



## **Cradle Beach Theoretical Framework**

### **Cradle Beach**

8038 Old Lakeshore Road  
Angola, New York 14006

**Phone:** (716) 549-6307

**Fax:** (716) 549-6825

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### INTRODUCTION

Cradle Beach, whose mission is to help every child reach his or her potential by providing high quality, evidence-based, innovative programming; has been serving Western New York children from economically and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds and children with disabilities for over 123 years. Nearly 85% of those children who attend our summer residential program come from the neediest, poorest parts of the City of Buffalo, with 76% living at or below the poverty level. In 2010, approximately 800 economically and educationally disadvantaged children as well as children with disabilities between the ages of 8-16 attended the life changing experience of Cradle Beach. These 800 children were divided into 5 sessions based on their age, each session containing 150 children and lasting 10 residential days. Due to the campers' special needs, the camper-to-counselor ratio is almost 1:1 and consists of counselors from all over the world. CB campers in 2009 were 56% Caucasian, 39% African-American and 5% Hispanic/other. From the beginning of the camp, we have strongly believed that by combining those with disabilities with those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds you gain a benefit that is mutual, exponential, and long-term. Cradle Beach is the only program in the nation that serves children with special needs and economically and educationally disadvantaged children together in an inclusionary 10-day residential learning program.

Building on the success of our summer enrichment program, we added Project Soar and expanded our programming into the Buffalo Public Schools (BPS) where we are in classrooms partnering with teachers and working with children in order to close the achievement gap by building on skills that are cross-promoted at camp. Project SOAR (Success, Opportunity, Achievement, Responsibility) is modeled after the national evidence-based Fiver Children's Foundation work where 95% of students earned a high school degree and 73% continued on to college. The proposed service delivery model builds on Fiver's success and extends our summer enrichment program throughout the school year by offering tutoring, in-class instructional support, one-on-one support, and mentoring for 3rd and 4th Grade students at Lovejoy Discovery School – BPS #43. In addition, we added 3 overnight weekend retreats (field trips) that bridge between classroom and summer session and close our programming continuum with the development of higher level skills like critical thinking, problem solving, inquiry, complex reasoning, writing, teamwork, and decision making. This innovative effort combines year-round services with congruent goals, objectives, and outcomes.

**Overnight Weekend Retreats/Field Trips:** Weekend retreats are used to provide experiential learning opportunities for participants, enhance their classroom learning, conduct individualized programming, and enhance science and math development. Weekend retreats can be held throughout the year at our facility in Angola where students will experience educational stations that include but are not limited to sports, computers, culinary arts, dance, music, beach and nature, photography, sensory, and theater. Weekend retreats are incorporated into the program to provide an off-site experience that many of these students have never experienced. Furthermore, the weekend retreats strengthen students' commitment to their education and the program, increasing the overall impact on their educational and personal lives and increasing program retention rates.

**10-day Residential Summer Enrichment Program:** The Summer Enrichment Program is designed to combine students with disabilities with students who come from educationally and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This one-of-a-kind format allows students to gain much more than they

would simply by attending a summer camp with a similar cohort. Similar to the weekend retreats, we utilize educational stations and activities designed to provide students with and without disabilities opportunities to learn from each other, grow through the interaction, and develop their emotional intelligence. This experience is often said to have a lasting impression on students because they develop stronger abilities to understand their own feelings, manage their feelings, read other's feelings, and develop meaningful relationships based on those skills. Combined with the In-School and the Weekend Retreats, the Summer Enrichment program is the capstone of what will likely be a life changing experience for these Buffalo Public School students.

**Overall Cradle Beach Program:** The saying, "the whole is much greater than the sum of its parts," characterizes exactly how the three components of Cradle Beach work. First, there is a cumulative effect that builds an exponential impact on participants. Second, we have carefully created the program for each component so that the impacts are congruent and build upon the combined experiences of students. Finally, we measure impact using an evidence-based research model that tracks strategic outcomes and how they interconnect and impact academics, personal outcomes, and career outcomes. Furthermore, Cradle Beach benefits from over 123 years of experience working with BPS students , evidence-based programs, and a commitment to continuous improvement through program/process evaluation and management.

## RESEARCH

**Research indicates that Cradle Beach works.** Cradle Beach programs are grounded in multiple disciplines which combine to have an exponential impact. From the field of education, researchers like Winkler, De Vita, Carol, et al., 2010; Afterschool Alliance, 2010; Costley, 2011; Black, Somers, and Doolittle, 2009 have demonstrated the need for engaging environments that ensure a deeper more meaningful experience for youth that not only enhance content learning but also promote the development of deeper level skills recently identified by *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses* (University of Chicago Press, 2011) and a number of other publications as grossly lacking in American youth. Cradle Beach programming provides opportunities for youth to engage in activities that complement the classroom while simultaneously developing higher level skills like critical thinking, problem solving, complex reasoning, decision making, and data analysis that are nearly impossible to develop solely through today's educational environment. Enhancing this educational framing is the field of social work. For instance, Long and Bos (1998) demonstrate in their research that multiple venue approaches achieve greater results than programs which focus on one setting and one type of programming. Finally, the world of neuroscience and psychology come together in an in-depth analysis of emotional intelligence and the value of purposeful efforts to develop emotional intelligence in youth, informing programming decisions and outcomes analysis by Cradle Beach (Goleman, 2008; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002; Collins, 2001). This interdisciplinary approach has informed the multi-faceted programs of Cradle Beach, the development of multiple higher level skill sets in students through exponential learning experiences, and the evidence-based programs marked by impacts on student academics across the board, improved rates of absenteeism, and overall improvements in behavior.

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