innovative community partner, and we practice responsive partnership, all in the name of access, student success and community development. Our vision is more compassionate and resilient students, for a more compassionate and resilient world."

- Poppy Potter, Director of Development,
Voyageur Outward Bound School

This case study utilizes several sources of data to better understand Twin Cities Center's partnership approach, demographics, and programming. Qualitative and quantitative data were used, including survey data, interviews, and a document review.

THE KEY ISSUE

VOBS aims to increase access to Outward Bound programming, and to enroll more students of color for effective leadership development. VOBS aims to create environments and experiences that put young people in the best position to build and practice knowledge and life skills to thrive. To achieve these objectives, in 2021, VOBS plans to deliver 70% of its programs to community partnerships and to serve 54% students of color within these programs.

LESSONS LEARNED

ENLIST A CHAMPION

Twin Cities Center reports that a program champion “on the inside” is key to successful student learning and sustainable partnership with schools and youth-serving nonprofits. When VOBS Program staff work alongside an on-site teacher or staff member, the students win.

“When our Program team works with a caring and committed adult within an organization, we can go farther, faster with students,” says, Marlais Brand, VOBS Director of Partnership. “Students benefit from someone to support the transfer of their Outward Bound learning to their in-school or in-agency learning. This is a win-win-win for partner, student and VOBS. That champion gives us a reliable way to garner feedback, share ideas, improve our practice and meet students where they are at.”

Program champions are usually not the main decision-makers in an institution. They are likely to be teachers or staff who work directly with students; they are hands-on stakeholders who understand the student experience intimately. A typical initial partnership development meeting includes a partner organization’s leadership team and the VOBS Director of Partnership. “In that first meeting, if our partner hasn’t yet identified a program champion, we spend time helping them identify potential support,” says Brand. “Eventually, leadership turns over the relationship and coordination to one dedicated teacher or staffer. That champion then works directly with our Program Director and their team, giving them one reliable source of information and communication, which is vital to success.” This partner champion plays a critical role in sustaining the momentum for VOBS program delivery and improvement. Brand adds, “It’s important to VOBS

to engage in sustainable partnership and relevant programming for students. The only way we can be really relevant is to get to know our community partners and students as well as we can. We strive for continuous input, feedback and improvement, and we stay very curious. Outward Bound wants to meet students where they are at, and so we value student and partner experience as much as we can through listening and shared understanding.”

UPWARD BOUND

Trio [Upward Bound](#) is a federally-funded outreach and student services program that prepares students for postsecondary education. It identifies and provides services to low-income and/or first-generation youth in 9th through 12th grades. The goals of Upward Bound are to “increase the rate at which participants complete secondary education,” and provide students with the skills and motivation necessary to enter, complete, and succeed in a program of postsecondary education (US Dept. of Ed.). TRIO Upward Bound serves nearly over 70,000 with 966 programs currently across the US. In addition, there are 212 Upward Bound Math Science programs serving over 13,000 students to in total, 1,178 programs, serving 83,895 students this year.

LEARN FROM THE COMMUNITY

VOBS strives to learn from and engage community stakeholders to create lasting relationships and deliver relevant programs for student success. The Director of Partnership solicits engagement through Requests for Proposals or “RFPs.” The goal is to invite partners to engage and potentially collaborate with VOBS. VOBS seeks to:

1. Enroll more students of color to participate in programming,
2. Engage schools and youth-serving nonprofits in year-over-year partnership, and
3. Enlist an on-site champion to support programming and transfer learning.

Brand shares a bit of history about the RFP process: “Initially, we sought a cost share from partners. Now we recognize that many of our partners are already making significant investments in this programming through things like transportation and staff time. We value these significant partnership investments and know we can do more by reducing cost-sharing or eliminating tuition altogether. As VOBS and TCC strengthen our commitment to equity, we now aim to create greater access and eliminate barriers through more funding. Schools are ordinarily strapped and are now reeling from the pandemic. We want to serve more students, and our community partners are rich in students. Now we fund all community partnerships from 80-100%. We’d rather work harder to fundraise than put the burden on our partners and fail to serve students.” The RFP process itself provides an opportunity to learn more about partners needs and goals. Brand explains, “Sometimes we can’t serve a partner because they don’t have a point person or they’re not quite ready to commit to a full Expedition or an Insight Series, but we always learn a lot about what they need, what their constraints are and where they want go. Conversations like this have led to program innovation, to our current partnership model, and they generally go a long way toward building trust. Sometimes it takes years of conversation to form a partnership, and when we finally launch programming, we have more trust and understanding because we’ve worked so hard together.”

VOBS asks a set of questions in partnership development conversations. Some of these questions include:

- Assessing institutional needs: What is important to the institution? What defines the culture? What are the organization’s goals? Where does the institution want to grow? What are their strengths and challenges? What is their history with experiential education, social-emotional development, and leadership programming?
- Assessing student needs: Who are the students VOBS could serve? How does that group fit into the larger culture of the community? What are their goals? What are their strengths, interests, and challenges? What is their history with experiential education? History with social-emotional development or leadership programming?
- Assessing institutional student goals: What are the institution’s social-emotional and leadership goals for the identified students? How can VOBS programming best support these goals?

VOBS works to understand students and partners before, during, and after programming to maximize effectiveness and student growth and continuously improve delivery. This ongoing connection also provides opportunities to expand programming to other segments of students within a partner organization. In some partnerships, for example, VOBS delivers programming for every grade level in a school or builds year-round

and multi-year programming for key populations that may include student leaders, mentors, academically-challenged, first-year, or graduating students.

DELIVER CONSISTENT PROGRAMMING

In 2021, as they emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic and returned to in-person programming, the Twin Cities Center made the strategic decision to shift to two consistent program models: Six-Day Leadership Expeditions (Figure 11) and a Six-Part Insight Series. TCC will deliver wilderness expeditions to most of their current partners in the summer, and the same students will continue Outward Bound challenge and adventure programming through monthly day-long Insight programs during the school year. These Six-Part Insight programs (three in fall and three in the spring) engage a consistent cohort of ten students to explore key Domains of Thriving through specific activities.

Figure 11. Twin Cities Center Sample Six-Day Leadership Expedition Itinerary

| DAY 1 | DAY 2 | DAY 3 | DAY 4 | DAY 5 | DAY 6 |
|----------------|--------------------------|------------------|-------|----------------------|------------|
| Team-Building | Climbing and Backpacking | | | | Graduation |
| Learning Phase | | Leadership Phase | | Responsibility Phase | |

Rock climbing, orienteering, and skiing are examples of adventure and challenge activities; each activity is designed to highlight a key Domain of Thriving – Courage, Belonging, Reflection or Physical Engagement – for skill and leadership development. Together, the six programs create a progression of leadership learning. The Insight Series is then further catalyzed by a subsequent Six-Day Leadership Expedition. Ideally, the same group of peers will engage a new level of challenge and adventure, setting goals and solving problems with increasing skill.

TCC will shift from more varied programs to focus on this year-round approach to curriculum delivery that meets partner need and demand. Brand explains, “Our partners have asked us to provide more reliable programming so that we can work with a consistent group of students for an entire year, and, in the best-case scenario, for multiple years. This progression of programming builds belonging, strength, and purpose for students. We know that we can really leverage student potential through multiple touchpoints of programming, and it is also our goal to fit into our partners’ calendars and schedules. Now we can maximize summer for out-of-school time learning, and we can leverage the school year for consistent skill development and connection.” Together, TCC and a partner set the tone for a new school year, build community and support key transitions – as they advance from grade to grade, prepare for college or employment, or graduate from high school or training.

This streamlined approach to programming cultivates organizational knowledge and excellence through predictability, allowing instructors to focus on improving practice, particularly around Domains of Thriving and inclusion. Over time, VOBS believes instructors can refine curriculum for student success, and operations staff can build on existing structures, rather than reinvent them. VOBS points out that partner organizations can expect consistent programming and, with TCC, they can better anticipate necessary student supports for success. Examples of recent, ancillary innovation around this improved model include the development of

course webpages (for partners, students and families to access program information), electronic forms (to reduce barriers to enrollment), and reliable program calendars (for effective staffing). Brand reflects on this new approach, “As we introduce a more reliable program with a more reliable calendar, we are able to routinize key processes, like program contracting and planning. Now we can plan a year out with a partner and more easily chart a course for increasing our capacity to meet increased demand. This is going to be a huge win for us. We can now plot year over year capacity growth. This is going to help us deliver more effectively on our mission and pursue our vision for a more compassionate and resilient community with more students.”

Highlighted Partnership: Upward Bound

UPWARD BOUND GOES OUTWARD BOUND

University of Minnesota’s TRIO Upward Bound (UB) program and VOBS have been in partnership for twenty-six years. UB focuses on college preparation for first-generation college students, helping high school students develop skills, readiness and motivation for post-secondary education. Much of UB’s work occurs through academic instruction, tutoring, college visits, cultural activities, and advising. UB supports student success in coursework, testing and the college application process. UB grant funds can be used to support “exposure to cultural events, academic programs, and other activities not usually available to disadvantaged youth.” UB’s partnership with Outward Bound provides students access to relevant experiential education and opportunities to acquire and practice skills, try new things, learn from peers, and grow confidence through community, adventure, and challenge.

