

RREV's Innovative Pilot Template

As part of the **Innovative Mindset and Pilot Development** courses being offered through several of Maine's institutions of higher education, the RREV project uses a consistent template for the creation of all future pilots. Because every pilot created and tested with RREV funds WILL BE published in EnGiNE, we want all of Maine's educators to have the assurance of consistency.

This template provides an outline of the components required of an Innovative Pilot. The information in this template will serve as the basis for requests for school/district level project funding.

Section 1: Define the Need

A. Describe your innovation.

Consider what evidence supports the need for an innovation and the evidence that suggests your innovation will improve the current situation.

Out and About: The Outrageous Outdoors!

Our schools are built among the mountains, lakes, rivers, harbors, and shorelines of Midcoast Maine. As a result, our PreK-4 students are surrounded by an array of accessible ecosystems. We want to create outdoor learning spaces and offer programming for students and teachers that will enhance their educational experience. Due to research ([Greater Good Magazine](#), Cultivating Outdoor Classrooms, Lens on Outdoor Learning) on the positive impacts outdoor learning can have, we began looking more closely at outdoor learning opportunities in 2017. With the onset of the pandemic outdoor experiences **became a daily necessity**. In 2021 we will introduce our first Pre-K program and it will be grounded in nature-based learning experiences for young children. We believe that through partnering with local and regional outdoor organizations and experts in the field we can create outdoor learning spaces, training opportunities for staff, and innovative programming that will benefit all PreK-4 students.

Even though our school district has some teachers engaged in outdoor learning there has been no comprehensive system in place to ensure all students experience the benefits from nature-based education. At the elementary level we know approximately 25% of classroom teachers seek multiple nature-based learning experiences and have integrated learning standards to be met through outdoor education. Without a comprehensive system in place, learners are not provided equitable learning opportunities. In addition, with the advancement of technology, children now more than ever, need to develop an appreciation for their natural surroundings and the importance of a healthy, engaging learning environment. The need to create a comprehensive system for outdoor learning is crucial to both the academic and the social/emotional well-being of our students.

Hearing from K-4 grade staff members through stakeholder interviews that time is a most valuable resource, we plan for a flexible approach to outdoor learning. Some opportunities for students may require an hour outside, while others run for an entire semester. Service-learning projects and/or residencies can be week-long or month-long endeavors. Our goal here is to remain flexible while providing all students an outdoor learning experience. Optimizing opportunities and minimizing

restrictions will be an essential part of making outdoor learning available to all students throughout the year. Past practices around minutes/specific content areas will need to be revised. Field experiences will need to be encouraged and enhanced not limited to a specific number/year.

Research shows that engaging students in applicable, relevant, and engaging experiences in the out-of-doors contributes to academic success and environmental literacy; specifically a positive influence on students' learning dispositions, skills, and behaviors. (Outdoor School for All! 2019 Evaluation Report). Furthermore, specific learning standards for young children through outdoor learning have been set forth as essential. These include, but are not limited to: curiosity and initiative, engagement and persistence, imagination, invention, reasoning and problem solving, risk-taking and responsibility, reflection, flexibility, and resiliency. (Lens On Outdoor Learning, Banning and Sullivan, 2010). These are the attributes of well-rounded learners.

B. Identify which students would be impacted, targeted, or supported by the innovation.

Review the evidence – quantitative and qualitative data and research – that indicates this group of students is considered the most vulnerable and would benefit from the described innovation.

Data you can use to inform your innovation, rationale, and targeted student population include the performance of various groups of students (e.g., students in rural locales, students from low socio-economic conditions, students with disabilities, students who are EIs, students at risk for dropping out, student who are homeless) with regard to academic achievement, graduation rates, social-emotional and mental wellness, economic data, and/or workforce participation.

- We believe that ALL students regardless of socio-economic status, identified disabilities, or other labels benefit from learning in the outdoors. Nature provides an equal opportunity for all students and for some students allows them more freedom to express themselves This project, initially, is geared to all students in grades PreK-4 including students in our special education self-contained programs. We believe in an inclusive learning environment so all students will be participating in this learning opportunity with their classroom. We currently have special education students who are integrated into their regular classroom setting and would participate in the outdoor learning with their classroom. There are also specialized special education programs that are more restrictive and these students will also participate in outdoor learning. All staff members will participate in the provided training and have opportunities to utilize expert residents. This will impact approximately 380 students.
- We also believe that students in the low-socioeconomic grouping will show increased academic gains as measured by NWEA and local assessments. Currently from our most recent state testing data (18-19 Empower assessment), those students who are economically disadvantaged performed well below those students who are not. For English Language Arts 61% ED performed below state expectations compared to just 25% of those non-ED. For mathematics, 77% ED performed below state expectations compared to 39% of those non-ED. We have set a goal for at least a 10% increase in academic goals for the low SES students. In addition, we know that families from low SES backgrounds have limited abilities to purchase needed outdoor clothing that may prohibit students from participating. We will provide all the necessary outdoor clothing that a child might need if families can not do so. This eliminates one of the barriers to participation. We believe that the Outrageous Outdoors project will increase student engagement in learning while consequently increasing performance.

