

MEASURE WHAT MATTERS

The Expanding View of Educational Excellence in Maine



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Foreword

“Education is the fuel that drives the economy, drives the community, and if you have a good education system, you’re going to attract businesses, you’re going to attract people, you’re going to attract ideas, and good things are going to happen.”

Peter Geiger, Vice Chairman, Geiger, and Editor, Farmers’ Almanac

Amid a shifting landscape, education stands as both a foundation and a beacon for our collective future. Measure What Matters represents a pivotal moment in Maine’s history—a moment where we pause to reflect, listen, and envision what education must become to meet the needs of our students and communities.

As we navigate changes driven by automation, artificial intelligence, and shifting workforce demands, the traditional model of education—with an emphasis on standardized assessments and isolated academic achievement—no longer suffices. The future will demand durable skills like critical thinking, resilience, adaptability, and collaboration. It will require students to approach complex challenges with critical thinking, social intelligence, and innovation. Through the voices of those interviewed and engaged, the people of Maine have clearly recognized this shifting need. But is our educational system designed to meet this?

By engaging communities in helping to define what makes a great school and what matters most to student success, Measure What Matters serves as a testament to Maine’s resolve to lead. The journey to understand our views on what educational excellence might become, with every voice, every community, and every shared aspiration for our children.

Together, we will ensure that each student in Maine is equipped to thrive in a world of infinite possibility.

Introduction

On behalf of the Maine Department of Education (Maine DOE), Battelle for Kids launched a statewide conversation and listening tour to engage a wide range of educators, families, business leaders, and community members, with the goal of developing a shared blueprint for school success. The project aims to spark further conversations amongst communities to identify the essential elements of a high-quality education system of the future and explore how those elements can be measured and sustained across Maine's schools.

Interviews were also conducted with nearly 100 individuals during the process. This included conversations with students, educators, community leaders, parents, policymakers, business leaders, and more from across Maine. Student voices were also a key part of this tour with feedback received from students in PreK-12 and higher education.

Objectives

“I think it’s important to focus on the individual. Being able to measure success on an individual level of what works for that student in their community, what works for that school in its community, and what matters to the people of that community around success.”

Page Nichols, Chief Innovation Officer, Maine Department of Education

The key objectives of the conversation and listening tour were to:

- Collect insights from diverse community groups to understand the evolving needs and expectations of schools in a changing world.
- Elevate and amplify conversations around the essential qualities of a successful school, focusing on both academic and non-academic factors.
- Identify practical strategies for supporting students’ holistic development, from academic achievement to well-being, resilience, and belonging.
- Begin conversations around a potential framework for expanding our views of how to measure student success, ensuring that Maine schools are aligned with the expectations of educators, students, families, and business leaders.
- Foster collaboration among participants to build a shared understanding of education’s role in preparing students for future challenges and opportunities.

A Shifting Landscape

The Evolving Landscape for Students and Schools in Maine

Students in Maine are preparing for futures that will look vastly different from those of previous generations. For example, the rise of entrepreneurship, the automation of routine jobs, and the fast-pace nature of artificial intelligence (AI) creates a need for a level of adaptability not seen for any generation in history. Schools must now prepare students not just for college or a single career, but for a world where they may need to pivot multiple times and continuously learn new skills throughout their lives.

Additionally, the recognition that well-being, civility, and collaboration are just as important as academic success underscores the need for an education system that develops whole students—preparing them to be active, engaged citizens in their communities and the world at large. Measure What Matters was designed to ensure that the perspectives of all participants—students, parents, educators, and business leaders—were considered in creating the conditions for the necessary conversations across the state in considering what student success looks like now and in the future, as well as developing an education strategy that equips students for this dynamic landscape.

WORKFORCE SHIFTS



70%

The percentage of job postings that now require durable skills.

(America Succeeds, 2024)



5x

The top five durable skills (communication, leadership, metacognition, critical thinking, collaboration) were requested nearly five times more than technical skills.

(America Succeeds, 2024)



44%

The percentage of workers who will require different skills in the next five years.

(World Economic Forum, 2023)



60%

The percentage of employers who cite a skills mismatch for jobs.

(McKinsey & Co., 2017)

EDUCATION SHIFTS



95%

The percentage of educators who said that fostering creativity leads to better mental health and less stress for themselves and students alike.

(Adobe for Education/Advanis, 2023)



#1

Developing practical skills is now seen as the top priority for educational outcomes.

(Populace, 2024)



25-54%

The percentage of students nationwide who lack engaging K-12 school experiences.

(Walton Family Foundation/Gallup, 2024)



82%

The percentage of educators who saw positive impacts on student well-being and engagement when using creative activities.

(Adobe for Education/Advanis, 2023)

The Expanding View of Educational Excellence

Reimagining How We Measure Student Success

One of the key motivations behind Measure What Matters was the recognition that the traditional measures of student success no longer tell the full story of the knowledge, skills, and abilities our students must attain to be successful. While standardized tests provide some insights into academic proficiency, they fail to capture the broader competencies students need to thrive in today's world—such as critical thinking, adaptability, and the ability to work collaboratively.

Battelle for Kids sought to listen to a wide range of voices throughout the state to understand what the people of Maine think makes a great school and to ignite further conversations and ideations about alternative ways to report and share student success that reflects a more holistic view of student development. This includes looking beyond only test scores to find metrics that encompass students' ability to solve problems, innovate, lead, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. The tour provided an opportunity for participants to discuss how schools might better assess and celebrate success in ways that reflect students' growth as learners and individuals, not just their performance on standardized tests.

By listening to the voices of the state's various communities, the Maine DOE aims to dive deeper into what Mainers want as they chart a course for education that is inclusive, forward-thinking, and reflective of the changing world in which today's students will live and work. The statewide conversation and listening tour is a critical step in ensuring that Maine's education system can support all students in achieving success—however that may be defined in an increasingly complex and dynamic world.

MEASURE WHAT MATTERS

As we work collectively to recognize and acknowledge what schools are doing to prepare students for success in a rapidly changing global economy, in their careers, and as engaged and productive citizens of Maine, learning experiences are already being reimagined.

What we learned during the course of this effort was that there are many elements already in place throughout Maine that are receiving enthusiastic support from families, educators, and students alike. The next step is to ask ourselves how do we scale these experiences so every student in Maine has the same learning opportunities?

OUTDOOR EDUCATION

The Maine Outdoor Learning Initiative was expanded into 2024, providing access to the outdoors for grades 6-12 and increased eligibility for schools and local educational providers throughout the state. Along with hands-on learning experiences, these opportunities opened connections to Maine-based industries, integrating career exploration.

EXTENDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

This model seeks to assist in adopting and/or expanding programs in Maine to help students gain a better understanding of their career opportunities, acquire valuable foundational and 21st Century skills, as well as create meaningful connections to employers in our state.

MULTIPLE LEARNING PATHWAYS

In Maine, schools throughout the state are focusing on alternative education models, enhancing career readiness and workforce development pathways, and creating pathways to build connections between students, their culture, community, and their schools.

