


# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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**TO:** Senator Rebecca Millett, Chair ✓  
Representative Bruce MacDonald, Chair  
and Members of Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

**FROM:**   
Stephen Bowen, Commissioner of Education

**DATE:** May 6, 2013

**SUBJECT:** L.D. 1422 An Act To Prepare Maine for the Future of the Economy Report

Pursuant to L.D. 1422, PL 2011, Chapter 669, Section 10, I hereby submit to you the March 1, 2013  
Department of Education Proficiency Based Technical Assistance Plan – Outline.

We look forward to discussing this report with you at your convenience.



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# Maine Department of Education Proficiency-Based Graduation

## Technical Assistance Plan – Outline

March 1<sup>st</sup> 2013



## Introduction

The passage of LD 1422 — An Act to Prepare Maine for the Future of the Economy — represents a significant shift in the manner students will be taught and how they will ultimately demonstrate what they have learned and can do. The progression of students through school in grades K-12 and the decision to grant them a high school diploma will no longer be based on the amount of time they spend in classrooms and the number of credits they accumulate in the process. Rather, these significant steps will be determined on the basis of whether students can demonstrate they have met the rigorous set of learning standards first established in the Maine Learning Results in 1997. This significant milestone will also move schools toward realizing the learner-centered education envisioned in 2012 by the Maine DOE's strategic plan, *Education Evolving*.

This document outlines the elements and features of the Maine DOE's Technical Assistance Plan — as called for in Section 10 of the statute which enacted a statewide proficiency-based diploma by 2017. This outline describes the comprehensive set of online resources that will be made available to all schools — along with the ways in which Maine DOE personnel and its Technical Assistance Partners will be providing support — as required by Section 9 of the statute.

The primary elements of the Technical Assistance Plan are listed here and will be more fully developed and described in the pages that follow:

1. Review of the new *statutory requirements* pertaining to the awarding of a proficiency-based diploma
2. A description of the *Theory of Action* which describes the manner in which school districts typically design and implement a proficiency-based learning system
3. An online interactive resource that will include a needs-assessment instrument which, when completed, will lead to a district readiness profile that will inform the development of a tailored implementation plan for school districts and links to several key tools and resources that will guide and inform their work
4. A set of broad implementation steps which generally take place over time when school districts design and implement a proficiency-based learning system
5. A description of the ways in which the Maine DOE and its Technical Assistance Partners will provide a wide range of support to school districts

6. An outline of the benchmarks and deliverables related to the Technical Assistance Plan that will be met during the next 16 months

#### **I. Requirements under the statute**

As stated earlier, LD 1422 set forth a requirement that, in order to graduate, Maine public school students must demonstrate they have met or exceeded all learning expectations specified in the System of Maine Learning Results. These include all standards listed in each of the eight content areas (English, mathematics, science, social studies, world languages, health and physical education, visual and performing arts, and career and education development). In addition, students must also meet the cross-curricular set of standards outlined in the Guiding Principles of the Learning Results.

LD 1422 directed the Maine DOE to prepare a Technical Assistance Plan that would provide support to School Administrative Units as they make the necessary changes and modifications in local policy, practice, and communication that will ensure they are poised to successfully implement a proficiency-based system. This requirement is established in Subsection 9 of LD 1422.

Further, the statute directed the Commissioner of Education to present an outline of the Technical Assistance Plan to the Maine Legislature's Joint Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs by March 1, 2013. This requirement is established in Subsection 10 of LD 1422.

The following timeline illustrates the major benchmarks and activities that will occur between now and the official implementation date of January 1, 2018.

- Presentation to Ed Committee: 3/1/2013
- Launch of Online Resource: 7/1/2013
- Completion of Needs Assessment Tool: 9/1/2013
- DOE Personnel Continuum of Support Launch: 9/1/2013
- Completion of initial set of comprehensive resources and tools: 6/30/2014

## II. Theory of Action regarding our approach to technical assistance

*If Maine School Administrative Units address the set of essential steps in the areas of local policy, classroom practice, and public will and understanding...*

*and the Maine DOE provides comprehensive resources and tailored guidance to support local decision-making and individual SAU implementation plans...*

*then proficiency-based learning and graduation will be successfully implemented across the state.*

The implementation of a K-12 proficiency-based learning system in a School Administrative Unit in Maine requires thoughtful, collaborative, and comprehensive planning over time. SAUs must simultaneously attend to the revision of local policies; the updating and refinement of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and support; and ensure that local community members understand and support the manner in which teaching, learning, progression, and graduation will take place.

