

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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131st MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST SPECIAL SESSION-2023

Legislative Document

No. 1817

S.P. 732

In Senate, April 27, 2023

An Act to Support Outdoor Education by Establishing the Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program

Reference to the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry suggested and ordered printed.

DAREK M. GRANT
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by Senator BRENNER of Cumberland.

Cosponsored by Representative CARLOW of Buxton and

Senators: BAILEY of York, BALDACCI of Penobscot, BEEBE-CENTER of Knox, BENNETT of Oxford, BLACK of Franklin, BRAKEY of Androscoggin, CARNEY of Cumberland, CHIPMAN of Cumberland, CURRY of Waldo, DAUGHTRY of Cumberland, DUSON of Cumberland, FARRIN of Somerset, GROHOSKI of Hancock, GUERIN of Penobscot, HARRINGTON of York, HICKMAN of Kennebec, INGWERSEN of York, President JACKSON of Aroostook, KEIM of Oxford, LaFOUNTAIN of Kennebec, LAWRENCE of York, LIBBY of Cumberland, LYFORD of Penobscot, MOORE of Washington, NANGLE of Cumberland, PIERCE of Cumberland, POULIOT of Kennebec, RAFFERTY of York, RENY of Lincoln, ROTUNDO of Androscoggin, STEWART of Aroostook, TIMBERLAKE of Androscoggin, TIPPING of Penobscot, VITELLI of Sagadahoc, Representatives: ABDI of Lewiston, ANKELES of Brunswick, ARFORD of Brunswick, BELL of Yarmouth, BLIER of Buxton, BOYER of Poland, BOYLE of Gorham, BRENNAN of Portland, BRIDGEO of Augusta, CAMPBELL of Orrington, CLOUTIER of Lewiston, CLUCHEY of Bowdoinham, COLLINGS of Portland, COPELAND of Saco, CRAFTS of Newcastle, CRAVEN of Lewiston, CROCKETT of Portland, DANA of the Passamaquoddy Tribe, DAVIS of East Machias, DHALAC of South Portland, DODGE of Belfast, DOUDERA of Camden, DUCHARME of Madison, FAULKINGHAM of Winter Harbor, FAY of Raymond, GATTINE of Westbrook, GEIGER of Rockland, GERE of Kennebunkport, GOLEK of Harpswell, GRAMLICH of Old Orchard Beach, HASENFUS of Readfield, HEPLER of Woolwich, HOBBS of Wells, HYMES of Waldo, JAUCH of Topsham, LANDRY of Farmington, LOOKNER of Portland, MADIGAN of Waterville, MALON of Biddeford, MASTRACCIO of Sanford, MATHIESON of Kittery, MATLACK of St. George, MEYER of Eliot, MILLETT of Cape Elizabeth, MILLIKEN of Blue Hill, MONTELL of Gardiner, MOONEN of Portland, MORRIS of Turner, MURPHY of Scarborough, OSHER of Orono, PERRY of Calais, PLUECKER of Warren, POLEWARCZYK of Wiscasset, PRINGLE of Windham, RANA of Bangor, RIELLY of Westbrook, ROEDER of Bangor, SALISBURY of Westbrook, SAMPSON of Alfred, SARGENT of York, SAYRE of Kennebunk, SCHMERSAL-BURGESS of Mexico, SHAGOURY of Hallowell, SKOLD of Portland, SOBOLESKI of Phillips, STOVER of Boothbay, SUPICA of Bangor, Speaker TALBOT ROSS of Portland, TERRY of Gorham, THERIAULT of Fort Kent, THORNE of Carmel, WARREN of Scarborough, WHITE of Waterville, WILLIAMS of Bar Harbor, WOODSOME of Waterboro, WORTH of Ellsworth, ZAGER of Portland, ZEIGLER of Montville.

1 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2 **Sec. 1. 12 MRSA c. 433** is enacted to read:

3 **CHAPTER 433**

4 **IMMERSIVE OUTDOOR EDUCATION**

5 **§5301. Definitions**

6 As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms
7 have the following meanings.

8 **1. Department.** "Department" means the Department of Agriculture, Conservation
9 and Forestry.

10 **2. Immersive outdoor education.** "Immersive outdoor education" means
11 experiential, holistic and interdisciplinary education that uses the outdoor setting to engage
12 students in educational opportunities about the outdoors and natural resources and
13 industries and supports the health and wellness of students.

14 **3. Outdoor education program provider.** "Outdoor education program provider"
15 means an organization that qualifies as a tax-exempt organization under 26 United States
16 Code, Section 501(c)(3) that offers immersive outdoor education.

17 **§5302. Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program**

18 **1. Program established.** The University of Maine Cooperative Extension shall
19 establish and administer the Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program, referred to
20 in this chapter as "the program," to support immersive outdoor education and to assist
21 school administrative units in partnering with outdoor education programs.

22 **2. Grant requirements.** The University of Maine Cooperative Extension shall
23 provide grants to implement the program in order to assist school administrative units in
24 partnering with outdoor education program providers. Grants under the program must be:

25 A. Distributed to an outdoor education program provider that meets the requirements
26 of section 5303;

27 B. Used to serve publicly funded students enrolled in grade 4 to grade 8 in schools
28 operated by tribal school committees or students enrolled in grade 4 to grade 8 in public
29 schools in the State, as determined by the sending school administrative unit and the
30 outdoor education program provider based on community needs and the curriculum;

31 C. Provided to the same school grade each year to ensure that students in subsequent
32 years have an opportunity to participate in the program; and

33 D. If program funds are limited, prioritized for schools and communities that are
34 historically underserved by outdoor education, including, but not limited to, Indian
35 tribes and nations, migrant students, schools with high numbers of students who qualify
36 for free and reduced-price lunches, rural and remote schools, students in alternative
37 education programs, students of color, English language learner students and students
38 receiving special education services.

