MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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State of Maine
125th LEGISLATURE
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Senate Chair
Sen. Brian D. Langley

House Chair
Rep. David E. Richardson

September 7, 2012

TO: Marion Hylan Barr, Director, Office of Policy & Legal Analysis

FROM: Senator Brian D. Langley, Senate Chair, and Representative David E. Richardson,
                    House Chair, Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

SUBJ: **Approval of Partial Payment for Work Performed by the Maine Education Policy
                    Research Institute per Fiscal Year 2012 Cooperative Project Agreement**

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        We write on behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs to
approve partial payment of $77,334 for work performed in fiscal year 2012 by the Maine Education
Policy Research Institute ("MEPRI" or "Institute").

        Please find attached invoice #31280 (for $77,334) and #31281 (for $22,666) from the University
of Southern Maine requesting total payment of $100,000 for work performed in fiscal year 2012 by the
Institute. While we have verified that the bulk of the required deliverables were submitted to the
Legislature on July 26, 2012 and were accepted by the Joint Standing Committee on Education and
Cultural Affairs on September 5, 2012, we have not yet received the final "comprehensive report on the
improving high schools study" in fulfillment of the payment provisions in Exhibit B of the cooperative
project agreement between the Legislative Council, the Department of Education, and the University of
Maine System for fiscal year 2012 (please see attached page 6 of Exhibit B).

        The dissemination plan submitted by the Institute in work product "B.4" describes the schedule
established by the MEPRI for dissemination and "rollout of (the) final report" to Maine superintendents,
principals and educators in the fall of 2012 (please see attached page 1 of "MEPRI FY2012 Work Plan
Product Deliverables: B.4 Product"). At this time, we recommend withholding the payment of $22,666
requested by invoice #31281 until such time as the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural
Affairs receives the final "comprehensive report on the improving high schools study" in fulfillment of
the payment provisions in Exhibit B.

        Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please do not
hesitate to contact either one of us, or Phil McCarthy, our Legislative Analyst.

cc: Commissioner Stephen L. Bowen, Department of Education

David E. Boulter, Executive Director, Legislative Council, Maine Legislature
Lawrence Waxler, Office of Sponsored Programs, University of Southern Maine
David Silvernail, College of Education, University of Southern Maine
Phil McCarthy, Office of Policy & Legal Analysis

Enclosures: University of Southern Maine invoice #31280 & #31281 (dated July 11, 2012)

Page 6 of Exhibit B of the FY2012 Cooperative Project Agreement between the Legislative Council, the Department of Education, and the University of Maine System

Page 1 of "MEPRI FY2012 Work Plan Product Deliverables: B.4")

Rider A

MEPRI 2013 Workplan

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	TIMELINE
A. Track evaluation developments	No activity	NA
B. Conduct targeted studies	Targeted Studies	
	B1. Complete Phase II of Improving Schools study.	7/1/12 - 6/30/13
	B2. Compile research evidence on design, cost and effectiveness of teacher and administrator evaluation models.	7/1/12 - 2/1/13
	B3. Compile data on development, costs, and impacts of standards-based school programs.	7/1/12 - 4/1/13
	B4. Examine design, costs and impacts of RTI programs.	7/1/12 - 4/1/13
	B5. Compile data on impacts of Aspirnaut Project for improving STEM K-20 pipeline.	7/1/12 - 6/30/13

Maine Education Policy Research Institute Budget
University of Southern Maine - University of Maine Orono
A. Total Projected Budget 7/1/11 to 6/30/12

Object	Account Code	Class	USM Sponsor	USM Cost Share	UM Sponsor	UM Cost Share	Total Sponsor	Total Cost Share
1. Principal Investigator	51000			$23,490				$23,490
2. Co- PI Mason	50200				$0	$22,000		$22,000
3. Research Associate-Smith	51100				$28,633		$28,633	
4. Data System Project Lead-Song	51100	07			$11,035		$11,035	
5. Research Associate- Johnson	51100	02	$5,775				$5,775	
6. Research Associate-Stump	51100	01	$40,800				$40,800	
B. Other Personnel								
1. Admin Mgr.	51100	03	$2,715				$2,715	
2. Temp RA TBD	51012		$25,600				$25,600	
Total Salary			$74,890	$23,490	$39,668	$22,000	$114,558	$45,490
C. Fringe Benefits (48.9%)	54800		$24,103	$11,487	$19,398	$10,758	$43,501	$22,245
D. Fringe Ben Temp (.08%)			$2,048				$2,048	
Total Personnel & Benefits			$101,041	$34,977	$59,065	$32,758	$160,106	$67,735
E. Permanent Equipment								
F. Travel								
1.In-State	61400		$5,000		$1,672		$6,672	$0
G. Other Direct Costs								
1. Materials & Supplies	61015		$1,800	$30	$259		$2,059	$30
2. Telephone	64000		$484				$484	$0
3. Postage	60400		$49				$49	$0
4. Printing	60600		$1,370				$1,370	$0
5. Computer Service	64016		$1,081				$1,081	$0
Total Other Direct Costs			$4,784	$30	$259	$0	$5,043	$30
H. Total Direct Costs			$110,825	$35,007	$60,996	$32,758	$171,821	$67,765
I. Indirect Costs (32.8%)			$36,350	$11,482	$20,007	$10,745	$56,357	$22,227
J. Total Direct & Indirect Costs			$147,175	$46,489	$81,003	$43,503	$228,178	$89,991
K. UMS Contribution of IDC (16.4%)			($18,175)	$18,175	($10,003)	$10,003	($28,179)	$28,179
L. Amount of this request			$129,000	$64,664	$71,000	$53,506	$200,000	$118,170

Maine Education Policy Research Institute Budget
University of Southern Maine
A. Total Projected Budget 2/1/12 to 6/30/12

Object	Account Code	Class	Sponsor	USM Cost Share	Total Budget
1. Principal Investigator	51000			$23,490	$23,490
2. Research Associate - Johnson	51100	07	$5,775		$5,775
3. Research Associate - Stump	51100	01	$40,800		$40,800
B. Other Personnel					
1. Admin Mgr.	51100	03	$2,715		$2,715
2. Temp RA TBD	51012		$25,600		
Total Salary			$74,890	$23,490	$98,380
C. Fringe Benefits (48.9%)	54800		$24,103	$11,487	$35,590
D. Fringe Ben. Temp (.08%)			$2,048		
Total Personnel & Benefits			**$101,041**	**$34,977**	**$136,018**
E. Permanent Equipment			$0		
F. Travel					
1.In-State	61400		$5,000		$5,000
G. Other Direct Costs					
1. Materials & Supplies	61015		$1,800	$30	$1,830
2. Telephone	64000		$484		$484
3. Postage	60400		$49		$49
4. Printing	60600		$1,370		$1,370
5. Computer Service	64016		$1,081		$1,081
Total Other Direct Costs			**$4,784**	**$30**	**$4,814**
H. Total Direct Costs			$110,825	$35,007	$145,832
I. Indirect Costs (32.8%)			$36,350	$11,482	$47,833
J. Total Direct & Indirect Costs			$147,175	$46,489	$193,665
K. UMS Contribution of IDC (16.4%)			-$18,175	$18,175	$0
L. Amount of this request			**$129,000**	**$64,664**	**$193,664**

Maine Education Policy Research Institute Budget
University of Southern Maine

1. Complete Second Part of Improving Schools Study

Object	Account Code	Class	Sponsor	UM Cost-Sharing	FTE (Days)
A. Senior Personnel					
1. Principal Investigator	51000	Silvernail	$0	$15,780	30.7
2. Research Associate Amy	51100	07	$1,155		5
3. Research Associate	51100	01	$33,252		163
B. Other Personnel					
1. Admin	51100	03	$1,267		7
2. Temp RA TBD	51012		$12,800		64
Total Salaries			$48,474	$15,780	
C. Fringe Benefits (48.9%)	54800		$17,445	$7,716	
D. Fringe Ben. Temp (8.0%)			$1,024		
Total Personnel & Benefits			$66,943	$23,496	
E. Permanent Equipment					
F. Travel					
1.In-State	61400		$4,500		
G. Other Direct Costs					
1. Materials & Supplies	61000		$1,300	$30	
2. Telephone	64000		$250		
3. Postage	60400		$49		
4. Printing	60600		$800		
5. Computer Service	64016		$900		
Total Other Direct Costs			$3,299	$30	
H. Total Direct Costs			$74,742	$23,526	
I. Indirect Costs (32.8%)			$24,515	$7,717	
J. Total Direct & Indirect Costs			$99,257	$31,243	
K. UMS Contribution of IDC (16.4%)			-$12,258	$12,258	
L. Amount of this request			$86,999	$43,501	

Maine Education Policy Research Institute Budget
University of Southern Maine
3. Compile Data on Development, Costs, Impacts of the Conversion to Standards-based School Programs in Maine

Object	Account Code	Class	Sponsor	USM Cost-Sharing	FTE (Days)
A. Senior Personnel					
1. Principal Investigator	51000			$7,710	15
2. Research Associate - Johnson	51100	07	$4,620		20
3. Research Associate-	51100	01	$7,548		37
B. Other Personnel					
1. Admin	51100	03	$1,448		8
2. Temp RA TBD	51012		$12,800		64
Total Salaries			$26,416	$7,710	
C. Fringe Benefits (48.9%)	54800		$6,658	$3,770	
D. Fringe Ben. Temp (.08%)			$1,024		
Total Personnel & Benefits			$34,098	$11,480	
E. Permanent Equipment					
F. Travel					
1.In-State	61400		$500		
G. Other Direct Costs					
1. Materials & Supplies	61000		$500		
2. Telephone	64000		$234		
3. Postage	60400				
4. Printing	60600		$570		
5. Computer Service	64016		$181		
Total Other Direct Costs			$1,485	$0	
H. Total Direct Costs			$36,083	$11,480	
I. Indirect Costs (32.8%)			$11,835	$3,765	
J. Total Direct & Indirect Costs			$47,918	$15,245	
K. UMS Contribution of IDC (16.4%)			-$5,918	$5,918	
L. Amount of this request			$42,000	$21,163	

Maine Education Policy Research Institute Budget
University of Maine
A. Total Projected Budget 7/1/12 to 6/30/13

Object	Account Code	Class	Sponsor	UM Cost Share	Total Budget	FTE Days
A. Senior Personnel						
1. Co-PI Mason	51000			$22,000	$22,000	43
2. Research Associate - Smith	51100		$28,633		$28,633	169
3. Data System Project Lead-Song	51100		$11,035		$11,035	46
B. Other Personnel						
Total Salary			$39,668	$22,000	$61,668	
C. Fringe Benefits (48.9%)	54800		$19,398	$10,758	$30,156	
Total Personnel & Benefits			$59,066	$32,758	$91,824	
D. Permanent Equipment						
E. Travel						
1.In-State	61400		$1,672		$1,672	
G. Other Direct Costs						
1. Contracted Services	60000					
2. Materials & Supplies	61015		$258		$258	
3. Telephone	64000					
4. Postage	60400					
5. Printing	60600					
6. Computer Service	64016					
Total Other Direct Costs			$258	$0	$258	
H. Total Direct Costs			$60,996	$32,758	$93,754	
I. Indirect Costs (32.8%)			$20,007	$10,745	$30,752	
J. Total Direct & Indirect Costs			$81,003	$43,503	$124,506	
K. UMS Contribution of IDC (16.4%)			-$10,003	$10,003		
L. Amount of this request			$71,000	$53,506	$124,506	

Maine Education Policy Research Institute Budget
University of Maine

5. Teacher and Administrator Evaluation Models

Object	Account Code	Class	Sponsor	UM Cost-Sharing	FTE (Days)
A. Senior Personnel					
1. Co-PI Mason	51000			$ 6,286	13
2. Research Associate - Smith	51100		$ 12,586		74
3. Data System Project Lead-Song	51100		$ 5,405		22
B. Other Personnel					
Total Salary			$17,991	$6,286	
C. Fringe Benefits (48.9%)	54800		$8,798	$3,074	
Total Personnel & Benefits			$26,789	$9,360	
D. Permanent Equipment					
E. Travel					
1.In-State	61400		$ 603		
G. Other Direct Costs					
1. Contracted Services	60000				
2. Materials & Supplies	61015		$ 99		
3. Telephone	64000				
4. Postage	60400				
5. Printing	60600				
6. Computer Service	64016				
Total Other Direct Costs			$ 99	$ -	
H. Total Direct Costs			$ 27,491	$ 9,359	
I. Indirect Costs (32.8%)			$ 9,017	$ 3,070	
J. Total Direct & Indirect Costs			$ 36,508	$ 12,429	
K. UMS Contribution of IDC (16.4%)			$ (4,509)	$ 4,509	
L. Amount of this request			$ 32,000	$ 16,938	

Maine Education Policy Research Institute Budget
University of Maine

7. RTI Programs in Schools in Maine

Object	Account Code	Class	Sponsor	UM Cost-Sharing	FTE (Days)
A. Senior Personnel					
1. Co-PI Mason	51000			$4,714	9
2. Research Associate - Smith	51100		$9,439		56
3. Data System Project Lead-Song	51100		$4,054		17
B. Other Personnel					
Total Salary			$13,493	$4,714	
C. Fringe Benefits (48.9%)	54800		$6,598	$2,305	
Total Personnel & Benefits			$20,091	$7,019	
D. Permanent Equipment					
E. Travel					
1.In-State	61400		$453		
G. Other Direct Costs	60000				
1. Contracted Services	61000				
2. Materials & Supplies	64000		$75		
3. Telephone	60400				
4. Postage	60600				
5. Printing	64016				
6. Computer Service					
Total Other Direct Costs			$75	$0	
H. Total Direct Costs			$20,619	$7,020	
I. Indirect Costs (32.8%)			$6,763	$2,302	
J. Total Direct & Indirect Costs			$27,381	$9,322	
K. UMS Contribution of IDC (16.4%)			-$3,381	$3,381	
L. Amount of this request			$24,000	$12,703	

Maine Education Policy Research Institute Budget
University of Maine

Efficiency Fund

Object	Account Code	Class	Sponsor	UM Cost-Sharing	FTE (Days)
A. Senior Personnel					
1. Co-PI Mason	51000			$11,000	21
2. Research Associate - Smith	51100		$6,608		39
3. Data System Project Lead-Song	51100		$1,576		7
B. Other Personnel					
Total Salary			$8,184	$11,000	
C. Fringe Benefits (48.9%)	54800		$4,002	$5,379	
Total Personnel & Benefits			$12,186	$16,379	
D. Permanent Equipment					
E. Travel					
1.In-State	61400		$616		
G. Other Direct Costs	60000				
1. Contracted Services	61000				
2. Materials & Supplies	64000		$84		
3. Telephone	60400				
4. Postage	60600				
5. Printing	64016				
6. Computer Service					
Total Other Direct Costs			$84	$0	
H. Total Direct Costs			$12,886	$16,379	
I. Indirect Costs (32.8%)			$4,227	$5,373	
J. Total Direct & Indirect Costs			$17,113	$21,752	
K. UMS Contribution of IDC (16.4%)			-$2,113	$2,113	
L. Amount of this request			$15,000	$23,865	

MEPRI 2012 Workplan Product Deliverables: B.1 Product

Identify Improving Maine High Schools

Rationale Behind Criteria for Identifying Improving Maine High Schools

There are five criteria for identifying improving schools. These criteria are listed in Figure 1. on the next page. The first criterion for identifying improving schools compares the mean score on the state assessments to the statewide mean:

1. The average standardized difference between the cumulative scale score on the state exams (MEA, NECAP, or MHSA) and the state average is higher in the most recent two years than in the prior two years.

This is a good starting point, because the mean scale score is an overall measure of student academic achievement and is affected by the score of every student. The average scale score is called a *status* criterion, because it depends on the status of students' knowledge and abilities at the time of taking the test rather than how much they have learned since starting at the school. Other status measures, such as the median, only reflect the scores of the middle scoring students and are unaffected by the lower or higher scoring students. Measures such as the proportion of students meeting state standards are not sensitive to how far over or under the standards students are. A student barely meeting the standards is counted the same as one acing the test, and a student failing miserably is counted the same as one almost meeting the standards. The first criterion in this set avoids both of those shortfalls. However good it is as a starting point, it would not be a good stopping point, because it does not account for the fact that some schools have students that are better prepared to succeed when they first enroll in the school. For example, two high schools may produce the same mean SAT score with very different classes. If so, the high school whose entering freshmen were better prepared did not have to teach as much to achieve the same achievement levels as the school whose students are not as well prepared.

Accordingly, the following criterion is added:

2. The average standardized difference between the cumulative scale score on the state exams and the score that would be predicted based on pupil characteristics and student scores in previous grades is higher in the most recent two years than in the prior two years.

This criterion assures that schools identified as improving have improved in teaching their students well, relative to how prepared they were before entering the school. This is called a *value-added* criterion,

because it measures what the school has added to the students' knowledge and abilities. Having both the first and second criteria are better than having either one alone. However, both are based on means, and

Figure 1

Criteria for Identifying Improving Maine Schools

For a school to be identified as an Improving Maine school, the school must meet five criteria if it is a high school, or four criteria if it is not a high school.

Improving Schools. A school is designated as improving if it meets *the first four* of the following criteria in the evaluated grades, grades 4 or 8, and *all five criteria* for grade 11:

1. The average standardized difference between the cumulative scale score on the state exams (MEA, NECAP, or MHSA) and the state average is higher in the most recent two years than in the prior two years,

2. The average standardized difference between the cumulative scale score on the state exams and the score that would be predicted based on pupil characteristics and student scores in previous grades, is higher in the most recent two years than in the prior two years,[1]

3. The average standardized difference between the percentage of pupils at or above the *Meets* proficiency level and the state average is higher in the most recent two years than in the prior two years, and

4. The average standardized difference between the percentage of pupils at or above the *Partially Meets* proficiency level and the state average is higher in the most recent two years than in the prior two years.

5. For high schools, the average standardized difference between the four-year graduation rate and the state average is higher in the most recent two years than in the prior two years.

[1] In grade 4, the predicted score is based only on pupil characteristics, not student scores in previous grades.

an improving mean might be the result of large improvements in high scores combined with smaller decreases in lower scores, in effect, leaving lower performing students behind. Such a school should not be considered improving.

In view of that, a third and fourth criterion were added.

3. The average standardized difference between the percentage of pupils at or above the *Meets* proficiency level and the state average is higher in the most recent two years than in the prior two years, and

4. The average standardized difference between the percentage of pupils at or above the *Partially Meets* proficiency level and the state average is higher in the most recent two years than in the prior two years.

Including these criteria assures that an increasing number of students in schools identified as improving are meeting the state standards and that fewer students are not at least partially meeting the standards. In practice, most schools that meet the first criterion, that is, have an improving mean score, also have increasing percentages of students meeting proficiency standards. So adding these criteria should not be expected to rule out many schools. But if being identified as improving becomes a goal, having these criteria could affect the strategies schools use to achieve that goal. Common wisdom says that the surest, quickest way to improve mean scores is to focus on improving the most teachable students. Keeping the third and fourth criterion assures that schools cannot achieve improving status while leaving many underachieving students behind.

One final criterion for identifying improving schools was added, which applied to high schools only:

5. For high schools, the average standardized difference between the four-year graduation rate and the state average is higher in the most recent two years than in the prior two years.

This criterion assures that high schools are graduating their students and not simply having more of them drop out either before or after they take the SAT.

Note that each of the criteria for identifying improving schools is relative to a statewide average or to a predicted mean score. Ideally, performance criteria could be based on an absolute rather than a relative standard. However, there is no available, generally accepted absolute standard to use. Unless an absolute standard is developed, relative standards can function well in the criteria for identifying improving schools.

3

Application of Criteria for Identifying Improving Maine High Schools

Three approaches to defining Improving have been attempted using four or more of the five measures (using only math and reading scores) developed for identifying "Higher Performing" status high schools.

    a) First the annual average z-score was calculated using the following standardized criteria, SS, meets plus, partially meets plus, & graduation rate, creating a year z-score for each of the four years of data. The difference in prior year z-score (across 4 years) was calculated (1011 z-score minus 0809 z-score, 0809 z-score minus 0708 z-score, 0708 z-score minus 0607 z-score). If the three differences within the year average z-scores of the three criteria were all positive, the school was considered improving.

This approach did not allow for many schools to receive the status of "Improving". Some fluctuation in results across time would be considered not significantly different from a previous result, such as having 89% of your students meeting standards one year and then 88.5% meeting the next. However mathematically this would be considered a drop as would a change from 89% to 80%. This approach was too sensitive to yearly fluctuations in results and was not used for the purposes of identifying "Improving" schools.

    b) Next each criteria, SS, meets plus, partially meets plus, & graduation rate was kept separate and differences were calculate. All differences within the criteria needed to be positive and all criteria changes needed to be positive to be considered "Improving".

