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The mission of Outside the Box is to provide activities and experiences related to design fields and construction trades to middle school youth experiencing systemic barriers to achievement, and to offer them opportunities to develop and practice creative problem solving skills.

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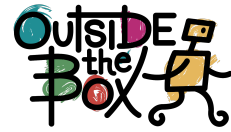
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Our program began in 2019, operating as an incubation program at Ecolibrium3. In summer 2020 we began the transition to become an independent non-profit organization, with [Ecolibrium3](#) as our fiscal agent.

We spent our first year defining and refining the program's goals, mission, and structure of organization and delivery; with the assistance of a wonderful Advisory Committee and guidance from Ecolibrium3 director Jodi Slick. In our first year we also delivered some creative pilot activities and received a welcoming and encouraging reception from students, families, educators, and community leaders who serve our youth in the schools and at the centers where we will continue to offer programming.



Welcome Potential Instructors!

Thank you for your interest in sharing your stories and skills with middle school aged students of Central and Western Duluth! Your time and energy can positively impact the lives of these students.

Outside the Box (OTB) is an education and community partnership program engaging middle-school students from populations underrepresented in design and construction trades with activities and opportunities designed to introduce them to the fields of design, construction, and environmental sustainability. Program offerings include in-school, after-school and summer activities, at times including family, taught by role models like you; reaching youth at a critical time of development.

Our programming blends creative, technical and leadership skills to give young people the tools they need to develop and practice creative problem solving. Our goals include encouraging and stimulating students to take CTE classes when they enter high school, to participate more fully in STEAM-related coursework and activities, and to consider careers in related trades and professions.

“Thinking Outside the Box” can be a transformational tool, allowing someone to move beyond a barrier, whether that barrier is personal, professional, educational, or societal. It is our goal for students to believe, as we do, that they can transform their lives and their community through creative problem solving.

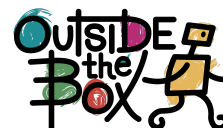
If you become an instructor with OTB you will be asked to complete the following checklist below:

- ☐ Read through all the Instructor Toolkit documents
- ☐ Fill out forms for authorization of a Background Check, email or mail to OTB Staff
- ☐ Fill out W-9 and submit via email or mail to OTB Staff
- ☐ Provide a description of your module(s), email to OTB Staff for further coordination
- ☐ Sign and complete the Instructor Agreement and email or mail to OTB Staff

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Design Thinking Approach

We focus our communication and our activities using the paradigm of "design thinking," because of the powerful way this approach can transform students' ways of engaging with their education, their lives, their communities, and their future.

Design thinking helps create a culture of inquiry, agency, creativity, and reflection. Importantly, design thinking also promotes the concept of failure as a means of advancement to success, rather than a signal of defeat. This is crucial. We encourage failure in the sense that we encourage exploration and experimentation - as these are well-understood and accepted means of testing and refining ideas and solutions.

The Design Thinking Process, as described below, is intended to help guide the approach for the curriculum you are creating. Regardless of the length of the activity, the outlining principles are the same. Activities should promote creative problem solving.

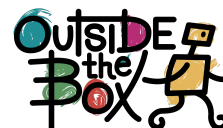
Briefly, our internal definition of the design thinking process can be summarized as follows:

1. **Observe and Understand** (the conditions/issues)
 2. **Define** (the problem to solve or the desired response to the conditions)
 3. **Explore** (ideas to solve the problem or respond to the conditions)
 4. **Create** (build solutions/prototypes)
 5. **Tinker** (test and evaluate)
- And repeat

It is this process that unifies all Outside the Box programming.

It is your choice whether the steps of the process are introduced to the students or simply inherent in the teaching. One twist: if and when you are introducing the concept and the steps to students we'd like you to refer to the process simply as the **Thinking Process**. We believe it is important that students relate this process to all circumstances that could benefit from a creative solution.

Another approach to consider is to introduce the concept of design thinking to the students by engaging them in defining the Thinking Process. The students could define their approach with a physical manifestation, such as written or spoken words, images, video, models, or any combination thereof.



