



Welcome to the Maine Forum on Outdoor Learning



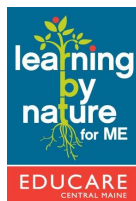
Co-hosted by



CHEWONKI



Juniper Hill School
for Place Based Education



White Pine
Programs



Maine
Outdoor
Coalition



KENNEBUNKPORT
CLIMATE INITIATIVE

MEEA's Land Acknowledgement/Recognition of Injustice

One way that we can support equity is by beginning our meeting by acknowledging our history of colonization and oppression and that our organization has had a role in.

We acknowledge that these systems of oppression are still in play and that historical events as well as current events cause impact and trauma felt today. It's important to remember that wherever we are in Maine we are on the home of Native Peoples, who have stewarded these lands through generations and many of whom were forcibly removed from their lands. Maine is the home of the Wabanaki, currently made up of Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, Abenaki and Penobscot. One action we can take in our own lives to counter erasure of indigenous narratives is to learn about the history (past and present) of native people in our own communities.

Historically, white communities have often been centered in the environmental education and conservation sector and the contributions of Black, Indigenous and people of color are often excluded from this narrative. Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) have vibrant, rich histories and cultures that contribute to our field. We all have responsibility to continue working to change the systems that continue to allow injustice and inequity to exist.

Thank you for joining us in this work here today.

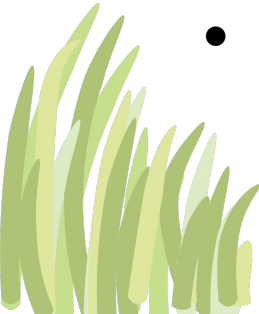


MEEA

MAINE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Advances in Outdoor Learning in Maine 2020



- Outdoor Learning in Maine Schools has Expanded Rapidly in 2020
 - The Network of Educators Teaching Outdoors has Grown
 - Coronavirus Response Funds Paired With Community Resources Has Been Very Impactful
 - This is an Opportunity to Reimagine Education-- Because of our Collective Work Maine is a National Leader in this Movement
- 

Video by Teach ME Outside



Teach ME Outside builds on the collaborative work of many different organizations and individuals over the past decade and is led today by a partnership between the Maine Mathematics and Science Alliance, Maine Environmental Education Association, and Nature Based Education Consortium. This project is made possible with support from the Pisces Foundation and the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation.

UMaine 4-H Learning Centers



Across the state, in a “normal” year, the UMaine 4-H Learning Centers at Blueberry Cove, Bryant Pond, Greenland Point and Tanglewood work with over 9,000 youth in hands-on, learning through academic year programming and summer camps. This year, the team pivoted programming in response to community needs. Collaboration was key.

Through existing relationships fostered over many years, 4-H Learning Center staff had connections in place to support learning at home via virtual spring and summer programming for school teachers and families.

In late summer, staff began working closely with local school administrators in support of their COVID response plans. To date we are serving schools in the districts of MSAD 17, RSU 13, RSU 71, MSAD 28, and St. George.

Captain Albert Stevens School + UMaine 4-H Learning Center at Tanglewood

COVID Response Programming

- Expanding the capacity of the school space while taking learning outside
- Grades 2-4 (3 classes per grade with about 14 students per class) attended weekly programs at Tanglewood for September and October with days designed with hour-long education blocks facilitated by Tanglewood staff and the classroom teacher
- Students connected learning with the outdoor environment, bridging traditional classroom time with the natural world, lessons followed sequences that built on skills gained through observation of their world

Tech Wizards Programming

- Weekly STEM programming for 5th graders, funded by OJDP and 4-H
- With a focus on language arts where it meets natural history, this program takes place 100% outdoors (at the school) or virtually and supports teachers and students meeting academic learning goals in a hands-on way





St. George School + UMaine 4-H Center at Blueberry Cove

Middle Level Program Collaboration

- All middle schoolers from St. George will have the opportunity to spend a school day at Blueberry Cove on a rotating basis, for the entire school year. Students will engage in outdoor, field-based science with support from UMaine professionals, and the 4-H Center will provide the technology necessary for those students to participate in educational opportunities that will connect them with expert educators, including UMaine faculty in various disciplines.
- Students will also complete assignments from their middle-level teachers with the support of staff from Blueberry Cove and St. George School.
- The program provides space, staffing, and programming that allows us to spread out students and follow social distancing guidelines and requirements. The health/safety requirements and protocols that apply to students and staff while in the school building and on school grounds will apply when they are at Blueberry Cove.

