

*"First you must learn to fall in love with life; then you can make the world over."
(N.F.S. Grundtvig)*

The Community Year Alternative High School Program Building Leadership for a Healthy Self, Community and Planet



*A program of the Cobscook Community Learning Center
in partnership with the Association for World Education*



The Cobscook Community Learning Center

The mission of the Cobscook Community Learning Center (CCLC) is *to sustain an educational setting within which people can enhance life through experiences with the natural surroundings, our cultures and traditions and through access to the arts.* Started in 1999 by people from the Cobscook Bay Region of eastern Maine, the CCLC is recognized locally as, *"something new and promising in a region needing a fresh beacon"*, and internationally as a model of *"visionary grassroots education."* Vicky Eiben, a doctoral student with the Fielding Graduate University concludes, *"CCLC is ...unique among learning facilities nationally. It offers a prototype that other rural communities can learn and draw from. A growing group of educators believe that community learning centers offer the seeds of a new vision for education in this country. In this endeavor CCLC stands in the forefront."*

The CCLC has been offering courses in Washington County since 2001, and organizes a range of formal and informal educational activities for people of all ages in response to interest expressed by community members and organizations. CCLC's current community education programming includes traditional and fine arts, music, health and fitness, nature and ecology, computer use, and academic tutoring. The Center also organizes arts and ecology field trips for area schools and currently offers an alternative high school degree program, known as Passages, designed for the needs of pregnant and parenting teens. To build on its slate of educational programming, the CCLC has developed a year-long high school program for students seeking a pathway to active and engaged learning in alternative setting.

The Association for World Education

The curriculum for this integrated experiential studies program has been developed in cooperation with the Association for World Education (AWE), an international, non-governmental, voluntary organization of individuals and institutions who believe that learning about ourselves and our communities is most effective and satisfying when education reflects an awareness of our intimate relationship to the world as a whole. Through The Community Year, the CCLC and AWE are working locally and globally to promote fluency in understanding and living on this planet today.



Rationale for The Community Year

The Community Year (TCY) responds to the needs, identified locally and in the Maine Learning Results, for effective alternative programming addressing the present call for engaged young people who are mindful and informed in their everyday choices and actions, understanding how these reverberate globally.

Program Intentions

Students will:

- * Ignite and feed passion and joy for lifelong learning
- * Discover and honor their authentic selves, finding meaning and fulfillment in life
- * Participate in an educational environment leading to a realization of the interconnectedness of all life
- * Explore their home place with new eyes bringing to it their hands and heart
- * Envision a healthy and fulfilling future for self, community, and the planet
- * Acquire and build skills and capacities necessary to manifest their visions

Educational and Philosophical Foundations

Through The Community Year, students and teachers form an inquiry-based, experiential learning community where they are actively engaged in learning together and from one another through direct experience and focused reflection. In the process of questioning assumptions, beliefs and values, and considering multiple points of view, participants are inspired to become changed by what they are learning in significant and long-lasting ways. The place-based curriculum is rooted in the unique history, ecology, culture, economy, literature, language, and art of the Passamaquoddy and Cobscook Bay region. Engaging with local people, landscapes, and issues promotes a form of education that is relevant and based in real experiences. This grounding in local community provides a context from which to understand and link with global conditions and concerns. Our collaborative education is further enriched through authentic service learning practices which teach and encourage lifelong civic responsibility and engagement.

Throughout this transformative learning process, students develop values, knowledge, skills, and behaviors to live in harmony with themselves, others, and all life on the planet. Students emerge from the program prepared to apply their learning wherever they may go in the world.

Summary

The goal of The Community Year is to serve area students and school districts by providing a much-needed alternative high school program for students who are struggling or disengaged in the conventional setting. Based at the CCLC Campus in Trescott, students will spend a year traveling in the Down East region and beyond to learn firsthand from people, landscapes, and one another. This program is directly influenced by experiential, ecological, indigenous, and inquiry-based pedagogies, and is focused on getting students outdoors, engaged in service-learning projects, and learning directly from people in our community while building their leadership, outdoor, academic and personal skills. In alignment with the Guiding Principles of the Maine Learning Results, this program is designed to support students in becoming excited, life-long learners; compassionate and clear communicators; and informed citizens who are able to take positive actions to address problems and approach opportunities in sustainable and creative ways. The partnership between the Cobscook Community Learning Center and the Association for World Education brings together the CCLC's experience in creative educational development and AWE's focus on world education and global citizenship.

Program Structure

The Community Year will bring up to 20 students together on the CCLC campus in Trescott, Maine for fall and spring semesters, following a regular school calendar. Student activities will be facilitated and guided by 2-3 faculty members. Community plays a central role in The Community Year. Students will not only become immersed in Cobscook Bay communities for the purposes of learning, but will also be completely engaged with the creation and maintenance of their own "learning" community. The learning community will offer support for students as they challenge each other and work collaboratively on community decisions and in group work. A 10-day backcountry expedition in the fall, the first of three throughout the school year, will serve as an orientation and, in addition to providing a hands-on experience in outdoor leadership and Maine natural history, will also offer students and faculty a chance to become acquainted and bond as a community, cover program expectations, create a community contract, and have lots of fun.