Program Goals

Encourage creative-problem solving through design thinking

- Invite failure! Allow students to see failure as a step along the way to success.

Promote student agency and collaboration

- Guide students just enough to allow them to take charge and work with each other.
- Instructors should “walk away and watch” as much as possible.

Stimulate interest in design, construction, engineering, and sustainability

- Create activities and opportunities that are simultaneously creative, fun and relevant to making desired change in students’ lives and the world around them.

Integrate students into the community

- Use field trips and “activity guests” to provide real contact with community members.
- Explore and discuss community issues with the students.

Create fluid and adaptable programming

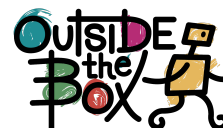
- We invite you to encourage the students to shape curriculum and to make shifts in the programming to better align with their needs.
- Consider activities designed to creatively solve student-suggested community issues.
- Students may not make it to all the sessions of a module. Plan activities to accommodate student engagement even if they’ve missed sessions.
- Be ready to accommodate students’ different learning styles and ways of engaging with the program, other students, and the instructors/staff.

Serve underrepresented populations

- We strive to break down barriers that exist and persist for students from nondominant populations (including low income, BIPOC, female, nonbinary and LGBTQ+ students).
- We hope to help students see themselves as potential participants in trades- and STEAM-related school classes and professions.
- Think about how the messaging, design, and format of your curriculum encourages students to participate

Integrate families into the programming when possible

- If this is a good fit for your activity, work with OTB staff and program site partner staff to coordinate invitations to family members.



Guide to Student Engagement

Things to understand about students and their lives:

Trust Takes Time to Build

- Many of our students have good reason not to trust adults.
- Be kind, consistent, and fair.
- Be yourself. Students will know if you are “faking it.”

Students may not attend all sessions of a module or ongoing OTB activity

- Partial attendance can happen for many reasons and shouldn't preclude participation.
- How can your activity adapt to allow students to participate if they haven't received the information from the prior session?

Students may be hungry. If they are hungry, it can be hard to concentrate

- Food is available at each site
- Activities may need to pause for students to eat

Something challenging at home or school may have affected a student that day, or something in your activity may act as a trigger, and they may need support.

- Youth center staff are available for this support.
- As long as location staff agree, keep students present for the activity even if they don't actively participate, as long as they do not pose a threat to others or themselves.
- Encourage different levels of engagement that will “meet students where they are.”

Depending on the site, kid ages may range from 0-18 years old.

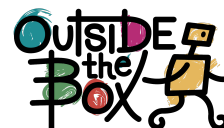
- Though middle school students are our focus, other age youth may be there.
- Try to be flexible, and consider how your activity can be adapted to include younger or older students who want to participate.

Activity deliverables

- Students will want to keep what they make, does your activity support this?
- Some students' lives may be transient. Is what they create small enough to be kept at home or travel with them?

Don't take students' behaviors personally

- It's not about you.
- Show the example of the behaviors you want.
- “No losing your cool.” Stay neutral and non-emotional when students act out.
- Don't be baited by the student.
- Remaining calm and responding without retaliation will help build trust.



Check In/Out Activities

All sessions will include a check-in, main activity, and wrap up/closure.

Check-In

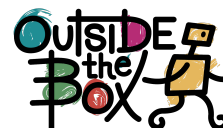
- Name and pronoun introductions
- Add intentional beginning that is consistent: sets a goal, learn something about one another or something that brings everyone together
 - Engaging question of the day
 - Stretching
 - Setting an intention for the day
 - Word association

Main Activity

- Introduce the Activity, then dive right in
- Remember to “walk away and watch” - try to offer as little post-introduction instruction as possible, and when a student requests assistance, offer as little as possible to allow them to have the experience, whether successful or not.
- Check-in about halfway through time
 - Inquire with each person what they’d like to learn/finish/try before the end of the day if the session is a 90 minute+ activity
 - Consider Move and Stretch as a break, could be with music (dance break)

Wrap Up/Clean Up/Check-Out

- Give everyone the chance to talk about their experience
 - If applicable, ask if they achieved their goal
- What they want to learn next time
- Ask if anyone has a question
- Have attendees help with Clean Up!



