

Individual Adopter School – Camden-Rockport: Year 1 Case Study

Maine School Administrative District #28, Region 5 – MidCoast

Background

Maine School Administrative District #28 (MSAD #28) is a rural school administrative unit (SAU) that serves students across two schools: Camden-Rockport Elementary School (“Camden-Rockport”) serving grades pre-Kindergarten (PreK) through 4 and Camden Rockport Middle School serving grades 5–8. Camden-Rockport, about 50 miles south of Bangor, is implementing the Rethinking Responsive Education Ventures (RREV) pilot model. Camden-Rockport teachers and administrators characterized the community as “mostly affluent,” which aligns with socioeconomic data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The median annual household income (\$67,106) is higher than the Maine average, and the proportion of students who are economically disadvantaged or eligible for free/reduced price lunch is less than half the state average (Table 1).¹

TABLE 1: SOCIOECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

	SAU	Maine
Number of Students	722	178,860
Locale Classification	Rural	N/A
Students Identified as White	96%	88%
Students Identified as Economically Disadvantaged	18%	41%
Students Eligible For Free/Reduced Price Lunch (Camden-Rockport Elementary School)	20%	44%
Students Identified with Disabilities	17%	18%
Student/Teacher Ratio	11.04	N/A
Median Household Income	\$67,106	\$57,918
Adults with a Bachelor’s Degree or Higher	73%	32%
Adults in Labor Force	90%	63%

Sources: Maine Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, and U.S. Census Bureau

¹ School data was collected from the Every Student Succeeds Act ([ESSA Dashboard](#)) reported by the Maine Department of Education and the National Center for Education Statistics ([NCES Search For Schools](#)) database. SAU information was collected from the Maine [ESSA Dashboard](#), the [NCES Search For Schools](#) database, and the NCES Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates ([EDGE](#)) database. Information about the State of Maine was collected from the [ESSA Dashboard](#) and the [U.S. Census Bureau Maine Quick Facts](#) report. Note, the Students Eligible For Free/Reduced Price Lunch on a state level contains data from the 2018-2019 school year (the most recent publicly available data for the state), while both school and SAU contain data from the 2019-2020 school year.

Development of pilot project

In August 2021, Camden-Rockport received an RREV award (\$235,800) to develop and implement *Out and About: The Outrageous Outdoors!* beginning in the 2021–2022 school year. The pilot model was developed by the district assistant superintendent and a Camden-Rockport K–2 teacher (“the pilot team”) during the Winter 2020 Innovative Mindset Pilot Development (IMPD) course. Both team members described the IMPD course as a prerequisite to applying for the RREV award but did not consider the course itself instrumental in their program development. The pilot team explained that Camden-Rockport had been infusing outdoor learning into the curriculum for the past several years and saw the RREV award as a vehicle to translate these existing efforts into a more structured program. School administrators and teachers also noted that the COVID-19 pandemic created further impetus for developing an intentional outdoor learning program. As one school administrator said, “COVID actually helped get more enthusiasm for applying for the [RREV award]—a way to get masks off!” Additionally, the pilot project was described as part of a longer-term goal of supporting students’ social/emotional health, which school leadership expects to ultimately improve academic outcomes. Finally, the outdoor learning program was described as providing an equity opportunity for students. The school principal explained that while Camden-Rockport is a generally affluent community, approximately 20 percent of students are from low-income households where engagement with the outdoors is limited. Specifically, he said “a good chunk of our student body does have really robust summer opportunities, and families are traveling on weekends and going here, there, and everywhere. But that’s not the case for a fifth of our population. And they struggle to achieve outcomes relative to the rest of our student body. So, this is a real opportunity to level that playing field a bit.” Another dimension of this equity lens is all students, regardless of which teacher they have, having equal opportunities to learn outside.

Program description

The *Out and About: The Outrageous Outdoors!* program focuses on increasing outdoor learning experiences for students in grades pre-kindergarten (PreK)–4 at Camden-Rockport. The elementary school is surrounded by an array of ecosystems among the mountains, lakes, rivers, harbors, and shorelines of MidCoast Maine. Camden-Rockport sees its pilot program as a way to capitalize on these assets through more structured outdoor learning spaces and programming for students and teachers that will enhance their educational experiences. According to school administrators and teachers, Camden-Rockport had been incorporating elements of outdoor learning in the classroom for years prior to the RREV program, but COVID-19 provided the impetus to help make this a standardized practice across all classrooms.

