

Pilot Name:

School/District Name: Gorham High School/ Gorham School District

Contact: Catherine Paul, John Haley

Overview:

The Gorham High School RREV award will be used to maximize the capacity of a new Freshman Academy to implement integrated, project-based, place-based learning in our school, and create a teaching climate that embraces these ideas more broadly throughout the curriculum. The project will use these funds to create outdoor learning spaces, fund field trips for students, and offer students and teachers learning experiences to extend our capacity toward outdoor learning.

One limiting factor for outdoor learning is having spaces that are comfortable for students and teachers to learn and teach in. To this end, we intend to construct a greenhouse that will become a learning lab for students, hosting a weather station and solar panels for student learning. Another outdoor learning space that we intend to construct is a set of picnic tables. These will provide easy access to outdoor classroom space for teachers who would like to get outside.

We also hope to extend our “classrooms” beyond our campus boundaries as well. A portion of our funding will go to providing field trips to places in Maine. These local field trips will help our students become comfortable in the outdoors and get access to experiences that make their learning more relevant.

Finally, putting these projects into practice requires a faculty that is prepared to access the tools at hand. To this end, we will have a professional development workshop about outdoor education for all faculty. We will also create an outdoor learning library that will be available for all teachers.

These three innovations - creating outdoor learning spaces at our school, bringing our students out into the field, and ensuring that our teachers have the background necessary to conduct quality outdoor education - promise to offer the freshmen on our academy a meaningful and motivational first year of high school.

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