This approach was also too restrictive in having a school meet all conditions.

    c) Averaging the first two years of data and the last two years of data within each criteria then calculate the difference between the two. This was done for all 5 criteria SS, SS better than peers, meets plus, partially meets plus, & graduation rate. If all 5 criteria differences were positive then the school may be considered "Improving".

This final approach allowed for all 5 criteria to be considered and for year to year fluctuations to be muted so that an overall positive, "Improving" trend could be observed and allowed for more schools to meet the criteria and qualify as "Improving".

Once the Improving High Schools were identified, the final step was selecting the case study schools. Several criteria were used in selecting a representative sample of high schools. These included: (1) school size; (2) geographic location; and (3) level of poverty. Application of these additional selection criteria resulted in the identification of five case study schools.

The list of identified improving high schools appears on subsequent pages.

School	Performance 11-12	Return 11-12	Efficiency 11-12	Performance 08-09	Return 08-09	Efficiency 08-09	Scale Score Better than State	Scale Score Better than Peers	Meeting or Exceeding % Better than State	Partially Meeting Plus % Better than State	Graduation Rate Better than State
1	Higher Performing	High Returns	More Efficient	Typical	High Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	1
2	Higher Performing	High Returns	More Efficient	Higher Performing	High Returns	Efficient	1	1	.	1	1
3	Higher Performing	High Returns	More Efficient	Higher Performing	High Returns	Efficient	1	1	1	1	.
4	Higher Performing	High Returns	More Efficient	Higher Performing	High Returns	Efficient	1	1	1	1	.
5	Higher Performing	High Returns	More Efficient	Higher Performing	High Returns	Efficient	1	1	1	.	. .
6	Higher Performing	High Returns	More Efficient	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	1
7	Higher Performing	High Returns	More Efficient	Higher Performing	High Returns	Efficient	1	1	1	1	1
8	Higher Performing	High Returns	More Efficient	Higher Performing	High Returns	Efficient	.	.	.	.	.
9	Higher Performing	High Returns	More Efficient	Typical	High Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	1
10	Higher Performing	High Returns	More Efficient	Higher Performing	High Returns	Efficient	.	1	1	.	1
11	Higher Performing	High Returns	More Efficient	Higher Performing	High Returns	Efficient	1	.	1	1	1
12	Higher Performing	Mixed Returns	Typical	Higher Performing	Mixed Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	1
13	Higher Performing	Low Returns	Typical	Higher Performing	Low Returns	Typical	1	1	.	1	.

Maine High School Improving Schools List 07/2012

School	Performance 11-12	Return 11-12	Efficiency 11-12	Performance 08-09	Return 08-09	Efficiency 08-09	Scale Score Better than State	Scale Score Better than Peers	Meeting or Exceeding % Better than State	Partially Meeting Plus % Better than State	Graduation Rate Better than State
14	Higher Performing	Low Returns	Typical	Higher Performing	Low Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	1
15	Higher Performing	Low Returns	Typical				.	.	.	.	1
16	Higher Performing	Low Returns	Typical				1	1	1	1	1
17	Higher Performing	Mixed Returns	Typical	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	1	1	1	.	1
18	Higher Performing	Mixed Returns	Typical	Higher Performing	Mixed Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	1
19	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	.	1	.	.	1
20	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	1	1	1	.	.
21	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	Lower Performing	Mixed Returns	Typical	.	.	1	1	.
22	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	.
23	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	1	.	1	1	.
24	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	1	.	.	.	1
25	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	.	1	.	.	1

School	Performance 11-12	Return 11-12	Efficiency 11-12	Performance 08-09	Return 08-09	Efficiency 08-09	Scale Score Better than State	Scale Score Better than Peers	Meeting or Exceeding % Better than State	Partially Meeting Plus % Better than State	Graduation Rate Better than State
26	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	.
27	Typical	High Returns	Typical		High Returns		1	1	1	1	1
28	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	.
29	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical		1	1	1	1
30	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	1
31	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	.
32	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	1
33	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Lower Performing	High Returns	Typical	1	.	1	1	.
34	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	1
35	Typical	Low Returns	Typical				.	.	.	.	.
36	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	1	.	1	1	.
37	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	.

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School	Performance 11-12	Return 11-12	Efficiency 11-12	Performance 08-09	Return 08-09	Efficiency 08-09	Scale Score Better than State	Scale Score Better than Peers	Meeting or Exceeding % Better than State	Partially Meeting Plus % Better than State	Graduation Rate Better than State
38	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	Higher Performing	Mixed Returns	Typical	1	.	.	1	.
39	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	1
40	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Inefficient	.	.	.	.	.
41	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Higher Performing	High Returns	Efficient	.	.	.	.	1
42	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	1	.	1	1	.
43	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	1	1	.	1	.
44	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	1
45	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	1
46	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	1	1	.	.	1
47	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	.	.	.	1	.
48	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	.	1	.	1	.
49	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	1	.	1	1	.
50	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Inefficient	1	1	1	.	.

School	Performance 11-12	Return 11-12	Efficiency 11-12	Performance 08-09	Return 08-09	Efficiency 08-09	Scale Score Better than State	Scale Score Better than Peers	Meeting or Exceeding % Better than State	Partially Meeting Plus % Better than State	Graduation Rate Better than State
51	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	1
52	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	Lower Performing	Mixed Returns	Typical	.	.	1	.	1
53	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	1	.	1	1	.
54	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	.
55	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	Lower Performing	Mixed Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	.
56	Typical	Low Returns	Typical				.	.	.	.	.
57	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	.	1	1	1	1
58	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	1	1	.	1	1
59	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	.
60	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Inefficient	1	.	1	1	.
61	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	1
62	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	.
63	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	1

9

School	Performance 11-12	Return 11-12	Efficiency 11-12	Performance 08-09	Return 08-09	Efficiency 08-09	Scale Score Better than State	Scale Score Better than Peers	Meeting or Exceeding % Better than State	Partially Meeting Plus % Better than State	Graduation Rate Better than State
64	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	.
65	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	1	.	1	1	1
66	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	.	.	1	1	1
67	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	1	.	1	1	.
68	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	Lower Performing	Mixed Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	1
69	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Inefficient	1	1	1	1	1
70	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	1	.	1	1	.
71	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	1
72	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	. .	.	.	.	.
73	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	.
74	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	Lower Performing	Mixed Returns	Typical	.	1	.	.	1
75	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	.

School	Performance 11-12	Return 11-12	Efficiency 11-12	Performance 08-09	Return 08-09	Efficiency 08-09	Scale Score Better than State	Scale Score Better than Peers	Meeting or Exceeding % Better than State	Partially Meeting Plus % Better than State	Graduation Rate Better than State
76	Typical	Low Returns	Typical				1	1	.	.	1
77	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Inefficient	1	1	1	1	.
78	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	1
79	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	.	.	.	1	.
80	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	.
81	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	1
82	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Inefficient	1	.	1	1	1
83	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	1
84	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	1
85	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	.
86	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	1	.	1	1	.
87	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	.
88	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Inefficient	1	.	.	1	1

School	Performance 11-12	Return 11-12	Efficiency 11-12	Performance 08-09	Return 08-09	Efficiency 08-09	Scale Score Better than State	Scale Score Better than Peers	Meeting or Exceeding % Better than State	Partially Meeting Plus % Better than State	Graduation Rate Better than State
89	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	.	1	1	.	.
90	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	1	1	1	.	1
91	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	1
92	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	1	.	.	1	1
93	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	.
94	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	1	.	1	1	1
95	Typical	High Returns	Typical	Typical	Mixed Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	.
96	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	.
97	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Inefficient	1	1	1	1	1
98	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	.	1	.	.	1
99	Typical						.	.	.	.	1
100	Lower Performing	High Returns	Typical	Typical	High Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	1
101	Lower Performing	Mixed Returns	Typical	Lower Performing	Mixed Returns	Typical	1	1	1	.	1

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School	Performance 11-12	Return 11-12	Efficiency 11-12	Performance 08-09	Return 08-09	Efficiency 08-09	Scale Score Better than State	Scale Score Better than Peers	Meeting or Exceeding % Better than State	Partially Meeting Plus % Better than State	Graduation Rate Better than State
102	Lower Performing	Mixed Returns	Typical				.	.	.	.	.
103	Lower Performing	Mixed Returns	Typical	Lower Performing	Mixed Returns	Typical	1	1	1	.	.
104	Lower Performing	Mixed Returns	Typical	Lower Performing	Mixed Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	.
105	Lower Performing	High Returns	Typical	Lower Performing	Mixed Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	.
106	Lower Performing	High Returns	Typical	Lower Performing	High Returns	Typical	1	1	1	1	1
107	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Less Efficient	Typical	Low Returns	Typical	.	.	.	.	.
108	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Less Efficient	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Inefficient	.	.	1	.	1
109	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Less Efficient	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Inefficient	.	.	.	.	.
110	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Less Efficient	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Inefficient	1	1	1	1	.
111	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Less Efficient				.	.	.	.	.
112	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Less Efficient	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Inefficient	1	.	1	.	.
113	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Less Efficient	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Inefficient	1	1	1	.	1

School	Performance 11-12	Return 11-12	Efficiency 11-12	Performance 08-09	Return 08-09	Efficiency 08-09	Scale Score Better than State	Scale Score Better than Peers	Meeting or Exceeding % Better than State	Partially Meeting Plus % Better than State	Graduation Rate Better than State
114	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Less Efficient	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Inefficient	.	.	.	1	.
115	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Less Efficient	Typical	High Returns	Typical	1	.	1	1	.
116	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Less Efficient	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Inefficient	1	1	1	1	.
117	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Less Efficient	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Inefficient	1	1	.	1	.
118	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Less Efficient			.	1	1	1	1	1
119	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Less Efficient	Lower Performing	Low Returns	Inefficient	.	.	.	.	.
120							.	.	.	.	1
121							1	.	.	1	1
122											1
123							1	.	1	1	.
124							1	.	.	1	1
125							1	.	1	1	.
126							.	.	.	.	.

Maine High School Improving Schools List 07/2012

School	Performance 11-12	Return 11-12	Efficiency 11-12	Performance 08-09	Return 08-09	Efficiency 08-09	Scale Score Better than State	Scale Score Better than Peers	Meeting or Exceeding % Better than State	Partially Meeting Plus % Better than State	Graduation Rate Better than State
127							1	.	1	1	.
128							.	.	.	.	1
129							.	.	.	.	.
130							1	.	1	1	.

MEPRI FY2012 Workplan Product Deliverables: B.2 Product

Five field site high school case studies were conducted. Following a preliminary review of materials on the five high schools, and subsequent to interviews with the principals, site visits were conducted at each of the five high schools. The schedules for these visits appear on the following pages.

Once the site visits were completed, case studies were created for each of the five high schools. These case studies include the materials contained in the MEPRI FY2102 Workplan Products B.3 and B.4.

2012 Schedule for USM Improving High Schools Study Site Visit - School 1 High School

Time	Researcher 1	Researcher 2
7:30 to 7:45	Quick Tour of the Building	
7:45 to 8:30	Teaching Staff Focus Group - S. Manhart, M. Ditzel, B. Johnson, Q. Donahue, D. Balentine, V. Maurais	
8:30 to 9:10	Assistant Principal - David Greenier	Staff Focus Group - Leo Smith, Liz Macone, Marie Caldwell, Dan Stewart
9:19 to 9:35	Student Focus Group - 9th grade	Student Focus Group - 12th Grade
9:39 to 10:00	Classroom Observation - Lisa Scofield, English Grammar - juniors and seniors	
10:00 to 11:00	Meet with principal - identify key resources, ask questions, more tour of the building, other topics	
11:00 to 11:45	Researchers lunch and discuss	

11:45 to 12:00	Follow-up individual student interviews (students selected from prior focus groups by researchers)	T. Wagstaff - Guidance Director
12:00 to 12:40	Teaching Staff Focus Group - D. Daigle, B. Davenport, S. Morris, J. Plourde, B. Campbell	AP Physics observation
12:45-1:15	Classroom obs - O'Clair, Batty	school nurse - ms. parent
1:30-2:10	Interview district staff	interview parents, coaches school board members
2:20-3	observe joint student council & faculty council meeting	

Schedule for USM Improving High Schools Study Site Visit - School 2 High School

Times	Day 1	
	Researcher A	Researcher B
7:30-8:15 AM	Meet with principal – identify key resources; building tour; review schedule	
8:15-9	observe grade 9 team meeting - dsk room 11	classroom observations
9-9:40	researchers meet & debrief	
9:40-10:15	grade 12 student focus group interview	observe grade 10 team meeting - groening room
10-20-11:15	observe advisory researchers lunch & debrief	
11:15-12:30	classroom observations	non-teaching staff focus group interview

12:30-1:15	community members focus group interview: parents, save our school organization members, school board chair	interview community partners: technology center, Penobscot Marine Museum education coordinator
1:15-2	classroom observations	
2:15-3	observe after school tutoring sessions	

Schedule for USM Improving High Schools Study Site Visit - School 2 High School

Times	Day 2	
	Researcher A	Researcher B
7:00-7:30 AM	Before School Observations (Before School Help Sessions, Student Arrival, Student Group Meetings, etc.)	
7:30-8:10	classroom observations	school coach interview
8:15-9	observe grade 11 team meeting - room 3	student focus group - mixed grade levels
9:05-9:50	technology team interview - library conference rm	learning lab observations
10-10:20	Librarian Interview (20 minutes)	interview special education teachers
10:25-11:15	observe lunchtime intervention sessions	
11:30-12:15	researchers lunch & debrief	
1-2	interview Early College coordinator	interview guidance, social worker & VISTA coordinator
2-3	meet & debrief w/ school administration: ruth & brian	

Schedule for USM Improving High Schools Study Site Visit - School 3 High School

Times	Day 1	
	Researcher A	Researcher B
7:30-8:30 AM	Meet with principal – identify key resources; building tour; review schedule	
8:30-9:15	teaching staff interview: deagle, goodwin, cyr, doughty, irvine wood, small	Student Focus Group interview - 12th grade (media center)
9:15-9:30	Researchers Meet & debrief	
9:30-9:45	classroom observations	
9:45-10:15	asst principal interview: Jarvais	Professional Learning Observations
10:15-11	Andy McAuliff	non teaching staff interview: bigelow, norweg, barter, murray
11-11:45	researchers lunch & debrief	
11:45-12:15	school nurse	interview 9th grade PLG
12:30-1:15	community members interview: don s., watson, coach johnson	parent focus group interview: qualey, watson
1:15-2	district staff focus group interview	asst principal - lucille

Schedule for USM Improving High Schools Study Site Visit - School 3 High School

Times	Day 2	
	Researcher A	Researcher B
7:45-8:15 AM	Before School Observations (Before School Help Sessions, Student Arrival, Student Group Meetings, etc.)	
8:30-9:15	Teaching Staff Focus Group Interview : facteau, smith, sawyer, martin, farrington, libby, black, brackett	technology coordinator interview: d. hight
9:15 – 10:00	Classroom Observations	math tutors interview - library
10:00-10:30	special education focus group interview	12th grade students focus group interview - library
10:45-11:30	Librarian Interview (20 minutes)	teaching staff interview: watham, grenier, bates, irish, hopkins, white, lebrun, hylan
11:30-12:15	Researchers Lunch & Discuss	
12:15-1	alternative school program: Ron, Jen, Jim	classroom observations
1-1:45	Literacy Specialist: E. Wood	classroom observations
1:45-2:30	meet & debrief w/ school principal	

Schedule for USM Improving High Schools Study Site Visit - School 4 High School

Times	Day 1	
	Researcher A	Researcher B
7:30-8:30 AM	Meet with principal – identify key resources; building tour; review schedule	
8:30-9:27	observe drug/alcohol counselor session w/ junior class cafeteria	Brittany Ray - guidance
9:45 – 10:35	D. Silvernail meet w/ Supt Ramsay	classroom observations
10:00 - 11	Teacher Leader Interview - Conference room: emerson, holub & sprague	12th grade focus group
11-11:45	Classroom Observations	
11:50-12:30	researchers lunch & debrief	
12:30-1:15	interview art teacher	interview self contained special education teacher
1:15-2	classroom observations	
2:23 -4	observe grade 10 PLC meeting	

Schedule for USM Improving High Schools Study Site Visit - School 4 High School

Times	Day 2	
	Researcher A	Researcher B
7:00-7:30 AM	Before School Observations (Before School Help Sessions, Student Arrival, Student Group Meetings, etc.)	
7:45-8:45	Teaching Staff Focus Group Interview : english teachers	classroom observations
9:00 – 10:00	Classroom Observations	school nurse interview
10:0-10:30	review professional learning documents w/ teacher leaders	classroom observations
10:45-11:30	Librarian Interview (20 minutes)	classroom observations
11:30-12:15	Researchers Lunch & Discuss	
12:15-1	interview alternative education coordinator: Seacoast & EDGE	classroom observations
1-1:45	classroom observations	math & science teacher interviews
1:45-2:30	meet & debrief w/ school administration: Sawyer & Willey	

Schedule for USM Improving High Schools Study Site Visit - School 5 High School

Times	Day 1	
	Researcher A	Researcher B
7:30-8:30 AM	Meet with principal – identify key resources; building tour; review schedule	
8:30-9:40	Teaching Staff (classroom teachers, teaching ed techs, etc.) Focus Group Interview	12th grade student focus group
9:45 – 10:35	Researchers Meet & Debrief And Classroom Observations	
10:40 - 11	Asst. Principal Interview - Duane	Julie - Dean of Instruction
11-11:45	Classroom Observations	Non-teaching Staff (non-teaching ed techs, administrative assistants, etc.) Focus Group Interview: Eileen, Jen, Robin
11:50-12:40	School Nurse Interview (20 minutes)	Classroom Observations
12:45 - 1:35	Brian Smith, Alternative Education	
1:15-2	Community Members Focus Group	Teaching Staff Focus Group Interview: Rebecca, Julie, Phil, Robin, Kim
2-3	April Clifford - Technology Coord	
3-3:30	observer SIG leadership meeting	

Schedule for USM Improving High Schools Study Site Visit - School 5 High School

Times	Day 2	
	Researcher A	Researcher B
7:00-7:30 AM	Before School Observations (Before School Help Sessions, Student Arrival, Student Group Meetings, etc.)	
7:55-8:45	Teaching Staff Focus Group Interview : 9th grade academy team	Mixed Age Student Focus Group Interview
9:15 – 10:00	Classroom Observations	Professional Learning Observation
9:45-10:30	Special Education and Administrators Focus Group Interview: Sandy, Sarah (rm 208)	classroom observations
10:45-11:30	Librarian Interview (20 minutes)	classroom observations
11:30-12:15	Researchers Lunch & Discuss	
12:15-1	Professional Learning Observation	Mr. Burns
1-1:45	Teaching Staff Focus Group Interview	Guidance and Social Worker Interview
1:45-2:30	Administrator De-Brief Meeting: asst. supt Katrina Kane	

MEPRI FY2012 Workplan Product Deliverables: B.3 Product

Once the case study site visits were completed, data from interviews, observations, focus groups were complied and coded. This coded data appears in the following pages.

Table of Contents

Case study school 1

<u>Intellectual Work</u>

- Understanding:
    - strong level of teacher knowledge and skills demonstrated in class obs (62% 18/29 of obs said educator demonstrated understanding 60-100% of time)
    - content-based trimester themes
    - spelling and neatness were commonly assessed on rubrics
    - writing core skills assessed across subject areas
    - students engaging with reading texts in most subject areas, some texts offered based on NWEA scores
    - rubrics and product descriptors usually include criteria for "research" "summary" and assessment levels indicate students should "demonstrate deep understanding of the topic" "show clear understanding of the text"
    - some tasks have rubrics that ask students to "evaluate, interpret or analyze" to earn "exceeds" standard, but to "meet" students are only expected to "demonstrate clear understanding of the text and task"
    - most product descriptors and tasks describe how to earn "meet" but are not explicit in directions about how to engage in higher order thinking, even when that is the expectation to earn "exceeds" in the rubric
    - product descriptor/task expectations ask students to "summarize," apply to their own life and ask (not attempt to answer) questions
    - technology is used purposefully, does not distract from learning
    - 62% of observations (18 out of 29) indicated educators demonstrated understanding of core skills and/or content knowledge 60-100% of the time
    - 90% of observations (26 out of 29) indicated that the learning activity's primary expectation was understanding
    - (From the assessed student work we looked at, there was little evidence that the instructor used the rubric language to assess work.)
    - (Some question as to how much time is spent on scaffolding skills. Example: in one class, the expectation that each group of students were to research an agricultural cycle and "teach" it to the class. The "teaching" component merely translated to the group reading information off their poster--some of which they misunderstood or left out-- and then offering their classmates a crossword puzzle as their "assessment.")