“Through this trip, I have challenged my mind. I have learned so much about myself and my teamwork. I loved the people that I shared this experience with, and this is a trip we will not forget. I will tell myself, “If I did this, then I can do anything I want to in life, and can overcome any barriers.”

- Hamda, Student, University of Minnesota TRIO Upward Bound

“TRIO Upward Bound’s mission is to prepare low income, first generation students with the skills and preparedness to apply to college and earn a degree. Outward Bound supports this mission by helping students identify their own strengths, grow persistence and practice leadership. Students learn about themselves and peers in nature. They learn they are capable of more than they ever knew. This translates to increased confidence, persistence and lifelong social-emotional skills. Outward Bound compliments Upward Bound goals by providing an opportunity for students to explore abilities, discover new skills, reflect on their actions and set goals.”

- Tricia Wilkinson, Director, University of Minnesota, TRIO Upward Bound

Outward Bound programming supports college readiness through social-emotional skill development, situational learning, and an increased sense of belonging and strength. The VOBS/UB partnership provides first-generation college-bound students a unique opportunity to learn and thrive together, in nature. UB students often identify their VOBS Leadership Expedition as the most memorable experience of their three years with UB. The approaches, goals, and philosophies of these two organizations are complementary, and provide a meaningful learning experience for college-bound students. Brand says, “Our organizations have great alignment, and Outward Bound sees great potential to develop regional and national partnerships with TRIO Upward Bound.”

Upward Bound students build social-emotional skills via each of Twin Cities Center’s current program models: Six-Day Leadership Expedition and Six-Part Insight Series. Routinely, Upward Bound students describe their Outward Bound experience as

transformative, “I’ve learned so many things. I’ve learned more about my peers, and I’ve learned about my strengths, my needs, nature and survival. This trip, I’ve gotten to know myself. My rights, my wrongs, my strengths and my influence. My highlight would be when our instructor came up with the activity to share three pivotal points in our lives that changed us. That made me feel like we were all open and understood. No judgment, just pure hope and understanding.”

Diversity in Student Demographics

Table 7. 2019 Twin Cities Center Student Demographics

| Student Demographic | | Group (n= 68) | Open (n= 39) | Total (n= 107) |
|---------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Age (Years) | 11 and under | 0% | 2.6% | 0.9% |
| | 12-13 | 10.4% | 53.8% | 26.4% |
| | 14-15 | 43.3% | 43.6% | 43.4% |
| | 16-17 | 34.3% | 0% | 21.7% |
| | 18-23 | 11.9% | 0% | 7.5% |
| Primary Language | English | 59.7% | 94.9% | 73.3% |
| | Not English | 40.3% | 5.1% | 26.7% |
| Gender | Male | 53.1% | 74.1% | 61.2% |
| | Female | 45.3% | 23.1% | 36.9% |
| Race and Ethnicity | African American, Black | 25.0% | 5.1% | 17.8% |
| | Asian, Asian American | 8.8% | 2.6% | 6.5% |
| | Latino or Hispanic | 27.9% | 7.7% | 20.6% |
| | White, Caucasian | 8.8% | 71.8% | 31.8% |
| | More than 1 race | 23.5% | 5.1% | 16.8% |
| | Not listed | 5.9% | 2.6% | 4.7% |

Note: Chi-squared analyses revealed that the racial and age makeup of VOBS Twin Cities students were substantially different by enrollment type. Specifically, group enrollment students were significantly more likely to be BIPOC ($\chi^2= 46.399$, $df= 1$, $p<0.001$) and over 14 years old ($\chi^2= 24.903$, $df= 1$, $p<0.001$) than open enrollment students.

Twin Cities Center plans to serve nearly 100% students of color via 2021 community partnership programs. One of the goals of VOBS' community partnership work is to create access to leadership programming for more students of color. Data from their 2019 Outward Bound Outcomes Survey shows a historic trend in this direction (Table 7).

In 2019, less than 9% of students in partner programs were White or Caucasian. In contrast, 72% of open enrollment students were White or Caucasian. Also, 40% of students in partner programs identified a language other than English as their primary language, whereas 5% of students in open enrollment courses identified a language other than English as primary. Community programs also saw a much more balanced gender distribution of students, whereas 74% of students in open enrollment programs identified as male.

CONCLUSION

VOBS has a clear goal to serve more students of color and to serve more students

from untapped communities through Twin Cities Center community partnership programming. VOBS believes that Twin Cities Center community programs can “blaze a trail” to create greater access to programming at their two other sites in Ely, Minnesota and Big Bend, Texas. Brand is optimistic about increasing access and growing racial, gender and economic diversity across VOBS: “We see partnership as a model to enroll more students of color in all of our programming, here in Minnesota, and in Texas. The TCC program is our flagship as we move toward increased equity in all of our programming, and community partners have taught us that we are all definitely better *together*. We have an opportunity to increase diversity in enrollment for all VOBS programming. Community, regional and national partnerships with other great youth-serving organizations, like Upward Bound, can help us get to a place where we can include more people who have traditionally been excluded from outdoor experiences, and increase learning and impact for all.”

Key lessons were learned in VOBS' partnership work:

- Enlist Champions,
- Learn from the Community, and
- Deliver Consistent Programming.

The partnership between the University of Minnesota's TRIO Upward Bound and VOBS was highlighted to demonstrate how sustainable partnerships can be formed to create access for students of color, increase diversity in enrollment, improve program relevance, and participate in broader community development. In addition, the 2019 Outward Bound Outcomes Survey data were presented to show how student demographics within the Twin Cities Center are already shifting to meet their stated goals of increasing the number of untapped students served via community partnership programs.

PHILADELPHIA OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL

Over the last two decades, the Philadelphia Outward Bound School (POBS) has built 83 partnerships with schools and community-based organizations in Philadelphia. These partnerships are a result of early grassroots efforts to serve the community and the city's public school students. This case study utilized several sources of data to better understand Philadelphia Outward Bound's approach to these partnerships and their impact on student demographics and programming. Qualitative and quantitative data were used, including survey data, an interview, and a document review.

THE KEY ISSUE

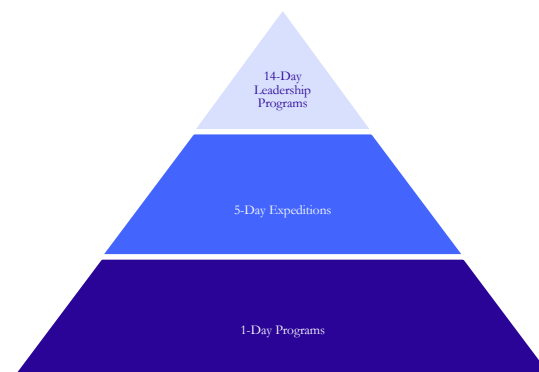
Philadelphia Outward Bound School has many school- and community-based partners. To secure partnership funding, POBS often needs to make a case for its programming value. Data collection and research are key instruments in demonstrating the impact of Outward Bound programming.

HIGHLIGHTED PARTNERSHIP: PHILADELPHIA PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

The idea to launch an Outward Bound School in Philadelphia grew out of a five-day invitational sailing expedition for Philadelphia educators and community leaders. Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School hosted the event in Baltimore Harbor. Through this expedition, a group of influential people in education, the parks department, and the city government formed the Philadelphia Friends of Outward Bound. The School District of Philadelphia's Superintendent was among the group's founding members and clarified the effort's mission to serve the city's public school students. The district provided resources to support the program, such as buses for transportation from Philadelphia to Baltimore, and the Philadelphia Friends of Outward Bound hired a program support staff in Philadelphia. Over time, these efforts led to the founding of Philadelphia Outward Bound School.

In 2003, almost a decade after the original sailing expedition that catalyzed the vision, a formal partnership with the School District of Philadelphia was formed, focusing on leadership and character education. In the preceding years, much work had been done to align Outward Bound's curriculum to Pennsylvania State Standards and Maryland State Standards. Instead of transporting students to Baltimore, the programming location shifted to Philadelphia parks. Word of the city's partnership with Philadelphia Outward Bound School spread, and the city's public, charter, and independent schools started inquiring about participation. These early

Figure 12. Pyramid of POBS Programming



partnerships grew into the 40 or more that exist now. As educators with POBS experience transitioned to new schools, they brought their advocacy for POBS with them and helped expand partnerships.

With 202,944 students spread among 326 public, charter, and alternative schools, the School District of Philadelphia is large. The majority of students are Black/African American (52%), about one-fifth are Hispanic/Latino (21%), and the remaining are White (14%) and Asian (7%). Over 166 languages are spoken by students across the district. 80% of the students POBS serves attend the city's public schools. In order to serve this large and diverse student population, Philadelphia Outward Bound had to craft an intentional approach and program progression to adequately meet their needs (Figure 12).

