

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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132nd MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST SPECIAL SESSION-2025

Legislative Document

No. 1543

S.P. 627

In Senate, April 10, 2025

An Act to Establish the Maine Green Schools Network

Reference to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D M Grant", is positioned above the printed name of the Secretary of the Senate.

DAREK M. GRANT
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by Senator RAFFERTY of York.

Cosponsored by Representative MURPHY of Scarborough and

Representatives: BRENNAN of Portland, DODGE of Belfast, MITCHELL of Cumberland.

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

2 Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA c. 335 is enacted to read:

3 **CHAPTER 335**

4 **MAINE GREEN SCHOOLS NETWORK**

5 **§9931. Definitions**

6 As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms
7 have the following meanings.

8 **1. Green school.** "Green school" means a public school that shows exemplary progress
9 in the following areas:

10 A. Supporting the work of school administrative units to increase efficiencies in and
11 reduce carbon emissions from buildings, energy systems, transportation, food use and
12 landscaping;

13 B. Constructing an engaging support system and framework for environmental literacy
14 through networking and sharing curriculum units, projects and outdoor activities
15 between educators in this State;

16 C. Establishing a continuous pathway for career exploration and skill development in
17 climate-ready fields; and

18 D. Building strong and lasting leadership within youth, educators, administrators and
19 community members to support the initiatives described in this subsection.

20 For the purposes of this subsection, "climate-ready fields" means occupational fields
21 related to climate or clean energy.

22 **2. Network.** "Network" means the Maine Green Schools Network.

23 **3. Student.** "Student" means an individual enrolled in prekindergarten to grade 12 in a
24 public school or school administrative unit.

25 **§9932. Network established; administration; composition**

26 The Maine Green Schools Network is established within the department to support
27 environmental education and initiatives within public schools and school administrative
28 units as described in section 9933.

29 **1. Administration.** The department shall administer the network. In administering the
30 network, the department may collaborate with the following entities:

31 A. A nonprofit organization in this State that supports environmental awareness,
32 accountability and action through fostering youth leadership, supporting educators,
33 prioritizing research and evaluation, shifting culture and advancing transformational
34 policy;

35 B. Other state agencies;

36 C. Tribal governments; and

1 D. Nonprofit organizations that support environmental, outdoor and climate learning
2 programs, traditional ecological knowledge, local procurement and other experiential
3 learning initiatives in public schools and school administrative units.

4 **2. Network composition.** The department shall invite the following individuals to
5 participate in the network:

6 A. The director of green schools within the department;

7 B. The climate education specialist within the department;

8 C. The Wabanaki studies specialist within the department;

9 D. Two educators who have previously participated in the Climate Education
10 Professional Development Pilot Program established by Resolve 2021, chapter 178;

11 E. Two students of an educator who has previously participated in the Climate
12 Education Professional Development Pilot Program;

13 F. A representative from a nonprofit organization in this State that supports
14 environmental awareness, accountability and action through fostering youth
15 leadership, supporting educators, prioritizing research and evaluation, shifting culture
16 and advancing transformational policy;

17 G. A representative from a climate education nonprofit organization;

18 H. A representative from a career and technical school;

19 I. A representative from the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future
20 with expertise in youth engagement or climate education; and

21 J. A representative from the Department of Environmental Protection.

22 The department may invite additional individuals or organizations to participate in the
23 network.

24 **§9933. Network duties and other activities**

25 The following provisions govern the network's duties and authority under this chapter.

26 **1. Duties.** The network shall:

27 A. Assist with transportation of students to and from environmentally focused
28 activities;

29 B. Support school projects that incorporate traditional ecological knowledge and best
30 practices for one or more of the following:

31 (1) Waste management and recycling;

32 (2) Energy conservation;

33 (3) Water conservation;

34 (4) Schoolyard habitats;

35 (5) Outdoor classrooms;

36 (6) Transportation; and

37 (7) Health;

38 C. Support professional development;

1 D. Increase the number of educators in the State who provide training to support the
2 development of green schools and assist schools with becoming green schools; and

3 E. Develop common resources, trainings and metrics to support educators.

4 **2. Department authorized to develop grant program.** The department may develop
5 a program to offer grants through the network to support initiatives consistent with the
6 network's duties as described in subsection 1. The department may receive support for any
7 grant program developed by the department consistent with this subsection from a
8 nonprofit organization in the State that supports environmental awareness, accountability
9 and action through fostering youth leadership, supporting educators, prioritizing research
10 and evaluation, shifting culture and advancing transformational policy.

11 **Sec. 2. Maine Green Schools Network to report to Legislature in 2026.** The
12 Maine Green Schools Network, established in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A,
13 section 9932 shall issue a report, including any recommendations developed by the network
14 for new legislation necessary to achieve the goals of the network to the Joint Standing
15 Committee on Education by November 4, 2026. The report must contain an update on the
16 status of the following:

- 17 1. The schools represented within the network;
- 18 2. The schools supported by the network; and
- 19 3. The number of counties participating in the network.

20 The committee may report out legislation based on the report to the 133rd Legislature
21 in 2027.

22 SUMMARY

23 This bill establishes the Maine Green Schools Network within the Department of
24 Education to support environmental education and initiatives in public schools.

25 Under the bill, the department must administer the network and invite several
26 individuals and entities to participate in the network, including the director of green schools
27 within the department; education specialists within the department; educators; students;
28 representatives from climate education nonprofit organizations; a representative from a
29 career and technical school; a representative from the Governor's Office of Policy
30 Innovation and the Future; and a representative from the Department of Environmental
31 Protection.

32 The bill requires the network to do the following: support professional development;
33 support school projects that incorporate traditional ecological knowledge and best practices
34 for waste management and recycling, energy conservation, water conservation, schoolyard
35 habitat, outdoor classrooms, transportation or health; increase the number of educators in
36 the State who provide training for green schools and develop common resources, trainings
37 and metrics to support educators. Under the bill, the department is authorized to develop a
38 grant program to be administered through the network in furtherance of fulfilling the
39 network's duties.

40 The bill requires the network to report back to the Legislature by November 4, 2026
41 with findings and recommendations.