Section 4: Managing Students in the Outdoors and Refining Outdoor Goals

Module Overview

Section Goal: For educator teams to share and discuss strategies for managing students in the outdoors, learn tips and tricks from educators across Maine working with a wide range of students, and reflect on what strategies they could incorporate into their work with youth. This section will provide additional time to work towards and reflect on the outdoor space goals identified in the previous section.

Pre-Work:
- Email a reminder to all team members about the meeting, including date, time, location, and Section 3 and 4 Workshop Summaries.
- Review team members’ “Teaching Outside Initial Worksheets” from Section 1 to identify any specific questions or concerns related to managing students outside.

Section 4 Workshop Summary:
1. Welcome and Meeting Framing (10 minutes)
2. Managing Students in the Outdoors (45 minutes)
3. Outdoor and Environmental Learning Goal Work (30 minutes)

Workshop Length: Approximately 1.5 hours

Detailed Protocols

Activity 1: Welcome and Meeting Framing (10 minutes)
Purpose: To set the stage for today’s key work- learning about resources for managing students in the outdoors and dedicating a substantial amount of time for working towards the team’s outdoor and environmental learning goals identified in the previous session.

Procedure:
1. Welcome team members back and let them know that the focus of today’s session is going to be moving beyond the physical assets available on the school’s grounds to the skills and capacities of the team to work productively with students outside.
2. Remind team members of the outdoor and environmental learning goals set at the end of the last meeting and let them know that the last half of today will be focused on making concrete plans for achieving those goals.

3. Ask team members if there is anything that has come up between last meeting and this meeting regarding their thoughts about outdoor and environmental learning at their school, the spaces available on school grounds, or the resources present in the community to support this type of education.

Activity 2: Managing Students in the Outdoors (45 minutes)
Purpose: To discuss the importance of developing confidence for taking students outside and the development of a unique set of skills for facilitating this from each others’ experiences and the experiences of educators across the state of Maine.

Procedure:
1. Tell team members that the focus for this activity will be on sharing strategies for managing students in the outdoors - a critical part of ensuring a successful outdoor learning experience. Explain that there is a lot to consider when going outside, but just like inside the classroom, by establishing clear routines and norms, your students can thrive and you all can have an enjoyable experience. It is important to set a structure and boundaries on the experience so that students don’t just fall into a default “recess” mode when outside.

2. Bring up (anonymously) some of the questions/concerns or strategies highlighted in their “Teaching Outside Initial Worksheets.”

3. Ask team members to reflect on a time that they took students outdoors for a learning activity, whether they consider it successful or unsuccessful. Ask each team member to share what strategies worked for managing students and what strategies did not work. On a chart paper, keep track of both the successes and the challenges.

4. Explain that this module draws on experiences from educators all across the state and that there is a library of “tips and tricks” for managing students outside developed by Maine educators for Maine educators.

5. Screen the “Getting Started with Outdoor Learning” video from the Cathance River Education Alliance (15 minutes). Ask for reflections from the group about tips/strategies in this video. Have team members revisit some of the unsuccessful strategies or challenges they previously faced and reconsider where the problem was in light of the discussion, (Was it a one-time thing? Poor instructions? A bad day? Not enough planning?). Acknowledge that it is possible to learn just as much from a poor outdoor teaching experience as a positive one!
6. Ask team members to identify one or two strategies from the Maine Outdoor Learning Tips and Tricks Library that they think will be helpful in their own work with students outdoors. Instruct them that their “homework” will be to try out and reflect on these strategies and to report out at the next meeting how their experiences went.

---

**FACILITATION TIP**

Depending on when you are conducting this module with your team, you may or may not have access to students. If your team will not have access to their classroom between this meeting and the next, you can instruct team members to test out a new strategy with their own children, neighbors, an afterschool program that they volunteer at, etc.

---

**Resource Roundup**

The FOSS (Full Option Science System) curriculum has Taking Foss Outdoors chapters developed for grades K-5 and 6-8. These guides provide general guidance for taking students outdoors, including choosing a study site; managing time, space, students, and materials; and general teaching strategies. The information contained in these guides can be extremely helpful whether or not you are using the FOSS curriculum.

Watch Part 2 of the Cathance River Education Foundation's “Getting Started with Outdoor Learning” series for short, simple, structured activities you can start doing immediately.
Activity 3 GOAL WORK: Outdoor and Environmental Learning Goal Work
(35 minutes)
Purpose: To provide some concrete working time for team members to develop an action plan for achieving their outdoor and environmental learning goal(s) identified in the last session.

Procedure:

1. **Revisit your goals** from the previous gathering and as a group begin to outline some target goals, timelines, action items, and key partners to help you achieve them. You may find it helpful to use this [One-Year Action Plan template](#) as a guide to support your process.

---

**FACILITATION TIP**

Define the purpose of these goals (and revisit the SMART goals framework from Section 2) for your team, if needed. Goals in this sense can include social and emotional goals, health oriented goals, brain break goals, behavioral goals, etc. We recognize that incorporating academic goals into outdoor learning scenarios may take time and increased comfort levels for some educators while others will see the connections right away - and all of those scenarios and comfort levels are okay.

---

**FACILITATION TIP**

Start with one or two goals and make sure they are manageable - it is best to start small and build your team’s confidence, rather than tackling a lofty goal that may lead to burnout. Consider bringing out the asset map you created in a previous session to guide your thinking about what resources you have available in your community to help. You are not alone!