"I am counting on our local Outward Bound Center to help us reduce the city's dropout rate and inspire our youth to reach beyond their limits, attend college, and continue to make our city a great place to live!"

- The Hon. Michael A. Nutter,
Philadelphia Mayor

Supporting students required Philadelphia Outward Bound School to devote time and effort to create strategies for fundraising, mainly through private foundations and in-kind donations. For many years, Philadelphia Outward Bound supported this district partnership through its own fundraising efforts; however, recently, the district has provided Outward Bound with two contracts committing funding to support Outward Bound's programming. One contract fully funds programs for 24 Ninth Grade Academies and professional development for the district educators and leadership. The second partially funds programs with other high schools and middle schools throughout the district.

Philadelphia Outward Bound School was originally located in a Park Rangers' office in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park. As they grew their partnerships and program delivery, they quickly outgrew their space and relocated to a larger space in the center of the park that temporarily fit their needs. As expansion continued, they realized they needed a larger and more permanent space. As they searched for a new location, they also sought a partner in this endeavor. At the

time, the Pennsylvania Audubon Society had similar needs and was looking to create an environmental educational center at a decommissioned reservoir in East Fairmount Park. Pennsylvania Audubon and Philadelphia Outward Bound worked for nine years to finalize the details of this partnership and the funding for the project. In September of 2018, they celebrated the culmination of this planning with a ribbon cutting for their new, shared facility.

LESSONS LEARNED

INCLUDE LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATORS WITH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

POBS developed from a five-day sailing expedition that brought together leaders across Philadelphia. The tradition to involve District leaders and educators in programming has continued to this day. Programming is

offered to the district’s superintendent and members of their Leadership Team so they understand the impact of Outward Bound. In addition to exposing leadership to what programming looks and feels like, these programs also directly support the strengthening of the Leadership Team and create trusting relationships with Outward Bound staff. With this experience, school leadership articulate their own understanding of Outward Bound programming and develop their own sense for how the partnership fits into the school system’s goals and how to “maximize the impact of the Outward Bound experience for the students.”

Educators also participate in Outward Bound programs (Figure 13). Educators participate as chaperones for one-day and expedition courses. An Assistant Principal describes: “When the teachers are in it – and they show fear and they show the nerves that the students are feeling – it makes them more human and students see that and they draw on those things.” Educators can also participate in seven-day summer break expeditions in which they learn to incorporate Outward Bound experiences into their classroom and expand their professional networks.

ALIGN WITH STATE STANDARDS AND PARTNER SCHOOL’S STRATEGIC PLANS

In aligning itself with the state standards early in their partnership with the District, Philadelphia Outward Bound School ensured the sustainability of the partnership and impact on youth and educators. These standards initially focused on the Safe Schools and bullying prevention initiatives and have evolved to include ongoing support for safety and positive school climate, physical engagement, and social and emotional learning practices. Intentional alignment was critical because it guaranteed that students’ participation in Outward Bound courses would not affect their attendance records; it allowed them to be marked “excused” and not absent during one-day programs and multi-day expeditions. Changing standards have implications for POBS. To address possible fluctuations, POBS created contracts with schools to build in the standards. Therefore, the schools could define their expectations within the bounds of predetermined learning goals.

Figure 13. POBS Sample Statement of Work with Philadelphia Public Schools

“Regardless of our job descriptions, roles, responsibilities or our time together as peers, the experience on course, facilitated by POBS staff, changed the dynamic in our relationships. It drew out our humanity. It created trust among and between team members.”

- Nancy Nayowith, Director, Health, Safety & Physical Education, The School District of Philadelphia

Insight Programs: Day-long courses are offered at Outward Bound Philadelphia's High Ropes Challenge Course in the Wissahickon Park. Participants spend the day engaged in problem-solving exercises and challenge themselves and each other while climbing high ropes or high course elements. As they tackle their fears, they build self-confidence and develop a sense of trust and teamwork. Students from selected schools work together during the day, along with their teachers, to bring the impact and learning from the Outward Bound experience back into their school communities. Each program will have focused, custom designed outcomes (spring 2011 courses will focus on conflict resolution and leadership styles) to meet the pre-determined outcomes of the School District of Philadelphia.

Educator's Training: Workshop style course designed for the teachers and school administrators to introduce and explore the curriculum of Outward Bound, the teachings of its founder, Kurt Hahn, and the pedagogy of experiential education. Educators are encouraged to take their Outward Bound principles back to their classrooms and school environments, enhancing the framework of "learning by doing" within their own curriculum.

Philadelphia Outward Bound School's contract with the Philadelphia school district's Ninth Grade Academy illustrates how tight alignment with a school's goals can broaden a partnership's reach and scope. The Academy was created to address the high dropout rate among 9th grade students across the district. Philadelphia Outward Bound School programming complements this initiative through its explicit emphasis on relationship building with peers, caring adults and the entire school community. This partnership has expanded from ten to 24 schools.

UTILIZE MULTIPLE LEVELS OF RELATIONSHIPS

While the Director of Education and Partnerships, Kim Glodek, holds the primary relationship with the school district in Philadelphia, other Outward Bound staff are involved with the partnership at different levels. These staff may include the Program Director, who handles the partnership's curricular components, and the Executive Director, who is involved in the strategic elements. However, relationship building is not limited to a handful of staff for Outward Bound or the District. As Kim Glodek describes, "no one can be the single holder of these relationships [in a way] that is meaningful to our community growth." Philadelphia Outward Bound School has a culture of making connections and helping staff understand the system and community in which

they work. For instance, the Center Manager is encouraged to meet and build their relationships, knowledge, and trust with potential partners. Rather than being focused on open-enrollment courses, POBS is oriented towards the community and its culture typifies this distinction.

"You don't just show up, run the program and go home and say I got it. You must understand the schools, students, staff and school neighborhood; you understand the school system so that your investment is different, your commitment is different, and your language, your action steps and the trust that you're building in the relationships is really different."

– Kim Glodek, Director of Education and Partnerships, Philadelphia Outward Bound School

PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

Growing pressure from partners and funders is pushing Philadelphia Outward Bound School to use data to justify allocation of time and resources into its programming. Anecdotal information is no longer a sufficient means to prove the effectiveness of Outward Bound. Both funders and partner organizations expect quantitative data that demonstrate Outward Bound's successful student outcomes. In an interview, Katie Newsom, former Executive Director at POBS and current Chief Advancement Officer for OBUSA, recounted a conversation she had with a private foundation that wanted more concrete evidence for the impact of Outward Bound programming. From her own experience, she wanted to say: "You have no idea what can happen in five days, how [students'] lives and their trajectory can be changed." Without data, she was not able to back up this claim.

EVIDENCE OF PROGRAM QUALITY: NINTH GRADE ACADEMY

Philadelphia Outward Bound observed their Ninth Grade Academy programming in 2019 using the Domains of Thriving (OB-DoT) Tool (Figure 14). A certified observer, trained to provide both quantitative and qualitative data on the quality of Outward Bound programming, conducted these observations. In describing the Philadelphia Outward Bound programming in an observation report, Kim Glodek wrote:

“The observation was conducted during an Insight, one-day program at POBS’ base at the Discovery Center. The group was 9th students from Penn Treaty H.S., a comprehensive, neighborhood school that is included in 9th Grade Academy partnership between POBS and The School District of Philadelphia. This is their 3rd year in the program.”

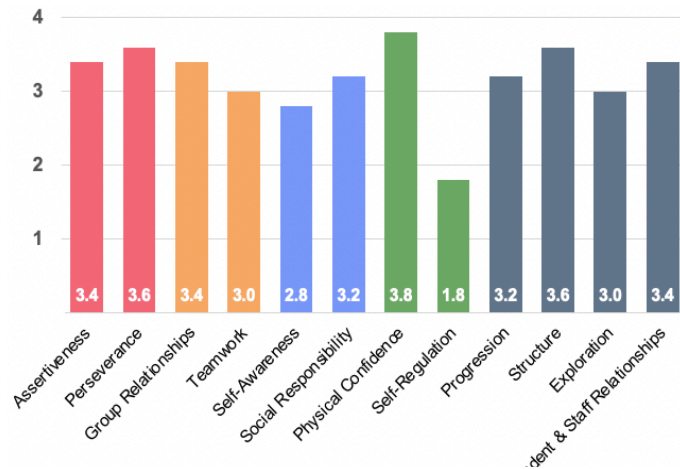
A full-day observation was conducted on five of these courses, which included 45 students and ten Outward Bound staff. The observational tool outlines criteria that represent best staff practices to support social-emotional development. These criteria are evaluated using a four-point scale (1 - little to no evidence, 2 - weak evidence, 3 - evidence and 4 - consistent evidence). Overall 10 out of the 12 social-emotional rubrics received ratings of “3 – evidence” to “4 - consistent” evidence. Physical Confidence, Perseverance, and Structure practices were the most consistently used. In addition to quantitative information, detailed field notes are taken to give instructors feedback on program quality. For example, Perseverance was one strength identified in staff practices:

“During Turnstile - with a Code Crack challenge...students navigated the challenge and dealt with mistakes, challenges, and failures. All students stayed focused for 30 of the 35 minutes of this activity; with 3 stepping to the side for a few minutes in the last 5 min. All returned to the group for the final jump-in when asked by peers and the instructors. Students made 47 jump attempts in order to be successful! Students experienced differentiated challenge (and in some ways managed their own differentiation) and had opportunity to bring specific skill and leadership characteristics to the activity. As a group, they responded well to mistakes including miscalculations in timing and keeping track of numbers. They self-corrected, applauded each other’s efforts, and with respect and with humor, called each other into trouble-shooting mistakes. When given the opportunity to skip a step in cracking the code, one student refused the help of the instructor and chose to take on the more difficult challenge - and the rest of the group went with that decision.”