School districts across the state – and across the country – that have successfully implemented a proficiency-based system of progression and graduation have engaged in a series of broad activities across the arenas of policy, practice, and public will, largely following the same sequence. These broad series of steps are illustrated in Appendix A (page 21) and are described in the next section. While these steps generally occur in a broadly similar sequence across the majority of school districts, each district undertaking this initiative will not do so in an identical fashion. In fact, similarly to students requiring a personalized learning environment and supports to successfully meet the rigorous standards we expect of all Maine graduates, school districts undertaking this work will likely follow a unique pathway toward implementation. This unique pathway will require supports and resources that can be tailored in a way to support the successful implementation of a proficiency-based system.

The Technical Assistance Plan will provide SAUs with a tailored implementation plan that will be informed by the completion of a district-based needs assessment. This will be the first entry point for districts and will provide district personnel with an opportunity to determine their level of

readiness and capacity, giving them a starting point informed by the work already underway and the assets and particular challenges in place.

The completed needs-assessment – informed by a series of reflective questions – will result in a readiness profile that will help pave the way toward the development of a tailored plan that will give each school district a sense of which work will need to be done with respect to each of the main areas of policy, practice, and public will. The plan will provide links to specific tools and resources available on the proficiency-based learning website being designed. Each of the tools will provide specific instructions and guidance about what needs to be accomplished, how to do it, and who needs to be involved. In addition, many of the tools will have examples and models—many drawn from Maine schools—that schools can either adopt or adapt to suit their particular local needs.

Finally, as will be described later in this outline, school districts will not only have access to a well-designed and intuitive set of online tools, they will also have access to direct support from specialists within the Maine DOE.

### **III. Typical SAU Steps Toward the Implementation of Proficiency Based Learning: Participants, Process and Practice**

The interactive self-assessment tool is designed to engage district and school level stakeholders in a reflective process to establish a starting point for effective implementation of a proficiency-based learning system. The user will have the opportunity to view the full implementation framework, respond to prompts, and build a tailored plan leading toward the development and completion of a proficiency-based system of learning and graduation.

The plan is grounded in the belief that there are three integral areas of focus for effective implementation: policy, practice, and public will. Simultaneous development of all three areas is essential and the outcome of the self-assessment will provide tailored guidance in how to approach each area of work.

The planning tool begins by outlining a process to build conceptual understanding and develop a framework with district-level leadership and stakeholders. While it is possible to start in a different

realm, sustainable systemic change requires district leaders to gain a clear understanding and have common language in order to develop a model.

Roles and Responsibilities:

**District leadership** is charged with and accountable for building and implementing a plan to meet the requirements of LD 1422 by January 1, 2018. Their role is to:

1. Inform the school board/committee of the research and rationale for implementing proficiency-based teaching, learning and assessment and develop understanding and support;
2. Work with the community and staff to articulate a district-wide mission and vision statement that supports and guides the implementation of proficiency-based learning;
3. As necessary, coordinate support from the state department of education, partnering organizations, and the community;
4. Establish a district Proficiency-Based Committee, representing all stakeholders in the district, including a representative from each building's leadership team.
5. Support effective implementation of the model by ensuring that individual school leadership teams understand requirements and are held accountable for appropriate implementation in their school.
6. Participate in the development of a communication plan that will lead to broad-based understanding and support.

The **School Board/Committee** is then responsible for:

1. Drafting policy that supports proficiency-based learning in related areas such as graduation, assessment, instruction, reporting, and others as necessary;
2. Engaging parents, students, and community stakeholders to foster understanding and support for the proficiency-based system being developed in the district; and
3. Adopting proficiency-based graduation and related district policies.



