



Harriet Beecher Stowe Elementary School

44 McKeen Street
Brunswick, ME 04011
Telephone (207) 319-1960
Fax (207) 837-6941

May 13, 2012

To whom it may concern,

The children in my class always jump when they hear me say the word CREA. At only nine or ten years old, they already know the local gem that is the Cathance River Education Alliance. They want to share their experiences, they want to talk about what they found, but mainly they want to know when we will be going back again.

Each of my six years of teaching fourth grade in Brunswick has included at least one trip to the Cathance River Education Alliance. They have done a fantastic job of putting together programs that match our curriculum study. Whether our focus is geology, biomes, or adaptations, the students come away with a new wealth of knowledge, an appreciation for the outdoors, and a smile on their faces.

I don't know where to begin to convey my appreciation for the people and the place. My district's budget cuts have left many field trips off the table. CREA has remained mostly free for our children. I don't know how they do it, but I always hope it will continue for one more year. Our school currently has no outdoor space for the children to play on that is not pavement or woodchips. CREA is an oasis for these children with its acres of forests, footpaths, quarries, and that beautiful river.

The staff at CREA does what great educators do. They are passionate at what they do. They question. They value the opinions of the children. They let children discover. They let children reflect. They continually impress, but they don't rest on their laurels.

This fall I got the opportunity to attend a professional development day at the Ecology Center at CREA. In fact, CREA provided the scholarship funds to make my attendance possible. Then they hosted a first-class workshop on the history and geology of the area. It has enhanced my teaching in those areas, and I was very excited to share with my colleagues, not only what I had learned, but also the free resources and geology specimens that were given out.

The Cathance River Education Alliance is a jewel of mid-coast Maine. Its benefits are immeasurable. Our children get so much more out of each visit than what it says they need to learn in our curriculum. They get to reconnect with nature. They get to explore, discover and be amazed at what they find. I get to come away rejuvenated to try to match that level of excitement back in my own classroom.

Sincerely,

Steve Shea, Fourth Grade Teacher
Harriet Beecher Stowe Elementary School