Curriculum Modules

Lincoln Park What I Need: (on hold)

Fridays 11-11:30am; 30 minutes

What I Need (or WIN) is a district-wide 30 minute period each school day that allows students to make-up work they need to finish, get additional help, or explore special activities or short classes outside of their regular classes. WIN periods have no homework and no grades. "What I Need" refers to an approach to give students regular scheduled times for "what they need" beyond their normal class schedule.

On Fridays, most students have the opportunity to sign up for special WIN offerings, sometimes taught by people who are not regular school teachers. A LPMS teacher or other full-time staff will always be present when an OTB Instructor teaches a WIN class.

In classroom or outdoors at Lincoln Park Middle School

Instructor stipend: refer to contract

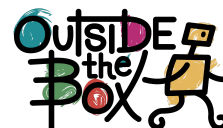
Note:

- teachers give announcements for first 5+ minutes of WIN
- Plan for 15-20 minutes total for activity
- Students in grades 6-8
- Park in lot in front of building
- Check in at the school office at arrival and departure, wear guest pass

To be coordinated with OTB Staff

- Teacher/classroom for your activity
- Single or multi-session activity
- Storage space needs for materials between sessions

Fill out the Module Proposal form in the Toolkit



Youth Center; 45 minute Single or Multi-Session Module

75 min time commitment per session on-site

45 minutes with students (typically)

90 minute preparation time

Instructor stipend: refer to appendix

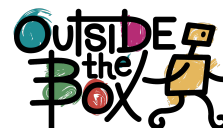
Note:

- Students of ages 5-18 may be present at the Center daily
- OTB will coordinate with each Center about supervision and space for the OTB modules within the Centers
- This module could be repeated or sequential
- You are responsible for materials
 - Coordinate budget with OTB Staff
 - Purchase and save receipts for reimbursement
- Food will be available for students during programming
 - Coordinate breaks with Center staff to ensure all students have an opportunity to eat
 - Food provided by and served/offered by Center

To be coordinated with OTB Staff

- Scheduling preference
- Site(s), refer to Program Host Sites document in Toolkit. Some or all sessions can occur at non-host site locations. OTB staff can assist in coordinating permission slips and transportation for students.
- Tour of host site; discussion of spaces to be used indoors or outdoors
- What support items do you need to complete the module?
 - Tables, chairs, clean up supplies, etc beyond the materials for the project
- Number of students your module will serve?
 - Activities to engage families or kids of younger or older age than middle school
- Number of staff or volunteers you'd like to participate

Fill out the Module Proposal form in the Toolkit to answer the items above and share with staff.



Youth Center; 90 minute Single or Multi-Session Module

2 hours time commitment per session on-site

90 minutes with students (typically)

2 hour preparation time

Instructor stipend: refer to appendix

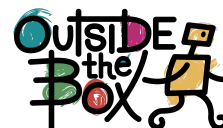
Note:

- Students of ages 5-18 may be present at the Center daily
- OTB will coordinate with each Center about supervision and space for the OTB modules within the Centers
- This module could be repeated or sequential
- You are responsible for materials
 - Coordinate budget with OTB Staff
 - Purchase and save receipts for reimbursement
- Food will be available for students during programming
 - Coordinate breaks with Center staff to ensure all students have an opportunity to eat
 - Food provided by and served/offered by Center

To be coordinated with OTB Staff

- Scheduling preference
 - Once a week
 - Alternate schedule may be proposed in writing
- Do you need storage space for materials between sessions?
- Site(s), refer to Program Host Sites document in Toolkit. Some or all sessions can occur at non-host site locations. OTB staff can assist in coordinating permission slips and transportation for students.
- Tour of host site; discussion of spaces to be used indoors or outdoors
- What support items do you need to complete the module?
 - Tables, chairs, clean up supplies, etc beyond the materials for the project
- Number of students your module will serve?
 - Activities to engage families or kids of younger or older age than middle school
- Number of staff or volunteers you'd like to participate

Fill out the Module Proposal form in the Toolkit to answer the items above and share with staff.



