



## **Wilderness Inquiry Youth Evaluation External Report 2022**

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## **Abstract**

Research shows that there are myriad benefits from nature contact and learning in the outdoors, such as demonstrated gains in social emotional learning (SEL) capacities, an increase in overall happiness and wellbeing, and improved academic outcomes. Wilderness Inquiry piloted a research-based evaluation tool created by Hello Insight, to measure youth program success in increasing SEL capacities, which is foundational to youth experiencing positive wellbeing and academic outcomes.

Wilderness Inquiry measured SEL capacities of youth participants before and after Outdoor Credit Recovery and Extended Camping Trips. The data showed that these outdoor programs contributed to significant growth in areas of social emotional learning (SEL) amongst high schoolers and middle schoolers. Extended Trip Experiences showed the most growth in 1) wellbeing in the outdoors; 2) social skills; and 3) self-management. Outdoor Credit Recovery showed the most growth in 1) positive identity; and 2) academic self-efficacy.

Wilderness Inquiry measured the percent of youth participants who experienced and engaged in each SEL research-based practice in our Canoemobile program. Canoemobile participants reported that Wilderness Inquiry's staff excelled at providing 1) a safe and supported experience and 2) pushed young people to try hard and do their best. Consistent behavior is one of the ways trust is built. Pushing young people to try hard and do their best promotes resilience, enhances academic performance, and strengthens young people's ability to stay focused on achieving their long-term goals.

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## Introduction

The goals of Wilderness Inquiry's evaluation process are to:

		
<b>Improve Program Implementation</b>	<b>Guide program participants to appropriate programs and settings</b>	<b>Increase program funding</b>
<i>Evaluation results will be reviewed and shared with staff to make ongoing and long-term programmatic changes.</i>	<i>Evaluation results will be shared with program participants and the community to help individuals and organizations determine if Wilderness Inquiry programs align with their goals and desired outcomes.</i>	<i>Evaluation results will be shared with funders and other stakeholders to demonstrate impact and the need for continued or increased funding so that program opportunities remain financially accessible.</i>

### **Organization Mission**

Wilderness Inquiry's mission is to connect people of all ages, backgrounds, identities, and abilities through shared outdoor adventures so that everyone can equitably experience the benefits of time spent in nature.

Through the medium of outdoor adventure travel, we inspire personal growth, enhanced awareness of the environment, and community integration. Wilderness Inquiry's adventures encourage people to open themselves to new possibilities and opportunities. We evaluated three of Wilderness Inquiry's youth programs using Hello Insight's youth evaluation tool including Canoemobile, Extended Camping Trips, and Outdoor Credit Recovery.

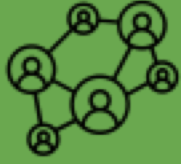



1. Canoemobile is a "floating classroom" that brings students out on local waterways in 10-person canoes to learn about science, history, geography, and culture. Canoemobile brings classroom learning outside, engaging youth to improve school

performance, cultivate a stewardship ethic, and create pathways to pursue educational and career opportunities in the outdoors.

2. Wilderness Inquiry's extended camping trips solidify outdoor and interpersonal skills while experiencing a wilderness area such as the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, Yellowstone National Park, Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, Glacier National Park, and more. Each experience that was evaluated lasted between 4 and 6 days.
3. Outdoor Credit Recovery offers an attractive experiential learning solution. In efforts to assist and incentivize Minnesota youth to stay on track to graduate, this program provides a fun, alternative approach for high school students to recover academic credits. The program lasted one week per student cohort.

### ***Program Focus Goals***

Wilderness Inquiry trained their staff to focus on these four key themes that all revolve around ***building connections*** during program implementation using the below tactics.