Community Support

- Before care program to support families due to changes to bus schedules; after school programming free for all families; and, childcare on teacher in-service days



Challenges & Solutions in Outdoor Learning



#1 Please share **challenges** you have seen with outdoor learning.

#2 When prompted, please share **solutions, successes or inspiring responses** to challenges with outdoor learning.

We will record these and share!



On a new tab or your phone:
Go to link in the chat or go to **menti.com/** and enter the number shown on the next screen.

Rethinking Remote Education Venture (RREV): *Designing and Piloting Innovative Remote Learning Models*



Innovative Pilots – Outdoor Education

Grant overview

- Educational Stabilization Funds through US Department of Education's Rethink K-12 Education Models grant program
- 39 states applied, 11 received awards, 5 under Priority Area 3
- Maine received \$16.9M
- Increase capacity for innovation – courses and workshops
- Create innovative models for remote learning pilot designs – courses
- District pilots – up to \$250,000/pilot; \$10 million for 40 pilots over three years
- EngInE platform

Timeline

January 2021 – January 2023: *Courses available (ongoing)*

Spring 2021: *Application to pilot a model available*

June 2021: *First round of awards made to pilot districts*

January 2022: *Second round of awards made to pilot districts
(application available fall 2021)*

June 2022: *Third round of awards made to pilot districts
(application available spring 2022)*

Focus areas for Innovations

- Outdoor Education (!!)
- Multiple & Flexible Pathways
- Extended Learning Opportunities
- Online Learning

Outdoor Education

- DOE investing in pilots that use outdoor education in innovative ways as a way of strengthening learning opportunities (during the pandemic and beyond)
- Professional Learning related to outdoor education (included in SAU budgets for pilot funding)
- Outdoor education resources

For more information:

Visit:

<https://www.maine.gov/doe/rrev>

Contact:

Page Nichols

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Kingfield Elementary School: History of Outdoor & Place-Based Learning

- Ski & Skate Program
- 2014-2018 Growing Gardeners - After School program
- 2018-2019 Transitioned to Growing Gardeners - In school for PreK-4
- 2019-2020 Green Team - Develop partnerships, grants, compost; forest kindergarten
- 2020-2021
 - Launched our compost program
 - Building a pavilion
 - Professional Learning - Juniper Hill
 - Create 3 outdoor classrooms



Kingfield Elementary School: Garden



Kingfield Elementary School: Forest School



Kingfield Elementary School: Classroom on the Hill



Kingfield Elementary School: Why we think it is working

- Staff support
 - Community support
 - Teacher leadership
 - Partnerships (MMSA, 4H, Foster Tech Center)
 - Funding
 - Local grants (CV Innovation Grant)
 - Business donations
 - Biosophical Institute
 - MEEA grant
- COVID - CRF and CARES Act



Kingfield Elementary School: What positives can we see?

- Culture and climate of staff collaboration
- Parent comments on facebook posts
- Students asking for time outside
- Social and emotional benefits for students and teachers
- Health benefits
- New teachers asking to use the outside classrooms



Contact Information

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Kingfield Elementary School: What is next?

- Curriculum
 - Building integrated units
 - Connecting to Wabanaki history and place
 - Teaching with nature, not just in nature
 - Continue to build connections to natural history of place
 - Build connections to historical and modern traditions of fishing, logging, hunting
 - Across grade levels PreK-8
 - Build connections to current place-based professions of foresters, sustainable agriculture, eco-tourism, local crafts
- Continue to get outside and learn in winter
- Continue to celebrate and tell our story