- Student engagement will be reflected through a reduction in behavior data for each class. We will use SWIS data, office referrals, and PAUSE Place visitations to monitor the success. Our goal is to see at least a 20% reduction in behavior infractions.

Section 2: Describe the Innovation

A. Describe the goals of your innovation.

Consider how your innovation will meet the needs of the identified target student population(s) and how you plan to achieve your goals. Additionally, consider any changes in policy, practice or structures you expect as a result of the innovation.

Goal: 100% of students will participate in at least one or more extended outdoor learning experiences in 2021-22. These experiences will be on-site at identified outdoor learning spaces as well as in the “wild-spaces”. Students will have opportunities to utilize a variety of tools and materials to enhance and extend their learning, via their grade level learning kits. In addition, these experiences will be connected to off-site learning field trips that are directly connected to the learning standards and curriculum. Students will be active and engaged participants in these experiences with anecdotal data collected and self-reported on engagement and enjoyment levels with at least 75% of the student population indicating engagement and enjoyment. In addition, student achievement, attendance, and SWIS (behavior data) will be used for measures of success with the goal of a 20% reduction in behavior infractions and a 10% increase in student attendance rates.

95% of staff for grades PreK-4 will participate in a 2-day summer institute for professional development and planning. Integrating content area standards and the guiding principles, as staff plans with outdoor experts will result in the best possible learning outcomes for students moving our instruction from “good” to “great”. In addition, staff will participate in ongoing support and coaching from our partners with Hurricane Island Center for Science and Leadership throughout the school year. This ongoing support includes staff from Hurricane Island Center for Science and Leadership working directly with students in delivering instruction in the outdoors.

100% of staff will be partnered with a regional expert in the area of study. Staff will partner with their expert to co-plan and co-facilitate the student learning activities. The experts will provide direct instruction in their identified areas of expertise. We believe this “residency” model provides the expertise, support, and confidence our staff needs to make outdoor learning a common part of our curriculum. A learning coordinator (stipended position) will work with staff to identify local experts to collaborate with each grade level. Teachers will also collect student data during the residency using a student observational survey. This will be a true partnership

B. Describe activities included in your plan for each stage – preparation (P) or implementation (I) – of your innovation.

- **Preparation** includes building stakeholder awareness, establishing routines and processes, and coordination of logistics.
- **Implementation** includes planned implementation activities, as well as professional development for the educators participating in the innovation.

Activity	Purpose	Stage (P or I)	Date of Completion	Person Responsible
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1. Survey staff	Interest and Willingness to participate in PD	P	4-21	Deb and Kristy
2. Secure funding	Will need funds to implement all components of this grant	P	Summer 2021	Grant submission - Deb and Kristy
3. Collaborate with Hurricane Island Center for Science and Leadership for developing and planning staff pd	Dedicated time and focus on integration of learning standards with outdoor experiences.	I	8/21 some work will be ongoing into the academic calendar year of 21/22	Administration and staff sub-committee
4. Work with outdoor architect designer for identifying areas and plans on grounds.	Design and plan for outdoor learning areas.	P	June 2021	Administration
5. Hire Project Manager	To oversee the work required for the physical structures and design implementation.	P	June 2021	Central Office
6. Secure Landscaper company	To secure the necessary company to complete the work as outlined in the design.	P	June 2021	Central Office
7. Develop timeline	To identify clear outcomes and deadlines for all parties involved	P	April	Administration
8. Identify and Purchase outdoor materials	Materials prepped and ready to go for staff and learners.	I	Identify - April 2021 Purchase - August 2021	Deb, Kristy and Staff
9. Identify and purchased materials for learning kits	Kits assembled based on content-specific standards to support classrooms	I	Identify - April 2021 Purchase - August 2021	Deb, Kristy and Staff
10. Hire a stipended coordinator	Facilitate and coordinate residency experiences for PK-4 classrooms	I	July 2021	Administration
11. Identify experts and partners	To secure outside community organizations willing	I	Summer 2021	Coordinator

	to commit to partnering with specific grade levels/teachers.			
12. Staff training	To provide learning opportunities for staff in creating alignment to curriculum outcomes and nature-based learning opportunities	I	Summer 2021 Fall inservice day 2021 Ongoing consultation throughout the school year of 2021-22.	Deb, Hurricane Island
13. Create Outdoor spaces	Outdoor spaces are created and ready for access by staff and students. All outdoor spaces will be ADA compliant.	I	Fall 2021	Administration

