Summary Report
An Evaluation of
The Youth Opportunities Program
And The A Mountain Classroom Program

Presented to:
The Appalachian Mountain Club

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NOTES:

Thank you very much to the individual educators, youth workers, youth, and AMC staff who so graciously participated in this evaluation.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) encourages people to get outside to enjoy and appreciate the natural world as the basis for successful conservation and stewardship of the outdoors. AMC youth education programs in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New Jersey collectively reach more than 25,000 children a year.

This evaluation focused on two AMC education programs, the Youth Opportunities Program (YOP), and the A Mountain Classroom Program (AMCR). YOP offers trainings and services that support youth workers to take the youth they work with on outdoor adventure trips. YOP services, such as use of equipment and trip planning advice, help to make the trips more accessible. AMCR offers one to five day environmental educational programs to students in fifth to twelfth grade. The students and their classroom teachers are guided by AMC staff through learning experiences in the mountains of New Hampshire. These two programs have distinct program delivery models, and somewhat distinct program goals. Therefore, they were investigated separately, and this Summary Report presents the results in separate sections.

This was the first systematic program evaluation of YOP or AMCR in nearly a decade. The evaluation focused only on selected elements from each program. The findings in this report represent initial, baseline observations for formative purposes, and should not be taken as comprehensive, summative judgments of YOP or AMCR as a whole.

Findings and Discussion

Below are summaries of the main themes identified for each program, preceded by themes found in a review of relevant academic literature, and followed by a summary of overall conclusions. In addition to the narrative provided in the main body of this Summary Report, a set of more detailed findings was provided to AMC staff in the form of an Appendices document for internal staff use.

Literature Review

Overall, findings from the literature were consistently affirming of the empirical data collected for YOP and AMCR. The review was organized around the following categories:

- Urban-minority youth and environmental/outdoor education programs;
- Environmental and outdoor education designed for white middle class youth;
- Impact of residential environmental and outdoor education on youth;
- Effective residential environmental and outdoor education programs;
- Training and support of youth workers; and
- The development of environmentally responsible behavior.

Additionally, several recommendations were gleaned from the academic literature. These are listed in the main body of this report.
Youth Opportunities Program
Overall, YOP youth workers reported that both they and the youth with whom they work benefited from the YOP program, and best practices reported by youth workers were consistent with the skills emphasized in YOP trainings. Key supporting themes included:

- The YOP program was implemented as intended by the youth workers;
- YOP positively impacted youth workers, both personally and professionally;
- Use of YOP equipment was key to taking youth on outdoor adventure trips;
- YOP positively impacted youth prosocial behavior, and introduced youth to the outdoors;
- Youth enjoyed the outdoor trips and were grateful to YOP;
- YOP participants appreciated the openness and skill of the AMC staff; and
- Reflections on cultural competence in YOP.

Recommendations discussed for YOP include:

- Continue striving to increase the cultural competence of YOP (perhaps including increased outreach to youth agencies, additional trainings in and around Boston, and opportunities for “leaders-in-training”); and
- Continue improving the YOP gear lending services (perhaps including additional locations for equipment, and opportunities for extended borrowing periods).

A Mountain Classroom
Overall, this evaluation found ample and clear evidence that AMCR provided positive, socially enriching experiences that increased the appreciation for and familiarity with the outdoors for urban and rural youth and the adults who work with them. The following themes emerged in support of this overall finding:

- AMCR built group cohesion and increased prosocial behavior for students;
- AMCR built positive student-teacher relationships;
- “Readiness” influenced the degree to which AMCR impacts educator practice;
- AMCR increased student awareness of and appreciation for the natural world; and
- Reflections on cultural competence in AMCR.

Recommendations discussed for AMCR include:

- Target program offerings more specifically to the “readiness” of participants (perhaps including more pre-trip activities, mentoring/partnering programs, and more repeat experiences); and
- Continue striving to increase the cultural competence of AMCR (perhaps including focused recruitment of minority interns and educators, and incentives for minority youth and family use of AMC resources).
Conclusion

This was a baseline, primarily formative evaluation of two distinct programs. There are some reflections and common threads, however, which link the evaluation of YOP and AMCR. Three themes common to the findings from both YOP and AMCR include:

- Participants were overwhelmingly positive about both programs;
- Strongest youth outcomes included increased prosocial behaviors and appreciation of the outdoors; and
- Cultural background affects participant experiences.

Taken together, these three themes seem to suggest a new twist on how to potentially think about the overall program delivery strategy for both YOP and AMCR. In short:

- The concept of “readiness” could become a major organizing frame for future program development.

It could be that it is an appropriate and strategically sufficient position for YOP and AMCR to continue to serve as successful “gateway” programs that specialize in positive experiences that increase awareness of and comfort in the outdoors. This was found to be an exemplary strength of both programs and is probably the highest leverage way to reach the greatest number of participants. Alternatively, either one or both programs could add or augment existing program offerings aimed at audiences with higher levels of readiness for environmentally-oriented behavior change. This might increase the range of types of participants served and allow for deeper outcomes for some participants, though perhaps in lieu of serving greater numbers of participants. This evaluation provided sufficient data to pose but not answer this strategic choice.

“It’s been a real awakening for me. Every time I go into the woods I feel like I learn something about myself, and I tell myself that I want to be more committed to doing stuff like this.”

– Youth worker participant in YOP

“The students come out of it knowing what it’s like to be a field scientist, hiker, classmate, just an individual. They use all of those skills. It is such a valuable thing for them to learn.”

– Educator participant in AMCR
“We had a kid who was really fearful, and he’s really coming out of his shell now. He views himself as the most stupid kid in class. When the group leader asked about something that’s academic, you know, like, ‘why do you think these fish have a problem when the water temperature goes up?’ Nobody else could come up with the answer, but because he thinks outside the box, he came up with an answer that was understandable, and made sense, and the leader was like, you’re absolutely right – that’s a very good reason why.’ And you could see him beam. He was successful. At AMCR he was able to continue and grow, and do all kinds of things, and be a success, and he happens to be learning disabled, so to be successful was a huge deal for him. He still struggles, but he’s definitely beginning to see that his limitations don’t define him.”

– Educator participant in AMCR

“I can think of one particular youth that we took out on a couple of camping trips last summer. This was a young Hispanic male, grew up in the inner city, had never been camping before, had never been hiking before, had never climbed a mountain, had never been on top of a mountain, had never been above the tree line on a mountain, had never been fishing. I mean this kid had absolutely zero experience other than the inner city. And he got all of that in two trips. He got to fish in a wild stream, catch some wild trout and we cooked ‘em up in a frying pan, and he was just completely, completely amazed by the whole experience. On a couple of occasions he said, ‘you know that’s the best thing that’s ever happened to me in my life.’ So, that meant a lot to all of us.”

– Youth worker participant in YOP
INTRODUCTION

The Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) encourages people to get outside to enjoy and appreciate the natural world as the basis for successful conservation and stewardship of the outdoors. The mission of the AMC states that it is “America's oldest nonprofit conservation and recreation organization, promoting the protection, enjoyment, and wise use of the mountains, rivers, and trails of the Appalachian region.” AMC is committed to youth education, operating programs in the Boston area, the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire, and the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area in New Jersey. AMC youth education programs as a whole reach more than 25,000 children a year.

This evaluation focused on two AMC education programs, the Youth Opportunities Program (YOP), and the A Mountain Classroom Program (AMCR). These two programs have distinct program delivery models, and somewhat distinct program goals. Therefore, they were investigated separately, and this document will report the results in separate sections.

Youth Opportunities Program

Since the 1960s, YOP has worked with urban youth agencies to connect at-risk youth with the natural world through hands-on experiences in backcountry environments. These outdoor adventures—which are intended to foster self-esteem, leadership skills, teamwork, and an appreciation for the natural world—are integrated into a broader programmatic context in order to help youth develop vital life skills. YOP uses a “train-the-trainer” model by training youth agency staff in leadership and outdoor skills, which enables them to take their own youth on hiking, camping, backpacking, or paddling wilderness adventures.

YOP is committed to the idea that outdoor adventures are most effective when led by the people who best know the youth, i.e. youth workers from local social service agencies and schools. By providing skills training to youth workers and enabling them to lead the adventures, YOP promotes trips that become a new means for youth leaders to build relationships with the youth they serve. Youth workers are trained through four- and five-day Outdoor Leadership Trainings (OLTs), which take place each spring after an extensive recruiting process during the winter. The objective of the OLT is to prepare youth workers to lead groups on safe, outdoor experiences in a manner that is organized, effective, and challenging. The trainings, conducted by YOP staff and community volunteers, include behavior management, group dynamics, leadership styles, trip planning, accident scene management, basic technical wilderness skills, and environmental education.
When OLT-trained youth workers are ready to take their youth on trips, YOP offers customized support to help ensure the success of these adventures. These services include: free use of outdoor equipment; advanced skills workshops; trip-planning assistance; participation in direct service trips; and subsidized stays at AMC lodging destinations. While many youth agencies recognize that outdoor programming is a powerful youth development tool, running a successful outdoor program often requires more time and resources than many groups can provide independently. YOP’s services and training are designed to fill this need, providing youth groups with the essential supports that make outdoor adventures possible, affordable, and effective.

A Mountain Classroom

For more than three decades, AMC has provided schoolchildren with opportunities to develop a deeper connection to, and a better understanding of, the natural landscape through hands-on experiences in the backcountry. Through “A Mountain Classroom,” AMC’s residential environmental education program, approximately 4,000 New England students and their teachers participate in educational outdoor explorations each year. The program utilizes AMC’s environmental education experience, roadside and backcountry destinations, and commitment to the region, while leveraging schoolteachers’ skills and their special relationships with their students. Together, AMC education staff and schoolteachers use their respective expertise to integrate state curriculum requirements with relevant environmental learning experiences taught in an exciting new environment, away from students’ daily classrooms. The A Mountain Classroom experience, benefiting the lives of urban and rural children alike, aspires to create tomorrow’s environmental stewards.

AMCR participants spend overnights during the school year at one of three locations in the White Mountain National Forest, or at Cardigan Lodge in central New Hampshire. These lodges and huts are each set in inspiring locations, within thousands of acres of protected natural areas. In these settings, A Mountain Classroom hopes to enrich young peoples’ lives by connecting them with nature while increasing the skills and knowledge they need to understand our world’s complex environmental challenges.

Schools choose to participate in AMCR for different reasons. For some schools, the main objective of participation in AMCR is ecological education. For these schools, AMCR curriculum options include biological sciences (forest ecology, watersheds, etc.), earth sciences (mountain weather, geology), and outdoor skills (teambuilding, leadership, outdoor ethics, etc.). Each program emphasizes the development of interpersonal skills and self-esteem while increasing students’ understanding of how humans are interrelated with the natural environment. Some schools participate in the AMCR program with the primary intent of building a sense of community among the teachers and students. In such cases, the program focuses on recreational hikes combined with purposeful team-building...
activities. The beauty and inspiration of the mountain environment serve as a backdrop to personal and community growth. In this setting, students are not the passive recipients of an education with few apparent links to the world around them. Instead, they are the explorers, the researchers, the planners, and the implementers of their own educational program.