The District **Proficiency-Based Committee** is responsible for:

1. Reviewing the results of the “Planning for Proficiency-Based Learning” self-assessment tool and developing a timeline for implementation around the steps established within the results;
2. Creating a messaging and communications plan within K-12 schools, with students, parents, community, and the local media;
3. Planning for timely full faculty professional development regarding the rationale and research for proficiency-based teaching and learning; the development of instructional units designed to support a proficiency-based learning model; and instructional strategies and the assessment literacy of educators;
4. Coordinating involvement of various K-12 educators and teams to create cross-content graduation standards, content area graduation standards, and assessment systems to assess cross-content and content graduation standards;
5. Developing a record keeping process including student transcripts and standards/proficiency based report cards; and
6. Ensuring the establishment of and coordination with school-based leadership teams.

**School-based Leadership Teams** will be responsible for:

1. Reviewing the K-12 curriculum and outcomes of the implementation plan to consider changes in school based policies;
2. Coordinating school-based professional development in alignment with district professional development;
3. Coordinating and supporting curriculum development including performance indicators based on the standards;
4. Coordinating and supporting the development and refinement of valid and reliable common assessments concerning performance indicators; and
5. Creating time and structural support for school-based teams to work collaboratively to proceed through their tasks, as defined.

**Educators in the classroom** will be responsible for:

1. Developing instructional units including learning targets and essential questions;
2. Developing formative assessments for learning targets;
3. Developing daily lesson plans;
4. Acquiring new routines of proficiency-based record keeping and reporting student progress; and,
5. Setting professional goals relevant to proficiency-based teaching and learning.

#### **IV. Sample SAU needs-assessment questions**

The following is a sample series of reflective questions and prompts regarding SAU steps in the areas of policy, practice, and will. These are intended to be used by district leaders and stakeholders as a starting point to help inform their implementation work. The answers to these questions will result in a district readiness profile. Districts will also receive tailored guidance and supporting resources to help implement their plan.

##### A. Practice

###### *District Wide Leadership:*

- Is there representation from each school and the central office on the District-Wide Implementation Team
- Do members of the Team fully understand the requirements of the proficiency-based graduation system and its ramifications for proficiency-based learning K-12, and have access to all of the supporting resources?
- Is there a clear mission and vision in the district aligned to proficiency based learning?
- Does the district have a history of effectively applying new educational initiatives, K-12 and is it organized to implement such initiatives successfully?

- Does the district have a history of effectively monitoring and appropriately adjusting strategies to ensure success of an educational initiative?
- Is there an established leadership team comprised of K-12 educators, leaders, and – where appropriate – students?
- Is there an established leadership team where members have shared responsibilities and decision-making?

*Professional Development:*

- Is there an established set of shared expectations and norms for professional conduct and meetings within the district?
- Is there time built into the school calendar for regular and ongoing district-wide professional development?
- Is there established time in the school calendar for regular and ongoing professional development within each school building or across grade spans within the district?
- Has the district utilized working groups or professional learning groups to address specific issues or to achieve goals in the past?
- Has the district used professional development time to raise awareness of and engage educators in discussion of proficiency-based learning?
- Have the educators in the district worked comprehensively on instructional design leading to demonstration of proficiency?
- Has the district used professional development time to build a common understanding and language around assessment literacy?

*School Level Leadership:*

- Do the building level administrators focus their time on instructional quality over other administrative tasks?

- Do the building level administrators use student achievement data and other measures to inform decision-making regarding professional development, time, staffing, and goal setting?
- Do the building level administrators work with their staff to review trends and patterns in instructional time to ensure access to optimal learning conditions for all students?
- Is there sufficient support at the school level for educators to apply new instructional strategies and seek consistent and clear feedback?
- Do educators have experience in working collaboratively to review student achievement data routinely and develop plans for improvement?

### *Standards & Curriculum*

- Do the educators in the district have experience in working collaboratively to design curriculum, instruction, and assessment?
- Has the district carefully reviewed the Common Core standards?
- Has the curriculum in the district been aligned to common learning standards, K-12?
- Has the district established cross-content graduation standards ensuring all students the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in habits of mind aligned to the Maine Learning Results Guiding Principles and college and career readiness skills?