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

Maine continues to provide schools with 1:1 devices through the MLTI device program, professional learning opportunities for educators, technology grants, student leadership and computer science resources, as well as bolstering network infrastructure. Online education also continues to thrive. This commitment to technology access creates equitable learning experiences and provides the tools needed to thrive in the 21st century.

HOLISTIC APPROACHES TO LEARNING

The state's Whole Student Approach was developed in partnership with educators, administrators, parents, students, and educational organizations. It seeks to create vibrant school environments where students are safe, healthy, supported, engaged, challenged, and prepared.

Key Findings

Community Conversations & Interviews

There were 19 community conversations held that gathered valuable insights from participants across the state representing every county. In addition to the community conversations, there were also nearly 100 individuals in Lewiston, Orono, Camden, Augusta, and Portland interviewed. Each of these experiences represented parents, students, alumni of public education, state leaders, policymakers, business owners, and educators. From both, here are the common themes and insights identified:

Holistic Student Development

Participants across both formats emphasized the need to nurture students academically and emotionally. There was a shared focus on the “whole child” approach.

Future-Ready Learning and Career Pathways

A strong consensus emerged around the importance of preparing students for a rapidly changing workforce. This includes providing experiential, hands-on learning opportunities and varied pathways such as career-technical education, creative problem-solving projects, and real-world skill development.

Equitable Access and Opportunities

Both sets of conversations highlighted the necessity for equitable educational experiences, ensuring all students—regardless of background or ability—have access to high-quality learning and support systems.

Community Engagement and Partnerships

Maine’s education system thrives on strong community roots. Schools, families, businesses, and local organizations must collaborate to create opportunities that bridge the gap between education and workforce readiness.

A Broader View of Student Success

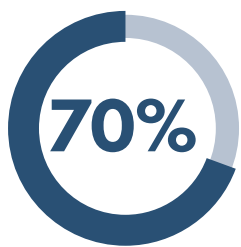
There was widespread agreement on the need to redefine how educational success is measured. In addition to standardized test scores, academic achievement metrics should include classroom assessments, percentage of courses passed, educator observations, and GPA, to name a few. Participants also advocated for metrics that include student well-being, engagement, real-world preparedness, and economic alignment.

Education as an Economic Catalyst

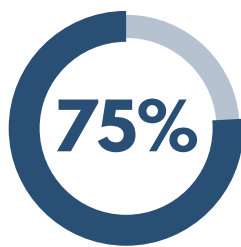
Education was viewed as a driver of Maine’s economic growth. Aligning education with workforce needs through competency-based and career-connected learning was seen as critical to preparing students for the demands of the economy.

KEY FINDINGS

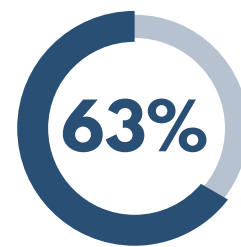
Positive Sentiment Rating Across Educational Themes



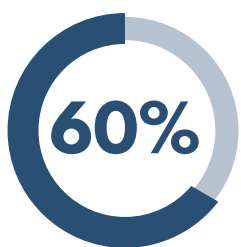
Student-Centered Learning



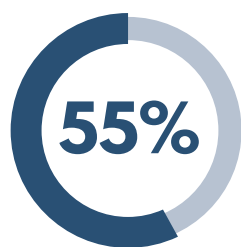
Real-World Preparation



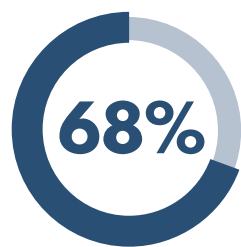
Community & Collaboration



Mental Health & Well-Being

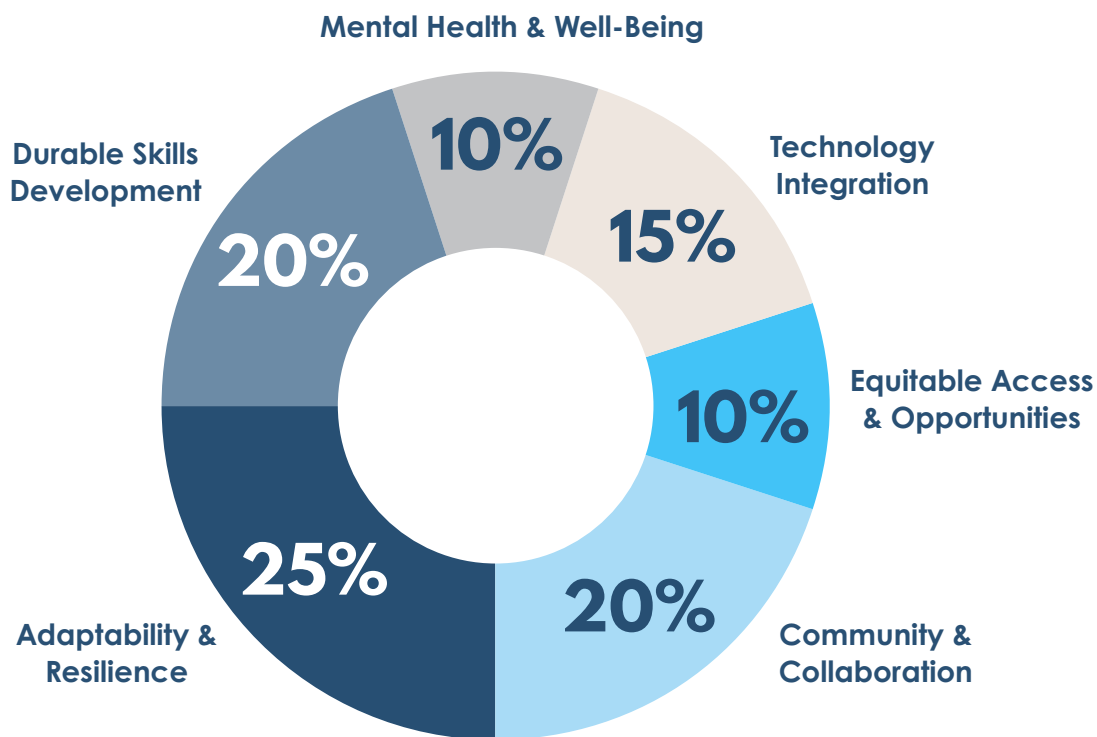


Equitable Access & Opportunities



Innovation

Emphasis Distribution Across Key Themes





Statewide Conversation & Listening Tour

The Why

As the future of work evolves rapidly, the demands placed on education systems grow more complex. Maine has an opportunity to best position its students at the forefront of this change by preparing them for postsecondary enrollment, enlistment, employment, or entrepreneurship. Measure What Matters represents a critical step in sparking conversations, creating opportunities for growing awareness of successful practices in Maine schools, and aligning educational practices with the future needs of students and society.

Methodology

Over the course of 2024, Battelle for Kids engaged educators, families, business leaders, community members, and students to discuss the evolving needs of the workforce, the rapid pace of technological change, and the critical skills students will need to thrive in the future.

