Section 2: Case Studies of Teaching
Students Outside in Maine

Module Overview

Section Goal: For educator teams to review existing models and examples of learning outdoors in Maine, as well as examples of the logistics of taking students outside to provide inspiration and a point of reflection for what could be done in their own school settings.

Pre-Work:
- Email a reminder to all team members about the meeting, including date, time, location, and Section 1 and 2 Summaries.
- Combine responses to the final question (“What questions do you have about teaching outside?”) from the Teaching Outside 101 initial worksheet onto a chart paper.
- Encourage team members to invite other peers to join the group, now that they have a better understanding of the goals of this module. They can get caught up on some of the materials/reflection points by accessing the Individual Learning Journey Guide for this module.

Section 2 Workshop Summary:
1. Welcome and Meeting Framing (10 minutes)
2. Case Study Review (Independent Work) (30 minutes)
3. Case Study Discussion (30 minutes)
4. Documenting Our Own Programs (20 minutes)

Workshop Length: Approximately 1.5 hours

Detailed Protocols

Activity 1: Welcome and Meeting Framing (20 minutes)
Purpose: To revisit questions raised at the end of the last meeting to provide context for examining program case studies throughout Maine that could be applicable to your school.

Procedure:
1. Welcome team members back for the continuation of the Teaching Outside 101 module. Ask team members to share any questions or ideas that came up since the last meeting.
members to share a rose, bud, and/or thorn from the last meeting.

🌹 Rose = A highlight, success, small win, or something positive that happened.

🍁 Thorn = A challenge you experienced or something you can use more support with.

🌱 Bud = New ideas that have blossomed or something you are looking forward to knowing more about or experiencing.

2. Revisit the questions that were raised on the Teaching Outside Initial Worksheet last session. Explain that today we are going to explore case studies of existing examples of outdoor and environmental learning in Maine to try to generate some answers to these questions as well as inspiration for what is possible.

3. Explain that the case studies represent a wide range of schools, regions, and grade ranges; some represent new programs and others highlight programs that have existed for years.

**Activity 2: Case Study Review (Independent Work) (30 minutes)**

Purpose: For team members to familiarize themselves with a range of program models across Maine as examples and inspiration for what could be done at their own schools.

Procedure:
1. Provide team members with the Teaching Outside 101 Case Study webpage.

2. Ask team members to each choose 2-3 case studies to read/watch independently over the next 30 minutes.

3. Ask team members to think about the following questions for discussion:
   a. What goals were the case study schools trying to achieve through teaching outside?
   b. What assets or resources did the school have to accomplish their outdoor learning goals?
   c. What were some of the challenges experienced by the educators and how were they overcome?

   **FACILITATION TIP**

   You can encourage team members to find a quiet space to review case studies (outside, in different spots in your building etc.) and give them a specific time to return to the group.

   **FACILITATION TIP**

   Have questions posted, or on half sheets for teachers to refer to when doing their independent work.
d. What lessons from these case studies can be applied to our own school community?

Activity 3: Case Study Discussion (30 minutes)

Purpose: For team members to discuss commonalities and differences between the case studies they independently reviewed and to bring key themes back to the group for action at your school.

Procedure:
1. Put up four pieces of chart paper in the room highlighting each of the four questions above (Goals, Resources, Challenges, Applicable Lessons).
2. Ask team members to explain the highlights of the case studies they read and take notes (or ask a volunteer) on the appropriate chart paper.
3. After each team member has had a chance to share, ask for common themes that have emerged, focusing on lessons that can be applied at your school.
4. Wrap up the discussion by identifying 3-4 potential goals or ideas that your team has for supporting outdoor learning at your school.

Resource Roundup

You can use a SMART goals framework to help ensure your goals are clear and reachable:
- **Specific** (simple, sensible, significant).
- **Measurable** (meaningful, motivating).
- **Achievable** (agreed, attainable).
- **Relevant** (reasonable, realistic and resourced, results-based).
- **Time bound** (time-based, time limited, time/cost limited, timely, time-sensitive).


Activity 4: Documenting Our Own Programs (20 minutes)

Purpose: To emphasize the importance of and provide tools for documenting your outdoor learning journey at your school.
Procedure:

1. Tell team members that a key piece of guidance from existing outdoor learning programs was to take LOTS of pictures and documentation of their outdoor learning journey. As they developed outdoor learning spaces, outdoor classrooms, and partnered with community organizations, teachers and administrators have all emphasized the value of documentation to demonstrate progress and capture the story of outdoor learning at their schools. For example, there is really nothing more powerful than to see before and after photos of a schoolyard when it has been transformed from blacktop to garden - these photos will help you make the case for support in the future and share your story!

2. Ask team members to brainstorm other reasons we may want to document our outdoor learning journey. Answers might include: to share our story with others, for self-reflection with teachers or students, for fundraising purposes, for media attention and to inform families.

3. Ask team members to come up with some examples of other programs or initiatives they’ve documented and shared out about at their school, (these don’t need to be about outdoor or environmental learning). Discuss what was successful about these processes, and capture the common themes. Brainstorm and discuss how to translate these themes and experiences into documentation for outdoor and environmental learning.

4. Generate a plan for how you will document your own outdoor learning journey at your school. Some ideas might include:
   a. Setting up a shared folder for pictures featuring outdoor learning
   b. Taking video clips of students in action to create an end of the year video
   c. Reaching out to local media outlets for positive press
   d. Writing and submitting a case study to Teach ME Outside for use by other educator teams
   e. Sharing photos on your school’s social media. Don’t have one? Get permission from your administration and set one up! This is a great opportunity to get other students involved as photographers, graphic designers, etc.

Resource Roundup

There are several networks and organizations across our state who are interested in hearing your stories of success and how you have overcome challenges in teaching outside. The Nature-Based Education Consortium, Maine Environmental Education Association, Inside-Outside, and University of Maine Farmington are collaborating to create short two page case studies of outdoor learning.
Teach ME Outside also has a “Communicate Your Work” webpage that has tools to help you organize and share your story. If you’d like to share your story with Teach ME Outside and be included in the list of case studies available to educators through this module, please contact us. You can also use this Case Study Toolkit to learn how to structure and submit your materials.