### *Assessment & Record Keeping*

- Does the district have a centralized K-12 record keeping system and online student information system?
- Do grade level or grade span educators use common scoring guides that provide detailed expectations of levels of performance for students?
- Does the district have a standards-based reporting system and transcript?
- Are there multiple measures of assessment for students to demonstrate proficiency in the learning standards?

### *Instruction & Support*

- Have instructional units and daily lessons been designed around essential questions and learning targets?
- Are there common expectations for core instructional practices?
- Does the instruction allow for differentiation and the development of multiple pathways?
- Are the school-based RTI systems aligned with the district proficiency-based learning expectations?
- Is there additional learning time and support offered for students who have yet to meet the learning targets and standards?

### B. Public Will

- Is there a clear communications plan in the district?
- Is the district skilled at hosting public forums to inform the community of educational changes and initiatives?
- Are members of the leadership team accessible to parents, staff and students to discuss educational initiatives?
- Is there published material for parents, students, and community members describing the proficiency-based system in your district and listing the advantages of such a system?
- Are school events, school committee meetings, and school goals and priorities published and easily accessible to parents and community members?
- Is the school accessible to the community for learning and supporting the learning environment?
- Do parents have online access to student achievement data and their child's current academic status?

### C. Policy

- Is the school committee aware of the requirements of LD 1422 which ensures that all graduates by 2018 will secure a proficiency-based transcript?
- Has the school committee drafted policies for graduation, progression, assessment, reporting, and other related areas regarding a proficiency-based system?
- Have these revised policies been adopted by the school committee?

### **V. Online resource site map + brief narrative**

The passage of LD 1422 profoundly shifts the focus of teaching and learning in our schools. In order to graduate, students are expected to demonstrate competency within each of the eight identified content areas as well as the Guiding Principles of the Maine Learning Results. To achieve this paradigm shift from “we have taught it” to “our students have learned it”, this website enables leaders from Maine school administrative units to develop an understanding of proficiency-based learning, reflect on a district’s progress toward implementation, and ultimately receive support to create a locally designed proficiency-based learning model.

It is our belief that full scale implementation is most effective when three major areas are considered: policy, practice, and public will. Simultaneous development of all three areas is required for a district to successfully support the learning of each student. Website resources are structured around these areas of work.

Aligned with the State’s core priorities, as outlined in *Education Evolving: Maine’s Plan for Putting Learners First*, this web site provides comprehensive and relevant support for districts as they build learner-centered educational system.

The web site supports:

#### **Learner Centered Vision that:**

- anchors the planning process for the district;

- allows substantial support for alignment and revision of curriculum;
- enables districts to define rigorous standards and develop aligned curricula; and
- provides tools and structures to support an efficient assessment system.

**Great Teachers and Leaders by:**

- outlining professional development options;
- encouraging professional learning to foster continuous improvement;
- providing resources and tools for professional development and practice; and
- highlighting organizational design topics to help answer the challenging questions raised by educators and leaders.

**Multiple Pathways for District Implementation including:**

- an interactive, dynamic self-assessment tool for districts to support the design of a tailored implementation plan;
- several resources around policy, practice, and public will that can be accessed systematically or independently; and
- a user friendly site for educators, administrators, school board members, and the general public.

**Comprehensive Planning and Implementation Support Through:**

- open access to the website anytime from anywhere;
- multiple opportunities for engagement with the self-assessment tool, the resources, and Maine DOE staff and partners; and
- varying degrees of support tailored to the districts' needs, including web resources, discussion forums, email queries, and webinars.