The overarching purpose of the pilot is to be more structured and intentional about weaving outdoor learning into the daily curriculum for all PreK–4 students in ways that are connected to learning standards. A key component of this structure is Camden-Rockport’s partnership with the Hurricane Island Center for Science and Leadership (“Hurricane Island”). Through this partnership, most Camden-Rockport staff participated in a 2-day professional development workshop focused on how to best integrate content area standards with the guiding principles of outdoor learning. Hurricane Island also offers ongoing coaching and support for teachers throughout the school year.

The RREV pilot project also incorporates a “residency” approach in which Camden-Rockport teachers are partnered with a regional expert to co-plan and co-facilitate project-based learning for students. The RREV award includes funding for two outdoor liaisons, who are Camden-Rockport staff receiving stipends who will work with teachers to identify local experts to collaborate with each team.² By the end of the school year, each team will develop an outdoor residency team project. These projects can be week-long or month-long endeavors. For example, one team has been doing some preliminary brainstorming around developing a resource to help students identify the different flowers and plants around the school. Another team set up a nine-week residency with a program called Chewonki (an outreach program in Wiscasset, Maine) to create outdoor learning experiences that aligned with the multi-age (K-2) class curriculum on animals and birds.

Exhibit 1: Logic Model for Out and About: The Outrageous Outdoors!

Resources	Strategies and Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes	Impact
RREV program \$\$ MSAD 28 schools are surrounded by accessible ecosystems (mountains, lakes, rivers, harbors, and shorelines of Midcoast Maine) Community Partners MSAD 28 Teachers Bisbee grant (local endowment for schools) RREV Coach	Collaboration with Hurricane Island (2-day professional development workshop on how to integrate content area standards with guiding principles of outdoor learning, plus ongoing coaching and support for teachers throughout the school year) Partner with local and regional experts to provide outdoor learning community partnerships. Co-planning and co-facilitating student learning	Number of students who participate in extended outdoor learning experiences Number of teachers who participate in extended outdoor learning experiences Number of outdoor residency team projects completed Number of teachers/staff receiving training/professional development in preparation for outdoor residency	Teacher confidence in designing outdoor learning experiences increases as they become nature-based innovators. Students are active, joyful, and engaged participants in outdoor learning.	Teachers make outdoor learning a common part of the curriculum. Teachers innovate their curriculum in creative ways that provide greater access to learning outcomes for more students. Student behavioral infractions decrease. Students achieve academic growth and better	Student social, emotional, academic, and physical development thrive. Physical and mental health improves while communities come together in nature-based learning partnerships. A foundation of environmental stewardship is built.

² In this context, “team” generally refers to grade levels. There are seven teams total: Pre-K, kindergarten, first grade, second grade, third grade, fourth grade, and the multi-age program (kindergarten through second grade).

	<p>activities using a “residency” model.</p> <p>On-site outdoor learning spaces, as well as “wild card’ spaces are explored and utilized for learning by all students PreK-4.</p> <p>Outdoor liaison (stipended position) will work with staff to identify local experts to collaborate with each grade level.</p> <p>Purchase and prepare Learning Kits (grab and go bags) with necessary tools and materials for outdoor learning opportunities.</p> <p>Design and construction of outdoor site planning, development and preparation of outdoor learning sites. Secure a landscape company (ADA-compliant spaces).</p>			learning outcomes.	
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Innovativeness and responsiveness of learning model

The Camden-Rockport *Out and About: The Outrageous Outdoors!* learning model is innovative and responsive to student needs for the following reasons:

