The purpose of the SUCCESS collaboration between Island Institute (II) and College of the Atlantic (COA) is multifaceted. The primary objective is to serve our constituents in ways that were are consistent with the needs and interests of island and other area educators, with our institutional missions, and with the goals of the Fund for Maine Islands. Therefore, our initial goals were ambitious, not only to support pre- and in-service teachers but also to ensure that their elementary and secondary students and communities would benefit from the learning and collaboration opportunities that we hoped to foster for beginning and veteran teachers.

This report seeks to articulate what we offered in the grant period 2016-18, who engaged and, with what outcomes. We also address how we might move forward to continue to support and enrich this collaboration between COA, II, and the island and communities whose schools and educators we seek to connect, learn from, and support beyond the grant period. The data that we have collected to inform this report come from a variety of sources: participant surveys following events and other grant-funded activities; documentation from these activities; data collected, analyzed, and reported by COA students enrolled in an advanced tutorial on program evaluation and by an outside evaluator, observations and reflections from this report’s authors, the education directors at COA and Island Institute.

The report is organized by proposed goals, starting with those we accomplished and ending with those still in progress. For the former, evidence comes primarily from participant feedback but also from the student- and third-party evaluators. For the latter, we include suggestions from participants and community partners as well as reflections from this report’s authors.

SUCCESS

ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Create a high quality professional development infrastructure to increase understanding of place-based and experiential education and the ability to practice this form of learning and teaching in a proficiency-based education context. This work will include outcome and assessment components.

Over the course of three years, beginning with collaborative planning with COA students and faculty, II staff, school leaders, and community partners, a total of 138 individuals from twenty-three schools
and seven organizations participated in a variety of grant-funded activities. We offered ten school visits to six schools, with four to sixteen participants at each visit (median twelve); two summer institutes attended by twenty-six and twenty-nine participants in 2016 and 2017, respectively; and three spring institutes attended by twenty-four to thirty-one participants. Three teachers at Conners-Emerson School participated in a professional learning community (PLC) facilitated by consultants with the Rural Aspirations Project (RAP), and twelve COA students partnered with three Conners-Emerson School (CES) teachers in a farm-to-school program that served approximately seventy elementary and middle-school students. Furthermore, twelve and eleven COA students and staff attended the Island Institute’s Island Teachers Conference in 2016 and 2017, respectively, and one recent alumna presented a session.

Following several planning meetings with a representative group of COA students, island educators, and community partners, we agreed on a set of objectives as well as potential activities in a draft logic model. While co-creating a logic model comes with its own set of challenges, the process gave us some shared understandings of how we sought to collaborate, seeking in particular to find co-learning opportunities among our intergenerational constituents, from COA undergraduates interested in Education Studies to veteran teachers and school and community leaders. Building on the potential for experiential and place-based education to start from the foundation of local expert knowledge and appreciation for the natural and social communities on the islands and along the coast, we also sought to integrate the important focus areas identified in the FMI grant: climate change adaptation and mitigation, energy independence, and sustainable food systems.

Through the various activities identified during the planning process and offered in the grant years, we have laid the groundwork for a high quality professional development infrastructure to deepen educators’ understanding of experiential and place-based education and their ability to practice this form of teaching and learning in a proficiency-based education context. As evidenced in the participant feedback and evaluation reports, respondents identified school visits as opportunities not only to witness diverse public school students engaging in experiential learning and place-based education but also to be able to gain practical knowledge about how to facilitate these kinds of learning in their own schools. For example, in interviews with the third-party evaluator, a school leader cited the school visits as the “most important” program component because they “connected [teachers] with authentic learnings,” and a school teacher reported “how a school visit provided a really good introduction to expeditionary learning.” COA students interviewed reported how the school visits gave them a model for what could take place in public schools in terms of connecting “kids to the community,” with one stating how it “really opened [their] eyes to ways to do place-based education and project-based learning.” The outside evaluator affirmed the attainment of this goal when he noted in his conclusion, “the program primarily served to reinforce, strengthen, and deepen teacher and school pedagogy and practice, rather than convert teachers and schools to completely new ideas and ways of teaching” (p. 6). First-generation place-based educators felt affirmed and supported in their creativity and risk-taking in connecting their students with local communities; second-generation place-based educators (COA education students) gained the ability to see how theory inspires and informs practice in real school settings.