			
Build Positive, Caring <b>Connections between Outdoor Leaders</b> and Participants	Increase Awareness of the <b>Connections between Nature</b> and Participants	Provide Growth Opportunities for Participants to <b>Connect to their Inner Selves</b>	Provide Growth Opportunities for Participants to <b>Connect to their Community</b>

Some of the ways we build connections is to start out our experiences with a Welcome Circle that is fun, welcoming, inclusive, and builds trust between participants and outdoor leaders, then we close out the experience with a Closing Circle that encourages participants to reflect and share. During activities, outdoor leaders build a sense of community among participants, by providing opportunities for teamwork, problem solving, and having participants choose a team name for canoe paddlers. Throughout the outdoor experience, participants are encouraged to connect to their inner selves through reflection, taking time to stop and take in nature's sounds, smells, sights, and impact on wellbeing. Lastly, Wilderness Inquiry

connects participants to their local parks and waterways and takes the time to hear what participants are enjoying and providing guidance on how to access the outdoors and outdoor recreation.

Throughout Wilderness Inquiry youth programs, young people gain 21st-century skills and develop social and emotional capacities that correlate with long-term gains in high school completion, college/career readiness, and increased life-long thriving. Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. There is growing evidence showing that SEL qualities rival academic or technical skills in their ability to predict employment and earnings, among other outcomes. While the demand for such skills has increased over the past 20 years, many employers around the world have reported that job candidates lack the soft skills needed to fill available positions.

In the face of current societal economic, environmental, and social challenges, the promotion of these non-academic skills is seen as more critical than ever before with business and political leaders urging schools to pay more attention to equipping students with soft skills such as a positive identity, social skills, self-management, social capital, academic self-efficacy, and a sense of contribution – often referred to as SEL or “21st Century Skills” ([CASEL](#), 2022). To meet these needs, Wilderness Inquiry’s programs integrate essential research-based practices that have been shown to promote these types of outcomes for young people. In addition, these skills are regularly assessed to assure that each young person is on a pathway toward success.

To accomplish this, Wilderness Inquiry used an online learning and evaluation platform – Hello Insight to deploy scientifically validated tools and analytics that have been tested and statistically validated through surveying more than 250,000 young people, in over 1,500 programs, in over 750 organizations nation-wide. This field standard platform allows Wilderness Inquiry to benchmark young people’s outcome growth against other young people with similar attributes, assuring that the growth they see is meaningful and significant.

Pre/Post surveys measure SEL skill development during Wilderness Inquiry programs and assess youth’s experience of key positive youth development practices that have been correlated with the types of SEL growth that lead to long-term academic gains, career and workforce development, positive behaviors, and increased thriving. These surveys were used for Outdoor Credit Recovery and Youth Extended Trips.

Check-in surveys measure the positive youth development experiences that Hello Insight research shows leads to SEL growth. This survey was used for Canoemobile MN Day Trips.

Wilderness Inquiry is dedicated to ongoing learning and improvement. Therefore, we use POST assessment results to better understand the young peoples' experiences of Wilderness Inquiry so that we can continue to make adjustments and improvements.



## Evidence Base

According to CASEL, “SEL (social and emotional learning) is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.” ([CASEL](#), 2022) There is growing evidence that SEL qualities rival academic or technical skills in their ability to predict employment and earnings (Kautz, Heckman, Diris, ter Weel, & Borghans, 2014), increased academic success, decreased risk, and increased thriving (CASEL, 2022). The demand for such nonacademic skills has increased over the past 20 years (Balcar, 2014; Carnevale, 2013; Eger & Grossmann, 2004; International Labor Organization, 2008) and their promotion is more critical than ever — with business and political leaders urging schools to pay more attention to equipping students with skills like problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and self-management, often referred to as “21st Century Skills” (CASEL, 2022).

## Definitions

Emerging Core SEL For young people with Emerging Core SEL, growth is a value defined as a statistically significant change from pre to post.

Advanced Core SEL For young people with Advanced Core SEL, maintaining their pre score or showing any positive increases.

