

RREV School Snapshot – Falmouth

Background

In June 2020, the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) was awarded a \$16.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Rethink K–12 Education Models program to implement the Rethinking Responsive Education Ventures (RREV) program. The overarching purpose of RREV is to support Maine educators to create, implement, and disseminate responsive and innovative educational models that help all students learn and thrive.

Pilot Description

In May 2022, Falmouth Public Schools (Falmouth) received an award from RREV to implement its pilot *Navigator Program*. This pilot is in the Outdoor Education category.

The goals of this pilot are to:

- Provide Falmouth students opportunities to engage in authentic, interdisciplinary learning and experience place-based learning.
- Provide opportunities for Falmouth students to build connections with nature, their community, and Wabanaki culture, past and present.
- Build Falmouth students' understanding of the ecological relationships within the Presumpscot Watershed and the importance of water, both locally and globally.

Key activities of this pilot include:

- Select staff participate in a variety of outdoor education planning sessions and Wabanaki studies classes to create interdisciplinary, place-based learning experiences that are aligned to curriculum standards.
- Students engage in a variety of experiential learning activities connected to the Presumpscot Watershed, including but not limited to water testing and identification of local flora and fauna.
- Each student engages in an experiential learning project connected to local waterways, including fishing, canoeing, and navigating underwater robots.
- Grade levels partner with community experts that connect to area of focus of their experiential learning plan.
- Cross collaboration of grade levels and/or students of different grade levels.
- The Outdoor Learning Educator supports curriculum development, curricular alignment, and implementing place-based learning experiences.

Exhibit: RREV Award Summary

Budget *These are estimates. The new budget is still being determined following our notice of a no-cost extension into 2024.

Category	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Personal Services – Salaries and Stipend	\$82,000	\$82,000	\$164,000
Employee Benefits	\$26,000	\$26,000	\$52,000
Purchased Professional and Technical Services	\$3,000	\$2,000	\$5,000
Purchased Property Services	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$5,000
General Supplies (Instructional Supplies and Media)	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$14,000

Property and Technology	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$5,000
Miscellaneous - Field trip transportation	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$5,000
Total	\$125,500	\$125,500	\$250,000

- Approximately 1100 students involved through a multi-year roll-out of curriculum.
- Grades 1-12 served.
- 50-60 teachers involved through a multi-year design process.

Responsiveness of the pilot

Falmouth's pilot is responsive to local needs and/or assets because:

- **It builds on a robust history of outdoor education at Falmouth.** Falmouth is surrounded by an abundance of parks and recreation areas, including rivers and woods. Over the past 10 years, Falmouth has invested a great deal of energy and resources into developing those spaces as learning spaces. For example, Falmouth hired a garden manager who tends the gardens and provides students with class lessons and education on planting and harvesting. Falmouth also has "eco leaders," who are teachers designated to take care of and encourage use of outdoor spaces. However, according to the Director of Learning at Falmouth, use of outdoor learning spaces and engagement with outdoor learning is not yet comprehensive. Falmouth's pilot project aims to "recenter outdoor learning" so that all students have an opportunity to experience the outdoors and outdoor learning becomes an embedded part of the curriculum.
- **It utilizes Falmouth's local waterways to deepen students' understanding of Wabanaki culture, past and present.** Within the Presumpscot Watershed, Falmouth is special in that it has lake, river and ocean access. As such, the pilot program seeks to develop students' appreciation and knowledge of these waterways by centering them to teach science and history concepts and make connections with Wabanaki culture.

Innovativeness of the pilot

Falmouth's pilot is innovative because:

- **It fosters cross-collaboration through its whole school approach.** Though Falmouth is a single school campus, educators said curriculum and communication often feel fragmented across schools. The *Navigator Program* intentionally builds connections across grade levels and across the elementary, middle school, and high school. By creating collaborative working partnerships (in the form of mentoring, coaching, and co-teaching and learning opportunities) across classes, teams, and grade levels, students are expected to experience an increase in connection to teachers across the district.
- **It positions outdoor learning not as an "enrichment opportunity," but rather central to Falmouth's overall academic philosophy.** Centering place-based curriculum design will shift the learning experience for Falmouth's students from a discrete approach to a more integrated approach that builds over time.

Sustainability of the pilot

Falmouth's sustainability strategy includes:

- **The RREV Team will seek approval for permanent funding of the Outdoor Learning Educator position.** The Outdoor Learning Educator is instrumental to sustaining the transformative change in outdoor learning at Falmouth. This position is funded for two years through the RREV grant, but would need to be written into the district budget for future years.