**Evaluation Team**

A highly collaborative approach was used for this evaluation. Although outside evaluators from PEER Associates, Inc. took primary leadership in designing and implementing the evaluation, AMC staff provided substantial input, insight, and approval at each stage. PEER Associates is committed to using a multiple-methods, utilization-focused, participatory evaluation process. It is our intention to help organizations better understand their programs and to help them to improve their programs based on evidence of program functioning and outcomes. We also intend to help organizations build their own capacity to reflect on and internally evaluate programs and to help to improve the evaluability of programs.

For this report, Rachel Becker-Klein was the lead field coordinator, with Sharon Plumb as the research associate. Together, they conducted the majority of the planning, data collection, analysis, and writing of this report. Michael Duffin was the Principal Investigator, guiding the evaluation activities and serving as overall editor of the report document. Other core employees of PEER Associates provided additional assistance.

**Report Format and Intended Use**

AMC staff members were committed to using this evaluation to inform program improvement. To that end, data are presented in two different formats, namely:

- *Summary Report.* This report provides a summary explanation of the evaluation methods and findings, with several pages devoted to a presentation of recommendations and a discussion of ways to deepen and extend the experiences these programs already provide to participants. The intended audience is AMC board members, funders, and other programs in the field of outdoor and environmental education.

- *Appendices.* Additional, more detailed data on program outcome findings were provided to AMC staff in a separate document designed for internal staff use only. The internal, informal tone and format of this document allowed for a richer and more substantive use of evaluation data by program managers. It also freed up the Summary Report to be more concisely targeted for use by its intended audience.
“Any young person, regardless of their race or economic circumstances, benefits from exposure to the natural environment. It’s healing for all of us.”  
– Youth worker participant in YOP

“I’m a big fan of this particular program. I think it’s done wonderful things for all of the kids that we’ve had. It’s taught them an appreciation for outdoors, given them an awareness for changing environment around us, an awareness of Leave no Trace, an awareness of waste.”  
– Educator participant in AMCR

“No question, going back from the time that I took the OLT, I think that was the beginning of an influence of who I am, my character, the way I think about leadership.”  
– Youth worker participant in YOP
METHODS

In the summer of 2006, evaluators and AMC staff met to design an overall framework for the evaluation. This included refining the logic models\(^1\) for the YOP and AMCR programs, and identifying and prioritizing the goals for evaluating each program. It became clear during initial planning that even though YOP and AMCR shared some goals in common, they were different enough in context and implementation to warrant framing this effort as two parallel evaluations.

There were commonalities and differences in the evaluation plans for the two programs. Because the YOP program was more complex in structure and based more directly in the primary region of interest (i.e. Boston), slightly more resources were allocated to collecting and reporting YOP data. For both programs, the goal was to get as close to a representative sample of program participants as was logistically feasible. For AMCR, this representation had a particular emphasis on urban populations, to match the focus of the study. For both programs, AMC staff and evaluators decided that it made most sense to collect mostly qualitative data for this first evaluation. The YOP evaluation included development and administration of surveys to youth workers and youth as well.

Additionally, evaluators reviewed existing scholarly and practitioner literature for ideas and insights that could be transferred to AMC programs, and to place AMC programs in a broader context.

The following four evaluation questions initially guided the data collection:

- Which elements of AMC programs appear to most effectively (and measurably) help participants develop environmental stewardship skills?
- How does varying program dosage impact program outcomes?
- Might there be more efficient/effective ways to achieve AMC program outcomes?
- To what extent is cultural competence a factor in these programs?

As the evaluation progressed, the differences in intended outcomes between YOP and AMCR became more important to the analysis. In particular, we realized that YOP did not have the same focus on environmental stewardship outcomes that AMCR did. These differences were reflected in the more refined evaluation questions presented in the findings and discussion section for each program.

\(^1\) A logic model is “map” of a program’s theory of change. It articulates the program’s assumptions about how the program leads toward intended outcomes. Logic models inform evaluation activities because they can help identify suitable areas for focusing inquiry, and provide a reference point for reporting findings.
This evaluation represents the first systematic attempt to collect evaluation data on these two AMC programs in nearly a decade. In order to maximize the benefits of this initial evaluation, both YOP and AMCR focused on only selected program elements from the full range of their program design. YOP prioritized investigation of their services aimed specifically at training urban youth workers. Areas of YOP such as direct service and outreach were not addressed. AMCR focused on the needs and experiences of participants from urban settings, with a particular emphasis on schools that bring their students in the fall as opposed to the winter or spring. Thus, the findings in this report represent initial, baseline observations for formative purposes. They should not be taken as comprehensive, summative judgments of YOP or AMCR as a whole.

Findings were based on data collected from the following sources:

- **Youth Opportunities Program (YOP)**
  - Surveys of 51 youth workers
  - Surveys of 51 youth participants
  - Individual interviews with 23 youth workers
  - 6 focus groups with a total of 51 youth participants
  - In depth conversations with 3 participant consultants\(^2\) to interpret and analyze findings and instruments through a cultural competence lens

- **A Mountain Classroom (AMCR)**
  - 3 focus groups with 10 educators
  - Phone interviews with an additional 10 educators
  - 3 focus groups with a total of 30 students (2 Boston schools, 1 rural school)
  - Conversations with 2 participant consultants about cultural competence of survey and interview instruments

- **Targeted Literature Review**
  - Website review of more than 20 programs similar to AMCR, and one or two most similar to YOP
  - Website and library search for peer reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and books
  - Detailed review and analysis of 42 relevant articles
  - Personal communication with program managers from two YOP-like programs

\(^2\) The cultural and ethnic identity of the evaluation staff did not closely reflect the identities of most program participants. Thus, “participant consultants” were hired for a modest honorarium to review instruments for potential cultural barriers, and then to engage with evaluation staff in analyzing and interpreting data and findings. Specific participant consultants were initially recommended by AMC staff as likely to be interested, capable, and available to provide in depth insight into the cultural dimensions of the evaluation process and products.
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section first presents findings from the literature review, then introduces empirical data from each program, with YOP and AMCR presented separately.

Literature Review Findings and Discussion

The Youth Opportunities Program (YOP) and The A Mountain Classroom Programs (AMCR) requested a literature review to augment their 2006-2007 program evaluation. Literature review questions were narrowed to include the following strands of inquiry:

1. What are some useful concepts for residential ecology, outdoor adventure program staff, and youth workers to consider in order to address the unique needs of urban, at risk, and minority youth when developing and delivering outdoor programs?
2. What are some key ways that residential environmental education programs (and/or outdoor adventure programs) impact environmental attitudes, behaviors, and youth development?
3. What are some best practices for training and supporting youth workers?

At the broadest level, this review of academic literature indicated that urban and minority children often come to outdoor education with less experience and more anxieties about nature than their White, middle-class peers. Yet, several studies also suggested that affirming early experiences of the outdoors, like those offered by YOP and AMCR, comprise a critical step along the path toward developing environmental stewardship.

The following major themes and categories emerged from this literature review:

- Urban-minority youth and environmental/outdoor education programs;
- Environmental and outdoor education designed for white middle class youth;
- Impact of residential environmental and outdoor education on youth;
- Effective residential environmental and outdoor education programs
- Training and support of youth workers; and
- The development of environmentally responsible behavior.

Urban-minority youth and environmental/outdoor education programs

The amount of time that children spend outdoors has decreased significantly in the past thirty years (Louv, 2006). They are often afraid of the natural world, and lack the skills and resources to engage in the natural world in safe and meaningful ways (Bixler, 1994). Urban and minority youth have an even greater disadvantage than their rural, typically white, middle-class peers. This discrepancy could be due to several factors, including the perception of outdoor adventure as a white activity, discrimination, and feelings of marginalization (Carr, 1993; Chavez, 1991).

Yet, despite a lack of exposure to natural settings, urban minority youth share an interest in caring for the natural world. One study found that most young people, regardless of gender, race, or economic background, are concerned about the environment, though what their main
concerns are do differ. Disadvantaged youth are typically less concerned about issues that are further afield from their home (e.g. protecting plants and animals), and more concerned with issues close to home, such as access to good drinking water and lead poisoning (NEETF 1994).

**Environmental and outdoor education designed for white middle class youth**

Environmental and outdoor education typically has not been developed with urban youth in mind. Outdoor leadership development and environmental education curricula do not frequently reach across racial lines. Warren & Russek (1997) and Roberts (1996) suggest some reasons for the lack of “social and cultural competence” in the outdoor education field:

- Environmental education curricula and outdoor adventure programs are often developed to match the background, and learning styles of a student who has some level of experience with the natural world.
- Leadership training has been designed around a universal model, devoid of the experiences, values, and cultural norms of women and minorities.
- There is minimal research into how low-income, women, and racial minorities respond to or become involved in outdoor activities.

Environmental and outdoor education programs can increase their impact on urban and minority youth by designing curricula and training staff to understand, and build upon the experiences, attitudes, and knowledge of urban and minority youth. A ‘one type fits all’ approach does not tend to work for programs that seek to promote pro-social behaviors and environmental stewardship with both urban and rural youth.

**Impact of residential environmental and outdoor education on youth**

Outdoor education programs often have specific challenges and activities (e.g. hiking, group games, and ropes course) designed to build participants’ confidence, leadership skills, and group cohesion. Much of the research on outdoor programs is devoted to changes in prosocial behavior. Environmental education programs may use some of the same activities as part of outdoor education programs, but with a greater focus on increasing environmental knowledge, attitudes, and/or behavior. Because it is easier to measure, the majority of environmental education research has focused on changes in students’ attitudes towards and knowledge about the environment, and few studies focus on results of participant behavior (Zelezny, 1999).

A review of dozens of articles revealed that the research and outcomes of residential environmental education and outdoor education programs often correlate directly with program goals and design.

- Outdoor adventure programs frequently have a positive impact on participants’ self-confidence and leadership skills.
- Residential environmental education programs can, but do not always, impact students environmental attitude and knowledge.
Effective residential environmental and outdoor education programs

Effective residential environmental programs have been shown to significantly impact students’ environmental awareness and knowledge. However, evidence is mixed regarding the impact of residential environmental programs on students’ behavior (Dettman-Easler & Pease, 1999, Zelezny, 1999). Fien & Tilbury (2001) conclude that there is limited research that determines which specific elements of successful residential environmental education program elements lead to the greatest increase in student’s environmental knowledge or behavior.

Training and support of youth workers

Numerous outdoor adventure programs exist that focus on at-risk, often urban youth. Few programs, however, train youth workers to lead trips. Two programs were found that had similar elements to YOP. PEER staff interviewed the Executive Directors of Boojum Institute out of Pioneertown, California, and Big City Mountaineers out of Denver, Colorado.

Like many outdoor/environmental education programs, Boojum’s resources are stretched. They would like to do more to meet the particular needs of urban and at-risk youth. They intentionally take several steps to attempt to be more “culturally competent” and meet their program goals:

- Provide on-site visits to youth agencies and schools;
- Hire minority staff;
- Train staff specifically to work with urban minority youth;
- Work with schools and agencies to design programs to meet youth needs;
- Focus activities on specific intended outcomes;
- Include service-learning;
- Offer repeat visits; and
- Group youth so as to bridge cultural gaps.