- 1. It cultivates and channels the natural curiosity and energy of young students in productive ways.** As one school administrator put it, “you don’t have to be in school to learn.” School staff noted this is especially important because elementary students are at a pivotal age when they are not yet conditioned how to think and how to structure their thinking, but instead, let their curiosity drive what they learn. A PreK teacher shared that the learning model is responsive to the way PreK students experience and process their environment. She said that “4-year-olds learn in a very sensory way—there’s lot of running and heavy motor work done throughout the day, which is easier and less disruptive to do in the woods rather than the classroom. They are actually calmer outside.” By and large, students indicated (through focus group discussions or naturalistic observation) that they prefer outdoor learning to the classroom learning because recreational activities (e.g., exercise, outdoor games) enhance their learning experience. As one student put it, “we’re playing games and we’re learning science at the same time.”
- 2. It centers the process and reasons for learning.** A community partner at Tanglewood shared how this has happened for third grade students during outdoor STEM activities: “We’re really emphasizing the *learning*, as opposed to success or failure. So, when something doesn’t go as you expected, then what did you learn from it? It really helps set the state for students being able to persist and appreciate the process of learning and think deeply into the reasons *why* they’re doing things.” The community partner provided a compelling scenario of this: “There was a student, and it was apparent that they typically get frustrated when things don’t go well. And the student built a boat...and it kind of just tipped over. And this kid takes a deep breath and he said ‘ok, I need to make my mast wider.’ So just like that, he changed his thinking process and wasn’t worried about whether he succeeded or not.”
- 3. The nature-based PreK program is the first public school PreK program in the state to be facilitated almost completely outdoors.** Even though Camden-Rockport teachers had been incorporating outdoor learning into the curriculum for years prior to the RREV award, this is the first time that students are spending a significant part of their school day outdoors. The nature-based PreK program³ at Camden-Rockport is the first of its kind in Maine public schools that is facilitated completely outdoors. A PreK teacher said, “We have 4-year-olds who come and spend their entire day outside, and they’re fully clothed for that kind of play, rain or shine.” This program also utilizes a very adaptable curriculum that is not scripted. One of the PreK teachers shared that while there are some place-based PreK curriculums, they were not an appropriate fit for what Camden-Rockport wanted to do: “We really want to go with what the seasons are

³ It is important to note that the PreK program at Camden was not created through the use of RREV funds; however, the RREV funds have contributed significantly to the development of the PreK program through the creation and enhancement of outdoor learning spaces for PreK students.

showing us and what the kids are interested in; yesterday, slugs came up as a huge interest. I don't want to derail their fascination by saying 'well, the curriculum says that on Tuesdays, we have to do this. We look closely at what the children are fascinated by.'"

4. The model promotes environmental stewardship and a sense of community.

Camden-Rockport staff and community partners emphasized that connecting students with nature and the environment fosters a sense of place in the community. One community partner from conservation group Maine Coast Heritage Trust said, "Connecting kids with their own space will allow them to have more security and understanding of why it's important to be a good citizen. That's what's so huge about this [learning model] in the broader sense." A Camden-Rockport teacher explained, "This is giving students an opportunity to develop love and appreciation for the outdoors. It will help them develop a sense of place and civic attitude."

5. The model's residency approach supports long-term teacher growth and development.

Throughout the 2021–22 academic year, teachers partner with an expert to co-plan and co-facilitate student learning activities. The experts provide direct instruction in their identified areas of expertise. Camden-Rockport staff believe this residency model will provide the expertise, support, and confidence teachers need to make outdoor learning a common part of the primary education curriculum. One school administrator explained, "It benefits students and it benefits staff. When you interact with experts, it only serves to enhance the skills of staff. The intention is not to hand students off to an expert—it's to work in partnership."

Implementation of learning model

Student identification and recruitment

Camden-Rockport believes all students benefit from outdoor learning. This project, therefore, is geared toward all students in grades PreK–4, including those in special education programs. All staff members will participate in the training and have opportunities to utilize expert residents as part of the residency model. This will impact approximately 380 students and 30 teachers.

Staffing

To facilitate the residency approach in this learning model, Camden-Rockport created two Outdoor Liaison positions. The roles are paid a stipend and have been filled by Camden-Rockport staff (a school counselor and a multi-age classroom teacher) who work with teachers to identify local experts to collaborate with in each grade level. The liaisons connect teams with community partners that can help enhance a project and deepen student learning. One liaison serves as the point person for the primary grade levels (grades PreK–2, plus the multiage K-2 program) and the other liaison serves as the point person for the intermediate grade levels (grades 3 and 4, plus arts, music, and physical education teachers).

