



Challenges Create New Opportunities

October, 2020

Dear Friend of High 5,

One of the many highlights of our High 5/Edge of Leadership Summer program is the pond traverse, also affectionately known as the swamp crossing. Mixed teams of students and educators are provided with minimal equipment: a ladder, webbing, carabiners, helmets and a harness. The goal is for every team member to get from one side of the pond to the other without touching the water. That is the extent of the directions provided. With no prior information and little time for planning, teams must work collaboratively to problem-solve, be adaptable, and support one another to successfully navigate uncharted territory.

As we write to you to present the High 5/Edge of Leadership 2019-2020 Year-End Report, we find ourselves reflecting on an unprecedented year. Our 2019 EOL Summer program was a great success, and we were excited to extend that positive energy to our work with students and teachers in the Keene School District. And what a wonderful start to the school year it was! Fall visits to the High 5 campus and program delivery to all 5th, 6th and 7th grade classrooms. The start of a new Student Leadership group at the Keene Middle School. Professional development for teachers, staff and principals at Wheelock Elementary and Keene Middle School. The momentum was palpable, and just as we were gearing up for spring visits and our 2020 EOL Summer program, everything expected and familiar suddenly came to a halt. For everyone. It didn't feel all that different from standing at the edge of the pond, with little to guide us but our strong commitment to Keene students and teachers.

The pandemic has disrupted our educational landscape and forced us to find new ways to teach. This seismic shift has changed everything about how schools operate and how students learn, with impacts likely far into the future. We are fully embracing the critical importance of the High 5/Edge of Leadership curriculum in Keene, and are developing new and innovative ways to effectively deliver programming to students who are socially distancing in the classroom or learning remotely.

We hope this report will give you an insight into all we were able to accomplish during the 2019-2020 school year, in spite of the challenges we faced. In the true spirit of adventure education, we have adapted and will continue to do so - to stand at the edge of the pond and work together to cross safely and get to the other side. We look to the future with hope, knowing we can continue to positively impact the lives of students and educators for many years to come.

Be well,

Ryan McCormick
Director
Edge of Leadership

Anne Louise Wagner
Assistant Director
Edge of Leadership

Jim Grout
Executive Director
High 5 Adventure Learning Center





Connect—Empower—Lead... Be the Example.

The motto and vision of High 5's Edge of Leadership program (EOL), Connect-Empower-Lead... Be the Example remain relevant and strong, particularly given the ever-changing landscape of education. Highlighting EOL's work with the Keene, NH public schools, this sixth annual report to the community provides an executive summary of the 2019-2020 school year, as well as the most current evaluation of program outcomes and impacts.

2019-2020 School Year Summary

EOL Student Leadership at Keene Middle School

In partnership with the Guidance department at Keene Middle School, the EOL team developed a new model for student leaders to participate in a leadership team. The overall purpose of this team is to improve school culture in small ways, leading to bigger impacts.

Professional Development

One of our biggest priorities was developing a series of EOL specific training workshops for educators. During the 2019-2020 school year we were able to offer the following workshops:

- Classroom Activities for Teaching Social and Emotional Skills, presented by Ryan McCormick and Anne Louise Wagner on 2/28/20 at the High 5 campus.
- Classroom Activities for Teaching Social & Emotional Skills, presented by Anne Louise Wagner on 3/10/20 at the New England League of Middle Schools (NELMS) annual conference in Providence, Rhode Island.
- Any Way You Slice It: Using a KYOOB to Build Mathematical and Social Emotional Skills, presented by Sam Copland and Keene Middle School teacher Anne Guerriero on 2/22/20 at the Northeast Association for Experiential Education conference. The Kyoob is a problem-solving initiative designed by High 5.

