



**Belfast Bay
Watershed
Coalition**

Natural Literacy Program Winter/Spring 2020

Natural Literacy's 2020 Winter and Spring Report

Year-to-date, both semesters:

479 unique students

301 program hours

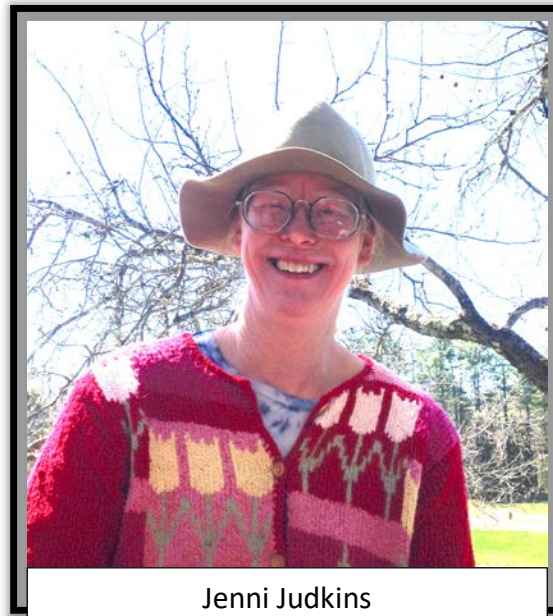
5,346 student contact hours

Winter-Spring semester

339 unique students

1,700 student contact hours

98 program hours, additional hours online and phone after school closings



In May, our Natural Literacy Educator Jenni Judkins was honored by Maine Science Teachers Association with their Phil Marcoux Award for excellence in environmental education. To read more about her award and watch an interview: Village Soup article and video:

[:https://waldo.villagesoup.com/p/award-winning-nature-educator-nurtures-kids-sense-of-wonder/1860421](https://waldo.villagesoup.com/p/award-winning-nature-educator-nurtures-kids-sense-of-wonder/1860421)

Volunteer Power: 28. Thank you one and all!

Weekly volunteers: Maury Hepner, Sandy Wallace, Margo Burnham, Beverly Roxby, Sandy Lord, Mike Shannon, Gene and Marianne Randall, and Cloe Chunn.

Family Math Night: BBWC and Literacy Volunteers Liza Odell, Steve Wolfson, Mary Davis, Denise Pendleton, Bill Smith, Mollie Noyes, Judith Garnett, Deb Murphy, Tom Murphy, Kevin Finnigan, Jen Shaver, Howard Green, Fran Pan, and Dottie Odell.

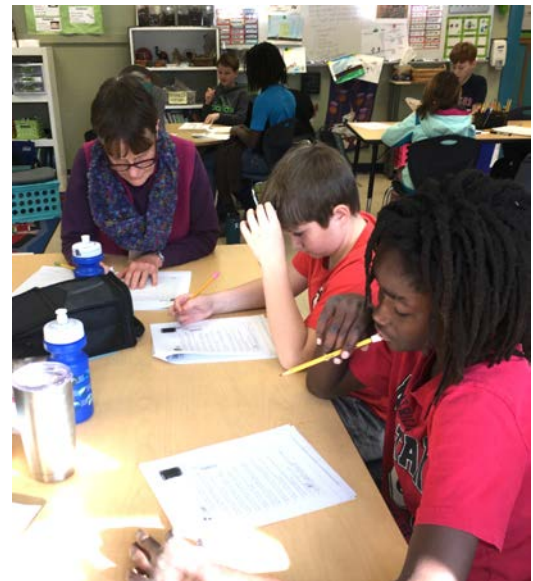
Students: Noah Gilchrist, Reilly Newton, Tyler Richards, Gabe Warren, and Lyla Warren.

275 Volunteer Hours+

K – 5 Natural Literacy

Most classes begin with the Moon Report. We observed the waxing of the Wolf Moon in January through the Chinese Lunar New Year of the Rat in February to the waning of the March Worm Moon. Our circles often begin with Qi gong movement and an enactment of the sun-earth-moon positions. This led into coyote communication, rodents of usual and unusual sizes and the anatomy of worms. (Did you know earthworms are both male and female!)