- Transformation:
    - some assignments/tasks ask students to engage in higher order thinking such as synthesis or evaluation, but sometimes this part of the task is optional (ie Vietnam War Video Reflection)
    - samples of assessed student work show that students can earn "exceeds = evaluation, interpretation, analyzing" without significant evidence of analysis or evaluation; ex. The Wounded Wolf wksht student earned B+ while being marked fully correct for only 4 out of 7 questions and demonstrating little to no

transformation (the questions not marked fully correct were three of the four that asked for transformational thinking)
  - 20% of observations (6 out of 29) indicated some students were demonstrating transformation 60-100% of the time; 59% of observations indicated some students were demonstrating transformation less than 25% of the time.
  - only one observation indicated that the learning activity's primary expectation was transformation; 45% showed some expectation; 45% showed little or no expectation

- Sharing:
  - Of the 83% of students engaged, most were sharing information in some way. In our observations, we saw examples of small and large group discussion, presenting, collaborative small group work, writing, and student-teacher conferences.

Equity

- most tasks and units are aligned to common standards, some common rubrics
- rubric format is uniform throughout school
- neatness is commonly assessed across content areas
- United Arts experience is shared for all grade levels and all teams
- all mainstreamed students are scheduled for at least math every day and ELA every other day (some students have additional ELA, G/T students use scheduled math class with team as study hall and get math instruction during pull-out)
- students appeared to be pulled out of core courses (math, science, ELA, social studies) frequently to do other projects or experiences
- writing is expected across the content areas
- G/T and foreign languages are scheduled during intervention time
- observations indicate the students feel comfortable and safe with adults and within the physical plant
- building is clean, well-kept, well-utilized, bright and modern
- 1-to-1 laptops for all students ??
- most frequently observed class size was 11-20 students (20 out of 29 observations)
- observations indicated that teachers frequently worked individually with students and were highly engaged in the learning activity: 48% (16 out of 29) of observations identified teachers "conferencing" or "facilitating" which usually included one-on-one instruction or guidance; all but one observation (28 out of 29, 97%) identified teachers "conferencing," "facilitating," "monitoring," or "presenting"; one observation identified a teacher "working independently"

3

- observations indicated students were engaged in the learning task at hand: 83% of observations (24 out of 29) identified a "majority" or more students were engaged; 24% of observations (10 out of 29) indicated "all" or "all but a few" students were engaged
- (The multiple team structures [7 teams total] and lack of embedded time for team and content-teacher collaboration could create inequity for students. Conceivably, students' journeys through Maranacook Middle School are remarkably different--different does not always mean equitable.)

Case study school 2

Intellectual Work

- *Some teachers use scaffolding approach to teach skills. For example, 9th graders came in with poor writing skills. English teacher focused instruction on building effective paragraphs first before moving onto writing effective essays. Students then used a graphic organizer that prompts student for the appropriate components for each paragraph (I.e. introductory paragraph should include a hook sentence, at least one transition sentence, and then a thesis statement).

- *To teach some literary analysis, 9th grade English teacher used a scaffolded lesson to introduce the idea of symbolism. Students had to think of a symbol to represent themselves. Then, after presenting to class, discussed other items with symbolic content (i.e. U.S. flag, etc.,)Then, the class moved on to a common text (short story) to analyze for symbolism and look for patterns common to the author's work. Then, as an assessment, students had to select a short story by the same author, analyze it for common symbols, and then write an analysis essay.

- *In an English class that focused on building vocabulary, students were given a "story starter", a beginning sentence purposefully left open ended for students to expand upon. The sentence contained one vocab word from the class' common list. In pairs, students had to finish the story, writing for 25 minutes. They also were challenged to include one new vocab word per sentence. Students referred to their vocabulary folder which featured on the front a visual for each word as a reminder to them of each word's meaning.

- *In another English class, students were asked to read a biography (student choice) and write an evaluation of the book and the author's writing style using at least two or more outside critical reviews. They had to consider their analysis of the work's effectiveness with the viewpoint expressed in the criticism and decide on their own viewpoint.

- learning activity
    - transformation: little (4), some (9), primary (5)
    - understanding: primary (12)
- educators

- o understanding: 75% of obs demonstrate strong understanding
- o transformation: 75% of obs demonstrate at least some transformation
- o role: conference (10), facilitate (5), present (4), monitor (4), work ind (2)
- professional development - adults intellectual work
  - o research schools like you datawise
  - o set standards (must reflect key skills, not just content) > re-align curriculum > align grading criteria to meet standards > develop interventions ... phased in to 9th grade first, not consensus that this was best strategy
  - o celebrate success: "look everywhere for evidence of growth"
  - o DuFour leadership workshop
  - o one hour collaborative prof time w/out students every other day: use protocols to look at tasks, rubrics and quality of completed student work; grade level meetings to discuss individual students and common assignments; PLC 1x/month; iWalkthroughs regularly ??; parent meetings w/ team members; backward curriculum planning, re-evaluation of materials in place using data and student work
  - o 40 min every other day individual or common, same as above or means some prof time every day???
  - o fist to five consensus building protocol
  - o weakness - technology pd involvement, out of date hardware disengages many teachers "we've hit a plateau" "not able to sustain innovation with cuts in budget, cuts in hardware"
  - o apply vs add: apply new research, literature, tools to existing focus, don't add more
  - o supt: "provide [staff] with every professional learning opportunity that you can" "give them the opportunity to learn" "take time to explain"; lots of visits to other schools for focused purpose then pd to share
- student learning - student intellectual work
  - o 75% of obs indicate at least some transformation work by students
  - o 90% of obs indicate students demonstrating understanding

- 85% of obs indicate a majority or more of students engaged: all (30%), all but few (30%), majority (25%), less than half (15%)
- course of studies requires students to meet standards of core skills (writing, reading, math) to earn diploma > in-school interventions are req'd for any student not meeting any standard on summative assessment
- students meeting all standards prior to curriculum completion of unit may opt for "Honors Challenge"; students and parents indicate that this is often additional work, not necessarily higher level or more in-depth work
- students VERY familiar with rubrics, standards, grades, etc. "students take part in their learning"
- over half students engaged in at least one "multiple pathways" learning opportunity (online hs course, internship, early college @ Hutchinson Ctr, senior experience project w/ blog & annotated biblio

Equity

- *the school uses extensive interventions to ensure all students meet standards. Interventions such as Lab, lunchtime interventions, and academies extend the time and teaching for students to meet standards. As one student said, the interventions "allow learning to really happen."
- additional interventions include: ALEKS math - half course for students not meeting standards or benchmarks on standardized tests; summer or vacation "institutes" for students with standards not met; "Academy" = after school help sessions
- skill-based interventions: RTI = strength of system according to numerous members of school community; but effort-based interventions is still "a problem not yet worked out" - still enroll students in course or ½ course to re-do credit.
- use GoogleDocs accessible by all staff to keep track of individual students progress towards meeting standards
- *students can meet standards in creative ways that may be more in tune with their individual career goals and interests through partnerships with the Penobscot Maritime Museum, Technical Center**, Americorps VISTA (extension learning opportunities & internships). Example: senior students was enrolled in pre-school program at the technical center and need a fine arts credit. Through the flexibility of her teachers, she was able to meet her fine arts standards through an arts-centered portfolio documenting her early childhood work.
- *Students are heterogeneously grouped 9-12.
- *Raising aspirations for students is evident in program offerings: METS**program, Early College, access to the Hutchinson Center where students can enroll in college classes, online college classes, Americorps VISTA. The school is raising "aspirations for students to have aspirations." Evidence: The school has a 100% turnout rate for last year's SAT Saturday.
- *Attitude of school leadership: every staff and faculty member is valued as a potential leader who brings a set of gifts to the table. Examples:

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special Ed. Teacher and Ed techs are invited to participate in team meetings, assistant librarian collaborating with teachers.
- *Special education students are mainstreamed in common core classes.
- *All students are required to take 4 years of math, English, science and social studies.
- still working to align technical/vocation center standards (currently students can meet English standards in "Carpentry" course)
- sacrificed electives to ensure core skills by all students

Efficient Use of Resources

- *use of grant money is purposeful and aligns with school vision.
- *all staff and faculty are valued in terms of their strengths and what they can offer students. Examples: Assistant Librarian runs a mentoring program with high school and middle school students. Ed. techs are encouraged to participate in team meetings in order to familiarize themselves with the content standards and curriculum. This way, their work with individual students is more efficient.
- build grants to extend and enhance existing programs/goals, not grant hopping
- community alumni group "Save our Schools" raised $1.2 mil to build new school facility in 2002: "an opportunity for staff to have a more professional & students to have a more respected place to do their work" - community member; downside - school is only at about 50% capacity now, unable to sustain funding for bldg, may need to consolidate with neighboring hs
- technology-based intervention systems saved long-term costs: online texts, testing, etc.

Visible Change

- * In 1990s, Site A H.S. was a more traditional school--tracking, traditional grading system, etc. The general perception was that the high school was not providing for all kids. In 1999*, the school lost its NEASC accreditation because of their inadequate facility.
- *Community group "Save our Schools" rallied and raised enough money (matched 50%** by MBNA) to improve school facility and build a brand new wing.
- *School still had poor data...school received CSRD grant to make structural changes: block scheduling, heterogeneous grouping, 9/10 teaming, and deeper examination of practice.
- * New principal in 2004** (check year?) began researching standards-based education: visited other schools, formed leadership teams, created time for professional development, used data to inform where greatest needs were, maintained dialogue with other SBE schools and educators, joined the Great Schools Partnership cohort.
- * Roll-out of SBE was incremental--a gradual process of holding kids to rigorous standards and instituting skill-based and effort-based interventions.
- * Robust intervention system is timely and direct.
- * Cut back on electives to focus students on core content courses where they could see more improvement in skills.
- * Stopped buying textbooks. Used data from computer-based adaptive assessment tools to focus instruction.
- * Also used data to track progress, pinpoint areas of curriculum need, and inform professional development time.
- * Adopted a skills-based curriculum model that allowed for more depth, rather than breadth.
- * Embedded on-going, focused professional development time for all core content teachers 9-12.
- * In-school data showed fewer kids repeating courses and graduation rate improving. State-wide data show steady improvement in SAT scores.

- took many aspects of DuFours "Whatever it Takes"
- researched schools w/ similar data (urban, hispanic::traditional, homogeneous) > developed & set standards > re-aligned curriculum to standards (took 2 years) > aligned grading system to standards - hi failure rate > developed intervention system

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- "everything we did initially failed" - former principal; "first few years were really hard" - teacher leader
- new look to interventions: didn't pull from class, did in addition to class; technology-based on-line testing, texts, etc.; Accuplacer 9th grade
- developed Community Counsel 2006: community, business, students, staff; trained in mediation; coordinated volunteers, contributed to writing standards; "[the principal] found a voice in the community council; I watched him grow" - community & school board member
- graduation ceremony re-organized to be more "student-centered": speakers from student and staff
- 1990's created heterogeneous grouping (staff initiated) & inclusive special ed programs (classroom differentiation vs. pull out)
- have success stories testify: 2-3 kids pilot program then present to Board, staff & community; document turnaround student examples

- **Focused, Effective Leadership**
- *Former principal had clear vision and expectations with the implementation of a standards-based curriculum.
- *Former principal provided his teachers with research readings, professional development, and formed leadership teams
- *Former principal was action-plan oriented in his introduction of SBE to his faculty and community. He incrementally implemented SBE. The school's current junior class (2013) will be the first class to graduate with a complete 4 years of SBE.
- *Former principal valued all faculty and staff for what they could bring to the table. As one staff member said, the principal's effective leadership style rested on the belief that "every staff member is a potential leader in terms of instruction and [intellectual] gifts."
- *Current principal encourages the use of data (generated from iWalkthroughs and/or other state data) to generate discussion and inform instruction.

- "a culture of school leaders" - time for professional work w/out students, focused pd, awareness of grants (GSP school coach - staff generated grant) that "build on the work of any previous grants" and develop consistency; leadership ids key players to build consensus
- when something comes up "we have a conversation about it" - develop collaboration & collegiality: 63 of 65 staff members involved in developing "academy" (=after school help sessions, req'd for those not mtg standards)
- former principal led process of change: researched schools w/ similar data (urban, hispanic::traditional, homogeneous) > developed & set standards > re-aligned curriculum to standards (took 2 years) > aligned grading system to standards - hi failure rate > developed intervention system (current system = 3rd, first two systems were deemed insufficient by staff and leadership through analysis of data and reflection so added more time for students to succeed and used DuFours model "Whatever it Takes"

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- staff received lots of formal and informal feedback on practice and student performance: iWalkthroughs, "culture of school leaders", PLC protocols to discuss student work, rubrics and assignments
- improvement was "a very intentional process" by a "visionary principal" - asst. supt.
- change always included "a conversation about it" with staff, leaders, community and often students; fist to five consensus req'd for most major implementations;
- supt: "can't mandate it" "little steps" until you've "got everything solid"; when you reach critical mass of support, all a save-face way of getting on board for holdouts; "take the opportunity, give the opportunity for people to learn, take time to explain"; work to get staff on board, then work together to get community on board, then use community to keep staff on board

Thorough, Sustained Professional Learning

- *Teaming on the 9/10 level is highly collaborative. Teams meet regularly--every other day for 40 minutes--for collaborative work.
- significant amount of consistent, regular professional time without students/duties: 1 hr every other day for common/collaborative time; 40 min every day for individual or common time
- *Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are in place for teams where specific protocols are used to look at student work and rubrics in a deeper, more meaningful way.
- *All teachers encouraged to attend their local content conferences as well as the national ones.
- *Teachers encouraged to share their work with colleagues on a national level. For example, a science teacher was encouraged to design a workshop featuring a successful unit she's taught for several years on Rachel Carson's Silent Spring. She presented this workshop at the National Science Teachers Association in San Francisco. Also, a team presented at the Coalition for Essential Schools Fall Forum in New Orleans and San Francisco.

- paid professional learning opportunities significant & consistent: summer institutes, release time for collaborative or professional work
- technology pd is exception: tech coordinator said four years ago there was significant innovation but no there is no designated pd b/c "not able to sustain innovation with cuts in budget & cuts in hardware" ; tech integrator available for individual help whenever needed but same people access her availability and others just don't use tech in classroom "we've hit the plateau"

School Focus = Student and Adult Learning

- *School vision is evident in practice: "We breathe it." For example: "Supporting the development of self-worth and self-confidence by providing multiple pathways for learning" is evident in the various programs and opportunities (Technical Center, Early College, etc.,). As well as: "expecting proficiency in standards-based core academic experiences" is evident in the graduation requirements, standards are posted in many if not all classrooms, students may not advance to next grade level until all standards are passed with at least a "3" (meeting the standard).
- *All core content teachers 9-12 are expected to participate in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) where they can norm student work and tweak rubrics, as well as examine and reflect on their own pedagogy.
- * There is a culture designed for continuous improvement, not complacency. Example: a leadership group of teachers advises principal on issues that affect teaching and learning and school culture. It is evident that this group reflects a continuous effort to improve. Teachers spoke of their aspirations and efforts to make learning more student-centered, improve school culture with a reinstated Honor Roll, school-wide recognition assembly, and a new cell phone use policy.
- observations indicated very little time during school day is not structured for learning; no early release/late arrival; small study halls/interventions with direct teacher interaction with all students
- observed PLC in which grade-level teachers were using feedback protocol to discuss research paper assignment brought to the table by English teacher: teacher asked if too much specificity in rubric and product descriptor took away from students ownership, was student work that appeared to be analytical really just reflecting the teacher's ideas because "standards make us do a lot of thinking for the students"?; assignment, rubric and assessed student samples were analyzed by all teachers present; teachers responded, "if I was a student..."
- time within school day for teachers and administrators to work with school coach surrounding curriculum, grant writing, and direct student interaction

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- professional development - adults intellectual work
  - research schools like you datawise
  - set standards (must reflect key skills, not just content) > re-align curriculum > align grading criteria to meet standards > develop interventions ... phased in to 9th grade first, not consensus that this was best strategy
  - celebrate success: "look everywhere for evidence of growth"
  - DuFour leadership workshop
  - one hour collaborative prof time w/out students every other day: use protocols to look at tasks, rubrics and quality of completed student work; grade level meetings to discuss individual students and common assignments; PLC 1x/month; iWalkthroughs regularly ??; parent meetings w/ team members; backward curriculum planning, re-evaluation of materials in place using data and student work
  - 40 min every other day individual or common, same as above or means some prof time every day???
  - fist to five consensus building protocol
  - weakness - technology pd involvement, out of date hardware disengages many teachers "we've hit a plateau" "not able to sustain innovation with cuts in budget, cuts in hardware"
  - apply vs add: apply new research, literature, tools to existing focus, don't add more
  - supt: "provide [staff] with every professional learning opportunity that you can" "give them the opportunity to learn" "take time to explain"; lots of visits to other schools for focused purpose then pd to share

Case study school 3

<u>Intellectual Work</u>

- some teachers' use of technology (ex. Moodle) to track student progress and then use data to inform instruction.
- some instructors' use of higher level questioning (how? why? In what ways...? etc.,) in the facilitation of discussions or learning tasks to push kids to infer, classify, compare/contrast, and/or identify cause and effect.
- district literacy focus since 2002 (Maine Literacy Project - UMaine) & hs/ms literacy initiative since 2006- reading for past few years: Read180 grades 6-12 (50-75 students per year involved in hs, since 2009); NWEA test 2x/yr provides "more informed placement" of students in teacher recommended ability grouped courses; goal = lexile level 1,000 for 9th grade
- 4th quarter portfolio in English - revise 1st quarter work, reflect, organize
- 2006-08 external literacy audit (Public Consulting Group) instigated cross-curriculum building wide literacy work but not been formally maintained, just share materials & ideas via email now there is no pd or common time
- CorePlus math encourages dept collaboration, use subs to provided embedded time to compare and analyze student data & develop, revisit all common summative assessments; asst. princ - math has shown success b/c "focus on curriculum instead of textbooks"
- grad req = 3 credits of math; id students need intervention, get extra 40 min every other day of math instruction
- Mental Math practice for past 4 years - daily quick activity to start class with basic skills refresher
- technology available - 9 classroom laptop carts (5 macbook carts); all math teachers use SmartBoard or Promethean Planet whiteboard program
- tech integrator provides "Project Lab" pd for teachers 1 day/wk after school to give individual tech assistance or train on new programs/software, etc.
- students say most classes use Cornell Notes method/template: take notes, talk about material, reflect on ideas, draw conclusions
- students in voc and upper level classes say drafting essays is not req'd, can just write one/final draft but can revise corrected assignment if don't get grade want (but sometimes revision is not required)
- classroom observations n= 23: 78% of obs recorded educator demonstrating understanding 61-100% of time; 48% of obs recorded educator demonstrating transformation 25-60% of time; 26% of obs recorded educator demonstrating transformation 61-100% of time;
- classroom observations n= 23: 61% of obs recorded some students demonstrating understanding 61-100% of time; 0% obs indicated students demonstrating transformation 61-100% of time; 74% obs indicated students demonstrating transformation less than 25% of time (70%) or not engaged in activity (4%); 26% indicated students demonstrating transformation 25-60% of time
- classroom observations n= 23: 30% obs indicated "some expectation that most students demonstrate transformation"; 70% obs indicated "very little or no expectation that students demonstrate transformation"; 70% obs indicate learning activity's primary expectation requires students to demonstrate understanding
- educator role: (n=23) conferencing 3, facilitating 7, presenting 12, monitoring 3

Equity

- Various programs/organizations such as the SAHS After-school Program, Homework Lab, Summer School (using computer programs to identify when student has met standards, then they're done with summer school "shifting summer school from seat time to learning time"), Winter School (Feb & Apr vacation spent supplementing or completing work) in-school suspension, and Extended Learning Opportunity program help to address students' high level of needs.
- ELO (funded by 21st Century Grant) in its infant stages, implemented just a year ago. Example projects thus far include: a computer help-site at the Grist Mill in downtown Site S, staffed by students who help local wheat farmers integrate technology into their practices; high school students mentoring middle school students; Digital Graphic Arts program at Tech Center working with downtown businesses to start up and/or improve the look and efficacy of their websites. but regular teachers & guidance feel it is marginalized, are skeptical of "how are we going to catalogue growth?"
- After-school program (21st Century Grant) serves school community's neediest kids. Approximately 100 students--mostly low-performing, at-risk--over the course of the year participate in after-school program which focuses on community service work. As the coordinator explains: "We are the constant for kids. We don't fluctuate. We are in the building...we're visible."
- Having a full-time nurse--instituted 5 years ago--helps to keep kids in school.
- In-school suspension has improved student attendance and decreased suspensions overall. It addresses those students who miss too much school because of behavioral difficulties. Students who commit non-violent infractions are required to be in school in a staffed detention room (funded by grant) where they are expected to do homework. Teacher facilitates academic help for these students. Students who are suspended because of fighting get 5 days suspension--only one of those days is spent at home. The other 4 are spent in the staffed detention room. In-school suspension sends important message to kids: school is important and you're welcome in the classroom BUT you're not allowed to hinder others' education.
- Early stages of team model at 9th grade level (not true team model of shared students however; out of 80-90 students, only 12-14 are shared by more than one teacher)) has allowed for more common planning, collaboration, and academic experiences for students.
- Math: Use of Moodle allows teachers to track student progress and use data to inform instruction; 40 minutes of Daily Algebra implemented 3 years ago allows students to make up work, receive additional help, and engage in skills work to close gaps. Daily Mental Math activity in all courses - quick daily activity to start class time that reviews/refreshes basic skills. highly qualified volunteer math tutors available to students 3-4 days per week.
- Soc. St./Geography: Teachers able to collaborate on and implement common assessments. Each teacher has a Consultant class (Spec Ed & low performers mixed group, 3 teachers per class). recently re-wrote curriculum, collaborated with dept and ms teachers. two teachers each teach same course so can work together. 80% common assessments, including portfolio
- English: Common curriculum at College Options level. Some core texts include The Odyssey, Romeo & Juliet, Night. All levels incorporate standard core skills such as elements of a short

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story, and grammar goals.4th quarter portfolio in English - revise 1st quarter work, reflect, organize. (appears to be a common practice).

