

# HP 1087: Joint Resolution Supporting All Maine Youth Outdoors



**Primary Sponsor:  
Speaker Ryan Fecteau**

**The Joint Resolution Supporting All Maine Youth Outdoors recognizes the value of outdoor learning to increase student well-being, performance, and connection to natural resources in their community**

## Resolution Summary

- Learning outdoors is proven to improve academic performance, increase student motivation, and enhance student connection to natural resources and their community.
- For years, Maine youth have been spending less and less time outdoors.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has placed immense strain on Maine youth and our education system, and teachers have creatively overcome many of these challenges by using the Maine outdoors.
- Maine’s environment and natural resource economy will depend on today’s youth, who must understand relationships between natural and human-built systems in order to make informed decisions.
- When all youth can experience the outdoors, our communities are much stronger.

This resolution commends Maine teachers, administrators, and school districts for their innovation in using outdoor learning to increase community safety while meeting youth physical and mental health needs. It also affirms that all Maine youth benefit from the opportunity to enjoy time outdoors to explore, learn, and build connections to Maine’s natural resources. This creates stronger and healthier communities and upholds Maine’s deep history of connection to the outdoors.



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**Photo description:** At RSU 89- Katahdin Schools, teachers of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades hold class in outdoor classrooms a few times each week. The music teacher taught outdoors in the fall for all classes. A gear library with donated gear from community groups ensures that every student is prepared to bundle up for outdoor learning.

## Maine Youth Thrive in the Outdoors

Evidence shows that exploring and learning outdoors leads to:

- Increased student motivation
- Improved standardized test scores
- Enhanced critical thinking abilities
- Strengthened social skills
- Connections between classroom content & 'the real world'
- Students empowered to be engaged citizens & community members
- Improved student understanding of relationship with natural world
- New confidence & leadership skills

Ardoin, N. M., Bowers, A. W., Roth, N. W., & Holthuis, N. (2018). Environmental education and K-12 student outcomes: A review and analysis of research. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 49(1), 1-17.

## Innovation in Practice

Outdoor learning in the 2020-21 school year

- Schools build gear-share libraries to create equitable access to winter items
- Administration supports teacher professional development to learn outdoor learning best practices
- Families, teachers, and community members come together to build outdoor classrooms
- Schools partner with local community groups and nonprofits to learn from experts in nature-based education
- School leadership allocates CARES Act funds and apply for grants to support outdoor learning
- Schools innovate with creative use of schoolyard outdoor spaces and nearby public and private lands



Maine students explore Cow Island through a school partnership with outdoor adventure nonprofit Rippleffect.