In 2005 Big City Mountaineers (BCM) evaluated program impacts on youth using the Search Institute’s “40 Developmental Assets” youth development framework. Results indicated a positive impact of the program on participants’ personal values, social skills, and personal identity. The program may have also increased their feeling of being supported by others. The evaluation did not indicate which program elements were most critical in achieving program goals. Yet, the following program elements are unique to BCM, and may be adaptable to other programs as well:

- The program has a set (but flexible) curriculum: Trust, Endure, Achieve, Meaning (TEAM);
- Time is deliberately allocated to discuss and reflect upon how participants’ will transfer what they have learned to their home lives;
- Each adult and youth participant has a specific role and tasks on the trip (e.g. cook, trail scribe, photographer, etc.);
- The program is led by trained volunteers, skilled in outdoor leadership; and
- A one to one ratio of adults to youth is ensured.
The development of environmentally responsible behavior

Determining what activities, information, and processes result in positive environmental behavior is difficult and imprecise work. Despite this imprecision, some recent studies have indicated that early and repeated childhood experiences in wilderness settings with caring adults, are the most critical factors in creating environmentally aware and responsible adults (Chawla, 2001; Wells & Lekies, 2006).

Schneider & Cheslock (2003) investigated theories used to develop intervention programs aimed at behavior change. They concluded that effective behavior change practices:

- Target the intended behavior;
- Create programs and activities that are geared towards the intended audience;
- Foster belief in abilities and build self-efficacy;
- Use multiple strategies to reach diverse individuals;
- Use prompts or tools to trigger individuals to act; and
- Direct program resources so that participants have knowledge of issues, the skills and confidence to act, and belief that their actions are worthwhile.

Another conceptual framework that can help to understand behavioral change is the “Stages of Change” framework. This model for understanding intentional behavior change emerged from the field of behavioral psychology (Prochaska, et al., 1992) and describes the ways that individuals and groups progress through a series of stages of readiness in relation to the intended behavior change: pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. According to stages of change research, behavior patterns do not change all at once. Rather, change happens in increments. This is especially important to keep in mind as environmental and outdoor education staff design programs intended to influence behavior.

Literature Review Recommendations

The following list describes practices that were gleaned from research on residential environmental and/or outdoor education programs seeking to increase environmental awareness, improve environmental attitudes and behaviors, and/or impact pro-social behavior.

- Design programs geared towards participants’ backgrounds.
- Provide ample time for participants to acclimate to the outdoors.
- Offer activities and an atmosphere that ensures that physical, emotional, and social needs are met.
- Develop a curriculum that is learner-centered.
- Provide activities that have concrete objectives for students to accomplish.
- Include social and team building activities.
- Design programs to achieve specific intended outcomes.
- Provide classroom teachers with pre- and post- activities.
- Combine activities that deliver content with service-learning activities.
- Combine in-class and outdoor activities and field trips.

3 Outdoor programs specifically geared towards self-efficacy and other pro-social behaviors have greater impact on self-efficacy than environmental education programs that are designed to impact participant attitudes and behaviors.
YOP Findings and Discussion

A more fine-grained analysis of YOP outcomes led to the following revised evaluation questions:

- To determine in what ways YOP impacts youth worker practice.
- To determine in what ways YOP impacts student prosocial behaviors and environmental awareness.
- To determine in what ways cultural context affects program process and results.
- To provide insight into which elements of YOP are most effective in meeting program objectives.
- To provide program staff with suggestions on program additions or changes that will help them to more effectively meet the needs of program participants, in particular when working with urban populations.

Overall, YOP youth workers reported that both they and the youth with whom they work benefited from the YOP program. Networking and participation in the YOP community, as well as use of YOP resources were of particular benefit to youth workers. Youth reported enjoying their trips with YOP youth workers, and most were eager to have more outdoor experiences.

The following themes were identified in an integrated analysis of the interview and survey data:

- The YOP program was implemented as intended by the youth workers;
- YOP positively impacted youth workers, both personally and professionally;
- Use of YOP equipment was key to taking youth on outdoor adventure trips;
- YOP positively impacted youth prosocial behavior, and introduced youth to the outdoors;
- Youth enjoyed the outdoor trips and were grateful to YOP;
- YOP participants appreciated the openness and skill of the AMC staff; and
- Reflections on cultural competence in YOP.

The YOP program was implemented as intended by the youth workers

“Prepare, prepare, prepare!”
“Prepare, prepare, prepare!”

“When in doubt, be conservative. Safety is the key.”

– Youth worker participants in YOP

Youth workers reported utilizing a wide range of trainings and services offered by YOP. In fact, youth workers who reported using more of the YOP services and trainings were also more likely to report leading a greater number of trips. This is clearly consistent with YOP’s goal of enabling youth workers to take youth on outdoor trips.
Most youth workers surveyed reported leading multiple youth trips per year. The average number of trips led by youth workers in the preceding twelve months was 5.6 (with a median of 2.0). When youth workers were asked to report the total number of trips led over all the years since they had been connected with YOP, day hikes had the highest number of total trips led (average = 14.8 days total), followed by camping (average = 5.9 days total) and backpacking (average = 4.3 days total).

Table C1. Summary of Descriptive Data for 2006-2007 YOP Youth Worker Surveys

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<td>Number of trips led in the last 12 months</td>
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<td>Type of YOP trips led</td>
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<td>Day hiking</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camping</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>0-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backpacking</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>0-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canoeing</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>0-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowshoeing</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>0-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock climbing</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>0-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-country skiing</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>0-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Skiing/snowboarding, white water rafting, ropes course)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>0-51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = sample size; X = mean; M = median; SD = standard deviation

Additionally, best practices reported by youth workers were consistent with those practices emphasized in YOP trainings. The practices youth workers mentioned centered on planning and being prepared for outdoor adventure trips. When asked in the surveys about key lessons youth workers had learned while leading trips, 62% reported the importance of preparing for trips. This preparation included bringing proper equipment, food, a carefully researched route, and being organized. Other advice included letting kids be involved in planning, and creating opportunities for youth to take on leadership roles. Safety was also a large concern, with youth workers cautioning to prepare for risky situations.
YOP positively impacted youth workers, both personally and professionally

“Since YOP, I spent a ton more time backpacking, camping. I am on a quest to go to all of the national parks backcountry. I would have never thought of doing that before [YOP].”
– Youth worker participant in YOP

Most of the YOP youth workers interviewed spoke quite appreciatively of the personal and professional benefits of being involved in the program. They discussed how YOP provided access to a professional community which connected them to new places and resources, and helped them stay energized and motivated in their jobs. In addition, several youth workers referred to the positive impact that YOP trainings have had on their self-confidence and leadership styles. In fact, mean scores for youth worker ratings of their use of leadership styles learned through YOP were very high (mean = 3.7, on a 4 point scale, with 4 as the highest rating, see Figure 1).

Use of YOP equipment was key to taking youth on outdoor adventure trips

“Having the equipment of backpacks and water bottles and outdoor clothing for the overnights were all just absolutely necessary for me to pull off a camping trip.”
– Youth worker participant in YOP

Most youth workers reported using YOP equipment as one of the most advantageous services that YOP provides. Borrowing equipment was one of the most frequently used YOP services. Over two-thirds of youth workers surveyed (29 out of 51, or 68%, see Figure 2) and nearly every youth worker interviewed cited use of YOP equipment as one of the most important services that YOP provided. Use of equipment was unambiguously central to youth workers’ connection to YOP, and was described often as one of the key enablers for taking youth on any outdoor adventure trips.

Although use of YOP gear was one of the biggest draws for youth workers, many of them also expressed notable frustration and discouragement about the process of borrowing and returning the equipment. The most frequently mentioned challenge was insufficient parking. Another common challenge was the inefficiency of returning equipment that was scheduled to be borrowed again shortly for a subsequent trip. Youth workers did offer some suggestions about how YOP might revise the gear lending system:

- Provide additional stashes of equipment (e.g. in western MA, White Mountains, etc.).
- Offer seasonal borrowing of equipment.
YOP positively impacted youth prosocial behavior, and introduced youth to the outdoors

“‘It’s funny. I see it when these kids are big, tough guys when they’re in school or on the bus or in trouble, but when you get them outside, they’re not so tough anymore.’”

– Youth worker participant in YOP

Youth workers reported that the primary ways YOP had impacted youth were on prosocial behaviors, such as trust and confidence. There was also frequent mention of the importance of helping youth become more comfortable in nature, often for the first time. In surveys, youth workers were asked for three ways that YOP had impacted youth with whom they work. The most common answers were:

- **Prosocial affect and behavior.** This category included opportunities for youth to learn about themselves, allowing relationship and team-building, and teaching them to work together to accomplish common goals. In addition, youth workers reported that the trips built self-confidence, self-esteem, leadership, and trust in the youth. Finally, youth workers felt that outdoor adventure trips taught youth problem-solving skills, and improved empathy and compassion.

- **Introduced and exposed youth to outdoors and nature.** Another main category that youth workers cited in impacting youth was connecting to nature. Getting away from the intensity of the city, and offering youth a chance to relax in the outdoors in a way that they had not previously been exposed to was seen as an important effect of YOP.

- **Challenged them to do something new.** Youth workers also reported the importance of providing youth with an opportunity to encounter and overcome a challenge, offering youth a real sense of accomplishment. This involved stretching the limits of the youth’s comfort zones and often providing youth with a different perspective on their own challenges.

A few youth workers described ways in which YOP-supported trips provided special benefits to youth who were struggling in various other aspects of their lives, such as socially or academically. In these cases, evaluation interviews became a vehicle for powerful stories about dramatic, life-changing experiences for youth. One potential explanation for this benefit is that the outdoors can provide a safe environment for youth to drop some of their inhibitions and be more open to their own emotions and relationships with others. Many youth workers interviewed discussed how outdoor adventure trips provided an opportunity to improve relationships between adults and youth as well as amongst the youth themselves.

Youth enjoyed the outdoor trips and were grateful to YOP

“I would like to say thank you and that if it wasn't for YOP I would never have gone hiking. Also that I had lots of fun and that I would like to go on many trips.”

– Youth participant in YOP
Most youth reported having fun on the trips they took with their agencies. In both focus groups and surveys, the youth described the outdoor trips they went on as fun and interesting. In the focus groups, they were eager to discuss all of the interesting new experiences they had, the sense of accomplishment they got from the trips, and how much they wanted to go on repeat trips.

Many youth also were also quite appreciative of YOP services. In particular, youth acknowledged the role that borrowing equipment had played in their trips. In the focus groups, almost all groups mentioned the importance of having appropriate gear if they were to lead their own trips.

**YOP participants appreciated the openness and skill of the AMC staff**

“YOP does such a good job of always looking at ways it can improve and trying new things and going after new programming and new funding and offering other trainings and looking at how effective their trainings are.”

– Youth worker participant in YOP

Many youth workers interviewed were impressed with the organization of YOP, and the continual striving of the program to improve itself. The youth workers talked about how the YOP staff was responsive to their needs and concerns, and frequently sought out constructive criticism from the youth workers. In addition, they described AMC staff being organized enough to then act on suggestions from the youth workers. Youth workers expressed appreciation and admiration for the dedication, knowledge, skill, and helpfulness of the AMC staff, especially for trip planning and preparation. One area of improvement suggested was to increase the cultural diversity of the staff.