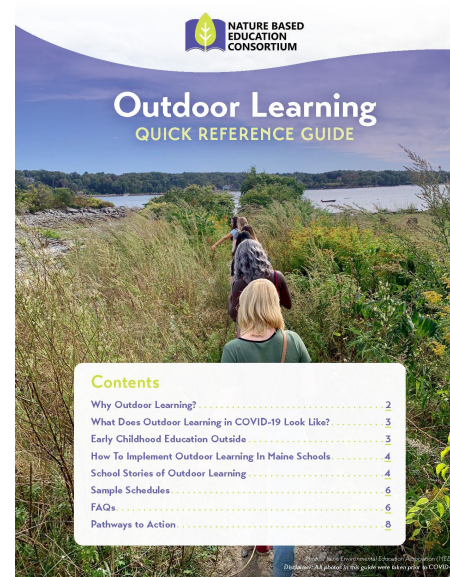
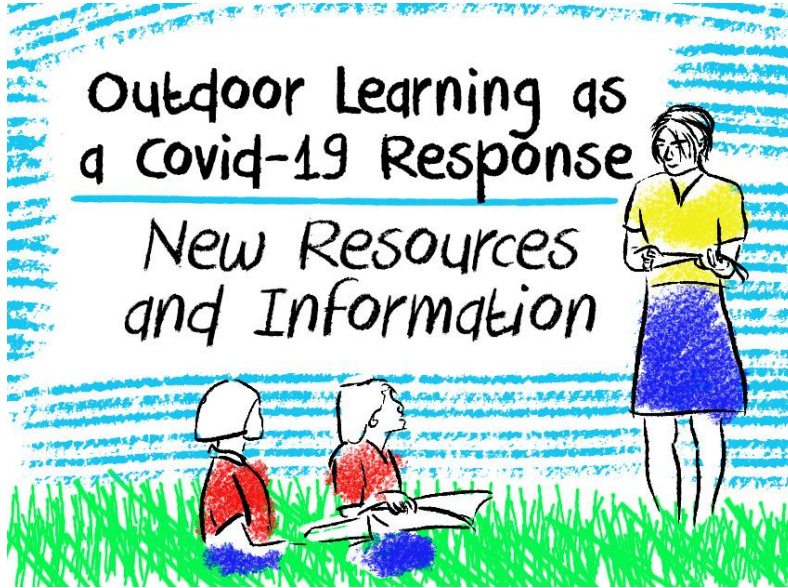


Contact Information
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Outdoor Learning Resources

NBEC Outdoor Learning in Schools Web Portal



Download the Outdoor Learning Quick Reference Guide and access planning resources, trainings, funding information, and more at www.nbeconsortium.com/outdoor-learning-schools

Sharing School Outdoor Learning Stories

Introducing a school outdoor learning story series, a collaboration between Inside-Outside, the Nature Based Education Consortium and University of Maine at Farmington.

If you have a story to share about outdoor learning happening in your school or district, contact Patti Bailie - patti.bailie@maine.edu

OUTDOOR LEARNING CASE STUDY

RSU 89 – Katahdin Schools

Rural District • ~300 K-12 Students • Elementary School and Middle/High School • Serving Mount Chase, Patten, Sherman, and Stacyville, ME



Building a Culture of Outdoor Learning in a Rural District

Katahdin Schools have a culture of outdoor and nature-based learning that has been developing over several years. Superintendent Marie Robinson came to the district in 2016 with a passion for learning in nature and has worked diligently to support teachers with training and resources so they can make outdoor learning a reality. What began with English classes outside for nature journaling has expanded to include outdoor classrooms and outdoor education electives in both middle and high school.

Excitement from a few teachers quickly expanded district-wide through partnerships with community programs like the Maine Forest Collaborative and the Katahdin Learning Project. Superintendent Robinson attributes the district's enthusiasm for learning outside to patient adaptation, and the way outdoor learning has enabled teachers and students to break down barriers between subjects. Teachers work at their own pace, with the support they need, and invite their students into holistic learning that reflects the interconnectedness of life after school.

COVID-19 has accelerated outdoor learning in RSU 89 at a level that would have been unimaginable a year ago. A core planning team made up of teachers, administrators, and groundskeepers has been key to this success - each of the district's new outdoor learning initiatives has been driven and coordinated by this team. After an early experience with several tents being damaged by storms, the district built two permanent

continued...

TOOLS FOR CHANGE

-  An Outdoor Learning Planning Team
-  Community Volunteers
-  School Gear Library
-  Professional Development Opportunities