The OB-DoT Tool also includes opportunities for feedback by identifying areas of improvement. Not all courses, especially one-day courses, can cover all social-emotional rubrics consistently. However, feedback in these areas help instructors identify areas in which they could deepen social-emotional learning. In this day’s observations, Social Responsibility was one such area for improvement:

“There may be time to prompt students more deliberately creating opportunity/time to pause and consider perspectives of others; this may be using additional reflection tools that serve as prompts. Moving physical space to minimize distractions (especially at the Discovery Center) and giving students time to think about the interconnectedness, personal and group accountability, application at school and how they might continue to attend to the needs of their group peers is suggested.”

Figure 14. 2019 OB-DoT Full-Day Ninth Grade Academy Scale Ratings (N = 5)



CONCLUSION

Philadelphia Outward Bound has a deep relationship with the school district in Philadelphia and over 83 partnerships in their community. In this case study, we described POBS’ relationship with the school district in Philadelphia. Then, we reviewed key lessons learned, including:

- The value of creating professional development opportunities for leadership and educators,
- The utility of aligning Outward Bound programs to state standards and the school’s strategic plans,
- The impact of having multiple levels of relationships with partners, and
- The need for evidence of impact.

The observations of the Ninth Grade Academy illustrate the way Outward Bound is beginning to demonstrate its value and impact on social-emotional learning using quantitative and qualitative observational data.

RESEARCH AGENDA

EXISTING RESEARCH

In surveys and interviews, Outward Bound regional Schools provided information on the extant research conducted on their programs. Many Outward Bound Schools (45%) had evaluation reports, and all discussed data collection attempts for key partnerships and programs. The following section highlights the research evidence-base across the network of Outward Bound schools.

New York City Outward Bound Schools' Crew Model Evaluation

In 2020, New York City Outward Bound Schools reported a multi-year multi-method evaluation of the Crew model's impact and implementation (Scuella et al.). This study provides an evidence-base for the Crew model, sharing lessons that inform practices and resource allocation. To evaluate impact, quasi-experimental data from three NYCOBS partner schools ("Crew schools") were compared to those from seven equivalent "control schools." Academic records were obtained from 558 students (including 296 Crew school students) and social-emotional assessments were administered to 415 students (including 241 Crew school students) twice to attain baseline (pre) and spring (post) measures. Differences in test scores, social-emotional assessments, and attendance records were analyzed.

Results indicated a lack of meaningful test score and social-emotional outcome differences between Crew and control schools. However, there was a significantly lower rate of chronic absenteeism in the Crew schools. Further study is needed to clarify if the surprising absence of substantial findings was due to a biased comparison selection process and/or the use of a social-emotional tool that is insensitive to Crew-specific measures. The secondary purpose of the evaluation was to identify areas to improve the Crew model. Principal interviews, student and teacher focus groups, and surveys were conducted to investigate core Crew features and differences across schools and model perceptions. Though each school's Crew implementation was unique, shared elements included having an adult leader and small size, providing a safe space, meeting regularly, and a culminating orientation experience. Otherwise, the flexibility of the model allowed each school to tailor their Crews to students' unique needs. Perceptions of the model overall were positive, and the most frequently reported benefits included the relationships, strong community, and moral and academic support that Crews provided. Students, teachers, and administrators expressed a strong enthusiasm for the Crew model but the true degree of its effects on student outcomes is yet to be fully understood.

Philadelphia Outward Bound School Peer Leadership Evaluation

Philadelphia Outward Bound School conducted an external evaluation of its Peer Leadership program in 2007 to assess its effectiveness in engendering student success (Nelson). Before (pre) and after (post) the program, participants and teachers were administered questionnaires. These questionnaires collected data regarding student success as evidenced by academic achievement (e.g., grades, attendance, class participation), personal development and growth (e.g., self-confidence, perseverance), and civic engagement (e.g., volunteerism). Results from teachers and students indicated positive changes across all three metrics of success. Areas of greatest improvement included self-awareness, leadership skills, and teamwork, and students' open-ended

questions frequently cited better emotion regulation and an increased tolerance for new experiences following program participation.

Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School Police Youth Challenge Evaluation

In collaboration with Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health, Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School commenced a multi-year study to determine the impact and efficacy of its Police Youth Challenge (PYC) program (Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School, 2020). PYC aims to improve the interactions between the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) and school-aged members of the community. Between 2012 and 2015, 7,747 participants (3,286 officers and 4,461 youth) were administered pre- and post-PYC surveys. Survey data revealed positive changes in the relationship dynamics among officers and youth. Youth participants perceived officers as markedly more helpful, trustworthy, friendly and fair and less aggressive, racist, rude and scary. Similarly, officers saw gains in trust, relationship importance, and relationship climate and decreases in stereotypical beliefs and perceived social distance in their interactions with young people. This study has provided a basis from which CBOBS has deepened its involvement with BPD; in 2019, it hired a PYC-specific program coordinator who has since become a member of Baltimore's Citizen Public Safety Advisory Committee.

Hurricane Island Outward Bound School Program Impact Evaluation

In an early empirical study of a HIOBS summer program, a funder was interested in identifying program impact on scholarship recipients at a partner school (Sakofs et al., 1988). Data from a group of 29 high school students were collected to better understand how participation in the summer program fostered their psychosocial growth. Outward Bound-specific student outcomes were measured through a social-emotional assessment that was administered three times: pre-program, post-program, and six-months later. Academic records and parent questionnaires were also used to explore real-world changes in student behaviors, attitudes, and actions following program participation. Assessment results revealed five areas of significant positive psychosocial growth: self-confidence, sociability, self-deprecation, social pessimism, and general well-being. While there were no significant signs of academic improvement, parents anecdotally reported positive behavioral and attitudinal changes in their children. Participation in this summer program yielded long-term psychosocial improvement and students left with a stronger sense of self, increased confidence, and improved communication skills. These findings presented justification for the funder and partner school to continue their relationship with Outward Bound. They also provided a direction for program improvement as the lack of meaningful academic outcomes suggested that more intentional efforts could be made to merge academic content into the OB experience.

Outward Bound Outcomes Instrument (OBOI) Pilot Test 2

Outward Bound's distinctive philosophy and programming has led to the development of tools designed to measure Outward Bound-specific outcomes (Frankel, 2010). The Outward Bound Outcomes Instrument (OBOI) was one attempt to quantify the results of Outward Bound's efforts. After completing an initial pilot phase, the language and format of the OBOI was refined to improve validity and reliability. It measures outcomes of Character, Leadership, and Service and is comprised of 24 items that make up 11 factors. A second round of participant sampling was conducted and 1,741 Outward Bound students aged 12-62 were

administered the OBOI twice, pre- and post-course. Results from the pre-post comparison indicated that students had positive increases across all outcomes. Potential covariates, such as location, course type, student ethnicity, and student gender, did not have a significant impact on outcomes. This pre-post study demonstrates that the OBOI language and format changes were appropriate. Further, the findings demonstrated that Outward Bound is successfully reaching its intended outcomes and that the OBOI may be useful in conducting longitudinal studies to measure course impact one-year post-course.

Summary

In summary, we reviewed five evaluation reports from Outward Bound Schools. These studies were all quasi-experimental, used traditional pre-program surveys and post-program surveys, and only one included a comparison group. Each study demonstrated that participation in an Outward Bound program produced positive changes in at least one target student outcome. Across schools, programs yielded improvements for students in a variety of domains including chronic absenteeism (Scuella et al., 2020), academic achievement and civic engagement (Nelson, 2007), historically tense community relationships (Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School, 2020), and psychosocial growth (Sakofs et al., 1988). OBOI data reveal that Outward Bound programs effectively achieve the organization's mission in improving participant outcomes that align with its core values: Character, Leadership, and Service (Frankel, 2010).

These studies also provide key insight to inform the future direction of programming. Many of these studies included data collection across multiple time points. These results highlighted the time-bound nature of Outward Bound's impact. For instance, HIOBS' evaluative study (Sakofs et al., 1988) demonstrated the lasting effects of program participation on student outcomes. Even a lack of significant results was informative for NYCOBS (Scuella et al., 2020) as it highlighted the experimental and assessment limitations that will guide additional studies and data collections.

