



WASHINGTON STATE  
UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION



## 4-H CHALLENGE COURSE

2014

### BY THE NUMBERS

- Since opening in 2009, the Challenge Course at Camp Long has engaged more than 7,000 students, and is expected to double that number in 2015.
- Nearly 200 Challenge Course facilitators have been trained at Camp Long, and more than 400 facilitators have been trained system-wide.

*Developing capable, caring, contributing citizens through research-based, guided adventure exploration and experiential learning.*

### ISSUE

Youth need more than knowledge to be successful and productive members of society—they also need social and emotional skills such as communication, leadership, cooperation, respect, trust, self-confidence, conflict resolution, decision-making, and problem-solving, frequently referred to as “emotional intelligence.” In today’s world of standardized testing and increasing pressure for academic success, students have fewer and fewer opportunities to develop these life skills (Source: “Using positive youth development to predict contribution and risk behaviors in early adolescence ...” *Int J Behav. Dev.*, vol. 31.). Currently, our country is experiencing a 30% to 40% dropout rate in our public education system. Nationally, the graduation rate for Caucasian students is only 78%; rates for minority students are lower still: 72% for Asian students, 55% for African-American students, and 53% for Hispanic students (Source: “Getting ahead by staying behind: An evaluation of Florida’s program to end social promotion.” *Education Next* 6).

### RESPONSE

Washington State University Extension 4-H Youth Development is collaborating with Seattle Parks and Recreation to provide the residents of Seattle, King County, and beyond, the benefits of an educational partnership for school districts, non-profit organizations, institutions of higher education, businesses, and the public, resulting in the strengthening of community life. As a result, an outdoor Challenge Course has been established in an urban setting, at Camp Long in Seattle. The hands-on learning and experiential methodologies used in the program are the tools for re-engaging students in the learning process.

In active development for seven years, Phase One—a low course and two stand-alone high elements—was completed in September 2011. Phase Two—a hub-and-spoke high ropes course—was completed in 2012. This has allowed both the City of Seattle Parks and Recreation and WSU Extension 4-H to meet strategic goals of strengthening relationships and building a sense of community while promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Camp Long provides a unique location, adjacent to a major bus route, making it accessible to all Seattle public school students. Open to the public, Camp Long also serves the largest school district in the state; Seattle Public Schools has 50,000 students in 95 schools.



## QUOTES

*"I feel like my team can do anything now! We know each other a lot better!"*

*"We are all different, but we work together ... we are like one big puzzle and each one of us is a piece."*

*"I really like the stuff about figuring out our goals. We needed that!"*

*"It could have taken years of meetings to get these kids to work together this smoothly. It's amazing how much can be accomplished during one of these retreats."*

*"I can't believe the difference in him. Other family members have commented on how he has changed."*

*"Thanks for running a program that has proven to have deep impacts on our students."*

## PARTNER

Seattle Parks and Recreation

Teachers are being trained by WSU Extension 4-H Adventure Education staff to facilitate the courses with their students.

Currently, competitive grants and fee-for-service structures are being developed to provide sustainable, long-term funding for the project. More than \$190,000 has been secured for the development of the 4-H Challenge Course at Camp Long.

In October 2013, Camp Long became the first 4-H Challenge Course in the state to deploy a new pre- and post-survey tailored specifically for adventure education participants. The survey is designed to evaluate post-participation behavioral changes in four areas: teamwork, decision making, communication, and self-efficacy. In spring 2014, a report from WSU on the data collected is expected to detail what students are learning and how the Adventure Education program can improve.

## IMPACTS

- In 2011, the Challenge Course at Camp Long served 299 participants. In 2012, 802 participants were served. There were more than 2,100 participants in 2013, and as of the end of September 2014, more than 3,400 people participated in the Challenge Course. More than 7,000 participants are expected in 2015.
- Challenge Course activities have helped increase participant self-confidence and positive risk taking, while reducing risk factors, increasing protective factors, and improving readiness to learn.
- The creation of an urban challenge site has changed the perception of 4-H with urban stakeholders, from that of a primarily rural organization to that of the youth development arm of the nation's land grant universities. 4-H is gaining recognition for its positive youth development in the areas of science, health, leadership, and personal growth in life skills and community involvement for youth from all walks of life.



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