- Science: Currently restructuring vertical alignment of science courses. This year, Biology is now offered at the 9th grade level to address previous gaps in content knowledge by the time students had reached 11th and 12th grade. This has allowed 9th grade teachers to work together more.
- Literacy initiative: In 2006, implemented literacy program Read 180. One group of teachers identified this initiative as one of the school's strengths. One science teacher claimed it made a huge difference in her instruction. She noticed immediate student engagement and it created an awareness for her of content vocabulary and common language. However, literacy has lost focus b/c of all other initiatives.
- Special Education Department was recognized many times throughout our visit by teachers, staff, and parent groups as being a strength at the school: the spec. ed teachers "go above and beyond" and incorporate the "checks and balances" necessary to provide equitable access to regular education. One mother cited how her son's experience with special education empowered him to learn self-advocacy skills.
- 7-12 literacy specialist, Read180, Scholastic Reading Inventory, NWEA 2x/yr, and requiring teacher recommendation has led to "more informed placement" of students in ability grouped course levels
- expanded AP offerings in last 8 years, advertise & encourage state online program AP4ALL
- technology available - 9 classroom laptop carts (5 macbook carts); all math teachers use SmartBoard or Promethean Planet whiteboard program
- tech integrator provides "Project Lab" pd for teachers 1 day/wk after school to give individual tech assistance or train on new programs/software, etc.
- Parents expressed concern that guidance over emphasizes in-state universities and is not aware of other more rigorous institutions, therefore students who depend solely on guidance for college counseling do not have access to equitable options.
- We didn't see or investigate the Tech Center but it was referenced frequently by staff & students as a positive experience with numerous pathways and areas of study.
- significant disparity in academic expectations from various levels of students: student, "It's okay for consultant classes to not do homework." teacher, "Some of our students just cannot produce work." "It's out of our hands." guidance, "There is always a safety net for students who choose not to do work."
- Social Worker regular student sessions continue year round at school, even through vacations and summer

Efficiency

- Use of grant money (21st Century, Maine Content Literacy Project, etc.,)
- Beginning stages of teaming model at 9th grade level allows teachers to find some common time to collaborate and establish common experiences for students.
- use of technology/computer-based programs to remediate instead of repetition of material/course. use Read180, NWEA, PLATO, Accussess, Accuplacer to assess individual student proficiency and set performance goals for remediation. Remediation is then complete when student reaches established goal vs. having to put in specific seat time.
- two asst. principals split student load alphabetically to focus on same group of kids for four years. AD position cut - one AP is now also AD.
- only hire ed techs for Spec Ed.
- access numerous grants due to large percent and population of f/r lunch students. but could be more focused in obtaining grants, a bit of evidence of grant hopping.
- expanding dual enrollment for senior students to earn college & hs credit.
- reduced numbers of students using volunteer tutors over past several years, seems to be a stigma of being "dumb" or "overachiever"
- technology - recycle older hardware to where is it used more basic level and give new hardware to trained, enthusiastic staff that will make use of its more sophisticated features. tech integrator, "put the machine where it best fits."; vocational students do some technical repairs & installation; 1-to-1 laptops for all teachers; use internal teacher technology experts to train staff
- teachers say investment in initiatives needs to be more depth v. breadth: "initiatives are fine as far as they go but the most value is put into what is new, not what is working" "a lot of the initiatives could be great if resources and focus remained involved" "nothing gets finished"
- No logical connection between initiatives; general lack of VISION: "vision for initiatives not clear" "initiatives die because of lack of vision" "buckshot approach" vs. "laser approach" "culture of latest and greatest bandwagon"
- Lack of faculty ownership of initiatives; not a lot of prof.dev.: "we feel like the rat on the treadmill" "decisions are made before we know about them..." "change comes like a sledgehammer"
- Scheduling was cited by some teachers as being a hindrance to the implementation of some of these initiatives. Regarding the ninth grade "Team": "not a lot of attention paid to scheduling..." Regarding change in general: "the schedule is a big issue"

Visible Change

- Freshman Teaming focus accompanied by changing classroom assignments, creating grade level wings of building, this has since been abandoned and classroom organization is now a hybrid of old structure and new
- Changes to interventions and remediation: use of technology/computer-based programs to remediate instead of repetition of material/course. use Read180, NWEA, PLATO, Accussess, Accuplacer to assess individual student proficiency and set performance goals for remediation. Remediation (summer school) is then complete when student reaches established goal vs. having to put in specific seat time. on-going remediation for reading = additional 40 min course every other day.
- Full-time nurse--instituted 5 years ago--has helped to keep kids in school.
- In-school suspension has improved student attendance and number of suspensions has decreased. It addresses those students who miss too much school because of behavioral difficulties. Students who commit non-violent infractions are required to be in school in a staffed detention room (funded by grant) where they are expected to do homework. Teacher facilitates academic help for these students. Students who are suspended because of fighting get 5 days suspension--only one of those days is spent at home. The other 4 are spent in the staffed detention room. In-school suspension sends important message to kids: school is important and you're welcome in the classroom BUT you're not allowed to hinder others' education.
- Early stages of team model at 9th grade level (not true team model of shared students however; out of 80-90 students, only 12-14 are shared by more than one teacher) has allowed for more common planning, collaboration, and academic experiences for students.
- 2006-08 external literacy audit (Public Consulting Group) instigated cross-curriculum building wide literacy work but not been formally maintained, just share materials & ideas via email now there is no pd or common time

Focused, Effective Leadership

- supt said principal was "kid oriented" "good at identifying the issue" and using data but also had to "guide his idea a minute"
- administrative leadership (principals, supts) appear to be very familiar with and regularly use data to inform decisions supt "you can't do it without data"
- teachers say leadership "doesn't thank people" "nothing gets finished" "no consequences [for students or staff] for not following standards" "I feel powerless...it's out of our hands" "we just can't bring ourselves to do another new thing" "it concerns me how we approach collaboration" "the data is pushing us instead of the student" "teachers want to be involved" "the *academic* reforms and initiatives are what do work" "a lot of initiatives could be great" "we don't feel valued...we don't see that our voice is heard"
- Teacher-leaders for the Extended Learning Opportunity, after-school and in-school suspension programs credited the principal for driving and supporting these initiatives.
- teachers indicated that department heads and content department teams are "valuable and concrete" although meet "inconsistently"
- Literacy Specialist led literacy initiative since 2006. focused first five years on reading - content literacy strategies, external literacy audit, reading assessment, teaches Read180 courses at 9th grade. she said they "frontloaded too much" for first couple of years so they "tried to pare down" and made "literacy was the professional development focus 2007-09"
- Technology Integration Specialist - finds new technology & pilots w/ capable teachers then if improves findings offers to whole staff; provides numerous optional pd training opportunities: "GoogleDinner" = dinner & Google options training; "technology IEP" for individual teachers (includes CEUs); after school "Project Lab" 1 day/wk work individually w/ teachers "I try to meet everyone where they're at"

Thorough, Sustained Professional Learning

- Literacy focus: district wide since 2002, 7-12 Literacy Intiative since 2006, focused literacy pd in hs 2007-09, Maine Literacy Project grant since 2002 used efficiently to hire teaching specialist in hs and have external literacy audit in 2006, affected classroom practice w/ content literacy strategies and reading instruction techniques seen in practice during observations.
- Technology - Technology Integration Specialist - finds new technology & pilots w/ capable teachers then if improves findings offers to whole staff; provides numerous optional pd training opportunities: "GoogleDinner" = dinner & Google options training; "technology IEP" for individual teachers (includes CEUs); after school "Project Lab" 1 day/wk work individually w/ teachers "I try to meet everyone where they're at"; available to district staff 24 hrs on-call even in summer
- Math dept worked w/ Pam Buffington (EDC?) to integrate technology - all math classrooms have SmartBoard or Promethean boards that appeared to be used regularly by educators; use own time outside of contractual day to meet as dept to develop common summative assessments, analyze student performance data; Moodle training: OAR grant provides $ for prof. dev. for teachers but teachers must seek it out individually.
- Other content departments have created some common time although inconsistent to share materials and develop some common assessments

School Focus: Student and Adult Learning

- Literacy focus: district wide since 2002, 7-12 Literacy Intiative since 2006, focused literacy pd in hs 2007-09, Maine Literacy Project grant since 2002 used efficiently to hire teaching specialist in hs and have external literacy audit in 2006, affected classroom practice w/ content literacy strategies and reading instruction techniques seen in practice during observations.
- Technology Integration Specialist - provides numerous optional pd training opportunities: "GoogleDinner" = dinner & Google options training; "technology IEP" for individual teachers (includes CEUs); after school "Project Lab" 1 day/wk work individually w/ teachers "I try to meet everyone where they're at"; classroom observations indicated technology was used to supplement or enhance learning and did not distract from direct teaching interactions
- building principal very focused on improvement, to a fault in fact since he has an "idea a minute" but is very "kid oriented" according to supt and confirmed by our conversations

classroom observations n=23: 52% of obs indicate "all" or "all but a few" students were engaged; 26% obs indicate "a majority" of students were engaged; 22% obs

Case study school 4

Intellectual Work

Students:

- almost half (13 out of 32) observations identified a learning activity with at least some expectation of transformation; 3 out of 32 obs showed primary expectation was transformation
- a great majority (25 out of 32) obs identified a learning activity with at least some expectation of understanding; 13 out of 32 showed primary expectation was understanding; half (16 out of 32) obs showed students demonstrating understanding 61-100% of time, a majority (23 out of 32) obs showed student demonstrating understanding some (25-100%) of the time
- Ex. Students are placed in 2 groups ("teams") and are instructed to categorize the annotations in their text (sticky notes) according to the criteria listed on a handout she has given them. Such categories include analysis, questioning, predictions, etc.,The learning activity asks that students re-read their notes and the corresponding sections to determine what reading skill--analysis, inquiry, etc.,--they've employed. Teacher then would sit with each group to discuss their findings. All but 1 or 2 students had evidence of close reading of the text in the form of sticky notes.
- Ex. English class recently read Romeo & Juliet and had watched excerpts of one film version. class discussion was reviewing the character dynamics of a specific scene and how those had been presented in film. teacher led discussion with probing questions but students actively engaged, demonstrating a thorough understanding of character and ability to analyze language in the text, referred frequently to text throughout discussion. were making predictions about possible interpretations of the scene that they may see in future viewing of other film versions. drawing and revising initial conclusions about characters and power structures within play based on text and film.
- significant evidence (sample student work, product descriptors, curriculum & reference in interviews) of writing across the curriculum; common rubric for writing style and content used in many content areas. however, revisions and multiple drafting did not appear common practice except in English classes.

Adults:

- a majority (13 out of 32) obs indicated the educator was demonstrating transformation at least some of the time (9 - 25-60% of time; 4 - 61-100% of time)
- conversations with lead teachers about curriculum and specific assignments indicated a significant intellectual capacity within adult educators: common rubrics developed by educators reflect expectation of transformation to meet and exceed the standards; assessment of sample student work appears rigorous and reflects expectation of transformation to meet the standard of the assignment; teacher selection of challenging, invigorating content materials persisted throughout the required curriculum for all ability levels especially in English, math, science, art and self contained special education program; educators spoke eloquently and insightfully re content materials and pedagogy

Equity

- strong ESL program for approx. 10 Spanish speakers: dedicated trilingual ESL instructor; written and auditory tools for working with English text content materials; students reading English class required texts in English and Spanish; all students mainstreamed with supplemental ESL class and additional support available; some collaboration w/ Mano en Mano non-profit org for after school and ESL programming - however, this program and its participants could be more celebrated and enveloped into the popular culture of the school beyond their classroom experiences
- invigorating self contained special education program for students with significant special needs: non-verbal and physically challenged students engaged in communication skills, adaptive PT, and a variety of other learning experiences throughout the day in a well funded, well equipped (1:1 iPads, adaptive technology, physical therapy equipment, adapted furniture, full kitchen) and well staffed large classroom; however, program director (and only fully certified teacher in the program) says that prof development for all educators and support staff in the program is needed to help provide a better education for these students, additionally geographic isolation limits the students' experiences with certified professionals in the field.
- very strong guidance program advocating for challenging and productive post-secondary pursuits: "We promote and get excited about the options after high school; I've seen a great difference over the years. We have to credit the MELMAC grant because they fund things our district couldn't fund locally." "One good thing about the SAT being the required state test is that every single student gets the attention to prepare for the SAT. What if we didn't have that? Would there be groups of students that started to perceive themselves as not so important?" "Every student is targeted for improving their math and reading because our school is held accountable for that. I'm not saying the SAT is the best measure. But now I don't think there are kids in this school saying, 'I can't go to college.'...so at least they've taken it, they've had the experience of preparing for it. More students may say, 'I can go on.' So I think it's good in that one sense." {MELMAC grant since 2003}
- students corroborated on the school's enthusiasm and focus on post-secondary for ALL students: SAT/PSAT prep for all mainstreamed 9th, 10th & 11th grade students in Learning Lab & English; annual Pie Night very well attended: pie and desserts provided along with information sessions, alumni panel discussions, fafsa help, etc.; 2009 guidance meets individually with every 12th grade student in the fall to develop Personalized Learning Program including completing college application; "for the kids who think they are just going to enter the workforce, the guidance counselor does a good job of asking them to think about all their options" "a lot of the students who think they can't go to college are the ones who don't think they can. The guidance counselor makes them apply, and when they are accepted they are in awe because they never thought they could." "It's gotten better. They are pushing a lot more to get you to think about your future and college."
- Early College program: initially, this program was seen as an enrichment opportunity; equity was a big concern b/c students needed a car to travel to the UMaine Machias campus to take live classes and this limited access for many of NHS students; NHS guidance convinced UMM to offer online classes and now the librarian at NHS overseas the online program; UMM offers discount rate (from $600 to $200) only to students in Aspirations program (1st time college) but Guidance (Brittany) gave presentation to Admissions and Early College liaison and UMM will begin offering the discount rate to all NHS students starting next year; this year, 14 seniors are taking college classes; next year, UMaine Orono will pilot distance learning courses offered to juniors in the Academy program; students can take courses in high school required for a college

program--for example, 4 students who will be enrolling in the Nursing Program at UMaine will be taking Food + Science Nutrition, a required course for the program; students have potential to earn up to 18 credits during high school toward a college degree--guidance counselor sees this as a real carrot for students to continue on to college: "With 18 credits, how could you not keep going?" For each college course successfully completed, students are awarded an elective credit towards graduation.

- small classes (some are under 10 students, biggest class is 23) allow for individual attention "Classes are very one-on-one. If we had an issue with something, we didn't move on, we stayed right on with the task."
- 1:1 laptops since 2009 locally funded with stimulus $$; 2:1 laptop carts prior to 2008; technology program includes free dial-up internet at home for students & families
- Parents, "When a kid comes here and sits down in a classroom, it doesn't matter if you made $20,000 last summer lobster fishing or not, you still have to pass that class whether rich, poor or indifferent. We don't look at it that way." "We make a big effort to keep kids in school and participating." "In the world we live in--the economy, mechanization in industry--people are starting to realize they need to get an education. Now, you need to get a certificate or degree to even learn job skill development and a trade. The kids are starting to see that physical labor work isn't a long term option, so they are saying 'I've got to go to college to get a skill.'" "I'm encouraged to see kids from families that don't have a history of post-secondary education in college now."
- Development and widespread use of school-wide rubrics (6 total: writing, oral presentation, social expectations, behavior, individual learning, creative & practical problem solver)--writing and oral presentation rubrics are used most systemically. Teachers, on the use of the writing rubric: "[Students] have had it in English, social studies, science and even math in some cases. [They] know what acceptable means." Student corroboration: "[Rubrics are] used a lot. We use the writing rubric in biology research...all research papers, essays, even in photo arts and Spanish." Teacher/parent: "School-wide rubrics are systemic, not just in English."

Efficiency

- utilize grant funding resources they receive to enhance student learning experiences: guidance use of MELMAC grant since 2003 guidance, "We promote and get excited about the options after high school; I've seen a great difference over the years. We have to credit the MELMAC grant because they fund things our district couldn't fund locally." students, "It's gotten better. [This school is] pushing a lot more to get you to think about your future and college."; NovaNet online summer credit recovery program funded by Seacoast; 4 classrooms equipped w/ SmartBoards - grant funding; model Maine DOE school - provided significant grant to continue Silver & Strong 16 Best Practices professional development
- maximize professional development experiences by often using "train the trainer" practice of training a few teachers externally then having them return to the school and become internal trainers or experts; school board member, "We have internal experts within the system. Professional development continuation goes on today. That's part of our culture, and we do it mostly internally now." : 2000 Brown Literacy; Downeast Education Partnership (DEEP) through UMF - trained and assigned in-school professional mentors; 2003 - Silver & Strong 16 Best Practices includes Leadership Team, PLCs & "Teacher Rounds" 3x/year - collaborative lesson planned, taught and debriefed; 2008 iWalkthrough; 2008 Student Assistance Team training; principal, "Let teachers lead."
- school board members indicated that they encouraged teachers to pursue CEU opportunities because it is "extra money we don't have to spend since it doubles as professional development."
- Seacoast, EDGE {Lori, you can add more to this I am assuming}; Seacoast has $27m endowment of which 4.5m is subsidized for EdGE programs; offers tutoring program and some enrichment (technology, arts, physical education, and science) twice a week at high school; aim is to help kids academically; available to all students, free of charge; EdGE has Americorps volunteer who now tutors low-performing students 3x week; also, a mentoring program where upperclassmen mentor freshmen who are identified by sending schools; older students work with younger studts. on teambuilding, online social issues, alcohol/drugs; participation is anywhere from 20 to 36 students; EdGe also offers summer credit recovery program for science and English for $15/week; 90% of kids consistency earn their credits.

