

RREV School Snapshot – RSU 21 (Kennebunk)

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 21 received an award from RREV to expand and strengthen its Kennebunk High School Alternative Education program. This pilot is in the Multiple Pathways category.

The goals of this pilot are to:

- Increase the physical space of the existing Alternative Education program to accommodate more students and allow for project/community-based learning.
- Provide students with individualized social support and the opportunity to participate in large scale community service projects aligned to academic standards.
- Provide a targeted wellness curriculum to support all students' physical and emotional wellbeing.

Key activities of this pilot include:

- Hiring two Educational Technologists to support the needs of incoming students.
- Shifting the daily schedule of the Alternative Education Program to accommodate more students, staff, and work on the large-scale community project.
- Purchasing additional vehicles to allow for more flexibility to and from community project sites.

Exhibit: RREV Award Summary

Budget

| Category | Year 1 | Year 2 | Total |
|--|------------------|----------|------------------|
| Personal Services – Salaries and Stipend | \$90,000 | – | \$90,000 |
| Employee Benefits | \$30,000 | – | \$30,000 |
| General Supplies | \$12,000 | – | \$12,000 |
| Property | \$113,000 | – | \$113,000 |
| Other items – Travel | \$5,000 | – | \$5,000 |
| Total | \$250,000 | – | \$250,000 |

- 18 of students served
- Grade 10-12 served
- Two teachers directly involved, but planning to add two Educational Technologists.

Responsiveness of the pilot

RSU 21's pilot is responsive to local needs and/or assets because:

- **All aspects of the program are a direct response to student needs.** All pilot elements, including the curriculum, house renovation project, and wellness/social emotional learning (SEL) layer have been developed based on conversations the implementation team has had with students. For example, some students are interested in entering the trades field when they graduate, so the team has developed a curriculum and partnered with local community organizations to provide students an opportunity to develop their skills to prepare them for a career in a trade.
- **The wellness curriculum encourages students to re-engage with each other during in-person learning.** The implementation team discussed how students were struggling with learning how to be together again when in-person learning resumed. During virtual learning, students had “Wellness Wednesday” that included individualized check-ins and encouraged students to make time for physical activity and outdoor exploration. When in-person learning resumed, the new wellness curriculum continues to implement these activities while providing direct instruction on how to bring each student’s wellness back in balance. The curriculum includes standards-aligned wellness instruction that provides students with the strategies and tools they can use in their everyday lives to prioritize their mental and physical wellness.

Innovativeness of the pilot

RSU 21’s pilot is innovative because:

- **A new curriculum is created each year that is adapted to student needs.** The implementation team discussed how they spend a lot of time at the beginning of each year to develop a brand new curriculum that is responsive to student needs. This includes spending time with students to understand their needs and strengths and then providing them with opportunities to work with each other and in their communities to encourage active citizenship. As one member of the implementation team put it, “this is the way school should be.”
- **The program gives students the opportunity to learn about material they would not have learned in mainstream settings.** The curriculum that is adapted to student needs creates a unique opportunity for students to explore their interests through job shadows, business visits, internships, and other project-based learning. One member of the implementation team discussed how they have noticed how excited students are to come to school and are finding their voice in what they are creating and the relationships they are forming within their community.

Sustainability of the pilot

RSU 21’s pilot model’s strategy for sustainability includes:

- **Utilizing performance objective data to advocate for expansion of the program.** Collecting data on the positive outcomes will be beneficial for the long-term vision of the Alternative Education Pathway, including acquiring more funding, establishing full-time positions, and creating sustainable spaces for students to learn beyond the two-year pilot program.