"I like learning outside because there's more space to learn!"
—Grade 2 Student

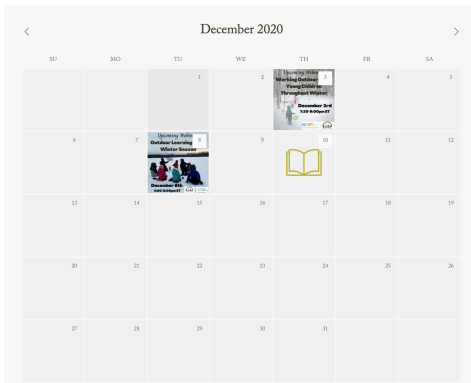
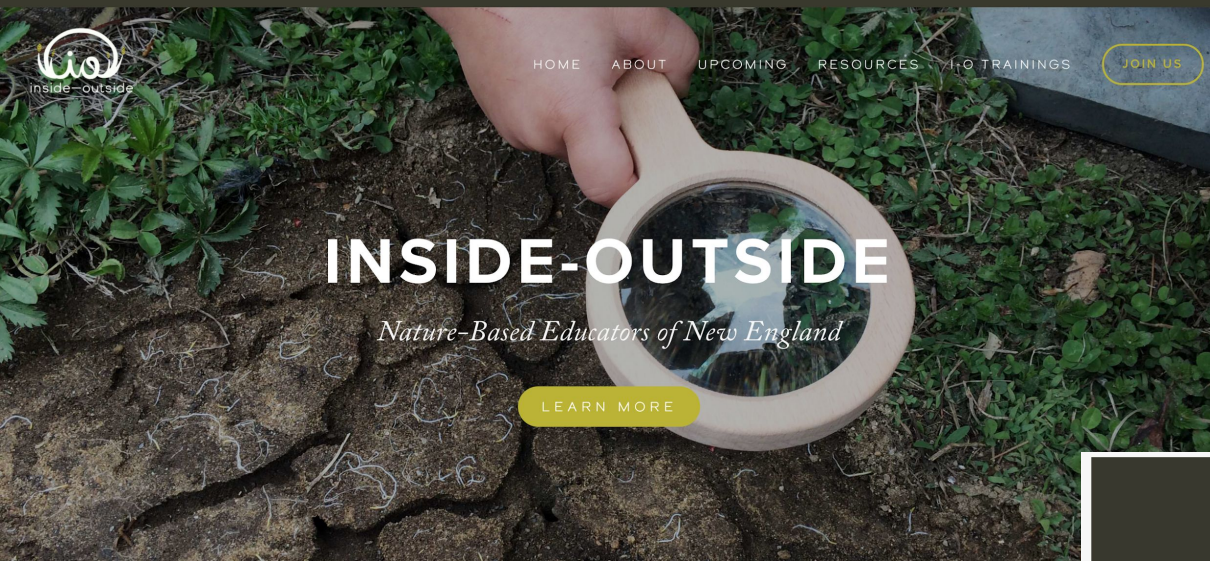


BENEFITS

-  Academic gains
-  Reduced need for behavioral plans
-  Community connections
-  Active and curious learning

Outdoor Learning Case Study: RSU 89 – Katahdin Schools
www.insideoutside.org | www.naturebasedmaine.com

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Events calendar on the homepage

MIDCOAST CHAPTER

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10TH • 5:00-6:30P.M.

Sharing about Teaching in Colder Climate Winters: Routines & Lessons, Tricks & Tips!

Let's gather virtually with a warm beverage to share about our **teaching in winter strategies**. What resources do we love? How can we take care of our students, colleagues, and ourselves in the winter months? What fun can we create in an 1.5 hour conversation to motivate us (and others) to stay outside for health, wellness, and learning?

—> Meeting on the 2nd Thursday of every other month. (Aug. 13th, Oct. 8th, Dec. 10th) <—

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Contact Anne astires@juniperhillschool.org for more information


LOCAL CHAPTERS

Maine: Midcoast • Downeast • Western Maine Foothills • Katahdin Region

Vermont: Upper Valley • Southern Vermont • Central Vermont

Massachusetts: Metrowest • Boston Area • Western Mass

New Hampshire: Seacoast • Lakes Region • Monadnock Region



Interested in starting your own local chapter?

Contact Liza Lowe: elowe@antioch.edu

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GETTING STARTED



Webinars on Nature-Based Education

PLACE-BASED EDUCATION: REIMAGINING THE FUTURE OF
EDUCATION

BRINGING SCHOOL TO LIFE

Inside-Outside Conference 2020

Keynote Speaker - Sarah Anderson

OCTOBER 24, 2020



Resources to get you started with Outdoor Learning during COVID-19

OUTDOOR PROTOCOLS & GUIDELINES

PORTABLE HANDWASHING
STATIONS

PORTABLE TOILETS

OUTDOOR SEATING

SHELTERS FOR OUTDOOR
CLASSROOMS

VIDEOS TO GET YOU
STARTED

BOOKS TO GET YOU
STARTED

NATURALIST KIT FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS



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OUTDOORS IN WINTER

Resources for Outdoor Classrooms in Winter

WINTER CLOTHING AND GEAR

FOOD, SHELTER AND NAPPING

WINTER CURRICULUM & ACTIVITIES

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT



Outdoor Learning in Cold Weather

Keep Moving through Winter and COVID-19

Maine ♦ New Hampshire ♦ Vermont

This position statement is the collaboration of the Inside-Outside Advisory Group. Reach out for guidance!