Summer Curriculum Work

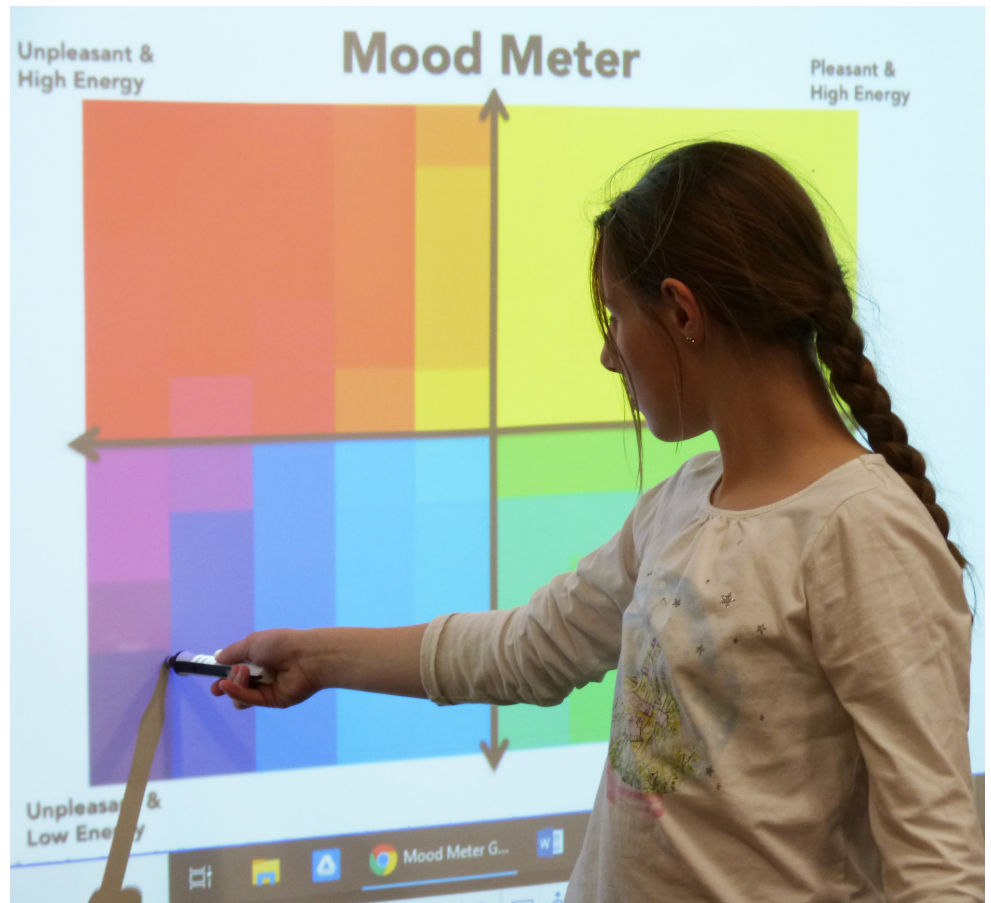
During the summer of 2019, EOL staff were invited to participate in curriculum development with 7th grade Cluster C teachers at Keene Middle School. This was an important milestone for EOL, as the goal of this work was to develop strategies for integrating EOL concepts into 7th grade schedules and instruction, as well as align EOL to other social emotional learning initiatives at KMS. The EOL team participated again in 2020, and this year's work grew in terms of the number of teachers participating and preparing resources for both remote and in-person learning models.

Keene State College Partnership

We have continued our collaboration with Keene State College (KSC) and SAU 29 to offer graduate credit and CEUs for Keene educators who participate in EOL programming with their students. During the 2019-2020 school year, we helped design and received KSC approval for a graduate level independent study course for a student in the Masters of Education program. This 3-credit course involved immersion in our EOL Summer program

*"I love the way that
EOL integrates
emotion learning
and vulnerability
into everything.
I cherish the
authenticity."*

Julian Laferrera, former EOL student



along with additional syllabus requirements. We were not able to run EOL Summer and therefore the student could not take the course, but hope to offer a similar course in the future.

Journal Publication

The EOL program was recently featured in an article published in the Journal of Outdoor Recreation, Education & Leadership (2020, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 322-332). The article, Teachers' Perspectives of Students' Social and Emotional Changes During an Adventure-Based Program, was written by Ann Gillard who serves as an independent evaluation consultant for EOL and High 5.

A Year Like No Other

Our last session in the classroom took place on March 13th, at which time the

Keene School District moved to remote learning for the remainder of the 2019/2020 school year.