Community partnerships

The success of this innovative learning model hinges on building and maintaining a dense network of community partnerships. Through partnering with local and regional outdoor organizations and experts in the field, Camden-Rockport can create outdoor learning spaces, provide training opportunities for staff, and deliver innovative programming that will benefit all its

students. For example, Camden-Rockport has a partnership with Tanglewood, a 4-H summer camp and learning center located approximately 10 minutes from CRES. This year, Tanglewood hosted three outdoor experiential learning visits for third graders. Tanglewood staff worked with teachers to ensure that each visit was aligned with Next Generation Science Standards. Through the outdoor liaisons, Camden-Rockport teachers are connected with a diverse array of local and regional experts who provide the expertise, support, and confidence teachers need to seamlessly integrate outdoor learning into the curriculum.

Infrastructure

The global supply chain disruption has caused delays in building key outdoor infrastructure necessary for outdoor learning during the initial months of the project. For example, one teacher shared that at the start of the school year, the playground was not complete due to lumber shortages and delays in receiving other important materials. Another teacher noted that the woods were not cleared entirely to create the outdoor classroom for the PreK program. By the spring, much progress had been made on the construction of outdoor learning sites.

Outdoor Learning Coaching

As noted previously, Hurricane Island facilitated a mandatory 2-day summer institute on professional development for all Camden-Rockport faculty to help move teacher competency in outdoor learning from “good to great.” Coastal Mountain LandTrust also provides ongoing coaching and support to teachers throughout the school year. Several Camden-Rockport staff noted that one of the Coastal Mountain LandTrust coaches took a new position midway through the school year, which was a temporary setback; however, another coach was hired soon after and Camden-Rockport teachers were able to establish a strong relationship with her.

Outcomes

Teachers are growing their confidence to engage in outdoor learning with their classes.

As noted above, Camden-Rockport staff has been receiving ongoing coaching from Hurricane Island to help support teachers in growing their confidence for engaging in outdoor learning. This coaching has been instrumental. The assistant superintendent shared, “We’ve found that the greatest fear that teachers have is kids running away; we’re trying to work with those who have been reluctant to get outside because of that.” A PreK teacher said, “I think, for any group who is going to do this, I think having that role model, having a mentor—it makes an enormous difference in getting you like comfortable in the outdoors.” However, some teachers indicated that while this support has been helpful, they would feel more comfortable if they were able to have another teacher or adult join them when going outside. One teacher said, “That is one of the things that almost discourages me at times—taking my 21 second graders, and a lot of them are really active kids, outside. It’s something that worries me for sure, I would feel so much more comfortable going out with another adult.” Another teacher explained, “Even though we have been trained in outdoor learning and outdoor experiences, having someone on site that is even more of an expert [would be helpful]; almost like a specialist teacher.” In addition to growing confidence for going outdoors during the school day, there were mixed findings regarding teacher confidence for designing outdoor learning experiences and aligning those experiences to curriculum standards. During the fall 2021, several teachers remarked that one of the challenges in creating outdoor learning opportunities was thinking about how to clearly connect outdoor experiences to curriculum standards. Community partners have played a

pivotal role in helping teachers align outdoor learning experiences to learning standards. A community partner at Tanglewood shared that she was able to help third grade teachers think through how align all the outdoor learning activities for third graders to Next Generation Science Standards—“everything they wanted, we were able to figure out how to do it,” she said.

Students are active, joyful, and engaged participants in outdoor learning. Students, parents, teachers, school administrators, and community partners all emphasized how student attitudes toward and engagement with learning have transformed over the course of this school year. Results of the student survey (Exhibit 2) showed that 92% of Camden-Rockport students indicated that they were glad to have gone outside to learn this year, and 81% believed that going outside helped them learn this year. According to a school administrators and teachers, the outdoor learning pilot project is contributing to a paradigm shift in terms of how students think about education and learning. Numerous examples of this were shared during the spring 2022 site visit. A multiage program teacher stated that she observed high attendance this school year, particularly during the 9-week residency. A parent of a second grader described her daughter’s enthusiasm for outdoor learning: “She talks a lot about how they’ve been doing a lot of work with Chewonki and Aldermere Farm and she gets really excited about it, sharing little facts she’s learned about cows and little tidbits of information she has learned. She just seems really motivated and excited about it.” A PreK teacher shared that there has been a marked shift in PreK students’ enthusiasm for schoolwork, noting that at the beginning of the year, students did not enjoy keeping a field journal to note their observations of the outdoors. However, as PreK students gained more exposure to the outdoors and began using their senses to understand their natural environment, enthusiasm for scientific thinking began to build. She further explained, “Now, a lot of them are like ‘we need to put that in our field journal! We need to make sure we take pictures of this.’ It’s so wonderful to see.” During an observation of the PreK classroom, a parent volunteer of one of the students stated she “couldn’t be more pleased” with the PreK outdoor learning program. She shared that she enjoys volunteering as a classroom aide whenever she is able and believes that the outdoor learning experiences PreK children are having at this early stage in life will help build a love for nature. As well, she observed, “I think this has also been good for their overall mental health.”