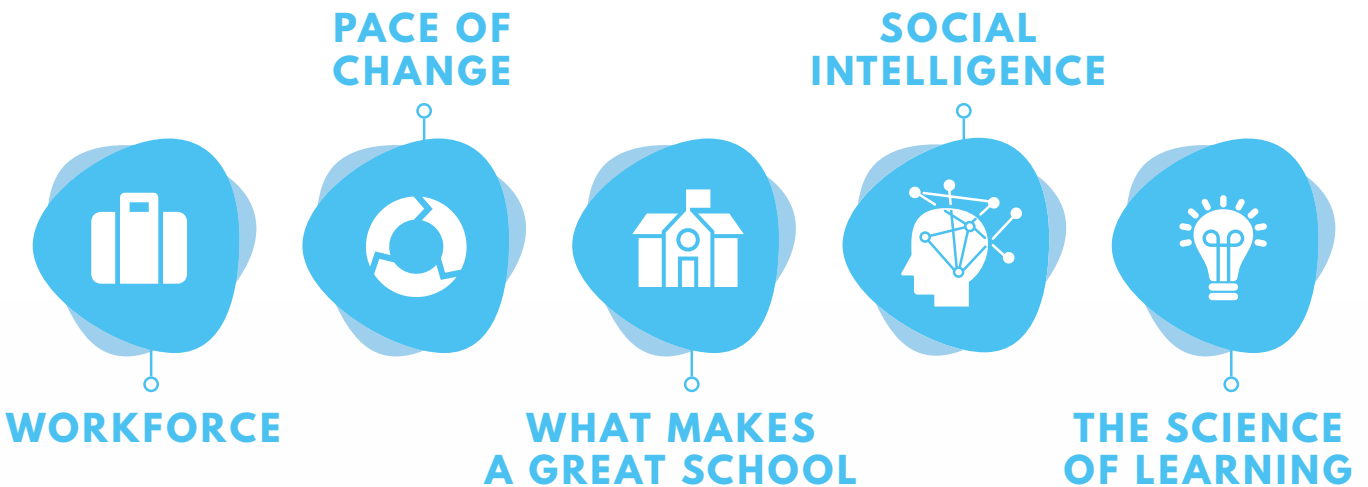
STATEWIDE CONVERSATION & LISTENING TOUR

Overview of the Community Conversation Process

In August and September 2024, Battelle for Kids conducted a series of community engagement sessions across every county in the state. Battelle for Kids' FuturesCoLab experience served as a catalyst to begin critical conversations about the rapid changes in our world and how school systems must evolve to meet these challenges. The sessions were designed to spark further conversations to build a shared vision that aligns with each community's hopes, dreams, and aspirations for all students.

During each session, participants worked to consolidate their ideas into a shared vision for the future of education in their county. At the end of each session, participants shared feedback on the process.

The key focus areas during these sessions included:



Community Conversation Focus Areas

During these community conversations, participants examined five key landscape shifts and inquiries about what makes a great school to help create further discussions and help inform the future of education across the state. Each area speaks to the evolving demands placed on students, educators, and schools, and collectively, they form a comprehensive vision for education that ensures students are ready to thrive in their personal, academic, and professional lives.



WORKFORCE

As Maine's economy continues to evolve, so too must the education system that prepares students for their future careers. The Workforce area of focus emphasizes the need to equip students with the skills, knowledge, and adaptability required to succeed in a job market where routine tasks are increasingly automated. As technology reshapes industries, students must be prepared for non-routine, creative, and interpersonal work. This includes fostering entrepreneurial mindsets, teaching students how to thrive in the freelance/project-based economy, and preparing them for remote work environments that demand strong communication and collaboration skills.

By aligning educational opportunities with workforce needs, Maine aims to ensure that its students are well-positioned to contribute meaningfully to their communities and the broader economy, no matter the career path they choose.

Guiding Questions:

- **Routine to Non-Routine:** How do we prepare our students for non-routine work in an increasingly automated world?
- **Service Economy:** How do we prepare our children for the human interactions needed to thrive at work?
- **Entrepreneurship:** How do we prepare our students to become their own boss?
- **Remote Work:** How do we prepare our students for the demands of virtual engagement, collaboration, and work?

