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**Vamos Outdoors Project's Innovative Schools Based Programs During COVID-19:
Program Assessment**

By

Andy Basabe

Accepted in Partial Completion
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Master's Project

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Andy Basabe

06/01/2021

Vamos Outdoors Project's Innovative Schools Based Programs During COVID-19:

Program Assessment

A Project Presented to The Faculty of Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts

Andy Basabe

Western Washington University

Advisor: Dr. Grace Wang

Committee Members: Dr. Amber Worthington, Dr. Steve Hollenhorst

June

2021

Abstract:

This Masters of Arts Project describes the evolution of a pilot program to a scale model that served youth in the Bellingham School District who were identified as “10% furthest from opportunity” and/or Latinx, Migrant, and English Language Learner (ELL) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Vamos Outdoors Project delivered the pilot project in partnership with the Bellingham School District, serving students in-person and on-site to improve educational and socio-emotional outcomes during online learning and quarantine. The scale model, Connections, was delivered as a multi-organizational community partnership with the same goals. As the literature describes, Latinx, ELL, and Migrant youth experience inequitable educational and social outcomes and disproportionately benefit from experiential and socio-emotional learning. Influenced by Bourdieu’s theory of social capital, Vamos connected youth to mentors who helped navigate online learning and supported socio-emotional development through outdoor activities. Access to mentors and other program resources helped students build social capital and find joy, thus improving educational and socio-emotional outcomes during remote learning and quarantine.

Data from qualitative and quantitative assessments from both the pilot and scale programs indicate that participants improved academic outcomes and socio-emotional development during a time when they faced barriers to success in school. This project is an evaluation of the pilot and scale programs and serves as a case study that demonstrates how the two programs benefited participants during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been completed if not for the help of my advisor Dr. Grace Wang and my committee members, Dr. Amber Worthington and Dr. Steve Hollenhorst. I would also like to thank Dr. Kate Darby and Dr. Nini Hayes for the conversations that sustained me during my time as a grad student. Dr. Paul Thomas, thanks for going out of your way to help me get started. Thanks to all of the staff, volunteers, participants, and families that make Vamos Outdoors Project a great place to work.



“Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a chance to change the world.” ~ Dolores Huerta

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Positionality

I, Andy Basabe, as the writer of this program evaluation, would like to acknowledge the various positions, perspectives, privileges, and experiences I hold in order for the reader to better understand how my subjectivity is a part of this project. First, as well as being a graduate student at Western Washington University, I am also the founder and a director of the Vamos Outdoors Project, the organization whose programs I am evaluating. In summer and fall 2020, I was the sole director of Vamos Outdoors Project; I now share that role with a co-director. Vamos Outdoors Project administrative staff and board of directors are majority white, as is most nonprofit leadership. Vamos serves communities of color, perpetuating the white supremacy practice of white leaders making decisions for communities that they are not a part of and with whom they do not share lived experience. As a person whose intersectionality is expressive of the culturally dominant paradigm (white, able, cis-gender, straight, male) that has benefitted me my whole life, I am hoping that my efforts to leverage my privilege to the benefits of more marginalized communities is resulting in good than harm. I also recognize that my biases likely affect this project, as I am the designer of the program, the one who carried out the research, and the writer of the evaluation. In being both the designer and the evaluator of a program, I likely have a conflict of interest in the outcomes of this report. Unfortunately, the scarcity of funding for grassroots nonprofits that serve communities of color makes it difficult to ensure robust data and rigorous analysis by impartial researchers. I wrote this project in the third person, but the references to Vamos Outdoors Project's actions or claims made that are not cited in the literature refer to my actions and my claims based on my experiences, observations, and conversations as the director of Vamos Outdoors Project.

Introduction

This Master's project evaluates programs that took place during the COVID-19 pandemic in the summer and fall of 2020. Society experienced changes to daily life unprecedented in living memory. Municipal entities took efforts to limit in-person human interaction to lower the risk of transmitting the disease. Occuring at the same time, one of the biggest social movements in the United States' history, commonly referred to as Black Lives Matter, explicitly highlighted the struggles of minorities and BIPOC due to racism and inequities. As a result of these unprecedented circumstances, engaging in scholarly pursuits as a graduate student in Environmental Studies required flexibility.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, state government lockdown measures disrupted traditional education and childcare services by closing schools and childcare centers. This disruption affected all families in Whatcom and Skagit Counties. For local school officials and nonprofit leaders, these closures were concerning due to the perceived inequitable burdens that would be placed upon Latinx, English Language Learner (ELL), Migrant, and/or other families identified as the "10% furthest from opportunity". Those families depend on school districts for an inordinate number of services compared to the population at large, as this paper will describe further. As these disruptions were likely more impactful to families already marginalized, Whatcom County's outdoor and educational organizations had an opportunity to implement emergent programming to address access to education and childcare, as well as mental and physical health within the COVID-19 context.

Vamos Outdoors Project (Vamos) is a nonprofit serving Latinx, ELL, and Migrant families in Whatcom and Skagit Counties. Its mission is “Building Community Through Connection to the Land and Access to the Outdoors”. Vamos was one of the local organizations responding to community needs emerging during the COVID-19 pandemic. Vamos provides community resources and representational mentorship to youth and families, primarily through outdoors and recreational programming, as well as academic programs in partnership with schools. As the COVID-19 pandemic, and lockdown progressed during the spring of 2020, Vamos received feedback from families and school staff that more support was needed, especially childcare, academic support, and opportunities for social interactions in lower risk settings, such as the outdoors. While searching for ways to respond to these needs, Vamos determined that in-person services could be provided to families when framed as childcare, according to the Washington State Department of Health. Many of the families Vamos serves did not otherwise have access to traditional childcare. Vamos reached out to the Bellingham School District to partner to provide childcare services in a mostly outdoors, COVID-19 low-risk setting, thus helping to mitigate the inequities in access to services during the COVID-19 pandemic for the families that Vamos serves. This program, the 2020 Summer Migrant Summer Childcare Program, was the first program to return youth to schools in Whatcom County during the COVID-19 lockdown. There were no in-program transmissions of COVID-19 during this program.

In the fall of 2020, schools in Whatcom County continued remote learning for students and families. Therefore, a cohort of environmental and outdoor education organizations collaborated to design a program similar to the 2020 Migrant Summer Childcare Program, as continued

remote learning was likely to result in inequities, especially for families who did not speak English or were otherwise identified by the school district as in need of support to succeed during online learning. This program, called Connections, was designed in the same manner as the Summer Migrant Childcare Program. Community based outdoors and environmental education organizations would work with students in schools to support their academics and provide outdoor enrichment activities.

This project describes the development and implementation of these two programs, as well as the evaluation based on data collected during both programs. The Summer Migrant Childcare program is referred to as the pilot program, and Connections is referred to as the program for evaluation. Both programs collected qualitative and quantitative data for assessment, although Connections had more students, more service days, and more elements to evaluate.

In contextualizing this program evaluation within academic literature, this project applies Bourdieu's theories of social capital (1977, 1980, 2002) to the fields of environmental and experimental education, with a focus on their impacts on the Latinx, ELL, and Migrant communities. The social capital provided in the Summer Migrant Childcare program and in Connections was primarily in-person support for youth who were forced to navigate their daily lives unsupported due to the lack of access to teachers and childcare and whose parents were working and unavailable to assist or supervise their children during the school day. The evaluation data collected indicated that students improved in socio-emotional learning as measured by increased engagement with academic mentors, academic learning, and outdoor

activities. Students found joy in their experiences in the two programs, which they shared through qualitative interviews.

Social capital can be defined as the social resources that exist in the relationships between individuals and groups wherein such resources can be accessed and used to reach individual or collective goals (Bourdieu 1977, 1980, 2002; Coleman 1988; Lin, 1999; Putnam, 1993, 2000). The COVID-19 pandemic was a disruption to the social capital networks of the students and families served by the Summer Migrant Childcare Program and the Connections Program. Pierre Bourdieu's work on social capital (Bourdieu 1977, 1980, 2002) is especially important as it highlights the influence of power and inequities in social capital. During the COVID-19 pandemic, people of color were more likely to get sick and die from the COVID-19 virus (APM Research Lab 2021). People of color were also more likely to lose jobs and/or income during the COVID-19 pandemic (Pew Research Center, September 2020). Youth of color were more likely to fall behind in educational achievement (Barnum & Bryan, 2020). Community school programs that connect youth and families to community based organizations through schools, such as the Summer Migrant Childcare Program and Connections Program, foster supportive relationships that can help close these educational gaps. Social capital does not alleviate the harms of poverty and racism directly, but strong relationships with others enable people to access resources they need and can leverage more resources for whole communities (Ferguson, 2006; Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

The two programs assessed in this project included elements of environmental and experiential education, as well as mentorship. Benefits of these programs are based on the same assumption

for social capital that fostering supportive relationships can benefit participants, as described in the literature review. Studies show that environmental and experiential education positively impact youth of color at a higher rate than the overall population, specifically for educational and socio-emotional outcomes (Chawla, 2001; Krasny et al., 2013; Louv, 2006).

