



Evidence of Success

VOLUME 5



Closing the Opportunity Gap for Boston's Urban Youth with **Science and Character Development**



THOMPSON ISLAND
OUTWARD BOUND
EDUCATION CENTER

The Problem: A Growing Opportunity Gap

All young people deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential. National research shows that low income urban middle school students are **6,000 hours behind** their middle income peers in opportunities to learn outside the classroom. **Our Connections program plays a crucial role in closing this gap.**



Students who started with low interest in science showed a **17% interest gain** after Thompson Island expeditions in the spring and fall.



We Know What it Takes for Young People to Succeed in Science

A decade of national research has proven that to learn science, young people must first get excited about science and practice it in the real world.

Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center's hands-on science curriculum inspires that interest and engagement.

Our Approach: Expanded Learning on Thompson Island Works for Urban Youth

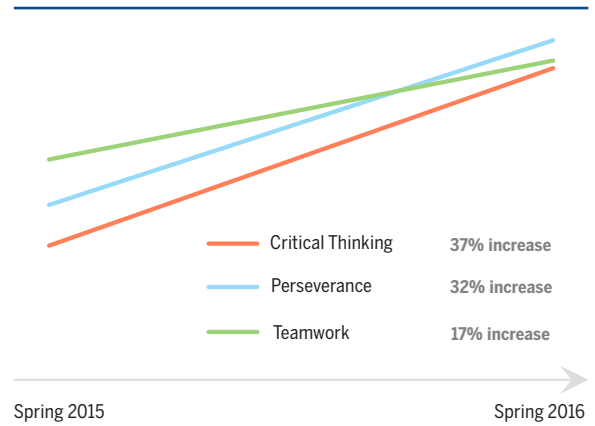
External evaluations of our summer and school-year Connections programming have concluded **Thompson Island is strengthening children's academic performance in ELA, Math, and Science** as well as **Life Skills**. This edition of EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS highlights our science work and its impact on Boston students.



Those same students who discovered their passion for science also made **gains in critical life skills.**

Research Shows Time on Thompson Island Also Builds Critical Life Skills

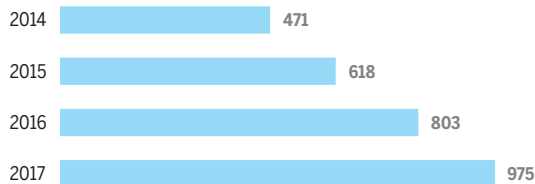
DATA FOR THOMPSON ISLAND STUDENTS WHO ARRIVE WITH LOW INTEREST IN SCIENCE**



Partnerships with researchers and educators at **Harvard Medical School, Wellesley College, UC Berkeley, Boston Public Schools, National Park Service, and Boston After School and Beyond** help us continuously improve our education curriculum.



NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED THROUGH OUR MULTI-YEAR CONNECTIONS PROGRAM*



It is Not a Coincidence... It is Rigorous Work

Our Connections program is a research-based multi-year sequence of learning that:

- Supports Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and National Next Generation Science Standards
- Utilizes Outward Bound’s proven pedagogy for developing emotional competence
- Is **expanding to serve 20% of Boston’s middle school students**, thus impacting practices in the school system as a whole

*This table shows only students in our multi-year program. Over 2,600 BPS students participate in our general Connections programming each year.

**Data is from an evaluation conducted by the PEAR Institute at Harvard Medical School and the National Institute on Out of School Time at the Wellesley Centers for Women. A sample of 200 students on Thompson Island in four grades from three Boston public schools completed surveys between Spring 2015 and Spring 2016. Results shown are for those students within the sample who started with low interest/engagement with science in Spring 2015. Percentage increases are on a 4-point Likert scale and all results are statistically significant.

A Multi-Year Sequence of Expanded Learning

5th Grade	
Fall and Spring	2 days of teambuilding and science exploration
Summer Options	5 weeks of intensive field science and character building
6th Grade	
Fall and Spring	2 to 3 days of science investigation
Summer Options	5 to 7 days of Outward Bound backpacking or sea kayaking expeditions 5 weeks of intensive field science and character building
7th Grade	
Fall and Spring	5 days, 2 overnights of science field work , perseverance , self-discipline , family engagement
Summer Options	5 to 7 days of Outward Bound backpacking or sea kayaking expeditions
8th Grade	
Fall and Spring	3 days, 1 overnight of leadership development and high school readiness
8th Grade Summer and Beyond	
Summer Options	5 to 7 days of Outward Bound backpacking or sea kayaking expeditions 7 weeks of leadership and career readiness summer job program
Year Round	Public speaking and networking opportunities