STATEWIDE CONVERSATION & LISTENING TOUR



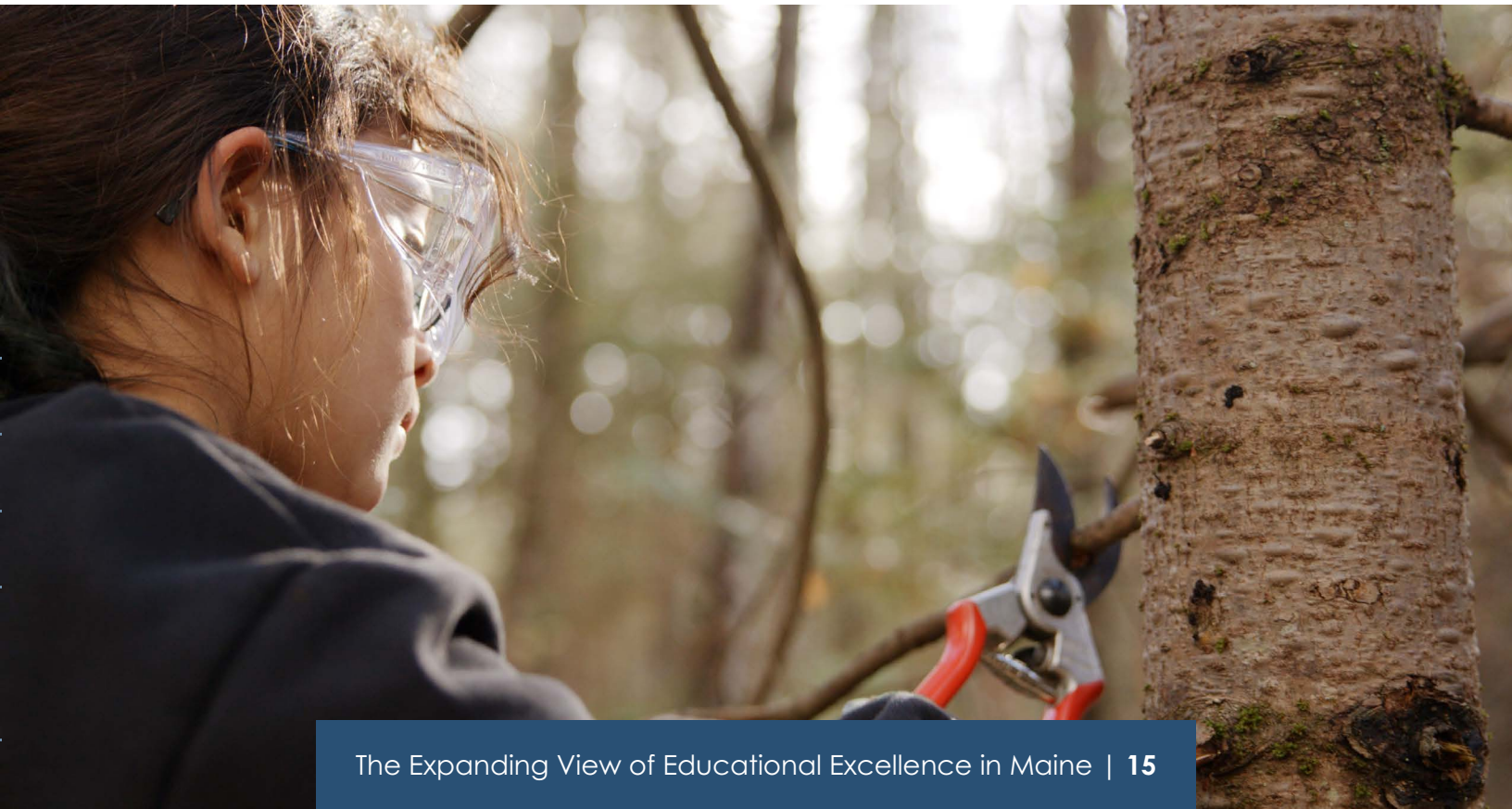
PACE OF CHANGE

The rapid pace of technological advancement and the constant flow of new information present both opportunities and challenges for Maine’s students and educators. The Pace of Change area of focus acknowledges that schools must keep up with these developments to remain relevant and effective. Education must help students become technologically literate, able to adapt to emerging technologies, and prepared to navigate the information overload that characterizes modern life.

This focus area also emphasizes the need for schools to foster a culture of innovation, where students are encouraged to take risks, experiment, and learn from failure. By embracing change and developing students’ capacity to innovate, Maine schools can ensure that students not only keep pace with the world around them but are also able to shape the future themselves.

Guiding Questions:

- **Technology:** How do we prepare all our students to use continually advancing technology to the benefit of themselves and the greater community?
- **Information Explosion:** How do we help students prioritize and navigate all the information that’s at their fingertips?
- **Innovation:** How do we approach the concept of failure/errors/etc., so students feel supported to take risks and innovate while keeping pace with the acceleration of new ideas?



STATEWIDE CONVERSATION & LISTENING TOUR



GREAT SCHOOLS

A great school is one that supports the whole student while preparing them for the future. While preparing them for the future, the Great Schools area of focus highlights the qualities that make schools effective in this modern context, including the need to create environments where students are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.

Maine schools must focus on fostering inclusive cultures that recognize the diverse needs of students, ensuring that all learners have access to the resources and opportunities they need to succeed. In addition to high academic standards, great schools also cultivate students' character, promote equitable outcomes for all, and provide real-world learning experiences that prepare students for life beyond the classroom.

Guiding Questions:

- **Value:** What do you value about the school you know best/schools in your community?
- **Preparation:** What should schools be focused on to prepare students to thrive in a constantly changing future?
- **Measure What Matters:** How do Maine schools ensure that students are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, challenged, and prepared?



SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

In an increasingly interconnected world, the ability to understand, empathize, and communicate with others is more important than ever. The Social Intelligence area of focus emphasizes the need for schools to help students develop emotional intelligence, collaboration skills, and the ability to navigate complex social dynamics. These skills are critical for success not only in the workforce but also in students' personal lives and civic engagement.

Maine schools will focus on teaching students to be thoughtful, responsible citizens who can work effectively in diverse teams, appreciate different perspectives, and contribute positively to their communities. Developing social intelligence will allow students to thrive in both professional and personal contexts, helping them build strong relationships and lead with compassion.

Guiding Questions:

- **Design Mindset:** How do we position students to embrace the design process—clarifying, ideating, developing, and implementing solutions?
- **Empathy:** How do we help our students develop the ability to emotionally connect with others, understand their perspectives, and act accordingly?
- **Discourse:** How do we encourage students to value the opinions of others and use disagreement as an opportunity for progress?

STATEWIDE CONVERSATION & LISTENING TOUR



THE SCIENCE OF LEARNING

The final area of focus, the Science of Learning, reflects the growing body of research on how students learn best. This focus area is grounded in understanding the cognitive, emotional, and environmental factors that influence learning, ensuring that Maine's schools are designed to maximize student engagement and achievement.

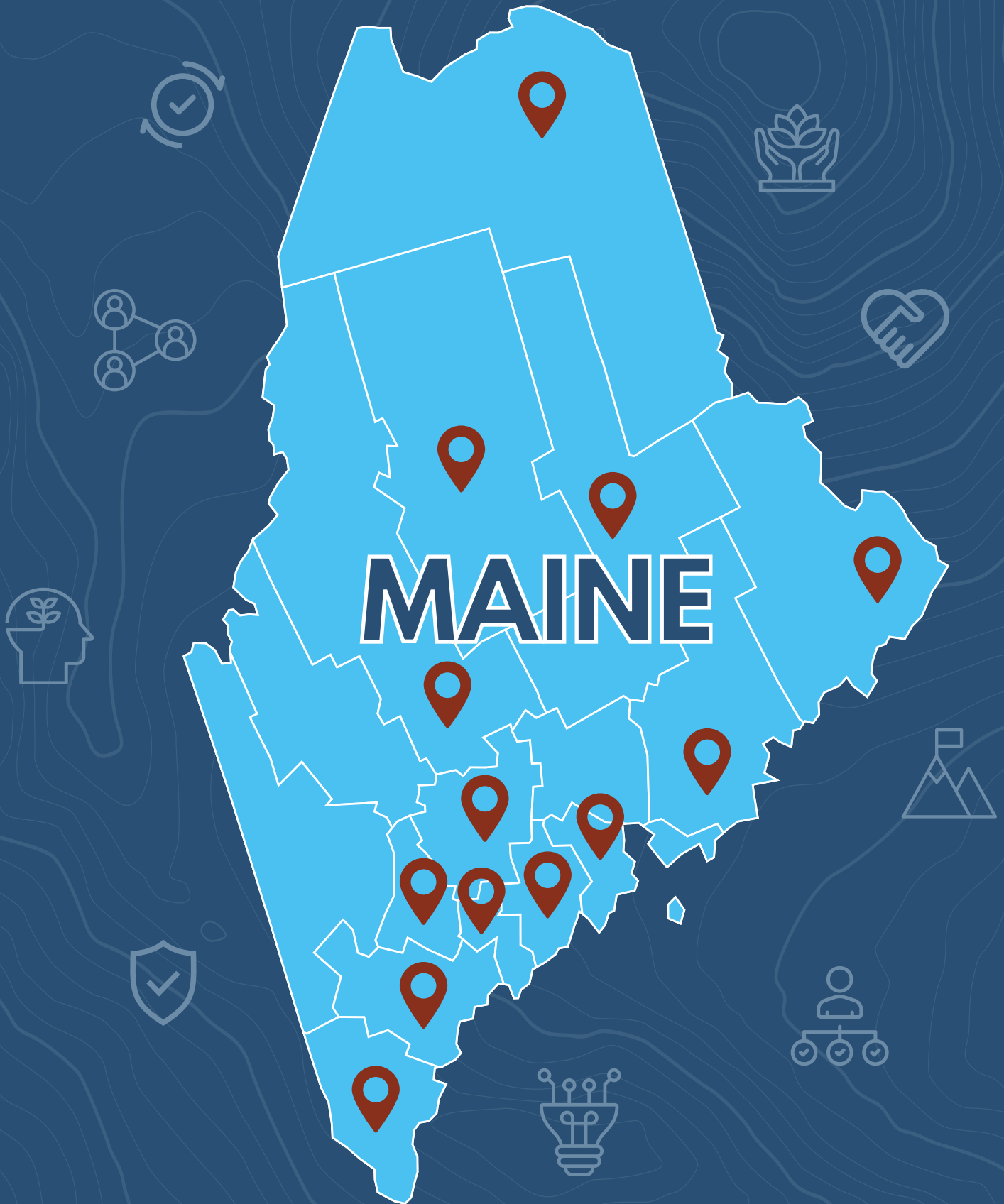
By applying the latest insights from neuroscience and educational psychology, Maine schools will create learning environments that are adaptive, personalized, and responsive to the needs of all students. This includes promoting student agency, fostering a growth mindset, and using evidence-based strategies to support deep, meaningful learning. The Science of Learning also informs how schools can better prepare students to be lifelong learners, capable of acquiring new skills and knowledge throughout their lives.