The two programs evaluated in this project primarily serve youth of color and youth whose families do not speak English at home. The literature on social capital posits that fostering supportive relationships can help individuals and communities mitigate or overcome gaps (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch 1995; Marlino & Wilson, 2006; Garcia-Reid 2007; Ream 2008; Zembrana 2002; Clemons 2016; Contreras, 2011; Kirst & Reeves Bracco, 2004; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004), such as those that arise from the COVID-19 quarantines and remote learning . Environmental and experiential education, which are foundational aspects of these programs, also depend on fostering supportive relationships between participants and mentors. Due to these connections, this project frames the evaluation of the programs within Bourdieu's theory of social capital (1977, 1980, 2002) and focuses on how relationships between groups and individuals provide access to other resources. The following Literature Review section will elaborate more on these connections.

While most program evaluations written in an academic setting rely primarily upon academic literature to inform the development and evaluation of the program, the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated acting within frameworks outside of academia. The development of these programs therefore relied on the best judgement of experts within outdoor education and the public school system to frame what needs they would meet, and what

inequities they would hopefully help mitigate. For that reason, some of the decisions made during these programs in response to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic were expert opinions and judgements of practitioners, and not the results of using the scientific method. In these instances, the claims are cited to the claimant.

Literature Review

Social Capital:

Social capital has been used and contested by social scientists as a tool for understanding processes and outcomes within social systems. Much of the foundational work developing this theory comes from Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, and Robert Putnam. Social capital can be defined as the social resources that exist in the relationships between individuals and groups wherein such resources can be accessed and used to reach individual or collective goals (Bourdieu 1977, 1980, 1986, 2002; Coleman 1988; Lin, 1999; Putnam, 1993, 2000). However, some claim that social capital relies on circular reasoning and lacks analytical clarity (Portes 1998; Krasny 2015). Others critique social capital in that it removes context and totalizes experiences across groups (Naughton, 2015; Somers, 1994; Grossman, 2013). To understand how social capital is used as an academic theory, it is important to understand how the theory was conceptualized within its three traditions, as developed by Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam.

Putnam (2000) describes social capital as the social ties between one or more actors within a community network of relations. Putnam (2000) highlights two types of social capital: bonding and bridging. Bonding is social capital that lies within one's social network and is an exclusionary form of capital that binds people together based on similarities. Bridging capital are relationships that extend outside of one's immediate community, generate connections across groups, and build broader communities. Putman (2000) characterizes bridging capital as "WD-40" and bonding as "glue". Putnam (1993, 1995, 2000) views social capital as an

important aspect of communities, and much of his writing is about the loss of social capital in the United States.

Coleman (1988) describes social capital as the “structure of relations between actors and among actors” (p. S98). Coleman’s (1988) definition stems from agency and structure, meaning the formation of social capital, and what it means to have social capital. To Coleman (1988), social capital has three components: expectations/obligations and trust, social norms, and information channels. Expectations are established when one actor provides for another. Reciprocity is expected, and it is trusted that this new obligation will be met at an appropriate time (Coleman, 1998, 2000). Social norms are the community-wide norms based on the shared expectations and obligations of a group of people (Coleman, 1988; Elster, 2003; Demant & Jarvinen, 2011). An example used by Coleman (1988) is that a child can walk alone unaccompanied in Jerusalem, and the community will see that the child is safe. Information channels are relations that people can use to find and collect information (Coleman, 1988). One important point of Coleman’s (1988) take on social capital is that simply by being part of a group, one has social capital. One does not have to act in order to gain social capital (Coleman, 1988).

Both Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2000) view social capital as a public good and not something that is privately held by individuals. Putnam’s (2000) research focused primarily on community as the point of social capital, while Coleman (1988) focused instead on the family and education. The two of them have created theoretical frameworks to “see” social capital. In comparing Coleman and Putnam, Grossman (2013) writes “the most critical difference between the two is that Coleman focuses more on function and is less specific, whereas Putnam focuses on the

content as well as the structure of the relationship and the relationship's place in the larger network" (p. 28).

Bourdieu (1977, 1980, 1986, 2002) examines social capital as a way of understanding inequality. His work analyzed different types of capital: social, economic, cultural, and symbolic (Bourdieu, 1977, 1980, 2002). Bourdieu (1986) described social capital as mutable into other forms of capital through social acts. Bourdieu's (1986) work is especially important as it highlights the influence of power and inequities in social capital. While Bourdieu (1986) highlights this, he did not produce much work relating to social capital. Scholars critiquing applications of social capital ask why Bourdieu's theory is not included in the works of other scholars (e.g., Portes, 1998; Field, 2003).

Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992) definition of social capital is based in Marxism and is as follows:

“[s]ocial capital is the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (p. 211).

Much of the current critique of social capital (e.g., Naughton, 2014; Grossman, 2013; Lin, 1999; Somers, 1994) as totalizing finds influence in Bourdieu and Wacquant's (2002) definition, as Bourdieu was forward thinking in his depiction of social capital as context based. In Bourdieu's (1984, 1986, 2002) theory of inequality, which he extends to public education, he sets the

framework for not only looking at social capital, but also the manner in which it is distributed and the resulting inequalities due to disproportionate availability of resources. As described by Naughton (2014), social capital is a problematic and contested theory, without a standard definition in the literature. Social capital can be examined through the individual and community context. Without a standard concept of social capital to draw upon from the literature, this project relies on a combination of sources regarding social capital.

The inequality of social capital is critical to the current project. Specifically, barriers in access to social capital contribute to the inequities in accessibility to resources for Latinx, ELL, and Migrant youth in the United States. Latinx, ELL, and Migrant youth are faced with inequities in public education in the United States, and this results in lower levels of college attendance and even lower levels of college graduation (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995; Marlino & Wilson, 2006; Garcia-Reid, 2007; Ream 2008; Zembrana 2002; Clemons, 2016; Contreras, 2011; Kirst & Reeves Bracco, 2004; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004). In analyzing the interactions between current first-generation college students working as mentors, those who have exceptionally found means to surmount the inequities to higher education, and those who have yet to attempt to surmount those barriers, through a social capital framework, This project uses a social capital framework to design and evaluate a pilot and scale program focused on the needs of Latinx, ELL, and Migrant youth in Whatcom County.

Environmental Education

This section examines environmental education (EE), with a focus on youth development instead of educational curriculum. This section also covers the intersection of EE and social capital.

Many studies posit that social capital and youth development are linked (Ferguson, 2006; Eccles & Gootman, 2002). According to the National Association of Environmental Educators (NAEE 2021),

“Environmental education (EE) is a process that helps individuals, communities, and organizations learn more about the environment, and develop skills and understanding about how to address global challenges. It has the power to transform lives and society. It informs and inspires. It influences attitudes. It motivates action. EE is a key tool in expanding the constituency for the environmental movement and creating healthier and more civically-engaged communities”

(<https://naaee.org/about-us/about-ee-and-why-it-matters>)

EE is traditionally a white and privileged institution with low numbers of staff and leadership from communities of color (Romero, 2019). Due to that, EE has focused on issues that resonate with privileged white people (Romero 2019). Leaders of color in EE and recreation claim that access, equity, representation, and mentorship are critical if EE wants to appeal to communities of color (Romero, 2019).

A variety of EE organizations are designing programming with youth development in mind, especially those with a focus on social justice and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity (DEI) principles (Romero, 2019). Scholars have examined other youth development outcomes in EE, such as educational achievement (Ernst & Monroe, 2004) and intergenerational relationships (Ballantyne, Connell, & Fien, 2006). Many empirical studies and reports link evidence of social capital at the individual youth, family, and community level to positive outcomes for youth, including reducing adolescent pregnancy, delinquency, school failure, and child maltreatment, as well as enhancing happiness, health, high quality relationships with adults, and the ability to run meetings and other civil society skills (Bettertogether, 2000; Helve & Bynner, 2007; Ferguson, 2006; Jarrett, Sullivan, & Watkins, 2005; Lewis-Charp et al., 2003; Rossteutscher, 2008). Given growing interest in the role of EE in fostering youth well-being in minoritized communities (Chawla, 2001; Krasny et al., 2013; Louv, 2006), social capital linked to positive youth development provides a conceptual and analytical lens for EE oriented toward such community outcomes.

