



Outdoor Learning Takes Place Year Round at Bicentennial Elementary School

By Sara Head, NHPLT Communications Specialist

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Any teacher knows that preparing a class of young students to go outdoors in the winter can be a frustrating task, as they wrestle with cumbersome boots, twisted snow pants and the ever disappearing pairs of mittens. Now add 25 pairs of snowshoes with their straps and buckles to the mix and what have you got? Twenty-five excited winter explorers is the answer! Because as any kid knows, the chance to go out and play in the snow is literally a breath of fresh, if cold, air during a long winter indoors.

The teachers at Bicentennial Elementary School (BES) planned *WinterFest* this February as a way to engage their students in the winter wonderland right outside their classrooms. Activities included snowshoeing, sledding experiments to determine which materials made the best sleds, and winter tracking. Even art moved outdoors as students built snow sculptures, creating an entire yard of penguins and sea creatures over the course of the day.

NHPLT's Erin Hollingsworth is working with the staff and students at BES weekly through the *Connecting Schools to People and Place (CS2P)* program. She supports the staff in bringing environmental education and outdoor learning into the curriculum.

Undaunted by the cold weather, students' enthusiasm was high, with opportunities to warm up at the hot chocolate station provided by parents in the school. Few students had experienced walking in snowshoes before and they were thrilled to be able to tromp through the woods on top of the snow. Most got the hang of it right from the start and the joy found in their accomplishment was evident in the abundance of bright smiles. Of course, no

snowshoeing excursion is complete without some competition. Mr. Webb, the physical education teacher, led the students and teachers in snowshoe relay races in the school yard. Cheers and laughter kept the excitement level high as they raced from cone to cone, each with their own style and many, including teachers, tumbling happily in the snow.



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