Respondents who had participated in summer and spring institutes reported gains in concrete skills in facilitating exploration and inquiry processes as a viable alternative to direct instruction and how to apply these new skills in their classrooms. As described by the third-party evaluator, “Summer institutes, with their immersive professional development (PD) opportunities, were described as beneficial by interviewees who had attended” (half of the interviewees). Participants often described feeling inspired and energized by these PD opportunities. As one school leader told the third-party evaluator, the Summer Institute provided “resources to energize and for impetus.”
While most participants chose sessions focusing on collaborative curriculum planning with their school teams, a few focused on exploring experiential and place-based education through local sites. Just one respondent in the 2016 Summer Institute and 10% of the 2017 Summer Institute “somewhat disagreed” that “[t]he institute supported [them] in developing experiential and place-based curriculum.” A participant in the 2018 Critical Explorers Spring Institute stated: “Receiving the prompts for how to be a facilitator during a discussion was particularly useful. This helped me identify effective, open-ended questions to guide the inquiry/curiosity process.” Another understood the transformative power of learners letting go of being wrong: “I was surprised with how powerful the guiding questions were in deepening my thinking, especially because I was not afraid of being wrong.” Participants in this Spring Institute also gained the experience of working with a variety of multidisciplinary artifacts and having the opportunity to choose which they would juxtapose to deepen and extend the earlier explorations through discussion with their peers about the rationales for their choices. As one appreciated, “Having the opportunity to select our own primary sources was helpful practice to bridge the experience here at the workshop with my work in the classroom.”

An explicit goal in developing this professional development (PD) infrastructure was to create opportunities for connecting educators and education students with resources that would support their continued practice of experiential and place-based education for community and environmental sustainability. Rural Aspirations Project (RAP) is an important example of such a resource. In addition to consulting with RAP for the Conners-Emerson School professional learning community (PLC), we also contracted with RAP to help structure and facilitate both the 2016 and 2017 Summer Institute and provide follow-up check-in sessions at the annual Island Teachers Conference. Over the past three years, RAP has increased its involvement with a number of island and coastal schools that are also SUCCESS schools, including North Haven, Islesboro and Edna Drinkwater. RAP’s ongoing work to help these schools deepen and expand their place-based and experiential learning opportunities for students may be, in part, because of the access and networking that SUCCESS events provided. We report on other PD infrastructure and resources under the following goal.

Support an intergenerational and developmental network of schools and communities that fosters student, teacher, and leader mentors through multiple entry
points (i.e., preK-12 student, education student, student-teacher, teacher, school leader)
As with the above goal, the 2016-18 FMI-supported activities provided a foundation for the establishment of this network through individual relationship-building between educators, organizations, and communities. The vast majority of participants reported connecting with someone at grant-funded activities whom they would identify as a resource. 80% to 83% of the respondents to evaluations of the spring institutes and one of the school visits for which we had collected this data connected with someone they consider a resource. For example, one COA student reflected that it was helpful to connect with resources where she intended to student-teach. For the 2017 summer institute, all but one of the twenty respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that they “made meaningful connections with another educator during unscheduled times.” One “neither agreed nor disagreed” with that statement. For the 2016 summer institute, only one of the respondents somewhat disagreed that they had “made meaningful connections with other educators in the evenings.” The Farm-to-School (F2S) collaboration with Conners-Emerson School (CES) in Bar Harbor arguably provides the most intergenerational and developmental network through the connection between K-12 students, COA student-teachers, and CES educators. COA students with Conners-Emerson teachers collaborated to connect kids with local food sources and the understanding of large- and small-scale food production; students gained knowledge about food insecurity and nutrition and developed skills to grow edible plants and research food-systems topics of their interest, among other learning outcomes.