Guiding Questions:

- **Learning Design:** How do we design learning experiences that allow our students to solve problems, ask and answer questions, discuss, explain, debate, or brainstorm?
- **Student-Centered Learning:** How do we create experiences that foster learning driven by student voice, where students understand their ability to shape their future?
- **Old Smart vs. New Smart:** How do we position our students to enhance the quality of their thinking, learning, and emotional engagement with others?



COMMUNITY CONVERSATION TOUR DATES AND LOCATIONS



COMMUNITY CONVERSATION TOUR DATES AND LOCATIONS

The listening tour spanned across the entire state with sessions held across multiple counties to ensure broad representation. Hundreds of Mainers participated across all sessions.

Leadership Orientation (Augusta): May 2, 2024

Commissioner's Conference (Bar Harbor): June 27 and 28, 2024

Department of Education Staff Session (Augusta): July 29, 2024

Annual Educator Summit (Augusta): August 6-8, 2024

Statewide Business Leaders (Augusta): August 12, 2024

Cumberland County (Westbrook): August 13, 2024

Sagadahoc/Lincoln County (Topsham): August 14, 2024

York County (Wells): August 15, 2024

Piscataquis County (Milo): August 19, 2024

Kennebec County (Readfield): August 20, 2024

Androscoggin/Oxford County (Auburn): August 21, 2024

Franklin/Somerset County (Skowhegan): August 22, 2024

Hancock County (Lamoine): August 26, 2024

Lincoln County (Waldoboro): August 27, 2024

Knox/Waldo County (Rockport): August 28, 2024

Washington County (Machias): September 10, 2024

Penobscot County (Bangor): September 11, 2024

Aroostook County (Caribou): September 12, 2024

One-on-One Interviews

“At the end of the day, can you show up every day and have a positive attitude? Do you want to be part of a team? Do you want to collaborate? Can you be accountable for yourself? That’s what business leaders and the community communicate as to what they need.”

Dwayne Conway, Dean of Workforce Development, Central Maine Community College

Common Ideas About Education in Maine

- **Adaptability and Community Connection:** The idea that Maine’s education should adapt to changing student needs while staying rooted in community values emerged repeatedly. Flexibility in learning environments, such as online schools and competency-based models, are key to ensuring all students can succeed.
- **Economic Growth Through Education:** Education is seen as a cornerstone for economic development in Maine. By connecting education to workforce readiness, schools are playing a critical role in attracting businesses, fostering innovation, and ensuring students are prepared for the future job market.

Common Sentiments

- **Optimistic and Community-Oriented:** Educators and community members are optimistic about Maine’s future and believe in the strength of local partnerships. There is a shared confidence that Maine’s education system, with its focus on hands-on learning and community ties, will successfully prepare students for the future.
- **Resilient and Pragmatic:** There is a consistent emphasis on resilience, adaptability, and practicality. Maine’s educators and students are focused on developing practical skills and real-world experiences that help prepare them for a rapidly changing world.

STATEWIDE CONVERSATION & LISTENING TOUR

“I got a lot of hands-on experience from doing construction work over the summer. All my teachers really pushed to do that over the summer. You have to do your internships, you have to get this experience because doing an internship in the field, it enriches your experience back here at UMaine so much more because all of the things you learn doing it.”

Will Barry, Construction Engineering Major, University of Maine



ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

Maine Points of Pride

- **Strong Sense of Community:** One of the most celebrated aspects of Maine is the strong, supportive community. This sense of belonging is a defining feature of Maine’s culture, and it significantly influences educational experiences.
- **Valuing Practical and Creative Skills:** Maine’s education system places high value on hands-on, practical skills that lead to career success. There is also a strong appreciation for creativity, with many opportunities for students to explore artistic pursuits and career-technical skills.
- **Connection to Nature:** The natural beauty of Maine and its outdoor environment are seen as critical components of education. Outdoor learning and experiential programs are frequently highlighted as opportunities that not only enhance education but also connect students to the state’s natural heritage.
- **Local Support Systems:** Maine has strong local support networks, both within schools and in the broader community. Collaboration between educational institutions, local businesses, and community members is a point of pride and a key strength of the state.

Amplifying Voices

“I think success for our family is about being connected to your passion and your purpose as a citizen in your community. So, it’s about knowing what your values are and knowing the opportunities you have to live those values in the community you want to be a part of.”

Nico Chen, Founder, Up with Community

“I think a great educator is somebody that uses everything at their disposal to reach the kids where they are. They’re coming to us from all sorts of different backgrounds and families and problems and issues, and we must meet them where they are.”

Ben Lothrop, Principal, Limestone Community School

“The thing that’s exciting about what I see with administrators is that they adapt. They adapt to what their students need. Every school in Maine might have a different focus area or different priorities, but they’re all unique to what that community needs.”

Kim Liscomb, President, Maine Principals’ Association, and Principal, Cony Middle and High School

“What if for the first time in public education, we just made the assumption going in that students were right about their lives?”

Gregg Palmer, Superintendent, Brewer School Department

“As a state, we figure it out. We do what’s best for our neighbor, and we make sure that people get what they need. And that’s what we’re doing with all these programs. Access, engagement, and pathways so that you can go from PK through 12 all the way up through retirement and that we’re here to be able to build this education highway no matter where you’re at or what it is that you need.”

Carolyn Dorsey, Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives and Chief Of Staff, University of Maine System

“Students that are coming from CTE schools, or whether they’re coming for second career, if they’re coming out of the military, this is a really an open field for them looking for something different. The similarity is that we all have that passion for culinary arts, and we all are excited to create something.”