Reflect on Outdoor Exploration A young person's experience with an adult who takes time to create attentive, critical, and exploratory thoughts about spending time in the outdoors. Reflecting on Outdoor Exploration involves observing and developing awareness of the interdependence of living things and feelings and thoughts toward nature. Research says that this experience increases concern and respect for all living things.

Foster Outdoor Exploration A young person's experience with an adult who encourages them to explore natural environments and develop a personal interest in the outdoors. Foster Outdoor Exploration involves promoting interest in the natural environment and exploring the relationship with other living and nonliving things. This experience has been shown to increase young people's healthy habits, such as physical activity, and in the long-term, indicators of wellness like better concentration and a greater sense of freedom.

Engage Authentically Engage Authentically is a young person's experience with an adult who takes the time to get to know them by listening and understanding who they are — their cultural and lived experiences, their interests, and their passions. Engaging authentically involves placing young people's personal stories at the center of the program's work and ensuring that they feel valued, heard, and cared for by adults. This is a Foundational Experience for young people, or one that lays the groundwork for all of the others in Hello Insight's logic model.

Promote Peer Bonds Promote Peer Bonds is a young person's experience with an adult who helps them work with peers in teams and groups, creating a safe space to learn with and from one another, exploring similarities and differences, and developing deep bonds and relationships. Promoting peer bonds involves supporting young people to share and value one another's unique perspectives, experiences, strengths, and ideas. This is a Foundational Experience for young people, bolstering all other PYD practices measured by Hello Insight.

Expand Interests Expand Interests is a young person's experience with an adult who supports them to try new things, broaden their horizons, learn about other people's cultures and perspectives, and explore their own identities. Expanding interests involves exposing young people to new ideas, experiences, and places.

Challenge Growth Challenge Growth is a young person's experience with an adult who encourages them to take risks and perform beyond their own expectations. Challenging growth involves four actions: 1) Staff expect young people to do their best and to live up to their potential; 2) They stretch and encourage young people to go further than they imagine; 3) Staff support young people to reflect on failures and to learn from mistakes; and, 4) They hold young people accountable by supporting them to take responsibility for their actions.

## Data

### ***Population***

Over the course of the 2022 youth programming season (June-August), Wilderness Inquiry's evaluation tool assessed the SEL skills of 43 young people at the beginning of the program (pre) and at the end of the program (post) in Wilderness Inquiry's Credit Recovery program and 42 young people in Wilderness Inquiry's Extended Trips. The capacities we measured included: Positive Identity, Self-Management, Contribution, Academic Self-Efficacy, Social Skills and Social Capital.

Over the course of the 2022 Canoemobile programming season (May-October) we surveyed 748 young people at the end of a day trip through a one-time check-in assessment tool. The experiences measured included: Foster Outdoor Exploration, Reflect on Outdoor Exploration, Engage Authentically, Promote Peer Bonds, Challenge Growth, and Expand Interests. Each young person that completed a survey was asked to report their age, grade, gender, and race/ethnicity (optional).

### *Credit Recovery*

- The **Ethnicity** of young people who participated in Wilderness Inquiry's program is 37% Asian, 26% Black or African American, 14% Latino(a)(x), 12% Two or more races, 5% Some other race, 2% Middle Eastern or North African, 2% No Response, 2% White.
- The **Gender** of young people who participated in Wilderness Inquiry's program is 49% Female, 47% Male, 2% Chose Not to Describe, and 2% No Response.
- The **Grade** of young people who participated in Wilderness Inquiry's program were 100% High Schoolers.
- The **Age** of young people who participated in Wilderness Inquiry's program are 7% 18+ years old, 58% 16-17 years old, 35% 14-15 years old.

### *Extended Trips*

- The **Ethnicity** of young people who participated in Wilderness Inquiry's program is 71% White, 17% Hispanic or Latino (a)(x), 7% Black or African American, and 5% Asian.
- The **Gender** of young people who participated in Wilderness Inquiry's program is 69% Female, 21% Male, and 10% chose not to describe.
- The **Grade** of young people who participated in Wilderness Inquiry's program is 95% High Schoolers, 2% Middle Schoolers, 2% Other.

