

Teaching Resilience: Professional Development for Climate Curricula

North Haven and Vinalhaven partner with Hurricane Island Center for Science and Leadership

Overview: The Vinalhaven School proposed a climate-focused teacher professional development program (PD) in collaboration with Hurricane Island Center for Science and Leadership that supported teachers integrating hands-on, climate-focused, project-based learning into their classrooms. *Teaching Resilience: Professional Development for Climate Curricula*, was a three-phased program to support teachers from a variety of grade levels and disciplines. Phase 1 included a 3-day 2-night retreat at Bigelow Laboratories in East Boothbay



during April vacation that brought a cohort of teachers together from the Vinalhaven School and the North Haven Community School to engage in high quality, place-based, project-based climate curricula development. Phase 2 focused on the implementation of their projects in their classrooms during May and June with support from Hurricane Island Staff. Phase 3 included a final, culminating gathering on Hurricane Island for 2-days and 1-night for reflection on the project implementation, celebration of their accomplishments, and planning for the year ahead.

Teaching Resilience emphasized interdisciplinary, place-based, and project-based curriculum development, bringing teachers together to form a connected cohort of professionals across two island communities. The pedagogy and approach focused on building resilience and sustainability on a personal, professional, and community-wide level. Providing this opportunity, support, and time for teachers to work together fostered a deep sense of community between North Haven and Vinalhaven teachers and strengthened the feeling that we are all in this together. The culminating event demonstrating the success of this work occurred later in the summer when students, teachers, local, state, and national leaders gathered together on stage at the North Haven Community Center for a panel presentation to the wider community. It is worth noting that other partnering organizations were represented on the panel including the Island Institute, the Maine Department of Education Climate Education Specialist, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association. In addition, local and state government representatives were in attendance along with Governor Janet Mills.

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Teacher comment: The Hurricane Island team provided excellent leadership in modeling activities and engaging our school teams in conversations around teaching, mentoring, and collaboration strategies to focus our students on climate resiliency. Most importantly, our retreat at Bigelow Labs gave our school teams essential time to connect with one another and strategize about how we could bring the idea of climate resiliency into our teaching. For Spring semester, this supported us in offering a school-wide, interdisciplinary activity called "Where did all the fish go?" Good intentions aside, focused time for collaborative strategizing is largely unavailable to teachers in our daily schedules. One of the most valuable gifts we can be given is space and time away from school in which we can collaborate with colleagues to improve our educational activities. This program provided us with that time.



Teacher comment: Climate resiliency education equips individuals and communities with the knowledge and skills to adapt to the impacts of climate change. This is particularly important on a small island overrun with winter storms twice in the same month. Teaching sustainable practices, disaster preparedness, and environmental stewardship fosters proactive responses to extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and shifting ecosystems. This education helps mitigate the



adverse effects of climate change. Collaborative efforts between island communities, empowered students, and teachers alike to innovate and develop solutions that enhance community resilience, ensure a more sustainable and secure future for all. Knowing what skills our neighbors have and what our shared resources are will only benefit the creative solutions to make our small community better. The time spent collaborating with staff for the new year has been instrumental in a successful rollout.