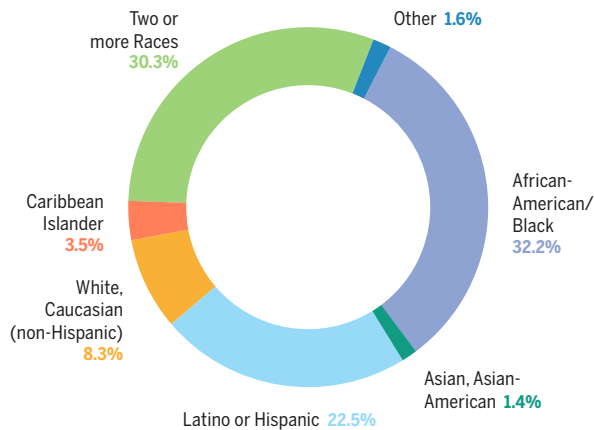
Combining **science learning** with **Outward Bound character building**, our Connections program works with students from Boston's most underserved neighborhoods.

A Focus on Continuous Improvement

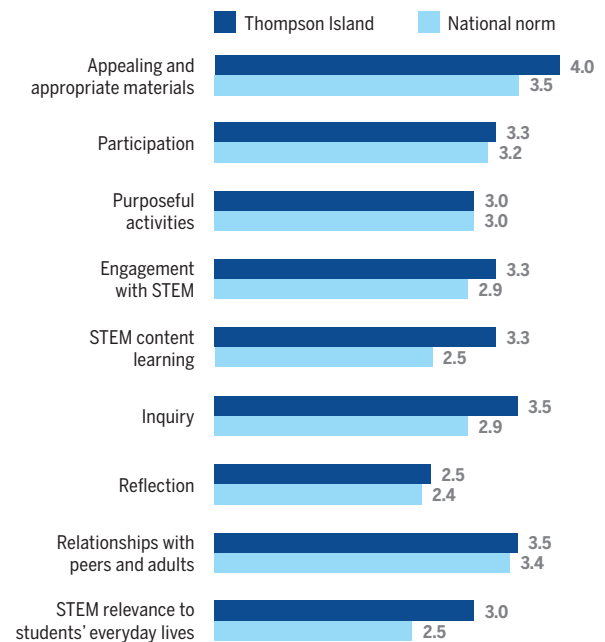
Thompson Island uses evaluation as an ongoing process to discover what is working and what can be done better. As a data-driven organization, we have moved from studying summer learning to also examining year round work.

Thompson Island **exceeds national benchmarks** in nine out of twelve dimensions of program and instructional quality for out-of-school-time Science programs.

STUDENTS SERVED



OVERALL COMPARISON OF THOMPSON ISLAND-BASED PROGRAMS TO NATIONAL BENCHMARKS



Contributing to a National Impact

The focus on science education is growing nationally as a key component of closing the opportunity and achievement gaps.



On the Island

Seven years of research on our Connections program has helped to **develop and set standards in STEM** (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and social-emotional learning.

Our Citywide Role

Thompson Island is one of 11 organizations in a network called **BoSTEM** which aims to give **100% of Boston's middle school students** the opportunity to participate in **more STEM learning experiences**.



Our National Role

Through BoSTEM, Boston is part of the national **STEM Ecosystem Initiative** to scale effective **STEM learning opportunities for all young people**.



Thank You

Thompson Island's Connections program is funded by philanthropy, as well as a wedding and events business that allows visitors to enjoy the Island's majesty while supporting essential education for Boston's youth.

Philanthropic support comes from a generous community of individual and corporate donors, and private and family foundations.



Connections students showing how many times they have studied on the island



About Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center

Providing extraordinary education for Boston youth since 1833, Thompson Island is a local and national treasure in the Boston Harbor Islands, located just one mile from downtown Boston.

Each year, Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center helps thousands of students discover who they are and what they can become amid 204 acres of marshes, beaches, woodlands, and meadows. Our free work for Boston's public schools provides a multi-year sequence of hands-on field science infused with Outward Bound's unique approach to character development – building resilience, compassion, and leadership.

Thompson Island programs for students and teachers demonstrate best practices in experiential education, providing a model to advance public education nationally. From our multi-year STEM curriculum to kayaking expeditions to teen summer jobs, time spent on Thompson Island is expanded learning that works, laying the groundwork for children's success in the classroom, workplace, and community.



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www.thompsonisland.org