Visible Change

- 2003 semester courses block schedule then 2008 blended schedule, year-long courses; a few teachers cited this as a major catalyst for change; blended schedule allowed for more flexibility in the implementation of programs like Learning Lab and Advisory.
- 2007 began NEASC accreditation process, 2010 earned accreditation
- 2008 implemented Learning Lab class: 2x/wk for all students, English and Math intervention & PSAT/SAT prep
- 2008 began Professional school-level Leadership Team
- 2009 began using internally developed school-wide rubrics; NWEA testing 2x/yr in Math, English & Science; began developing Personalized Learning Plan for every senior including completing college application
- 2010 implemented Guided Study instead of general study halls, 2x/wk opposite days used for Learning Lab
- seven new teachers in past five years - retirements & recommended resignations

Focused, Effective Leadership

- principal 35 years in district: 18 years as asst princ and AD, 8 years as principal (some of that time at elementary level)
- 2008 began school-level Leadership Team consists of teachers, open to all teachers; teachers describe team as "liaison between teachers and administration"; also, this Team advocates for the needs of the high school in a district of 5 elementary schools; example--Team redesigned the district mandated "Teacher Rounds" into more of a peer coaching model of collaboration and shared expertise. *How it worked before:* teachers were assigned times to observe other teachers (sometimes this meant finding a sub if they were teaching a class) and often were not observing strategies that could be useful to them. Very top-down driven with lots of paperwork to fill out for accountability. *How it works now:* Teachers seek each other out based on interest ("Hey, I heard you were doing this really great thing and all the kids are talking about it. Could I come in and see it in action?"). Teachers observe each other then meet to reflect, which has facilitated more conversation among teachers about best practice. Teachers also contribute regularly to the "museum wall" in the Teacher's Room that displays effective classroom practices and strategies that could be useful to others. According to one Leadership member, "Feedback from the rest of the staff has been positive. It's more collaborative and takes into account our professionalism, our craft." Themes that guided the teacher rounds this year were use and implementation of school-wide rubrics and brain strategies (based on Medina's The Brain Way).
- several teachers indicated asst. principal was real leader of instruction and advocate for strong, embedded professional learning opportunities; principal identified as executive leader, very visible in school, does 10+ short (less than 20 mins) classroom obs per year even for veteran teachers; according to guidance counselor, asst. principal good with data (SAT, PSAT, NWEA)-- she knows what to do with it; under her leadership, Learning Lab was implemented (2010-2011) to target skills gaps.
- apparent content area teacher leaders, especially in Art, English and Science
- district leadership team, administrators, sets pd agenda

Thorough, Sustained Professional Learning

- 2002 Silver & Strong 16 Best Practices & Thoughful Education - remains focus of professional development selection and organization
- research & pd relevant to education integrated into Best Practices: "A Better Education: Brain Rules" - Dr. John Medina; PLC training--although implementation of PLCs resemble more of a grade-level team meeting where teachers discuss students and develop intervention plans; examination of instructional practice is not the focus; however, teachers recognize that this is a "hybrid" model of PLC but are pleased with how much more effective they are in keeping closer tabs on kids in crisis; leadership training for school-level Leadership Team; Teacher Rounds - collaborative lesson planning-Teachers seek each other out based on interest ("Hey, I heard you were doing this really great thing and all the kids are talking about it. Could I come in and see it in action?"). Teachers observe each other then meet to reflect, which has facilitated more conversation among teachers about best practice. Teachers also contribute regularly to the "museum wall" in the Teacher's Room that displays effective classroom practices and strategies that could be useful to others. According to one Leadership member, "Feedback from the rest of the staff has been positive. It's more collaborative and takes into account our professionalism, our craft." Themes that guided the teacher rounds this year were use and implementation of school-wide rubrics and brain strategies (based on Medina's The Brain Way).; Reading for Meaning; memory improvement
- Silver & Strong included group observations of teaching, teachers said that was very disruptive and difficult to maintain genuine classroom situation so did iWalkthrough training to replace
- technology pd = 1 workshop day per year; optional stipended summer courses 2009-2011

School Focus: Student and Adult Learning

- parents and school board members indicated that school board was historically very supportive of any measure that improved and supported student learning, "student focused" even in budgets and policies; however, said shift in recent few years to more focus on physical plant and saving money

- professional learning seemed to be a culture among teachers and an expectation of administrators. principal said, "Let teachers lead" the professional learning experiences. guidance said, teachers "really implement" their learning from professional development. triangulated with conversations, classroom observations & review of assignments that all indicated many educators had intellectual capacity and demonstrated a strong content knowledge expertise. - weakness = level of transformative learning happening both by adults and students, mostly transfer/understanding of content & pedagogical information

- 2002 Silver & Strong 16 Best Practices & Thoughful Education - remains focus of professional development selection and organization; research & pd relevant to education integrated into Best Practices: "A Better Education: Brain Rules" - Dr. John Medina; PLC training; leadership training for school-level Leadership Team; Teacher Rounds - collaborative lesson planning-Teachers seek each other out based on interest ("Hey, I heard you were doing this really great thing and all the kids are talking about it. Could I come in and see it in action?"). Teachers observe each other then meet to reflect, which has facilitated more conversation among teachers about best practice. Teachers also contribute regularly to the "museum wall" in the Teacher's Room that displays effective classroom practices and strategies that could be useful to others. According to one Leadership member, "Feedback from the rest of the staff has been positive. It's more collaborative and takes into account our professionalism, our craft." Themes that guided the teacher rounds this year were use and implementation of school-wide rubrics and brain strategies (based on Medina's The Brain Way); Reading for Meaning; memory improvement

- several teachers indicated asst. principal was real leader of instruction and advocate for strong, embedded professional learning opportunities

- often use "train the trainer" practice of training a few teachers externally then having them return to the school and become internal trainers or experts; school board member, "We have internal experts within the system. Professional development continuation goes on today. That's part of our culture, and we do it mostly internally now." : 2000 Brown Literacy; Downeast Education Partnership (DEEP) through UMF - trained and assigned in-school professional mentors; 2003 - Silver & Strong 16 Best Practices includes Leadership Team, PLCs & "Teacher Rounds" 3x/year - collaborative lesson planned, taught and debriefed; 2008 iWalkthrough; 2008 Student Assistance Team training

- students & guidance counselor indicated school's enthusiasm and focus on post-secondary educational pursuits: SAT/PSAT prep for all mainstreamed 9th, 10th & 11th grade students in Learning Lab & English; annual Pie Night very well attended: pie and desserts provided along with information sessions, alumni panel discussions, fafsa help, etc.; 2009 guidance meets individually with every 12th grade student in the fall to develop Personalized Learning Program including completing college application; "for the kids who think they are just going to enter the workforce, the guidance counselor does a good job of asking them to think about all their options" "a lot of the students who think they can't go to college are the ones who don't think they can. The guidance counselor makes them apply, and when they are accepted they are in

awe because they never thought they could." "It's gotten better. They are pushing a lot more to get you to think about your future and college."

- strong ESL program for approx. 10 Spanish speakers: dedicated trilingual ESL instructor; written and auditory tools for working with English text content materials; students reading English class required texts in English and Spanish; all students mainstreamed with supplemental ESL class and additional support available; some collaboration w/ Mano en Mano non-profit org for after school and ESL programming - however, this program and its participants could be more celebrated and enveloped into the popular culture of the school beyond their classroom experiences
- invigorating self contained special education program for students with significant special needs: non-verbal and physically challenged students engaged in communication skills, adaptive PT, and a variety of other learning experiences throughout the day in a well funded, well equipped (1:1 iPads, adaptive technology, physical therapy equipment, adapted furniture, full kitchen) and well staffed large classroom; however, program director (and only fully certified teacher in the program) says that prof development for all educators and support staff in the program is needed to help provide a better education for these students, additionally geographic isolation limits the students' experiences with certified professionals in the field.

classroom observations indicated a good level of student engagement in the learning task 72% of obs showed at least a majority of students engaged (all = 7, all but a few = 7, majority = 9, less than half = 9); and there seemed to be a consistent expectation upheld by students that even if students were not engaged in a learning task.

Case study school 5

Intellectual Work

- Less than half (27%) of classroom observations indicate that the <u>primary</u> expectation for learning activity is transformation; less than half (30%) of observations indicate that there is some expectation of transformation.
- 30% of classroom observations indicate that there is <u>some</u> expectation of transformation
- Just over half (53%) of classroom observations indicate that the <u>primary</u> expectation for learning activity is understanding.
- 17% of classroom observations indicate a mixture of understanding and transformation as the primary expectation for learning.
- Classroom example of transformation 1: Students in an Anatomy & Physiology class dissected a cat in order to examine the musculature and digestive systems. The primary expectation for this 2 day activity was for students to use transformative skills: to <u>compare/contrast</u> cat's musculature and digestive system with that of humans (students therefore had to use a prior understanding of human anatomy and physiology); to <u>analyze</u> these comparisons to <u>draw conclusions</u> about the life experience of the cat (ex. how did this cat die? what do the size of its abdominal/pectoral muscles say about the agility of this cat? what were the physical limitations of this cat--compare to humans--based on size of muscles, location/size of certain organs, etc.? What does the digestive system suggest was the cat's primary diet? What conclusions can you make about the quality of life of this cat?)
- Classroom example of transformation 2: Students in an Honors Biology class were studying the energy transfers of ecosystems. Students were doing an online lab, learning about such concepts as food webs, energy flow, and adaptations on flora and fauna, etc., Then, students then were asked to <u>apply this new learning</u> to their understanding of biomes.
- Classroom example 3: Students in a 9th grade English class had just completed a study of the novel <u>Speak</u> in which an area of focus was understanding how an author uses voice to create character and narrative (1st person). Students had to create 2 "found" poems (words/phrases taken directly from the text interspersed with original thought)--side by side, these poems should illustrate the growth experienced by the main character over the course of the novel. With colored pencils, students had to evaluate their own work and that of a peer using the assignment descriptor and rubric. Students had to decide what about the work was intentional (i.e. breaking rules of grammar, punctuation, location of words, font, etc.,) and what was its intended effect. Teacher models this process with a student model from past year on overhead.
- Students indicated there was writing across the curriculum with common school-wide (but adapted by individual teachers to connect to specific content) rubrics given out prior to due date but not usually discussed: history - conferenced drafts; chemistry labs assessed for writing ability; Algebra II req'd research report
- highly successful arts programs - 20 years school has had award winning show choir w/ approx 40 students participating each year, this year's group invited to national competition; jewelry making; sculpture course, obs indicated students asked to integrate "understanding" of specific artists' styles and tranform into own visual project, w/ written explanation of purpose of their piece and how it presented the artist's style

Adult Intellectual Work

- NEASC process (accredited in 2010) required lots of adult reflection on practice, asst. supt. said, the NEASC process "taught us how to go through the process of change" and led to more clarity about instruction

- teacher evaluation system: based on Danielson domains, teachers must develop action plan, mandatory improvement plans for struggling teachers (probationary & veteran), peer coaches, teachers say, "We are expected to go into each others' classrooms."; maintained this process even in significant administrative turnover in past ten years
- Carnegie math program followed deliberately since 2006 by core Math dept with common assessments and common curriculum for Alg I, Alg II and Geometry- asst. supt said it is a hard program, demands high cognitive thought and results in high Math teacher turnover
- 2007 teachers worked together on building curriculum content w/ team teaching in Soc Studies and Engl "Infusion" class - served 60 students per year who were identified as "at risk" (sped and non sped); teachers said this was a valuable intellectual process for teachers involved to reflect, evaluate and collaborate on craft, pedagogy & content; ended 2012 > started Alternative Education in March 2012 to replace that program, serves 12 students, very little time for collaboration, no team teaching
- teachers, students and asst. supt indicated increased focus on writing in past few years; district literacy initiative several years ago, Maine Content Literacy Project 3 years ago; common writing rubrics developed by group of teachers and available (but not req'd) schoolwide

Equity

- 1:1 laptops (MLTI) k-12 district-wide (high school since 2008, not sure district wide); student focus for district technology team is "equity" - provide free dial up internet access at student's home; improved speed of technology repair as rec'd by NEASC, now repair in-house no longer than 48 hours
- 9th grade students are teamed ("Freshman Academy") and share the same teachers for their core classes: English, social studies, math and science. There are two freshman teams, "Thunder" and "Lightning."
- 9th grade students are heterogeneously grouped; Honors Challenge options are provided for all core classes.
- Since implementation of Freshman Academy (in its 4th year; implemented in its 3rd & successful attempt 2007-2008), data has shown decrease in failures for the 9th and 10th grade
- According to guidance: Teaming model has eased transition for students from 8th to 9th grade. There are more conversations about students and increased parent-teacher contact. School licensed social worker: "I worry less about 8th to 9th grade transition." 8th>9th grade Transition Team (of teachers and admin) provide support and organize transition activities, technology automatically enrolls identified students in interventions
- 9th grade teaming model includes regularly scheduled collaboration time for teachers. Teachers meet every day: they meet 3 times as a team to discuss students and team issues; 1x a week with content counterpart; 1x a week with other team. According to guidance, this model-- shared students with regular, embedded professional time--continues to be "sacred" in the scheduling process.
- 9th + 10th grade: To address skills gaps (as identified by test scores and teacher recs)-- literacy workshop (Read 180) offered everyday for 55 min (no opt-out policy just implemented this year), math 360 (only for 9th grade).
- Additional academic supports:
  + For 9th grade: "Academic Support"--after school academic "detention";

  + For ALL students: Guided Study (9th grade with a team teacher); math and English teachers available for after school help 2 days a week.

  + Guided Study: 3 days a week (m-w-f) students have unstructured time to do work or catch up with teachers; the other days (t-th), 10th & 11th grade students do SAT/PSAT prep, 9th grade health or other advisory-related work.

  + PLATO program used for credit recovery, sometimes for scheduling conflicts (rare).

  + Read180 course - students testing below grade level in reading are enrolled & take course until reach grade level then put back in mainstream English course

  + After School Tutoring in Engl & Math serves approx 36 students, M-Th transportation provided

- Common curriculum:
  + math (Algebra I & II, Geometry only): Carnegie Learning Curriculum, in place 5-6 yrs; Cognitive Tutor used as an intervention to address skills gaps.

  + Science (9th grade): Maine Physical Sciences Partnership (managed through UMaine)

+ English and Social Studies (9th): Springboard

- Site E has early college programs offered to juniors and seniors: AcadeME (UMaine classes offered online to qualified students who have earned an 85 avg. or better); Aspirations (classes offered through Eastern Maine Community College and Univ. of ME at Augusta); AP for ALL (Site E just qualified this year).
- Post-secondary aspirations: According to one of the guidance counselors, "[There is] a generally accepted belief that all students will have a post-secondary plan." The hiring of a post-secondary career specialist (funded by FAME since January of 2011) has made a difference for many "at-risk" seniors. In this role, the specialist provides counseling to 1st time college (or high school) seniors about financial aid, interviewing skills, college applications, and general support. Social worker: "I can think of at least three kids off the top of my head who would not have considered college if it weren't for our career specialist."
- Career Counselor - 2nd year as f/t thru school year and 2 days per wk in summer; position funded by Maine Early College Grant to raise aspirations for targeted low income student population; identify students in fall from student survey completed during course registration & f/r lunch status; 2011 - 40 seniors identified: meet weekly w/ career counselor to develop individual post sec plan, meet in fall w/ student & parents to discuss post sec options, college applications and FAFSA; use GoogleDocs to share student file w/ guidance counselor; provides 4 workshops per year for all juniors during guided study
- Guidance counselors are committed to being visible to students as a way to consistently advertise the various ways they can support them. Examples:
  + 8th grade transition: Guidance offers a High School Choice Fair for outlying towns; presentation to Site E 8th graders; holds an Open House for all 8th graders; Step Up day where all 8th graders visit high school for a day

  + Guidance counselors greet students every day in the lobby from 7:15 to 7:55 every day. They have a table set up with various brochures and information about their services, college info, important dates, etc.,

- Alternative Ed. program... 2007 teachers worked together on building curriculum content w/ team teaching in Soc Studies and Engl "Infusion" class - served 60 students per year who were identified as "at risk" (sped and non sped); "Infusion" ended 2012 > started Alternative Education in March 2012 to replace that program, serves 12 students, very little time for collaboration, no team teaching, 4 core teachers rotate into students' alt ed classroom
- Gifted and Talented program (serves 25-30 high achieving and identified "gifted" students at E.H.S.):
  + process for identification includes test scores (NWEA, NECAP), grades, parent/teacher recs, and peer recs;

  + aim of program is to provide enrichment, academic opportunity, and a peer group for students that serves their socio-emotional needs;

  + students' needs and interests are identified through an in-depth survey--the "Interest-a-lyzer" (Joseph Renzulli)--which takes several days to complete. Results are then used to identify individual programs and areas of study.

  + program provides links to resources that school does not offer such as online or distance learning courses. Examples of what students are studying: AP Physics, American Sign Language,

Beginning Business and Entrepreneurship (online course); Renaissance Era with a focus on French Literature; Latin III and Greek (for the student headed to Harvard as a Classics major hopeful)

+ Funded by Gifted Education program (state funds)

- Maine Content Literacy Project (MCLP) through Univ. of ME at Farmington serves to train administrators and teacher-leaders in content-based literacy instruction as a means to increase student achievement in all core content areas (math, English, social studies and science).
+ Implemented at E.H.S. in 2007-2008

+ formed literacy team consisting of teachers (at least one from each dept.) and 1 administrator. Literacy coach is also a full-time English teacher and does not receive a stipend but does have an extra planning block.

+ professional development for Team and for faculty funded by MCLP

+ Prof. dev. for faculty provided during faculty meetings, some individual work, and teacher workshop days. Literacy Coach meets with individual teachers on an as-needed basis during her planning time.

+ Literacy "toolkits" were introduced and disseminated to faculty. Teachers began using them right away in classroom instruction. To measure systemic use of literacy strategies, teachers took data survey to measure how, if and how often they were using strategies. According to literacy coach and a few teachers, this is the program with the most consistency and has had far-reaching effects. Success is anecdotal. According to recent iwalkthrough data (as explained by one of the teacher-leaders on Peer Coaching Team), literacy strategies are still being used across the board. There is an established common language surrounding literacy.

- role of library has changed in past five years due to budget cuts and technology, but head librarian says, "we've become computer experts" and they do provide Kindles and iPods to try to reach all types of students, "A library is all about equity."
- highly successful arts programs - 20 years school has had award winning show choir w/ approx 40 students participating each year, this year's group invited to national competition; numerous students involved in sculpture, drawing and jewelry classes

Efficiency

- 9th grade teaming model: shared students, efficient use of time to discuss students and contact parents, efficient use of time for team and content collaboration.
- Grants...FAME, MELMAC, MCLP teacher leaders credit asst. supt for significant grant writing ability
- Implementation (this year) of teacher-leader groups to effect change...instruction, literacy, use of grant money (SIG) asst princ said, focus is on "building internal capacity"
- in-depth teacher evaluation system used in past six years credited for keeping strong teachers and encouraging weaker teachers to leave - asst. supt. (been in district 22 years) said the core leadership group has been maintained and is still here: based on Danielson domains, teachers must develop action plan, mandatory improvement plans for struggling teachers (probationary & veteran), peer coaches; maintained this process even in significant administrative turnover in past ten years
- asst. supt said, "Art, Science and Phys Ed departments have been strong throughout time...those teachers bear the biggest credit" for school's improvement, "they're the experts"
- intentional district level involvement of community w/in school building to create support: 2011 Chamber of Commerce Annual Dinner hosted at school by HCTC culinary program; business & town leaders supported recent budgets b/c presented as what was needed for students, business leaders value education b/c main economy is in banking; had pre-emptive community meeting to explain SIG and what it would entail for school; "never micro-manage, but believe you're going to bring forth something that fixes any problem"; used student representatives to explain steps/changes brought forth by SIG to school board
- technology focuses on an "investment option with outcomes"

Visible Change

- Possible catalyst: NEASC. Preparation process began 3 years prior to visit. According to a 20+ year veteran teacher, the process of self-study paved the way for change: "We became reflective." Beginning with "Promising Futures" back in 2001, she recalls: "[It] seems like change is a part of our culture." Programs/practices that emerged as a result of this self-reflection:

  + Freshman Academy: Former 9th grade structure was traditional model—tracked classes, teachers working individually, limited access to resources. As one 20+ yr. veteran 9th grade teacher recalls: "Remediation and at-risk resources were zero." Juniors and Seniors were taking 9th grade classes over again and again. Enter teaming model: decrease in 9th grade failure rates; 8th to 9th grade transition more smooth; interventions/academic supports in place; teacher collaboration; more conversations about kids, and more frequent contact with parents.

  + heterogeneous grouping of all core 9th grade classes; 10-12 English classes are also heterogeneously grouped (still honors level courses in core subjects grades 10-12 according to some teachers) .

  + Movement from traditionally tracked classes to heterogeneous classes forced a focus on differentiated instruction; though there was some expertise in building, teachers needed more support.

  + Mission Statement (required by NEASC)

  + Professional Learning Communities (PLC): Groups are organized by content areas with support staff integrated starting in 2011, previously cross curricular. One education technician working in a science class attested to the willingness of regular ed teachers to regularly collaborate on a professional level with support staff. Regarding her knowledge of the curriculum in each classroom she serves: "I'm in the know." PLCs meet regularly each week during Friday early release time, started in 2009.

  + Evidence of teacher collaboration as result of PLC work: all science teachers making effort to use Essential Questions to guide instruction and the general offering of ideas amongst each other. One colleague showed a veteran teacher how to offer a test online for students...she now uses this strategy regularly.

- Maine Content Literacy Project (MCLP) through Univ. of ME at Farmington:
  + Implemented in 2007-2008

  + formed literacy team consisting of teachers (at least one from each dept.) and 1 administrator. Literacy coach is also a full-time English teacher and does not receive a stipend but does have an extra planning block.

  + professional development for Team and for faculty funded by MCLP (which in turn is funded by MDOE Title IIA grant)

+ Prof. dev. for faculty provided during faculty meetings, some individual work, and teacher workshop days. Literacy Coach meets with individual teachers on an as-needed basis during her planning time.

+ Literacy "toolkits" were introduced and disseminated to faculty. Teachers began using them right away in classroom instruction. To measure systemic use of literacy strategies, teachers took data survey to measure how, if and how often they were using strategies. According to literacy coach and a few teachers, this is the program with the most consistency and has had far-reaching effects. Success is anecdotal. According to one of the teacher-leaders on Peer Coaching Team, recent iwalkthrough observations indicate that literacy strategies are still being used across the board. There is an established common language surrounding literacy.

