

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

The following document is provided by the  
**LAW AND LEGISLATIVE DIGITAL LIBRARY**  
at the Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library  
<http://legislature.maine.gov/lawlib>



Reproduced from electronic originals  
(may include minor formatting differences from printed original)



# 132nd MAINE LEGISLATURE

## FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2025

---

Legislative Document

No. 81

---

H.P. 45

House of Representatives, January 8, 2025

---

### **An Act to Foster Innovation in Maine Schools by Updating the Requirements of School Innovation Waivers**

---

Submitted by the Department of Education pursuant to Joint Rule 204.

Received by the Clerk of the House on January 6, 2025. Referred to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs pursuant to Joint Rule 308.2 and ordered printed pursuant to Joint Rule 401.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT  
Clerk

Presented by Representative MURPHY of Scarborough.

1 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2 **Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §8, sub-§1**, as amended by PL 2021, c. 571, §1, is further  
3 amended to read:

4 **1. School innovation.** For the purposes of this section, ~~the term~~ "school innovation"  
5 means the process by which schools and communities use pilot programs ~~and~~ or make  
6 significant changes in the existing school structure, including the policies, procedures,  
7 roles, relationships, pathways, approaches, pedagogies, philosophies and schedules that  
8 influence teaching and learning in the school, in order to support the best learning  
9 environments and opportunities for students. School innovation recognizes the critical  
10 educational role of technology and integrates technology and technological systems in the  
11 classroom, in school governance and in school record keeping. ~~School innovation is based~~  
12 ~~on:~~

13 ~~A. The development of comprehensive educational goals establishing community~~  
14 ~~expectations for what all students should know, the skills they should possess, the~~  
15 ~~attitude toward work and learning they should hold upon completing school and the~~  
16 ~~role of the school in the community;~~

17 ~~B. A formal appraisal of the basic structures that govern operation of the school; and~~

18 ~~C. A commitment to revise the basic school structure to achieve the comprehensive~~  
19 ~~educational goals.~~

20 School innovation, which is most effectively carried out at the local level, depends on  
21 community and educator involvement and approval and student participation. School  
22 innovation ~~includes~~ may include understanding of the various roles of stakeholders,  
23 including parents, students, teachers, administrators, support staff, postsecondary  
24 education institutions and officials and various segments of the community. It focuses on  
25 understanding and defining the root cause of challenges and innovates and tests solutions.  
26 School innovation may include a significantly broadened role for schools and school  
27 administrative units that engage in education research and development practices that can  
28 be attempted as a pilot program and shared with others. ~~The commissioner may designate~~  
29 ~~a school administrative unit that engages in education research and development as a~~  
30 ~~demonstration site.~~

31 **Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §8, sub-§2**, as amended by PL 2021, c. 571, §1, is further  
32 amended to read:

33 **2. Waiver of rules for local schools.** A school administrative unit ~~undergoing~~  
34 engaged in school innovation may request that the commissioner waive the application of  
35 specific rules to that unit, or to certain schools in that unit, if the waiver is necessary to  
36 achieve the proposed school innovation. The commissioner shall grant a waiver if the  
37 requesting unit, as determined by the commissioner, has:

38 A. Demonstrated that one or more state rules ~~prevent or seriously handicap~~ inhibit the  
39 unit's pursuit of its school innovation goals;

40 B. Demonstrated that reasonable steps have been taken to provide the safeguards  
41 offered by the rules in question to allow continued educational progress by students  
42 and protect the continuity and integrity of the unit and employees of that unit;

1 C. ~~Provided evidence that the necessary resources and community and staff support~~  
2 ~~are present to ensure that the innovative changes requiring the waiver stand a~~  
3 ~~reasonable chance of succeeding; and~~

4 D. Informed any bargaining agent or agents representing affected school employees  
5 of the waiver request; and

6 F. Demonstrated an intention to engage in professional learning to support school  
7 innovation, which may include, but is not limited to:

8 (1) Design thinking;

9 (2) Interdisciplinary methods;

10 (3) Outdoor learning;

11 (4) Early childhood education;

12 (5) Career exploration, including extended learning opportunities, junior  
13 achievement programs, entrepreneurial skills development and student-run  
14 businesses; and

15 (6) So-called whole student approaches, including, but not limited to, the so-called  
16 Building Assets, Reducing Risks model, community schools, school-based health  
17 centers, alternative education programs, in-district special education programs,  
18 inclusive music and arts programs and inclusive science, technology, engineering  
19 and mathematics and computer science programs.

20 The department shall provide professional learning and technical assistance to schools  
21 seeking such support for school innovation.

22 The request for the waiver must include documentation to substantiate the conditions of  
23 this subsection. If the request is denied, the commissioner shall provide the reasons for  
24 denying the request to the school administrative unit.

## 25 SUMMARY

26 This bill updates the school innovation statutes by eliminating certain requirements that  
27 school units must fulfill to obtain school innovation waivers. The bill also updates  
28 language to reflect current practice and currently appropriate terminology.