Academic research supports this. For example, according to Krasny, Kalbaker, Stedman, and Russ (2015):

“EE should engage with social capital for the following reasons: (1) the need to adapt programs to address youth development and other outcomes of interest to low-income urban and other stressed communities; (2) the ability of social capital to expand on existing work in participatory, emancipatory and related approaches to EE” (p. 5).



Image 2. Vamos participants look over a bridge in the forest.

Needs Statement and COVID-19 Pandemic Context

As of May 2021, at the writing of this project, the COVID-19 pandemic has inflicted a combination of disparate negative impacts on the Latinx community. Latinx women's employment decreased by more than any other demographic (Koeze, E. 2021). Specifically, Latinx communities experienced disparate COVID-19 health outcomes, including 1.3 times as many confirmed cases of COVID-19 as whites and 3.1 times as many hospitalizations due to the COVID-19 virus as whites; Latinx individuals were also 2.4 times more likely to die from the COVID-19 virus as whites (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). For schools with high Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) populations, students entering school in the fall of 2020 were disproportionately further below grade level than the historical average (Curriculum Associates, 2020). Families without legal citizenship, which are primarily Latinx in Washington State, were not given stimulus checks to reduce economic hardship (American Immigration Council, 2020). Families without legal citizenships also did not qualify for childcare subsidies in Washington, which limited their access to childcare alternatives while their children were out of school (Department of Youth, Children, and Family, 2020). The psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affect young people (Power, Hughes, Cotter, Cannon, 2020). Migrant families are particularly isolated and cut off from resources (Kaplan 2020; Hurtado-de-Mendoza, Gonzalez, Serrano, Kaltman, 2014).

Vamos Outdoors Project (Vamos) serves Latinx, ELL, and Migrant families through connection to the land and access to the outdoors for youth. After the lockdown measures began in Washington in March 2020, Vamos stopped providing programming. The youth and families

served by Vamos fall into the demographics described above (i.e., Latinx, ELL, and Migrant) and experienced disparate negative outcomes due to the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine. Based on communication with families and school staff, concern arose among Vamos staff and Bellingham School District (BSD) staff for school age youth who were at home without parental supervision or internet access to participate in remote learning. In addition, families who did not speak english struggled to understand what was being asked of them, and the students were often at home alone, attempting to learn in a language they did not speak, with no support. The assumptions described in the following paragraphs are a summary of the conclusions reached between Bellingham School District and Vamos staff based on their knowledge of the situation at the time and their relative expertise in working with the community.

In conversations between Vamos staff and BSD staff, it became clear that both parties were concerned by the closure of schools, as they believed that Latinx, ELL, and Migrant families depend on school districts for many resources, including childcare, meals, transportation, school supplies, toys, social networks, and wrap-around services, such as access to counselors and social workers. If students were not in school, Vamos and BSD staff reasoned, they would not have access to these resources. The overlap between Latinx, Migrant, and ELL and low-income in the Bellingham School District is highest in the most diverse schools in the district, which are also Title 1 schools. Therefore, if families were cut off from school based resources, this will affected Latinx, ELL, and migrant families more than white families. The Vamos and BSD staff further believed that Latinx, ELL, and Migrant families were also cut off from access to community based organization programming for their children, in a similar manner to childcare, in that few resources are available to pay for and provide transportation to childcare or

community based activities for youth. Latinx, ELL, and Migrant families primarily participate in community organizations' programming through the school system where it is free to access. In Bellingham, all in person programs were closed as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown measures, but organizations were still able to offer services that aligned with the various phases of re-opening in Washington State.

The main takeaway from these conversations was that the youth from the families that Vamos serves were essentially cut off from all socialization, education, and joyous activities during the COVID-19 lockdown measures. Based on information gathered from participant input and family visits, Vamos therefore proposed to the BSD to provide programming specifically for Latinx, Migrant, and ELL youth, with the intent of mitigating many of the aforementioned barriers to education, specifically remote learning and isolation. The partnership between the school district and a community based organization was especially valuable during the COVID-19 pandemic as each side had resources and capacities that could only be utilized during the COVID-19 lockdown measures as part of a partnership. The BSD had data on student attendance and participation in online learning, but they were not able to connect students with staff or other in-person supports. Vamos had staff with built relationships with these students and families and could provide in person services, but did not know which students needed the most support. Vamos would provide staff in schools to support the students, based on the literature regarding social capital and EE that demonstrate that connecting youth to mentors and providing meaningful educational experiences provides a disproportionately positive impact on marginalized and/or minoritized students. (Bettersogether, 2000; Chawla, 2001; Helve & Bynner, 2007; Ferguson, 2006; Jarrett, Sullivan, & Watkins, 2005; Krasny et al., 2013; Louv, 2006;

Lewis-Charp et al., 2003; Rossteutscher, 2008). The BSD would provide transportation, meals, and administrative support. Together, Vamos and the BSD hoped to improve academic and socio-emotional outcomes in the students served, as both parties were already concerned about inequities facing these youth and families, and that the pandemic would likely make those inequities worse.

These previous sections introduced the academic literature grounding this project and the specific community need due to the COVID-19 pandemic that inspired these programs. This project now turns to describing and evaluating the pilot program (i.e., the Vamos Migrant Summer Childcare Program) and the scale program (i.e., the Connections Program).

Pilot Program: Vamos Migrant Summer Childcare Program

Vamos worked in conjunction with the BSD to run an in-person summer childcare program in a school building that provided supervision, transportation, meals, academic support, and access to outdoor activities. The BSD applied summer migrant funding from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) that would normally be used to provide a summer programming for Migrant youth. This program was called the *Vamos Summer Migrant Childcare* program (VSMC).

The program provided childcare for 24 students in pre-kindergarten through 8th grade, Monday-Thursday, at Kulshan Middle School from (date) to (date). Students identified as Migrant by the Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (WA OSPI) were eligible, and students were selected based on location, as funding and COVID-19 protocols only allowed for one school bus for transportation. VSMC participants were divided into 3 classrooms based on grade level. Students spent the morning in outdoor programming, and the afternoon focused on academic activity in both indoor and outdoor settings. On average, students spent more than half of the day outside. Outdoor activities included park walks, nature games, mountain biking, and unstructured playtime at Kulshan Middle School, Galbraith Mountain, and Whatcom Falls Park. Outdoor activities were provided by Vamos, Whatcom Mountain Bike Coalition, and Wild Whatcom.



Image 3. Vamos participants wait for the bus, socially distanced.

Each classroom was staffed by 2 adults, with a teacher/paraeducator and a representational educator as an academic mentor in all classrooms. This created a different classroom atmosphere than the students were accustomed to, as they were the majority, not the minority, as migrant youth. Classroom curriculum was focused on the lived experience of migrant youth, including Spanish Language Arts, La Lectura, and Story Circle, a peer to peer support program designed to mitigate isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Image 4. Vamos participants sit in front of a shelter they built.

Evaluations of the summer migrant program were completed as pre- and posttest assessments of math and English language proficiency and qualitative interviews. Under the OSPI grant requirements, the VSMC was required to test math and English language arts proficiency at the beginning and end of the program, demonstrating maintaining or improving those skills over the course of the program. Students were also interviewed about their experience using online learning, providing qualitative data on each student’s engagement with remote learning.

The math and English language arts pre- and posttest assessments were administered by academic mentors. Prior to the VMSC program, standardized exams were use as a pre-test for all students in the cohort.

After the completion of the VMSC program, project based learning was used to assess achievement. This meant that academic mentors designed individualized projects for each student based on the initial data from the pre-test. The academic mentor then subjectively assessed achievement using a 1-100 scale and compared student improvement in relation to grade level.

There was one positive COVID-19 case at the housing complex where the students lived during the third week of the VMSC programming. Some students in the program were required to quarantine, and others chose to withdraw from the program to reduce potential exposure. Due to this, only 10 students were able to complete the pre and post English language arts and math assessments. Of those 10, all students maintained or improved scores. Seven students showed improvement in at least one of the categories. Two students scored higher in the Spanish version of the assessment; all others scored higher in the English versions.

The qualitative interviews assessed engagement with remote learning. Students were asked if they engaged in online learning after schools closed and why or why not. Most students said that they could not access online learning due to a lack of the required device or a lack of connection. The data from these surveys were used to develop inform remote learning policies in preparation for the upcoming school year.