- Teaming model implemented in 2007-2008 for a third time (and with most success): 9th grade students are teamed ("Freshman Academy") and share the same teachers for their core classes: English, social studies, math and science. There are two freshman teams, "Thunder" and "Lightning."
- 9th grade students are heterogeneously grouped; Honors Challenge options are provided for all core classes.
- Since implementation of Freshman Academy (in its 4th year; implemented in its 3rd & successful attempt 2007-2008), data has shown decrease in failures for the 9th and 10th grade
- According to guidance: Teaming model has eased transition for students from 8th to 9th grade. There are more conversations about students and increased parent-teacher contact. School licensed social worker: "I worry less about 8th to 9th grade transition."
- 9th grade teaming model includes regularly scheduled collaboration time for teachers. Teachers meet every day: they meet 3 times as a team to discuss students and team issues; 1x a week with content counterpart; 1x a week with other team. According to guidance, this model-- shared students with regular, embedded professional time--continues to be "sacred" in the scheduling process.
- 9th + 10th grade: To address skills gaps (as identified by test scores and teacher recs)-- literacy workshop (Read 180) offered everyday for 55 min (no opt-out policy just implemented this year), math 360 (only for 9th grade).
- EHS identified as a School Improvement Plan (SIP) school (2010??); applied for and received a School Improvement Grant (SIG) in (2010-11??) to assist in the school's turnaround plan.
- Many initiatives have been introduced and implemented this year as a result of the SIG grant: -New principal and Dean of Instruction, 15 teachers left & replaced w/ new hires, many brand new teachers

-Peer coaching program + a focus on instructional practice. Five volunteer teachers volunteered and have been trained to do peer observations, data collection, and share data with peers as a means of creating a collaborative culture that reflects regularly on instructional practice. Peer coaches receive no stipend but have an extra prep block for this work.

- Leadership Team: team of volunteers who ensured SIG proposal was enacted and oversee SIG work and report progress to stakeholders

-Consensus building and curriculum alignment on Frosh Academy.

-Student evaluations of teachers—lots of anxiety on the part of teachers.

-Examining and making sense of iwalkthrough data (completed over 800 walkthroughs in 2011-2012)

-Place-based Learning (PBL) pilot year

- used eloquent, enthusiastic student representatives to explain steps/changes brought forth by SIG to school board & at staff meeting

- One veteran teacher said of this year, the first year of the SIG initiative: [It's] my most tiring year yet."
- According to the school's coach (GSP) who arrived this year, the culture of professional reflection has encouraged many teachers to "de-privatize their practice" for the first time. asst principal said, it's important to "knock down the walls and get people in each other's classrooms." teachers said, "we are expected to go in to each other's classrooms." ; but some teachers indicate that SIG initiatives have dampened collaborative work, no cross curriculum collaboration outside grade 9 teams
- Career Counselor - 2nd year as f/t thru school year and 2 days per wk in summer; position funded by Maine Early College Grant to raise aspirations for targeted low income student population; identify students in fall from student survey completed during course registration & f/r lunch status; 2011 - 40 seniors identified: meet weekly w/ career counselor to develop individual post sec plan, meet in fall w/ student & parents to discuss post sec options, college applications and FAFSA; use GoogleDocs to share student file w/ guidance counselor; provides 4 workshops per year for all juniors during guided study
- consolidated w/ Sumner under state consolidation; made local connections more of a challenge, esp w/ businesses
- Alternative Ed. program... 2007 teachers worked together on building curriculum content w/ team teaching in Soc Studies and Engl "Infusion" class - served 60 students per year who were identified as "at risk" (sped and non sped); "Infusion" ended 2012 > started Alternative Education in March 2012 to replace that program, serves 12 students, very little time for collaboration, no team teaching, 4 core teachers rotate into students' alt ed classroom
- Guided Study began 2008: 3 days a week (m-w-f) students have unstructured time to do work or catch up with teachers; the other days (t-th), 10th & 11th grade students do SAT/PSAT prep (teachers indicated that this signified a change in attitude towards SAT, now teachers & students understand its value and importance), 9th grade health or other advisory-related work.
- Identified as Title I school in 2008, most of reason why identified as SIG school in 2011.
- asst supt said AYP really changed attitudes in and towards sped, improved practices & instruction immediately but once brought up scores didn't maintain improvement practices

Focused, Effective Leadership

- Previous principal at E.H.S. for 9 years but left in 2011 after E.H.S. was identified as a SIP (School Improvement Plan) school.
- New this year to EHS: principal (formerly asst principal), superintendent and Dean of Instruction (formerly EHS teacher).
- Previous principal oversaw NEASC process and the implementation of Frosh Academy, Maine Content Literacy Project and PLCs. According to one veteran teacher: "The Frosh Academy was evidence of administration support—district *and* school—collaboration."
- Current principal commended by some teachers as an "encouraging force in pulling together teacher-leaders" in the school's efforts to implement the SIG plan. asst supt said princ is a good source of "encouragement" for staff and is a "leader supported by core staff." Leadership team member, veteran staff member said principal "has potential" and "creates buy-in."
- Prior to SIG year, under previous principal, several teachers involved in leadership:

  -<u>Frosh Academy</u>: team of teachers researched, visited schools who successfully   implemented teaming model.

  -<u>Maine Content Literacy Project</u>: Several teachers volunteered and trained to be members of the Literacy Team; current literacy coach is a full-time English teacher

  -<u>NEASC</u>: Several current veteran teachers led NEASC committees for the school's accreditation process that ended in the school's accredited status in 2010.

  -<u>District support for PLCs:</u> District supported the creation of embedded time each week for professional development during early release time every Friday.

- Current teacher leadership with SIG appears to stem from a pre-existing culture of internal experts and a willingness of teachers to "be part of the solution." One teacher explained that when she and other veteran teachers considered their participation with the Leadership Team, they asked themselves, "Were we going to be part of the solution?" asst supt, "NEASC brought clarity" and "taught us how to go through the process of change. "Art, Science & Phys Ed teachers have been strong throughout time...Those teachers bear the biggest credit..." "Teacher leadership emerged" in spite of district changes.
- Leadership team member & veteran staff said, "Department heads were very strong years ago." Then shifted to Leadership Team for past several years but, "We've had organized leadership for several years."
- asst supt said, "It's a really good school on the verge of being great."

● Prior to SIG year, under previous principal, several teachers involved in leadership and thorough, sustained professional development for the following initiatives:

-<u>Frosh Academy</u>: team of teachers researched the idea of a teaming model , visited schools to examine what it looks like in practice and how to successfully implement. Now in place, 9th grade teaming model--2 teams named "Thunder" and Lightning"-- includes regularly scheduled collaboration time for teachers. Teachers meet every day: 3x as a team to discuss students and team issues; 1x a week with content counterpart; 1x a week with other team. According to guidance, this model--shared students with regular, embedded professional time--continues to be "sacred" in the scheduling process. This school year (2011-2012), under the direction of the new Dean of Instruction, 9th grade Academy teachers are working toward consensus on curriculum alignment and common academic experiences for students. These conversations have been rooted in Rick Wormeli's text <u>Fair Isn't Always Equal</u>.

 -<u>Maine Content Literacy Project</u>:

+ Implemented in 2007-2008

+ formed literacy team consisting of teachers (at least one from each dept.) and 1 administrator. Literacy coach is also a full-time English teacher and does not receive a stipend but does have an extra planning block.

+ professional development for Team and for faculty funded by MCLP (which in turn is funded by MDOE Title IIA grant)

+ Prof. dev. for faculty provided during faculty meetings, some individual work, and teacher workshop days. Literacy Coach meets with individual teachers on an as-needed basis during her planning time.

+ Literacy "toolkits" were introduced and disseminated to faculty. Teachers began using them right away in classroom instruction. To measure systemic use of literacy strategies, teachers took data survey to measure how, if and how often they were using strategies. According to literacy coach and a few teachers, this is the program with the most consistency and has had far-reaching effects. Success is anecdotal. According to one of the teacher-leaders on Peer Coaching Team, recent iwalkthrough observations indicate that literacy strategies are still being used across the board. There is an established common language surrounding literacy.

+Lit. Team ensures that new faculty (especially 2011-2012 year as there were 16 new faculty members replacing teachers who'd left) receive training and toolkits. Literacy team shares strategies at prof days and faculty mtgs

- <u>Professional Learning Communities (PLC)</u>: Groups meet regularly each week during Friday early release time and are organized by content areas with support staff integrated starting this year, was cross curricular in past years. One education technician working in a science class attested to the willingness of regular ed teachers to regularly collaborate on a professional level with support staff. Regarding her knowledge of the curriculum in each classroom she serves: "I'm in the know." District supported the creation of embedded time each week for professional

development. Evidence of teacher collaboration as result of PLC work: all science teachers making effort to use Essential Questions to guide instruction and the general offering of ideas amongst each other. One colleague knowledgeable with technology showed a veteran teacher how to offer a test online for students...she now uses this strategy regularly. asst principal said PLC protocol provides feedback, accountability "relationships and teambuilding"

-NEASC: Several current veteran teachers led NEASC committees for the school's accreditation process that ended in the school's accredited status in 2010.

- Current professional learning piloted just this year (2011-2012):
  -"Developing internal experts": Peer coaching program (under the direction of the Dean of Instruction) + a focus on instructional practice. Five volunteer teachers have been trained to do peer observations, data collection, and share data with peers as a means of creating a collaborative culture that reflects regularly on instructional practice. The training is rooted in peer coaching philosophy--"Impact Schools"--founded by Jim Knight, a research associate at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning and the president of the Instructional Coaching Group. Peer coaches use data collections tools during classroom observations. These tools then help teachers identify places for instructional focus (i.e. teacher-student ratio of interactions, levels of questioning, time on task). Peer coaches receive no stipend but have an extra prep block for this work.

  - Data (quantitative and qualitative) culled from iwalkthroughs, 7 "C's" (Great Schools Project), Charlotte Danielson's performance indicators outlined in Framework for Teaching, PSATs/SATs, and teacher interviews is used to create instructional targets, such as transitions within the classroom, whole group/small group instruction cooperative learning, etc.,

  - Leadership Team: team of volunteers who ensured SIG proposal was enacted and oversee SIG work and report progress to stakeholders

  -Consensus building and curriculum alignment on Frosh Academy (under direction of Dean of Instruction).

  -Student evaluations of teachers—lots of anxiety on the part of teachers.

  -Examining and making sense of iwalkthrough data

  -Place-based Learning (PBL) pilot year

- One veteran teacher said of this year, the first year of the SIG initiative: [It's] my most tiring year yet."
- According to the school's coach (GSP) who arrived this year, the culture of professional reflection has encouraged many teachers to "de-privatize their practice" for the first time.
- current district focus = writing: identified teacher leaders, have common schoolwide writing rubric (that is adapted by individual teachers to fit content but used commonly according to students); pd provided by district = one release day
- technology pd: 2-3 days at start of school year tech support available "on-call" @ school during teachers' prep time and subs provided if no prep to help all teachers set up webpage; administration - monthly training in tech programs and use; staff can request individual help

sessions w/ ticket system (submit ticket request to set up individual help or in-class lessons); shared network folder for all staff

- teachers said, "Teachers don't use the data, guidance or administration use data to identify students or determine initiatives."

School Focus: Student and Adult Learning

- "Protected, focused learning time for all members of school community"
  + For 9th grade: "Academic Support"--after school academic "detention";

  + For ALL students: Guided Study (9th grade with a team teacher); math and English teachers available for after school help 2 days a week.

  + Guided Study: 3 days a week (m-w-f) students have unstructured time to do work or catch up with teachers; the other days (t-th), students do SAT/PSAT prep, health or other advisory-related work.

  + Frosh Academy: 9th grade teaming model--2 teams named "Thunder" and Lightning"--includes regularly scheduled collaboration time for teachers. Teachers meet every day: 3x as a team to discuss students and team issues; 1x a week with content counterpart; 1x a week with other team. According to guidance, this model--shared students with regular, embedded professional time--continues to be "sacred" in the scheduling process.

  + Professional Learning Communities (PLC): *Groups meet regularly each week during Friday early release time and are organized by content areas with support staff integrated.* One education technician working in a science class attested to the willingness of regular ed teachers to regularly collaborate on a professional level with support staff. Regarding her knowledge of the curriculum in each classroom she serves: "I'm in the know." District supported the creation of embedded time each week for professional development. Evidence of teacher collaboration as result of PLC work: all science teachers making effort to use Essential Questions to guide instruction and the general offering of ideas amongst each other. One colleague knowledgeable with technology showed a veteran teacher how to offer a test online for students...she now uses this strategy regularly.

- "Pedagogical Emphasis"
  + PLCs

  + Peer coaching program (under the direction of the Dean of Instruction) + a focus on instructional practice. Five volunteer teachers have been trained to do peer observations, data collection, and share data with peers as a means of creating a collaborative culture that reflects regularly on instructional practice. The training is rooted in peer coaching philosophy--"Impact Schools"--founded by Jim Knight, a research associate at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning and the president of the Instructional Coaching Group. Peer coaches use data collections tools during classroom observations. These tools then help teachers identify places for instructional focus (i.e. teacher-student ratio of interactions, levels of questioning, time on task). Peer coaches receive no stipend but have an extra prep block for this work.

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  + Maine Content Literacy Project:

-Prof. dev. for faculty provided during faculty meetings, some individual work, and teacher workshop days. Literacy Coach meets with individual teachers on an as-needed basis during her planning time.

-Literacy "toolkits" were introduced and disseminated to faculty. Teachers began using them right away in classroom instruction. To measure systemic use of literacy strategies, teachers took data survey to measure how, if and how often they were using strategies. According to literacy coach and a few teachers, this is the program with the most consistency and has had far-reaching effects. Success is anecdotal. According to one of the teacher-leaders on Peer Coaching Team, recent iwalkthrough observations indicate that literacy strategies are still being used across the board. There is an established common language surrounding literacy.

+ Freshman Academy: This school year (2011-2012), under the direction of the new Dean of Instruction, 9th grade Academy teachers are working toward consensus on curriculum alignment and common academic experiences for students. These conversations have been rooted in Rick Wormeli's text Fair Isn't Always Equal.

- "Content emphasis=core skills"
  + 9th + 10th grade: To address skills gaps (as identified by test scores and teacher recs)-- literacy workshop (Read 180) offered everyday for 55 min (no opt-out policy just implemented this year), math 360 (only for 9th grade).

  + ME Content Literacy Program + Literacy Coach/Team + professional development

  = systemic use of content literacy strategies within the classroom

- asst supt: "NEASC brought clarity" to instructional focus for all kids; teacher evaluation system w/ mandatory improvement plan requires underperforming teachers to improve and learn or move out
- asst principal: SIG has improved instruction; "school is very accessible to students"
- students asst principal & nurse raised concern w/ increased "student anxiety" issues from the "demands" of improving the school when "stakes are high"; nurse indicates that most of her job is hand-holding in "this demanding environment" vs. pre-emptive or educational work; students said anxiety is caused by peer pressure to be over involved and need stricter laptop rules to avoid cyberbullying
- 1:1 laptops (MLTI) k-12 district-wide (high school since 2008, not sure district wide); student focus for district technology team is "equity" - provide free dial up internet access at student's home; improved speed of technology repair as rec'd by NEASC, now repair in-house no longer than 48 hours

MEPRI FY2102 Workplan Product Deliverables: B.4 Product

For each high school that agreed to participate in the study, we agreed to compile the findings and provide a report for their dissemination and use. Accordingly, after conducting a site visit, and analyzing the site data, we have prepared a school level report for each high school.. These reports are **confidential** and can not be shared or used without the expressed written consent of the school district superintendent. Attached are copies of the five high school reports. They are being sent to fulfill B.4 on the MEPRI FY2012 workplan, but may not be shared at this time.

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In addition several steps were taken in establishing and executing a dissemination plan. These steps include:

1. Meeting with Commissioner Bowen to discuss dissemination through regional networks.

2. Meeting with ad hoc group of educators to discuss ways to disseminate the study findings.

3. Scheduled dissemination as part of Fall 2012 Maine Principals Association annual meeting.

4. Planned presentation to Southern Maine Partnership Superintendent's group.

5. Planned presentations to 3 educator groups in Fall 2012.

6. Meetings with media specialists to develop a rollout of final report.

Case 1: High School Level Report

Study of Improving Maine High Schools - 2012

Researchers: Erika Stump and Lori Moran Gunn

As part of a research study undertaken at the request of the state legislature, the Center for Education Policy, Applied Research, and Evaluation (CEPARE) at University of Southern Maine (USM) and the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) are conducting a study of high schools that have been identified as improving. CEPARE is exploring the significant practices and characteristics of improving Maine high schools in an effort to identify some practices and attributes that have helped these schools to improve student performance. Several case study high schools have agreed to participate in this study, and in return, CEPARE is providing each case study school with a descriptive report of the observations and data gathered during their site visit.

The CEPARE research team is pleased that Site EL High School (EHS), an improving Maine high school, agreed to be part of this important study. The school is part of RSU 24 and serves approximately 608 students in grades 9-12 from the towns of Eastbrook, Site EL, Franklin, Gouldsboro, Hancock, Lamoine, Mariaville, Sorrento, Steuben,

Sullivan, Waltham, and Winter Harbor, which are rural communities on the northeast coast of Maine. Approximately 52% of the student population is eligible for free and/or price-reduced lunch, 11.5% is identified as special education, and 2% of students have been identified as Limited English Proficiency.

CEPARE researchers Erika Stump and Lori Gunn visited Site CC on May 29th and 30th after speaking with Assistant Superintendent Katrina Kane at an earlier date to prepare the schedule and gather additional information regarding the practices and characteristics of EHS. In all, the team conducted meetings with teachers, staff, students, parents, and school and district administrators in both interview and focus group settings. Observations were conducted during classroom and non-classroom time. Student and staff handbooks, school and district curriculum documents, newsletters, student work, and school websites were reviewed to help paint a picture of the school as a whole. Researchers obtained additional information from the Maine Department of Education website and from a review of articles in local and regional newspapers over the past three years.

At the outset of the study, CEPARE committed to providing each school with an individualized report of observations from the data collected. Therefore, the following is a *description* of some of the data gathered from the site visit, interviews, classroom observations, and review of documents. These observations are organized into three distinctive features of More Efficient Schools, as referenced in the report, *More Efficient Public Schools in Maine: Learning Communities Building the Foundation of Intellectual Work* (Silvernail et al., 2012). The observations from this site visit are also categorized into four additional areas representing key features found in research literature about improving schools. This report does not provide a complete description of your school, nor of the many programs and activities provided to its students. Rather, it is designed to provide school staff and community a *snapshot* of some of the evidence this school demonstrated in the seven areas. At the conclusion of the study, the research team will provide all schools with a cross-site analysis.

This descriptive feedback will hopefully help schools, districts, and communities examine the working practices, programs, and strategies in your school and guide continual improvement for your learning community. While immersed in the daily work of striving to support all students to meet high standards and expectations, it is difficult for any school to stand back and view the interactions between plans, intentions, actions, and results. These individualized observations, which are intended to summarize key and illustrative points of the field research, are communicated to support your school's on-going efforts.

Characteristic #1: **Student-focused learning communities in which there is systemic evidence of Intellectual Work.** Intellectual work is demonstrated through three elements:

1. **Understanding:** focused, sustained and thorough academic (content knowledge and fundamental skills) and social/behavioral (interpersonal relationships, social trends, cultural norms, etc.) learning.
2. **Transformation:** constant inquiry using various reasoning processes and all levels of cognitive thinking to work with information and concepts in order to create innovative solutions.
3. **Sharing:** clear communication of invigorating conclusions that enhance existing ideas.