While we greatly missed our program delivery time in the classrooms, we continued to connect with Keene teachers and provided them with resources around EOL themes (including written materials, EOL staff videos, games and other resources). Teachers had the opportunity to integrate these ideas into their remote instruction and share with students. As the weeks progressed, the EOL team was invited to participate in conversations with teachers, as well as connect with students along with their teachers. We were excited to have attended several end of the year and last day of school celebrations, offer games and fun ways to reflect, and be a part of witnessing an important moment for the students.

(more)

This time away from the classroom provided a unique opportunity for us to dive into further work around EOL expansion efforts. These activities included the completion of the Keene 7th grade EOL curriculum (5th and 6th grades are already a component of district curriculum), development of EOL replication materials (including resources specific to emotions and Dialogue), and continued outreach through social media to the broader EOL community.

Aside from losing time in the classroom, the biggest challenges we faced were related to the overall growth of the program in Keene. The need for our work to support social emotional learning (SEL) is growing with each year. Principals are asking for EOL programming for additional grade levels. At the middle school the principal would like to eventually include the 8th grade in EOL; while at the elementary schools, principals are hoping we can expand our work to include

grades K-4. The challenge is in balancing our team's realistic capacity to deliver high quality programming in Keene with the objectives outlined in our current phase of work, including replication and teacher training workshops.

Unfortunately, we were not able to invite students to spend time on campus for our EOL Summer program in 2020. We did, however, have the opportunity to connect with former Student Facilitators during a Virtual Dialogue session in May. We appreciated this time with our friends and are excited to continue building connections and having conversations with past, present and future EOL students.

Although challenging at times, our team's ability to grow thoughtfully while creatively solving problems and clearing hurdles gives us the confidence to keep us moving towards our goals and expanding EOL in new and innovative ways.



"I can't speak highly enough about EOL and all of the staff. The program is wonderful, but the EOL staff really make it come to life. Their enthusiasm and the way they can connect to the students is invaluable." A Keene Teacher



Evaluation

The evaluation process has evolved over time, providing High 5/Edge of Leadership classroom teachers and school administrators the opportunity to share insights into EOL's impacts on students' social and emotional skills, teachers' approaches to teaching and learning in their classrooms, and administrators' pursuit of improving cultures and strengthening environments for learning in their schools. We continue to work with an independent contractor to assure our evaluation efforts are comprehensive and objective.

The 2019-2020 evaluation incorporated both quantitative and qualitative feedback from classroom teachers working with EOL educators, including their perception of EOL's impact on students' social growth and progress, as well as the influence of EOL on their teaching practice. This change from the previous year offered teachers more flexibility in recording their responses and sharing their thoughts. Principals in schools receiving EOL programming also participated in this year's evaluation,

providing an opportunity for them to contribute input relative to EOL's impact on the culture and climate of their schools. An additional change in the evaluation process this year was to collect feedback one time toward the end of the school year. Moving forward, this will allow for comparison of data across years.

While we lost over three months of face-to-face program delivery this year, the EOL team was able to find new and innovative ways to stay connected with students, teachers and administrators. We appreciate EOL teachers and principals taking the time to complete the evaluation surveys, especially during this stressful time.

We are pleased to present a summary of evaluation findings and feedback based on the impacts of EOL on students, teachers, classroom culture, and school climate.



Summary of Effects/Outcomes

Student leadership and social emotional skills development and effects on classroom culture

The EOL staff were the primary factor in teachers' positive perceptions of the program due to their high quality communication, modeling, friendliness, and positive relationship building. Some educators perceived or anticipated additive or cumulative effects of EOL throughout school communities and across grade levels.

Student Impacts: Connect

- Self awareness (most impact)
- Social awareness
- Self regulation
- Self confidence

Student Impacts: Empower

- Students' relationships with others (most impact)
- Group functioning skills (strong impact)
- Cooperative participation
- Consideration of others

Student Impacts: Lead

- Influence on student leadership skills
- Communication skills
- Willingness to speak up in a leadership role
- Teamwork

Changes in Teaching Practices

- Commitment to a sense of community and connection (most impact)
- Modeling
- Alignment of EOL with values and goals for students and classroom community
- Appreciation for collaboration with EOL
- EOL's role in supporting and coaching teachers