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)

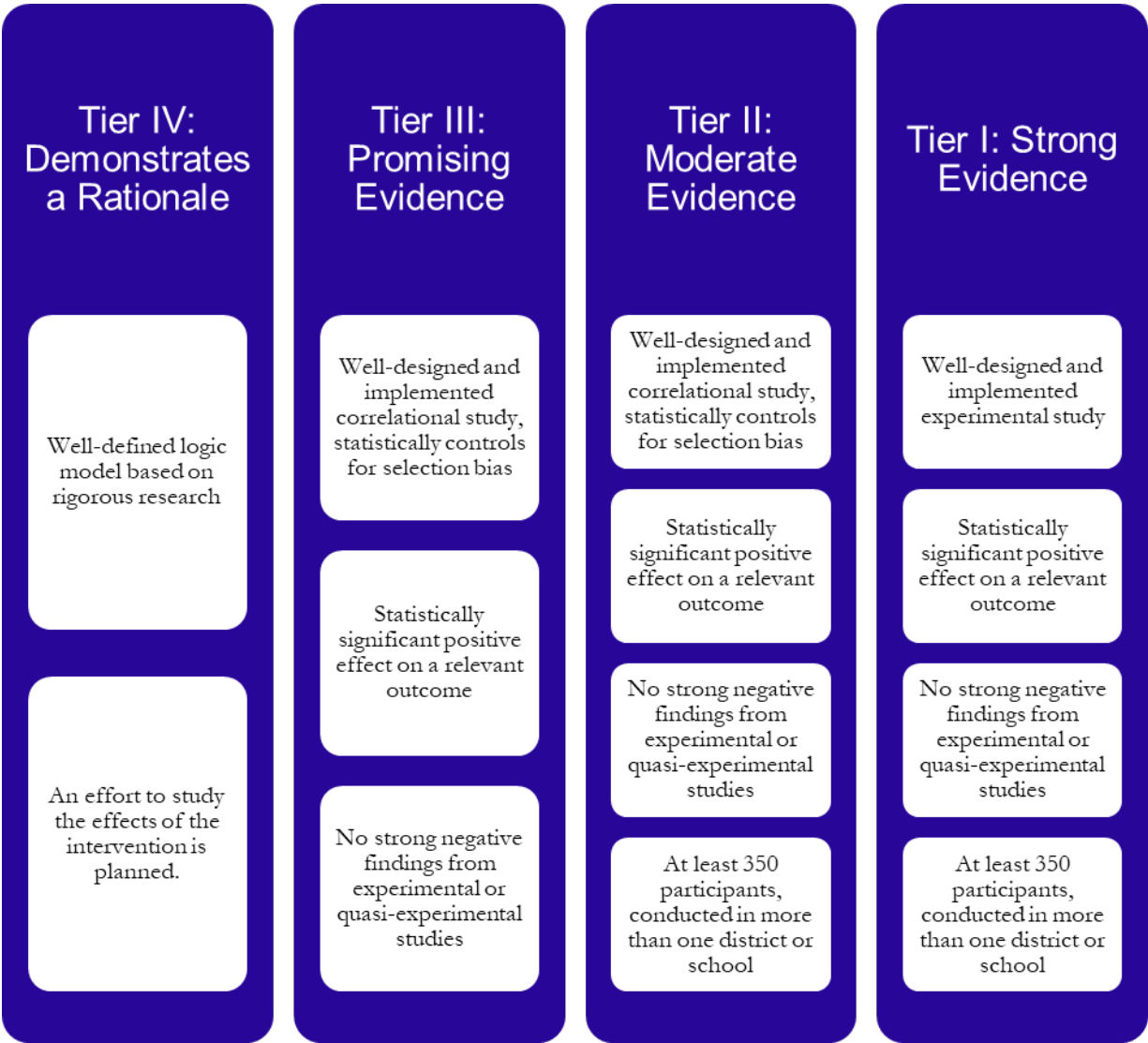
There is mounting pressure in school and out-of-school-time (OST) settings to provide data in defining and demonstrating their impact and securing ongoing funding. For schools, this shift toward quantifiable outcomes began in 2001 with the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2001). NCLB mandated that states use standardized test scores to measure school quality and close the achievement gap. In 2015, NCLB was replaced with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is a federal act that guides local educational agencies and schools in selecting programs to support school improvement and student success (Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), 2021). It includes resources to fund a variety of program types, including social-emotional learning and school climate programs.

With the passage of ESSA, OST programs are now expected to meet a set of effectiveness standards just as schools are. Funders have followed suit at the state, local, and private levels as well, requiring data to support resource allocation. Producing high program quality indicators and successful youth outcome measures has become essential to justify that OST programs are a sound investment in this changing funding landscape. ESSA has clear evidential requirements to prove program effectiveness and ensure that funded programs are

grounded in research. There are four tier-levels of program effectiveness: demonstrates a rationale, promising evidence, moderate evidence, and strong evidence (Figure 15).

The five studies from U.S. Outward Bound regional Schools reviewed in this report provide evidence in Tier IV. More specifically, these studies demonstrate a theory- or research-based rationale for studying Outward Bound, but they have not yet shown a statistically significant positive effect on social-emotional outcomes.

Figure 15. ESSA Tier Levels



RESEARCH STRATEGY

Based on the review of existing research and interviews with Outward Bound Schools, we offer several recommendations for future research strategies to Outward Bound USA and its regional Schools.

First, Outward Bound needs a consistent and specific program model for evaluation and research efforts. We recommend using a five- to seven-day backpacking expedition for group enrollment students, ages 12-15, as the set program model. This program should include a form of pre-expedition student preparation either through in-classroom support or through an Insight day. Program attrition can be problematic to research studies and pre-course preparation might minimize this potential bias.

Set program parameters will reduce the amount of “noisy data,” allowing for more meaningful interpretations. It also will allow for comparisons across Outward Bound’s regional Schools. Across the five highlighted research studies in the section above, the 2010 OBOI study is the only one that included data collected across Outward Bound regional Schools (Frankel). Findings from the remaining four studies are specific to their individual schools, and are not generalizable to other schools. Additionally, limiting variability improves precision in measuring the effect of program participation on the student outcome variables in a way that is less influenced by extraneous factors. Although strict control of all possible variables is not realistic, we suggest the use of a set program model to isolate the independent variable, program participation, more clearly and improve replicability.

“You know, [we are] really at the dawn of a new era. I like to think of it as the way in which we’re thinking about using our data to actually inform our daily practice through continuous improvement. There’s been a lot of space between our inputs and our outcomes, and not a lot of understanding of how they actually line up or how we might learn from our outcomes to do things differently”

- Cal Hastings, Chief Schools Officer, NYC Outward Bound School

“I think we need to prove that our work aligns with other organizations’ goals and missions as well. I see that as data and research.”

- Josh Brankman, Executive Director Outward Bound USA

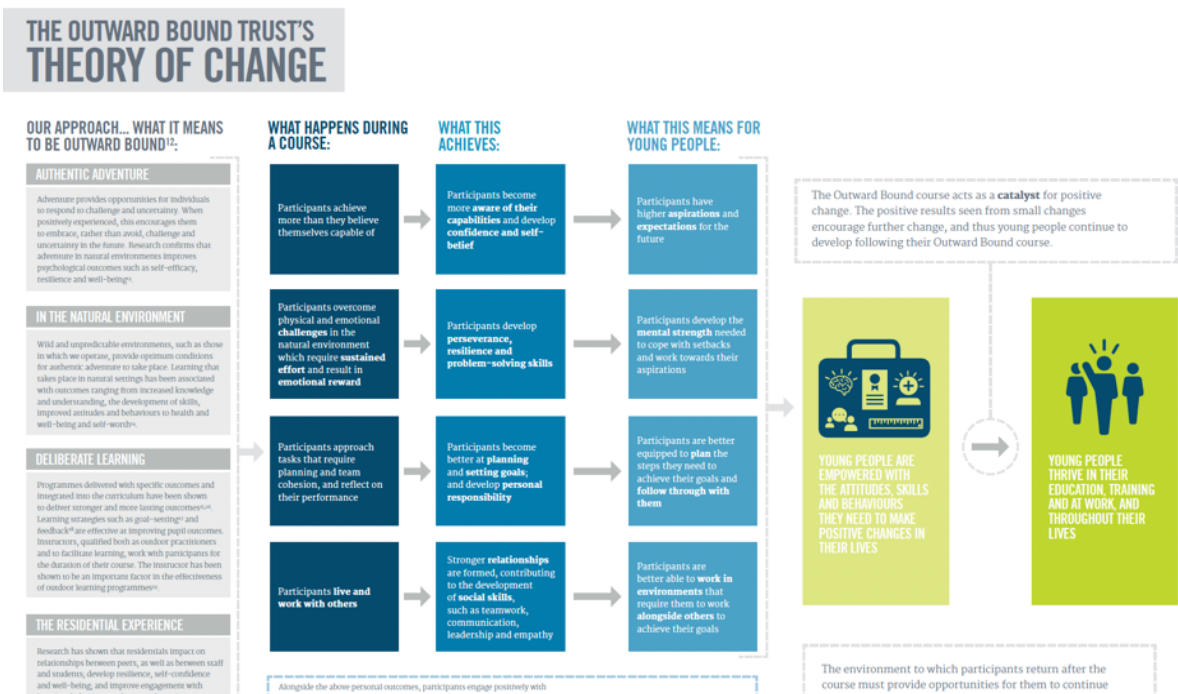
It is important to operationalize the key components of an Outward Bound program through a logic model (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004). The Chesapeake Outward Bound School’s Logic Model (Figure 4), the Domains of Thriving framework (Figure 5), and Outward Bound Trust’s Theory of Change (Figure 16) offer starting points for developing a change model that can be used across all regional Schools. The following are important factors to include: program fidelity (Holliday, 2014), target student population, dosage, social-emotional outcomes, long-term outcomes, course activities, and course length. Also, identifying evidence-based measurement tools, such as the OBOS, that capture social-emotional and long-term outcomes is useful part of the program element definitional process. A well-defined logic model, based on rigorous research and plans to study the effects of a program, is a Tier IV requirement of the ESSA Tiers of Evidence (Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), 2021). Therefore, a well-developed logic model should be prioritized in efforts to increase the

