

## RREV School Snapshot –The LION Semester at RSU #71 (Belfast Area 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 March 2022, Belfast Area High School (RSU 71) received an Accelerator award from RREV to implement its remote learning pathway pilot, *the Learning Intentionally Online Now (LION) Semester*, which is in the Online Learning category.

The goals of this pilot are to:

- Provide an individualized remote learning pathway, the LION Semester, as a part of the summer program to help disengaged high school students transition back to in-person instruction.
- Support students’ social/emotional wellbeing by providing enrichment activities and offering in-person opportunities.

Key activities of this pilot include:

- Identify or hire a LION Semester Teacher who is a remote learning specialist and would be solely designated to LION semester.
  - The LION Semester Teacher engages with students in remote and in-person settings.
  - The LION Semester Teacher coordinates remote classes and weekly in-person offerings and activities, such as field trips in community centers and outdoor activities.
  - The LION Semester Teacher is a remediation specialist and provides individualized support focusing on creating personal learning plans outlining student academic goals, remediation efforts of previously attempted courses as applicable, and a plan for earning credits.
- Identify and establish curriculum and technology (remote learning platform, online subscriptions, etc.) to be and road maps for students in the LION Semester.
- Foster student engagement through in-person experiences, like drivers’ education and art workshops in the local art center, and activities like hikes and meetings at coffee shops.

### Exhibit: RREV Award Summary

Category	Year 1
Personal Services – Salaries and Stipend	\$48,850
Employee Benefits	\$11,788
Purchased Professional Services	\$8,000
Other purchased services (Tuition)	\$12,362
Instructional Supplies	\$5,000

- 12 students enrolled in the LION semester.
- Serves Grades 9-11
- 1 teacher, a remote learning specialist, is directly involved.

Technology Related Software	\$2,000
Miscellaneous	\$12,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>

### Responsiveness of the pilot

Belfast Area High School's (RSU 71) LION Semester is responsive to local needs and/or assets because it:

- **Provides a pathway for students to stay on track to graduate on time.** Belfast Area High School's (RSU 71) LION Semester is geared towards creating opportunities for students in need of remediation or not on track to graduate on time on account of credit shortfalls, which was exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. The program helps students get a head start on the school year by earning credits during the summer LION semester. In the course of the LION semester, the LION Semester teacher works with students to create and establish a personal learning plan, and provides individualized support, so that students are geared for success in the course of the subsequent school year.
- **Re-engage students by offering positive in-person learning experiences.** Belfast Area High School's (RSU 71) LION Semester targets students who were disengaged from remote learning owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a result, were identified as being truant or chronically absent and having credit shortfalls. The LION semester aims to reengage students by offering in-person experiences that could potentially aid in the transition to in-person schooling. Some of these in-person experiences were weekly check-ins with their LION Semester teacher and peers in coffee shops, walks downtown, and hikes. Other in-person offerings were connected to earning credits where students needed to gain credit for one in-person class. These included art credits for attending art workshops at the local art center and credits for attending drivers' ed classes. The purpose of offering these in-person opportunities is to create a learning environment where LION Semester students could have positive social experiences with their peers and instructors. As such, the focus of the LION semester is to help students build a sense of community both within and outside the school through these in-person experiences, which would in turn help students acclimate to conventional in-person instruction.

### Innovativeness of the pilot

Belfast Area High School's (RSU 71) LION Semester is innovative because:

- **It is a novel option for students who experience credit deficiency to earn credits.** Prior to the initiation of the LION semester, Belfast Area High School did not have a program in place to target students who were experiencing credit deficiencies. The summer LION semester is more than a conventional summer school educational model. The pilot provides students, particularly Grade 11 students, with much-needed opportunities to gain credits through online and in-person courses so that they can be on track to graduate. To complete the LION semester, students needed to participate in two online courses and one in-person experience. In addition to this, the LION semester pilot allows students to socialize and bond with one another and reintegrate within the school and the larger local community through in-person experiences. In this sense, it is flexible in that it affords students new ways of earning credit that does not necessarily fit within the confines of the typical school year at Belfast Area High School.

- **It allows stakeholders to stop thinking of the school year as being limited to the duration of the school year.** The pilot allows stakeholders, including parents, staff, and students, to have an expanded view of the school year in that learning experiences need not be limited to the duration of the school year. When interviewed, the staff member shared that by having summer programming like that of the LION semester, it opens up opportunities for students and parents to view the summer as a potential period to participate in learning experiences and as a result can result in lower stress levels.

### Sustainability of the pilot

Belfast Area High School's (RSU 71) LION Semester strategy for sustaining its pilot model includes:

- **Continue to offer the online mode of instruction as an option.** With the RREV award, the LION semester was able to procure subscriptions for online courses for a couple of years. To sustain the RREV pilot, Belfast Area High School is considering continuing to offer online courses as an alternate option to earn credits so that students can stay on track for graduation.
- **Identify supplemental funding sources.** Staff noted that the main challenge to sustaining the pilot is having adequate budget for continuing to offer the in-person experiences and to support the LION Semester teacher. Key to this is to identify additional sources of funding that may become available at the culmination of the RREV award year that could be used to continue to offer the pilot.