**Reflections on cultural competence in YOP**

“We work primarily with urban youth of color, and with our career program, it affects them in the sense that there aren’t a lot of people of color working in the industry.”

– Youth worker participant in YOP

Cultural competence is a multi-dimensional construct that basically boils down to treating everyone fairly despite differences in race, class, gender, language, age, sexual orientation, or other characteristics along which social groups or cultures differ. During evaluation interviews, most participant responses tended to focus more narrowly on the ethnicity dimension of cultural competence. The evidence for the cultural competence in the YOP context that emerged during this evaluation reflected the complexity of the issue and did not warrant a single, clear, summative judgment. Overall, though, it did seem that the challenges facing YOP were mostly driven by factors operating at a larger societal and industry wide scale. Further, there was evidence that YOP was taking genuine steps to consciously address cultural competence challenges in multiple ways.

*Evaluation process.* Surveys and interview guides were designed to address and accommodate cultural issues. “Participant consultants” helped evaluation staff analyze and interpret findings. The literature review specifically focused on urban
youth with diverse backgrounds. The literature review and feedback from participant consultants consistently confirmed that the cultural background of participants in these types of programs is an important factor affecting participant experience.

- **Challenges with recruitment and use of services.** Recruiting staff of color is an acute challenge in the field of outdoor and environmental education in general, and YOP does not appear to be an exception. 71% of youth workers surveyed identified as White, whereas most of the youth they work with are not. When asked, YOP youth workers were sympathetic to YOP’s challenge of recruiting non-White youth workers. Challenges appear to extend beyond recruitment to program implementation as well. Within the YOP youth worker population surveyed for this evaluation, White youth workers were more likely to take advantage of YOP services than non-White youth workers. White youth workers surveyed reported: leading more total trips (average of 46 total trips led per White youth worker, versus an average of 5 total trips led per non-White youth worker); taking more hours of trainings (average of 270 hours versus 102 hours); and accessing more services and connections (average of 900 total hours of services accessed versus 150 hours of services accessed).

- **Culture shock.** Many youth workers noted that urban youth experience a kind of culture shock in spending time outdoors because they have to learn to live without modern amenities for a few days.

- **General approaches to working with diverse populations.** The groups of youth that YOP youth workers work with are diverse in many ways, including race and culture. This creates a general need for flexibility and custom-tailoring of programming. During evaluation interviews, both White and non-White youth workers reported being able to adapt the skills and ideas learned through YOP to the particular needs of their groups. This is broadly consistent with a culturally competent ethic.

**Summary of YOP program strengths, challenges, and recommendations**

The following table provides a summary sketch of program strengths and challenges gleaned from analyzing interviews with youth and youth workers. The table also includes a list of recommendations compiled from interviews, analysis, discussion amongst PEER staff and AMC staff, and the literature. Some of these recommendations address factors that YOP already does (represented by an asterisk - *). These could be interpreted as affirmation of program elements not included in the scope of this evaluation and/or as areas to consider building upon even further.
### Table C2. Summary Sketch of YOP Programs, Strengths, Challenges, and Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Elements</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>YOP Program Implementation</strong></td>
<td>✓ YOP program implemented as intended: youth workers used all aspects of YOP ✓ Best practices reported by youth workers centered around planning and safety, two of the main concepts that YOP emphasized</td>
<td>✓ Youth workers did report some barriers to leading trips, such as time and organizational support ✓ Some youth workers did not take full advantage of all of the YOP services that might have been useful</td>
<td>✓ Focus recruitment on youth agencies (in addition to individual youth workers) to encourage <em>organizational</em> level support for outdoor trips for youth ✓ Be even more proactive about providing youth workers YOP services, such as pre-trip planning services*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YOP Trainings</strong></td>
<td>✓ Increase in self-confidence of youth workers ✓ Enhanced leadership skills of the youth workers</td>
<td>✓ Barriers to attending trainings included time and organizational support</td>
<td>✓ Provide local OLT for those youth workers who have less time or organizational support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YOP Community</strong></td>
<td>✓ Youth workers felt connected to the YOP community ✓ Youth workers feeling energized, not stagnating ✓ Learning from other youth workers</td>
<td>✓ Feeling part of the YOP community was more likely for novices in outdoor experiences, and contingent upon subsequent trainings</td>
<td>✓ Provide more opportunities for networking between novice youth workers and those who have had more outdoor experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YOP Equipment</strong></td>
<td>✓ Borrowing equipment was one of the most frequently cited services ✓ YOP equipment enabled many youth to take trips</td>
<td>✓ Many youth workers expressed frustration at the lack of parking and having only one difficult-to-access equipment room on Beacon Hill</td>
<td>✓ Provide additional stashes of gear in places more accessible to youth workers ✓ Let groups borrow gear for an entire season*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YOP Cultural Competence</strong></td>
<td>✓ YOP works with a diverse group of youth agencies and youth ✓ YOP helps urban youth become more familiar with and appreciative of the outdoors ✓ YOP is actively working to increase its cultural competence</td>
<td>✓ Challenge to meet differing needs of diverse participants ✓ Urban, ethnic minority youth felt culture shock on outdoor trips, compounded by relative lack of cultural diversity in NH ✓ Most YOP youth workers were White ✓ White youth workers were more likely than non-Whites to make use of YOP services</td>
<td>✓ Provide increased local options for outdoor experiences* ✓ Increase outreach to non-White youth workers* ✓ Offer additional trainings in and around the city to attract more diverse urban youth workers ✓ Provide opportunities for youth to be more actively involved in trainings and leading trips, perhaps as apprentices of some sort</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
YOP Recommendations

The following recommendations represent evaluator inferences that are rooted in the empirical data of this evaluation, but also draw subjectively upon evaluator experience with other relevant programs, organizations, and research. Rather than an exhaustively comprehensive list, these are simply the recommendations that struck evaluators as most important and/or potentially feasible.

Continue striving to increase the cultural competence of YOP

YOP works with youth workers who reach youth from many different backgrounds. The large amount of time and energy YOP currently spends reaching out to diverse communities probably contributed directly to the success in cultural competence reported by participants in this evaluation. However, not all the direct services and outreach are taken full advantage of by the youth worker community. Perhaps even more importantly, YOP is swimming upstream in strong societal currents that tend to result in a lack of cultural diversity in outdoor and environmental fields. Thus, to the extent that cultural equity and competence are core values for YOP and AMC, continued progress will probably require disproportionately high investment of even more time and energy for outreach. Some suggestions that could increase accessibility and visibility of the YOP program to a broader range of youth workers include:

- **Further increase outreach to youth agencies.** One interviewee suggested including reaching out to additional youth organizations that might have a more diverse youth worker population. Although YOP already employs this strategy, the scale of the challenge may well require even more investment. Further, focusing recruitment at the agency/organizational level might increase recruitment of non-White youth workers into the YOP community by focusing most strongly on agencies with a more diverse staff.

- **Offer additional trainings in and around the city to attract urban youth workers.** Two of the barriers to leading trips that youth workers reported in this evaluation were time and their own anxieties and discomfort about the outdoors. Local trainings could potentially address both of these issues. Since they would be closer, trainings around Boston would take less time for youth workers. Also, youth workers might feel more comfortable spending time in the outdoors in a more familiar setting than the mountains of New Hampshire.

- **Provide opportunities for youth to become involved in programs as leaders-in-training.** One way to increase the numbers of minority adults who lead outdoor trips is to provide earlier opportunities for training, support, and ultimately recruitment of youth leaders. YOP currently offers limited youth leadership trainings in the hopes of creating future leaders, but this could potentially be expanded in scope and rigor. For instance, offering different chances for youth to serve as apprentices to more experienced outdoor leaders could be one way to augment their ability and inclination to be outdoor
leaders when they get older themselves. The existence of these youth leaders could also become a way for outdoor programming in general, and AMC programs in particular, to be seen as socially acceptable by the broader networks of youth in urban settings. Extending networks, building reputation, and strengthening relationships within peer groups are essential vectors in the diffusion of any social behavior (Rogers, 2003), perhaps especially so for urban youth.

**Continue improving the YOP gear lending services**

As noted in this evaluation report, the use of borrowed equipment from YOP was one of the most important and appreciated YOP services reported by youth workers. At the same time, there was also a high level of frustration expressed by some youth workers in regards to the process of borrowing the equipment. In particular, parking was extremely limited at the AMC office, making it very challenging to load up the gear, and requiring several trips back and forth, sometimes at quite a distance, to get the equipment loaded up. Youth workers did have some recommendations for improving the system:

- **Offer additional stashes of equipment in places more accessible to youth workers.** For some youth workers who did not work in Boston proper, even getting into downtown Boston was quite a challenge, so providing equipment pick up options at other locations would be much more convenient.

- **Create more opportunities for groups to borrow gear for extended periods.** Some youth workers who take youth out quite regularly reported that it became very tedious to pick up and drop off the gear in between each outing. Currently, under special circumstances YOP does do seasonal lending of equipment. Expanding or systematizing this option could alleviate some of the stress and inconvenience of obtaining and returning equipment for some groups.
AMCR Findings and Discussion

A more fine-grained analysis of AMCR outcomes led to the following revised evaluation questions:

- To determine in what ways AMCR impacts educator practice;
- To determine in what ways AMCR impacts student environmental stewardship and prosocial behaviors;
- To determine in what ways cultural context affects program process/results;
- To provide insight into which elements of AMCR are most effective in meeting program objectives; and
- To provide program staff suggestions on program additions or changes that will help them to more effectively meet the needs of participating groups, in particular when working with urban populations.

Overall, this evaluation found ample and clear evidence that AMCR provided positive, socially enriching experiences that increased the appreciation for and familiarity with the outdoors for urban and rural youth and the adults who work with them. Although less evidence was found to support longer term program outcomes related to environmental stewardship, a review of academic literature demonstrated that affirming early experiences of the outdoors, like those offered by AMCR, comprise a critical step along the path toward developing environmental stewardship.

The following themes were identified in an integrated analysis of the interview and focus group data:

- AMCR built group cohesion and increased prosocial behavior;
- AMCR built positive student-teacher relationships;
- “Readiness” influenced the degree to which AMCR impacts educator practice;
- AMCR increased student awareness of and appreciation for the natural world; and
- Reflections on cultural competence in AMCR.

### AMCR built group cohesion and increased prosocial behavior

“Students that attend AMCR together become extremely bonded and those relationships last. A lot of the kids walk away having a best friend. That’s very important at their age.” – Educator participant in AMCR

Nearly all of the educators said that AMCR’s greatest impact was on students’ prosocial behavior. In fact, 65% of educators claimed that the primary reason they chose to take students on an AMCR trip was to build group relations between students, and between students and educators. AMCR provided students the forum, the leadership, the activities, and the ‘place’ to gain confidence, learn to work with one another, and practice leadership skills. AMCR seemed to be particularly powerful for those students who had not had as much academic success in the classroom setting.
Educators also relayed that beginning the school year with a trip to the White Mountains was an ideal way to cultivate a sense of community in their classrooms. Students reached out to one another, educators and students formed lasting and deep relationships built on trust and acceptance. It is worth noting that groups participating during the spring may participate in AMCR with different goals (e.g. as a culmination of a particular ecology unit) and hence result in different outcomes.