Teacher Skills Influenced by EOL

- Process over product
- Problem solving
- Building community
- Differentiation

Strengths in Classrooms

- Cumulative effects on student and school communities
- Community building
- Establishes a safe environment
- Consistency for all students

Challenges in Classrooms

- Group functioning skills
- Transferring EOL skills into classroom instruction
- Limitations to EOL due to move to remote learning in March
- Need for increased EOL programming time

Key Recommendations

- Continue the EOL program (especially the high-quality staff) and seek opportunities to expand to additional grade levels and schools.
- Consider ways to promote transference of EOL concepts (especially with teachers new to the program).
- Explore alternative methods of delivering EOL remotely to teachers and students.
- Ensure consistency in EOL-related terminology and integrate with other school initiatives.



Your Voices Heard

The following comments were provided by teachers and principals in survey responses and during phone interviews. Being able to reflect on this crucial feedback provides the opportunity for us to understand what teachers are witnessing in their own classrooms, and sheds additional light on the scope of change affected by EOL.

"I think over the last 15 years, schools have really become an even split of academics, but also creating that community. So I would say my experience with High 5 coming in is meeting that social curriculum need."

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"I'm most grateful for the financial support C&S provides to allow EOL to come into our school. Our students are gaining skills that will help them for their whole lives, and will shape how they work and interact with peers for the better."

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"The potential influence of EOL on my students is great. The activities, games, and challenges that they are a part of through EOL help them expand their thinking, build their flexibility and patience, and often shift them out of their comfort zones a bit. They see other students being supported as they take risks, and it allows them to do the same."

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"The program brought a challenging group of students together a bit more than I think they would have with normal school day activities."

"I see some students who are hesitant to participate in a typical curriculum, but fully engage with High 5 and that's really meaningful."

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"I think that the skill EOL most impacted was the self-awareness of my students. We have a few students in our cluster that struggle to understand how their actions, responses, and decisions affect other students around them, and through EOL we were able to show them with examples of how they are being perceived by the student body. This allowed them to take a moment to step back and reassess how they were acting."

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"The teachers and staff notice the impact on the class community with the support of EOL."

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"I continue to believe that it is SO important to continue to focus on these very important skills for young people. As our world continues to change, the need becomes more and more prevalent."

2019-2020 Program Statistics

School Participation

Keene Elementary Schools
214 students, 43 teachers

Keene Middle School
460 students, 24 teachers

Keene High School - EOL Club
15 students, 1 teacher

Marlborough Elementary School
50 students; 1 teacher

Total Sessions: 292

Total Participants: 739 students,

223 teachers/administrators

Faculty Professional Development Days

39 Wheelock staff members participated in a professional development workshop prior to the start of the school year.

106 Keene Middle School staff members participated in a professional development workshop prior to the start of the school year, as well as one follow-up session during the year.

Nine 7th grade Middle School faculty participated in 5 days of summer curriculum development work, integrating EOL-based social emotional learning elements into their classroom practices.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Despite an unforeseen disruption in program delivery during the 2019-2020 school year, Edge of Leadership has remained vibrant and shown the ability to constantly adapt and innovate in order to continue providing services and support to students in the Keene School District. Evaluation results clearly demonstrate the value of EOL in Keene, and the positive impact of the program, not only on students but on teachers, staff and administrators as well. Our mission to enable others to Connect-Empower-Lead...Be the Example stands firm and has never been more imperative.

We have entered into a paradigm shift in the Edge of Leadership program. We must pivot to effectively deliver EOL to all Keene students, whether they are physically in classrooms or learning remotely. But how do we accomplish this when prior to the pandemic, EOL programming was done mostly in person, working with students, teachers and administrators in their schools and classrooms? We have started by building a digital platform to deliver our program elements, services and resources to teachers and students in the Keene School District. As we roll out our EOL online platform, we will continue to identify ways in which we might also be able to return to Keene classrooms.

The global disruption to education and our plan to bring EOL into the digital world has also informed our longer-term goals for a national and international roll-out, in order to make EOL accessible to schools, districts, educators students and parents in the country and throughout the world. We're excited to be part of a movement that is innovating the world of education and creating the ability to learn, and teach, from anywhere.



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For more information about High 5 and the Edge of Leadership Program in Keene, go to high5adventure.org or call (802) 254-8718