IN PROGRESS
Create a high quality professional development infrastructure to increase understanding of place-based and experiential education and the ability to practice this form of learning and teaching in a proficiency-based education context. This work will include outcome and assessment components.
While there are substantial accomplishments serving this goal, we are still in the process of identifying and crafting assessment components that can better help us to document K-12 student learning and community outcomes, also noted below under “Not Yet Documented.”

Promote the transfer of knowledge from one school and community to another in which shared geographical and historical knowledge can be more widely disseminated.
There are several examples of SUCCESS activities that promote the transfer of knowledge from one school and community to another in which shared geographical and historical knowledge can be more widely disseminated. Perhaps the best example comes from the Critical Explorers spring institute in which participants engaged with highly credible and multidisciplinary primary sources in an inquiry process that extended their understanding of Maine geography, economics, history, geology, art, and literature. While this knowledge did not originate from one school and community, it was designed to serve all Maine schools, particularly coastal and island schools where granite quarrying was or is a significant industry. One participant reported really enjoying “working with the group to decide on an extension” of their learning “as it allowed [them] to go through the process of analyzing different materials, thinking about different themes and uses, while simultaneously getting to benefit from other members in a group, such as being able to learn from their thinking process and their ideas.” Summer institute sessions that provided opportunities for team collaborations and inter-team discussions about curriculum were also opportunities to promote this knowledge transfer. This kind of knowledge transfer will benefit from wider dissemination. As the authors and the outside evaluator found, scheduling and publicity were challenges we discuss below.

Develop a high quality preK-12 sustainability curriculum weaving learning about self, other, and systems: agriculture/food systems, energy, and climate change mitigation into proficiency-based school curriculum
The Conners-Emerson Farm-to-School (F2S) collaboration has resulted in an ongoing co-designed curriculum that weaves this learning in a proficiency-based environment. In the student-evaluators’ report, there is some evidence that F2S
participants understood essential interconnections between the climate, water, the environment, and plant and animal life cycles and needs. Through content analysis of Conners-Emerson student notebooks, 97% demonstrated learning about agriculture and food systems and 83% about climate change mitigation. This curriculum will benefit from continued support and involvement by K-12 educators and piloting with a larger sample of K-12 students.

As with the Conners-Emerson School Professional Learning Community over the past two school years, during the 2016 and 2017 Summer Institutes, several school teams gathered to co-design curriculum based on existing priorities and interests. While we provided the space, facilitation, and some resources for this to occur, we have not yet compiled or synthesized this ongoing work within individual schools.

NOT YET DOCUMENTED
Enrich preK-12 student learning through increased student ownership in their education and engagement with their community in all participating schools. While there is some documentation of K-12 learning in the context of the CES Farm-to-School collaboration, there is substantial room for expanding research at this level concerning all participants in SUCCESS activities.

faculties to learn from interaction with regional educators and schools, particularly for observation. In addition, one graduate student spent a winter student-teaching on Islesboro with a secondary life science teacher. We will look forward to continued collaborations that may extend to service-learning, practica, and educational research with deepened relationships, as it has for one new student-teacher and island teacher. In the 2018/19 school year, a recent COA graduate has taken a teaching position on an outer island (Matinicus), and she reports feeling better able to make that choice because of her exposure to island education and resources through SUCCESS. A current COA student will be student-teaching on a different outer island (Monhegan) this fall.

IN PROGRESS
Further the COA mission to facilitate inquiry into human ecology from early childhood to higher education. The Conners-Emerson School Farm-to-School2S program is the best example of furthering the COA mission in the years preceding higher ed-
ucation. With greater curricular focus on early childhood and opportunities to partner with PK students and teachers, we expect to extend our reach beyond K-12 to facilitate inquiry into human ecology through our courses, education students, and future grants. We still also need to consider how best to offer a similar kind of farm-to-school partnership with other island and coastal schools should there be mutual interest from COA students and other K-12 schools.