Exhibit 2 Summary of Student Survey Results (n=63)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements	Strongly or somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat or strongly disagree
I am glad I went outside to learn this year.	92%	5%	3%
Going outside helped me learn this year.	81%	8%	11%
Overall, I liked my experience going outside to learn this year	92%	5%	3%
This year, I had more opportunities to learn outside a traditional classroom than in the past	80%	10%	10%

Outdoor learning shows preliminary promise for improving behavioral and socio-emotional issues for students. One of the goals identified in Camden-Rockport's application for RREV funding was to experience a 20 percent reduction in behavioral infractions during the first year of the outdoor learning pilot program. Official data on behavioral infractions as reported in the School-Wide Information System (SWIS) showed a slight decrease in referrals for behavioral incidents from 249 in the 2017-2018 academic year to 240 in the 2021-2022 academic year. Of particular interest, the 4th grade had the lowest number of behavioral incidents reported during this academic year (n=13). With the exception of the PreK program, 4th graders engaged in the most outdoor learning this school year. However, caution should be exercised in interpreting this figure, as the association between outdoor learning and behavioral infractions is likely influenced by several other unaccounted-for variables. The assistant superintendent and principal both noted the challenges of coming back to in-person schooling following an extended period of social isolation for many students and their families. The assistant superintendent for MSAD28 said, "I think we're still seeing the residual effects of that period come out in student behaviors this year." Data from teacher interviews suggests, however, that student behaviors have shown improvement over the course of the school year. For example, a PreK teacher noted that many PreK students did not have a lot of social interaction prior to enrolling to Camden-Rockport; she reflected, "this group came in here pretty anxious. At the beginning of the year, I had some really disruptive behaviors. I had some flight risks. And the way this group came together as a team, I don't think I've ever had a class that is that has happened so early."

Students have demonstrated academic growth during the 2021-2022 school year. By Spring 2022, more than 80% of the Camden-Rockport student body demonstrated growth in their RIT score on at least one NWEA assessment. Specifically, 85% showed RIT growth in Math, 83% showed RIT growth in Reading, and 87% showed RIT growth in Language Usage. One of the PreK teachers has observed growing interest in STEM-related topics amongst the PreK students. During the PreK team's residency with Chewonki, she observed students making connections between what was learned across different class days. "I have a couple kids that I really honestly believe are going to stick on this path of science because they're just so fascinated by all of these different outdoor experiences."

The majority of parents are aware of *The Outrageous Outdoors* and are satisfied with their children's experiences with outdoor learning. Results from the family survey (Exhibit 3) showed that 75% of parents knew that Camden-Rockport was implementing an outdoor learning program this year, and parents were either somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with the availability of responsive education activities offered through Camden-Rockport. Further, 90% of parents either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I am satisfied with my child's experience with outdoor learning," and 98% of parents indicated that they would recommend this program to other parents. During a focus group with parents of CRES students, all parents stated that their children had shared some of their outdoor learning experiences with them, including trips to Tanglewood and Aldermere Farm. As well, parents shared that CRES teachers have been consistent in providing regular email updates about what students are learning and how outdoor time and use of outdoor learning spaces is connected to that learning. Some parents have gotten involved with the program as classroom volunteers. A community partner at Tanglewood shared that she has observed several second-grade parents attending field trips with their children: "We have parents who really treasure that time with their children."

