



**Belfast Bay
Watershed
Coalition**

Natural Literacy Program

Making Friends with Nature

Fall 2024



The Bottom Line:

Schools and Grade Levels	# Unique Students	Program Hours	Student Contact Hours
Nickerson- 4 th g	19	4	76
Ames -3 rd , 4 th g	49	20	328
Searsport – K, 1 st 4 th g	49	20	245.5
CASS	88	43.5	648
Weymouth - K	38	16.5	313.5
Wagner – 8 th g	60	9	180
Totals	303	113	1,791

What Transpired while Making Friends with Nature

In the Fall of 2024

“When I say PHOTO, you say SYNTHESIS. PHOTO *SYNTHESIS*, **PHOTOSYNTHESIS!**”

This common word has taken center stage this year with Miss Jenni and her Natural Literacy classes. This remarkable process fueled by the Sun’s energy fixes the **Carbon** from **CO₂** into **Sugar** releasing **Oxygen**. Principally underappreciated for its primary and complex role in the marvels of **evolution** spanning 5 **Kingdoms** – **Bacteria, Archaea, Protista, Chromista** and **Plantae** – Photosynthesis is focused in the limelight through games, songs and **Field, Forest** and **Pond** discovery.

The verdant, flower-filled September days beginning the school year were a wonderful introduction in **Biodiversity**. While getting to know each other 2 new mascots joined our circles, a cuddly sheep named Baaa-ony (Botany) and Chlorophyll who began as a solar powered green Groundhog but due to a breaking fall from the backpack Chlorophyll became a green frog puppet. Many students sang Chlorophyll’s name with our little puppet friend. A little **Organic Chemistry** was learned through numerous rounds of Photosynthesis tag in which the animal tagger converted O₂ to CO₂ while another plant tagger converted CO₂ to O₂. The Carbon **atom** was represented by a bandana and the result was fun bedlam



Week to week **Summer** became **Autumn**, **pollination** and **seed dispersal** made way for lessons of the changing leaf colors. Students learned about **Xanthophyll** (yellow pigments) and **Anthocyanin** (bright red pigments). Successively as the leaves fell to the ground we got to know our **Deciduous** neighbors, **Ash Tree**, **Quaking Aspen Tree**, **Big Tooth Aspen Tree**, **Oak Tree**, **Beech Tree** and finally **White Birch Tree** and **Grey Birch Tree**. When all these were bare we shook the boughs of our **Conifer** friends, **Hemlock Tree**, **Balsam Fir Tree**, **White Pine Tree** and the 3 native **Spruce Trees – Black, Red and White**. We collected the different cones and imagined the time when there were no flowers and the conifers ruled the land.

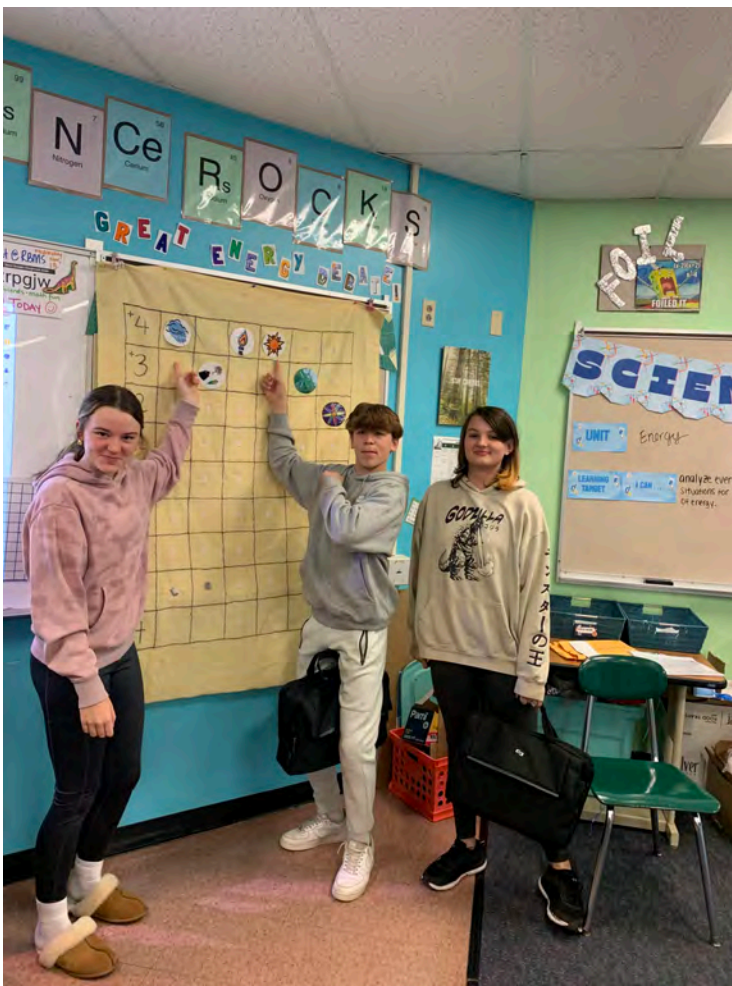
We learned how trees support hundreds of lives of animals (including us!) and other plants. They provide food, homes, building and nesting materials, refuge, and perches for mammals, birds, insects, fungi, lichens, mosses, and many others.

As the **Winter Solstice** drew nigh, classes celebrated a Forest Tea. The first little paper cup with tea – red from Passion Flower, sweet with Honey and fragrant with Mint and needles from Balsam Fir – passed from hand to hand as each shared the joy they found in the Forest. The last to share poured the liquid out for our Forest. Once each had a filled cup, hands were raised in a CHEERS TO OUR FOREST!



The Great Energy Debate!

In October/November Ms Jenni and volunteers worked with all 8th grade classes at Wagner Middle School in Winterport to learn about the many forms of energy used by humans to work, travel, heat, cook, light, and run their lives. Each class divided into teams to debate the pros and cons of energy sources. Teacher Samantha Poll engaged parents and the district superintendent as judges over two days. Pictured at left, one of the teams moves their energy icon up the scoreboard.



With deepest gratitude to our supporters: Leonard C. and Mildred F. Ferguson Foundation, Schwartz Family Foundation, and generous individual donors.

Natural Literacy Mission Statement:

The Natural Literacy initiative fosters understanding and love for nature in youth through experiential learning opportunities integrating science, math, art and literacy. Our strengths lie in collaborations with schools and the community, including a team of volunteers committed to increasing our connections to each other and to the natural world.

The Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition works to support conservation in the watershed through research, community-building, and education.

We are a 501©3 nonprofit.