- The **Age** of young people who participated in Wilderness Inquiry's program is 2% 18+ years old, 69% 16-17 year olds, 26% 14-15 year olds, and 2% 12-13 years old.

#### *Canoemobile*

- The **Ethnicity** of young people who were surveyed in Wilderness Inquiry's program is 26% White, 18% Black or African American, 17% Asian, 16% Some other race, 9% Two or more races, 5% Hispanic or Latino (a)(x), 4% No Response, 3% American Indian, Indigenous, or Native American, 1% Middle Eastern or North African, <1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.
- The **Gender** of young people who were surveyed in Wilderness Inquiry's program is 42% Female, 41% Male, 14% chose not to describe, and 4% chose to describe.
- The **Grade** of young people who were surveyed in Wilderness Inquiry's program is 60% High Schoolers, 24% Middle Schoolers, 13% Elementary Schoolers, 2% No Response.
- The **Age** of young people who were surveyed in Wilderness Inquiry's program is 3% 18+ years old, 15% 16-17 year olds, 43% 14-15 year olds, 21% 12-13 years old, and 17% 9-11 years old.

### **Key Findings**

Post Benchmark Success falls into one of three categories:

1. Fewer Young People Made Gains Than Typical (a group's growth rate is very low when compared to the national norm). Defined as <65%.
2. A Typical Number of Young People Who Made Gains (a group's growth rate is average when compared to the national norm). Defined as 65% to 84% [Many].
3. More Young People Who Made Gains Than the Typical (a group's growth rate is very high when compared to the national norm). Defined as 90%+ [Almost All].

Wilderness Inquiry is aiming for 70% or higher to define success.

#### *Credit Recovery*

#### Core SEL

All (100%) young people in the program showed meaningful effect size gains in one or more SEL outcomes, almost all (93%) grew in two or more, and many (77%) grew in three or more SEL outcome areas.

## Benchmark Finding

Wilderness Inquiry's program is performing on par with Hello Insight's national benchmark for successful SEL Growth. In other words, young people in Wilderness Inquiry's program are developing SEL skills at the same rate as their peers attending high quality programs across the country. Young people were matched with peers based on pre-SEL scores, age, gender identity and ethnicity.

## SEL Capacity Data

Many (77%) young people in this program developed *Core SEL*. Core SEL summarizes the five SEL capacities that are all interdependent, and positively affect the development of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral factors in young people's lives.

Many (77%) of the young people in this program developed *Academic Self Efficacy* which is a critical aspect of social and emotional learning. In the CASEL framework, it is considered part of self-awareness or "the ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts." Academic Self-Efficacy is a young person's motivation and perceived mastery over their own learning, school performance, and potential to attain academic success. It is correlated with higher grade point averages and standardized test scores, fewer suspensions and expulsions, as well as longer-term gains in skills to identify, attain, and retain a career (Afterschool Alliance, 2009; Zins, J.E., et al., 2004).

Many (74%) young people in this program developed a *Positive Identity*. Positive Identity is a critical aspect of social and emotional learning. In the CASEL framework, it is considered part of self-awareness or "the ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts. This includes capacities to recognize one's strengths and limitations with a well-grounded sense of confidence and purpose." Positive identity helps young people develop resilience in the face of challenges and is correlated with higher confidence and reduced behavioral problems (McLaughlin, M.W., 2000).

## Experience Findings

Many (77%) of the young people in this program reported working with an adult who helped them work with peers in teams and groups, a key best practice shown to promote SEL growth. Young people in Wilderness Inquiry's program felt that adults created safe

spaces to learn with and from one another, exploring similarities and differences, and developing deep bonds and relationships.