level of evidence of Outward Bound programming. None of the five studies reviewed from the U.S. Outward Bound Schools explicitly included a logic model.

Second, for evaluation and research efforts to be sustainable and most efficient, Outward Bound USA needs to increase its national capacity to support this work as they will require the support of national staff. If an outside evaluator or researcher is used, we recommend that internal Outward Bound USA and/or regional School staff and long-term consultants/research organizations are involved. We recommend that these internal staff be responsible for developing and implementing a research strategy at the national level with input from Outward Bound regional Schools. Centralizing these efforts can minimize the current piece-meal approach and make for more impactful studies, increasing its generalizability across schools and allowing for resources to be pooled. Further, it increases efficiency in building the evidence-base for Outward Bound programming.

Centralizing and streamlining data systems is another component of increasing capacity at the national level. Specifically, we suggest that the national data systems, such as the IncidentAnalytix, OBOS, and OB-DoT data system be integrated to simplify the process of that triangulating and synthesizing information across data sources. If integrating data is not possible, it is important that regional Schools report student demographic data to OBUSA individually so that these data can be reported across the entire system for planning and strategy development. We also recommend expanded use of the OBOS data system for all courses that meet the program model criteria.

Figure 16. Outward Bound Trust's Theory of Change



Third, over time more rigorous research designs are needed to show the impact of Outward Bound's Program Model. Moving from quasi-experimental to experimental designs with a randomly assigned control group is

critical to increasing the evidence-base of Outward Bound programming. This strategy may potentially shift the level of evidence of Outward Bound programming from ESSA's Tier VI towards Tier I. Given the structure of Outward Bound and its relationship with partners, random assignment would likely be challenging in most cases. Schools with longer-term partnerships and student relationships may be best suited for this type of research design as a greater understanding of program impact may deepen the partnership. The following partnerships might be considered for such study: Northwest Outward Bound School's AVID partnership, Voyager Outward Bound School's Upward Bound, Thompson Islands Outdoor Education Center's partnership with Boston Public Schools, and Philadelphia Outward Bound School's partnership with the Philadelphia School District. Several partnerships might need to be pursued if this research is conducted at ESSA's Tier I level as multiple studies across schools or districts are required.

Experimental designs with random assignment minimize the possibility of confounds, selection bias, and alternative explanations of findings. A control group consisting of students who are on a waitlist to receive Outward Bound programming in the future is likely to be the most fitting comparison condition. When random assignment is not possible, another possibility is to follow NYCOBS 2020 study protocol (Scuella et al.). Non-Crew schools that were demographic equivalents participated as a comparison group and were offered monetary incentives and access to their aggregate student outcome results.

We also recommend a longitudinal approach that measures outcomes at several time-points. Traditional pretest-posttest studies are a good starting point; however, many schools interviewed reported an interest in long-term outcomes. Therefore, in addition to measuring outcomes pre-program, post-program outcomes should be assessed at several additional time-points, immediately following the program and three- and six-months post-program. In the 2014 Singapore study (see below), collecting data at multiple time points allowed the sustainability of programmatic effects to be explored (Ang et al.). The OBOS is a key measurement tool for intermediate student self-reported social-emotional outcomes at Outward Bound. The OB-DoT Tool provides key information related to program quality and use of social-emotional practices. In addition to social-emotional indicators, school engagement, attendance, and grade data will also need to be collected.

Singapore Five-Day “Intercept” Evaluation Study

In 2014, Outward Bound Singapore utilized a quasi-experimental study design to investigate the degree to which their five-day “intercept” program impacted participants’ school and co-curricular engagement (Ang et al.). Adolescent participants with a history of truancy (N= 136) either partook in the five-day outdoor experiential program or received no intervention. Both groups’ goal setting and problem-solving skills were assessed using the Youth At Risk Program Evaluation Tool (YARPET) at three different times: pre-intervention, one-month post-intervention, and three-months post-intervention. Attendance data, which included whether participants skipped academic classes and co-curricular activities, were measured twice: pre-intervention and three-months post-intervention. Results indicated that the “intercept” program produced positive short- and long-term outcomes for participants. Intervention participants saw significant short-term goal setting increases one month after their intervention, but these effects dissipated in the later follow-up. Compared to those receiving no intervention, the “intercept” participants also showed significantly improved school and co-curricular attendance rates that were maintained three months later. Problem-solving skills did not significantly improve for the intervention group participants at either post-intervention measures. This study provided empirical support to demonstrate that Outward Bound Singapore’s “intercept” program can improve students’ school engagement. Therefore, Outward Bound’s programming may be a powerful means to decrease dropout rates, improve college attendance, enhance mental health, and reduce problem behaviors.

FUNDING STRATEGIES

As Outward Bound seeks to continue and expand their partnerships with schools and community-based organizations, the regional Schools and OBUSA will also need to strengthen and expand their fundraising efforts to support these programs. Building on past successful fundraising efforts, locating new funders who have an interest in supporting Outward Bound’s mission, and continuing to build an evidence base will help to ensure that Outward Bound can maintain and expand access to its programs through these partnerships. We conducted an interview with the National Development Officers Group, which includes representatives from each regional school and OBUSA and several themes emerged.

TELLING THE OUTWARD BOUND STORY

We identified a clear theme through interviews of a need to improve how Outward Bound uses data to communicate its value. There is a need for more data and a need to better leverage existing data to tell this story. Clarifying Outward Bound program models may also reduce barriers to fundraising.

At Regional Schools

Regional School fundraisers expressed that they have a hard time articulating the value of the Outward Bound experience to some funders, in particular foundations that are interested in quantitative outcomes. Phyllis Kim at Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School acknowledged that one challenge is that it's "a crowded space and sort of a complicated message." However, she also noted that if you can get a funder out "to see the kids, they're sold." Emma Rapp from Outward Bound California noted that the typically "one touch" nature of Outward Bound is a barrier to accessing foundation funding. She articulated that those at Outward Bound know that it is a "deep touch. It's long lasting and impacting," but not having data to support that claim is challenging. Outward Bound will benefit from advancing a research agenda that prioritizes quantifying the ways that students transform through their programs and evaluates long-term outcomes.

In the meantime, communications materials that include testimonials that describe the long term impact of Outward Bound will help development officers and grant writers communicate with foundations and other funders. Including partner voice in the fundraising efforts can also help to convey the impact. For example, Philadelphia Outward Bound School has seen success with having their partner school or organization write a letter describing their interest in the program to support foundation requests. Regional Schools will benefit from thinking outside the box to put together data points that support their programs effectiveness, like number of partners that return to OB year over year.

At the National Level

Outward Bound USA has also been challenged by a complicated message and lack of data as they play their unique role in fundraising for the Outward Bound system. While the organization does not serve students directly, there is potential for OBUSA to build relationships with national foundations and corporations to support programming across the regional Schools. For example, in 2021 Outward Bound USA partnered with the Bronco Wild Fund to support programming for 150 students at four regional Schools. Outward Bound USA was also the recipient of a significant investment from the S.J. Bechtel Foundation from 2017-2020 that supported the development of the Outward Bound Professional Learning Lab and capacity building at all 11 Schools.

These funding relationships show the potential for OBUSA to support the system, but there are two main barriers that the OBUSA advancement team faces. One is that the national Outward Bound brand has been centralized around open-enrollment programs and has not represented the majority of Outward Bound students, who are served through partnerships with schools and community-based organizations. When a potential funder looks to the Outward Bound website or social media, they don't get the whole story of what Outward Bound is and who it serves. This can be addressed by updating the website and national communications to tell the whole story of Outward Bound in the US. This update is planned for 2021 and should be regularly evaluated for its effectiveness in communicating to potential funders.

