



PENNSYLVANIA EDUCATION

Some Philly school leaders spend their spring break bonding high above Fairmount Park

Trauma specialists at Philly schools take on an aerial challenge to better connect and build trust.

By Ella Lathan
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Some team members chart their course across the tighropes. (POBS photo).

A group of 25 Philly school leaders spent part of their spring break learning how to work as a team while conquering their fears high above East Fairmount Park. The group from the [Office of Prevention, Intervention, and Trauma at the Philadelphia School District](#) gathered at the park's [Discovery Center for a program led by](#) the [Philadelphia Outward Bound School \(POBS\)](#), which offers programs to students and professionals.



The Discovery Center banner flying outside of the Philadelphia Outward Bound School located in East Fairmount Park. (Ella Lathan/WHYY)

The day programs are designed to help to cultivate confidence and a sense of pride in students once they accomplish any part of the 60-foot aerial course.

To conquer the course, the office team had to help each other and get a better understanding of how to work as a team in an efficient, compassionate, and meaningful manner.



25 team members work together on the ground at POBS before gearing up for the aerial course. (Ella Lathan/WHYY)

Deputy Chief Dr. Jayme Banks oversees the office, and saw this program as a great chance to build trust in all aspects of her team.

“We respond and support all of our schoolwide mental health crises,” Banks said. “So that’s gun violence, deaths, and all of that. This is the team that helps organize all the responses in those schools. I wanted to give them time to refill their cup. Because they spend all their time trying to help other people refill theirs.”

Before tackling the aerial course, the team started with ground activities to build assurance and a sense of reliance between each other.



Dr. Jayme Banks, Deputy Chief of the Office of Prevention, Intervention, and Trauma. (Ella Lathan/WHYY)

“It helps them think about how to communicate with their colleagues, they may receive information one way, but they get to see through these exercises, someone else may receive information another. And so it gives them that practice of stopping to think like, ‘do they understand what I mean,’” Banks said.

POBS has partnered with the school district since 1992, said Kim Glodek, director of education and partnerships at POBS.

“Right now, about 75% of our work is with school district schools and charters, working mostly with middle and high schools,” Glodek said. “Then through high school, we work with about 46

school partners in what we call a progression. So the idea is to deepen our relationships with school students. So we see them over multiple years.”



Kim Glodek, director of education and partnerships at POBS. (Ella Lathan/WHYY)

The goal of POBS is to have students realize their worth and capability, while making connections, and fostering relationships with others.

“Getting more adults engaged in the process, and helping them to not only have the experience for themselves, but also have a mirrored and a shared experience with young people that they can actually make that connection, and talk about support, perseverance, courage, [and] building community. That shared experience goes a long way,” said Glodek. She added that it’s an extra bonus if they come back and work or intern at POBS.

Students like Nicholas Hazell and Qiad Jones have come back, recognizing the value and strength this program added to their life.

“I came back to help others experience what I experienced,” Hazell said. “I feel like for me, it opened doors, and it helped me to try new things and challenges. And I think every kid should at least get the opportunity once or maybe multiple times.”



Nick Hazell (right) and Qiad Jones are both former students of POBS who now work there as adults. (Ella Lathan/WHYY)

Like many city kids, nature is not necessarily something they grow up with or experience on a daily basis, and that was true for Hazell, too.

“I grew up in Trenton, [there] was not a lot of fun stuff going on out there. I’d never been outdoors,” Hazell said. “Just the first hour out here, it was more than anything I had ever seen. And so as an adult now, trying to give back to the community and stuff I’ve wanted to see other people are doing the same thing [or] having the memories I had.”

Throughout the year, [POBS facilitates free community programs](#) at the Discovery Center, and encourages people to take advantage of the 50-acre property. These family-friendly programs typically include rock climbing, ziplining, and canoeing on the Strawberry Mansion Reservoir.



Some team members chart their course across the tighropes (Courtesy of POBS)

In October, supporters will have the opportunity to feel like a superhero at Philadelphia Outward Bound School's big biennial fundraiser, [Building Adventure](#). Participants can rappel 30 stories down the Two Commerce Square building in Center City to support outdoor education programs for 8,000 students from more than 100 public and charter schools in Philadelphia and across the region.