MAINE

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Introduction

Snow or freezing rain will be part of many days throughout the winter months. Do we need to go back inside, even as flu season and COVID-19 persist? No! At least not on most days. What we need is preparation and planning, support and enthusiasm, and, most of all, warm and dry clothes to protect against rain and snow. All of this combined will result in joyful learning, enhanced safety, and positive results—academically, socially, physically and emotionally.

Since schools reopened for in-person teaching and learning in the fall of 2020 during a pandemic, in those communities where teachers and their students have been outdoors in nature as much as possible, the reported results have been excellent. The relatively low incidences of COVID-19 in Vermont, Maine and New Hampshire are associated with the widespread practice of mask-wearing, social distancing, and careful hygiene. Those factors have combined to create opportunities to do even more, safely, and consistent with educational and medical guidance, with positive results. Laughing children, related educators, focused learning, and wearing masks as easily as wearing a winter hat—all of these have characterized what happens when nature-based education is the norm.

Does everyone need to be outdoors every day, all day? No, although that works well for many teachers and their students. Participating in outdoor learning is not a one-size fits all process. There is no one right way. We do know, however, that more time outdoors reduces health-risks and enhances learning overall, with a host of related benefits.

On that foundation, we believe that schools should continue to employ outdoor learning as part of their plans for effective education—throughout the winter and going forward. Time spent learning from and with nature provides measurable academic, social, emotional, and physical benefits. It is sound policy to maintain and increase its implementation in our schools. We encourage an outdoor, nature-based approach during the school day, and in scheduling the school week, that can take place on school grounds, on nearby lands, in public spaces or at home with school guidance. In addition, when students are required or choose remote learning as well as other forms of schooling at home, we encourage learning to continue outdoors in backyards, neighborhoods and nearby outdoor places.



Photo by Eric Aldrich, Harris Center for Conservation Education, Jonathan Daniels School, Keene, NH

Our perspective is rooted in current understandings of the COVID-19 virus and a review of the literature on child development, the benefits of nature-based learning, and mental health resilience. For example:

- *Do Experiences with Nature Promote Learning?*
- *Yes, Your Kids Can Play Outside All Winter.*
- *Classrooms Without Walls, and Hopefully COVID*
- *Catching Corona Virus Outside is Rare but not Impossible*
- *Outdoor Learning: Another Option for Public Schools*

Winter Clothing & Gear

Well-designed clothing makes comfort in cold weather possible. Wool, fleece, and other fibers that insulate and wick moisture keep the body's core warm and prevent heat loss from the extremities. In order to learn outdoors in wintry weather, children and teachers will need insulated, waterproof boots; warm jackets; insulated waterproof pants; fleece or wool hats and neck warmers; and waterproof mittens or gloves and, ideally, wool socks. Dressing in layers makes it possible to modify body temperature, adjust clothing to match activity levels, and adapt to changing conditions. Layering is especially important when it's wet or cold. Two lighter layers are better than a single heavy one, as more adjustments are possible.

All children and teachers deserve access to the high-quality clothing that makes outdoor learning possible. Equitable access must become a regional priority, supported by education policy and funding. As we work to achieve this, we recognize the many ways that individual schools and their communities are providing for children. These include organizing gear swaps, developing gear libraries at schools, purchasing clothing with parent-teacher organization support or grant funds, and fundraising for particular items such as outerwear.

Food, Shelter, and Activity

Wintry weather brings us back to basics. Nourishing food, warm drinks, shelter from the elements, and physical activities that generate body heat are essential.

- ♦ Staying warm burns calories. Children need wholesome snacks and a healthy breakfast and lunch to fuel their outdoor learning. Fats and carbohydrates are important in a cold-weather diet, so add coconut oil, butter, maple syrup or other such ingredients to familiar recipes and foods to increase their nutritional and energy values.
- ♦ Children need to stay hydrated in all kinds of weather. Replace cold drinks with warm water and soothing teas as the temperature drops. A large-size Thermos with a cup for each child or individual insulated beverage bottles that children can carry will keep liquids warm for hours.
- ♦ Shelters such as school buildings, pavilions, tents, tarps, sheds, yurts and hoop houses can serve as warming stations, with windows, doors and other openings adjusted for air flow. Shelters can also be used for sedentary activities and those that require materials or technology that can't be easily transported outdoors. Children will need access to bathrooms. If the only available facilities are in the school building, other shelters can be situated with proximity in mind.
- ♦ When out and about, keep moving! Teach lessons in segments and move from place to place between. Flap like birds or scurry like squirrels on your way to the outdoor classroom, follow the leader, play Fox and Geese or introduce other movement games. Keep mobility challenges in mind, and adjust distances, activities, and locations accordingly.
- ♦ Standing out of the wind, making sure clothing stays dry, and sitting on an insulated mat rather than directly on snow or cold ground are also important measures to take.