Stephanie Enjaian, Culinary Arts Department Chair, Kennebec Valley Community College

“I am so grateful for it [extended learning opportunities]. It has opened so many doors for me...It’s keeping me outdoors and keeping me busy and, on my feet, and not just sitting around not knowing what I want to do.”

Isabella M., Senior, Brewer High School

“The more that the schools can help provide that training and that skillset, then the more helpful it is to the employers and it’s beneficial to the community.”

J. Michael Pierce, President and Treasurer, Allen Insurance and Financial

“I think that we have to recognize as educators that we no longer really know what we’re preparing students for. There’s a future out there where jobs are rapidly changing. The skillset for those jobs is rapidly changing, and I think we need to say that we don’t necessarily have all the answers, and we also need to be representative of what our community values.”

Wendy Harvey, Co-Principal, Westbrook High School

“Making sure that we balance that out with things that give students agency and choice is extremely important to the well-being of the child.”

Emily Serway, Art Teacher, Deering High School



Elevating Student Voice

“I think education is the most important thing in society, to be honest. I think it’s the foundation of everything. All students will grow up and we’ll eventually be adults in positions where we have to make changes, and they’re choices that affect everyone.”

Phat T., Senior, Deering High School

Background

The Maine DOE Student Cabinet is a group of students that meet quarterly with representatives from the Maine DOE to discuss educational opportunities, improvements, and policy. The purpose of the Student Cabinet is to provide a forum for Maine students’ voices to be heard. Student Cabinet members are selected through an application process in the fall of each year and includes Maine students in grades 4-12 as well as first-year college students.

Their feedback analysis provides a comprehensive view of what students value in their educational experience. This reflection reveals a strong appreciation for student empowerment, teacher engagement, and evolving mental health support.

The analysis underscores a forward-thinking and solution-oriented mindset among participants, with a clear desire to enhance inclusivity, teacher and student well-being, and practical advancements. Together, this feedback presents a balanced narrative of optimism and urgency, emphasizing actionable pathways to strengthen Maine’s educational system.

What's Working

- Students appreciate empowerment opportunities like leadership, advocacy, and extracurricular activities.
- Educators are supportive, open, and accepting of student needs, building strong relationships.
- Mental health support is recognized as improving.
- Career-technical education programs, early college opportunities, and well-managed classrooms are seen as beneficial.

Common Themes and Ideas

Here are the five themes and ideas most important to students who participated:



Amplifying Voices

“I think knowing that children and people in general have different ways of showing their success, and it’s not always a letter grade or something they produce, or it might be you might have a child or a person who is very, what we call book smart and can take a good test and can score a high grade, but that doesn’t necessarily quantify being smart or successful.”

Jennifer Galletta, Grade Four Teacher, Manchester Elementary School

“I think we’re at quite a moment of change in higher education and in education generally, but technologies are accelerating in ways that are going to change us, whether we plan for that or not.”

Joan Ferrini-Mundy, President, University of Maine and University of Maine at Machias and Vice Chancellor for Research and innovation, University of Maine System

“I think it’s absolutely critical to have that community support in your education because it’s so critical to your development to have that communication with others, to be building your social emotional skills as well as your knowledge of the world.”

Alma W., Junior, Deering High School

“I think when people ask me what makes a successful school, one of the very first things that always pops into my mind is your community. How involved is your community? To me, it’s critical.”

Sharon Gallant, Retired Science Teacher, Gardiner Area High School

“I think we have to engage educators in giving them permission to say, what are some alternative ways that we can assess? And frankly, many educators are already doing that. They look for capstone projects, there’s learning, there’s alternative education, there are multiple other ways to assess kids that are already going on in public education today.”

Mike Tracy, Superintendent, Augusta Schools

“I take it personally as a superintendent that it’s my responsibility when kids are spending the majority of their time in a school setting. Schools need to take and wrap their arms around kids and help to support them by making modifications to support their well-being along the way.”

**Marie Robinson, Superintendent,
Bangor School Department**

“I don’t think that artificial intelligence, for instance, is going to replace you in your position. What is going to impact you is another employee that comes along and has AI knowledge, and you don’t.”

Ryan Low, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration, University of Maine System

“I feel so lucky. I feel really privileged. It’s wonderful to stay in my home state and be able to focus on issues and research that’s pertinent to where I come from while also having the opportunity to really excel and work with some wonderful mentors.”

Sonia Leone, Student and Undergraduate Research Assistant, University of Maine

“I think a lot of careers are looking for that person who can go above what they’re asking for and it’s hard to find now, but I feel like these extended learning opportunities have really advanced that...When I apply for college, I can explain how I’ve already been in the field and I’ve been observing other dental hygienists and dentists. It helps me know what I want to do.”

Taylor G., Senior, Brewer High School

“I don’t care where you are. I think we all want the same things for our children. We want them to be safe and we want them to have opportunity. We want them to be critical thinkers.”

Brad Dyer, Business Owner and Board Member, RSU No. 56

Based on the key findings on pages 10 and 11, the conversations across Maine highlighted optimism and a proactive attitude. Despite challenges, there was a shared commitment across the state to empowering students, fostering collaboration, and addressing issues to create the conditions necessary for preparing students for the future. The discussions reflected a hopeful vision for a more inclusive, innovative, and student-centered future, and laid the groundwork for further conversations with communities to measure what matters.

Key Insights and Actionable Steps

The major insights from the community conversations can be categorized across five focus areas: Workforce, Pace of Change, Great Schools, Social Intelligence, and Science of Learning. Below is a summary from experts at Battelle for Kids of the key findings:

1. Workforce

Participants emphasized the need for critical thinking, adaptability, and problem-solving skills to prepare students for non-routine tasks in a rapidly changing economy. There was a strong call for equipping students with leadership and self-regulation skills, particularly for those interested in entrepreneurship or the freelance/project-based economy. Financial literacy, mentorship, and exposure to real-world work environments were highlighted as essential for preparing students for future workforce demands.

2. Pace of Change

The discussions centered on how education systems must keep up with the rapid pace of technological advancement and the changing demands of society. Participants stressed the need for schools to teach technology fluency, digital literacy, and the ability to adapt to evolving technologies. Media literacy, fact-checking, and source validation were considered critical skills for students navigating the information explosion in today's digital age. There was also a focus on teaching students how to balance their mental health in an era of information overload.

3. Great Schools

Participants identified the value of student-centered learning environments that emphasize collaboration, belonging, and engagement. Great schools were seen as those that provide real-world learning experiences and promote interdisciplinary approaches to education. A focus on emotional intelligence, well-being, and democracy were also seen as crucial to fostering strong school communities. There was a consensus that great schools foster strong relationships, ensure safety, and provide well-rounded opportunities for students' academic, social, and emotional development.

4. Social Intelligence

There was widespread agreement that students need to develop strong interpersonal skills, including emotional intelligence, communication, and conflict resolution. Participants emphasized the importance of creating spaces for students to engage in activities like role-playing and group discussions. Schools were encouraged to foster cooperative, inclusive environments where students are equipped to navigate a diverse and increasingly interconnected world.

