

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS**

**Review of the Department of Education  
under the Government Evaluation Act**

**The Government Evaluation Act**

The Government Evaluation Act (“Act”) provides for a system of periodic review of the efficacy and performance of state government agencies. The review of an agency’s finances and programs must include a review of agency management and organization, program delivery, goals and objectives, statutory mandates and fiscal accountability (3 MRSA § 951 et seq). The law was enacted in the 117th Legislature to replace the old Government Audit and Program Review Program and substituted a legislative audit of each agency on a rotating basis with an agency self assessment. The first reviews under the Act will be completed at the end of the 118th Legislature.

The keystone to the Act is the agency program evaluation report which consists of a number of components required by the statute. Essentially, the report is an agency self-assessment which the committee of jurisdiction uses as a starting point for its evaluation of the agency’s effectiveness, efficiency and performance. The components that must be included in the report are: the agency’s enabling state and federal legislation; program descriptions; organizational structure, position count and job classifications; compliance with federal and state health and safety laws; ten-year financial summaries; regulatory agenda; coordinated efforts with other state agencies; constituencies served by the agency; alternative delivery systems; and emerging issues for the agency.

**Review Process**

Pursuant to the requirements of the Act, the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs notified the Department of Education of its intent to review the agency shortly after the end of the 118th Legislature’s First Regular and First Special Sessions. The Department of Education submitted its program evaluation report on November 1, 1997. The Education and Cultural Affairs Committee held four meetings to conduct the review under the Act: January 13, February 3, March 3 and March 12, 1998.

**Findings of Review**

The Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs finds that the Department of Education is operating within its statutory authority, has clearly articulated its mission, and continues to focus its resources to provide programs essential to that mission. Further specific information about the Department and its organizational structure can be found in the Department’s Program Evaluation Report.

The Committee commends the Department for submitting a comprehensive and user-friendly Government Evaluation Report. The report shows the clear, direct relationship between the programs within the Department, as well as an overall interrelationship of the various programs to the entire organization and how each program fits into the mission, goals and objectives in the Department's Strategic Plan.

## **Recommendations**

The Committee has worked closely with the Department during the 118th session of the Maine Legislature, and recognizes the vital need for more resources to be directed to the Department in order to improve the quality and delivery of education to the people of Maine. The Committee recognizes that the lack of adequate resources poses a significant "performance barrier" for the Department to overcome. To assist the Department in overcoming these barriers, the Committee makes the following specific recommendations:

- Investigate funding for a Policy Level Instructional Technologist to oversee the Department's operations regarding external technology and telecommunications services;
- Investigate staffing levels in the field, and how the staffing levels impact service to children;
- Implement electronic conversion of the Certification Office;
- Implement electronic conversion of the Management Information System;
- Address staffing levels for the Maine Education Assessment; and,
- Address support staff levels for the Regional Education Services Team, and throughout Department.

Despite the lack of resources, the Committee acknowledges and applauds the efforts that the Department is making. The Committee agreed to work with the Department on an ongoing basis to be a part of the Department's dynamic planning process relative to the above recommendations, including any proposed legislation that may be introduced in the 119th Legislature.