Table 1 displays the pre- and post-intervention assessments for math and English language arts proficiency. Include information here on how each was scored, including range (i.e., lowest possible score and highest possible score).

Table 1. VSMC Math and English Language Arts Proficiency Pre- and Posttest Assessment Scores

| Student | Grade | Attendance | Math Pre | Math Post | ELA Pre | ELA Post |
|---------|-------|------------|----------------|-----------|----------------|---------------|
| 1 | 2 | 17 | 64 Eng/34 Span | NS | 70 Eng/0 Span | NS |
| 2 | 6 | 19 | 50 | 100 | 69 | 69 |
| 3 | 3 | 4 | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| 4 | 6 | 4 | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| 5 | 1 | 9 | 50 Eng/26 Span | NS | 64 Eng/NS | NS |
| 6 | Pre-K | 9 | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| 7 | 6 | 9 | 100 | NS | 87 | NS |
| 8 | 2 | 10 | 96 Eng/86 Span | NS | 95 Eng/60 Span | NS |
| 9 | 3 | 10 | 60 | NS | NS | NS |
| 10 | 7 | 10 | 100 | NS | 100 | NS |
| 11 | 2 | 16 | 75 | 85 | 65 | 75 |
| 12 | 7 | 16 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| 13 | 9 | 3 | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| 14 | 9 | 3 | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| 15 | 4 | 12 | 70 | NS | 50 | NS |
| 16 | 5 | 12 | 90 | NS | 80 | NS |
| 17 | 1 | 11 | 82 Eng/34 Span | NS | 79 Eng/29 Span | NS |
| 18 | 5 | 11 | 47 | NS | 56 | NS |
| 19 | 5 | 11 | 90 | NS | 90 | NS |
| 20 | 1 | 19 | 94 Eng/NS | NS/NS | 90 Eng/NS | NS |
| 21 | 3 | 19 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| 22 | 5 | 17 | 65 | 85 | 25 | 50 |
| 23 | 7 | 17 | 66 | NS | 31 | 100 |
| 24 | 8 | 16 | 0 | 100 | 44 | 100 |
| 25 | 9 | 2 | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| 26 | 1 | 18 | 34 Eng/38 Span | 44 Eng/NS | 19 Eng/4 Span | 21 Eng/NS |
| 27 | 3 | 2 | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| 28 | 1 | 19 | 32 Eng/92 Span | 40 Eng/NS | 5 Eng/64 Span | 9 Eng/66 Span |
| 29 | 3 | 9 | NS | 70 | NS | 75 |

Table 2. Total Attendance, VSMC

| Total School Days Attended | Average Attendance | % of students >15 days |
|----------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| 334/551 | 11.5 | 39% |

Pilot Programs Methods

Pre/Post Math and ELA Assessments

The academic mentors in each cohort provided the pre- and posttest assessments to students in their classes, although some students missed one or both of the assessments due to attendance struggles. In the pre-kindergarten to 2nd grade classroom, mentors used the K-screen to assess the students on their math and ELA proficiency at the beginning of the VSMC program. The K-Screen (see appendix) is a tool designed by BSD kindergarten teachers to assess student readiness for kindergarten.

In the 3rd to 5th grade classroom, the pretest assessment included assignments that allowed the students to apply a variety of math and ELA skills. Academic mentors recorded which skills the students were able to apply. Then, project based learning was utilized during the VSMC program to give the students opportunities to build upon the skills they had used in the pre-test in order to develop new skills with the support of their mentors. Student achievement in the post-test was based on how many new skills the students had gained during the VSMC program. One highlight was a third grader who read his very first book during the program in Spanish, his native language.

In the 6th to 8th grade classroom, the pretest assessment included math problems and samples of student written work. The students were then given projects to work on that allowed them to

develop their skills with the support of their mentors. Their improvement was measured at the end of the program using the same assessments as the pretest.

Socio-Emotional Learning

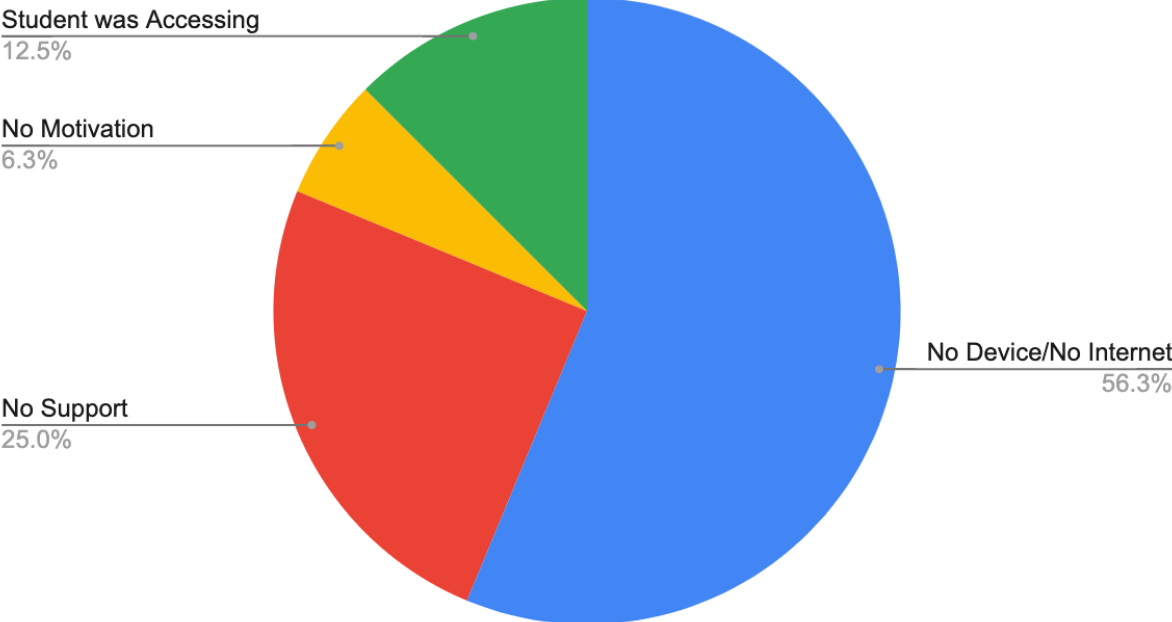
All students in the program completed qualitative interviews before and after the VSMC program. For the K-2 cohort, some of the questions were adjusted to be age appropriate. Students were also interviewed by the program administrator during the program to talk about issues relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health, socio-emotional learning, and school engagement. This data was added to the socio-emotional dataset to assess the impact of the VSMC program on student socio-emotional development.

Online Learning Participation

Students were also interviewed about their engagement and response to remote learning at the beginning of the VSMC program.

Figure 1. Reasons Why Students Were Not Accessing Remote Learning (Spring 2020)

Barriers to Access Online Learning-Spring 2020



Some students cited multiple reasons

Pilot Program Conclusions

Vamos Migrant Summer Childcare highlighted barriers that Latinx, ELL, and Migrant students face during remote learning, as well as barriers that some students face in school whether remote or in person. This program was successful at connecting students with online classrooms, as almost all had not been connected prior. This program also highlighted the struggles to maintain attendance rates of in-person schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic due to both actual COVID-19 cases and fear of potential COVID-19 infection. Students also spoke about issues that concerned them about regular school. Students also were able to hold conversations that reflected their lived experiences, which allowed for group socio-emotional development.

During one story circle for the 3-5 grade cohort, Ana, the academic mentor described how she and her family would slaughter chickens and pigs for food. Students responded that they also would slaughter animals with their families and began telling stories to each other about family events where animal slaughtering for food took place. Students began to comment that they did not know that the others did so, and that they had thought that it was only something their own families did. All of the students live in the same apartment complex, and many had known each other for years. It was incredible to witness the students come to the realization that they all had something in common, and it was incredible for the academic mentors to realize that in all of their years in elementary school together, the students had never been provided with a lesson, anecdote, or prompt that allowed for them to share this conversation with each other. In the same conversation, two girls from different families realized that both of their families came from Oaxaca and began talking about food and customs. These girls have lived in the same apartment

complex and attended the same school for years and never had the opportunity to share that information. Having an “affinity space” (Myers et al. 2019) in a school setting allowed the students to feel confident expressing themselves through their identities, and doing so helped develop bonds between the students and academic mentors.



Image 5. Vamos participants eat fruit cups with Tajin.