Photo by Ben Conant, Harris Center for Conservation Education, Greenfield Elementary School, Greenfield, NH

What could this look like?

Sample Schedule: Indoor Start, Daily Morning Outdoor Activity

8:00-9:00 Welcome & Weather

After a health check in front of the school building, students are welcomed into classrooms where windows have been adjusted for optimal ventilation and seating supports social distancing. After a nourishing breakfast or snack, the teacher initiates an activity or lesson to orient everyone to the outdoor time ahead. Students also assess the weather by checking the indoor-outdoor thermometer and local weather report, and observing conditions.

9:00 Prepare to Go Out

Students prepare for the outdoors by using bathrooms, gathering needed supplies and loading them into backpacks or buckets, and donning layers that are suited to the day's weather.

9:30 - 11:00 Outdoor Learning Activities

Students engage in outdoor activities that support learning goals in one or more curricular areas. Warming drinks and snacks are integrated to minimize the time children are sitting still. For example, kids might drink tea or munch a granola bar while the teacher reads, gives directions, or offers children individual turns to share observations.

Materials & Equipment

Some familiar indoor materials serve equally well in the outdoor classroom. Others must be exchanged for items that are more portable and weather-proof. For example, whiteboards and dry erase markers don't function once the temperature drops. Chalkboards, individual writing slates and chalk work perfectly well. Plastic buckets with lids serve a dual purpose: they can haul and store supplies, and as portable seating. Padded lids provide some outdoor luxury. A heavy-duty sled, able to glide along a gravel path or weedy trail as well as over snow, is a versatile means of transporting large or heavy items. Even a smaller sled is handy for moving many supplies to the appropriate spot. Zip-lock bags protect field guides and other books when not in use. Pencils won't smudge or ruin in damp weather, as many pens and markers do, and water-proof paper makes it possible to record data or write poetry even when it's snowing or raining.

Winter Curriculum

Winter is a season of abundance when it comes to teaching and learning. Intriguing topics for study are at the ready. For example, set up a bird feeding station. What can we learn by watching bird behavior? Find, follow, and map animal tracks and evidence to see who uses the school grounds besides the children. Figure out how squirrels communicate, or create ephemeral art with ice and snow. Where is the deepest snow near our school? Where does ice form at the school? Where are the warmest places outside? The coldest? Investigate seed dispersal, shadows, microclimates and more. Observe trees and twigs, explore friction, force and motion on the sledding hill, and write stories inspired by outdoor adventures.



Photo by Sue Spika, Harris Center for Conservation Education, Hancock Elementary School, Hancock, NH

11:00 Indoor Follow-Up

Students return to the indoor classroom and hang outerwear and extra layers where the clothes will be dry and ready for next use. The students then engage in activities that encourage them to extend or synthesize their outdoor experiences, such as collating and analyzing data, or adding to an evolving adventure story.

11:45 Lunch

When possible, lunch can take place in sunny or sheltered outdoor sites.


Afternoon

The afternoon schedule can mirror the morning, and include a substantial block for outdoor activity. Or, it can involve indoor lessons with outdoor breaks or recess.

Another option is to start the day indoors, and move this schedule outdoors from lunch through the afternoon.




Red italic text indicates web links to additional resources. Feel free to use, reprint, excerpt and/or adapt this document, with attribution to the source, noting "Used with permission from Inside-Outside, ©November 2020."

A photograph of children playing in a snowy forest. The children are wearing winter gear and are scattered across a snow-covered ground with trees in the background.

Upcoming Webinar: **Working Outdoors with Young Children Throughout Winter**

**December 3rd
7:30-9:00pm ET**

A photograph of a group of children sitting in a circle on a snowy field. An adult is standing and pointing at a book or map. The background shows a line of trees under a clear sky.

Upcoming Webinar: **Outdoor Learning in the Winter Season**

**December 8th
4:00-5:00pm ET**





Thank you for joining us!

Please fill out our exit survey,
linked in the chat