Research suggests that in More Efficient schools intellectual work may be demonstrated in the following ways: students engaging in academic knowledge and skills as well as social and behavioral learning; and adults creating instructional practices, curricula, professional learning programs, and leadership roles that improve student performance and are informed by assessment and experience.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified **some evidence** of this characteristic. For example:

- o *Classroom instructional practices reflected a primary focus on understanding the academic content.* 53% of classroom observations (n=30) identified a majority of students demonstrating "understanding" a majority of the time.{Note: According to the Center for Authentic Intellectual Work's *Teaching for Authentic Intellectual Work: Standards and Scoring Criteria for Teachers' Tasks, Student Performance and Instruction* (Newmann, King and Carmichael, 2009), the goal for a high quality learning experience is to engage all students in activities which have higher order thinking (i.e. "transformation") as their primary tasks 60% - 100% of their learning time and lower order thinking (i.e. "understanding") 0% - 40% of their learning time.} While 27% of classroom observations indicated that the primary expectation of the learning activity was "transformation" (see Appendix A: Table 1), 17% of observations indicated that the learning task required a "mixture of transformation & understanding" (see Appendix A: Table 2). It was noted in some observations that the learning task required students to use transformative thinking skills such as compare/contrast, analysis, evaluation and application of new learning in order to draw invigorating conclusions about the content. Some

instructors were also observed using higher level questioning (How? Why? In what way? etc.) in the facilitation of class discussions and individual conferencing. In a majority (63%) of observations, "all" or "all except a few" students were engaged in the learning activity (see Appendix B: Table 4).

o *Adults have engaged in intellectual work that provided a foundation for deeper examination of programs and instructional practices intended to improve student performance.* The NEASC self-study (EHS was accredited in 2010) required of all stakeholders a self-reflection that paved the way for change. According to the assistant superintendent, the NEASC process "taught us how to go through the process of change" and led to more clarity about instruction. Administrators and teachers have also maintained an in-depth teacher evaluation system — despite significant administrative turnover within the past ten years — based on Charlotte Danielson's domains of teaching (*Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching,* Danielson, 2007 second edition). Teachers developed action plans each year and administration mandates improvement plans for struggling teachers (probationary and veteran). As a result of this evaluation process, teachers were expected to observe their peers' classrooms. Together with the recent implementation of a Peer Coaching program, the teacher evaluation system helped to create an "open door" culture that invited conversation and collaboration among teachers and ultimately, a deeper examination of practice. Teachers, students, and administrators also indicated an increased focus on writing across the curriculum as the result of a district wide literacy initiative and implementation of the Maine Content Literacy Project in 2007-2008. A team of teachers — at least one from each department plus one administrator — was trained to provide faculty with a "toolkit" of content literacy strategies and ongoing professional development. As a result of systemic implementation, the use of literacy strategies as part of classroom practice across content areas helped to establish a common language surrounding literacy. Other work adults engaged in that has appeared to lay the groundwork for change and improvement included "pockets" of educators in various content areas. For example, the adoption of the Carnegie math program in 2006 that featured common curriculum and assessments appeared to demand high levels of cognitive thought from both teachers and students. Despite a high turnover in the math department, teachers indicated that they were committed to successfully implementing and maintaining this program. Additionally, an "infusion" class of social studies and English provided teachers with a valuable intellectual process for reflection, evaluation, and collaboration on craft,

5

pedagogy, and curriculum. (The program, which served approximately 60 "at risk" students [special education and regular education], was replaced in March 2012 by the Alternative Education program that served 12 students and allowed less time for collaboration, according to teachers). With the School Improvement Grant (SIG) this year, E.H.S. was able to establish a clear, focused set of goals for its improvement process. With the formation of a Teacher Leadership Team, Peer Coaching program, and a Dean of Instruction position, our observations indicated a growing capacity for a deeper examination of instructional practice.

Characteristic #2: Student-focused learning communities in which there is systemic evidence of Equity. Research suggests that in More Efficient schools equity may be demonstrated in the many ways, including: teachers and leaders demonstrating their belief that they have a moral obligation to focus on the intellectual development of students as a means towards a better world; and high standards and high expectations held for <u>all</u> members of the school community.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified **considerable evidence** of this characteristic. For example:

- o *A shared commitment existed among educators at EHS to provide all students with equitable access to a quality education.* Common curriculum for 9th graders in math for Algebra I and II and Geometry (Carnegie Learning Curriculum), science (Maine Physical Sciences Partnership), and, most recently, social studies and English (Springboard) allowed teachers more opportunity to collaboratively align academic expectations for students. A teaming model—two teams, "Thunder" and "Lightning," at the 9th grade level—enabled teachers to meet regularly to collaborate and discuss the needs of their shared students. This effort reflected a commitment to refine curriculum as well as the ability to monitor more closely the academic progress of their students. According to teachers and guidance, since the implementation of the teaming model in 2007, data showed a decrease in failures in core classes among 9th and 10th grade students. Guidance indicated a commitment to the teaming model when designing student and teacher schedules. Additionally, Math 360 for 9th grade students and Read 180 for 9th and 10th grade were intervention programs that were offered daily (55 minutes) to address skills gaps. Other academic supports included 9th grade academic detention required for students missing work from core classes, Guided Study offered daily for all students, PLATO program used for credit recovery, and after school tutoring in English and math (from teachers) two days a week. The district

provided after-school bus transportation Monday through Thursday. Systemic programs included the district's literacy initiative sponsored by the Maine Content Literacy Project. Since its implementation in 2007, the use of literacy strategies as part of classroom practice across content areas has helped to establish a common language and expectations for students. Both teachers and students indicated a focus on writing across the curriculum with school-wide rubrics (often adapted by individual teachers to connect to specific content). Students gave examples of required conferenced drafts in history, chemistry lab reports assessed for writing ability, and a required research paper in Algebra II. While EHS worked toward developing common academic experiences for their students, the school also had programs in place to address the diverse needs of their population. Through the district's Gifted and Talented program, which served 25-30 "high-achieving" and identified "gifted" EHS students, and the school's "Infusion" course (combined English and social studies), which served approximately 60 at-risk students (now known as the Alternative Education program), special education and regular education students were provided with remediation, further instruction, and/or enrichment as a means to address specific academic needs. Additionally, the school's library provided Kindles and iPods in an effort to reach all kinds of learners, because as a librarian said, "A library is all about equity." A 1:1 laptop program (MLTI) and free dial-up home internet access reflected the district's technology team's focus on equity. Finally, a highly successful arts program—that included a well-established, award-winning show choir—offered students with a variety of stimulating courses. Approximately 40 students participated in this year's show choir that qualified for the national competition.

o *The Guidance Department at EHS played an active role in cultivating post-secondary aspirations.* Comprised of two counselors, a full-time licensed clinical social worker, and a full-time career counselor, the Guidance Department made a collective effort to be visible and available to students. In an effort to improve the transition from 8th grade to high school, Guidance offered a High School Choice Fair and Open House for all 8th graders from outlying towns and a separate presentation for Site EL 8th graders. Guidance also organized Step Up Day for all 8th graders to visit the high school for a day. During these presentations, guidance focused on how to be successful in high school as well as planted seeds for post-secondary plans. Guidance counselors greeted students every day in the school's lobby from 7:15 to 7:55 where they set up a table with various brochures

advertising their services and information regarding PSAT/SATs, early college, post-secondary pursuits and various enrichment programs. Students indicated also that the Financial Aid nights hosted by the Guidance Department were particularly helpful. The Early College program, offered to Juniors and Seniors, included the AcadeME program (online University of Maine courses for qualified students); Aspirations (classes offered through Eastern Maine Community College and the University of Maine at Augusta); and, just this year, AP for ALL. Students corroborated that the school had a "great selection of AP offerings." According to a guidance counselor, "[There is] a generally accepted belief that all students will have a post-secondary plan." The hiring of a post-secondary career specialist in January of 2011 (funded by FAME's Maine Early College Grant to raise aspirations for targeted low income student population) made a difference for many "at-risk" or "first-time college-going" seniors. Students were identified to participate in the targeted counseling in the fall from student surveys completed during course registration and free and reduced lunch status. In 2011, 40 students were identified. Each student met weekly with the career specialist to develop an individual post-secondary plan. The career specialist met with the student and parents to discuss post-secondary options, college applications and the FAFSA form. The career specialist then shared student files (created on GoogleDocs) with Guidance to allow for each student to have a fully informed support team for their post-secondary plan. The school's social worker said, "I can think of three kids off the top of my head who would not have considered college if it wasn't for the career specialist."

Characteristic #3: Student-focused learning communities in which there is systemic evidence of Efficiency. Research suggests that in More Efficient schools efficiency may be demonstrated in the following ways: human and financial resources are used efficiently to maximize learning opportunities for students and staff. For the purpose of this study of improving schools, we did not directly analyze the exact fiscal practices of the school. Rather, we are focusing on how school personnel and systems demonstrate the use of human and other available resources.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified **some evidence** of this characteristic. For example:

o *The district and school leadership highlighted the strengths and needs of its community in order to receive grants and external funding for educational and professional programming.* The Guidance Department used grants from MELMAC and FAME

to institute programs intended to raise aspirations for students such as Early College and post-secondary career counseling. The district's use of Maine Laptop Technology Initiative (MLTI) grant led to a 1:1 laptop program with free dial-up home internet access for all students. In 2007, EHS used Maine Content Literacy Project funds to provide professional development to teachers in the incorporation of content literacy strategies into their classroom instruction. This team of literacy experts, in turn, provided ongoing in-house professional training and support for all other teachers across content areas. Following their identification as a School Improvement School (SIPS), this year's School Improvement Grant (SIG) money was used to implement various reform initiatives intended to develop instructional efficacy and improve student performance. Teacher-leaders credited the assistant superintendent, who has been in the district 22 years, for significant, successful grant writing.

o *The district and school administration made efficient use of internal human resources to improve adult and student learning.* A comprehensive teacher evaluation system—based on Danielson's domains—used for the past six was credited for keeping strong teachers and encouraging ineffective teachers to leave. According to the assistant superintendent, the current staff was a core group of effective educators with a capacity for leadership. With past reform efforts (literacy, teaming, Professional Learning Communities [PLCs]) and the current SIG initiatives (Peer Coaching, Leadership Team, Project-based Learning), the district and school focused on "building internal capacity" by capitalizing on the talents and work ethic of teacher-leaders. The district and school supported professional development opportunities and ongoing training for teachers as a means to "build internal experts" that created more overall teacher buy-in. This strategy was particularly effective with the school's work with the Maine Content Literacy Project and Peer Coaching. Efficient use of teachers' professional time and expertise were also evidenced by the 9th grade teaming model that has been in place since 2007. Consisting of two teams of core classes, the teaming structure allowed teachers to meet regularly to discuss academic progress of shared students, collaborate on content and common expectations, and have frequent, consistent contact with parents.

Characteristic #4: A visible change symbolizes significant and sustained reform within the school. Research suggests that in improving schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: "quick wins" within the first few months of

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initiating reform efforts to represent action and sincerity to the school community and the community at large; positive, consistent public relations with community; and a clear message that the school's role is to "support education" not be the "sole source of education" within the community.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified **considerable evidence** of this characteristic. For example:

o   *EHS became a more reflective community of educators committed to implementing sustainable improvement initiatives instigated by the NEASC self-study process.* Persistence and self-scrutiny paid off in the implementation of Freshman Academy, a 9th grade teaming model. The school tried two other times to implement the teaming structure without success. According to a veteran educator, the first attempt had not garnered enough teacher support; the second time, there had been persistent scheduling difficulties that diminished the vision of a true team model. Prior to the third and final attempt, a team of teachers visited other schools that had successful teaming programs and learned about effective implementation strategies. Prior to the teaming model, one veteran teacher recalled, 9th grade looked very traditional. "Remediation and at-risk resources were zero." Juniors and seniors were taking 9th grade courses over and over again. Since the program's implementation in 2007, the transition from 8th to 9th grade became more smooth; more academic interventions were put in place; and teachers had embedded time regularly to collaborate, discuss student progress, and make frequent contact to students' homes. According to teachers, administration, and guidance, a decrease in the number of failures at the 9th and 10th grade levels was attributed to the teaming structure. Skill-based and effort-based interventions were put in place to give students more time and/or instruction with content. Implemented in 2008, Guided Study, for example, was offered for all students. However, at the 9th grade level, teachers provided Guided Study at the same time across the grade level so students could access the teachers from whom they need the most help. Students were also identified (through test scores and teacher recommendations) for remediation in reading (9th and 10th) and math (10th only). Read 180 and Math 360 courses were offered every day to address skills gaps. The movement from a traditionally tracked system to heterogeneous classes also forced a focus on differentiated instruction. According to the team teachers, the embedded professional time allowed for collective reflection on instructional practice. The literacy initiative also brought about instructional reflection. In 2007, the Maine Content Literacy Project (through the University of Maine Farmington) provided professional development for a school literacy coach and a team of

educators—at least one teacher from each department plus one administrator. Under the leadership of the Literacy Coach, the Literacy Team provided initial training for teachers and ongoing professional support in the implementation of content literacy strategies. Faculty were given literacy "toolkits" that gave them immediate strategies to use as part of their instructional practice. The Literacy Coach also provided individual support for teachers on an as-needed basis during her planning time. According to the literacy coach and some teachers, this was a program with the most consistency and the most systemic outreach even though success was more anecdotal than quantitative. One teacher-leader who was also a member of the Peer Coaching and Leadership teams said that recent iWalkthrough observations indicated that literacy strategies were still being used across content areas. Teachers and students corroborated that writing across the curriculum was a focus. Students mentioned that writing skills were emphasized and assessed in a variety of classes, not just English.

o   *The work done recently by administrative and teacher leaders with the School Improvement Grant funding reflected a clear, focused path toward thoughtful change.* With a new superintendent, principal and Dean of Instruction in place, several initiatives were introduced just this year as a result of SIG to assist in the school's turnaround plan. A Peer Coaching program used the format of peer observations to improve instructional practice. Through classroom observations, trained teachers collected data and shared it with their peers in an effort to create a collaborative culture around improving instructional practice. Data collected from over 800 iWalkthroughs and the subsequent examination of data gave teachers and administrators an insightful look at instructional practice across content areas. Under the guidance of the Dean of Instruction, Freshman Academy teachers used their professional time to align curriculum and come to consensus on academic expectations. A Leadership Team—consisting of many veteran teachers—ensured that the SIG vision was enacted, facilitated the SIG work, and reported progress to the School Board. The Team recruited eloquent, enthusiastic student representatives to help explain the steps taken and the changes brought forth by SIG. While there was little quantitative data to support the systemic effectiveness and sustainability of these initiatives in the first year, there was some anecdotal evidence of paradigm shifts. According to the school's external coach who just arrived this year, the culture of professional reflection encouraged many teachers to "de-privatize their practice" for the first time. The assistant principal added that it was important to "knock down walls and get people in each other's classrooms." The assistant principal indicated that SIG has improved instruction. At the same

time, there was concern about whether these efforts could be sustained. One veteran teacher expressed that this year was her "most tiring yet." Other teachers indicated that SIG initiatives dampened collaborative work outside of 9th grade teams.

Characteristic #5: **Focused, effective leaders throughout the school and district guide improvement.** Research suggests that in improving schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: leadership, students and other adults in the school community are focused on learning; building administrator's role is to lead instruction, not just manage the school; school leaders initiate progress then collaborate to sustain improvement; open and explicit feedback and evaluation is conducted constantly.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified **considerable evidence** of this characteristic. For example:

o *A history of district support in "building internal capacity" and cultivating teacher leadership paved the way for a school improvement vision.* Current teacher leadership initiatives appeared to have stemmed from a pre-existing culture of internal experts and a willingness of teachers to "be part of the solution." According to a Leadership team and veteran staff member: "We've had organized leadership for years." Under the leadership of the former principal, several teachers became involved in leadership roles with various initiatives. According to a veteran staff member, the successful implementation of Freshman Academy in 2007 was "evidence of administrative support—district and school--of collaboration." A team of teachers committed to the teaming model researched implementation strategies and visited schools that had successful programs. The district also supported the formation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that necessitated regular, embedded professional development time for teachers to come together in purposeful collaboration. The NEASC self-study process was another opportunity for administration and several teachers to lead the school in reform. The assistant superintendent indicated: "NEASC brought clarity...and taught us how to go through the process of change." One veteran staff member said of the self-study process: "We became reflective." The school's literacy program—a product of the Maine Content Literacy Project—was another example of an initiative that was administration-supported and teacher-led. A team of volunteer teachers (at least one per department) plus one administrator was trained (funded by MCLP) in content literacy strategies with the goal of providing E.H.S teachers with professional development and ongoing support with Teacher

Action Plans and goal setting. Teachers were given "toolkits" — a collection of instructional strategies — as well as additional professional development during faculty meetings, district workshop days, and individual planning time. The literacy coach — a full-time English teacher — met with individual teachers on an as-needed basis. According to the school's literacy coach, the literacy initiative was the program with the most consistency. Another veteran staff member corroborated that the literacy "toolkit" has had the most widespread impact on instruction across the content areas.

o *The district and school administration supported and capitalized on teacher leadership in order to effect change.* When the previous principal and superintendent left in 2011 after E.H.S. was identified as a SIP school, "teacher leadership emerged" in spite of district changes. As one veteran staff member explained when she and other veteran teachers considered their role in leadership, "Were we going to be part of the solution?" With a new superintendent, principal, and Dean of Instruction, several initiatives were instituted during the first year of SIG. For example, under the direction of the Dean of Instruction, the Peer Coaching program used trained volunteer teachers as catalysts for reform in instructional practice. Teachers conducted peer observations, collected data, and shared data with peers in an effort to examine classroom instruction in a deeper way. The Leadership Team consisted of several volunteer teachers — many of them veteran staff — who ensured the SIG proposal was enacted, oversaw that work, and reported progress to stakeholders. PLCs and Freshman Academy — initiatives already in place — had been the focus of readjustment and deeper reflection of practice. PLCs were now organized by content areas and given directives by the Dean of Instruction; Freshman Academy teachers used their collaborative planning time to realign curriculum and build consensus on academic and behavior expectations. Additionally, a handful of teachers were also piloting Project-based Learning in their classrooms. Building leadership appeared to be supported by staff. The current principal was commended by some teachers as an "encouraging force in pulling together teacher-leaders" in the school's efforts to implement the SIG plan. The principal — the school's former assistant principal--was also cited as being a good source of encouragement for staff and one who "creates buy-in."

Characteristic #6: **Thorough and sustained learning is provided for school professionals.** Research suggests that in improving schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: regular professional learning time for all classroom practitioners

to work collaboratively and independently; professional development focused on instruction and building intellectual capacity; external learning opportunities utilized to develop internal experts.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified **some evidence** of this characteristic. For example:

o *There was an embedded structure that accommodated regular professional learning time for classroom practitioners to work collaboratively and independently.* As previously noted in this report, a team of teachers researched the idea of a teaming model and visited schools to examine what it looked like in practice and how to successfully implement such a model. With two 9th grade teams successfully in place since 2007, the 9thgrade teaming model — referred to as Freshman Academy — included regularly scheduled collaboration time for teachers. Teachers met five times a week: three times as a team to discuss students and team issues; once a week with a content counterpart; and once a week with the other team. According to guidance counselors, this model — shared students with embedded professional time — continued to be "sacred" in the scheduling process. Outside of the 9th grade team, however, there appeared to be little time for cross curriculum collaboration within the regular schedule. Yet, Professional Learning Communities, organized by content areas and met every Friday during early release, did provide some time for all teachers to discuss practice and share ideas. Additionally, technology professional development was provided for 2-3 days at the start of the year; then, tech support was available "on call" during teachers' prep time (subs were provided if a teacher had no prep) to assist with webpage setups and administrative programs. Additionally, monthly training was offered for the use of specific tech programs. Staff could request individual help with a "ticket" system: they would submit ticket request to set up an individual help or in-class session.

o *The SIG initiative provided purpose for professional development with a focus on instruction and building intellectual capacity.* For 9th grade teachers, collaborative time has had a deeper focus on curriculum and instruction under the recent directive of the Dean of Instruction. Teachers worked on aligning curriculum and developing consensus on academic expectations. These conversations were rooted in their reading of Rick Wormeli's *Fair Isn't Always Equal*. PLCs have also recently been given instructional focus. For example, to guide student learning, teachers began using an inquiry-based approach to lesson and unit design. Several of our observations indicated "Essential Questions" written on the board that were referred to by the teacher throughout the lesson. The assistant principal explained

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that the PLC protocol provided feedback and accountability for teachers with an additional focus on "relationships and teambuilding." Efforts to build intellectual capacity were evidenced by the work with Maine Content Literacy Project. As mentioned earlier in this report, MCLP provided training for a team of teachers, instilling in them an expertise on content literacy strategies. In turn, they would provide professional development for their peers, with ongoing support. The school's literacy coach—not a stipended position but compensated with an extra planning block—oversaw this work and met with individual teachers on an as-needed basis. The Literacy Team shared literacy strategies during faculty meetings and workshop days and ensured that new faculty (especially in 2011-2012 as there were 16 new teachers) received training and literacy toolkits. A district focus on writing prompted further professional training for the Literacy Team and brought about the development of school wide writing rubrics and writing across the curriculum. Developing internal experts was also the goal for the school's Peer Coaching program. Under the direction of the Dean of Instruction, the program is designed with a clear focus on improving instruction. Five volunteer teachers were trained to do peer observations and data collection. Then, they would share this data with peers as a mean of creating a collaborative, non-evaluative culture that reflected regularly on instructional practice. The training was rooted in the peer coaching philosophy founded by Jim Knight ("Impact Schools"), of the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning and the president of the Instructional Coaching Group. Peer coaches used data collection tools during observations. These tools then helped teachers identify goals for instructional focus. Peer coaches received no stipend for this work but had an extra prep block.