Table 3. Student Responses-Interviews with Academic Mentors about VSMC

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| Would you want to come back to a place like this? | Yes, because it's helping me, bring my confidence, and I'm really happy because when I was in school, I wasn't that happy. I was, like, sad. |
| (Student Prompt) "So when we go back to school, will there be police?" | [Student] does not think police should be in schools. She mentioned that kids are already going through a lot of trauma and that seeing police in the schools just makes it seem more scary, that she's thinking about the BLM movement (Black Lives Matter) and that having police there doesn't seem helpful to solve problems. [Student] she thought it would be okay if police officers were in our school if they didn't have weapons. |
| What do you like about this Vamos program? | I'm happy because I feel free and because I don't have to stay home all the time. I like that we are going in the forest and riding bikes but I am so nervous to crash and get injured. I also don't trust myself on the bike. |

This program was also successful in its implementation and in its commitment to equity. This program was the first program to explicitly include mountain biking in the school district

insurance and waivers. Mountain biking is expensive, and the participants in VSMC face barriers to access mountain biking. Enabling them to access mountain biking through school builds equity, as mountain biking is a very popular activity in Bellingham, and the students in VSMC now count mountain biking as something that can connect them to other students, not divide them. Mountain biking was the favorite outdoor activity of the students. This program also helped mitigate inequities derived from remote learning, as remote learning favored students that had devices, Internet access, and available support.



Image 6. Vamos Participants ride bikes at the pump track.

Connections

In Fall 2020, BSD's schools were closed. Students were participating in education via remote learning, including class that was conducted online with Zoom and other similar programs. Some of the barriers faced by students in the VSMC program had been addressed, such as lack of devices and lack of internet access, as the BSD had provided devices and Internet connections to all students in the district. Some of the other barriers, such as lack of support and lack of motivation, still existed. Families who depended on school districts to provide childcare during the day while parents worked were leaving kids at home during the day to learn on their own. Along with these daily struggles, young people were increasingly reporting feeling isolated, and suicide ideation was on the rise¹. The success of the VSMC in helping students and families access school-based resources inspired community organizations to advocate to continue to provide similar programs. The BSD agreed to again partner with Vamos and other community organizations to provide an in-school program for up to 144 students designated as 10% furthest from opportunity.

Wild Whatcom, another outdoor/environmental education organization in Bellingham, took the role as lead organization for Connections, as Wild Whatcom had more staff capacity to manage a larger program. Connections was a collaborative program, with nine organizations working together to collectively serve students. The following organizations provided staff and programming: Wild Whatcom, Vamos Outdoors Project, North Cascades Institute, Common Threads, Whatcom Mountain Bike Coalition, Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association,

¹ <https://www.hca.wa.gov/assets/program/covid-19-provider-alert-regarding-suicide-risk-in-youth.pdf>

ReSources, City of Bellingham Parks and Recreation, and Allied Arts. Collectively, these organizations provided over 50 staff members to directly serve students in classrooms or outside through enrichment programming.

Connections was funded through collaborative fundraising involving all organizations involved. In three months, over \$120,000 was raised by community organizations to pay for staffing and materials. The BSD and Common Threads provided in-kind donations of meals, food preparation and delivery, facilities usage (Kulshan and Shuksan Middle Schools), technology support, community outreach, and transportation. The funding was channeled through the Whatcom Community Foundation, as there were multiple major donors. The Whatcom Community Foundation passed the funding on to Wild Whatcom, who paid all of the community organizations involved through invoices.

The school district provided a list of prospective students two weeks prior to the first day of Connections. Vamos completed all outreach and enrollment, including in-person waiver signing and enrolled over 100 students into the program. The Family Resource Center assisted with enrollment for a small number of students whose families spoke languages that were outside the scope of the staff of Vamos. There were at least 12 different first languages within the student population at Connections.

The daily schedule was as follows:

8:25am - 9:00 am: Students arrive, COVID-19 screening, breakfast outdoors

9:00 am - 12:00 pm: Online learning with breaks (often outside)

12:00 pm - 12:30 pm: Lunch outdoors

12:30pm - 2:00 pm: Outdoor Activity (e.g.,iking, garden education, nature activities, play)

2:00 pm - 3:15 pm: Supported Learning Time, asynchronous or facilitated by Connections staff

3:15 pm - 3:45 pm: Free Choice Activity (e.g.,walk in the park, outdoor games, crafts)

3:45 pm: Dismissal

Students were divided into two groups referred to as A group and B group. Half of the students came to Connections on Mondays and Tuesdays, and the other half came on Thursdays and Fridays. Wednesdays were available for cleaning and as a buffer day between groups in case of a COVID-19 transmission onsite at a school. The program ran for 8 weeks. The A group had 16 days in Connections, and the B group had 14 days due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Within the A and B groups, students were divided into cohorts based on grades. Cohorts generally consisted of Kindergarten-2nd grade, 3rd-5th grade, and 6th-8th grade. Due to available classrooms at the respective schools, there were 3 cohorts at Shuksan and 6 cohorts at Kulshan each day. Each cohort had an academic mentor whose job was to support and supervise students through their remote learning and support the outdoor activities. In practice, the academic mentors were much more than that and provided direct instruction, scaffolded the curriculum, facilitated free play and projects, and managed student behavior and needs. Each

cohort consisted of 8 students when fully attended. The academic mentors were hired from within the collective staff of Wild Whatcom, Vamos Outdoors Project, and the North Cascades Institute.

The various community organizations provided outdoor activities for participants. Wild Whatcom provided park and nature based activities. Common Threads provided meal time games and garden education. Whatcom Mountain Bike Coalition provided mountain biking. Bellingham Parks and Recreation provided a variety of park games and restoration activities. Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association provided restoration and salmon related activities. Resources provided games and environmental activities. Vamos Outdoors Project and North Cascades Institute did not provide any additional outdoor activities as their staff involved in the program were academic mentors.

The Connections program had four main goals: 1) to connect students to their education through access to online learning; 2) to connect students to outdoor enrichment, as students were isolated and spending lots of time indoors during the COVID-19 pandemic; 3) to connect students to basic needs, as many families typically depended on schools for meals, childcare, clothing, and other resources; and 4) to connect students to peers, adults, community, and local parks. The program was designed to meet the emerging needs of students and families during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the unprecedented nature of the pandemic required flexibility and creativity to support those involved.



Image 7. Vamos participants in Connections with their mentor.

Connections Methods

During the Connections program, students, staff, community partners, and BSD staff were given quantitative and qualitative surveys to assess student outcomes. At the beginning of the program, academic mentors completed open-ended survey questions to record their impressions of students' ability to connect to online learning as they arrived in the program. In the middle of the program, academic mentors completed open-ended surveys to assess how effectively students were engaging with online learning and how the student's needs were being supported during Connections. At the end of the program, academic mentors were given a survey including quantitative scale responses ranging from 1 to 5 regarding student success in connecting to online learning at the beginning and end of the program, student success in engaging with outdoor programming at the beginning and end of the program, and their relationship with their teachers and school at the beginning and end of the program. Students were directly given open-ended surveys at the end of the program to learn what they liked and did not like, and where they did and did not feel successful, within Connections and within the framework of education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Community partners, academic mentors, and BSD staff were given surveys containing quantitative and qualitative questions to gather their feedback on the program and how successful the program was in supporting students during remote learning.

For a variety of reasons, there was little uniformity in how the surveys were administered to students, including differences in timing, differences in language, different proctors, and lack of training of delivery for proctors. However, the survey responses provided rich data of use for

evaluating the program.. Some students who were surveyed attended very little of the program, and others attended every day or almost every day, so there is data from students with a lot of exposure and students with little exposure. Data from program staff, BSD staff, and program partners were not comprehensive, meaning that not all of those who were given a survey responded. For those that did respond, some were present at Connections every day, and some were present for less than 10 days.

