

SALMON RIVER PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL HEADS

A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM THAT
BEGINS WITH A RAFTING ADVENTURE

July 13-18, 2026 (Rafting)
Sept-Feb, 2026-27 (Virtual sessions)

OVERVIEW

World Leadership School is proud to offer a unique experience for school heads who are interested in unplugging from technology, connecting with other leaders, and renewing energy for the year ahead. Now in its fifth year, this yearlong leadership development program begins with a 5-day rafting adventure.

For five days and five nights, we will share experiences and build community as we float down the sparkling waters of the Main Fork of Idaho's Salmon River, one of North America's most pristine wilderness rivers.

We then leverage the community we build on the river to support leaders with six virtual "peer coaching" sessions during the school year. These virtual meetings will be a trusted space for sharing ideas, challenges, and celebrations. Each participant is also paired with a facilitator who provides support throughout the program.

Known as the "River of No Return," the Salmon River flows through 2.4 million acres of the Frank Church Wilderness. On our 81-mile journey, we will pass through deep forests, swimming pools of crystal-clear water, boulder gardens, natural hot springs, and a succession of exciting rapids. Days are warm, and nights are cool, perfect for sleeping under a canopy of stars.

This program is operated by Confluences Expeditions, a rafting agency owned by Alzar School, an independent school in Cascade, Idaho. The team at Confluences will guide our rafts, make our meals, and set up our kitchen each day.

Facilitators for July 13 - 18 Program

- **Ross Wehner**, Founder, World Leadership School
- **Ayanna Hill-Gill**, President, Advancing Independent Schools (ADVIS)
- **Ken Aldridge**, Head, Wilmington Friends School



WHY RAFTING AND WHY HEADS?

In our experience, few experiences allow us to disconnect from the stresses of everyday life, be present, and build relationships as quickly as a river trip. The rafts allow us to experience a wilderness that changes with each bend in the river. At the same time, the rafts carry all the delicious food, beer, wine, and backcountry equipment for a comfortable camping experience.

On the river, we will share experiences, reflect on new ideas, relax, and recharge. The program's facilitators work to recruit a diverse group and facilitate learning on the river. After the program, we will extend the trust and dialogue to support and coach each other through the following school year.

...I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beauty on the
water, and the great heron feeds.

I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.

-Wendell Berry, "The Peace of Wild Things"

WHY PEER COACHING?

We leverage the community built around the river to support one another during the school year through six virtual sessions. During each meeting, there is time for connection and sharing, exploration of a key topic, and small group "peer coaching" sessions. These peer coaching sessions blend approaches from Parker Palmer (Circle of Trust) and National School Reform Faculty (Consultancy Dilemmas). Leaders who choose to bring a challenge to these confidential circles fill out a questionnaire in advance to clarify the dilemma. We leverage the wisdom of a group to help leaders grapple with challenges and find their best inner solution. It's not advice-giving or problem-solving. Our goal is to create a space of trust so leaders can reconnect with the wisdom and energy of the river and keep it flowing amidst the pressures of being head of school.



DAILY RHYTHM

Our days on the river (two half days at the beginning and end, and three full days in the middle) are simple. Each morning, we wake for coffee and breakfast, and some of us may choose to fly fish. After breakfast, we sit in our camp chairs on the sandy beach and discuss a new question each day in small groups. We share ideas, make connections, and reflect in our journals. During certain mornings, we will engage in a purpose clarification process that helps school leaders re-connect with their “why.” Then we board the rafts for the adventures that lie ahead. We have lunch on a beach and then arrive at camp in the early afternoon. The afternoon is ours to hike to a side canyon or an archeological site, fly fish, or simply sit by the river and relax. We convene in the evenings for drinks, dinner, and campfire reflections under the stars. Dinners have themes based on the values developed by each group, e.g., “joy” or “belonging.”



ITINERARY

- **Day 1 (July 13)**
 - Guests arrive in Boise, ID, and stay at a designated hotel in Boise.
 - Pre-trip meeting at 6 pm, followed by dinner
- **Day 2**
 - 7 am - Bush flight from Boise to Salmon, Idaho
 - 8 - 11 am - Drive to the launch point on Salmon River
 - 1 pm - Launch on the river
- **Days 3-5**
 - Three full days on the river
- **Day 6 (July 18)**
 - Take off the river and drive to Alzar School in Cascade, ID
 - Dinner at Alzar School
 - Drive to Boise, ID
 - 9 pm - Drop off at our Boise hotel for next-morning flights