1 **§5303. Outdoor education program provider requirements**

2 This section governs the requirements for outdoor education program providers.

3 **1. Program curricula.** The program shall:

4 A. Use the outdoors and local ecosystems as the primary context to support hands-on
5 learning, including lessons, meals and on-site living;

6 B. Engage students in safe and age-appropriate activities;

7 C. Focus on the State's outdoor heritage, science, engineering, technology,
8 mathematics, health, environment and natural resources and sustainability by including
9 a strong academic component that supports overall academic achievement and career
10 trajectories and connects science with other subjects, to support students' understanding
11 of:

12 (1) Conserving and developing marine and estuarine resources;

13 (2) Conducting scientific research;

14 (3) Promoting the State's coastal fishing industries;

15 (4) Protecting and managing fish, game and other wildlife and their habitats,
16 including restoring endangered species;

17 (5) Promoting agriculture, conservation, forestry, land management and the well-
18 being of domestic animals;

19 (6) Safely enjoying the outdoors; and

20 (7) Promoting public health;

21 D. Develop students' social and emotional skills, including teamwork, citizenship, self-
22 awareness and community responsibility;

23 E. Support students' health and wellness by developing an appreciation for education
24 and recreation in the outdoors;

25 F. Encourage hands-on engagement, observation, discovery, intellectual curiosity and
26 problem-solving; and

27 G. Support students and teachers to combat the learning loss associated with the
28 coronavirus pandemic.

29 **2. Program structure.** An outdoor education program provider shall:

30 A. Obtain an educational trip leader permit under section 12863 or operate in
31 accordance with the requirements of section 12863 for educational trip leaders;

32 B. Provide programs for 3 to 5 days in duration including up to 4 overnights, or day
33 programs when overnight programs are impractical due to health, cultural or capacity
34 considerations;

35 C. Pursue a sustainable funding model;

36 D. Collaborate with schools and teachers to access the program;

37 E. Pledge to provide equitable access to the program to all students;

38 F. Train educators in educational strategies and field work;

1 G. Develop and participate in an evaluation program in accordance with section 5305;
2 and

3 H. Promote high levels of accessibility for students with disabilities.

4 **§5304. Outdoor School for All Maine Students Fund**

5 **1. Fund established.** The Outdoor School for All Maine Students Fund, referred to
6 in this section as "the fund," is established under the department. The department shall
7 direct funding to the University of Maine Cooperative Extension to administer the grant
8 funds and administer the program in accordance with subsection 2. The fund is nonlapsing
9 and may be invested in the same manner as permitted for the investment of other state
10 funds.

11 **2. Use of fund.** Beginning in school year 2023-2024, the department shall determine
12 the funding needed for the program and disburse funds to the University of Maine
13 Cooperative Extension. The funding must be sufficient for students in all geographic
14 regions of the State to participate in the program for a 2-night, 3-day experience.

15 **3. Sources of fund.** The State Controller shall credit to the fund:

16 A. All money appropriated or allocated by the Legislature for inclusion in the fund;

17 B. Money from any other source, whether public or private, designated for deposit into
18 or credited to the fund; and

19 C. Interest earned or other investment income on balances in the fund.

20 The department and the University of Maine Cooperative Extension must receive funds
21 for staff and for administrative costs associated with administering the program and the
22 fund.

23 **§5305. Report required**

24 The department, the University of Maine Cooperative Extension and an outdoor
25 education program provider that meets the requirements of section 5303 shall develop an
26 evaluation program and longitudinal study on current and future demographics of students
27 participating in the program for the purpose of ensuring equitable access and to understand
28 the effects of outdoor education on emotional, educational and career trajectories of
29 students who have participated in the program. Beginning December 1, 2023 and annually
30 thereafter, the department and the University of Maine Cooperative Extension shall submit
31 a report evaluating the program to the joint standing committees of the Legislature having
32 jurisdiction over education matters, inland fisheries and wildlife matters and agriculture,
33 conservation and forestry matters. The report must include an emphasis on the accessibility
34 of the program from a geographic, economic, ethnic and disability focus and the program's
35 effect on state workforce goals.

36 **§5306. Advisory committee**

37 The department shall convene an advisory committee for the purpose of advising and
38 making recommendations to the program and seeking new opportunities to ensure that the
39 State is a nationwide leader in outdoor education, including high school education career
40 training programs. In inviting participation in the advisory committee, the department shall
41 take into consideration geographic and demographic diversity in membership and ensure
42 membership of the committee includes a youth advocate and representatives of all

1 applicable state agencies, the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, the outdoor
2 education program provider community, the natural resources community and upper
3 elementary and middle school education.

4 **Sec. 2. Appropriations and allocations.** The following appropriations and
5 allocations are made.

6 **AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY, DEPARTMENT OF**

7 **Outdoor School for All Maine Students Fund N427**

8 Initiative: Provides ongoing funding for the University of Maine Cooperative Extension's
9 administration of the Outdoor School for All Maine Students program to provide grants to
10 overnight outdoor education program providers partnering with schools and school
11 administrative units to attend overnight outdoor education programs.

| 12 GENERAL FUND | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 13 All Other | \$6,200,000 | \$6,200,000 |
| 14 | | |
| 15 GENERAL FUND TOTAL | <u>\$6,200,000</u> | <u>\$6,200,000</u> |

16

SUMMARY

17 This bill establishes the Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program to provide
18 immersive outdoor education to serve students enrolled in grade 4 to grade 8 in the State.