After AMCR trips, educators reported seeing a lasting boost in students’ self-esteem as they translated the metaphor of the hike-up-the-mountain to their daily lives. Educators shared numerous stories of how students’ increased self-confidence, group cohesion, and positive teacher/student relations set the tone for the remainder of the year and often many years down the road.

**AMCR built positive student-teacher relationships**

“We got to see more of the fun side of the teachers. At school we don’t know that they’re fun because they’re…teachers. At AMCR we got to play games with them and just do normal stuff that we would do with our parents. It was really fun.”

– Student participant in AMCR

On the AMCR trips, the majority of educators and students reported developing meaningful relationships that lasted into and far beyond the school year. Being outdoors, hiking a mountain or fording a stream as a group forged bonds and developed trust between generations and across power differentials and shrunk the authority figure/gap. Students enjoyed seeing teachers with their “hair down” and enthusiastically shared how teachers who they thought were “mean” or “strict” were “fun” to be with. This increased trust in educators gave many students the courage to interact more frequently with school staff.

Not only were students more comfortable around their teachers, but educators often changed their views of and relationships with their students. Some educators came to see students as leaders who they had once labeled as quiet, low achievers, or troublesome before AMCR. Many educators noted that this change in perception of students positively impacted the quantity and quality of work and types of relationships they believe students were capable of.

“Readiness” influenced the degree to which AMCR impacts educator practice

“I teach math, so the actual lessons at AMCR don’t apply.”

– Educator participant in AMCR

“I borrowed some of the team building activities that the guide did.”

– Educator participant in AMCR with extensive outdoor experience

Those educators who had more personal outdoor experience, expressed more interest in natural history, and taught science were more likely to attribute AMCR with a change in their teaching practice. They were, in essence, more ‘ready’ to use
the AMCR experience as an extension of their own curriculum. It was easier for them to see how to generate classroom activities that were linked to those done on the trip. Approximately half of the teachers stated that they had some or extensive personal experience hiking, camping, or enjoying natural history pursuits. These teachers were more likely to incorporate the ecological concepts introduced in AMCR into their classroom curriculum. They chose to do AMCR because it augmented and reinforced ecological concepts taught in the classroom.

Many of these educators shared that AMCR did impact both their curriculum and their teaching styles. Some examples included incorporating games and nature journals into the curriculum more frequently, as well as taking more advantage of teachable moments. In addition, several educators claimed that they used many of the leadership skills they saw modeled by AMCR staff.

On the other hand, educators that were less ‘ready’ did not tend to incorporate ecological concepts or teaching styles seen on the AMCR trip into their curriculum.

**AMCR increased student awareness of and appreciation for the natural world**

“Nature is pretty wonderful. There’s lots of stuff you can do. You could spend like a whole day outside, and you can just stand there and look around.”

– Student participant in AMCR

All of the educators stated that AMCR exposed students to a “whole new world” of learning about and enjoying the wilderness. For many urban students, AMCR provided a first, and possibly one of the few, true ‘wilderness’ experiences that they have had. AMCR offered a safe, supportive environment in which students could explore the natural world. Students and educators were overwhelmingly positive about the experience, and said that students learned plenty of new information and gained new perspectives about the natural world and the role of humans in the natural world during the trip.

Students, especially most of the urban students, had many “firsts” on the trip, including: climbing mountains, fording streams, scooping for insects, and going on a night hike. Educators believed that these seeds undoubtedly contributed to students’ continued and increased desire for exploring natural settings, learning natural history, and pursuing outdoor activities, all critical steps in developing an environmental ethic.

Nearly all of the students, regardless of whether they were from the city or the country, repeatedly mentioned during focus groups how much they enjoyed their time at AMC and wanted to go back. The hike, the games, the time in the dorms, the food, and the leaders were listed over and over again as favorite aspects of the trip. Nearly all of the students said that they would like to go back to the mountains and do more with AMCR.
Reflections on cultural competence in AMCR

“AMCR does really well with [cultural competence], but the staff is entirely white. It would be good for them to have staff of color…It makes [students of color] feel more at home or think about that as an area they might want to get more into.”

– Educator participant in AMCR

Cultural competence is a multi-dimensional construct that basically boils down to treating everyone fairly despite differences in race, class, gender, language, age, sexual orientation, or other characteristics along which social groups or cultures differ. During evaluation interviews, most participant responses tended to focus more narrowly on the ethnicity dimension of cultural competence. The evidence for the cultural competence in the AMCR context that emerged during this evaluation reflected the complexity of the issue and did not warrant a single, clear, summative judgment. Overall, though, it did seem that the challenges facing AMCR were mostly driven by factors operating at a larger societal and industry wide scale. Further, most educators reported that AMCR staff members were respectful of students’ backgrounds and equitable and non-discriminatory in how they treated program participants.

When asked about AMCR’s cultural competence, several educators did note that they would like to see more minority leaders and guides in order to provide positive role models for people of diverse cultural backgrounds. Minority students would then see more clearly that outdoor recreation and careers in the outdoors are options for their own lives. At the same time, educators understood the challenges AMCR faces in recruiting guides who are minorities, including low numbers of minorities partaking in outdoor activities.

Many educators also responded to questions about cultural competence with comments about other dimensions of diversity besides culture. Several said that AMCR staff had more difficulty working with students who have diverse learning styles, are behaviorally disruptive, or are lacking in environmental knowledge than they do working with students from culturally diverse backgrounds. This suggests that while cultural competence is certainly an important issue, it is not necessarily the most important issue in the minds of many participants.

Summary of AMCR program strengths, challenges, and recommendations

AMCR program staff and educators professionally delivered a well developed curriculum that met the needs of educators who aimed to use the program as a team-building program and for those whose primary goal was to provide students a hands-on ecology experience. Educators and students were overwhelmingly positive about the AMCR program. Schools repeatedly chose to take valuable school time to attend the program, and all of the educators who participated in the evaluation had either been on more than one AMCR trip already or was planning on bring students to the mountains of New Hampshire again. The following table summarizes the program strengths and challenges gleaned from analyzing interviews with educators and students. The table also includes an outline of several recommendations compiled from interviews, analysis, discussion amongst PEER staff and AMC staff, and the literature review.
Table C3. Summary Sketch of AMCR Programs, Strengths, Challenges, and Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Element</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AMCR Program</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff and Guides</strong></td>
<td>Professional, friendly, available</td>
<td>Staff stretched thin</td>
<td>Develop mechanism for more experienced guides to mentor new guides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Went the extra mile</td>
<td>One time contact with guides</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible to the needs of the groups</td>
<td>Inconsistent teaching and ecology expertise of guides</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good role models for students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AMCR Program</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-trip preparation packets contained information for parents</td>
<td>Parents/educators did not feel completely prepared for the trip</td>
<td>Create a systematic way to assess and meet the “readiness” level of the students and educators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excellent balance of ecology/outdoor adventure</td>
<td>Not all educators took advantage of the opportunity to connect trips to their classroom curricula</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gear provision made trip possible</td>
<td>Unstructured time was challenging for some students, leaving them unsure what to do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachable moments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparing and debriefing students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ecology, adventure, and team building activities</strong></td>
<td>Night hike and hike up Mt. Willard were the most popular activities</td>
<td>Many students came with little/no experience outdoors</td>
<td>Provide activities that allow students to acclimatize to the wilderness (listening, drawing, journaling, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High quality hands-on activities</td>
<td>Carryover of ecology and stewardship lessons hit or miss upon return home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good first exposure for students who were new to the outdoors</td>
<td>Inconsistency between groups; some had too few or too many boundaries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team building activities noted as particularly strong AMCR element</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connection to classroom</strong></td>
<td>Educators used group leadership skills upon return home</td>
<td>Many educators did not see educational link to curriculum</td>
<td>Develop a variety of interdisciplinary pre- and post-activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivated and skilled teachers linked ecology content to classroom</td>
<td>Educators were not aware of interdisciplinary opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Competence</strong></td>
<td>Most educators pleased with staff respect for diverse student backgrounds</td>
<td>All white staff</td>
<td>Provide incentives to recruit minority youth and families to use AMC resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some staff challenged to meet students at their ‘readiness’ level</td>
<td>More actively recruit urban minority youth to become interns and educators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AMCR Recommendations

The following recommendations represent evaluator inferences that are rooted in the empirical data of this evaluation, but also draw subjectively upon evaluator experience with other relevant programs, organizations, and research. Rather than an exhaustively comprehensive list, these are simply the recommendations that struck evaluators as most important and/or potentially feasible.

Target program offerings more specifically to the “readiness” of participants

Potential AMCR participants come with varying levels of preparatory knowledge, skills, experiences, and priorities with respect to ecological literacy and capacity for action. Perhaps variations on the core AMCR program could be developed that are specifically designed for participants with different “readiness.” For those with less experience outdoors, providing engaging experiences aimed primarily at appreciation and familiarity with the outdoors is probably the highest leverage intervention. Promoting later stages of change such as developing environmental attitudes and ultimately stewardship behavior probably requires repeat or extended experiences and more long term support, whether through AMC or in cooperation with other programs.

On a strategic level, building this targeted approach would involve several operational steps. Some sort of initial assessment of the readiness level of educators and their students would need to happen first. Subsequently, program offerings would need to be structured specifically to address a range of readiness levels, and there would need to be a way to efficiently guide participants to the most fruitful program based on their assessed readiness.

On an operational level, some examples what a targeted approach might look like in practice include:

- **Provide more preparation before students arrive in the White Mountains.** Several educators requested additional pre-trip support. This could take the form of AMC-sponsored service-learning or other on-going local projects, or even AMC staff going out to schools to do pre-trip activities and lessons on school grounds. Such preparatory work could help make students and educators more ready to take fuller advantage of the learning opportunities of the trip.

- **Build mentoring, partnering, or sponsorship programs.** Schools or educators who are potentially interested in AMCR could be partnered with a group or individual who has more experience in outdoor education as a result of previous AMC program experience. This would provide more support for people who are less ready, and provide the more experienced participants with a way to share, extend, and perhaps deepen their own skills in outdoor leadership.
Offer repeated outdoor experiences to youth and educators, with increasingly rigorous ecological literacy and action components. The literature review clearly showed that emotional connections to the outdoors are gained by early and repeated outdoor experiences (Chawla, 2001). Experiences that create an environment where youth can simply be “kids” in a relatively unstructured, yet safe, outdoor exploratory setting are key for developing environmental stewardship. Research shows time and again that the emotional connection developed when people are young is crucial. AMCR already does that well. Perhaps they could do it even more deeply if they could build upon the appreciation and familiarity with the outdoors gained in a first visit, by adding a series of program offerings consisting of increasingly rigorous and action-oriented repeat experiences.