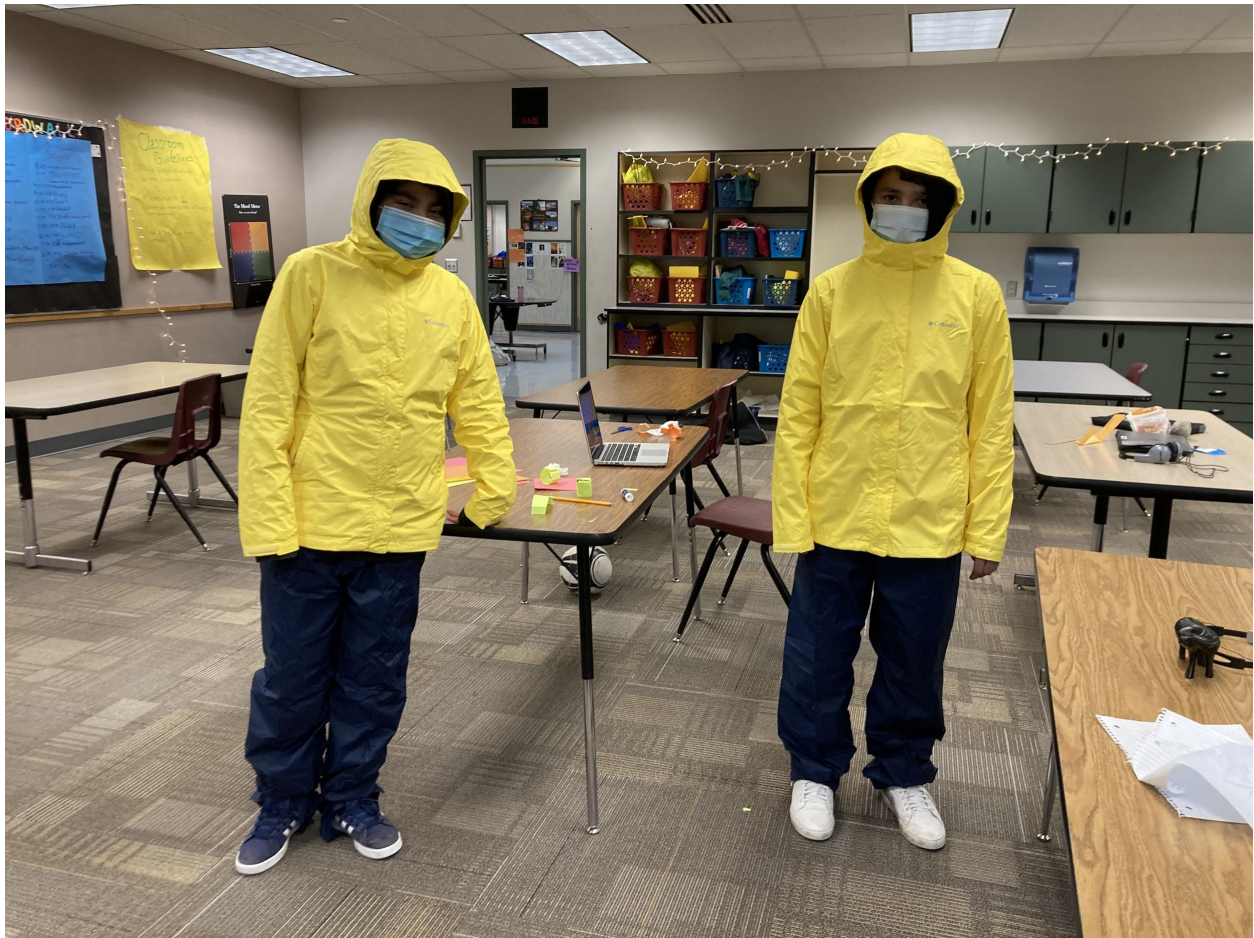


Image 8. Vamos participants try out their new raingear.

Results

The student responses from the student survey were coded in order to assess the frequency of related responses. Students were given seven questions, as seen in chart 5.

Table 4. Student Response to Interview Prompts

| Prompt | Response/ Frequency | Response/ Frequency | Response/ Frequency | Response/ Frequency |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| The hardest part of the coronavirus pandemic for me has been... | masks/washing hands/6 foot distances 25 responses | Not seeing family/friends 18 responses | can't go outside 14 responses | not go to public places 12 responses |
| The hardest part about participating in school during the coronavirus pandemic has been... | learning via computer 13 responses | nothing/unsure 13 responses | motivation/ Distractions 11 responses | isolation/ Social distancing 7 responses |
| My favorite part of the Connections program was... | mountain biking 28 responses | outdoor activities 11 responses | art music writing 10 responses | resource access (food, materials, clothing) 8 responses |

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| My favorite thing I learned in the Connections program was... | I don't know/ Unsure 19 responses | Biking 16 responses | enrichment activities 12 responses | Friends 7 responses |
| One thing that helps me learn is... | access to a teacher 25 responses | Tech support/ devices/school resources 10 responses | subject specific 9 responses | self control/ motivation 7 responses |
| If I could change one thing about the Connections program, I would change... | all good, stay open longer 17 responses | cold weather 10 responses | better food 9 responses | no social distancing 7 responses |
| Something I have in common with my academic mentor is.... | shared activity 16 responses | fun/joyful 16 responses | idk unsure 11 responses | like mtb 8 responses |

Some of the student responses are worth sharing, as they highlight the needs of students during remote learning.

- 1) The hardest part of the coronavirus pandemic for me has been...
 - a) Cuando no puedes salir a ningún lado.

- b) Not to see anybody, I can't go anywhere, I can't do anything. I don't get to see my friends and it is very hard to breathe with this mask.
 - c) Not being able to touch or get close to people, big sad.
 - d) Ya no podemos ir la escuela y abrazar a nuestros amigos
 - e) Wearing a mask and not being able to go to my school. There is a field with tall trees in the corner where I like to sit, its quiet there.
- 2) The hardest part about participating in school during the coronavirus pandemic has been...
- a) The hardest part has been needing to do work while in class to show that you are participating. My mom keeps getting calls that I wasn't in class but I was, I just wasn't doing the classwork.
 - b) Having to do it online. Probably that it is hard for me to focus when I am at home.
 - c) Joining the zoom
 - d) When I have school online i don't ask for help the same was as in school.
 - e) Yo querría preguntar algo, y no sabia cómo porque no hablo inglés.
 - f) Not sure. School got harder. Cause for PE we have to do flipgrids, and I didn't understand it, because I was late for the first day and I didn't know what to do.
- 3) My favorite part of the Connections program was...
- a) Books, I'm very glad I have books in my native language
 - b) Íbamos a manejar en bici.
 - c) We get food and jackets, a lot of stuff. Taking us to the park.
 - d) pizza and mountain bike and the internet and the water
 - e) That's its fun. We get to play around, when we have time. We get to see people

face to face. Biking was my favorite activity.

- f) We do activities and we get to use bikes. The tires are broken on my bike at home.
 - g) That they give you free stuff. My favorite activity is to play at the park. The swings
- 4) My favorite thing I learned in the Connections program was...
- a) Some new stuff like art and gardening.
 - b) Aprendi que tengo que estar no cerca a nadie si no vive con ellos.
 - c) La cosa que aprendí fue a hacer mis tareas solo y in poco de ingles.
 - d) How to ride a bike without training wheels.
 - e) Como manejar mejor las bicis, por que no sabia.
 - f) Making friends.
- 5) One thing that helps me learn is...
- a) Being able to get help from the teachers.
 - b) I learned how to read. I like to read. I tried to read here. I tried but I can't.
 - c) Paying attention. Trying to research other things. This helped me focus more by being put in this environment.
 - d) when people teach me
 - e) Like if something is hard and someone helps me.
 - f) aprendí a jugar.
 - g) Videos, paying more attention, at home I have to babysit my sister too.
 - h) being in the connections program because I get to meet new people and feel much better than home.
- 6) If I could change one thing about the Connections program, I would change...

- a) No coronavirus
 - b) I don't think so, it's all perfect.
 - c) La verdad no se. Podemos usar el teléfono durante los tiempos libres.
 - d) I would want everything on my computer to be unblocked.
 - e) Would want to play outside more
 - f) Having all my siblings with me so I can take care of them.
- 7) Something I have in common with my academic mentor is....
- a) I don't know. She is nice. We make slime sometimes, she sometimes asks what I do and I say the same things.
 - b) Not sure. Fun to talk to, full of energy, enthusiastic, caring, responsible.
 - c) Que es buen divertida, que es graciosa, se ríe mucha. Y me enseña el slime.
 - d) She does cool things. She convinces people to try things. Habla español conmigo.
 - e) That we are Mexican.
 - f) Nos gusta montar bicicletas.

As participants described in their responses, remote learning and the lockdown measures were difficult, especially for those who had language barriers or did not know how to navigate the technology. Participants also struggled with isolation. In their responses describing the Connections programs, participants described how Connections helped them overcome the struggles that they faced prior to enrolling in Connections. It is notable that the frequency of responses positively referencing mountain biking greatly outnumbers any other theme within the responses, and participants included positive references to mountain biking when answering

multiple questions. Based on the student responses, mountain biking was the highlight of the program.



Image 9. Vamos participant makes art with their academic mentor.

As one of the program goals was to support student learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, BSD teachers and staff were also given open-ended survey questions. The responses from community partners and school district staff also shed light as to how the program served the students.

