

# Nature-Based Education

we asked Maine-based educators for their perspectives on nature-based education (NBE). Here's what they said...

"This is also about re-empowering teachers to make professional decisions"



## Benefits of NBE

- **Health benefits** (for students and teachers): physical, social, emotional, and behavioral benefits have been found to correlate with being outside
- **Students have agency:** learning is interest driven, students are curious, and they can develop critical thinking skills
- **Equitable exposure to nature:** NBE provides access to all students in the classroom regardless of identity
- **Empowers teachers:** teachers have agency to promote engaging practices
- **Connection with nature:** students can establish a connection with their natural world at a young age

"Children are not barriers to NBE, but adults may be."



## Things to Consider

- **Administrator support:** need state-wide buy-in in order to attain support, communicate research/practices, and build relationships/understanding
- **Teacher buy-in:** emphasize benefits, encourage peer-to-peer collaboration, and provide models for teachers to follow
- **Parent buy-in:** show parents first-hand what NBE can do
- **Gear, tools, and space:** be aware of context dependency, utilize grants when possible, and ensure equitable access
- **Training + Implementation:** not everyone is equipped to carry out this programming; ensure staff are trained and prepared
- **Safety:** be thoughtful about how you design the environments, provide support staff, and establish good communication
- **Vertical alignment:** establish ways to ease students during transitions to or from programming with varied levels of NBE

## Tips from the Field

- **Consider your own context:** programs will look different depending on location, tools available, experience, etc...
- **Be conscious about who you hire:** hire and train in ways that support outdoor exploration; build in a nature-based lead position and assure intentionality
- **Provide a model:** educators prefer to see how NBE is done in order to feel comfortable adopting the approach
- **Use community partners:** provide opportunity for support and professional development
- **Gain administrative support:** provide teachers with more resources to develop an effective nature-based classroom
- **Communicate** with parents, colleagues, and administrators; involve parents/staff in developing outdoor guidance

"We've changed our teaching posting to include outdoor learning as an expectation"



"Offer a lot of information to parents about the benefits of being outside and how children are kept safe and healthy—stress the positives"