"Learning expeditions" are a mainstay of the program. Expedition education gives students the chance to interact directly with concepts learned and are incorporated into academic program throughout the year. In addition to the Maine backcountry expedition at the start of the year, The Community Year will include a month-long expedition to the desert southwest in January to explore the similar the natural history, cultures, economies, and issues of a place distinctly different from our home region, and a ten-day politics and participation expedition in the spring to Augusta, New York City and Washington, D.C. In addition to these three, longer-term expeditions (more comprehensive descriptions of each expedition can be found further along in this document), the philosophies of expeditionary education will be a foundational component to the day-to-day practices of The Community Year. When the learning community travels, whether in our home region or farther afield, it will meet with artists, activists, educators, local decision makers, business people, builders, authors, indigenous people, farmers, fishermen, and trades people, all the while deeply immersing itself in each landscape. These first-hand experiences with people and places will be the basis for the group's learning.

Contact

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The Community Year Curriculum

Core Curriculum

Ecology and Conservation of the Passamaquoddy Bay Region

Course Strand: Science (1 Credit)

Students will explore the unique ecology of the Passamaquoddy Bay region using the rocky ocean coast, rivers and estuaries, and surrounding Maine Woods. Critical inquiry into issues of importance to Washington County, such as resource-based economies, resource extraction, and local sustainability, will offer students a rich context in which to personalize their learning. Students will be asked to engage in active individual and group inquiry by keeping a reflective journal and then sharing their learning with the rest of the learning community.

In this course, students will:

- Explore traditional and contemporary methods for conserving/promoting revitalization of local natural resources, such as permaculture, homesteading, the back-to-the-land movement, etc.
- Investigate the ecology of the North Woods, coastal ecosystems, regional geology, etc, and through hands-on investigations, become familiar with bioregions and systems theory, among other topics.
- Use contemporary technology (GPS and GIS) to deepen their understanding of the ecology of the region.
- Communicate their reflections, understanding, opinions and increased awareness through project-related papers and learning journal, and through use of relevant vocabulary and participation in group discussions.

Core Questions:

- How has the ecology of the local region been changed through human activity?
- How has the local environment shaped the people that live here?
- What is a bioregion? How is our local bioregion unique? How is it interconnected to surrounding bioregions?
- How do our personal relationship and understanding of our local environment shape the decisions we make with regard to use of that environment?
- What observation skills are needed to understand the natural history of this region, and what personal skills are needed to promote the ecological sustainability of our home landscape?

Writing the Downeast Bones

Course Strand: English (1 Credit)

Students will examine and engage with various modes of storytelling originating from Downeast, ME, including oral traditions, creative writing, nature writing, poetry, folk tales, autobiography, and more contemporary online media. In addition to reading local sources, students will keep a learning journal in which they will experiment with a variety of written mediums.

In this course, students will:

- Examine connection to place through locally-produced writings, both contemporary and historical.
- Explore what writers convey through story, as well as different cultural practices of telling story/passing information.
- Focus on their personal development through reflective writing, critical inquiry, poetry, creative writing, nature-inspired writing, etc.
- Experiment with story telling through drama.

Core Questions:

- How can story be used to pass information? How is it a form of personal expression? How do stories carry the wisdom of the places in which we live?
- How are stories shaped by place - by the natural environment, by the people that inhabit a place?
- How do words create the world we live in?

Local and Global Issues of Social Equity, Economics, and the Environment

Course Strand: Social Studies (1 credit)

Students will use the Cobscook Bay region to explore interrelated issues of equity, economy and environment and how they reverberate throughout interconnected local, regional, national and global spheres. Students will trace their everyday actions and decisions into the larger global community and understand their present implications pertaining to social equity, global economic systems, and the effects on the natural world.

In this course, students will:

- Examine the history of economics in the Cobscook Bay region, beginning with the Passamaquoddy people through the introduction of European colonists to the present system operating with scales of economy in our increasingly globalized economy.
- Explore the effects of globalized economies on local ones through, incorporating interviews with local community members, research methods, group discussion and critical reflection to gain a deeper understanding of complex issues.
- Create presentations using a variety of electronic media to convey the complex storylines of the overlapping local and global economics.

- Interact with students across the globe, through our relationship with AWE, to learn first-hand about our common and diverging experiences as goods and services, jobs and information, cross political and natural boundaries.

Core Questions:

- How did people historically support themselves in our home region?
- What is the relationship between the economy and the regions natural resources?
- In what ways has the contemporary global economy affected the Cobscook Bay region?
- What are the stories of the goods and services that make up the landscapes of our daily lives? What do those stories mean for you and your family? What do those stories mean for people across the planet?