Please use this site to:

<p><b>Gain Understanding</b></p>	<p>For your transition to proficiency-based learning to go smoothly, everyone has to speak the same language. There needs to be a clear <a href="#">rationale</a>, <a href="#">structure</a>, and <a href="#">responsibilities for successful implementation</a>.</p>	
<p><b>Create a Plan</b></p>	<p>The design of this web site enables the user to develop an <a href="#">understanding of proficiency-based learning</a>, <a href="#">reflect on a district's progress toward implementation</a>, and ultimately receive <a href="#">support</a> to create a locally designed proficiency-based learning model.</p>	
<p><b>Take Action</b></p>	<p><u><b>Policy</b></u></p>	<p>Users will be directed to work collaboratively with their leadership team to build common understanding and language around proficiency-based learning. It will also be important to engage school committees in the work of understanding the model and language, expressing a public commitment to this shift in <a href="#">developing policy</a>.</p>
	<p><u><b>Practice</b></u></p>	<p>Practice is comprised of four areas of focus: <a href="#">curriculum</a>, <a href="#">instruction</a>, <a href="#">assessment</a>, and <a href="#">organizational design</a>. These links enable the district to use their tailored plan for proficiency-based learning and target particular resources. Development of or redirecting an existing district-level team for leadership of this initiative may enhance the communication plan by allowing for consistency in direction and language throughout the district.</p>



	<p><b>Public Will</b></p>	<p>Parents, local media, and the general public will have questions and concerns about a shift in teaching and learning. These links will provide the user with resources around <a href="#">communication strategies</a>, tools to engage the public in productive dialogue, and a <a href="#">glossary of education-related terms</a> for parents and the media. The resources available to the user are aligned with the self-assessment and tailored planning tool.</p>
<p><b>Access Support</b></p>	<p>The web site provides comprehensive planning and implementation support. There is access to the website anytime from anywhere. Users have multiple opportunities for engagement with the <a href="#">self-assessment tool</a>, the resources, and <a href="#">partners</a>. Multiple pathways for direct support include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Discussion forums</a>;</li> <li>• <a href="#">E-mail queries</a>;</li> <li>• <a href="#">Webinars</a>;</li> <li>• <a href="#">Department of Education Consultations</a>;</li> </ul>	

**VI. Continuum of SAU implementation support**

The Maine DOE will provide quality support through the development of web-based resources and a continuum of direct support services delivered by DOE staff and Technical Assistance Providers. The following continuum of support describes the ways districts will be able to access this support:

1. Self-serve website: The cornerstone of the Technical Assistance Plan is a new interactive and highly functioning website that will serve as the hub for districts seeking information, guidance, and tools to support their work. Many districts will be able to move forward and implement their work based only on these resources.

2. Online forum: The Maine DOE will catalog and post queries regarding the design and implementation of proficiency-based learning and provide – on the website – a searchable archive of questions and issues on which specific guidance has been provided.
3. Email: The Maine DOE already receives a very large number of requests for information and clarification via email. When such requests or questions are received, the Maine DOE will provide specific answers within a two-workday window following a specific format resulting in consistent advice. The substance of each response – where appropriate – will also be catalogued and listed in the website forum.
4. Phone: The Maine DOE also receives a very large number of phone calls with requests for information and clarification. When calls are received, the Maine DOE will provide specific answers within a two-workday window following a specific format resulting in consistent advice. The substance of each response – where appropriate – will also be catalogued and listed in the website forum.
5. Online Communities of Practice: Already in place and serving hundreds of educators, the Maine DOE's virtual professional learning community website continue to expand and provide all Maine teachers and administrators with an opportunity to communicate and collaborate virtually directly with other colleagues in Maine schools and districts. Specifically, this website encourages educators to share resources, ask questions, learn from one another, and engage in professional dialogue around a common experience. This is a valuable resources that does not depend upon DOE staff for support.
6. Webinars: Already a mainstay and readily accepted form of professional development – especially when it concerns learning new information – webinars on all of the significant topics pertaining to the implementation of a proficiency-based system will be conducted by Maine DOE personnel, our Technical Assistance Partners, and Maine practitioners. Examples will include how best to communicate the nature of the changes underway in schools, how to revise existing local policies, how to assess student demonstration of learning, and how to ensure students are provided with opportunities to learn, practice and meet the core standards outlined in the Guiding Principles. Webinars will be recorded and available for viewing on the website.

