

RREV School Snapshot – Harpswell Coastal Academy

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 2021, Harpswell Coastal Academy received an award from RREV to further develop and implement their community-based learning program, *Change Your World!* This pilot is in the Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) category.

The goals of this pilot are to:

- Strengthen and expand community-based learning (CBL) opportunities for all students to help build connections in the community and prepare students for life after graduation.
- Support teachers for incorporating fieldwork and service learning into their curriculum.

Key activities of this pilot include:

- Hiring a CBL coordinator at the start of the 2021-2022 school year to develop community partnerships, clarify fieldwork processes and expectations for teachers and students, teach a 12th grade seminar course, and work with 11th and 12th-grade students to build CBL into their schedules and long-term academic plans.
- Identify and improve transportation options to ensure high school students have more equitable access to off-campus learning experiences.
- Provide transportation and build community connections to expand class-based fieldwork and whole-class service projects for 5th to 10th grade students.

Exhibit: RREV Award Summary

Category	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Personal Services – Teacher Salary	\$68,000	\$68,000	\$136,000
Employee Benefits	\$17,000	\$17,000	\$34,000
Purchased Professional and Technical Services	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$14,000
Instructional Field Trip Transportation	\$12,288	\$12,288	\$24,576
Administrative Overhead	\$1,042	\$1,042	\$2,084
Total	\$105,330	\$105,330	\$210,660

- 2 or 3 students conducting internships each trimester starting in December 2021 (Trimester 2 of Year 1), but all 70 middle school students and 105 high school students engage in fieldwork or other CBL experiences.
- Grades 5-12 served

- All HCA teachers participate by incorporating field work or service learning into their curricula, including 2 teachers in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM), 4 in Humanities, 1 in science, and 1 in math, along with one instructional technology specialist and the CBL coordinator.

Responsiveness of the pilot

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

- **Expanded opportunities for field work, service learning, and internships are designed to build long-lasting connections between students and the community.** The shift away from what educators referred to as a "one-off field trip model" will deepen HCA's pre-existing Expeditionary Learning approach for clearer links to life after graduation. More reflective and sustained engagements in the community will be fostered through a new seminar for students with internships and mentoring and job shadowing opportunities integrated into the senior capstone projects.
- **The addition of a CBL coordinator and mid-day transportation for students addresses key challenges identified for HCA's Expeditionary Learning model.** Having a staff person dedicated to developing community partnerships and securing internships eases the burden on classroom teachers and allows for a more focused and concerted effort to link students to the right CBL opportunities. Providing transportation to internships and other off-campus placements removes a key barrier to participation for students who don't have their own cars.
- **Support for students is customized to serve evolving needs.** In October 2022, the Maine Charter School Commission voted not to renew HCA's charter, so the school will close at the end of the 2022-2023 school year. The role of the CBL coordinator has been adjusted to not only identify CBL opportunities for students but also to help them plan their transition to another academic setting or to connect them to potential employment opportunities.

Innovativeness of the pilot

The pilot at HCA is innovative because:

- **Students have access to a broader set of CBL opportunities across all subject areas.** Rather than focusing narrowly on science or STEAM-related internships, the Expeditionary Learning approach now offers various options for all students. The local newspaper provided an opportunity for a student to conduct fieldwork in humanities. Examples of other community partners offering internships, job shadowing, mentoring, or other off-campus activities include the Harpswell Historical Society, Growing to Give (a farm in Brunswick), the Midcoast Humane Society, Midcoast Hunger Prevention Program, Harpswell Aging at Home, and a wildlife rehabilitator in Bowdoin.
- **Student reflection and parent involvement strengthen the connections to life after graduation.** CBL activities at all levels include a reflective journaling component for students, and seniors attend a CBL seminar and complete a capstone project that articulates how the experiences link to longer-term plans. Parents or guardians are engaged first through requests to sign permission forms and then through commitments to provide transportation. HCA provides mid-day transportation to bring students to their CBL placements, but parents are

responsible to ensure students have a ride home. These factors are designed to increase commitment to the CBL experiences by students and their parents.