

## **Educator Overview of Conference**

"Both adults and students were challenged to come into this experience with an open mind and see each other as equal and valued participants. Narragansett High School students joined students from three other high schools from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New York. We all grew personally by leaps and bounds, myself included. We were brought through a wide variety of activities which challenged us mentally, physically, and emotionally; all of which allowed us to move through the three tenets of the Edge of Leadership program: connect, empower, and lead.

This was by far the most rewarding and transformative personal and professional experience I have ever had in my 15 years of teaching, hands down. It was amazing to watch this group of incredible young men and women develop the confidence and skills they have within themselves to become great leaders. On the last day of the program we had the opportunity to brainstorm and make plans to bring what we learned back to NHS. I feel blessed to have had such a wonderful group of students to share this experience and look forward to working with them this year on implementing those plans we've developed. We will start by utilizing the advisory program to introduce the cultural mindset shifts we hope to see take place in our school.

Following the completion of this rigorous program, these students have earned a place on the NHS Student Council. This means that they will help me in nominating and selecting the next group of students to attend the EOL program next summer! The students had a wonderful experience and I'm happy to have been able to accompany them on the journey. It was really so amazing to be there with the students and see them overcome obstacles and challenges all while collaborating with and supporting their team. I speak for both the students and myself when I tell you that the experience at the Edge of Leadership has changed how we think, act, feel, interact, support, lead, and empower."

***-Jennalee Lopes, NHS Physical Education and Health Teacher***

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## **Student Conference Reflections**

"After my experiences at the EOL program, my definition of a leader has 100% changed. As of now, my definition of a leader is someone who steps up and makes sure everyone has an opportunity to be heard, learn, and empowered. The activity that changed my definition was our experience on the ropes course. Cheering people on and having the support from the other participants throughout the whole camp definitely gave me the new definition of leadership. After this camp, to change the negativity of bullying in our school, I believe a great way to spark kindness is to implement and teach the activities and games we did at EOL. For instance, the pond activity brought us all together and taught us to listen to other people's ideas/theories and to give and receive respect and trust with one another. These not only brought the kids at camp together, but made us feel like a family. I believe with these activities we can feel the same way at NHS."

***-Jason Sweet Class of 2021***

"My definition of leadership and being a leader did change at EOL because I learned that you don't always have to know what you are doing to lead. You can lead by figuring out what to do within a group/ in an activity. I learned this very quickly when my group had to figure out how to get on top of the Burma bridge (tightrope) with a string and too short of a ladder. We had to work together to find a way to thread the rope through the belay system and we had to work together to learn how to tie a knot to clip into and keep us safe. In this activity I stepped us as a leader and talked out with the group a way to thread this rope through the belay system. This activity was also very meaningful to me as I was having a hard time figuring it how to make a specific knot (super 8), but the group stopped everything they were doing to teach me how to do the knot and did not stop until I knew how and could do it on my own. Once I made one on my own everybody clapped for me and gave me high fives which was very empowering."

***-Julia Highcove Class of 2021***

"The second day was especially meaningful to me because it really pushed me outside of my comfort zone and forced me (in a good way) to face a couple of my fears including heights and the dark. I wouldn't have been able to do this without the support of all the other students who also attended the camp. The constant cheering and reassuring throughout the day made me feel loved and comfortable being who I really am around them. This was crazy to me considering I had just met them the day before. My vision was that after coming home from the trip we could use the skills we learned during the program to connect the school and basically turn it into one big happy family full of students supporting and pushing other students to be their very best even if that means leaving the comfort zone. In Wednesday's activities, the camp really did turn into one big happy family and really learned who everybody was by watching them struggle and seeing how they handled situations. When people who barely know each other can easily display my vision, why can't our school?"

***-Gabrielle Adamo Class of 2021***