Continue striving to increase the cultural competence of AMCR

One of the strengths of AMCR is the opportunities the program provides for diverse groups of youth to spend time in outdoor learning settings. Educators acknowledged the inexperience of many of their youth in the outdoors, noting that urban youth often experienced a kind of culture shock in spending time outdoors. This vast difference in expectations and experiences can make it more challenging for urban youth to be open to learning environmental or ecological content. However, according to the literature review, youth with fewer outdoor experiences may benefit most from having positive initial experience in the outdoors (Chawla, 2001).

In order to continue to improve upon providing the most positive experience possible for urban youth, some recommendations are as follows:

- **Recruit urban minority youth to become interns and educators.** Like YOP, AMCR faced challenges in recruiting educators of color. AMCR educators reported wanting to see more minority leaders of trips so that those individuals could be positive role models for students. Yet, educators understood the challenges AMCR faces in recruiting guides who are minorities. One way to begin to address this challenge is to offer early experiences to older youth who may show some inklings of one day becoming educators themselves.

- **Provide incentives to recruit minority youth and families to use AMC resources.** AMC provides a plethora of resources to increase the ease with which people can access the mountains. However, many families from urban and ethnically diverse backgrounds have not heard of these services, and may feel less comfortable using them. There may be some sort of incentives and programs that AMC could offer minority youth and their families to increase their comfort level, lower their costs, and increase their access to the outdoors. Perhaps this could involve building more direct connections between YOP, AMCR, and other visitor service opportunities offered through AMC.
CONCLUSIONS

This was a baseline, primarily formative evaluation of two distinct programs. There are some reflections and common threads, however, which link the evaluation of YOP and AMCR. These final observations represent a relatively subjective inference of the evaluators based on the broadest level of analysis and synthesis of this data set as a whole.

First, there were three themes that were common to the findings from both YOP and AMCR:

- **Participants were overwhelmingly positive about both programs.** This should be the background against which future program changes or reallocations should be considered. Both adults and youth were clear that they were generally happy with the programs as they stand now. The question is not about whether to fundamentally change or discontinue either one of these programs. The only question is whether or not something good could be made better.

- **Strongest outcomes included increased prosocial behaviors and appreciation of the outdoors.** Participants describe many ways in which human social interactions tend to have a unique richness in the new, exciting, challenging yet safe outdoor experiences provided by both AMCR and YOP. Additionally, both programs have demonstrated strong success at helping youth and adults with little prior experience of the outdoors become increasingly comfortable in natural settings. When YOP supports multiple trips for a given youth (as it often does), that allows outdoor awareness and appreciation to flourish further still and become more deeply rooted. Prosocial behaviors and appreciation of the outdoors are outcomes that both programs can comfortably claim with confidence and pride.

- **Cultural background affects participant experiences.** Clearly, cultural competence is important to the staff of both YOP and AMCR. Participants in both programs reported noticing and appreciating AMC’s efforts to deliver programs that sensitively reflect the needs and context of urban youth audiences. Still, the fields of outdoor and environmental education generally do not reflect the cultural diversity of most urban environments. While AMC is not likely to be able to solve this problem single-handedly, it is conceivable that programs such as YOP and AMCR could (with sufficient investment and prioritization) provide a strong foundation for a concerted effort to forge AMC into a nationally recognized leader in blending cultural competence and outdoor/environmental education.
Taken together, these three themes seem to suggest a new twist on how to potentially think about the overall program delivery strategy for both YOP and AMCR. In short:

- The concept of “readiness” could become a major organizing frame for future program development.

It could be that it is an appropriate and strategically sufficient position for YOP and AMCR to continue to serve as successful “gateway” programs that specialize in positive experiences that increase awareness of and comfort in the outdoors. This was found to be an exemplary strength of both programs and is probably the highest leverage way to reach the greatest number of participants. If this approach remains the primary goal, YOP and AMCR could perhaps be more explicitly promoted as filling this niche in the broader environmental education landscape of Boston. AMC could intentionally build partnerships with other programs that focus more tightly on longer term outcomes such as AMCR’s environmental stewardship and YOP’s social capital and capacity building for youth agencies. In fact, because YOP and AMCR have demonstrated success at generating outdoor awareness and appreciation for urban youth and adults, it could even make sense to focus simply on serving more participants with existing programs.

Alternatively, either one or both programs could add or augment existing program offerings aimed at audiences with higher levels of readiness for environmentally-oriented behavior change. This might increase the range of types of participants served and allow for deeper outcomes for some participants, though perhaps in lieu of serving greater numbers of participants. With this approach, the existing programs that provide experiences leading to such positive outdoor appreciation would continue. In addition, though, there could be a layered system of program offerings designed specifically for people who are not as “ready,” as well as offerings for those who are more ready for more advanced and rigorous content in activities and trainings. Perhaps this could include more focus on ecological content and action.

In any case, this evaluation provided sufficient data to pose but not answer this strategic choice.

“I think my youth group has changed me for the better. I respect nature and know how important it is to my and everyone else’s environment. My outdoor trips and my youth group has given me another aspect of my universe of obligations.”

- Youth participant in YOP

“Even like today, I was going to ask my mom if we could go back to AMC and just say hi.”

- Student participant in AMCR
REFERENCES


SELECTED SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

The following pages present the Evaluation Overview document, draft logic models for each program, and the survey instruments and interview guides used for this evaluation.
Overall Purpose of Program Evaluation:
- Evaluate effectiveness of AMC in terms of process (implementation) and outcomes (results)
- Provide useful information for project coordinators & funders to assist with program development, justification, & refinement
- Determine whether and the extent to which the programs offered by AMC help urban youth become effective environmental stewards. Intermediate measures include student critical thinking skills and affinity for outdoor environments, among others. In order to begin addressing this overall goal, three more specific questions have been identified thus far to guide our initial evaluation efforts:
  1. Which elements of AMC programs appear to most effectively (and measurably) help participants develop skills to become environmental stewards?
  2. How does varying program dosage impact program outcomes?
  3. Might there be more efficient (or effective) ways to achieve the program outcomes of AMC?

An additional question which will be woven throughout the evaluation is:
- To what extent is cultural competency a factor in AMC’s programs?

Specific Purpose of Phase I of AMC Evaluation
- Build primary intended users’ understanding of and commitment to evaluation process and goals
- Define and prioritize evaluation questions
- Translate evaluation questions into useful evaluation tools and an Evaluation Plan.

Specific Purposes of Phases II and III of AMC Evaluation
- II: Collect and analyze the highest priority data that is most likely to best inform intended users
- III: Support AMC staff in applying evaluation results to real-life program decisions and uses.
- III: Generate a long-term evaluation plan and associated tools/instruments as appropriate.

Evaluators’ Philosophy
- PEER Associates is committed to using a multiple-methods, utilization-focused, participatory evaluation process. It is our intention to help organizations better articulate their vision, align their resources and their rhetoric accordingly, and improve their programs based on evidence of program functioning and outcome.
- We also seek to help organizations build their own capacity to reflect on and internally evaluate programs.

Evaluators’ Roles
- Meet with program staff to develop Evaluation Plan, and make modifications as needed
- Data collection including multiple methods (i.e. surveys, interviews, photo documentation, TBD)
- Data analysis and report writing (or production of other product(s) as appropriate)
- Provide planning and/or recommendations for following year’s evaluation (as appropriate)
- Evaluation contact person: Rachel
- Principal Investigator accountable for overall product: Michael
- Est. # of days to complete AMC evaluation products: 103 days (56 Sr. + 47 Assoc.)

AMC Staff Roles in Evaluation process
- Provide key input to evaluators as they develop the Evaluation Plan
- Provide input throughout the contract timeline via meetings, phone and/or email on evaluation direction, appropriateness of instruments, and format of final report
- Serve as liaison between evaluators and program participants (e.g. setting up interview schedule)
- Collect and share observation notes, project documentation, photos with evaluators as designated
- Assist in administration of surveys
- Provide incentives for participation in evaluation process, and follow up to ensure satisfactory return rates
- Provide incentives for student, educator, community participation in evaluation process
Meet with evaluators to consider needs assessment for subsequent evaluation (if wanted)

**Deliverable Products**

- Evaluation Plan that is based on solid and thorough program theory and prioritized intended uses. To be delivered on or around August 31, 2006.
- Draft report for review and discussion. To be delivered on or around February 28, 2007.
- Final report and/or other presentation of results, format and delivery date to be determined. To be delivered on or around March 31, 2007.
- Long term evaluation plan based on findings to date. To be delivered on or around May 31, 2007.

**Delivery of Evaluation Data**

- Since much evaluation work depends heavily on the active and timely participation of program staff, PEER will not be responsible for reporting on data that has not been delivered within a pre-determined time period. This also applies to site visit planning that does not happen in a timely fashion or events that evaluators might benefit from attending but of which PEER is not notified. To avoid this loss of data, PEER will provide program staff with a rough timeline in advance of data collection deadlines (or in the case of events, clarify the type of events necessary for observation), then provide a reminder of the deadline at least one week prior to the deadline. Finally, if data or notification has not been provided, PEER will notify program staff that data will not be included in the analysis or report because of delays, lack of provision, or lack of notification.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Questionnaire Preparation</td>
<td>Preparing and formatting the questionnaire for distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Sending the questionnaire to participants</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Analyzing the collected data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>Preparing the final report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td></td>
<td>Conducting a review of relevant literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interventions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Designing and implementing intervention strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Providing support to the program staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td></td>
<td>Providing logistical support</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Evaluation Summary/Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Objective</th>
<th>Result Achieved</th>
<th>Action Taken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve attendance</td>
<td>Increase by 10%</td>
<td>Conduct workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance program quality</td>
<td>Improve by 20%</td>
<td>Develop new curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet funding criteria</td>
<td>Achieve 100%</td>
<td>Submit complete applications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evaluation Findings**

- Significantly higher attendance rates were observed after implementing new strategies.
- There was a notable improvement in program quality as measured by participant feedback.
- Funding criteria were met without issue due to thorough preparation and application submission.
### A Mountain Classroom Logic Model

**IMPACTS**
- Improved student engagement
- Increased teacher effectiveness
- Enhanced learning outcomes

**LONG-TERM OUTCOMES**
- Increased graduation rates
- Improved student retention
- Development of critical thinking skills

**IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES**
- Enhanced classroom management
- Improved student behavior
- Increased student motivation

**ACTIVITIES & STRATEGIES**
- Implement differentiated instruction
- Provide academic support services
- Enhance professional development opportunities

**RESULTS**
- Improved student performance
- Increased parent involvement
- Enhanced community partnerships

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Throughout the implementation of a comprehensive instructional support program designed to develop critical thinking skills, AMC will enhance reading, writing, and study comprehension, thereby improving student outcomes in all academic areas.
A Mountain Classroom Logical Model: External Factors

- Improving the home environment
- AMC strategic planning, leadership skills, and help instill self-esteem, these new skills benefit students by understanding and respect.
- Challenges: increased stress, personal growth, and positive interpersonal connections, increasing.
- Focus on important classroom interpersonal dynamics is mitigated by larger class size.
- Character education is emphasized in a high stakes education climate with mandated learning goals.
- Many individual student learning styles and abilities.
- Larger class sizes increase the teacher's ability to reach in less structured environments, and use differentiation instruction.
- Learning moves, encouraging learning activities and teaching styles will encourage teachers to incorporate those new.
- Science educators often do not have the same environment, which are relevant to the learner and increase interaction.
- Positive exposure in the natural world, increase educational stewardship.
- Science educators are often not well connected with nature.

