

Pilot Name: Valley Outdoors

School/District Name: Upper Kennebec Valley Jr./Sr. High School

Contact: James Tyler and Melissa Lyons-Vitalone

Overview:

Upper Kennebec Valley Jr/Sr High School is working to grow an innovative outdoor-based education program to increase student engagement and better prepare students for their lives after high school. By participating in the program, we expect our students to develop and exercise a host of skills including problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, marketing, salesmanship, and financial management.

In order to bring this pilot to fruition, Valley Outdoors will partner with Baker Mountain, a community non-profit, to ensure all students in grades 5-12 have access to nature-based learning opportunities. Under the guidance of teaching staff, students will be able to use the base lodge and over 50 acres of trails and wooded land at Baker Mountain to engage in project-based learning activities. In addition, we will scale up current greenhouse operations, expand hands-on project offerings, and develop water exploration and research activities for our wildlife studies program.

Our pilot focuses on several critical elements:

- 1.) Increasing access to outdoor learning experiences for each of our students.
- 2.) Extending student use of our commercial greenhouse by adding heat and using cold frames to expand growing capacity.
- 3.) Expanding industrial arts project-based learning and offering rigorous opportunities to engage in pre-engineering activities with an outdoor focus.
- 4.) Developing our capability to offer water-based research.

Outcomes:

We anticipate 100% of our student body will be able to engage in at least one integrated unit of study. We also expect to see a decrease in absenteeism and a reduction in classroom behavior referrals as a by-product of increased engagement. Over the long-term, we hope to gain increased community engagement, attract highly qualified staff to open positions, and see improvements in standardized assessment data.

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