

RREV School Snapshot – MSAD 59 Madison Elementary 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 January 2023, MSAD 59 Madison Elementary School received an award from RREV to implement its *Paths to Exploration Trail* project. This pilot is in the Outdoor Education Accelerated category.

The goals of this pilot are to:

- Increase the physical, social, and emotional health of students.
- Enable more outdoor and experiential learning for all students.
- Create peer-to-peer bonds between high school students and elementary school students.

Key activities of this pilot include:

- Making the school designated areas for outdoor learning accessible to students with mobility limitations.
- Creating and using outdoor learning spaces, including nature stations/experiences, for exploratory learning in the areas of life sciences, art, music, PE, computer library, and remediation services, and guidance counseling.
- Installing a dock system onto the wetlands to be used as an outdoor classroom space.
- Pairing school students with local high school students in the Sustainable Agriculture Program to create a mentorship program.
- Training teachers to convert lessons to outdoor experiences.

Exhibit: RREV Award Summary

Budget

Category	Year 1
Personal Services – Salaries and Stipend	\$5,000
Instructional Supplies	\$6,312
Property – Learning Site Development/Construction	\$88,688
Total	\$100,000

- **Students:** All students in PreK-4th grade served (250 students) and the students that are part in the special education program (K-6, 15 students).
- **Educators:** Seven teachers are directly involved (Physical Education, Occupational Therapist, Life Skills, 4th grade and the 3 Kindergarten teachers) with the goal of involving the full teaching staff in the future.

Responsiveness of the pilot

MSAD 59 Madison Elementary School’s pilot is responsive to local needs and/or assets because:

- **It builds on a successful and popular summer program that prioritizes outdoor learning experiences.** The school has been holding a Summer Summit Academy which takes place outdoors and enjoys a high level of attendance. Teachers, students, and families respond very positively to this unique hands-on educational experience. The school decided to extend this model and its benefits to all students during the regular academic year. For that, the terrains and other surroundings needed some improvement. The award enables the school to adapt a parcel of land and trails to make outdoor learning a possibility to all elementary-grade students and according to their physical development.
- **It responds to community demand for accessible outdoor areas and experiences.** The school plans to share their outdoors with the community, whose trail system is not accessible to people with mobility handicaps.

Innovativeness of the pilot

MSAD 59 Madison Elementary School's pilot is innovative because:

- **It integrates physical activity in many classes students beyond the Physical Education class.** The school identified that 34% of the school kindergarten students and 42% percent of the third-grade students fall within the category of overweight or obese. The renovated trail system and the experiential learning activities provide students with more opportunities to be physically active during school hours.
- **It addresses the students' social and emotional needs after the COVID-19 pandemic.** The COVID-19 pandemic restricted playing and other group activities that are typical in early elementary classrooms and foster not only mental and learning growth, but social and emotional growth as well. The school aims to reduce stress, improve mood, boost concentration, and increase student engagement with more opportunities for outdoor learning.
- **It provides alternative teaching and learning experiences for students and teachers.** Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the young age of the school's students, most of their experiences with schooling are strongly associated to online environments and social distance measures. This grant will make possible for students and their teachers to create teaching and learning opportunities with a focus on hands-on experiences.

Sustainability of the pilot

MSAD 59 Madison Elementary School's pilot model's strategy for sustainability includes:

- **District and Community involvement.** With the help of the school district, local private business, and local organizations, the school plans to open the use and maintenance of the renovated trails and areas to the community all year around. The schools will use the district webpage to highlight students and families' activities--with testimonials, photos, attendance logs, and other resources-- to create awareness and expand the use of the spaces.
- **High school involvement.** The school will collaborate with the high school Sustainable Agriculture Program to identify the local fauna and flora to create signs, and to plant native plants and a garden.

SPRING UPDATE

Implementation Progress Update

Year 1 Challenges

- The school received the award when the school year was advanced.
- Involvement of the rest of teachers.
- Safe outdoor experiences for small children are contingent to the weather.
- The district is restructuring the distribution of grades. For the year 2023-2024, MSAD 59 Madison Elementary School will host students from PK to 2nd grade and the students from K-6 under the special education program. The incoming Grade 3 and 4 students will be sent to another school. The school wants to continue involving the Grade 3 and 4 students in this pilot.

Year 1 Successes