The topic of energy transfer cycles into many lessons from individual species to the ecosystem. The sun always begins our chain followed by the plants which produce their own food with nourishment from the decomposers who create soil. As consumers students explored our human impact through the Great Energy Debate. They explored the pros and cons of current industrial energy sources and again the highest marks were reached with solar and wind power.



The Great Energy Debate with 5th grade at Drinkwater School

Winter months highlight mammals, furry, warm blooded milk eaters who survive the cold months with blubber, food caches, sleep and protection from the elements. We learn about them by looking at the tracks of their feet and their teeth. Songs and games illustrate adaptations and connections to their habitat.

Other classes took wing with the birds exploring resident songbirds to shore birds and even a little a dip with some penguins and a quick visit with the owls. Nests are a favorite creation for bird and student alike whether it be a cup nest made with yarn and lichen, a pendant nest glued with magazine scraps, a platform nest of twigs or a scrape nest drawn in pencil. We had a lot of fun protecting our own clutches.

Nearly all of our watershed schools welcomed Atlantic Salmon eyed-eggs to a specially chilled tank where they grew into alevin digesting their food sacs until May when they were released into Wescott Stream. With providence some of these fry will swim down into the Passagassawakeag estuary in a few years and maybe even survive to travel the Atlantic Ocean to the waters off Greenland. Students swam though the many obstacles of the salmon life cycle and followed their noses back to their natal streams. (Was that lavender or licorice I remember as a little fry?)



Salmon obstacle course

Finally, I must admit my personal favorite exploration of the season was to dig and delve into soils. We sifted from sand, to silt, to clay into the wonderful world of humus with the amazing bacteria who are the transfer stations turning inorganic into organic. It really is amazing!

Family Math Night: By popular demand after last year, we planned two Family Math Nights for all elementary students in the district. We managed to have one before the pandemic closed school. The evening was filled with math games and activities for over 100 parents and children, 30 pizzas were consumed, and everyone enjoyed the fun.



Spring and beyond

A week and a half before the spring equinox classes came to an abrupt halt. As teachers worked hard to put together pieces for school at home, nature gave signs of life's renewal. Students reported from their homes that they never saw so many birds...

Nature investigations continued with spring snow forts, planting seeds, swelling buds, warming soils for worms and robins, finding insects, amphibians, blossoms and much more to come.

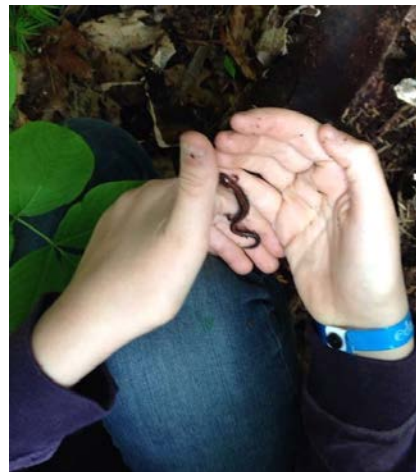
Natural curiosity lends itself to observation and learning. This opportunity for more outside learning time may produce more young naturalists and other positive influences on education. Natural Literacy will adapt to these new norms.

Nature based project learning:

Whether in the school yards or student yards, nature provides countless lessons. Children will wonder and form their own questions and we can provide attention, tools, information and encouragement. I am excited to continue guiding children to Make Friends with Nature while learning science, math, social studies, literature, art and health.

A Child's Wonder What To-Do List

- Make a tent
- Find some insects
- Fill a bird bath
- Climb a tree
- Dig for worms
- Be an ant
- Lie in the shade



During the summer we will be providing fun outdoor activities by way of surprises in food boxes to be delivered to 8 drop-off points in RSU 71. There will also be day camp experiences for a limited number of parent/child participants at Coastal Mountains Land Trust preserves in the 3 school districts we serve.

With gratitude to our funders: Individual donors, Leonard C. and Mildred F. Ferguson Foundation, Onion Foundation, New England Grassroots Environmental Fund, Maine Community Foundation.

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 our natural world.