5. Science of Learning

In this area, participants focused on the importance of embracing a growth mindset, where students are encouraged to take risks, make mistakes, and learn from them. Project-based learning and hands-on experiences were highlighted as effective strategies for engaging students in the learning process. There was also significant discussion about the need for flexibility in education—both in terms of teaching methods and schedules—to allow for personalized, student-driven learning experiences.

Emerging Priorities for Great Schools to Prepare Future-Ready Students

In response to the evolving landscape in education and the workforce, the statewide conversations and listening tour highlighted three key dimensions essential for the future of learning in the state: Emerging Education Priorities, Great Schools, and Future-Ready Students.

The Portrait of Emerging Education Priorities emphasizes a holistic approach, focusing on academic growth, social-emotional learning, equitable outcomes for all, community engagement, and redefining success beyond test scores. The Portrait of a Great Maine School envisions schools as inclusive, student-centered environments that foster collaboration, support, and real-world readiness through community connections and adaptable systems. Finally, The Portrait of a Future-Ready Student defines the essential attributes for thriving in an ever-changing world—adaptability, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and a commitment to lifelong learning.

Together, these three portraits showcase the collective feedback that was elevated out of the hundreds of conversations that took place and provide a starting point for further conversations in communities for broadening our views on what educational excellence looks like in addition to test scores and that empowers Maine's students to succeed both in school and in life.

Portrait of Emerging Education Priorities



Holistic Student Development

Emphasis on academic growth, emotional intelligence, and personal well-being.



Future-Ready Learning

Preparing students with skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, adaptability, and technology fluency.



Equitable Access and Opportunities

Ensuring access to quality education for all students, regardless of background or ability.



Community Collaboration

Building strong partnerships between schools, families, businesses, and the broader community.



Redefining Student Success

Moving beyond only standardized tests to include more relevant academic metrics. Additionally, consider measures like opportunity and access to student well-being, engagement, and real-world preparedness.

Statewide Stories

FUTURE-READY LEARNING

St. George School Receives Production Grant to Create Immersive Field Trips

St. George Municipal School Unit (MSU) Superintendent Mike Felton applied for a production grant through an organization called CareerViewXR last year. After an application and interview process, the PK-8 school was selected as one of three winning schools from across the United States. The prizes awarded to the school included one 12-month subscription to the CareerViewXR platform, two HTC VIVE virtual reality headsets, and two field trips produced in their region. CareerViewXR works with students, educators, businesses, and state agencies to develop immersive virtual reality experiences that allow students to explore careers across sectors – especially in the trades and technical fields.

[READ MORE](#)

HOLISTIC STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Building Relationships, Stronger Schools through BARR

Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR) was developed over 20 years ago by a high school counselor who felt ineffective because more than 40 percent of her 9th-grade students failed at least one core course and were at risk of not graduating on time. She learned from her school's principal that this was not just her high school's problem, but it reflected a troubling national trend. Executive Director Angela Jerabek created the BARR model and implemented it in the fall of 1998. By spring 1999, the 9th-grade student failure rate had decreased from 44% the previous year to 20%. Today, more than 100 Maine schools use BARR, combining real-time data to student engagement and well-being.

[READ MORE](#)

EQUITABLE ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Maine Students Explore Postsecondary Life at the First Annual Transition Maine Youth Summit

Students with disabilities from all over Maine had the chance to explore nearly two dozen career pathways and engage with professionals and peers about post-secondary life. This year's Summit theme was I Belong. "Our students belong in all spaces," Titus O'Rourke, Maine Department of Education Transition Specialist, shared with WMTW. "We must establish high expectations for students with disabilities and create pathways for them to explore their career interests. In doing so, we promote and further secure their opportunities to post-secondary economic inclusion."

[READ MORE](#)

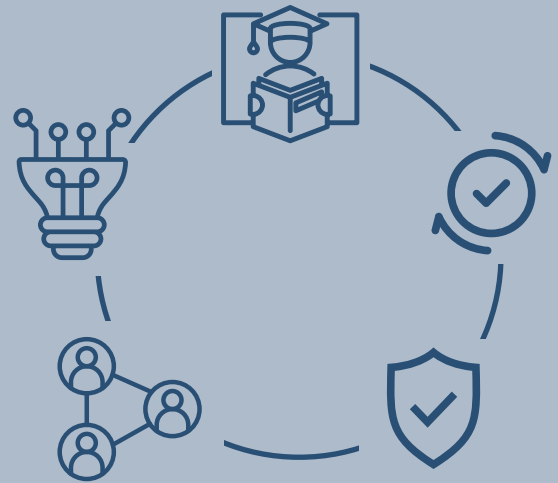
REDEFINING SUCCESS

ConCEPT Pilot Spotlight: A Successful Intersection of Curiosity and Learning

The Maine Department of Education's innovative ConCEPT Pilot program has yielded remarkable outcomes, as schools across the state have explored new ways to engage students through questioning protocols and scaffolding conceptual understandings into lessons. The pilot encouraged schools to view student growth as an ongoing process rather than just a final product. This recognition allowed educators to emphasize the importance of the journey itself, valuing the development of critical thinking, inquiry skills, and curiosity.

[READ MORE](#)

Portrait of a Great Maine School



Student-Centered Learning Environment

Schools should prioritize collaboration, inclusivity, engagement, and real-world learning experiences.



Whole-Student Support

Focusing on academic, social, and emotional well-being while fostering belonging and emotional intelligence.



Safe and Inclusive Cultures

Creating environments where students feel supported, challenged, and valued.



Community Connections

Schools should foster partnerships with families, local businesses, and other community members to enrich learning.



Adaptable Learning Systems

Schools need to keep pace with technological and societal changes by fostering a culture of innovation and adaptability.

Statewide Stories

STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Massabesic Middle School Students Focus on Renewable Energy Through Interdisciplinary Class

Seventh graders at Massabesic Middle School recently held a debate about renewable energy sources as part of an interdisciplinary class project. This is part of a new program after six teachers at the school—two at each grade level—transitioned from roles as content teachers in areas like science, math, and English Language Arts to Interdisciplinary Studies teachers. Now, they teach interdisciplinary, student-centered units based on the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals.

[READ MORE](#)

SAFE AND INCLUSIVE CULTURES

Deering High School Hosts French, Gabonese, and Central African Ambassadors in Celebration of Global Education and Cultural Exchange

Deering High School in Portland welcomed a distinguished delegation of international leaders, organized in collaboration with the DeFranco Heritage Center and supported by the Maine Department of Education (DOE). This gathering brought together students, educators, and dignitaries to celebrate the rich heritage and connections within the Francophone community. This event highlighted the value of educational partnerships in fostering multicultural understanding and global citizenship.

[READ MORE](#)

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

‘Community Day’ Connects Lisbon Community School with Local Businesses

Schools across Maine have begun to implement more career field exposure and post-grad planning. At Lisbon Community School, teachers have implemented the trend into their curriculum with the help of curriculum team leaders. The school has hosted a Community Day, bringing together students in grades Pre-K through 5th for the past two school years with great success.

