

RREV School Snapshot – RSU 13 Oceanside High 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 October 2022, RSU 13 Oceanside High School received an award from RREV to implement its *Expeditions* project. This pilot is in the Outdoor Education Accelerated category.

The goals of this pilot are to:

- Facilitate connection between the students and the outdoors, students and their peers, and students and their teachers.
- Increase attendance, academic outcomes, social emotional well-being, student engagement, and student self-ownership of their individual educational pursuits.

Key activities of this pilot include:

- Provide training in outdoor education to designed staff to develop recurrent outdoor activities for the targeted students. These activities will receive academic credit.
- Purchase of a minivan solely for the outdoor learning program.
- Purchase of hiking, camping, and other outdoor equipment and instructional supplies.
- Delivering the Wilderness First Aid certification and Junior Maine Guide certification to students.

Exhibit: RREV Award Summary

Budget

Category	Year 1
Personal Services – Salaries and Stipend	\$4,000
Property (minivan)	\$30,500
Minivan maintenance and driver	\$6,000
Instructional supplies & Outdoor gear	\$11,500
Professional Services (students training)	\$48,000
Total	\$100,000

- **Students involved:** 14 to 28 academically at-risk students, from Grades 9 and 10 grades, who show high rates of absenteeism and are at-risk of failing the requirements for graduation or promotion to the next grade.
- **Educators involved:** One teacher from Special Education, two teachers from the Alternative Education department, the Special Education social worker, and the principal.

Responsiveness of the pilot

RSU 13 Oceanside High School's pilot is responsive to local needs and/or assets because:

- **It continues a successful initiative in place since 2018.** The special education department behavioral program at Oceanside High School began collaborating with a third provider to develop and implement hands-on outdoor learning in 2018. The lessons learned allowed the school to leverage the positive outcomes and to expand it with the RREV grant.
- **School behavioral and attendance data collected reflected a high level of disengagement.** Recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be a slow and sometimes discouraging journey in the school. The school is having problems returning to the pre-COVID data and seeing alarming rates of truancy and behavioral events among students compared with previous years. The educators from the departments involved in correcting these trends showed a higher burnout. A staff member commented that “In the behavior programs at Oceanside High, four out of five ed techs reported they seriously considered quitting at the end of the school year.”

Innovativeness of the pilot

RSU 13 Oceanside High School’s pilot is innovative because:

- **It fosters cross-collaboration among teachers and staff.** The project seeks to involve different departments in a collaborative effort to address at-risk students’ needs. The first year, the project is piloted by the Special Education and Alternative Education departments. Subsequently, it will be expanded to involve the general education departments. The goal is to address students across their whole educational journey in school.
- **Experiential learning approach.** Moving from the traditional remedial interventions with at-risk students, the pilot pursues to move beyond office/classroom sessions to provide students a different environment in which they can continue learning and adapting to the school norms and requirements: “We are therefore seeking innovative methods of meeting students’ educational needs and engaging and fulfilling ways, particularly focused on the environment,” noted a staff member.
- **Cohort model.** The project aims to create a sense of belonging using the cohort model. Besides providing rich academic experiences, students and educators will collaborate to foster teamwork, team spirit, bonding, and meaningful relationships with peers and educators. The goal is to create a positive and elevated environment in which students not only can grow academically, socially, and emotionally, but where they can find a solid and sustainable supporting network to success: “Community-based outdoor education with an emphasis on teambuilding and skill building is an essential part of that.”

Sustainability of the pilot

RSU 13 Oceanside High School’s pilot model’s strategy for sustainability includes:

- The project will use most of the award to acquire the expensive instructional supplies and equipment needed and provide training for the educators involved. Once the investment is made, the project's continuity will require much less financial effort.
- The project seeks to create connections across the district: One long-term of the project is to give high school students the opportunity to mentor and engage middle school students, which in turn, will lead middle school students to mentor elementary school students.