

OUTSIDE YOURSELF

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THE PROBLEM

The percentage of students that are disengaged during school continues to rise as students get older and progress through their k-12 educational pathway - by high school, about 55% of students are disengaged entirely. The relatively rigid structure of high school and the content standards leave little room for students to explore their own interests and develop their curiosity at a time in their lives when exploration and discovering who they want to be in the world is of central importance. As a result, it's not surprising that only about 17% of high school freshman have a sense of purpose, and by senior year, it hasn't changed much – the number is close to 23%.

Currently seeking collaborators and financial supporters. Please contact:

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND DESIGN

We can ruminate and think about our interests constantly, but what this program provides is an opportunity for high school students to get *outside themselves*, through immersive experiences, to gain exposure to other people, interests, ideas, and issues that are unfamiliar to them. The immersive experiences are entirely dependent on the students' interests; they are not prescribed or pre-planned.

Students learn the fundamental skill set that a travel writer or immersion journalist has, but instead of traveling far and wide, the student will be applying these skills within the classroom to start, then will move beyond the classroom but within the school, and ultimately to at least one experience in the community, outside the school. Once a student has identified potential interests, the program administrators will help connect them with people engaged in whatever those interests are so the student can learn from that experience, then tell that person's story, not for widespread public consumption, but for personal development and an opportunity to share with their peers in the program. For students that find any of their immersive experiences meaningful, a more formal mentorship is encouraged between the students and person they connected with.



GOALS

This program aims to help inform the *next* step the student takes in a certain direction in the coming semester or month, for example, rather than a long-term rigid life path. For example, freshmen may want to explore electives, clubs, or extracurriculars that they may want to take, while seniors may be more interested in exploring postsecondary or career options.

By giving students opportunities to actively immerse themselves in interests that they identify themselves, the goal is that the student has a greater sense of purpose, more engagement in school, and greater autonomy. Additionally, the goal is to improve outcomes that are correlated with stronger sense of purpose: improved mental wellness, less alcohol and drug use, and a greater commitment to schoolwork.