VIDEO OVERVIEW



COSTS, SIGN UP, AND DETAILS

- The cost is \$3,200 per person (\$3,000 for ADVIS schools), including the rafting program and virtual sessions. This cost is billed in a single invoice. Registration is not complete until the invoice is paid.
- Cancellations. All payments are 50 percent refundable if cancellation occurs 90 days or more before the program start date, and non-refundable if cancellation occurs less than 90 days from the start date. If we find a paying replacement, we will offer a refund regardless of the cancellation date.
- All payments will be refunded if we do not meet a minimum enrollment of 11 participants by May 1 or if the program is cancelled for reasons beyond our control, such as a river closure due to a wildfire.
- The program is capped at 24 participants, including the facilitators, and enrollment is limited to new or existing heads of schools at independent, public, or charter schools.
- To register, email Ross at ross@worldleadershipschool.com for further details.



COSTS, SIGN UP, AND DETAILS, CONT'D

Included in the program price

- All meals from our kickoff dinner in Boise to dinner at Alzar School on the last day. This includes breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks, two canned beverages daily (including beer, soda, or non-alcoholic options), and wine pairings on all river dinners.
- All camping and river equipment. Each participant sleeps in an individual tent with a sleeping bag, pillow, and Paco Pad, a foam inflatable mattress designed for river trips that is more comfortable than most camping pads. Confluences also provides a personal flotation device and dry bags.
- The Salmon offers excellent fly fishing, which you can do from a raft or the shore in the afternoon. We will bring rods and flies to share and help you learn how to fly fish.
- All transportation from Boise, including a bush plane flight to Salmon, ID

Not included in the trip price

- Transportation to and from Boise
- Hotel rooms in Boise on the first and last nights. We have a pre-reserved block at the Modern Hotel, estimated at \$225 per night.
- "Cancel for Any Reason" insurance is highly recommended, and we will provide recommendations at registration.
- Fishing licenses can be purchased online and at a local store before we launch on the river.
- Guide gratuity: At the end of the program, we tip our guides using cash or credit cards. Please plan on tipping a total of \$200-\$300.

"My expectations were exceeded on every level. Nothing prepared me for the depth of insight, the quality of relationships, and clarity of learning I experienced in this program."

- Salmon Alum 2023-24



OPERATORS

- [World Leadership School](#), based in Boulder, CO, partners with K12 schools to reimagine learning and create next-generation leaders. We help schools bring greater purpose to learning by taking students out into the world and coaching teachers to bring purpose to learning. World Leadership School collaborates with over 100 independent, charter, and public schools annually.
- [Confluences River Expeditions](#), owned by Alzar School, is a member of the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association and is a licensed and bonded outfitter and permittee of the USDA Forest Service, Salmon-Challis National Forest, USDI BLM Salmon, and the State of Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board.
- [Alzar School](#), a member of the Northwest Association of Independent Schools, offers wilderness-based semester and Gap Year programs operating both in wilderness areas of Idaho and Patagonia, Chile. Alzar's mission is to "build leaders who positively impact the world, by bringing students to the intersection of engaging learning, cultural exchange, and outdoor adventure."

Reflections from Salmon Alums

"The Salmon River raft trip was the most effective and enjoyable professional development I have done in 29 years as a Head of School. Thoughtful fellow participants, superb organization, and river guides who encouraged, supported, and reassured us. Over the top quality from beginning to end. "

"It provided much-needed 'permission', a magically conducive setting and a clear window through which I could see, and understand the threshold I am crossing."

"This experience brought me back to myself and gave me a deep sense of peace that I hadn't felt in a long time... I am a better, more renewed head of school and human being thanks to my time on the Salmon."

"The wilderness aspect of the trip was essential for me to break out of those habits that keep me from being present to myself."

"Profound. Unplugged. Joyful. Transformational."

"The Salmon River Trip enabled me to connect and recommit to what I treasure that I don't often make time for in my daily life: my colleagues, the natural world, my purpose, and myself."

"This professional (and personal) development experience exceeded all my expectations. The program was thoughtfully and intentionally planned, and the time in nature with other heads of school was meaningful beyond measure."

"This is the best PD I've done in years. I forged extraordinary connections with colleagues, reconnected to my purpose as an educator, and am returning to school energized for the work ahead."

"The experience was life/career-changing. I arrived feeling disconnected and alone in my position, and left with 17 wonderfully diverse colleagues I feel deeply connected to."

"Restorative, reflective, connecting... a transformational experience of being in community."