[READ MORE](#)

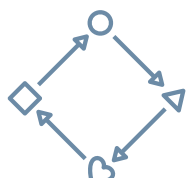
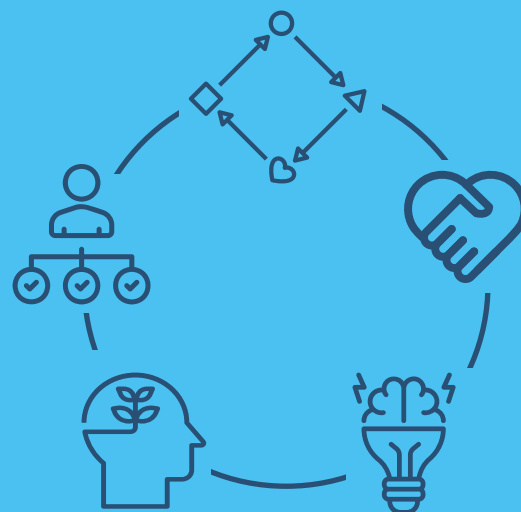
ADAPTABLE LEARNING SYSTEMS

Rethinking Responsive Education Ventures (RREV) Generates Innovative Models for Equitable Access to High Quality Remote Learning Opportunities

In 2020, the Maine Department of Education (DOE) was awarded \$16.9 million from the U.S. Department of Education’s Rethink K-12 Education Models Funding. Maine was one of 11 States to receive funding. Maine’s project, Rethinking Responsive Education Ventures (RREV), provided statewide resources and supports through professional development, coursework, and guided engagement in effective use of design processes to empower educators and school leaders as authentic research and development professionals.

[READ MORE](#)

Portrait of a Future-Ready Student



Adaptability and Resilience

Students need the ability to adapt to a changing world, tackle challenges, and pivot throughout their lives.



Emotional Intelligence and Collaboration

Developing empathy, communication skills, and the ability to work effectively in teams.



Critical Thinking and Creativity

Ability to think critically, innovate, and problem-solve in non-routine, technology-driven environments.



Lifelong Learning

Students should have a growth mindset, embracing learning and continuous improvement beyond formal schooling.



Real-World Skills

Preparedness for evolving workforce demands, including technology fluency, entrepreneurial thinking, and effective digital literacy.

Statewide Stories

ADAPTABILITY AND RESILIENCE

Katahdin Elementary School Honored for Healthy Afterschool Programming

Katahdin Elementary School and RSU 89 have invested in outdoor education through the Maine Department of Education's (DOE) Rethinking Responsive Education Ventures (RREV) grant. It was with this funding that these outdoor trails were created at Katahdin Elementary School. The grant has also funded outdoor classrooms, gear, and clothing to encourage more outdoor learning.

[READ MORE](#)

REAL-WORLD SKILLS

Portland Public Schools Become Winners of a Digital Citizenship Award

Portland Public Schools has been recognized as a Common Sense District for its work educating students on safe and healthy ways of using technology and integrating technology into the curriculum as a learning tool. Curriculum makers and educators have been figuring out how to integrate technology innovatively. Maine has been a leader in this integration, with many technology-related initiatives and grants. The Portland Public Schools have been utilizing Common Sense Education's research-based digital citizenship resources, working to foster a positive technology culture in the whole community.

[READ MORE](#)

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND COLLABORATION

Bucksport Eighth Graders Unplug and Help Out During Camping Trip at Birch Point Beach State Park

This May, eighth graders from Bucksport Middle School left the screens behind for a weekend of learning and service at Birch Point Beach State Park in Owls Head. Miles Bisher, Bucksport Middle School's social studies teacher and outdoor club advisor, brought his students out as part of the Teens to Trails' Life Happens Outside® Challenge, one of the Maine Outdoor Learning Initiative's 2024 programs.

[READ MORE](#)

CRITICAL THINKING AND CREATIVITY

Windsor Students Thrive Through Technology

At Windsor Elementary and Middle School, students are passionate about innovation, and their librarian, Kristel Anuszewski, uses the mobile computer science labs funded by the Maine Department of Education (DOE) to support that passion. Anuszewski, Kennebec County's 2024 Teacher of the Year, is the Librarian and STEM Educator for Windsor's Learning Commons. On a Friday in late May, the Maine DOE visited as she taught coding skills to a first-grade class using indi cars from the Maine DOE's Mobile Computer Science Lab program.

[READ MORE](#)

FOR REFLECTION:

Your Role in Elevating Great Schools in Maine

After reading the information and key findings in this report, we invite you to reflect on your role in helping to elevate great schools in Maine.

Personal Contributions

- What specific skills, resources, or expertise can you offer to your local schools to support their success?
- How can you contribute to fostering a positive school culture in your community?

School Engagement

- When was the last time you engaged with your local school district? How might you increase your involvement to better understand their needs?
- How can you help amplify student voices and support their role in shaping their education?

Community Partnerships

- Who in your network (businesses, organizations, or individuals) could you connect with local schools to provide additional support and opportunities for students?
- How can you help build stronger partnerships between schools and the broader community to enrich learning experiences?

Measuring What Matters

- How can you advocate for educational experiences that prioritize the whole child in Maine schools?
- How might you help shift the conversation in your community from focusing solely on test scores to a broader definition of student success?

Equitable Access and Opportunities

- What can you do to ensure that all students, regardless of their background or abilities, have access to the resources and opportunities they need to succeed?

Encouraging Innovation

- How can you support innovative programs or approaches in your local schools, such as outdoor education, technology integration, or career-connected learning?
- What role can you play in encouraging risk-taking and creative problem-solving within your community's schools?

Promoting Lifelong Learning

- How can you model a commitment to lifelong learning for students in your community?

Recognition and Celebration

- How might you take a more active role in recognizing and celebrating the successes of students, educators, and schools in your community?
- What stories from your local schools can you share to inspire others and highlight the value of great education?

Fostering Belonging

- How can you help create environments within schools that ensure every student feels valued, supported, and empowered?

Leading Conversations

- How can you initiate or participate in community conversations about the future of education and the evolving needs of students?
- What questions can you ask your neighbors, educators, and policymakers to spark meaningful discussions about great schools in Maine?



Acknowledgements and Sources

This report highlighting the key findings in Measure What Matters was produced by Battelle for Kids, an education not-for-profit empowering educators so that every student has hope, resilience, and the knowledge and skills to be future-ready. It is a collaborative project supported by the Maine Department of Education (DOE)

Thank you to the many Mainers who were instrumental in providing feedback, ideas, and insights throughout the Measure What Matters process whether in a community conversation session or in a one-on-one interview.

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Thank you to the dozens of school districts and educators who have shared their stories of success with the Maine DOE, many of them featured in this report, but more available on the [Maine DOE website](#).

This report uses data from publicly available research from the following organizations: Adobe for Education, Advanis, America Succeeds, Gallup, McKinsey & Co., Populace, Walton Family Foundation, World Economic Forum.

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MEASURE WHAT MATTERS

The Expanding View of Educational Excellence in Maine