Teacher and District Staff Responses:

1. The people you hire are really amazing. They interact with kids positively and connect with kids deeply. Though I don't know a lot about what specifically is happening at Connections, I can say theoretically that these connections your staff makes with kids can only help get them doing what they need to for synchronous learning. So much of teaching kids is about relationships. And I know this is something your organization holds in very high regard.
2. I really appreciated the program because I had 2 siblings that were not attending school at all remotely. With Connections, they started attending Mon and Tues.
3. This support is invaluable. Many of the students involved were struggling to attend in the online context. Indeed, many struggle with attendance and focus during regular classroom learning. The connections program also addresses social and emotional needs of these learners.
4. Connections works hard to provide equitable support for their many learners needs. They

have reached out to me to attend to mental health concerns and I know that all their students receive healthy food daily.

5. Great job overall. A good communication system would be good to set up between teachers of students and Connections program. Emails back and forth have helped meet the academic needs of the students.
6. Hooray for giving students extra support and scaffolding for their needs.
7. I know families were relieved to have kids eating two meals at school.
8. Students were able to practice biking, a skill many have not had the opportunity to try.
9. I wish students could have had more outdoor opportunities. I know the academic piece is important, but I feel like now, more than ever, socializing and connecting with physical activity is more important.
10. Very caring staff. They interact with the kids with respect and care. Emails were sent back and forth between program staff and teachers trying to help kids with their academic work.
11. The staff seemed supportive and helpful and most of all for my student, they helped him to be accountable for his actions and assignment. This is the element that was missing

when he was home.

The quantitative data from the academic mentor surveys assessing mentor perception of participant improvement during the Connections program further highlight the benefit of the program.

This program was qualitatively measured to assess the following three outcomes:

1. Increased academic engagement of students enrolled in Connections. A dependent samples t-test revealed that academic engagement scores were statistically significantly higher after the program (M=4.28, SD=0.88) as compared to before the program (M=3.66, SD=1.05), M Difference=0.63, $t(87)=8.58$, $p<.001$. On average, this was a 12.6% increase in academic engagement.

2. Increased engagement with outdoor activities of students enrolled in Connections. A dependent samples t-test revealed that outdoor activity engagement scores were statistically significantly higher after the program (M=4.22, SD=1.09) as compared to before the program (M=3.77, SD=1.28), M Difference=0.44, $t(85)=4.52$, $p<.001$. On average, this was a 8.25% improvement in engagement with outdoor activities.

3. Increased socio-emotional learning of students in the Connections program. A dependent samples t-test revealed that socio-emotional learning scores were statistically significantly higher after the program (M=3.90, SD=0.98) as compared to before the program (M=3.38, SD 1.08), M Difference=0.52, $t(85)=7.56$, $p<.001$. This was an approximately 10% improvement on average on socio-emotional learning.

The amount of average improvement, ranging from 8.25% to 12.6% over an 8 week period indicates that this was an impactful intervention. As this program was emergent, meeting specific needs of the time that may not arise again, it is unclear if this program, as was delivered, will continue to have benefit, but there are lessons that can be learned from the experience.

Conclusions

Both the VSMC and Connections programs were innovative as they involved new partnerships and were delivered in the context of an unprecedented global pandemic. Both programs followed a similar model and delivered outdoor enrichment and academic content to Latinx, Migrant and ELL youth. The design and implementation of these programs were inspired by academic literature relating social capital, experiential learning/EE, and the academic experiences of Latinx youth. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, these two intervention programs were more focused on emergent needs regarding access to remote learning and other resources. The mentor participant relationship was beneficial to participants, as in their responses they describe their appreciation for connection to educators during remote learning. As the teachers positively described the impact of the intervention on participants' ability to engage in online learning, it is likely that the academic mentors were a critical part of the intervention in helping participants be more successful in school. Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992) definition of social capital as "the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p.#) can be applied to the connections made between people and resources during these two programs.

The need for these programs arose because the students lost their connections to resources from their durable network of institutionalized relationships, which in this case represents their

connection to school, where they access people and resources that benefit them. Vamos Outdoors Project and other community organizations provided the two programs to continue to provide students with their connections to social capital. The COVID-19 pandemic would have left them learning and developing in isolation otherwise. Due to the educational inequities already facing Latinx, ELL, and Migrant youth, these programs were specifically designed with those populations in mind.

The success of these innovative programs offers lessons for the community in moving forward. First, the experiences of the participants indicate that families within the 10% furthest from opportunity (mostly Latinx, ELL, and Migrant youth, within the BSD) inordinately benefit from BSD resources such as transportation, childcare, and meals. Knowing this, it is important for the BSD and community partners to make policy decisions about the allocation of resources to ensure that policies that affect all students, such as closing schools during a pandemic, do not create undue harm for minority populations within the district. On the other hand, it indicates that community based organizations, such as nonprofits like the Vamos Outdoors Project, are faced with the opportunity to support families who would benefit from more childcare, transportation, and meal assistance.

Second, the community benefits when the district and community partners collectively leverage resources and relationships to increase equity in accessing programs that benefit the whole child. The increase in engagement in academics and improved relationship with educators and school based programs in participants over the two programs demonstrates that students in these programs that some element of representational mentorship and/or outdoor activities make

school a more appealing place. As Latinx youth, especially migrant youth, experience lower academic achievement than the population at large, it could benefit this population if schools and academic programs also included more activities that brought joy to the students and are otherwise difficult for those students to access, such as mountain biking.

Finally, coordination at the district level works to ensure equitable distribution of resources and services for families in the BSD. After school enrichment programs, and even in-school enrichment programs, tend to be mostly white and privileged. Racism, language, cultural, financial, and transportation barriers prevent many of the families that participated within VSMC and Connections from enrolling in traditional enrichment programs. For the community based organizations providing their services at Connections, they did not know how to reach the families that most needed their services. But the BSD did have access to the data identifying which families would be best served. If community organizations and school districts continue to work together to make sure that enrichment programs' opportunities reach families that would most benefit, the community based organizations would be able to serve families that they could not reach on their own. In Connections, this collaboration resulted in more equitable distribution of services.

Moving forward, as schools continue to reopen and more families are able to access school based resources, some elements of these programs will likely need to change to continue to provide benefit. Students are back in schools, so community based organizations do not need to provide childcare support during school hours. However, students who face barriers to activities like mountain biking and accessing outdoor parks and green spaces would benefit from receiving

those opportunities in a school setting, as parents still face barriers of racism, language, culture, finances, and transportation to independently access programs. For minority students and other demographics that experience lower educational outcomes than the population at large, these interventions could help improve school-based outcomes, as they did in VMSC and Connections. Hopefully the BSD and the community partners involved in these programs continue to partner to equitably provide services to students.

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Appendix:

Program surveys

Bellingham Connections Mid-Program Student Assessment

Academic Mentor: _____ Date: _____

Week of program: _____ Pod Number: _____ Student name: _____

Is the student able to find their assignments/homework in SeeSaw or other platform? Y / N

Could the student explain what their assignment is, in their own words?

Did the student's work demonstrate an ability to work at grade level, or to complete the assignment as asked?

What barriers exist that hinder the student's success in their work? What gaps exist in student learning that need support/scaffolding for them to complete their work?

How have you seen this student supported by the Connections program?

Bellingham Connections End-Program Mentor Survey

(Adapted from google forms)

1. Name
2. What grade level was your pod?
3. Do you have any thoughts, notes, feedback about your students' engagement in synchronous learning? (e.g. they needed a lot of help to sign on, they seemed to have a language barrier to access learning, they knew the drill and logged on without support, etc.)
4. Do you have any thoughts, notes, feedback about your students' engagement in asynchronous learning? (e.g. they didn't know their schedule and missed classes, they had trouble understanding lessons without teacher support, etc.)
5. Do you have any other thoughts, success stories, challenges about helping students with online academic learning?
6. Do you have any thoughts, success stories, challenges about your students participating in the outdoor education activities?
7. Do you have any thoughts, success stories, or feedback about how the outdoor education activities may have impacted your students?
8. I agree that program partners can quote my answers (without using my name) on their website or in their promotional materials in order to ensure the Connections program can continue and/or communicate the successes and challenges of the program.

