

## RREV School Snapshot – Gorham High School

### 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 August 2022, Gorham High School received an award from RREV to implement its pilot project: *Gorham Outdoors*. This pilot is in the Outdoor Education Accelerated category.

The goals of this pilot are to:

- Improve attendance rates by reinvigorating Grade 9 students’ love of learning.
- Decrease the number of social/emotional distress referrals by meeting Grade 9 students’ social and emotional needs.
- Rebuild community relationships after the pandemic.
- Expand their current outdoor curriculum.

Key activities of this pilot include:

- Creating a project-based, experiential, service-learning curriculum for Grade 9 students.
- Providing professional development for all teachers regarding project-based learning and outdoor learning.
- Purchase of outdoor education equipment.
- Purchase of video equipment to document the project .
- Students’ presentation at the end of the project that displays the project and final products.
- Building a solar powered greenhouse with a weather station and acquiring outdoor education equipment (2023-2024 school year.)

### Exhibit: RREV Award Summary

#### Budget

Category	Year 1
Personal Services – Salaries and Stipend	\$11,000
Purchased Professional Services	\$5,000
Instructional Supplies	\$5,300
Property – Learning Site Development/Construction	\$70,300
Miscellaneous - Field trip transportation	\$8,400
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>

- Students: 33% of Grade 9 students served (60-70 students)
- Educators: Four teachers are directly involved (English, Sciences, Social Studies, and Math core subjects)

### Responsiveness of the pilot

Gorham High School's pilot is responsive to local needs and/or assets because:

- **It builds on the district's cross-disciplinary curriculum and approach for helping Grade 9 students transition to high school.** At Gorham High School, teaching and learning practices for Grade 9 students are different from the rest of the grades. Grade 9 students are divided into three teams that take together the following core subjects: Math, English, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences. The purpose is to smooth the transition from middle school to high school and to build strong relationships between teachers and students. With a cross-disciplinary lens, the four core teachers assigned to each group work together to foster project-based learning. Gorham's RREV pilot leverages this set-up as an innovation "laboratory." This configuration into autonomous work groups of students and teachers allows the implementation of the RREV pilot project in one of the groups, for testing purposes, with the idea of expanding the project to the rest of Grade 9 students in later years.

### Innovativeness of the pilot

Gorham High School's pilot is innovative because:

- **It uses interdisciplinary, project-based learning to challenge traditional school norms and assumptions about teaching and learning.** A pilot leader said the school had long had a "traditional structure," but following the pandemic many students, staff, and administrators overwhelmed, disengaged, and discouraged. One reason the pilot is innovative is because it replaces the traditional classroom-based model with a new project-based, experiential, service-learning approach. This transformation is intended to invigorate the school culture and spark curiosity and passion for learning among students and teachers.
- **It leverages video and other technology to increase student engagement and buy-in.** Students will also create a video project highlighting the implementation of the pilot. This activity requires the involvement of the technology department and "builds capacity for student leadership, engagement and foster relationships throughout the building," said one of the educators involved. Students from different grades will lead and create an audiovisual project showcasing the RREV pilot. For teachers, "it takes creative thinking. It takes looking at our classroom time in a different way. It's like retraining our own teaching practices" with the goal of "retraining our students for how to learn outside of the classroom and engaging them in solving real world problems," stated one of educators involved.
- **Project-based and outdoor learning provides more opportunities to connect academic concepts with real-world experiences.** According to the staff involved in the project, students are experiencing "a lack of satisfying and authentic learning." The reason being students do not see the connection between the classroom and the real world. The idea is for students to see how the content learned applies to the real world, "instead of just learning from a textbook and learning from...worksheets in that more traditional model where we're asking them authentic questions."

### Sustainability of the pilot

Gorham High School's pilot model's strategy for sustainability includes:

- **Change in mindset and capacity building.** The hope with the cohort team is that it will pave the way for the rest of multidisciplinary teams to adopt an outdoor and experiential learning model, not only for Grade 9 students, but also for other grades.
- **Community involvement.** The school has already contacted several community organizations and educational institutions, such as the Environmental Sciences department at the University of Southern Maine and St. Joseph's College, to pursue long-term collaborations and keep the greenhouse functioning all year round.

## SPRING UPDATE

### Implementation Progress Update

#### Year 1 Challenges

- Involvement of the rest of Grade 9 teachers.
- The greenhouse is going to be built in a public space and needs local authorization and public vote. The permit is delayed.

#### Year 1 Successes

- Completion of a 3 month long interdisciplinary project with 9th grade academy students
- Well-attended culminating event that included over 30 parents, 20 additional staff and all students involved.
- Final video link here; <https://vimeo.com/782906150/876b23ca0d>