Youth Center; Full Day Session Module

1-4 sessions; 6 hours per session; or other agreed-upon distribution of instruction

Instructor stipend: will be negotiated per session design; refer to appendix

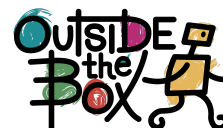
Notes:

- These modules could be offered as a “camp” in summer or during a school break
- This module could be repeated, in partnership with each youth site
- You are responsible for materials
 - Coordinate budget with OTB Staff
 - Purchase and save receipts for reimbursement

To be coordinated with OTB Staff

- Scheduling preference/possibilities
 - Once a week for 4 weeks | Twice a week for 2 weeks | All 4 sessions in 1 week
- Do you need storage space for materials between sessions?
- Site(s), refer to Program Host Sites document in Toolkit. Some or all sessions can occur at non-host site locations. OTB staff can assist in coordinating permission slips and transportation for students.
- Tour of host site; discussion of spaces to be used indoors or outdoors
- What support items do you need to complete the module?
 - Tables, chairs, clean up supplies, etc beyond the materials for the project
- Number of students your module will serve?
 - Activities to engage families or kids of younger or older age than middle school
- Number of staff or volunteers you’d like to participate
- Need for snacks
- Coordination of meals provided by host partner or LPMS Collaborative

Fill out the Module Proposal form in the Toolkit to answer the items above and share with staff.



Youth Center; Multi-Session Half-Day Module

2-4 sessions; 3 hours per session

Instructor stipend: refer to appendix

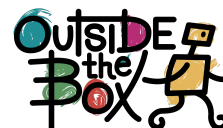
Note:

- This module could be repeated up to three times, in partnership with each youth site
- You are responsible for materials
 - Coordinate budget with OTB Staff
 - Purchase and save receipts for reimbursement

To be coordinated with OTB Staff

- Scheduling preference
 - Once a week for 4 weeks | Twice a week for 2 weeks | All 4 sessions in 1 week
- Do you need storage space for materials between sessions?
- Site(s), refer to Program Host Sites document in Toolkit. Some or all sessions can occur at non-host site locations. OTB staff can assist in coordinating permission slips and transportation for students.
- Tour of host site; discussion of spaces to be used indoors or outdoors
- What support items do you need to complete the module?
 - Tables, chairs, clean up supplies, etc beyond the materials for the project
- Number of students your module will serve?
 - Activities to engage families or kids of younger or older age than middle school
- Number of staff or volunteers you'd like to participate
- Need for snacks
- Coordination of meals provided by host partner or LPMS Collaborative

Fill out the Module Proposal form in the Toolkit to answer the items above and share with staff.



Take Home Learning Module

1-2 hours for a student to complete activity

Preparation time will vary; dependent upon activity, material prep, instruction prep.

Instructor stipend: Initial preparation stipend followed by repeat stipend for additional modules

Refer to appendix / coordinate with Director

Note:

- This module could be repeated if there is student demand
- Instructor is responsible for procuring materials
 - Coordinate budget with OTB Staff
 - Purchase and save receipts for reimbursement
 - Coordinate with assigned Director to seek donations for materials
- Hands on activities, not requiring supervision or digital access is preferred
- Plan for up to 12 kits created at a time
- Reference the Materials list for excess and needed materials
- Reference Equipment list for shared equipment access

To be coordinated with OTB Staff

- Donated materials and/or material reimbursement
- Kit delivery to Host Site
- Access for students to any supplemental digital instruction
- Any support you need to execute your kit and instruction creation
- Time needed to create the module initially and future additional kits. Stipend to be established per module creation and additional kit assembly

Fill out the Module Proposal form in the Toolkit to answer the items above and share with staff.