A Mountain Classroom Logical Model: Assumptions
Interview Guide, Winter 06-07, AMC YOP

Intro:
- Thank you for your time! About 30 minutes to learn some of your thoughts about YOP.
- I am an outside evaluator with PEER Associates, hired by AMC to help improve the program.
- Main purpose is to get your perspective about how the YOP program is working on a youth outreach worker and youth participant level, and what improvements can be made to make the YOP program more effective.
- This is NOT a performance assessment of you or your organization.
- Your responses are confidential in that names are never used. Quotes are used. Only evaluation staff will see raw data.
- Data from these interviews will be transcribed, analyzed, and written up in a report that we'll give to AMC in the spring. YOP will be sharing the results if you are interested.
- Request permission to record, take notes, transcribe.
- Questions or concerns?

1) I'd like to find out more about your experiences, both as a youth worker, and general experiences outdoors.
   (Additional prompts: What do you do at XX agency? How long have you been a youth worker? Tell me about your training/educational background. What was the extent of your outdoor experiences—hiking, backpacking, and camping—before YOP? Did you lead outdoor trips with youth before YOP?)

2) Why and how did you get involved with YOP? In what ways does your youth organization support or get in the way of your participation in YOP and leading outdoor adventure trips for youth? (Additional prompts: How would you characterize your agency’s attitude toward outdoor/adventure experiences for youth? How difficult or easy did your agency make it for you to lead or not to lead trips? Has your agency increased the number and quality of trips that it offers to youth a result of participation in YOP? Has it become a regular part of your agency’s programming?)

3) Part of the YOP philosophy is that the Outdoor Leadership Training is just the beginning: you are joining a community and ongoing support is the key to making trips happen. So, which elements of the training and/or ongoing support make you feel most connected to the YOP program and community? (Additional prompts: How much do you use the resources YOP provides? What would you do if you did not have access to these resources? What resources do you need most? What are some of the “tricks of the trade” in the ways you use the resources that you might pass on to other youth workers? Was there something missing from the support that prevented you from going on trips?)

4) How, if at all, has your involvement with YOP influenced you as a youth worker on a personal level? (Additional prompts: Have you noticed any differences in your leadership style/skills? Your relationship to the outdoors? Your intention to continue to lead trips? Does the program have a bigger influence on you, the youth you work with, or your organization? Why? Although you did not lead trips, did the OLT influence you as a youth worker?)

5) Can you think of examples or stories of youth at your agency being impacted or changing after having gone on one or more outdoor trips? (Additional prompts: In terms of: relationships between youths, appreciation for outdoors, confidence, leadership, empathy, teamwork, respect, or trust. What about examples of situations where you expected, but did not see change? How, if at all, do the youth you work with think or act differently as a result of YOP? Even simple things, daily life stuff... Are there tools/activities that you use with youth that have been especially effective or impactful with youth?)

6) If you were asked to share some of what you do that works well, as well as some of the most challenging parts, when leading outdoor trips with youth, what might you tell others? (Additional prompts: Strategies for working with youth. Managing kids on the trail. Structuring the introduction of the outdoor experience to youth (e.g., start slow, work up? Jump in to something fun & challenging?) What works well on your trips, and what are some of the struggles that you face?)

7) In what ways have you observed race, gender, or cultural background relate to or impact outdoor experience for youth you work with? How, if at all, have you been able to meet the needs of your youth while on trips with them? What are some of the best practices and most challenging times that you might share with YOP for their learning and program improvement? (Additional prompts: Please describe any situations in which the background of your youth, created a challenging situation. How did you handle those situations?)

8) In what ways could YOP improve its program to better meet your needs as a youth worker working with urban youth? (consider before, during, and after your trips?) (Additional prompts: What is missing from the program? Which parts might be a waste time and energy? To what extent has YOP met your expectations? What expectations or hopes did or do you have that haven’t been met? If you were in charge of YOP, what, if anything, would you change? What could YOP do to support you in leading trips in the future?)

9) Any other thoughts to share with me? (Additional prompts: Important points to emphasize? Things we missed? Closing thoughts? The bottom line? Boil it down?)

THANK YOU!!!

* For those interviewees who have not led trips, be sure to ask them the prompts with an asterisk.
** Skip for those youth workers who did not lead any trips
Youth Opportunities Program

Youth Worker Survey

THANK YOU
We recognize that youth workers have many demands on their time and greatly appreciate you completing this survey. Evaluation is an important component of every program and your frank feedback is VERY valuable for helping to improve YOP. As a special thank you for your time we will send you a $15 gift card to REI when we receive your completed survey.

IMPORTANT
We recognize that YOP is not the only factor affecting your youth. We appreciate your best guess on any items that may seem a little broad or difficult to measure. Please do not leave any blanks. If you have not led any trips and/or worked with YOP since your Outdoor Leadership Training please complete the survey and select “Not Applicable” when appropriate.

SURVEY RESULTS
Your individual responses will be seen only by the evaluation team, and your name will not be used in any report, publication, or discussion without your prior permission.

You may also complete this survey online at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=170453089515

TODAY’S DATE: ________________________

YOUR NAME: ________________________ AGENCY NAME: ________________________

YOUR ETHNICITY: ________________________

ETHNICITY OF YOUTH AT YOUR AGENCY (approximate breakdown): ________________________

NEIGHBORHOOD YOU WORK IN: ________________________

OVERVIEW
A1. How many outdoor trips have you led in the past 12 months? ______________

A2. What is the total number of outdoor trips for youth you have led since your OLT and beginning with YOP? Give your best estimate. ______________

A3. Please describe the youth outdoor trips that you led in your most recent program cycle (e.g. school year, summer program, etc.) Circle the best answer. In general I tend to lead:
   a. youth that I regularly work with on one trip
   b. youth that I regularly work with on multiple trips (more than one)
   c. youth that I don’t regularly work with (except for trips) on one trip
   d. youth that I don’t regularly work with (except for trips) on multiple trips (more than one)
   e. Other: ________________________
DIRECTIONS

- For the following items, please put a NUMBER in the box next to each activity to indicate how many times you have participated in the activity SINCE YOU TOOK THE OLT AND JOINED YOP.
- Please put a 0 in the box if you have never led this type of trip. If a trip included more than one activity pick what was most significant.
- If the number of times is large or hard to quantify, just put your best guess.
- The idea here is to try and get an overall estimate of your level of involvement with YOP and which types of support are most used. It might help to read through the whole list of activities first to jog your memory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Trips You Have Led</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Day hiking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Camping</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Backpacking</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Canoeing</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. Rock Climbing</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. Snowshoeing</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>g. Cross-country skiing</td>
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<tr>
<td>h. Other</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YOP Trainings</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. YOP Backpacking Outdoor Leadership Training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. YOP Camping Outdoor Leadership Training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. YOP Outdoor Leadership Training Part II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Urban Snow Sports Workshop (1 day)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Cross Country Skiing Workshop (1 day)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Winter Exploration Workshop (3 days)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>g. Wilderness First Aid</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>h. Team Building &amp; Low Props Workshop (Backpocket Adventure with Project Adventure)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>i. Canoeing Workshop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>j. Map and Compass Workshop</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>k. New Hampshire Day Hike</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>l. Backpacking Leave No Trace Workshop</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>m. Trip Planning Workshop</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>n. Debriefing and Processing Workshop</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o. Advanced Backpacking Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>p. Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YOP Services and Connections</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Borrowed equipment from YOP’s Equipment Room</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Stayed at an AMC facility (hut, lodge, campground) with youth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Received trip planning or programming advice or tips from YOP staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Attended a Boston Harbor Island Campout</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>e. Used the trip planning library (books, maps, trail maps, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>f. Communicated on the phone or by email with YOP staff or volunteers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>g. Served as a volunteer at a YOP event (not in an instructor role)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>h. Attended a YOP OLT or workshop</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Attended other volunteer meetings (VLC or other planning meetings)</td>
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<tr>
<td>j. Attended a holiday party</td>
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<tr>
<td>k. Attended OLT reunion</td>
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<tr>
<td>l. Attended YOP volunteer retreat</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>m. Attended YOP instructor trainings</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>n. Participated in the YOP Listserv (read or wrote emails; used website, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o. Other newsletter YOPortunities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p. Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### How much do you disagree or agree?
For each item, please circle only one number that best matches your opinion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Tend to Disagree</th>
<th>Tend to Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Not sure or N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>Since joining YOP, I intentionally use outdoor leadership skills learned on the OLT (i.e., safety, facilitation, preparation, and leadership styles) with youth.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td>Since I started working with YOP, I use the outdoors and natural settings more often in my work with youth.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6</td>
<td>Access to proper gear is one of the most important services that YOP provides.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7</td>
<td>I always try to plan my trips to match the physical abilities of the youth.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A8</td>
<td>Proper planning and preparation is very important to the success of my outdoor trips.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A9</td>
<td>Youth benefit greatly from participating in outdoor adventure activities.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A10</td>
<td>The chance to practice leadership skills in the outdoors offers youth a unique experience for growth.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A11</td>
<td>Access to YOP workshops and services makes leading outdoor trips more feasible and affordable.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A12</td>
<td>I make sure to assess the needs and skills of youth participants before a trip in order to plan a successful experience.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A13</td>
<td>Outdoor trips expose the youth I work with to environments and experiences that they would not otherwise encounter.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A14</td>
<td>Having appropriate outdoor equipment plays an important role in the success of the outdoor trips I lead.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A15</td>
<td>Setting trip goals and debriefing are important aspects of my trips.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A16</td>
<td>Ongoing support and resources from YOP after the OLT is/was necessary for successful implementation of my trips.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A17</td>
<td>I find myself varying my leadership style (e.g., directive, selling, consulting, engaging), depending on the situation.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A18</td>
<td>In order to make the outdoor adventure trips I lead enjoyable and safe, it is essential to have the proper gear and clothing.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Items A19-A27 refer to youth you take on trips

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Tend to Disagree</th>
<th>Tend to Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Not sure or N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A19</td>
<td>As a result of the trips I lead, the youth I work with want to spend more time in outdoor natural settings.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A20</td>
<td>I see less fear and/or anxiety about the wilderness and the outdoors in my youth after they go on outdoor trips.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A21</td>
<td>After they go on outdoor trips, the youth I work with seem more willing to participate in outdoor activities.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A22</td>
<td>The youth I work with look up to me and generally treat me with respect AFTER they go on outdoor trips.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A23</td>
<td>I regularly observe youth helping each other and working together WHILE on outdoor trips.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A24</td>
<td>It is common to see youth in my organization demonstrating hostile or aggressive behavior with each other WHILE on outdoor trips.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A25</td>
<td>The youth I work with look up to me and generally treat me with respect WHILE on outdoor trips.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A26</td>
<td>I regularly observe youth helping each other and working together AFTER they go on outdoor trips.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A27</td>
<td>It is common to see youth in my organization demonstrate hostile or aggressive behavior with each other AFTER they go on outdoor trips.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the remaining questions, please write your answers in the spaces provided. Please continue your answers on a separate sheet if you need more space. If you have not lead any trips, please skip to A.32.

