**Maine Department of Education**

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**At a glance overview**: The Maine Department of Education supports a growing number of Maine schools that are adopting an innovative approach to student learning that holds learning as the constant and time as the variable. ***Getting to Proficiency: Helping Maine Graduate Every Student Prepared*** provides technical assistance, resources, and guidance for school districts to implement the proficiency-based diploma in a way that promotes student learning and achievement. The Maine Department of Education also offers the ***Center for Best Practices*,** which serves as a clearinghouse of materials, support and case studies related to learner-centered instructional practices (sample in binder tab).

**Maine State Policy Context**

LD 1422: Schools and districts have been pursuing proficiency-based education systems for several years, but LD 1422 mandated that schools offer a proficiency-based diploma by 2017. It requires that a student graduating after Jan. 1, 2017\*, “demonstrate proficiency in meeting state standards in all content areas…” as set forth in department regulations. LEAs can determine the curriculum and assessments for those standards. The bill also created a waiver, which will allow schools until 2020 to develop their diploma. It also removed the requirement that high schools offer four years of courses.

In 2011, Commissioner Stephen Bowen began his tenure by embarking on a state-wide listening tour to solicit input from educators, parents, students, and others on the work they were doing, and about how the Department could best support them. Following that tour, he released a draft plan for personalizing learning in Maine and has since worked with stakeholders across the state to finalize a strategic plan that transitions to an education system focused on five core priorities:

* effective, learner-centered instruction;
* great teachers and leaders;
* multiple pathways for learner achievement;
* comprehensive school and community supports;
* and coordinated and effective state support.

While a focus on proficiency-based education took its first major steps a few years prior in a few districts across the state, Maine’s Strategic Plan, *Education Evolving,* comprehensively addresses a number of reforms that will support the continued implementation of a proficiency-based system. The plan states Maine’s intention to develop a Center for Best Practices in the DOE; use their online Communities of Practice to disseminate resources and share best practices; establish a learner-centered instruction team in the DOE to coordinate support for proficiency-based districts and establishing a communications strategy; and adopt statutory language requiring proficiency-based high school diplomas (which they have done in 2012 with LD 1422). Maine is also very focused on the idea of student voice and choice and many schools require students to participate in senior theses or capstones, which allow students to focus on their interests. The DOE is interested in scaling up this practice and developing reliable assessments for this work using the online communities of practice to load videos and exemplars of student work, and potentially developing online professional development opportunities where teachers can grade student work online using common rubrics and compare their work. Through initiatives such as the [Maine Cohort for Customized Learning](http://mainecustomizedlearning.org/) and the Great School Partnership, resources and system supports have been leveraged statewide to support districts grappling with implementation issues.

The Maine DOE has been supporting district systems change and engaging a wide range of stakeholders over the last few years and many districts and schools have embraced and are benefiting from such work. Currently, Schools across the state are moving away from grouping students by age, and are instead developing proficiency-based systems that ensure all students have met learning outcomes at individualized paces. Currently, no school or district has completely moved away from age-based grade levels. Through statewide partnerships with systems-change and other partners such as the Re-inventing Schools Coalition, the Maine Cohort for Customized Learning, the Great Schools Project, the Marzano Research Laboratory, and the New England Secondary Schools Consortium, the DOE has built support and capacity for implementing reforms. As the state has given a great deal of autonomy to school districts to pursue proficiency-based systems over time, implementation has varied, with some at the forefront and others moving more gradually.