Section 3: Define Innovation Outcomes & Measure to Assess Outcomes

- A. Identify the outcomes (i.e., student outcomes, changes in instructional practices, changes in student practice) that you expect to see as a result of your innovation.

Consider both short-term and long-term outcomes, at different points in the time (e.g., at 6 months, 12 months, 2 years and 3+ years).

*Outdoor learning opportunities supported by experts in the field and with our staff will allow 380 students to expand their engagement in learning and improve academic success. 100% of the opportunities will be supported by matching staff with mentors/experts. Using a residency concept, students will be immersed in the learning process for an extended period. Providing coaches or mentors to support staff and students will allow us to benefit from the best possible learning opportunities for our students. We also believe that we will see an increase in student engagement that will not only result in a reduction in daily absences but also a reduction in negative student behaviors for all students.

Sept - Nov. - Goal: At least 70% of staff and students will have at least one extended learning opportunity through accessing the outdoors. Data collection will include attendance, behavioral data (SWIS) and student observation (teachers will complete a student observational survey during outdoor residencies). Fall achievement data will set a benchmark. Our goal is to see at least a 20% reduction in behavior infractions by the end of the year.

Dec - Feb - Goal: At least 50% of staff and students will get outside for learning opportunities during the winter months. Achievement data will be collected and compared to the fall benchmark to determine academic growth, especially reviewing disaggregated data to review gains for low SES student subgroup. We have set a goal for at least a 10% increase in academic goals for the identified low SES students.

March - June - Goal: 100% of staff and students will have at least one extended learning opportunity through accessing the outdoors. In addition, at least 70% of staff will have also included the outdoor learning environment in their planning of instruction outside of the residency. Staff and student surveys will indicate satisfaction in the learning model. Data collection will include attendance, behavioral data (SWIS) and student observation (teachers will complete a student observational survey during outdoor residencies). Our goal is to see at least a 20% reduction in behavior infractions by the end of the year. Engagement will be measured through an observational survey and a student survey. Our goal is for 80% of students to indicate engagement in the activities, and an increase in attendance by at least 10%. The Guiding Principles will be monitored and measured through our 4 C's rubrics and observational survey.

Summer end of year one: The school subgroup will review data and determine if goals were met and make revisions to the project based on data including staff and student surveys. Summer PD will continue to be offered, especially for new hires, but continued ongoing support.

School Year 2022-23: Ongoing continuation of the collaboration with community experts and partnerships.

B. Describe your plan for collecting and reviewing data to assess your innovation outcomes.

Potential data to collect includes qualitative and quantitative data (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups, observations, exit tickets, and on-demand assessment(s) that can be considered.

Data Type	Baseline (B) Interim (I) Summative (S)	Frequency of Data Collection	Person(s) Responsible for Collection and Data Quality
1. Universal Behavioral Screening	B/I	3x/year Fall, Winter, Spring	CRES Guidance/Social Worker
2. NWEA- content standards	B/S	3x/ year starting in grades 2-4	Classroom Teachers
3. Teacher observational surveys	B/S	Before and after residency experiences	Classroom Teachers
4. SWIS Behavioral data	B/I/S	Ongoing throughout the year	Administration
5. Student Satisfaction Survey/Focus groups for younger students	I/S	Mid and End of year	Classroom teachers
6. Staff Survey	I/S	S	Administration
7. 4 C's rubrics - guiding principle measures	S	End of Year	Classroom teachers

- C. Describe how you will **scale and sustain** your innovation, including necessary policy changes, changes in mindsets, capacity-building activities, and **long-term financial sustainability**.

Consider the systems changes that this innovation will require and promote.

*As a system, this project will be sustained as a way of how we do school at Camden Rockport Elementary School. This will be an ongoing endeavor as we increase staff buy-in, expectations for new hires and create the ability for staff to continue to make connections to the outdoors and their curriculum. The district administration will continue to support teachers with professional development opportunities throughout the course of the year through title II funds as well as local funds in the budget.

