

Connect, Reach & Teach Each Child with Outdoor Learning
RSU 89 Katahdin Schools
Contact: Marie Robinson, Superintendent

Overview:

Connect, Reach & Teach Each Child with Outdoor Learning is an innovation designed to provide a PK-12 outdoor learning pathway for approximately two hundred students at Katahdin Schools. This innovation will meet the cognitive, social-emotional and physical development of students - a whole child approach to learning. All students in grades PreK-5 will benefit as they will spend an increased amount of time outdoors engaged in authentic learning experiences. Middle and high school students who are interested in continuing an outdoor learning pathway will be supported through an outdoor education program that has the potential to lead to college credits in an outdoor recreation major. This innovation will also meet the professional learning needs of teachers providing time, space and support for teachers to build their outdoor learning knowledge and expertise.

In approximately one hour per week and 20 sessions with a curriculum expert, our aim is that with a whole child approach to learning, children will be happier and more successful at school potentially decreasing the instance of childhood obesity and symptoms of attention deficit disorder while increasing the physical stamina, coping skills, self-regulation and overall wellbeing of children. The creativity and novelty of incorporating the outdoors into everyday lessons will lead to an increase in teacher job satisfaction and teacher retention.

Our project accomplishes this through a three-pronged approach including the following:

- 1.) Integrated curriculum innovation and development using science and the outdoors as the central focus
- 2.) Ongoing teacher professional learning and support
- 3.) Developing creative and engaging outdoor learning spaces.

This innovation will be evaluated using pre and post-climate surveys conducted bi-annually in the elementary school. At the middle and high school level we will evaluate the success of the program using the Holistic Student Assessment tool(www.pearinc.org).

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