Leadership, Community & Personal Development

Course Strand: Career Preparation (1 credit)

Learners will examine and experiment with a variety of leadership styles by taking on a variety of leadership roles within the learning community. Examples include facilitation of group discussions/meetings, preparation and presentation of course material or learning, wilderness skills and leadership, and engaging in active conversation regarding a variety of leadership styles. Through this course students will also engage in group processes, learning important skills like conflict resolution, group decision-making, and group dynamics. Students will begin to learn how to use their voice to affect change in the world and will develop personal practices to contribute to their own "personal" sustainability.

In this course, students will:

- Explore historical/current local leadership in a variety of disciplines (town government, regional government, environmental, activist, artist, musical, education, religious, etc.).
- Reflect on their personal leadership styles through learning journal entries, and through a group advocacy/activism project.
- Deepen their understanding of group dynamics through reflection throughout the year on collaborative projects, (consensus) decision-making, conflict resolution, group discussion, communication skills, group systems, etc.
- Practice their roles as leaders through community projects, wilderness experiences, group decision making, etc.

Core Questions:

- What does it mean to be an "effective leader"? What is effective leadership?
- What are the different kinds of leadership roles present in Washington County?
- What kind of leader do you want to be? What skills do you need to gain and grow to develop as a leader?

Mathematics

Course Strand: Mathematics (1 credit)

Mathematics courses are offered to meet the requirements set for by each student's sending school. Online courses, supplemented by tutoring sessions and study circles, will prepare students to reenter the math program at their sending school. Each student will also be supported in integrating their individual math course work in other subject areas.

Dollars and Sense: A Math Practicum

Course Strand: Mathematics (1/2 credit)

Students will explore the practical application of numbers in our lives. Through a series of collaboratively designed projects, students will explore budgets and they relate to a variety of systems (household systems, business systems, local government systems, etc). Throughout the year students will create and work with budgets as they relate to collaboratively created class projects, including expedition trips, building projects on campus, service projects and more.

Electives (Sample Courses)

Community-Based Arts for Social Change

Course Strand: Fine Arts (1/2 credit)

Recognizing the potential for artistic expression to create social change, this course will examine local arts and art as means of cultural, community and political expression. This course will also explore the role of art in building community and its role in challenging assumptions about class, culture, participation and power. Students will be encouraged to tap into and develop their own forms of artistic expression in a variety of settings and projects. Students will be supported in developing a mentorship program with a local artist of their choice as they deepen their capacity for self reflection and personal expression through media of their choice.

Downeast Music Traditions

Course Strand: Fine Arts (1/2 credit)

Music is a strand in the web that binds people together, and each region has its own particular musical traditions that make it unique. Downeast Maine has a rich tradition of local-grown music, and this course offers the opportunity to explore music and a means of personal expression, community building, and good old fashioned entertainment. In this class students will be supported in:

- Learning an traditional instrument
- Learning and singing traditional folk songs
- Music theory
- Writing and performing music
- Learning and creating traditional and contemporary regional music
- Hosting performances and community music gatherings

Outdoor Leadership

Course Strand: Physical Education (1/2 credit)

In this course students will be introduced to the fundamentals of camping and backcountry skills. Among the skills covered in this course are those related to safe and comfortable day hiking and multi-day backpacking, orienteering, outdoor cooking, survival skills, equipment care and maintenance, canoeing skills, basic nature identification skills, and trip planning. There will be an emphasis on practicing leave no trace principles. This course supports students in their personal explorations of the natural world, and inspires a sense of adventure and fun as we explore first-hand wilderness areas. The expected outcome of this course is that students will have a basic competency in comfortably and safely being, traversing and exploring backcountry landscapes.

Going Green: Building, Business and Energy Technologies

Course Strand: Science and Technology (1/2 credit)

In this course, students turn broad awareness of the individual and societal imperative to establish sustainable practices into practical and technical knowledge associated with implementing those changes at home, in our choices and in the workplace. Students use distance learning technologies, site visits, research and hands on projects to develop an understanding of how these technologies work, the economics that surround them and issues of access and involvement with these fields of social and ecological restoration. Students will leave this course with an expansive appreciation of the field of green technology and be able to identify and consider cultivating mastery in this field for personal and professional life applications.

Language of Place: Passamaquoddy

Course Strand: World Languages (1/2 credit)

In this course, students will learn the basics of the indigenous language of the Down East region, Passamaquoddy. Students will spend time with native speakers throughout the region to learn and practice speaking this region's native tongue. Woven into this exploration will be issues of identity and culture. While many tribal elders are fluent speakers, fewer and fewer younger people are able to speak Passamaquoddy fluently. As is the case with many indigenous languages, some fear that the language could be lost if language revival issues do not continue. It is expected that students will gain a greater appreciation of Passamaquoddy history, culture and contemporary issues and efforts, as well as be able to articulate the benefits of greater cultural diversity in a rapidly shrinking world.