

RREV School Snapshot – RSU #25 (Bucksport)

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, Bucksport High School (RSU #25) received an Accelerator award from RREV to implement its Remote Learning Pathway Pilot, which is in the Online Learning category.

The goals of this pilot are to:

- Provide a remote learning pathway towards a high school diploma for those for whom in-person learning is not a good fit.
- Support social-emotional wellbeing of students who struggle with in-person learning by offering a remote learning curriculum

Key activities of this pilot include:

- Hire a remote learning specialist (RLS) solely designated to the remote learning pathway
 - The RLS is especially equipped to teach and engage students in a remote learning setting.
 - The RLS convenes daily check-ins with each student about their academic and socio-emotional wellbeing goals and needs.
 - The RLS provides personalized, live, on-call support to students in asynchronous online courses offered by the pathway.
- Identify and acquire curriculum and technology, online subscriptions, and a remote learning platform.
- Deliver professional development needs that are unique to engaging students in a remote learning setting.
- Support students with social emotional learning activities, including but not limited to activities based on mindfulness and growth mindset.
- Create opportunities for students to attend in-person activities with their peers, including sports, clubs, and other events.

Exhibit: RREV Award Summary

Category	Year 1
Personal Services – Salaries and Stipend	\$53,000
Employee Benefits	\$22,279
Purchased Professional Services	\$3,000
Other purchased services	\$5,000
Instructional Supplies	\$5,360
Technology Related Supplies	\$11,361
Total	\$100,000

- 10 students, with 3 on hold, are directly involved.
- Serves Grades 7-12
- 1 teacher, a Remote Learning Specialist, is directly involved

Responsiveness of the pilot

RSU 25's pilot is responsive to local needs and/or assets because it:

- **Is tailored to students who have been individually identified as likely to succeed in a remote learning environment.** Prior to the pandemic, student and families did not have an option to enroll in anything but conventional in-person instruction. To meet the learning needs of students who did not or could not access and participate in this mode of instruction, families would have to unenroll from the district to resort to homeschooling. At the time, RSU 25 did not have an alternative educational model in place for these students. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent transition to virtual learning, some students were found to thrive in this setting. As schools re-opened for regular in-person instruction in the 2021-22 school year, RSU 25 found that some students struggled with this shift. As such, RSU 25 wanted to continue to offer students and families the opportunity to participate in a remote learning option. While RSU 25 does not follow an open enrollment process where students can self-select into the pathway, referrals from teachers, guidance counselors and/or administrators are utilized to identify and enroll students who can benefit from this pathway. Parents can also seek out this option for their child, however this request is reviewed by key staff with administrators from their child's middle or high school signing off on the decision.
- **Addresses the specific needs of students who prefer remote learning.** As schools returned to in-person instruction, RSU 25 found that it was challenging for teachers to meet academic and social-emotional needs of all students in both in-person and remote learning contexts. Students for whom in-person learning was not a good fit desired a remote learning pathway with an instructor experienced in their specific needs, especially those with anxiety, medical issues, chronic absenteeism, or independent learning styles. RSU 25's pilot is responsive to these needs because it engages students by having a multi-age RLS involved in personalizing assessments and supports of students in the pilot and supporting students' social-emotional well-being.

Innovativeness of the pilot

RSU 25's pilot is innovative because:

- **Students are entrusted with more responsibility over what and how they learn.** This pilot casts the traditional teacher-student relationship in a different light, where students are encouraged to be thinking partners in their own learning journey. In practice, this means students have more autonomy over what courses they take, how many courses they enroll in, and their learning pace. School staff have already noticed that offering students more control over their coursework contributes to students becoming more engaged and taking greater ownership over their coursework. For example, although students take asynchronous online courses, some students have been attending courses together on Zoom as a way to encourage mutual accountability. The role of the administrator is also reimaged in this setting where conventional checks for academic rigor in the classroom may not be applicable. The administrator expressed that there is an increased emphasis on being flexible and trusting the instructor and students to do what needs to be done to meet their academic and social-emotional needs.

- **Families have an option for remote learning through their local school district.** Prior to the pandemic, local families who opted not to have their children enrolled in in-person instruction at RSU 25 could either homeschool or enroll their children in a private online academy, which staff noted may not be ideal seeing as these online academies tend to lack the individual support that students require. The pilot offers offering these families the option of of remote learning through the local school district with the advantage of offering individual support contextualized to the students' learning needs.
- **Students receive personalized learning opportunities and support tailored to their academic and social-emotional needs.** The RLS role offers tailored support for students' academic and social-emotional needs. Staff noted that personalizing lessons and assessments ensures an appropriate level of rigor for each student and thus making it more likely for students to become engaged in their own learning. Moreover, the RLS schedules regular check-ins where they go over activities to manage students' social-emotional wellbeing (e.g., activities based on mindfulness and growth mindset).

Sustainability of the pilot

RSU 25's strategy for the sustaining its pilot model includes:

- **Expanding student enrollment.** RSU 25's sustainability strategy includes greater outreach in order to expand enrollment. The goal is to increase enrollment to 15 students which would support having a full-time RLS dedicated to the remote learning pathway. Staff noted that having data that speaks to the efficacy of the pilot would help provide evidence that this pathway is another viable option for students to succeed in school and thus would subsequently increase enrollment.
- **Identify supplemental funding sources from local avenues.** Staff noted that the main challenge to sustaining the pilot is having adequate budget for the instructional supplies and subscriptions along with supporting a full-time RLS. Key to this is to identify additional sources of funding at the local level that would continue to be available at the culmination of the RREV award year that could be used to continue to offer the pilot.