



ACCESS TO CREW: WHY REACH HIGH ROWING, BALTIMORE?

Prepared by Pat McCloskey
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The goal of the Walt Whitman *Access to Crew* initiative is to expand the impact of our sport, to enhance the experience of the sport for our current student-athletes and bring the benefits of rowing to a broader community through partnership.

Why Reach High Rowing:

There are several programs on the East Coast that provide rowing opportunities to underserved public high school students including:

- Row New York (RNY) in Queens, NY
- Philadelphia City Rowing (PCR) in Philadelphia, PA

Both do a wonderful job providing rowing opportunities and educational support for their student-athletes. However, a little closer to home, is **Reach High Rowing in Baltimore, MD.**

In selecting Reach High Rowing in Baltimore as a partner organization, we focused on three important factors: **mission, proximity, and potential competitive partnership.**

It is important to remember that our goals - *Access to Crew* is designed to:

1. Provide financial resources in the form of scholarships for Whitman student-athletes
2. Provide financial donations to Reach High Rowing
3. Create a social- and competitive-partnership that will enhance the experience of rowing for Whitman student-athletes in ways that go beyond athletics

When considering these three key elements, it is our firm belief that Reach High Rowing can be an ideal partner organization.

1. Mission

From the "About Us" page on Reach High Rowing's Website - Reach High Baltimore:

- Is a year-round after-school and summer training and racing program developing discipline, self-confidence, teamwork, and strong preparation for college, career, and life
- Uses rowing to teach fitness, nutrition, and leadership skills to young adults in middle and high school
- Encourages a focus on higher education with some of the best SAT prep in the country, college visits, and learning throughout our summer camp
- Creates employment opportunities for its rowers and alumni through paid summer jobs as rowing camp counsellors and catching interns
- Creates national and international travel opportunities for its athletes who row in races across the country and around the world
- Believes any student with the drive to row deserves a sport in a boat
- Offers scholarship opportunities to make sure that everybody has an opportunity to join regardless of income

This has helped Reach High become one of the most diverse rowing programs in the country.

These values mirror the values of Walt Whitman rowing.

Reach High Rowing use rowing to foster important life-skills and encourage the opportunities of higher education.

Their programs:

- Provide opportunities to learn about rowing, fitness, nutrition, teamwork, and other valuable skills that are often missing from school curriculum
- Encourage students to look beyond high school, and see what skills they might need to thrive in college, professionally, and beyond

Most importantly, Reach High Rowing provides this opportunity to as many middle and high school students as they can.

They perform outreach into neighborhoods that have limited access to rowing, focus on minority and underserved populations, and they make academics and college a priority.

2. Proximity

One of the best parts of high school rowing is the exposure it provides to the world at large. **The very act of traveling to a different city for a sporting event is eye-opening for some of our students.** These opportunities give Whitman student-athletes a chance to meet different kids from different places with different experiences. It provides exposure for them that enhances their experience in meaningful ways.

Reach High Rowing operates less than forty miles from Walt Whitman. The drive to and from their boathouse is less than one hour. This proximity is excellent because it provides us with a multitude of opportunities without being an overly onerous distance.

Our partnership can include:

- Events
- Competitions
- Training opportunities

That can and will take place at both locations.

We can do:

- Erg-a-thons
- Joint practices
- Scrimmages
- Races

The proximity of Reach High Rowing is a real benefit to our mission because it is close enough but still away. **Whitman student-athletes will get all the benefits of travel and yet still be geographically close enough to consider Reach High Rowers neighbors.**

3. Competitive Partnership

Reach High Rowing is an ideal partner because one of the primary ways that they accomplish their goals is through competition. **Reach High Rowing aims to be a competitive rowing program.**

Having worked for non-profits most of my adult life, I know the pitfalls of a socially-oriented sports team. **More often than not, minority student-athletes are given opportunities to do the sport, but not always to excel.**

Well-intentioned programs provide kids with the opportunity to row, but not necessarily the opportunity to win.

Reach High Rowing does everything it can to put their student-athletes on a level-playing field with their potential adversaries. They do not show up to race; they show up to compete. They do not show up hoping to make it down the river; they show up hoping to win.

In 2015, Reach High Rowing sent Amaris Hinton and Diana Lowitt to Sarasota, FL for the US Rowing Youth National Championship. Lowitt and Hinton did not win in Sarasota but attending that event is a testament to their talent and their drive. Ask any of the Walt Whitman rowers that went to the same race last year. Ask any of their teammates that glowed with pride when they returned. Racing at the US Rowing Youth National Championship is the height of athletic competition for high school rowers. It is without question the best and fastest race in the country. **The fact that Reach High Rowing was able to provide this opportunity for these two young women is remarkable.**

Reach High Rowing is not a powerhouse program. They do not have the numbers, the resources, or the culture that perennial powerhouse programs have. **Reach High Rowing is a work in progress with high hopes and big goals, admirable, big goals.**

This is what makes them a perfect partner.

Walt Whitman is a well-run, well-organized, highly competitive program. **This partnership can provide benefits for both organizations.** In partnering with Reach High, it is not our singular hope to help them. It is our hope that we can help each other. We can build relationships with our kids, different kids with different experiences. **We can push each other, teach other, and learn from each other's organizations.** Our athletes will benefit from meeting kids from a different city, of different backgrounds, and different lives. They can and will compete, and push one another, hopefully transforming each organization for the better. **Their values are our values.** They are away, but not close. They are competitive and hoping to be more so every day.

We have things to offer Reach High Rowing; they have things to offer us. This is why I think that Reach High Rowing makes an ideal partnership for *the Access to Crew* initiative.