*Changes that we will need to continue to support is providing for professional development (\$200/per day/per each new staff member for summer training), additional coaching and collaboration opportunities with Hurricane Island Outward Bound (\$1,500) both of which can be supported through our title funds allocated for professional development.

*As we look ahead we will be developing a new district strategic plan, which has outdoor learning as an underpinning for the district vision and instructional practices. This will continue to support the efforts and provide a systems approach to the philosophy and value of outdoor learning.

*Financially, we will also look to supporting outdoor residencies and community experts through our local partnerships and look to accessing needed funds in the local budget requests and through outside funding such as a Bisbee grant (local endowment for schools). We believe this model is financially responsible and sustainable by prioritizing the need in our local budget and through our community partnerships. Many of these non-profit organizations also have financial resources available to them and can therefore allow for cost savings to the school district. Our local budget will support any ongoing costs to needed supplies and materials. We anticipate the costs for our continued partnerships to be \$500 per partner outreach for each grade level (7) elementary for 5 opportunities = \$17,500 and additionally \$25000 for field trips (transportation) as well as \$1200 for the stipend support position. We do not anticipate great capital outlay in ongoing years as sites and groundwork would only be necessary for our initial year.

D. Describe the feasibility study you engaged in during the development of your innovative pilot plan, including which aspects of the plan for the pilot were reviewed, which stakeholders were engaged, feedback received and revisions made to the plan as a result of the feedback.

*In our school(s) when teachers (100 total/ 22 from CRES) were surveyed and asked,

If given the opportunity to participate in an outdoor learning residency with a local or regional expert and organization, how likely is it you would have your class participate?

Over 70% responded that they would want their learners to participate.

Over 60% responded that they would consider participation in summer training and planning in order to prepare for the outdoor learning residencies. We felt this was a strong indicator that there was support for developing a comprehensive outdoor learning program. When teachers sign up for summer training on the heels of a highly demanding school year, dominated by a global pandemic, this reinforced the support for this innovation.

These results lead us to believe there is strong support to begin the process of prepping for outdoor learning models to be implemented in the 2021-2022 school year.

We realized, based on the staff survey, that not all staff were willing to dedicate summer days to training so we needed to revise our plans and also offer the training during a school day pd offering so 100% of staff would have this training experience. We also realized we needed to hone in our focus of this project to address the PreK-4 learning experience so that we could do a more focused approach vs. Prek - 12.

In addition, we presented the idea to the administration who were 100% in support of the project. In this PDSA cycle we determined that the administration was behind the concepts of this project, but needed to have a clearer sense of the timeline and impact on other schedules. We collaborated with the administration regarding the calendar for professional development

We also presented the design concept to the administration to collect feedback and identify any barriers or concerns. During this cycle, we realized we needed to consider the impact of the outdoor learning spaces on entrances/exits for other grade levels as well as including specific grade level areas. It was identified as a concern by staff that without some dedicated spaces it becomes a challenge to schedule the space for each class.

Section 4: Identify Key Expenses

- A. Identify the key expenses associated with the preparation, implementation, and ongoing refinement of your pilot.

Expenses could include staff time, materials, professional development activities, facilities, and other related expenses. This section does not need to include specific costs, but rather list out the different costs that should be considered to implement the innovation.

*We envision partnerships for each grade-level team that will be two-fold. The planning and preparation component and then the ultimate delivery of the experiences. Some outdoor learning programs will be located within the district's school grounds and others will occur off-site at specifically targeted locations that support learners with the most meaningful experience.

Partnerships with local and regional experts to provide outdoor learning residencies will run around \$1000/partnership. With 20 classrooms PK-4 we will \$20,000 per residency/ grade team. (2-3 residency experiences per year will cost \$40,000-\$60,000)

Staff development will be targeted time beyond the school year so that residencies may begin promptly at the start of the school year and to allow us to leverage our seasonal changes and advantages in Maine.

In order for prior planning to occur with local and regional experts, we will need to dedicate 2 additional days beyond the teacher contract for (20+ or -) teachers at \$30,000.

Learning kits housing necessary tools and materials will be available for grade levels to grab and go with for outdoor learning opportunities.

Supplies and materials for grade levels programs, \$30,000

While many opportunities exist right on the school grounds, our region is rich with coastal attractions, waterways, mountains, trails, and more. This proposal will include off-site field experiences for learners.

Travel and transportation to-and-from off-site locations, \$25,000

Stipend for Coordinator, \$1200

Project Manager, \$4,200

Outdoor site planning, preparation, and development of outdoor learning sites, \$80,000 (this includes design and construction)