

RREV School Snapshot – RSU 1 Bath

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 May 2022, RSU 1 Bath Middle School (BMS) received an award from RREV to implement a pilot in the Extended Learning Opportunity category. The overarching goal of Bath's RREV pilot is to strengthen the school's sense of community so that everyone, including students, teachers, and parents, feel connected to and valued by one another. By fostering such a sense of community, BMS intends for its pilot to:

- Create stronger value and connection in the BMS community.
- Improve student engagement, academic achievement, and social-emotional well-being.
- Improve teacher morale, engagement, and passion.
- Strengthen connections between BMS and the broader community, including parents and local organizations.

Key activities of this pilot include:

- **Adapting the weekly schedule to increase opportunities for collaboration and inquiry-based learning.** The new schedule provides for: once a week passion classes from all teaching staff, longer class periods to facilitate project-based learning and off-campus learning opportunities, and more shared planning time to support staff collaboration.
- **The introduction of connections classes and a student climate and culture committee to support the exploration of student interests and needs.** The pilot provides a weekly connections class, a nonacademic class where teachers can choose a topic unrelated to their subject of expertise. Students will participate in four classes over the course of one school year. These classes aim to focus more on programs of interest rather than grades.
- **Using award funds to provide regular transportation for students.** BMS is investing in school-owned passenger vans to provide more flexibility for field lessons during the school day as well as opportunities to provide after-school transport to students. Having multiple vehicles allows multiple staff members to plan and conduct field trips on the same day. Further, owning the vans will provide the school with increased flexibility to offer transport outside of school hours. Increasing after school transport allows for more students to engage in after school opportunities.
- **Instructional coaching for teachers focused on inquiry and project-based learning.** During the first year, teachers engage with an instructional coach to support their creation and implementation of project-based lessons. In year two, staff will begin peer feedback practices. In year three, teachers will map standards to learning expeditions and incorporate them into the regular curriculum.

Exhibit: RREV Award Summary

Category	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Personal Services	\$60,712	\$63,512	\$124,224
Employee Benefits	\$38,865.03	\$14,950.16	\$53,815.19
Purchased Professional & Technical Services	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$10,000
Property	\$61,960.81	—	\$61,960.81
Total	\$166,537.84	\$83,462.16	\$250,000

- All enrolled students (330 students).
- Grade levels served: 6-8.
- All teaching staff.

Responsiveness of the pilot

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

- **The focus on outdoor education reflects student and teacher input that was intentionally sought and incorporated during the design process.** One of the major concerns of the pilot team is students feeling disconnected from the school community. Throughout the planning and implementation of BMS's pilot, they have found opportunities to collect student and teacher feedback and adjust accordingly. These opportunities for student feedback began during the planning phase, when the pilot team hosted student and teacher focus groups to include student and teacher input on pilot design. The pilot team plans to reconvene these focus groups during the first year of implementation to collect feedback. Further, the pilot team has implemented feedback surveys, so all students and teachers can provide input.
- **The pilot deepens relationships between the school and the community by providing for more frequent engagement between students and local organizations.** The pilot provides for the purchase of transport vans, which are intended to deepen the school's relationships with local organizations focused on ecology by allowing more frequent, small trips from the school can take advantage of their learning experiences. Further, school-provided transport for day trips removes some of the barriers for students who are not willing or able to participate in longer, overnight trips.
- **The pilot increases the available support for teachers by restructuring the weekly schedule and investing in professional development.** By adjusting the weekly schedule, the pilot is able to create protected time shared between teachers across the school. As a result, teachers have a specific time built into the week to collaborate with peers, an increase over the previous planning time available. Further the pilot provides funds to expand professional development for teachers and staff aligned with inquiry and project based learning practices. Teachers and staff will receive training from an instructional coach to build these skills over the course of pilot implementation.

Innovativeness of the pilot

BMS's pilot is innovative because:

- **The pilot develops reimagines the school structures to connect members of the community.** By redesigning the school day schedule, the pilot team has restructured the ways teachers and

students interact prioritizing time for project-based learning, teacher collaboration, small field trips, and time for nonacademic classes. The structure of teaching staff has been redesigned so more staff will teach across grade levels and houses and more students will be able to work with peers outside of their grade level.

- **The pilot expands learning spaces available to students and teachers beyond traditional classrooms.** Pilot funds are being used to help reshape the school lobby to feature and reflect student work and student engagement as well as support maintenance of physical spaces in the school. The pilot also facilitates the expansion of learning spaces beyond the building through the investment in school-owned vans such that teachers can take students on smaller, more frequent trips.
- **The pilot facilitates the creation of more authentic, real-world connections between schoolwork and students' values.** The pilot team defines value as "the importance community members place on their experiences at BMS." The pilot team will identify how students are deriving value in their work at school through a climate and culture committee as well as surveys. In addition, there is an increase in service-learning opportunities available for students to learn and become more connected with their community. The increased focus on inquiry and project-based learning to connect academic work with more practical skills and content related to the world around students.
- **The pilot fosters deeper connections between students and teachers built around interests beyond core subjects.** A distinguishing feature of BMS' model is its focus on authentic student-teacher relationships. The pilot provides space for these relationships to flourish through its "connections classes," during which teachers and students explore non-academic topics that align with students' interests. BMS' model posits that these classes will help students and teachers form stronger bonds outside of the stress of learning core academic subjects, and these bonds will in turn help students stay engaged and learn across all subjects.

Sustainability of the pilot

BMS' sustainability depends on three major areas: institutional sustainability, financial sustainability, and cultural sustainability. The pilot specifically created sustainable institutional measures like changing the schedule to establish longer class periods and more coordinated teacher planning periods as well as creating the "connections class." Both of these major changes can continue to be supported and adjusted beyond the pilot to serve the school community. However, a challenge to sustainability will be the funding for consumable supplies for connections classes as well as the materials necessary to start future connections classes. In addition, the pilot funds create more opportunities for students and staff to get into the community with short field trips. Though the school will maintain the flexibility of teachers facilitating short trips with access to the vans and longer block schedules to allow for trips, BMS will need to identify funds for the ongoing maintenance and vehicle costs after the pilot. The shift in the learning culture to focus on inquiry and project-based learning will be able to be sustained beyond the pilot, however additional funds for future professional development and coaching may need to be identified. Though teachers will receive ongoing support to grow their capacity to facilitate inquiry and project-based learning during the pilot, supports including the instructional coach will need additional funding to be maintained beyond the pilot which may be challenging for new staff joining BMS in the future.