**NOT YET DOCUMENTED**

*Support statewide efforts to encourage Maine youth, particularly those in more remote communities, to pursue a postsecondary education, whether at COA or other postsecondary institutions;*

Future activities should incorporate more explicit focus on secondary school students and educators to support this goal. Continuing to work closely with island and coastal students through an ongoing relationship with the Island Institute will be one way to meet this goal. The Island Institute is active in a number of state-level education and workforce development organizations, including MaineSpark (Future Success track), and Maine College Access Network and can share information and opportunities from their participation in these groups with the COA education community.

**IN PROGRESS**

*Help meet II’s strategic goals as they relate to workforce development, education, and leadership.*

Successful schools strengthen our island and coastal communities and help ensure that tomorrow’s leaders and workers are well prepared. SUCCESS is an effective and impactful project in our 30+ year tradition of promoting place-based and experiential education. As we refine our K-12 and post-secondary education projects and workforce development efforts, and sharpen our focus on impact, our continuing relationship with COA and the work of SUCCESS will help ensure that we meet our goals.

**NOT YET DOCUMENTED**

*Strengthen the leadership and curricular connections between schools and other education organizations.*

Future activities should document more explicitly degrees to which they strengthen leadership and curricular connections between schools and education organizations. The Island Institute’s Outer Islands Teaching and Learning Collaborative (TLC)
may be an important area to focus on as it has many existing and new connections to COA and SUCCESS, including a new COA alumni teacher and a current COA student–teacher.

**Lessons Learned**

**OBSTACLES OR CHALLENGES**

*Difference in calendars.* One of the challenges in our collaboration has been the availability of COA students and school-based educators for institutes. Summer Institutes were better attended by school staff whereas Spring Institutes were better attended by COA students. For example, during the first grant year (2015–2016), only two graduate and four undergraduate students participated in SUCCESS activities (not counting the Farm-to-School program). In the second year (2016–2017), one graduate student and five undergraduates participated in non-F2S SUCCESS activities. However, when we moved the institutes to the spring, twenty-four undergraduates were able to participate. Feedback from the third-party evaluator’s report suggests that both COA students and island educators would prefer one-day versus multi-day PD opportunities. Both appreciated the opportunity to interact with each other—students for the real-world experience teachers bring and educators for the diverse perspectives and enthusiasm the COA students bring.

*Unpredictable events.* The usual contingencies of school and community life (e.g., declining school enrollments; changes in school leadership) impacted the priorities and capacity for school leaders to participate fully and consistently. Changes in the steering committee’s composition also challenged continuity but allowed us to continue to solicit and involve school staff in planning.

*Publicity.* The student and outside evaluators’ reports revealed that publicity could have been more effective in clarifying what SUCCESS was and which COA or Island Institute event was connected with this collaboration. As the student-evaluators suggested, distributing a year-long annual calendar of SUCCESS events and opportunities would result in greater awareness of these events though somewhat restricting our ability to respond as quickly with emerging requests and needs.

*Unanticipated Opportunities.* Because the activities took place over three years, COA graduates became school staff who then participated with great appreciation and enthusiasm in SUCCESS activities. In future, we hope to tap the continuity of shared experiences for these COA students and island educators for future community-building in PD opportunities.

*School willingness to support PD for participating teachers.* The outside evaluator reported that school leaders would be willing to pay $100 out of district or school funds for teachers to participate in school visits and potentially several thousand dollars depending on the program, teachers served, and existing priorities.

**NEW QUESTIONS**

Given the very diverse responses to the question “On what topics or with which presenters or organizations would you like to focus in future SUCCESS activities?” the most obvious new question is how we will decide on the focus of future activities. Suggested topics ranged from critical theory such as human ecology, decolonizing education, or eco-psychology, to school-wide reform—for example, “teaching communication skills,” “language in the classroom,” “civic engagement,” “interdisciplinary collaboration,” or “rethinking the school day,” as some respondents suggested. Predictably, many
suggested topics reaffirmed interest in the subject of a particular institute or a main take-away from a school visit, whether it was globalizing the high school U.S. history curriculum, “another mindfulness workshop,” “utilizing Maine artifacts,” or “more constructivist instructional methods.” Given that every event will attract a self-selected group who bring a particular set of interests and needs, we will need to make a concerted effort to reconnect with our various stakeholders to identify those topics that they feel would most benefit their schools and communities, including those beyond the islands supported by the Fund for Maine Islands (for students who arrive at COA from other countries, for example).
Participants in the most recent spring institutes did provide some procedural suggestions that can guide this decision-making. “More activities/direct experiences (and/with?) more direct student and teacher perspectives” suggests that these institutes might have more of a school visit flavor, or as in the case of Island Institute’s Island Teachers Conference, featuring teacher-led and sometimes student co-led sessions. In particular, we will want to conceive creatively of ways to foster synergistic gatherings where the interests and needs of first- and second-generation place-based educators can spark energy, inspiration, and new perspectives and practices that will benefit student engagement and learning as well as community and environmental sustainability.