Many (81%) of the young people in this program reported that they expanded their interests, a key best practice shown to promote SEL growth because adults ensured that young people have the opportunity to engage in activities they like to do. It has also been shown to increase school engagement and high school graduation rates; promote healthy behaviors and decrease risky behaviors; increase overall satisfaction with life (Search Institute, 2020); increase a sense of contribution and desire to give back; and promotes a healthy positive identity (Benson, P.L. 2006; Scales, P.C., et al., 2011).

Many (79%) young people reported that they felt positively challenged, and they worked with an adult who encouraged them to take risks and perform beyond their own expectations. This was expressed to young people throughout the Outdoor Credit Recovery program by Wilderness Inquiry Outdoor Leaders, seasonal staff who lead outdoor trip experiences. Outdoor Leaders are trained to share with participants that: it's okay to feel challenged, we expect them to try hard and do their best, and we're here to provide support when they need it. These are key best practices shown to promote SEL growth. Challenging a young person's growth has also been shown to promote resilience (Zhang, Y., et al., 2011), strengthens their ability to stay focused on achieving their long-term goals (Steele, C.M. 2011), enhances their academic performance (Bowen, G., et al., 2012); and increases civic participation (Mesurado, B., et al., 2014).

### *Extended Trips*

All (100%) young people in the program showed meaningful effect size gains in one or more SEL outcomes, most (86%) grew in three or more SEL outcome areas.

Wilderness Inquiry's program is performing on par with Hello Insight's national benchmark for successful SEL Growth. In other words, young people in Wilderness Inquiry's program are developing SEL skills at the same rate as their peers attending high quality programs across the country. Young people were matched with peers based on pre-SEL scores, age, gender identity and ethnicity.

Many (79%) young people in this program developed Core SEL, which is an encapsulation of several SEL capacities which are all interdependent and positively affect the development of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral factors in young people's lives.

Many (74%) of the young people in this program developed *Academic Self Efficacy* which is a critical aspect of social and emotional learning. In the CASEL framework, it is considered part of self-awareness or “the ability to understand one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.” Academic Self-Efficacy is a young person’s motivation and perceived mastery over their own learning, school performance, and potential to attain academic success. It is correlated with higher grade point averages and standardized test scores, fewer suspensions and expulsions, as well as longer-term gains in skills to identify, attain, and retain a career (Afterschool Alliance, 2009; Zins, J.E., et al., 2004).

Many (74%) young people in this program developed a *Positive Identity*. Positive Identity is a critical aspect of social and emotional learning. In the CASEL framework, it is considered part of self-awareness or “the to understand one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts. This includes capacities to recognize one’s strengths and limitations with a well-grounded sense of confidence and purpose.” Positive identity helps young people develop resilience in the face of challenges and is correlated with higher confidence and reduced behavioral problems (McLaughlin, M.W., 2000).

Almost all (90%) emerging young people developed *Self Management*, these were the young people with low scores at pre, or those that needed it the most. Self management is a critical aspect of social and emotional learning. In the CASEL framework, it is described as “ability to manage one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations. This includes the capacities to delay gratification, manage stress, and feel motivation and agency to accomplish personal and collective goals.” Self-Management correlates with longer-term outcomes such as higher academic performance, lower engagement in negative behaviors, and improved social acceptance by peers (Bandy, T & Moore, K.A., 2010).

Many (79%) emerging young people developed *Social Skills*. Social skills are a critical aspect of social and emotional learning. In the CASEL framework, they are considered part of social-awareness or abilities “to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts. This includes the capacities to feel compassion for others, understand broader historical and social norms for behavior in different settings, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.” Social skills are considered an important part of development because they support positive social interactions and promote positive interactions between young people and their environment (Payton, J.W. et al., 2008).



Almost all (98%) of the young people in this program reported experiencing *Authentic Engagement*, a key best practice shown to promote SEL growth. In Wilderness Inquiry's program, young people build relationships with adults who take the time to get to know them by listening and understanding who they are — their cultural and lived experiences, their interests, and their passions, and helping them feel safe and supported.

