

Pilot Name: Great Works Ventures Outdoors

School/District Name: MSAD#35 Towns of South Berwick and Eliot

Contact: Jerry Burnell, Sara Allis, and Wendy Shaw

Overview:

Great Works Ventures Outdoors reflects our school's shared belief that authentic outdoor learning experiences can provide essential growth opportunities for every student. In the last few years, MGWS has taken small steps to support nature-based learning initiatives. This project, however, has the potential to shift this belief into everyday practice.

In collaboration with essential stakeholders, the Innovation Team considered the needs of our whole student population, as well as, micro-populations within our school community. Through these collaborative interactions, we identified the following student needs:

1. the need to increase student engagement
2. the need to support social-emotional development and well-being
3. the need to promote ecoliteracy skills in students and staff

These identified needs guided the Innovation Team in making decisions around what infrastructure, activities, and community partnerships to pursue in order to best serve our students.

This innovation seeks to foster student engagement through team building. A few of the components that address student engagement include cooperative learning experiences with UNH's Browne Center, the construction of low ropes course elements that promote group problem solving, and a small-group project building birdhouses with vulnerable learners. This part of the innovation is designed to support our students' awareness that they are an integral part of their learning community and an active part of the learning process.

This innovation seeks to support the social-emotional development and well-being of students. One component of this project that addresses SEL is the creation of a meditation garden where individuals and whole classes can learn and practice SEL skills. Students will also be able work with an artist in residency to establish a mural for this space. This part of the innovation is designed to support our students' capacity to understand, honor, and work with their own emotions and those of others.

This innovation seeks to promote the ecoliteracy of students and staff through authentic outdoor learning experiences. One component of this project that addresses ecoliteracy is the expansion of the Woodland and Wonder program. This program will ensure that every student has the opportunity to collect scientific data for the Gulf of Maine Research Institute. Every student will also have opportunities to explore a local preserve to connect students to natural spaces they can access with their families beyond the school day. Another component of this project is expanding the on-campus Wi-Fi to ensure that students can use technology to download game camera photographs, identify invasive and native plants, and use computers to support their learning while outside. Infrastructure such as sheds for learning supplies and outdoor gear to ensure all our learners have what they need to be comfortable was also included. This component of the innovation is designed to support students' understanding of natural systems and their role within them.

The Great Works Ventures Outdoors pilot has the potential to profoundly impact the learners and community at MGWS. It is bold and considered.

Contact:

name: Sara Allis and Wendy Shaw

email: sara.allis@rsu35.org and wendy.shaw@rsu35.org

phone: (207)-384-4010

The Maine Department of Education's Rethinking Remote Education Ventures (RREV) project is 100% funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Education Stabilization Fund awarded through the Rethink K-12 Education Models (REM) grant. Maine was awarded \$ 16,958,613.

The contents of this letter were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.