Based on the appreciation of the facilitated time for school-team collaborations and direct experiences with experiential and place-based education in local sites during the two summer institutes, we should consider how to offer this opportunity among, within, or for interested schools in addition to other opportunities for cross-pollination of ideas and resources. When and how we offer these professional learning opportunities will be an ongoing question.

Next Steps

FUTURE ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS
In 2018-19, we intend to continue offering visits to each of the Maine EL schools for elementary, middle, and high school teachers and school leaders, as well as co-hosting visits to schools among those with which we partner. We will continue to reach out to schools who have not yet sent educators to participate in any of our events to expand our reach along the coast. We will continue to encourage COA students and school staff to present at and participate in the annual Island Teachers Conference each October as a gathering where we can continue to build and maintain productive professional relationships across generations of educators, schools, and communities. With continued funding, we would also like to include offering one-day institutes during the school year, facilitation for weekly professional learning communities (PLCs), and compensating student coordinators for the Farm-to-School partnership. We will continue to explore the desirability and viability of an online platform to facilitate collaboration between participants, schools, and communities with our school and community partners.

RESTRUCTURE STEERING COMMITTEE AS A CONSULTATIVE BODY OF SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS
As stated above, we will need to reconvene our steering committee consult with current school leaders (given school staff turnover) to ensure that our planning and decision-making is and continues to be responsive to the needs identified in the schools and communities we serve. Given the time constraints of school staff and transportation challenges of rural Maine, post-grant we intend
to invite core partners to serve in a consultative capacity rather than convene regular steering committee meetings.

EXPLORE POTENTIAL LINKAGES BETWEEN THE II’S TEACHING-LEARNING COLLABORATIVE (TLC) EDUCATORS AND COA STUDENTS

One of the challenges of establishing and maintaining an intergenerational professional network is the differences in life and professional stages, interests, and therefore, professional development needs of potential participants. With the common interest in environmental, economic, and social sustainability, we will explore potential partnerships between TLC educators and COA students of sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and community development in addition to those pursuing teaching certification. As noted in an earlier section of the document, the 2018/19 school year will provide a good opportunity to begin this exploration as there will be two COA students, one current and one a recent graduate, who will be teaching in the TLC this year.

ONLINE PLATFORM

The original grant proposal included the development of an online platform to maintain relationships built in face-to-face activities. However, given the feedback we received from our participants, this was a lesser priority than continuing to build relationships and connections through in-person, intergenerational professional learning. Should there be a critical mass and need for such a vehicle, we will be ready to work with our constituents to determine what these needs are and how best to meet them.

EVALUATE IMPACT ON DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS BETWEEN SCHOOLS, ISLANDS, AND COMMUNITIES

While we collected feedback on most if not all of our activities, a more focused action plan as well as more systematic approach to program evaluation in future years will better serve both ongoing planning as well as providing evidence that can support future grant-writing.

FINAL WORDS

True collaboration takes time—to build trust, to learn how to work together, and to become an effective team. In addition to the all the specific components and outcomes of SUCCESS, one of the most valuable aspects of SUCCESS has been the opportunity for Island Institute and COA educators to work closely together in a sustained effort to support our island and coastal schools. The success of SUCCESS will have a lasting positive effect on the participating schools, educators and teachers, on the Island Institute and COA and on FMI. We are grateful to have had the opportunity to collaborate in this way.