Connections Program survey for BSD staff

(Adapted from google forms)

1. Your name
2. What is your role at Bellingham Public Schools?
3. How would you rate the program's ability to get students connected to online learning? 1-5
4. Do you have any thoughts, notes, feedback about the program's ability to get students connected to synchronous learning? 1-5
5. How would you rate the program's ability to provide basic needs to families that may not have received help otherwise? (The program provided breakfast and lunch, free outdoor weather gear, and access to outdoor enrichment) 1-5
6. Do you have any thoughts, notes, feedback about the program's ability to provide support to families in need?
7. How would you rate the program's ability to positively connect families with BSD and classroom learning? 1-5
8. Do you have any thoughts, notes, feedback about the program's ability to reach families or students that may have had trouble connecting with?
9. How would you rate the program's ability to offer students with outdoor enrichment? 1-5
10. Do you have any thoughts, notes, feedback about the program's ability to provide outdoor enrichment for students?
11. How would you rate communication and coordination with program staff? 1-5
12. Do you have any thoughts, notes, feedback about the program staff or management?
13. Any other thoughts or feedback? (e.g. program design, hopes for next steps, partners involved, etc.)

14. I agree that program partners can quote my answers (without using my name) on their website or in their promotional materials in order to ensure the Connections program can continue and/or communicate the successes and challenges of the program.

Bellingham Connections Post-Program Student Survey

This survey can be completed by the student, read aloud/completed by staff, or completed as a video "interview":

Name: _____

The hardest part of the coronavirus pandemic for me has been...

The hardest part about participating in school during the coronavirus pandemic has been...

My favorite part of the Connections program was...

My favorite thing I learned in the Connections program was...

One thing that helps me learn is...

If I could change one thing about the Connections program, I would change...

Something I have in common with my academic mentor is....

Connections Program survey for Partners

(Adapted from google forms)

1. Your name
2. Which organization do you represent?
3. What is your role at your organization?
4. How did you support the Connections program?
 - a. On-site program delivery
 - b. Managed staff that were on-site during the program
 - c. Served as my organization's liaison to the program
5. How would you rate the program's ability to get students connected to online learning? 1-5
6. Do you have any thoughts, notes, feedback about the program's ability to get students connected to online learning?
7. How would you rate the program's ability to provide basic needs to families that may not have received help otherwise? (The program provided breakfast and lunch, free outdoor weather gear, and access to outdoor enrichment) 1-5
8. Do you have any thoughts, notes, feedback about the program's ability to provide support to families who are not accessing resources they usually get through schools, due to systemic inequality and systemic racism?
9. How would you rate the program's ability to offer students with outdoor enrichment? 1-5
10. Do you have any thoughts, notes, feedback about the program's ability to provide outdoor enrichment for students?
11. How would you rate communication and coordination with program staff? 1-5
12. Do you have any thoughts, notes, feedback about the on-site program staff or management?
13. Any other thoughts or feedback on program design, logistical support, financial management, communication, or coordination?
14. Would you want to support similar efforts with the district in 2021?
15. If so, do you have suggestions for changes to program design, updates on your organization's capacity to participate, or any other future plans for our collaborative work together?
16. I agree that program partners (all entities involved) can quote my answers (without using my name) on their website or in their promotional materials in order to ensure the Connections program can continue and/or communicate the successes and challenges of the program.

Bellingham Connections Pre-Program Student Assessment

Academic Mentor: _____ Date: _____

Pod Number: _____ Student name: _____

Was the student easily able to connect to synchronous learning on day 1? If not, what additional supports were required?

Did the student have an understanding of academic requirements on day 1? If not, what additional supports were required?

Did the student understand how and feel comfortable with connecting directly with their teacher for support on day 1 through the District portal? If not, what additional support was required?

Do you have any concerns about your ability to support the student's participation in the program? Or anything else you'd like to share about the students' participation?

Bellingham Connections Post-Program Student Assessment

Academic Mentor: _____

Date: _____

Pod Color/Number: _____

Student name: _____

| Question | Hardly ever (0-25% of the time) | Sometimes (25-50% of the time) | Many days (50-75% of the time) | Regularly (75-100% of the time) |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| How regularly did this student connect to and engage with synchronous online learning? | | | | |
| How regularly did this student complete asynchronous learning? | | | | |
| How regularly did this student participate in outdoor education activities? | | | | |

| Question | 1 - Poor/ low | 2 - okay/ could improve | 3 - adequate | 4 - pretty good | 5 - great |
|---|------------------|----------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------|
| How would you rate your students' confidence level in navigating their online learning at the start of the program? | | | | | |
| How would you rate your students' confidence level in navigating their online learning at the end of the program? | | | | | |
| How would you rate your students' relationship with schools, teachers, traditional academic learning settings at the start of the program? | | | | | |
| How would you rate your students' relationship with schools, teachers, traditional academic learning settings at the end of the program? | | | | | |
| How would you rate your students' enthusiasm about participating in outdoor activities at the start of the program? | | | | | |
| How would you rate your students' enthusiasm about participating in outdoor activities at the end of the program? | | | | | |

Comments:

K Screen

5-7 age group Vocabulary Words:

**Use mini-books, write words on each page, English/Spanish on each page spread. Do students recognize how to read the word? When read to them, can students draw a picture and/or tell someone the word meaning?*

| | English | Spanish |
|----|------------|-----------|
| 1 | Mountain | Montaña |
| 2 | Bicycle | Bicicleta |
| 3 | Brake | Freno |
| 4 | Helmet | Casco |
| 5 | Safety | Seguridad |
| 6 | Hike | Caminata |
| 7 | Waterfall | Cascada |
| 8 | Bridge | Puente |
| 9 | Park | Parque |
| 10 | Collection | Colección |
| 11 | Mask | Máscara |
| 12 | Social | Social |
| 13 | Distance | Distancia |
| 14 | Problem | Problema |
| 15 | Solution | Solución |
| 16 | Shape | Forma |
| 17 | Circle | Círculo |
| 18 | Triangle | Triángulo |

| | | |
|----|------------------|-------------------|
| 19 | Rectangle | Rectángulo |
| 20 | Square | Cuadrado |
| 21 | Trapezoid | Trapezoide |
| 22 | Hexagon | Hexágono |
| 23 | Oval | Oval |
| 24 | Line | Línea |
| 25 | Pattern | Patrón |

| | English: Draw a picture or describe | Spanish: Draw a picture or describe |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | Mountain | Montaña |
| 2 | Bicycle | Bicicleta |
| 3 | Brake | Freno |

| | | |
|-----------|-------------------|------------------|
| 4 | Helmet | Casco |
| 5 | Safety | Seguridad |
| | | |
| 6 | Hike | Caminata |
| 7 | Waterfall | Cascada |
| 8 | Bridge | Puente |
| 9 | Park | Parque |
| 10 | Collection | Colección |
| | | |
| 11 | Mask | Máscara |
| 12 | Social | Social |
| 13 | Distance | Distancia |

| | | |
|----|-----------------|-----------------|
| 14 | Problem | Problema |
| 15 | Solution | Solución |
| | | |
| 16 | Shape | Forma |

| | | |
|----|------------------|-------------------|
| | | |
| 17 | Circle | Círculo |
| 18 | Triangle | Triángulo |
| 19 | Rectangle | Rectángulo |
| 20 | Square | Cuadrado |
| | | |
| 21 | Trapezoid | Trapezoide |
| 22 | Hexagon | Hexágono |
| 23 | Oval | Oval |

| | | |
|----|----------------|---------------|
| | | |
| 24 | Line | Línea |
| 25 | Pattern | Patrón |

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | English: Say or write the word | Spanish: Say or write the word |
| 1 | | |

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| 25 | | |

8-10 age group Vocabulary Words

*Esperanza Rising Words (English/Spanish)

*Adventure/Aventura

*How do you feel about COVID-19 and quarantine? Questions? Reflections?

*Process words (problem-based, project based learning, asking questions, research, etc.?)

*Math words

11-13 age group Vocabulary Words

*Because of Winn Dixie Words (English/Spanish)

*Adventure/Aventura

*How do you feel about COVID-19 and quarantine? Questions? Reflections?

*Process words (problem-based, project based learning, asking questions, research, etc.?)

*Math words

My Adventures

One day, I got on my bicycle to go for a ride on the mountain. I am learning about safety. I am learning how to use brakes and why it is important to always wear a helmet. The next day, I went on a hike to Whatcom Falls Park. There is a huge waterfall in the park, and there is also a bridge. When we hiked in the park, I found a collection of plants and flowers. I brought these back to school with me! We wear masks and keep social distance when we are at school. We do not want to get sick or make others feel sick, It is a problem when we feel sick. The solution to this problem is to follow the rules and be safe at school.

We also learn about shapes. Here are the shapes we know: circle, triangle, rectangle, square, trapezoid, hexagon, and oval. I can draw pictures of the shapes and I can find them all around me! I use lines and shapes when I draw and write. This is how I can tell my stories and share ideas with others!

I learn more every day I go outside and talk about patterns I see in the world. This will help me learn and grow!

I have fun outside. What do you like to do outside?