

RREV School Snapshot – Noble

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, MSAD 60 received an award from RREV to create a student wellness program at Noble FLEX called *Be Well Connected*. This pilot is in the Online Education category.

The goals of this pilot are to:

- Provide more options to students and families to learn from home part-time while also having opportunities for in-person engagement, including field trips and participation in school-based activities.
- Provide support for the socio-emotional needs of students, while building connectedness to their peers and academic coursework.

Key activities of this pilot include:

- Hire Noble FLEX staff, including a Remote Learning Director, a licensed social worker and two learning coaches who develop project-based learning opportunities tailored to the needs, interests, and goals of each student. Noble FLEX staff also help monitor student learning and socio-emotional well-being.
- Create a dedicated space where Noble FLEX students attend in-person activities with their peers one to two days per week. Noble FLEX students participate in special group classes and work on self-directed passion project. Students also participate in whole class field trips such as the Lego League competition and a Book Buddies program which partners with North Berwick Elementary school. The support and connections to local and regional organizations, such as the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard (PSNY), D.A. Hurd Library, and Primal Fit give students an opportunity to expand their experiences and give back to the community.
- Family training occurred once a week in Year 1 via informal virtual coffee talks. At these meetings, parents could drop in to talk with other parents and staff and have any questions that came up answered.

Exhibit: RREV Award Summary

Budget

Category	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Personal Services – Salaries and Stipend	\$0	\$15,424	
Employee Benefits	\$0	\$6,632.36	
Purchased Professional Education Services	\$2,325	\$0	
Transportation to Field Trips	\$1,170	\$0	
Instructional Supplies	\$1,278.64	\$0	
Property (fixed asset) Learning Space	\$75,993.11	\$147,176.89	
Total	\$80,766.75	\$169,233.25	\$250,000

- 24 students served during 2022-23
- Grade levels 5-9 participate.

Responsiveness of the pilot

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

- **It addresses the socio-emotional component of learning and connectedness.** A key component of Be Well Connected is its intentional approach to learning, including the socio-emotional needs of the students. Students in the *Be Well Connected* program can access their education, while working on coping strategies to address things that make it difficult to succeed in school, through more traditional paths. When students feel supported and can foster deeper connections with their peers, their educational goals are more attainable.
- **It expands transition time for 9th graders.** One of the lessons from Year 1 was that students in 8th grade were struggling with the transition into high school. Be Well Connected expanded their program to include the 9th grade to give these students extra time to access resources and develop coping strategies for continuing their educational journey into high school.

Innovativeness of the pilot

MSAD 60's pilot is innovative because:

- **It promotes a culture of inclusion through the use of shared space, experiences, and activities.** A key component of Be Well Connected is its intentional approach to building a culture where students empathize and support each other academically and socially. The program builds this culture through educator training on student wellness and through activities, policies, and practices that reinforce solidarity, kindness, and empathy as core values. School-wide in-person activities play a key role in these efforts.
- **It incorporates a wellness component into the student educational experience.** Many middle school students experience physical, mental, and emotional challenges that affect their learning. When in-person schooling was paused during the pandemic, the RSU #60 district school health coordinator noticed increasing signs of anxiety and depression, isolation, and academic struggle among many students in the district. At the same time, remote learning offered students more flexibility and independence, which was particularly beneficial to students who experienced social anxiety when attending school in-person. Be Well Connected is innovative because it

draws a direct connection between students' wellness and their overall educational experience through its emphasis on socio-emotional learning, stress management, and physical and mental health resources. To achieve this, Be Well Connected encourages students to practice empathy toward themselves and others, develop a sense of personal responsibility, and become "advocates for positive change." By doing so, the program integrates wellness across student's entire educational experience.

- **Students have more opportunities to exercise agency over their learning and pursue their interests through project-based learning.** The virtual aspect allows students to learn at their own pace and take classes that interest them. In addition to exercising greater control over their course content and pacing, students are also encouraged to discover their interests by working on a "passion project," which is a self-directed exploration of a topic of interest to each student, with support from their learning coach, culminating in a presentation to their peers.

Sustainability of the pilot

Be Well Connected has completed the Yurt building for their in-person activities. Students can now attend in-person activities one to two times a week at their own dedicated space for learning. This is intended to help students to feel more comfortable in their learning space while interacting with their peers. In the 2022-23 school year Be Well Connected expanded its outreach by including a 9th grade class. This allows students who are heading into high school but not quite ready for full-time in-person instruction, in a larger school environment, to transition more easily.