7. Workshops & Conferences: Together with its Technical Assistance Partners, the Maine DOE will provide a series of workshops (ranging from ½-day to full-day, to multi-day) on topics such as those listed above in addition to others across the state. These will occur across the state and – where possible – will be recorded and archived for the benefit of all educators.
8. Consultative visits: When possible, Maine DOE and its Technical Assistance Partners will be able to make in-person visits to SAUs during the course of their planning and implementation not only to provide guidance and feedback, but to learn how local implementation is going in order to inform ongoing refinement of the Technical Assistance being provided. Such visits will be dependent upon staff availability.
9. \*Intensive school support: At this time, the Maine DOE will not be providing schools with significant on-the-ground support, largely due to the costs involved. However, we recognize that many school districts across the state have been successful in their improvement efforts by hiring external critical friends and consultants. The Maine DOE will work hard to ensure that districts are able to use state and federally-allocated funds – in addition to the funding provided by the statute to support the transition to a proficiency-based system – to secure the services they desire. The Maine DOE is also actively seeking the support of federal and foundation funds to increase the resources available in districts for this purpose.

## **VII. Outline of next steps: March 1, 2013 through July 1, 2013**

The following is an overview of the key goals and related deliverables regarding Maine’s technical assistance plan.

**Goal:** To develop tools and resources to support implementation of a proficiency-based diploma in Maine secondary schools and their school administrative units, as required by LD 1422; provide all Maine school administrative units with ready and free access to these tools and resources via a publicly accessible interactive website that serves as a resource for schools implementing a standards-based system of education; and provide training and resources to support implementation

of a proficiency-based diploma, support that can be personalized to each district depending upon current knowledge, skill, and capacity.

**Indicator 1:** Develop a broad technical assistance plan framework, including a proposed website map, that includes a timeline with implementation dates for the resources and initiatives the Department will provide to enable school administrative units to transition to a proficiency-based diploma.

**Activity 1:** Lay out the organizational/conceptual framework for a technical assistance plan consistent with the requirements of LD 1422, including materials for the Commissioner’s presentation to the Education Committee of the Legislature.

**Deliverable 1:** By March 15, 2013, a technical assistance plan framework, including website map, and presentation materials are submitted to the Department.

**Indicator 2:** Develop an “implementation roadmap” for school administrative units, which outlines and describes the major steps and activities SAU’s would typically engage in to fully implement a proficiency-based diploma.

**Activity 1:** Lay out the typical process by which an SAU would transition to a proficiency-based diploma, describing the policy, practice and public will-building steps SAU’s typically take along the way, based on the experiences of school districts that have undertaken this transition.

**Deliverable 1:** By March 15, 2013, implementation roadmap provided to the Department.

**Indicator 3:** Develop and/or make available to SAU’s a set of proficiency-based diploma implementation tools, consistent with the technical assistance plan and implementation roadmap, to assist SAUs in implementing the policies, practices, and public will-building activities necessary for successful implementation of a proficiency-based diploma.

**Activity 1:** Develop implementation resources as described below, providing SAU’s with access to tools and resources in each of the following three broad categories sufficient to begin implementation of a proficiency-based diploma.

**Deliverable 1:** By July 1, 2013, make tools and resources available to SAU's that help them establish school and district policies around proficiency-based diplomas, including examples of such policies.

**Deliverable 2:** By July 1, 2013, make tools and resources available to SAU's that help them establish school and district practices around proficiency-based diplomas, including examples of such practices.

**Deliverable 3:** By July 1, 2013, make tools and resources available to SAU's that help them establish public will around proficiency-based diplomas, including examples of such efforts in other districts.

**Indicator 4:** Provide the resources and materials described above to all Maine school administrative units via a publicly accessible interactive website that serves as a guided resource for schools implementing a proficiency-based diploma.

**Activity 1:** Establish a publicly accessible interactive website, developed in collaboration with the Maine DOE, and which features an overview of statutory requirements of LD 1422 (developed in collaboration with the Department), and the implementation roadmap described above, along with and connected to the implementation tools and resources described above.