A.28 Please identify at least three ways that you think the outdoor trips you lead serve the needs of your youth.
1.
2.
3.

A.29 What key lessons have you learned about effective trip leadership since you began leading trips? (What advice would you give to a youth worker that was just starting out leading trips?)
1.
2.
3.

A.30 After your OLT what were the two or three most significant barriers you had to overcome BEFORE your trip(s)?
1.
2.
3.

A.31 What were the two or three most important things that YOP contributed to your trips this year?
1.
2.
3.

A.32 If you did not lead youth on a trip, please explain why you did not. (e.g. lack of resources, time, interest, organizational support, etc.)
Please feel free to comment on your responses or any additional interests/concerns about YOP.

B1. We need YOP Leaders to participate in 30 minute phone interviews. Would you be willing to have someone call you to provide additional information about YOP for this evaluation? You will receive a $15 gift card to Dunkin Donuts and your help will be GREATLY appreciated!

☐ Yes, please call me at this number: __________________________  ☐ No

B2. We also want to hear from YOP youth! Would you be willing to bring your youth to AMC for a free urban adventure (ice skating, pizza, initiatives) and to participate in a short focus group?

☐ Yes, please call me at this number: __________________________  ☐ No

Where should we send your $15 REI gift certificate? Please provide your address:

__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

The End.
Thank you again for taking the time to fill out this survey!

Please return in the envelope provided to:
YOP Evaluation, 58 Russell St, Keene, NH 03431
e-mail to Rachel@PEERassociates.net

Fax to: 603-357-3547
Youth Interview Questions

YOP

Introduction to interviews/focus group:

- This should take about 15 - 20 minutes.
- I am an outside evaluator with PEER Associates, hired by the Appalachian Mountain Club to help improve the program.
- Main purpose is to hear from you about what you got out of your trips with your youth agency.
- This is NOT about grading you or your staff in any way.
- Your responses are confidential in that names are never used. Quotes are used. Only evaluation staff will see raw data.
- Inform them we are recording, take notes, transcribe.
- Questions or concerns?

Exclude youth that haven’t been on a trip?

1) **We would like some basic background information on you** (age, youth agency, ethnicity, number and type of trips).

2) **I’m curious about your experiences in the mountains/woods.** [Make this active - e.g. stand up if you ever hiked in the mountains, stay standing if more than once, more than 5 times, etc.] What can you tell me about time spent outdoors - memorable moments, type of activity (e.g. camping, canoeing, hiking, etc.) views, etc.? (Additional prompts: How many times have you been on trips with [youth agency]? What are 2 things that you remember most about these trip/s?)

3) **What is one new thing you learned while on a trip?** (Additional prompts: How did the trip reinforce or review things you already knew? What were the most challenging/difficult and favorite parts of the trip? If you got to go back again, what else would you want to learn or do?)

4) **What are your thoughts about nature or the outdoors?** (Additional prompts: Did this change after spending time outside on the trip? What about other kids you know, from your neighborhood or school, who have not gone on this type of trip? Do you have friends that don’t like the outdoors as much as you? What do they say about it? What would you say to change their minds?)

5) **What about the social parts of the trip** (e.g. making friends, talking with people, playing games). (Additional prompts: Can you share the best parts about the social aspect? How about the most difficult/challenging. What are some examples?)

6) **Was there anything that surprised you about the trip? Did you learn anything new about yourself?**

7) **Imagine that you could lead a trip like this. Think about the top 10 things that should happen on the trip.** (Additional prompts: How would you make it safe? Where would you go? What would you focus on or like to teach other people? What would you avoid? What is the most important thing to bring on this trip?) [For this question, we can use flipcharts and write up the 10 ten answers.]
Thank you
We are interested in you and your ideas about the outdoors.

Important
There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer every question.

How will we use this survey?
Your answers will be seen only by the evaluation team, and your name will not be used in any report, publication, or discussion. Please be sure to tell us a little bit about yourself in the questions at the beginning of the survey. We appreciate your help!

Today’s date: ___________________ Your name: _______________________

Agency name: ___________________ City/town you live in: ___________________

Your ethnicity: ________________________

Overview
1. How many outdoor trips with your youth agency have you participated in over the past 12 months? _________
2. What is the total number of outdoor trips you attended with your youth group? Give your best estimate. _____
3. How many times had you gone on outdoor trips before you went with your agency? ___________________
4. Please list all of the activities you enjoy doing outside:
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
5. If you had the chance to go to any outdoor place, where would you want to go? Please list as many as possible and be specific.
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
How much do you agree with the following statements about YOUR thoughts and feelings? Circle one answer.

6. I enjoy spending time outside in nature.  
I. Not at all  | Not really  | Kind of  | Very much  | Not sure

7. I have been visiting more parks and forests than I used to.  
I. Not at all  | Not really  | Kind of  | Very much  | Not sure

8. I like to be challenged or try new things.  
I. Not at all  | Not really  | Kind of  | Very much  | Not sure

9. When I see people arguing, I don’t know what to do to make things better.  
I. Not at all  | Not really  | Kind of  | Very much  | Not sure

10. I prefer to do things indoors, rather than be outside.  
I. Not at all  | Not really  | Kind of  | Very much  | Not sure

11. I would describe myself as someone who knows something about nature.  
I. Not at all  | Not really  | Kind of  | Very much  | Not sure

12. At my youth group, we usually help each other and work well together.  
I. Not at all  | Not really  | Kind of  | Very much  | Not sure

13. I would be interested in going on another outdoor trip.  
I. Not at all  | Not really  | Kind of  | Very much  | Not sure

I. Not at all  | Not really  | Kind of  | Very much  | Not sure

15. My peers see me as a leader.  
I. Not at all  | Not really  | Kind of  | Very much  | Not sure

16. I like hiking, camping, canoeing, and other outside adventures.  
I. Not at all  | Not really  | Kind of  | Very much  | Not sure

17. I have people I can turn to for help when I experience problems in my life.  
I. Not at all  | Not really  | Kind of  | Very much  | Not sure

18. I feel respected by my peers.  
I. Not at all  | Not really  | Kind of  | Very much  | Not sure

How much do you agree with the following statements about the trip or trips you went on with your youth group? Circle one answer.

19. I enjoyed the outdoor trip(s) I took with my youth group.  
I. Not at all  | Not really  | Kind of  | Very much  | Not sure

20. I respect the staff that took me on the trip(s).  
I. Not at all  | Not really  | Kind of  | Very much  | Not sure

21. On my trip(s), I dealt with a challenge that I would not have faced back at home (like a big hike, having to work together with my group, etc.).  
I. Not at all  | Not really  | Kind of  | Very much  | Not sure

22. Succeeding on my trip(s) made me feel good about myself.  
I. Not at all  | Not really  | Kind of  | Very much  | Not sure

23. I was disappointed with how much I learned and grew from my trip(s).  
I. Not at all  | Not really  | Kind of  | Very much  | Not sure

24. It was important to work together as a group to succeed on my trip(s).  
I. Not at all  | Not really  | Kind of  | Very much  | Not sure

25. Doing new things on my trip(s) made me feel more confident about trying challenging things back home.  
I. Not at all  | Not really  | Kind of  | Very much  | Not sure

26. What else would you like to tell us about outdoor trips and your youth group?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

The End. Thank you for completing this survey.
Interview Guide, Winter 06-07, AMC MCR

Intro:

- I am an outside evaluator with PEER Associates, hired by AMC to help improve the program.
- Main purpose is to get your perspective about what teachers and students gain from participation in the A Mountain Classroom program and what improvements can be made to make the program more effective.
- This is NOT performance assessment.
- We are looking for your honest assessment of program benefits, including if you do not believe there are any benefits of the program.
- Your responses are confidential in that names are never used. Quotes are used. Only evaluation staff will see raw data.
- Data from these interviews will be transcribed, analyzed, and written up in a report that we’ll give to AMC in the spring. If you request, they will share with you how the program may change.
- Request permission to record, take notes, transcribe.
- Questions or concerns?

1) What is your role in the school? (Additional prompts: How many years have you been teaching? How many years have you taught at this school?)

2) Why does your school participate in this program? (Additional prompts: What goal(s) does the school have in attending? For teachers? For students? What about the program attracted the attention for your school? Who first brought this program to the attention of the school – educator, administrator, etc?)

3) What has been the extent of your association with MCR? (Additional prompts: How many MCR trips have you taken? Which trips? When did you first start taking trips with MCR? What did the students do for programming activities while on the trip? How do you make the case for taking the time away from your home classroom to go up to the mountains? Have you had other experiences with outdoor environmental education trips?)

4) Can you think of examples or stories that demonstrate the influence that the MCR trip has had on your students? (Additional prompts: In terms of: relationships between youths, appreciation for outdoors, environmental stewardship, confidence, leadership, empathy, teamwork, respect, trust, etc. For student knowledge and skills, like understanding ecological interdependence, or standardized testing for math and science. What about examples of situations where you expected, but did not see change? Is there evidence of youths integrating life skills learned into daily lives?) [Make sure to get both prosocial skills and environmental stewardship]

5) To what extent, if at all, has your involvement with MCR influenced what or the way you teach? (Additional prompts: What are the strongest connections between what happens on the MCR trip and what happens in your classroom? What gets lost in translation? Have you included new content/activities that you learned on your MCR trip? Have the MCR trips influenced your teaching strategies, e.g. hands-on or experiential learning? How, if at all, has MCR affected the amount of time you devote to environmental education or natural science?)

6) Please think back to your experience with the A Mountain Classroom program trip, and describe the way that AMC the staff (and non-programming staff, such as lodge staff) treated adults and students from your school. (Additional prompts: How, if at all, did MCR staff work to make students feel comfortable? To what extent did the attitude and style of the programming staff help or hinder students' ability to relate to the material presented? To what extent did they build on students' pre-existing knowledge of nature/lake activities?)

7) In what ways could MCR improve its program model to better meet your needs as an educator? (Additional prompts: What are the most valuable programmatic elements of MCR? In what ways did MCR meet your expectations before, during, or after the trip? What expectations or hopes did/do you have that haven't been met? What types of supports/resources do you need most, e.g. lesson plans, equipment, etc)

8) Using your imagination and wild hopes, what kind of success stories about MCR would you like to be able to tell to friends or family three years from now?

9) Any other thoughts to share with me? (Additional prompts: Important points to emphasize? Things we missed? Closing thoughts? The bottom line? Be it down?)

Student questions:

1) I'm curious about your experiences in the mountains/woods. What can you tell me about time spent hiking, memorable moments, views/vistas, etc.? Have you ever been to summer camp? How many times have you been on MCR trips? What are 2 things that you remember most about the MCR trip/s?

2) What is one new thing you learned while on the MCR trip? (Additional prompts: How did the trip reinforce or review things you already knew? What were the worst and best parts of the trip? If you got to go back again, what else would you want to learn?)

3) What are your thoughts about nature or the outdoors? Did this change after spending time in the mountains with MCR? What about other kids you know, from your neighborhood or school, who have not gone on this type of trip?

4) What about the social parts of the trip (e.g. making friends, talking with people, playing games). Can you share the best parts about the social aspect? How about the most difficult/challenging. What are some examples?