

Educators Initiative



**North Carolina
Outward Bound**

The North Carolina Outward Bound Educators Initiative is a year-long professional development program for classroom teachers. It combines the transformational experience of a North Carolina Outward Bound wilderness expedition with on-going follow up activities that increase teachers' understanding and integration of experiential education in their classrooms.

Goals & Objectives:

- Develop and reinforce teachers' understanding and appreciation of experiential teaching philosophy and methodology
- Provide teachers with specific tools to use in the classroom to facilitate both the content and process of experiential education
- Provide teachers with tools to conceptualize and support intentional community development among students
- Encourage teachers to focus on reflective and student-centered practice, empowering student responsibility for classroom leadership
- Develop community among participating teachers at their school as well as colleagues at other schools
- Create accountability for teachers and promote sustainability of the program through ongoing contact among colleagues and with NCOB staff.



Requirements to participate:

- The 2012-2013 program year kicks off with a weeklong wilderness expedition in North Carolina, August 1-8, 2012.
- The cost of the entire yearlong program is \$3800 per participant
- Must have support from administration of school
- Minimum of two teachers per school providing a support network
- Minimum one year full-time classroom teaching experience in a public or private school; two years preferred
- Must be teaching in a classroom setting during the upcoming school year
- Ability to balance school and program requirements

Program components include:

- Weeklong backpacking and rock climbing wilderness expedition in the North Carolina mountains, including one day transference workshop
- One-on-one monthly coaching calls with NCOB professional staff focused on personal and professional reflection and goal setting, as well as the on-going integration of experiential methodology in the classroom
- Development of a teaching portfolio that includes documentation of teacher and student work
- Regular meetings between teachers at each school providing opportunities for team planning, idea sharing and community development
- Readings on current educational topics that spark discussion and collaboration
- Mid and end-of-year retreats where EI participants reconvene with Outward Bound staff and other experts in the field of experiential education

Outcomes:

An evaluation of the Educators Initiative was conducted in the 2007-2008 school year by Evaluation, Assessment and Policy Connections (EvAP), a unit of the School of Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Below is a summary of that evaluation.

Educators changed instructional styles to better assist individual students.

- Teachers and students are more aware of individual learning styles and incorporate more student-centered lesson planning
- Teachers have tools to help students take initiative and responsibility
- Teachers help students try new things, accept challenges and struggle as part of the learning process
- Teachers experience and exhibit more tolerance and compassion
- Teachers are more aware of their interactions with students and work to be more open with students

The social structure in classrooms changed.

- Students hold each other accountable
- Classrooms develop as strong communities – creating norms and a culture of working as a team
- Classrooms intentionally create heterogeneous cooperative groups of students
- Students are more engaged, asking more questions and taking more risks in safer classroom environments

Behavior among individual students improved.

- Students understand and follow behavioral parameters
- Stronger students are more patient with struggling students and work to help them succeed
- Students and teachers experience and express greater trust
- Classrooms focus on personal responsibility and leadership development among students



“This has changed the way I think about how I teach and made me more intentional about the methodology that I use.”

– The Galloway School, Atlanta, GA

The overall instructional environment in classrooms improved.

- Educators have the tools to teach in ways they value, reinforcing personal teaching philosophies
- Educators teach experientially, including more project-based learning experiences
- Teachers incorporate more formative assessments, moving away from quizzes and tests
- Educators use the outdoors as a learning environment more often
- Teachers incorporate regular (daily, weekly) team-building initiatives and debriefings
- Teachers are encouraged to reflect on and revise existing plans and practices
- Educators found incorporating a sense of fun translates to increased student energy and openness to learning

Educators have increased job satisfaction.

- Teachers indicated they are happier in their work and are satisfied with their job
- Teachers and Heads of Schools reported a greater sense of community and collaboration among teachers at their school
- Teachers see themselves as leaders in their school and are inspired to include experiential education in the curriculum

“I have been to many conferences, professional development programs, etc. Your program was by far the most powerful and effective program that I have ever attended. I can honestly say that I am a better teacher because of the Educators’ Initiative. Kudos.”

– Charlotte Country Day School, Charlotte, NC

For more information, contact
Dr. Michael Follo
NCOB Director of Education
828-239-2130 mfollo@ncobs.org

2582 Riceville Road
Asheville, NC 28805
800-438-9661
www.ncobs.org