



# Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

### *Content*

- core ELOB practices
- designing expeditions
- assessment practices
- changing role of the teacher
- engaging students in learning
- instructional strategies
- literacy platform

Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (ELOB) is a school reform program that incorporates extensive content-based staff development. Students' educational experiences revolve around expeditions — long-term, in-depth studies of a topic or theme that involve field work, service, adventure, and a cumulative final project or performance.

Teachers, who are at the center of the learning experiences, must know their content deeply and be able to transform their teaching practices so that they can design and guide expeditions. Ten design principles and five program core practices characterize each of the 65 ELOB schools. The ten principles include an emphasis on character and academic development; social commitment, vision, and service; cooperation and healthy competitions against oneself and standards; the importance of caring and intimacy, solitude and reflection and success and failure as means to and conditions for learning; respect for nature and the environment; diversity and inclusivity in the classroom; and creation of conditions in schools for all students to discover and construct meaning. ELOB schools restructure schedules, school organization, teacher-student relationships, curriculum, professional development, and assessment to create and support a community of learners engaged in expeditions.

### *Context*

- diverse school sites, including urban, suburban, and rural schools
- range of grade configurations
- diverse student populations, including high populations of minority and low-income students

## PROGRAM CONTEXT

Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound is implemented at diverse school sites, including schools in urban, suburban, and rural settings. It is effective in a wide range of grade configurations including K-6, K-8, K-12, 6-12, and 9-12. ELOB schools include diverse student populations that frequently are composed of high populations of minority and low-income students.



## STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The staff development program associated with Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound is experiential and extensive. Its goal is changing teachers' views of teaching and their role in the classroom and helping them become facilitators of learning rather than dispensers of knowledge.

The staff development program includes multiple dimensions. During five-day summer planning institutes, national faculty works with teams of teachers in developing their expeditions. On-site professional development occurs after school or on planning days. On these days, national faculty help teachers align their expeditions to state standards, assist with identifying additional resources and materials, and help design concrete lessons. Additional training during the school year might include using portfolios or creating rubrics and other forms of authentic assessment. National leadership institutes focus on assessing a school's readiness to implement Expeditionary Learning. National leadership retreats and conferences are held annually and promote collaboration. Week-long summits provide immersion in a discipline or topic.

Other forms of staff development include sharing days where teachers network with colleagues; visits from master teachers; workshops on special topics; visits to schools with the ELOB network; leadership development forums for principals and other school leaders; and Outward Bound expeditions designed for educators. Most teachers participate in an average of 10-20 days of professional development a year. Summer institutes, sharing days, planning days, and mini-sabbaticals are the most frequent forms of ELOB staff development.

### *Process*

- training
- coaching
- demonstrations
- action research
- school self-study
- school visitations
- periodic peer review

### *Intended Audience*

- entire school

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Students' academic achievement in math and reading on standardized, norm-referenced, achievement tests increased significantly as a result of their participation in ELOB when compared to other schools in the states and/or districts. In addition, students' attendance, parent involvement, attitude about school, enjoyment of school, and active engagement in learning increase as a result of the expeditionary structure of learning.

## EVIDENCE OF INCREASED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



### *Success Indicators*

- state assessments
- norm-referenced tests in reading and mathematics

Students in Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound schools not only performed better academically, but also socially. To determine how students advanced academically, a complex evaluation system was conducted by the Academy for Educational Development. Data from two cohorts of students (1993-1995) were collected and analyzed separately and collectively. Cohort A students are those who were enrolled for two years in an ELOB school and received two years of ELOB instruction. Students in Cohort B received one year of ELOB instruction. Students in both cohorts showed significant gains on standardized assessments in reading and mathematics.

Particularly notable in three schools was the increase of students in the top two quartiles and the decrease of students in the bottom quartile. From 1993-95, selected grades in selected schools showed significant gains in reading: grades 5-6 in a K-8 school; grade six in two elementary schools; grade seven in two middle schools; and grade eight in one middle school. In math, in selected grades and selected schools the results are similar: grades 5-6 in a K-8 school; grade 9 in a middle school; and grade 6 in two elementary schools. In a middle school in Maine, student scores increased 45 points in reading and 65 points in math on the Maine Educational Assessment, compared to statewide gains of 5 points in reading and 25 points in math. Individual school performances in Georgia, Iowa, and Massachusetts showed similar significant gain in reading and math scores. Other evident gains were in attendance, student enjoyment of school, active engagement, and parent involvement.

### THE BOTTOM LINE



Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound, a comprehensive school reform model, is included because it incorporates extensive content-specific staff development. The integrated approach to teaching and learning required teachers to have deep content knowledge in order to develop high quality interdisciplinary learning experiences for students. Teachers not only learn to structure the learning environment differently, but they also learn to structure their teaching and content differently to engage students in authentic learning experiences in where they are primarily responsible for their own learning.

## SAMPLE SITES



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## DOCUMENTATION

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