Exhibit 3 Summary of Family Survey Results (n=86)

Question	Results
How important is it to you that schools offer responsive educational activities?	Very important – 87% Moderately important 13%
How satisfied are you with the availability of responsive education activities offered through your child's school?	Very satisfied – 45% Somewhat satisfied – 34% Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied – 14% Somewhat dissatisfied – 8%
Compared with last school year (2020-21), how much opportunity has your child had to participate in responsive educational activities this year?	A lot more opportunity – 46% Slightly more opportunity – 25% About the same opportunity – 19% Slight less opportunity – 3% A lot less opportunity – 7%
Did you know Camden-Rockport was doing outdoor learning?	Yes – 75% No – 16% Not sure – 9%
Have any of your children participated in outdoor learning?	Yes – 94% No – 6%
My child enjoyed participating in outdoor learning	Strongly agree – 83% Somewhat agree – 8% Somewhat disagree – 2% Strongly disagree – 6%
My child learned a lot participating in outdoor learning	Strongly agree – 72% Somewhat agree – 19% Somewhat disagree – 2% Strongly disagree – 6%
I am satisfied with my child's experience with outdoor learning	Strongly agree – 77% Somewhat agree – 13% Neither agree nor disagree – 4% Somewhat disagree – 4% Strongly disagree – 2%
Would you recommend this program to other parents	Yes – 98% No – 2%

Future Plans

Outdoor learning is the long-term vision for Camden-Rockport Elementary School. School leadership emphasized that this pilot project is the beginning stage of a longer-term strategy to institutionalize outdoor learning as a teaching and education standard for all students (i.e., outdoor learning opportunities for every student every year). In the near future, part of Camden-Rockport's hiring process will be to understand hiring candidates' teaching philosophies and whether these include outdoor learning. The school principal used the following analogy to describe how Camden-Rockport will be shifting their vision moving into the future: "I can use the analogy of a boat. I'm going to just shift the tiller like two degrees, and you're not going to feel a huge lurch. But over time, we're going to go into a very different place from where we're headed right now. So just know that my support with resources, whether that's time, money, and so

forth, is going to go in that direction. And I'm going to be hiring people who are inclined to go in that direction.”

Increased parent engagement with outdoor learning is a goal for next school year. School administrators mentioned there has been an overall low level parental engagement this school year. Much of this was attributed to the pandemic; for instance, the school principal noted that the pilot program was the first opportunity to bring parent volunteers back into the school: “they were shut out of our school for a year and a half, but we are trying to welcome them back in with open arms.” As noted previously, the nature-based PreK program attracted a number of parent volunteers throughout the 2021-2022 school year. The PreK teacher said her goal is to engage more families with class activities so that parents become more comfortable with being outdoors with their children.

Lessons learned

Teacher response to outdoor education is variable, but patience, peer encouragement, and structured support can help hesitant teachers become more engaged. One administrator observed a split in teacher reaction to outdoor education: some are energized by the opportunity while others find it intimidating. Whereas some teachers take part in outdoor learning daily, there are still teachers who engage on a minimal basis. One administrator attributed this to COVID-19, saying, “Some teachers do not have the capacity to take on new things when there is pandemic fatigue.” He also said that while the outdoor learning model is energizing for some teachers, other teachers find it intimidating, which is why the professional development and ongoing coaching support from Hurricane Island has been so important. As of late Spring 2022, all students had at least one outdoor learning opportunity during the 2021-2022 school year. As the principal put it, “patience is key in all of this.” The assistant superintendent also emphasized the importance of meeting teachers where they are at, as opposed to prescribing a uniform approach to outdoor learning for all teachers: “I think if it's a top-down directive, it usually will not be successful. So, we have to find ways to meet teachers from where they're at. It's not gonna look the same for everybody.” Teachers and administrators emphasized that ongoing coaching support (such as that provided by Hurricane Island, as well as Coastal Mountain LandTrust) has been key to building this confidence for outdoor learning.