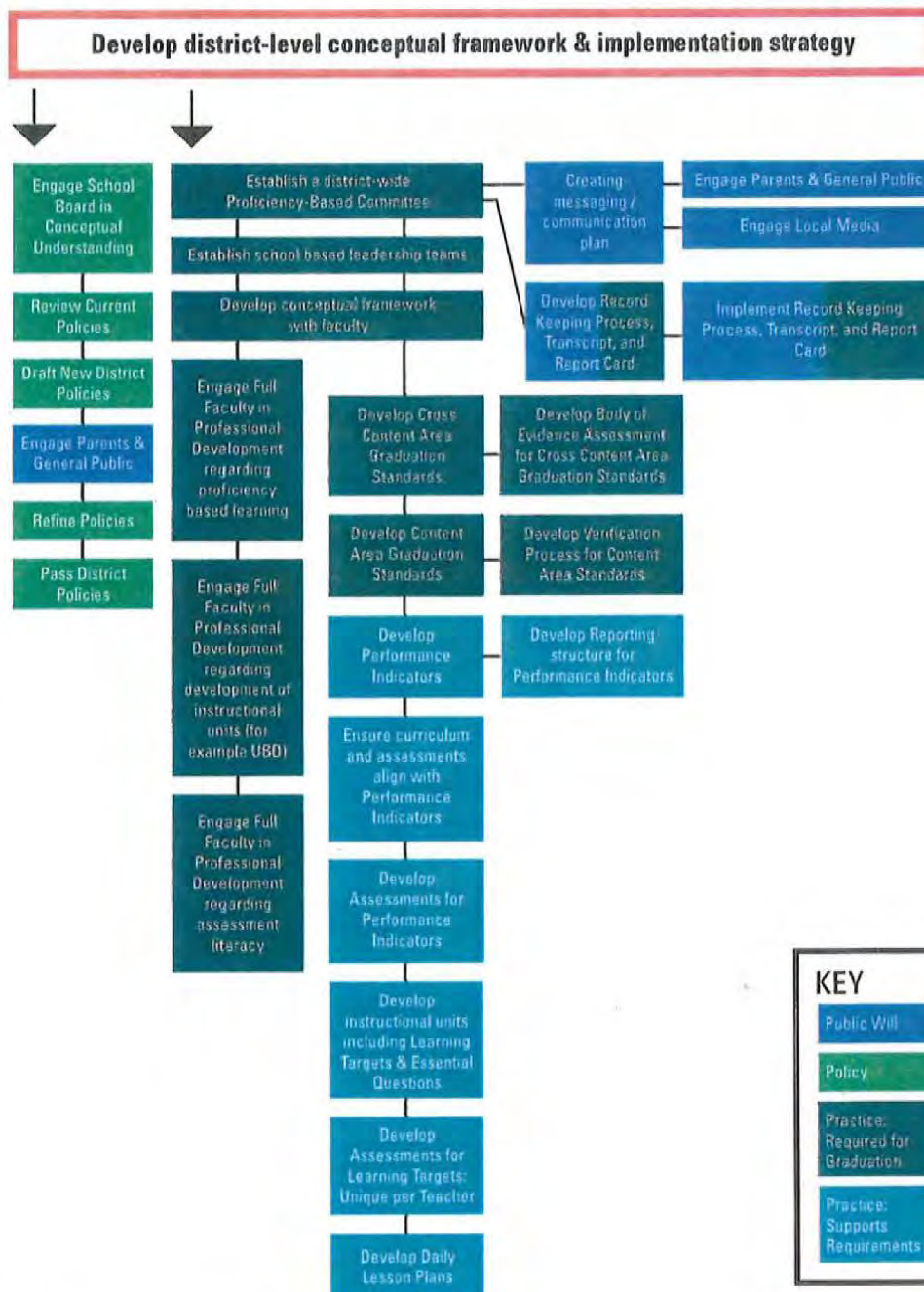
**Deliverable 1:** By June 1, 2013, an interactive website structure established.

**Indicator 5:** Increase the capacity of Department staff to utilize the website and associated materials and resources in order to help SAU's implement a proficiency-based diploma.

**Activity 1:** Conduct meetings and trainings with Department staff as website and other materials and resources are developed.

**Deliverable1.** Ongoing, a record of meetings/trainings: agendas, participants, outcomes.

# Planning for Proficiency-Based Learning



# Maine School Administrative Unit Planning For Proficiency-Based Graduation Website Map