Many (90%) of the young people in this program reported working with an adult who helped them work with peers in teams and groups, a key best practice shown to promote SEL growth. Young people in Wilderness Inquiry's program felt that adults created safe spaces to learn with and from one another, creating a sense of group identity, and developing deep bonds and relationships by working together.

Many (79%) of the young people in this program reported that Wilderness Inquiry's program *Expanded their Interests*, a key best practice shown to promote SEL growth because adults ensured that young people have the opportunity to engage in activities they like to do and encouraged them to take a risk and try something new.

Many (86%) of the young people in this program reported that Wilderness Inquiry's program positively *Challenged Growth*, a key best practice shown to promote SEL growth. They worked with an adult who encouraged them to take risks and perform beyond their own expectations, expressed often to young people that we expect them to try hard and do their best.

### *Canoemobile*

Canoemobile in Minnesota typically runs for 4-5 hours at a local park and waterway. Activities include: canoeing, nature hikes, orienteering, fishing, firebuilding, shelter building, water quality testing, netting for macroinvertebrates, and teambuilding games led by Wilderness Inquiry Outdoor Leaders.

Many (72%) young people in this program reported that Wilderness Inquiry's program positively *Engaged Authentically* a key best practice shown to promote SEL growth. In Wilderness Inquiry's program, young people build relationships with adults who create safe and supported environments by consistently and purposefully applying their recommendations.

Many (76%) young people in this program reported that Wilderness Inquiry's program positively *Challenged Growth* because Wilderness Inquiry's staff expressed often that they

expect young people to try hard and do their best and gave frequent reminders that they believed in youth and their ability to succeed.

National Canoemobile typically runs for 3 hours at a local park and waterway. Wilderness Inquiry solely runs a canoeing station which lasts for up to 45 minutes, while local partners facilitate learning activities. Wilderness Inquiry surveyed students participated in the all activity stations. The Hello Insight tool was not used for the National Canoemobile experience due to timing and logistical constraints. Instead Wilderness Inquiry Outdoor Leaders asked young people to respond in a visual manner at the end of their experience and responses were tallied. 342 youth participants were surveyed, ranging from K-12 grade levels, and came from Milwaukee, Indiana, Detroit, Washington D.C., Atlanta, New York, New Jersey, St. Louis, and Ohio.




Many (81%) of young people surveyed agreed that they enjoyed the outdoor experience. 4% disagreed and 14% were neutral.

58% of young people surveyed agreed that they felt like they were part of a community. 12% disagreed and 31% were neutral.

61% of young people surveyed agreed that they enjoyed spending time outdoors. 10% disagreed and 30% were neutral.

56% of young people surveyed agreed that they are interested in spending more time outdoors. 13% disagreed and 31% were neutral.

## Analysis and Conclusion

		
<b>Canoemobile (MN)</b>	<b>Outdoor Credit Recovery</b>	<b>Youth Extended Trips</b>
<p><i>Strengths include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Provide safe and supported experiences</li> <li>-Push young people to try hard and do their best</li> </ul>	<p><i>Most growth in:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Positive Identity</li> <li>- Academic Self-Efficacy</li> </ul> <p><i>Because young people experienced:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engage authentically</li> <li>- Challenge growth</li> <li>- Expand interests</li> </ul>	<p><i>Most growth in:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Wellbeing in the outdoors</li> <li>-Social Skills</li> <li>- Self-Management</li> </ul> <p><i>Because young people experienced:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engage authentically</li> <li>- Promote peer bonds</li> <li>- Challenge growth</li> </ul>
<p><i>Areas to improve include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Foster Outdoor Exploration</li> <li>- Engage Authentically</li> <li>- Promote Peer Bonds</li> </ul>	<p><i>Areas to improve include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reflect on Outdoor Exploration</li> <li>- Promote Peer Bonds</li> </ul>	<p><i>Areas to improve include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide opportunities to explore own passions, cultures</li> <li>- Reflect on Outdoor Exploration</li> </ul>