The introduction of new staff can cause confusion and frustration when roles are not clearly understood by all parties. As noted, a key project component is the introduction of the Outdoor Liaison roles, which are responsible for helping teachers and classrooms connect with community partners that can help enhance outdoor residency team learning projects and deepen learning for students. As envisioned during the pilot development, teachers at each grade level are responsible for brainstorming and developing a project plan, at which point the liaison reviews the plan and develops a partnership plan to ensure the team is connected to the appropriate experts to support the project. However, there has been some confusion about the specific function of this position, as both liaisons described situations in which they were approached by teachers to help brainstorm a project plan that had already been defined. As one Outdoor Liaison explained, “We are not helping them brainstorm. They are coming to us when they're done, and they have an idea and it is set in stone.” By Spring 2022, the role of the Outdoor Liaison appeared to be better understood as teams began to put their residency and project-based learning plans into action.

Classroom management outside demands more attention and resources than some teachers expect. While teachers praised the benefits of outdoor learning and the importance of getting students out of the classroom, it does present unique challenges from a classroom management perspective. Because outdoor spaces have boundaries that are less definitive compared to a traditional classroom, one teacher reported that she has had a few students run away on occasion. Fortunately, this teacher has been able to access the school behavioral specialist to help support those students. As well, Camden-Rockport has been able to install signs and snow fencing to mark boundaries, which has also been helpful.

Outdoor learning may be more conducive to certain academic areas compared to others. Generally, teachers believed that while outdoor learning was conducive to science classes, it is more challenging to create outdoor learning experiences in other classes (math, language arts, etc.). One teacher commented specifically on this issue in her class, stating, “being outside in the fresh air is lovely, but that doesn't necessarily enhance your reading and your writing or your math lessons. But it certainly enhances your science. We're studying the Maine woods and...that totally goes hand-in-hand with being outside and seeing that and doing it. So for our grade, we certainly see the value in doing that for science and social studies. We are not at the place where we feel like we are going to bring our kids out all the time just to be outside to read a book or write and do math.” Another teacher corroborated this challenge, stating, “There are math lessons I would never want to bring outside—it's just that I need my technology, the kids need materials, we need certain tools.” Generally, teachers believed that science is an easy “starting point” for teachers to think about how to create innovative outdoor learning experiences for students.

Community partnerships are key for helping bridge connections between outdoor learning and curricular standards. One of Camden-Rockport's community partners characterized outdoor learning as an approach that is “more messy and less structured” compared to traditional classroom approaches. Indeed, several teachers shared during the Fall 2021 that creating outdoor learning opportunities that are appropriately aligned with lesson plans and curriculum standards was a source of anxiety that stymied participation in outdoor learning, at first. Community partners have been instrumental in supporting teachers in designing responsive outdoor educational experiences for students. As noted previously, Tanglewood designed an outdoor site visit series in the spring that included activities aligned to Next Generation Science Standards in the specific area of forces and motions. During these visits, students designed their own miniature sailboats, kites, and compasses—all toward the goal of understanding the effects of balanced and unbalanced forces on the motion of an object. Tanglewood also hosted a similar site visit series for fourth graders, with outdoor activities that were aligned to earth system science standards. According to Tanglewood staff, once teachers shared the specific standards that needed to be met for the school year, designing responsive outdoor learning activities was not challenging; one employee shared, “once we had the standards, we were able to translate everything.”

Providing equal opportunities for outdoor learning shows promise for overcoming education disparities. As noted previously, this pilot project was characterized as an equity opportunity for students at Camden-Rockport. The findings from this first year of the pilot project show that progress is being made in this area. For example, Camden-Rockport was able to provide equipment and outdoor gear for all students to fully participate in outdoor learning this year, thus eliminating barriers to participation among low SES students otherwise would not have

been able to afford these accoutrements. Disparities in academic performance may also be attenuated via outdoor learning. As noted earlier, more than 80% of the Camden-Rockport student body demonstrated growth in their RIT score on at least one NWEA assessment during the 2021-2022 school year. One of Camden-Rockport's goals was to observe at least a 10% increase in scores among low-SES students. At this time, this data is not available, but will become available in Fall 2022. It will be crucial to analyze the academic performance trends for this sub-group of students to determine how outdoor learning has influenced this specific outcome.

Appendix





Slugs!

Where are you finding slugs?

On the ground	On a log or stick	On a tree
On a leaf	Somewhere else...	

What color are the slugs you find?

What are the slugs doing?

What else do you notice?

