

RREV School Snapshot – Bucksport Middle 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 May 2022, Bucksport Middle School received an award from RREV to implement its *Applied Learning Lab*. This pilot is in the Outdoor Education category.

The goals of this pilot are to:

- Foster student voice, agency, and engagement by expanding experiential, hands-on learning opportunities in healthy and beneficial ways.
- Create an educational space where students and teachers find joy in learning together and draw connections across the curriculum and within the community.
- Support student social/emotional skill development and teacher social/emotional wellness.

Key activities of this pilot include:

- **The construction of a 4-season greenhouse and kitchen/makerspace.** These facilities will contain aquaponics tanks that house independent, sustainable ecosystems of fish and plants as well as a kitchen and maker space to help students understand the concept of a grow-cook-eat cycle. The space will also include a resource library as well as storage for various tools and technology for application in various classroom activities.
- **The training of teachers as Experiential Learning guides.** Three selected teachers will receive additional professional development in the creation and implementation of applied learning units that align with their own subject-specific learning standards. These guides will then support other teachers in their ongoing efforts to create an applied learning community of practice at the campus.

Exhibit: RREV Award Summary

Category	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Personal Services – Salaries	\$9,270	\$0	\$9,270
Employee Benefits	\$2,305	\$0	\$2,305
Purchased Professional and Technical Services	\$55,677	\$0	\$55,677
Purchased Property Services	\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000
Other Purchased Services	\$1,500	\$0	\$1,500
General Supplies	\$106,248	\$0	\$106,248
Property	\$50,000	\$0	\$50,000
Total	\$250,000	\$0	\$250,000

- The program will serve the student body of 290 students across grades 5-8.
- Three teachers will be trained as Experiential Learning guides who will then act as coaches for the rest of the teachers at the campus.

Responsiveness of the pilot

Bucksport Middle School's pilot is responsive to local needs and/or assets because:

- **The focus on aquaponics connects to other campuses and community organizations that are experienced related technical and educational processes.** A local high school who recently constructed a similar facility as well as the Herring Gut Learning Center, a leader in aquaponics education, will provide ongoing support and allow students to further develop their interest in this form of agriculture.
- **The project will seek to integrate community participation and support.** The pilot intentionally integrates the community to support the students in their learning. For example, the goods produced by students based on their own business plans are sold in the community and income is reinvested into the program; the school also hosts community celebrations to demonstrate student accomplishments.

Innovativeness of the pilot

Bucksport Middle School's pilot is innovative because:

- **Experiential Learning guides are trained to build institutional capacity and expertise in the school community.** Bucksport's pilot trains an initial cohort of experiential learning guides, who in turn will become experts who assist other teachers to find opportunities for hands-on learning within their own subject areas. This community approach is intended to create a climate of creativity and foster a more innovative culture at the school.
- **The model emphasizes cross-subject utilization of experiential spaces and units.** The experiential learning approach offers students opportunities to learn content in social studies, science, math, ELA, and other content areas as elements of a single, ongoing project or topic. This integration can foster increased engagement and deeper learning for students of various interests.
- **A library of experiential learning units, or curriculum institute, will continue to encourage innovation.** As teachers develop and implement their ideas for experiential units, they will be able to share and train others in a formal setting that helps accelerate learning and adaptation of existing units based on the experiences of others.

Sustainability of the pilot

Bucksport Middle School's pilot model's strategy for sustainability includes shifting from stipend positions (Experiential Learning guides) to a more teacher driven utilization of outside spaces. As teachers become more familiar with how to make those hands-on, project-based connections, they will be more likely to utilize the space without outside support. The district is prepared to continue supporting this internal coaching model beyond RREV. In addition to the Experiential Learning Guides, the district is also building a foundation for future curriculum development through the proposed Summer Curriculum Design Institutes. The district is committed to continued support of these summer opportunities where teachers will be compensated for their curriculum design work.