## Recommendations

### ***Program Improvement***

From analyses of existing data in the Hello Insight system, the system can identify which practices are the most important for making Core and Outdoor SEL gains in young people like those that participate in Wilderness Inquiry programs. Hello Insight ranks their recommendations by the potential for positive impact on Wilderness Inquiry's young people's Core and Outdoor SEL scores. Based on Wilderness Inquiry's young people's unique mix of capacities, Hello Insight recommends the following program experience improvements for Wilderness Inquiry's young people:

#### *Outdoor Credit Recovery*

1. *Outdoor Exploration*: Identify ways to intentionally *Reflect on Outdoor Exploration* by creating opportunities for young people to reflect on what they hear, see, and feel in the outdoors.
2. *Foundational SEL*: Focus on improving how we facilitate *Foster Outdoor Exploration*, by encouraging young people to express their thoughts and feelings about their outdoor experiences and plan outdoor activities that young people find interesting or meaningful.
3. *Foundational SEL*: Focus on improving how we *Promote Peer Bonds*, by creating opportunities for young people to work together and help each other. Create a sense of team or group identity at the beginning of the program.

#### *Minnesota Canoemobile*

1. Wilderness Inquiry's biggest area of impact is to focus primarily on *Engaging Authentically*, since research shows that this has a significant impact on student outcomes and adds to a young person's social capital.

#### *Youth Extended Trips*

1. *Outdoor Exploration*: Focus on improving how we facilitate *Reflect on Outdoor Exploration* by helping young people connect what they learn outdoors with their everyday lives; create opportunities for young people to think about what they achieved and what was challenging during their outdoor experiences.
2. *Outdoor Exploration*: Focus on improving how we facilitate *Foster Outdoor Exploration* by finding ways to encourage young people to express their thoughts and feelings

about their outdoor experiences and support them as they encounter and take on outdoor challenges.

3. *Fortifying SEL*: Focus on improving upon *Expand Interests* by providing opportunities for young people to explore their own passions, cultures, identities and histories. Create opportunities for young people to try new things they have never done before.

#### National Canoemobile (*Recommendations are not connected to Hello Insight*)

1. Focus efforts on techniques that make youth feel like they are part of a community: creating team names, or teambuilding/icebreakers focused on community building.
2. Focus training efforts on techniques that guide students to reflect on their experience, such as stopping to focus on what they hear, smell, see, feel to bring more awareness to the power and beauty of the outdoors.

#### Staff Training

1. Create training and continued education opportunities that will prepare Outdoor Leaders to effectively deliver on the key areas of improvement identified above.
2. Create updated facilitation materials for Outdoor Leaders to reference for each lesson or process/procedure they implement in programming. Could include welcome circle, closing circle, best practices to facilitate safety talks, introductions, etc.

#### ***Guide program participants into appropriate programs and settings***

1. Share results with St. Paul and Minneapolis School Districts and discuss if and how Wilderness Inquiry programs are supporting their goals and students.
2. Share results with future school districts as programs scale.
3. Prioritize schools and students that may benefit the most. Students that show the greatest losses or delays from the pandemic may have the most to gain from Wilderness Inquiry program interventions. Addressing the opportunity gap in an equitable manner may mean prioritizing schools that serve students with the highest needs or may have the least green space / tree cover, least access to safe parks, highest number of students on Free and Reduced Lunch, and lowest performance on academic outcomes.

### ***Increase funding***

Increase funding to keep program costs reasonable for the end-user.

1. Share results with current and potential funders, to increase funding for these impactful and meaningful youth programs.
2. Develop a storytelling initiative to build connection, understanding, and awareness and interest in outdoor access.

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