

JVS students learn to be good stewards of nature while ice fishing



Jefferson Village School fifth graders learn about ice fishing traps from teacher Sawyer Pinkham.

Small groups of Jefferson Village School students in grades five through eight went on field trips to Deer Meadow Pond the week of Feb. 8-12 for a half day of ice fishing, environmental education, and fire building.

Middle-level English language arts teacher Julie Madden came up with the idea three years ago and teachers mulled it over for two years before deciding to take students on the outdoor field trip.

“Just being able to safely socialize was great because that’s something that is very difficult to do at school and it just doesn’t happen,” teacher Amanda Flagg said.

Middle-level teachers Julie Madden, Mike Uleau, Flagg, Ben Pinard, Andrew Grady, and Sue Bouchard, along with physical education teacher Sawyer Pinkham and Kieve educator-in-residence

Neil D’Acierno, took students on the ice fishing trip.

With COVID-19 restrictions, taking field trips outside of Jefferson hasn’t been possible this year. Earlier in the school year students had another outdoor adventure at Hidden Valley Nature Center, where they went fat tire biking. They are planning a third outdoor activity this winter, cross-country skiing at HVNC.

Each grade went ice fishing on a different day. Pinkham and D’Acierno brought the gear out ahead of time, got a fire burning, and started drilling holes. Students cooked hot dogs on the open fire and enjoyed gathering dry firewood to keep the fire burning throughout the morning.

Although fishing was slow, with only two fish caught the entire week, students “still had an awesome time,” Flagg said of the students

jigging for fish, playing games in the snow, and talking around the fire pit.

Pinkham showed the students how the traps worked and explained the different parts of the trap. D’Acierno taught students how to drill holes and set the traps. Students participated in every part of ice fishing, from skimming the holes to baiting the hook and setting the traps.

Students filled out a survey on their adventure and it was discovered that 38% of students had never been ice fishing before and 31% had only been once or twice.

“That says a lot to me, that 69% of students had either only been once or twice or have never been before,” Flagg said. “Seventy-seven percent of students said they would definitely want to go again and 21% said they might want to.”

Flagg said many of the students said they would have preferred going all day. “There were lots of thank-you’s for taking them ice fishing.”

Besides fishing, D’Acierno talked to the students about environmental stewardship and ethical ice fishing practices, and also made them aware of the many community opportunities available to them.

“There are many important factors when it comes to a student body having an opportunity to not only get outside in their community but to utilize the natural resources of their community,” D’Acierno said.

Students practiced the Leave No Trace model by picking up all their trash and disassembling the fire pit before they left.

“There are over 6,000 lakes and ponds and 32,000 miles of rivers and streams that are accessible to our public and youth,” D’Acierno said. “Showing students (fifth through eighth grade) specifically is invaluable to their healthy decision-making as they grow up.

“If they are aware of the public access of these lakes and ponds then they will have a higher chance of pursuing healthy hobbies. This week we showed the JVS student body how accessible and enjoyable Maine’s natural resources can be.”



Sixth grader Morgan McIvor jigs for a fish as Mackenzie Bernier looks on.



Teacher Sawyer Pinkham with a group of sixth graders who were lucky enough to catch a fish.