



THOMPSON ISLAND OUTWARD BOUND

WHERE YOU CAN



THOMPSON ISLAND
OUTWARD BOUND
EDUCATION CENTER

EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR
BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS



ABOUT THOMPSON ISLAND OUTWARD BOUND EDUCATION CENTER

WHERE YOU CAN

At Thompson Island Outward Bound we believe every kid can discover the freedom of possibility, as students move from “I can’t” and “I’m not” to “I can.”

Through our partnership with Boston’s public schools, each year thousands of students board the Thompson Island Outward Bound ferry to discover who they are and all they can become, on an island classroom that spans 204 acres of salt marshes, woods, campsites, labs, dormitories, and dozens of challenge structures.

Playing a crucial role in closing the achievement and opportunity gaps facing Boston middle schoolers, our multi-year curriculum features hands-on field science infused with Outward Bound’s unique approach to character development, compassion and service.

Our education programs are provided at no cost to students, funded by a combination of philanthropy and the island’s events business.

A local and national treasure, Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center is located in the Boston Harbor Islands National Park, just one mile from downtown Boston. Since 1833, the island has functioned as a non-profit expanding education and life opportunities for Boston youth.

Thompson Island Outward Bound is part of the national network of 11 Outward Bound USA sites, the mission for which is Changing Lives through Challenge and Discovery. Outward Bound is present in 33 countries.



OUR EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

Extraordinary outcomes require extraordinary programs. Our programs focus on enhancing education and collaboration, building trust and confidence, and teaching conflict resolution and leadership skills for students.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Thompson Island Outward Bound programs are designed and delivered according to four main principles:

LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE

Thompson Island students move through a sequence of engaging, relevant experiences that promote skill mastery and incorporate reflection. This focus on experiential education allows students to learn from struggles and failures, as well as successes.

CHALLENGE AND ADVENTURE

For many students, Thompson Island's outdoor environment of challenge and adventure is unfamiliar and daunting. By moving out of their comfort zone, students discover and develop new skills, confidence and compassion.

SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Highly skilled instructors use group facilitation methods and the natural world to engage students in programs designed to support physical and emotional safety.

STEM EDUCATION

While participating in our field-based programs, students build both social emotional skills and competence in STEM (science, technology, engineering, math). The experiential STEM education curriculum that aligns with MA State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards was designed with input from the UC Berkeley Lawrence Hall of Science's BEETLES program — the nation's premier outdoor science education center.



THOMPSON ISLAND OUTWARD BOUND PROGRAMMING

CONNECTIONS

Our flagship program, Connections, combines hands-on field science with the best of Outward Bound's approach to social emotional learning, leadership, compassion and service. Students can attend Connections during the school year, summer, and/or on backpacking and kayaking expeditions. Many students go on to become Green Ambassadors in high school.



SCHOOL YEAR

We partner with Boston Public Schools to help close the opportunity and achievement gaps by bringing students to Thompson Island every year throughout middle school. By exposing students to unique experiences and a new environment outside their comfort zone, Thompson Island Outward Bound ignites curiosity and allows students to push past their preconceived ideas of what they can achieve.

WHO: Boston Public School students

AGE/GRADE: Middle School

LENGTH: 2 visits per grade per school year lasting 1-3 days at a time

SEASON: Fall and Spring

LOCATION: Thompson Island

Guided by experienced instructors and supported by their teachers, students explore Thompson Island's wide variety of ecosystems from the tide pools to the forests. During hands-on outdoor STEM lessons, kids explore, investigate, and develop their ideas like scientists and foster a sense of their own capabilities. Small group sizes allow students to build meaningful connections with their classmates and makes it possible for instructors to provide support to students when they need it.

The structure of School Year Connections is meant to extend beyond Thompson Island; our Course Directors will be embedded in partner schools to fully engage with the students, teachers, and families.

“Every time my daughter would come home from Thompson Island, she would tell me how she learned about a different part of science and asked me to take her to the library. This program was a blessing.”

—MIREILLE LOUIS, PARENT

SUMMER

Our 5 week summer learning academy program is staffed by a dynamic combination of Thompson Island Outward Bound facilitators, certified Boston Public School middle school teachers, and National Park Service Rangers. The summer program leads students through exciting activities designed to help them grow as scholars, leaders, and scientific-thinkers.

Students spend each morning becoming experts in different ecosystems and organisms in the classroom, and afternoons exploring these concepts through hands-on field activities on the island. When they're not investigating the salt marsh, groups can be found playing team building games, making beach art, and climbing on our ropes course.

Small group sizes help students grow academically with 1-on-1 support from educators, and allow them to build meaningful and lasting relationships with their peers while they collaborate on projects and overcome challenges together. The program provides free transportation, breakfast, lunch, and snacks every day.

WHO: Boston Public School students

AGE/GRADE: Rising 6th and 7th grade

LENGTH: 5 days a week for 5 weeks

SEASON: Summer

LOCATION: Thompson Island





“On Thompson Island it’s the combination of many little moments, where students are given an opportunity to overcome something themselves, that continually tells them, ‘You can do it. It may seem scary and hard, but you can.’”

—CINTHIA COLON, 5TH GRADE
TEACHER, YOUNG ACHIEVERS
SCIENCE AND MATH PILOT SCHOOL

EXPEDITIONS

Every Thompson Island Outward Bound expedition is structured around a main mode of travel – backpacking or sea kayaking. Key elements of each course include outdoor skills acquisition, team-building, social emotional learning curriculum, service opportunities and a final Outward Bound solo experience.

Expeditions provide a supportive atmosphere of safe risk-taking, confidence building, and adventure. Exposed to a variety of new experiences, students explore levels of independence and learn to trust themselves and their peers. Students return home with new insights and lifelong friendships.

WHO: Boston Public School students

AGE/GRADE: Rising 7th and 8th grade

LENGTH: 5-day and 7-day courses

SEASON: Summer

LOCATION: Thompson Island and additional Boston Harbor Islands

GREEN AMBASSADORS

Through a partnership with the National Park Service, Thompson Island Outward Bound provides Boston's public high school students with paid summer employment in the green job sector. Green Ambassadors develop professional skills throughout a three-year summer curriculum that includes environmental science, natural resource and facilities management, and outdoor education.

Green Ambassadors apply STEM skills through hands-on projects led by industry professionals and leaders in the community. These projects help increase their environmental consciousness with the aim of promoting academic interest and life skills. For some of the participants, Green Ambassadors also provides an entrance into the green career sector. This is a paid summer opportunity.

WHO: Boston Public School students

AGE: 15 to 18 years old

LENGTH: 7-week employment that's part of a three-year curriculum

SEASON: Summer

LOCATION: Thompson Island and additional Boston Harbor Islands



“There is more in us than we know. If we can be made to see it, perhaps, for the rest of our lives, we will be unwilling to settle for less.”

— KURT HAHN, FOUNDER OF OUTWARD BOUND



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