The other barrier is that Outward Bound USA does not have accurate data on the number of students served through these partnerships, or demographics to communicate who is being served. OBUSA and the regional

Schools would benefit from a system where schools routinely report these demographics to OBUSA so that they can be included in fundraising efforts. As New York City Outward Bound School's Chief Advancement Officer expressed, "Raising the visibility of Outward Bound as more than open enrollment courses will make raising money for community programs easier....I think having a fundraising lens to the communication as well as [the existing] marketing lens for open enrollment courses could be really helpful."

Clarifying the Model and Message

For some regional OB Schools that are looking to expand their partnerships with schools and community-based organizations, identifying the target audience and clearly communicating their vision will be an important step towards securing funding. Colorado Outward Bound School has expressed a desire to build more partnerships and one staff member noted that the funding is out there, but they need to determine, "what are our target audiences? Not just kids in Denver. That's a little too vague."

As mentioned earlier in this paper, Outward Bound's lack of clear program models can be a barrier to communication with partners and funders. The desire to meet all needs for all partners may actually be working against Outward Bound's growth. When regional Schools clearly define program models they are able to communicate more clearly with funders and potential partners. If the system comes together to clarify national program models, regional Schools will be able to leverage each other's data in addition to their own, and OBUSA will see its barriers to fundraising on behalf of the system reduced.

When looking to simplify the messaging around the Outward Bound program and clarify the target student population, regional Schools may want to consider the model that Voyager Outward Bound School is utilizing at their Twin Cities center in Minnesota. VOBS recognized the need to be more proactive in communicating with partners and funders, who didn't always understand what Outward Bound was or how it could fit within their program. In response, VOBS created two distinct program models for partner organizations, determined how many partners they can serve with each model, and then fundraise to cover 80% (or more) of the cost of those two specific program models. They then release a Request for Proposals to schools and youth serving organizations, who apply to participate and pay the remaining amount. This presents a clearer message to potential partners and funders about what the program is, while also simplifying the internal operations that support the program.

Communicating about Outward Bound's Relevance

An additional role that OBUSA may be poised to play is to put together language around how the Outward Bound experience is relevant to varied funding interests. For example, Philadelphia Outward Bound School shared that they miss out on funds for things like supporting community health because they don't have the language to articulate how Outward Bound fits in that field. With additional staff capacity, OBUSA could develop language that demonstrates how Outward Bound's intermediary social-emotional learning goals support long-term outcomes including community, behavioral, and mental health; workforce development; academic achievement, retention, and graduation rates; and other broad funding areas.

FUNDING ECOSYSTEMS

Another theme we identified is the significant role that the local ecosystem and relationships play in fundraising for Outward Bound programs. Currently, each regional School and OBUSA fundraise separately. This is necessary for regional Schools to access local funding; at the same time the system may benefit from more collaborative efforts to leverage the scale of the national system.

Leveraging the National Network

The 11 regional Outward Bound Schools operate in 17 states and serve approximately 45,000 students per year across the United States. The scale of the national network may make it a more appealing funding opportunity for some foundations and corporate sponsors than an individual regional School would be. As previously mentioned, if regional Schools report more data to OBUSA, OBUSA could play more of a role in developing these national funding relationships. The scope of the network also sets Outward Bound up to seek partnerships with other national organizations. Several regional Schools have partnerships with organizations that also have national networks (e.g. Upward Bound, AVID, Boys and Girls Clubs). Outward Bound USA may be able to work with these and other organizations to seek funding at the national level to support local programming across the network.

The Role of the Local Ecosystem

OB USA's ability to fundraise on behalf of the system may be especially helpful for those regional Schools that operate in areas where there are local conditions that make fundraising challenging. For example, Northwest Outward Bound School shared that fundraising to serve students in Portland, OR is challenging because there are so many programs competing for funding. Likewise, in Maine, Hurricane Island Outward Bound School navigates a limited funding landscape where it is hard to find opportunities that wouldn't have them competing against their partners for the same funding.

While the local ecosystems can present challenges, as OB Schools learn to navigate them and build roots within communities, fundraising successes emerge. NWOBS has had more success fundraising for programs in the rural areas near their wilderness basecamps in WA and OR, where youth development programs are less prevalent. While CBOBS is in a crowded funding space in Baltimore, forming strong relationships with their community partners has helped them access funding. Philadelphia Outward Bound School has had success in identifying donors and funders that POBS and the partner organization have in common, and approaching them together with a partnership proposal. North Carolina Outward Bound School has seen the most support in the areas where they are most involved with the school system. They operate a program that is very imbedded in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system and also have a very active advisory board and fundraising activity in that area.

Program Costs and Cost Structure

Several regional Schools reported challenges in recruiting partners and accessing funding because of their high per-student cost compared to other youth development programs. Fundraisers noted that because regional Schools have typically included all costs, including facilities and gear, in their cost-structure, they appear significantly more expensive than other programs that have lower overhead. This is exacerbated when the costs of preparing for growth are also included. This was not a problem when regional Schools served mainly Open-Enrollment students, but warrants thought now that the great majority of Outward Bound students are served through group programs. Investigating a federally negotiated indirect rate was one suggestion that several schools expressed interest in.

Government Funding Sources

Government funding is one aspect of the local ecosystem that is inconsistently accessed across the Outward Bound network. Some regional Schools have strong, lasting funding relationships with government entities. Outward Bound California and New York City Outward Bound Schools have found that government funding sources may be less concerned than foundations about quantitative data and more focused on getting young people access to the outdoors and new educational experiences. NYCOBS receives hyper-local funding from City Council to support programs with students in specific areas of the city, and OBCA has received funding for their ropes course programs from their local Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

Success with government funding requires an initial and ongoing investment from the regional School and uses a specific set of skills and knowledge. The regional School fundraisers acknowledge that hiring government relations specialists and utilizing lobbyists would be important steps to increasing this type of funding. NYCOBS currently utilizes lobbyists for local funding and Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School benefits from being part of a network that lobbies for state funding as a cohort. Phyllis Kim at CBOBS noted that government relations is long term work and that hiring someone focused on these relationships would help her school access more of this funding.

As regional Schools acquire more government funding, they will benefit from balancing it with other funding sources. They can take a lesson from the now-closed programs that Outward Bound used to run in Florida that relied primarily on state funding. As the cost-of-living and expenses grew, the state funding did not keep up. The lack of complementary funding from other sources made the programs hard to maintain. While currently an underutilized funding source for many regional Schools, government funding should be paired with funding from other sources. For example, at New York City Outward Bound Schools, “it’s the fee for service, the foundation and the City Council money that together is making it possible. So if any one of them goes out of the equation, you’re still standing.”

Sharing the Cost with Partners

Regional Schools reported a variety of plans and philosophies regarding sharing program costs with partners. Some schools, like North Carolina Outward Bound School, have many partnerships with private schools where the partner pays all or most of the program cost. Others, like Voyageur Outward Bound School's Twin Cities Center, have a goal of subsidizing all or most of the program cost for the partner through fundraising. Philadelphia Outward Bound School previously fundraised for their programs with Philadelphia School District, and over time the district has taken on the more of the cost of the program. Regarding their Portland programs with public schools, a Northwest Outward Bound School representative shared “we subsidize a lot of that, but with new partnerships that we’re reaching out to, we’re really asking those to not move forward until they’re more self-funding.”

One way that regional Schools may find a middle ground between asking partners to pay the full program cost and fully subsidizing through Outward Bound fundraising efforts is to support partners in accessing funding for the program. If Outward Bound develops an evidence base that meets ESSA standards, this will help public school partners access funding to pay for the Outward Bound program. Similarly, a clearer message and well-defined program models may help community partners make the case to funders that Outward Bound is a valuable addition to their existing programs.

While most regional OB Schools expressed a desire to minimize the financial burden on the partner organization through fundraising, serving some partners that can pay for the program and building an evidence-base that allows partners to access their own funding sources (e.g. ESSA) should also be explored as Outward Bound looks to scale significantly.

CONCLUSION

We discussed several themes that emerged in an interview with the National Development Officers Group. First, we found that at both the local and regional level there is an opportunity to better leverage existing data and to communicate the full story of Outward Bound more clearly. Next, we noted that more defined program models may help Outward Bound communicate more effectively with prospective partners and funders. Finally, we examined several aspects of the funding ecosystems in which the regional Schools and OBUSA operate and opportunities for growth.

FINAL CONCLUSION

Outward Bound Schools aspire that “Outward Bound is a piece of every child’s education”. OB USA and its 11 regional Schools have over 400 partnerships with community- and school-based organizations. While Outward Bound Schools share an educational philosophy, each school’s has different approaches to partnering and implementing their programs. We conducted an analysis of the literature, field reports, administrative data and interviews to better understand Outward Bound’s regional Schools partnerships. Documenting the similarities and the differences among schools is key to broadening and deepening Outward Bound’s impact nationwide.

50.7 million students attend public schools in the U.S. (Digest of Educational Statistics, 2021). A large proportion of Outward Bound’s programming is already dedicated to community- and school-based partnerships. Results from the OBOS demonstrate that through these programs Outward Bound Schools are already making a significant impact on the student’s they serve. Expanding these partnerships has great potential for growth of OB, and the youth that are being served.. Further, these partnerships provide an opportunity for Outward Bound to fulfill its mission of greater access and opportunities for all .

We used a typology to examine Outward Bound’s regional Schools relationships to their partner organizations and found a wide variety of partnership types. While no one typology is ideal for every partnership, Penny Jeffers sums it up by describing that Outward Bound Schools should aim to be “purposeful about what we’re doing, and why we’re doing it as opposed to trying to sort of be everything to all people.” Specifically, being clear with partners about the type of partnership that will work best for both organizations is key to sustainability.

In order for Outward Bound regional Schools to expand their number of partnerships, Outward Bound USA needs to have a clear vision supported by concrete resources to support schools. National staff could provide technical assistance to schools to promote partnership development. Integrating data from the three national data systems that capture information relevant to these partnerships would provide important information for monitoring and tracking these partnerships. Further, having national staff convening and training staff across Outward Bound’s regional Schools could promote knowledge sharing and a community of practice in the system. Work done at the national level in areas such as curriculum development, building national partnerships (i.e., partnering with major youth-serving organizations) or strategic planning could consolidate efforts occurring at the regional levels. Finally, national staff could support efforts to increase the evidence-based of Outward Bound programming.

Outward Bound USA also needs to support regional Schools in developing their own capacity to expand outreach and programming. Financial support would be a key component of this growth. Further, as Outward Bound USA begins to streamline its data systems, more commitment to data collection is needed from Outward Bound regional Schools so that data can be collected and reported on a timely basis.

While the structure of partnerships varies across the Outward Bound system, Outward Bound’s program model would benefit from more standardization. We recommend using a five- to seven-day backpacking expedition for group enrollment students, ages 12-15, as the set program model. This program should include a form of

pre-expedition student preparation either through in-classroom support or through an Insight day. In clarifying the program model, we also recommend making the social-emotional learning outcomes more focused. Greater focus on social-emotional learning will likely improve partner organizations ability to understand what Outward Bound has to offer their students and create a shared vision around programmatic outcomes. Also, shared language around social-emotional learning will create more continuity between Outward Bound and its partner organizations and provide mutual reinforcement of the social-emotional learning practices across settings.

Outward Bound USA and the regional Schools have the opportunity to build on their past fundraising successes as they scale. Continuing to build the evidence base and communicate existing data, clarifying messaging, exploring new funding avenues, and leveraging the size of the national network will be key components to securing the funding needed to scale Outward Bound's partnership programs.

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APPENDIX

ADDITIONAL TABLES

Table A1. 2019 Outward Bound IncidentAnalytics School Enrollment

| Outward Bound School | Groups | | OE | | Educators | | Vets | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------|
| | Actual Student SPDs | Student Total* | Actual Student SPDs | Student Total* | Actual Student SPDs | Student Total* | Actual Student SPDs | Student Total* |
| Chesapeake Bay | 8632 | 5482 | 2400 | 234 | 43 | 43 | 193 | 28 |
| California | 5029 | 1524 | 6675 | 445 | – | – | 143 | 25 |
| Colorado | 2188 | 550 | 13960 | 799 | – | – | 241 | 41 |
| Hurricane Island | 2591 | 387 | 8824 | 457 | – | – | 390 | 65 |
| North Carolina | 11202 | 3465 | 10546 | 745 | 836 | 248 | 994 | 176 |
| Northwest | 6332 | 954 | 7127 | 550 | 1320 | 35 | 130 | 20 |
| NYC | 9223 | 5417 | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| Omaha | 3618 | 3590 | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| Philadelphia | 9794 | 6463 | 1623 | 146 | 497 | 425 | 69 | 24 |
| Thompson Island Education Center | 8085 | 4796 | 279 | 58 | – | – | – | – |
| Voyageur | 3572 | 1556 | 5751 | 344 | – | – | 415 | 81 |
| Total | 70266 | 34184 | 57185 | 3778 | 2696 | 751 | 2575 | 460 |
| Grand Total | Actual Student SPDs | | | | Student Total* | | | |
| | 141029 | | | | 39446 | | | |

Note: *Student totals may reflect duplicated counts

Table A2. 2019 OBOS Student Outcomes by Enrollment Type* (N= 5,032)

| OBOS Scale | Group (n= 2308) | | Open (n= 2724) | | t-value** | df | Cohen's d |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----|----------------|-----|-----------|----------|---------------------|
| | Avg. Diff. | SD | Avg. Diff.*** | SD | | | |
| Assertiveness | .15 | .40 | .29 | .45 | -12.216 | 5016.261 | -0.342 ⁺ |
| Emotion Control | .03 | .40 | .13 | .43 | -8.504 | 4934.842 | -0.240 ⁺ |
| Empathy | .11 | .38 | .18 | .37 | -6.898 | 4857.003 | -0.196 |
| Learning Interest | .20 | .41 | .35 | .45 | -12.321 | 4971.953 | -0.347 ⁺ |
| Perseverance | .20 | .49 | .46 | .51 | -17.947 | 4915.143 | -0.508 ^Δ |
| Teamwork | .20 | .51 | .33 | .54 | -8.660 | 4918.047 | -0.245 ⁺ |
| Group Relationships | .22 | .49 | .47 | .68 | -15.057 | 4837.133 | -0.419 ⁺ |
| Self Regulation | .18 | .44 | .41 | .53 | -12.262 | 2510.552 | -0.472 ⁺ |
| Self Awareness | .15 | .42 | .35 | .50 | -15.143 | 4927.534 | -0.426 ⁺ |
| Responsibility | .14 | .40 | .36 | .50 | -17.562 | 4906.294 | -0.493 ⁺ |
| Physical Confidence | .17 | .44 | .34 | .52 | -12.035 | 4921.392 | -0.339 ⁺ |
| Staff-Student Relationships | .11 | .40 | .18 | .47 | -6.262 | 4909.089 | -0.177 |

Notes:

* Data from 10 OB schools.

**All 12 scales had significant pre-post difference scores with $p < 0.001$.

***Open enrollment had significantly higher pre-post difference scores for all 12 scales.

⁺Small effect size; ^Δ Medium effect size

Table A3. 2019 OBOS Significant* Interaction Effects of Age, Race, Gender, and Enrollment Groups on Student Outcomes

| Scale | df | Mean Square | F-value | p-value | Partial η^2 |
|---------------------|----|-------------|---------|---------|------------------|
| Assertiveness | 17 | 0.530 | 2.915 | <0.001 | 0.010 |
| Emotion Control | 17 | 0.335 | 1.986 | 0.009 | 0.007 |
| Empathy | 17 | 0.311 | 2.172 | 0.004 | 0.007 |
| Perseverance | 17 | 0.409 | 1.631 | 0.049 | 0.005 |
| Learning Interest | 17 | 0.554 | 2.978 | <0.001 | 0.010 |
| Teamwork | 17 | 0.470 | 1.710 | 0.034 | 0.006 |
| Responsibility | 17 | 0.410 | 2.020 | 0.008 | 0.007 |
| Physical Confidence | 17 | 0.399 | 1.758 | 0.028 | 0.006 |

Note: *Only student outcome ANOVA results with $p < 0.05$ are reported.

Table A4. 2019 OBOS Significant* Student Outcomes for 5-10 Day Courses by Enrollment-Group

| Scale | 5-10 Day Courses | | | | p-value | Cohen's d |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-----------|---------------|------------|---------|----------------|
| | Open Mean | Open n | Group Mean | Group n | | |
| Assertiveness | 0.282 | 857 | 0.229 | 857 | 0.009 | -0.127 |
| Emotion Control | 0.115 | 853 | 0.045 | 851 | <0.001 | -0.178 |
| Learning Interest | 0.317 | 857 | 0.267 | 853 | 0.015 | -0.118 |
| Perseverance | 0.401 | 857 | 0.266 | 850 | <0.001 | -0.279 (small) |
| Teamwork | 0.334 | 856 | 0.232 | 848 | <0.001 | -0.201 (small) |
| Group Relationships | 0.423 | 838 | 0.285 | 841 | <0.001 | -0.246 (small) |
| Self Regulation | 0.337 | 418 | 0.243 | 776 | 0.001 | -0.202 (small) |
| Self-Awareness | 0.277 | 839 | 0.197 | 843 | <0.001 | -0.187 |
| Responsibility | 0.293 | 839 | 0.202 | 839 | <0.001 | -0.223 (small) |
| Physical Confidence | 0.285 | 840 | 0.226 | 844 | 0.008 | -0.129 |
| Staff and Student Relationships | 0.213 | 839 | 0.135 | 841 | 0.001 | -0.186 |

Note: *Only student outcome ANOVA results with $p < 0.05$ are reported.