Characteristic #7: The school focus holds steadily on student and adult learning. Research suggests that in improving schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: a pedagogical emphasis on improving student learning; protected, focused learning time for all students; student learning emphasis on depth of core skills (reading, writing, numeracy and thinking); "a laboratory of adult learning" developing cognition and intellectual capacity among educators and leaders.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified **some evidence** of this characteristic. For example:

o *Protected, focused learning time for all members of the school community provided opportunity for improved student performance and instructional efficacy.* As mentioned earlier, the Freshman Academy team schedule allowed for teachers to meet

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collaboratively five times a week and for students to have a guided study with a team teacher. Guidance indicated that the 9th grade team was considered "sacred" in the scheduling process. All other students had a Guided Study every day; three days a week, students had structured time to do homework or meet with teachers while the other two days were spent doing SAT/PSAT prep, health, or other advisory-related work. Additionally, math and English teachers were available after school two days a week for additional help. Freshmen were assigned an academic detention after school if they missed work or needed further instruction. Outside of the time provided for 9th grade team teachers, early release time every Friday was designated for all teachers to engage in PLC work. Groups met regularly for peer feedback and support with improving instructional practice. Organized cross curricular in past years, PLCs were organized by content area with support staff integrated starting just this year. One education technician working in a science class attested to the willingness of regular education teachers to collaborate on a professional level with support staff. As a result of this collaboration, she felt "in the know" regarding the curriculum in each classroom she served.

o *A content emphasis on improving core skills and a pedagogical emphasis on improving instruction was considered key to improving student performance.* As referenced often in this report, the school's work with MCLP (and the district's focus on writing) was evidence of a learning emphasis on core skills. Students corroborated the systemic impact of writing across the curriculum as they cited examples of writing assignments in history, chemistry, and Algebra II. To address skills gaps as determined by test scores and teacher recommendations, 9th + 10th grade students attended a literacy workshop (Read 180) offered every day for 55 minutes. {Note: Until this year, students could potentially opt out of the recommended literacy course.} For 9th graders only, additional, intensive math instruction (Math 360) was offered daily as well. For Algebra I & II and Geometry, the Carnegie math system included a skills-based intervention program called Cognitive Tutor. Our observations showed that students work independently with the computer program within the classroom following each unit. Teachers were available for additional instruction if students needed. Prior to the SIG year, the goal of improving student learning had been an objective reflected in some strategies and initiatives already in place. The assistant superintendent indicated that "NEASC brought clarity" to instructional focus for all students. As well, the teacher evaluation system with mandatory improvement plan required underperforming teachers to improve and learn or move on. Further, the MCLP initiative was

implemented across the curriculum to improve student performance in reading and writing. However, much of the school's focused work with improving instruction appeared to be directives of the current SIG initiative. The assistant principal pointed out that SIG had improved instruction and that the "school is very accessible to students." As described previously, PLCs and the Peer Coaching Program provided teachers with focused, purposeful strategies for a reflection of practice. Freshmen Academy teachers were in the process of aligning curriculum and discussing practice to improve the efficacy of the team model. Other piloted programs included a Project-based Learning model and the use of iWalkthrough data to assist in examining practice.

Conclusions

Many wonderful practices were evident during our visit to Site EL High School. In the research literature, some common distinguishing characteristics of Improving Schools include: visible change; focused, effective leadership; thorough, sustained professional learning; and a school focus of both student and adult learning. The research also identified key elements for sustaining successful school improvement, including: common language and vision; interventions for underperforming and excelling students; data analysis; sustained, dedicated resources; intellectual capacity; and district-level support. Site EL High School exhibited some of these characteristics and elements of an Improving School during our two-day visit and in our review of documents, interviews, classroom observations, focus groups, and conversations. The strongest and most pervasive of these attributes included:

- *In their efforts to improve instruction, curriculum and student performance, individual educators and administrators demonstrated a strong potential for leadership in developing and maintaining cross-curriculum and content area collaboration.*

- *A school focus on developing professional learning opportunities and improving student performance has led to a comprehensive effort toward overall school improvement.*

More Efficient Schools, as defined in the first phase of this multi-year study, are student-focused learning communities in which there is systemic evidence of **intellectual work, equity,** and **efficiency.** Site EL High School exhibited some of these features of More Efficient Schools during our two-day visit and in our review of documents, interviews, classroom observations, focus groups, and conversations. The strongest and most pervasive of these attributes included:

- *A solid understanding of content knowledge combined with a growing capacity for transformational work was demonstrated by both educators and students.*

- *Initial efforts had been made to provide collaborative opportunities for educators that resulted in shared academic experiences for students and improved instructional practice.*

These were the observations made during the course of the CEPARE school visit and document review, and there are undoubtedly more strengths present in your school that the team did not get a chance to experience. However, the identification of these characteristics may help your school continue the on-going work to educate your community's children.

A Final Word of Thanks and Next Steps

Visiting schools and getting a chance to experience the wonder of what takes place every day for Maine's children is both an honor and a privilege. We appreciate the extreme generosity of the staff, students, and parents at Site EL High School. We learned a great deal about your school. Your willingness to share stories, open your classrooms to our observations, and help us to see how your school works greatly enhanced the process of this study. The summaries and examples provided above are just a sampling of all we saw and heard. If you have questions about the report, feel free to connect with Erika Stump, Lori Gunn or CEPARE director, David Silvernail.

We will continue our school visits across the state, then the research team at CEPARE will conduct a cross-case analysis of all schools in our study to identify common key practices and characteristics of Maine's improving high schools. Our hope is that this work will support policy makers, practitioners, parents, and communities in collective efforts to improve educational outcomes for Maine's students.

Thank you for all of your efforts on behalf of Maine's most important resource.

Case 2: High School Level Report
Study of Improving and Higher Performing Maine Schools 2012
Researchers: Ken Kunin and Erika Stump

As part of a research study undertaken at the request of the state legislature, the Center for Education Policy, Applied Research, and Evaluation (CEPARE) at University of Southern Maine (USM) and the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) are conducting a study of schools that have been identified as higher performing and efficient. CEPARE is exploring the significant practices and characteristics of higher performing, efficient schools and a group of typical Maine schools in an effort to distinguish the attributes that have helped higher performing and efficient schools to excel.

The CEPARE research team is pleased that Site HH (HA), a higher performing and efficient Maine school, agreed to be part of this important study. The school is part of MSAD #22 and serves approximately 740 students in grades 9-12 from the towns of Winterport, Hampden, and Newburgh, which are rural and suburban riverside communities in central Maine. Approximately 21.5% of the student population is

eligible for free and/or price-reduced lunch, 17% is identified as special education, and one student has been identified as Limited English Proficiency.

CEPARE researchers Ken Kunin and Erika Stump visited Hampden on February 16th and 17th after meeting with principal Ruey Yehle at an earlier date to prepare the schedule and gather additional information regarding the practices and characteristics of WMS. In all, the team conducted meetings with teachers, staff, students, parents, and principal in both interview and focus group settings. Observations were conducted during classroom and non-classroom time. Student and staff handbooks, school and district curriculum documents, newsletters, and websites were reviewed to help paint a picture of the school as a whole. Researchers obtained additional information from the Maine Department of Education website and from a review of articles in local and regional newspapers over the past three years.

At the outset of the study, CEPARE committed to providing each school with an individualized report of observations from the data collected. Therefore, the following is a *description* of some of the data gathered from the site visit, interviews, classroom observations, and review of documents. These observations are organized into eight key characteristics, which are often referenced in education research literature to describe higher performing schools. This report does not provide a complete description of this school, nor of the many programs and activities provided to its students. Rather, it is designed to provide school staff and community a *snapshot* of some of the evidence this school demonstrated in the eight areas. At the conclusion of the study in summer 2011, the research team will provide all schools with a cross-site analysis.

This descriptive feedback will hopefully help schools, districts, and communities examine the working practices, programs, and strategies in your school and guide continual improvement for your learning community. While immersed in the daily work of striving to support all students to meet high standards and expectations, it is difficult for any school to stand back and view the interactions between plans, intentions, actions, and results. These individualized observations, which are intended to summarize key and illustrative points of the field research, are communicated to support your on-going efforts.

Characteristic #1: **High standards and high expectations are held for all.** Research suggests that in higher performing schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: high standards are communicated, understood, and expected for all students; all members of the learning community are aware of these academic and social targets.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your

school, we identified <u>considerable evidence</u> of this characteristic, for example:

- *Consistency of high standards and expectations by the teaching staff was something that was stated and which the school strived for in multiple ways.* Similar to most high schools accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), Site HH has a mission and clearly identified academic, social and civic expectations that were created collaboratively with faculty and community. The school communicated standards and expectations in writing in key documents, including the entire first half of the faculty handbook, which laid out global and specific curricular, instructional and behavioral expectations for teachers. Beyond what was written, the school took advantage of multiple opportunities to communicate standards and expectations and to make them real for teachers so that they would communicate them consistently for students. School-wide rubrics were clear for the five academic expectations with a detailed chart in the faculty handbook detailing primary and secondary responsibility. New teachers were mentored by the department heads and other teachers to set high and consistent expectations. All freshmen teachers also taught at least one upper level class to help them to raise the bar with freshmen. Faculty advocated in staff meetings for "Students of the Quarter" describing student qualities and actions in line with school-wide expectations. As one staff member noted, "We have common expectations...they are pretty well verbalized, and I have the feeling that people in all positions really subscribe to what we are trying to do. That makes a real difference."

- *Faculty had a sense of standards and expectations and took action when challenges were noted.* From multiple discussions, review of materials and observations it appeared that each department had done something new every year for the past several years to improve instruction. This was not by edict, but as one department chair noted, "We are doing O.K., but what can we do better?" adding, "Never be satisfied." This was also demonstrated by a group of teachers concerned that the current ninth grade students as a class were not meeting HA expectations and began an effort to gather staff after school for solution finding leading to revised planning and support for current ninth grade students.

- *It was a shared expectation that students read and write across the curriculum and that teachers develop the skills to support student growth in literacy.* Students reported that they read and write across various content areas on a regular basis. Students described writing out explanations in math, being guided on how to take effective notes in science and social studies and writing finished essays weekly in English. Students from all grade levels, including students attending classes at

United Technology Center, reported being required to read daily in class and discussing or being quizzed on their reading. Students also reported understanding that they would be required to take additional "Reading" courses if assessment scores were not high enough. Teachers reported, and we observed at a staff meeting, that they have received ongoing support and professional development enabling them to better support student growth in this area so critical to overall student success.

Characteristic #2: Leadership is effective and collaborative. Research suggests that in higher performing schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: the decision-making process is clear and focused on enhancing the learning of all students; members of the school community work collectively; conflicts are handled skillfully and respectfully.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified extensive evidence of this characteristic, for example:

o *There appeared to be wide agreement in the community that the current principal and assistant principal maintained an effective and vigilant focus on ensuring that Site HH positively impacted students.* We heard from a number of teachers about the principal's big question, "Is there value added when students come to Site HH?" and how this served to focus faculty effort on meeting student needs. One comment summarized what we heard from staff from all areas and from parents, "Administration is certainly committed to us being successful and students being successful, looking at ways to improve student performance...looking at how teachers teach, what do students need, how are we going to provide for this group of students that is already high performing, what are we going to do for these students who area struggling, looking at how we can meet those needs."

o *Site HH developed a leadership structure that invited a broad group of faculty into leadership roles to meet the challenges faced by the school.* There were a number of teams with overlapping faculty membership that took leadership roles in the school. The Department Heads, focusing on academic practice and policy issues, expanded in responsibility under the current principal. While previously just handled department budgets, they now provide greater academic oversight and by their report have much more input into school issues. There was also a Faculty Council focusing on school culture issues, an HA Response Team to support struggling students, a Data Team, an RTI Leadership Team, an I-Walk Through Team and a Transitions Team to guide the move to their new building. As one teacher noted, "Leadership takes on a variety of looks at Site HH" and the

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principal noted her role as connector of the various groups and efforts and commented, "We are all pulling on the same rope, but we are looking at things from a different angle and that makes it richer."

o *There was consistent leadership at the school and district level that worked hard to support excellence in teaching and was willing to make difficult calls regarding employment.* While the current principal had "only" been at HA since 2002, she served in the district in a range of positions since 1986, having worked closely with the superintendent for most of those years. The current assistant principal has been at HA for forty years. Teachers reported that school and district leadership tried to make things work for the school with comments like, "the attitude is that yes, there are obstacles, but we'll work it out, we'll get it done," and "very good at being supportive of teachers," and "the administration supports all aspects of extracurricular activities. The arts were supported as much as the sports." Teachers also noted that, "We're held to high expectations...and collectively we have high expectations of each other" and "it quickly becomes known to the new teacher in the building that it is expected that you do a good job." In the past five years, twenty teachers were hired using a team process with significant teacher involvement with questions developed by the school and district looking for particular characteristics and often a sample lesson performed on the second interview. After hire, the decisions to move from year one to year two probationary and then to continuing contract were taken very seriously with a number of new hires not being recommended. Also, the school and district worked through non-renewal for continuing contract teachers who were consistently not meeting the expected standard of performance.

Characteristic #3: **Curricula and instruction engages students in a wide range of meaningful learning experiences, in which teachers guide and facilitate student learning and multiple types of interventions and adjustments are made to meet student needs.** Research suggests that in higher performing schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: a focused and consistent curriculum; students are highly engaged in rigorous and relevant activities; a variety of interventions are used to ensure student progress.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified extensive evidence of this characteristic, for example:

o *A school-wide focus on literacy was evident from classroom and faculty meeting observations as well as reported by principal, teachers, students and parents. A science*

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teacher noted, "We have made a concerted effort to develop literacy across the curriculum. There are certain practices we now do that we didn't do before: frontload vocabulary, create vocabulary walls, text previewing before we ask kids to read, then talk about what they see in the text." Students also reported that reading and writing happens across content areas with reading daily in class, frequent note taking, and essays often weekly. Addressing this focus, students in upper-level English classes, recently began a student-staffed Writing Center. Special Education teachers also indicated that they see all departments using literacy language across the school and find this especially helpful for students with special needs. Various literacy intervention courses have been added in the past few years and are required for certain students based on demonstrated levels of proficiency: Reading and Math Seminar, Reading and Math Targeted Intervention, and Senior Critical Reading Elective. Frequent sharing opportunities about best practices were available and embraced during the faculty meeting and seen being implemented in classes the following day.

o *Site HH provided a variety of curriculum opportunities for students, based on skill level and areas of interest.* Within the regular course offerings, students enjoyed the choice in Senior Electives, Family & Consumer Science, Woodworking, and numerous A.P. courses. Students could supplement this curriculum with courses from Virtual High School, Early College for ME as well as some summer courses offered by HA to redeem credits in some cases or accelerate in preparation for A.P. courses. Students and parents spoke highly of the United Technologies Center opportunities for vocational education, and students also participated in the Eastern Maine Development Corporation's "Work Ready" program that provides (at no cost to the school) internships and career education. Students, parents, and teachers also indicated that use of textbooks at multiple reading levels within a single course, PLATO Learning (online courses), and ALEKS (online math program) provided important support for student learning.

o *A high level of teacher engagement with students during class time was both observed and reported by students, teachers, and parents.* Personal interaction, intervention, and instruction during class time was valued by the entire school community. Students indicated and classroom observations supported that textbooks and worksheets were most often used just as a support tool, while the majority of class time was spent through lectures, note taking, discussions, whole-class problem solving, and modeling. Especially in math courses, a great deal of class time was spent working through problems and corrections as a class with the teacher coaching or instructing. 49% of classroom observations (n=69) indicated that 91%

or more of students were engaged; 78% of classroom observations indicated that 76% or more of students were engaged. 16 observations identified students working at the Remember/Understand level of Bloom's Taxonomy; 17 observations identified students working at the Apply level; 3 observations identified students working at the Create level; 23 observations identified students working at Analyze/Evaluate level; 10 observations (including study halls) identified a varied level of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Characteristic #4: **Assessment data is examined, shared, and used in the school; student mastery of competencies is assessed with a range of formative and summative assessments that are rigorous and valid.** Research suggests that in higher performing schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: curriculum development, instruction, and intervention are informed by student performance; data is shared with students, parents, and community in an appropriate manner; appropriate assessment tools are selected and/or developed.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified <u>considerable evidence</u> of this characteristic, for example:

o *Curriculum and student course selection was informed by common assessments and rubrics.* Faculty handbook outlined five school-wide rubrics. An English teacher indicated, "We are still working on [common assessment tools] but the writing rubric and oral presentation rubrics have been put into place in the last few years but we're still developing that. It needs to be broken down into smaller steps, grade-level expectations." Course placement in English is based on semester grade, school-wide writing assessment, and teacher recommendation. In math, all Algebra I teachers use common chapter tests. They meet as a group to review student performance and examine instructional practices. Teachers also reported that they refer to PowerSchool to review common assessments and grades when talking with students about goals in Academic Advisory.

o *All teaching staff and administrators had a solid awareness of student performance from various assessments given to students.* Students took NWEA in fall and spring, with selected students who were struggling taking it in the winter as well. Students in 9th grade took the AIMSweb and MAZE three times per year. Students in certain programs also took the Accuplacer and ASVAB. TeenScreen (a mental health survey) and CHOICES (a career preference survey) was also administered to students by guidance. Time was provided for teachers to review assessment results, and the Site HH Data Team (consisting of teachers, guidance, and administrators) met regularly to analyze data from these assessments as well.

Characteristic #5: Professional learning is effective and primarily focused on improving student learning. Research suggests that in higher performing schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: informative, focused professional learning is supported at all levels, from the classroom to the district office.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified <u>extensive evidence</u> this characteristic, for example:

o *Site HH incorporated insights, ideas, and practices focused on improving student learning shared by a variety of staff members.* As mentioned above, HA involves a number of teachers in leadership roles through various committees: iWalkthrough, Data Team, Faculty Council, Department Heads, Transition Team, RTI, etc. Staff reported that they were willing to serve on these committees because their work and ideas were valued and implemented. There were frequent opportunities during faculty meetings, department meetings, and in-service days to share findings. For example, the iWalkthrough Team was trained to do iWalkthrough classroom observations, given release time to conduct observations, analyzed data, presented to the faculty, set goals, then conducted further observations. Another example was a group of Special Education staff members conducted a model IEP meeting in fishbowl format at a faculty meeting to demonstrate methods for improving teacher involvement and contribution.

o *Professional development time appeared to be used efficiently and with a focus on student learning.* A teacher noted that teacher presentations in the faculty meeting starts the conversations and keeps us focused on the goal of improving student learning. Our observations identified the regular faculty meeting as a focused, efficient use of time with a majority of the time committed to targeted professional learning. It included expert shares of best practices, Student of the Month discussion, and group analysis of Mike Mattos' <u>Pyramid Response to Intervention</u>. Teachers and administration indicated that the meeting we observed was reflective of their regular format and content for faculty meetings. Teachers also indicated that department meetings were similarly useful, "In our department meetings we have meaningful conversations about instruction: what is good instruction, what is not." While teachers shared the universal wish for more time to collaborate, they said they felt they really had a meaningful role in school improvement.

Characteristic #6: Community members, the school committee, and district leadership are engaged in improving student learning. Research suggests that in higher performing schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: all stakeholders are informed supporters of on-going instructional improvement.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified <u>considerable evidence</u> of this characteristic, for example:

- o *RSU #22 taxpayers demonstrated strong support of Site HH in the process of building a new high school to serve the needs of students and the communities it serves.* Recently, the community voted to bond six million dollars beyond what the state would fund for a new school in order to build the school that they determined they needed for their community. The additional funding will allow for larger science classrooms that meet national standards for size, a nine hundred-seat auditorium and construction of a larger gym. We heard a great many statements of pride as parents, students and staff describe Site HH.

- o *Both on a school-wide and individual student level, there was strong communication with parents and community.* The HA website provided students, teachers, parents and the community with extensive information and tools to support student learning and to keep up to date with events and projects taking place at the school. HA's other printed materials, such as the Student Handbook and the Course Guide, were clearly written and focus first and foremost on expectations for student learning, both academic and social. The school also hosted a curriculum night for eighth grade students and parents to introduce them to the high school, "dessert and discuss" evenings for parents regularly attended by 40-60 people and an interactive open house. Parents and students described in detail why and how they access PowerSchool to get current information about grades and assignments. From a number of focus groups and interviews it also appeared that teachers and school staff regularly contacted parents with positive news as well as with concerns and speak of the critical importance of developing trusting relationships between school and families.

- o *The school actively cultivated community partnerships on a range of levels both to be of service to students and for students to be of service to the community.* The Site HH Response Team (HART), a multi-disciplinary student assistance team that met weekly, actively pursued funding and partnerships with outside agencies to expand programmatic supports for students. HA also developed collaborations with the Eastern Maine Development Council to provide career preparation and internship services, University of Maine at Orono's program called "Innovations" to stimulate interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields and a national service organization of architecture, engineering and construction management professionals (ACE) to provide mentoring and project-based learning for students. Site HH was also proud of the level of community service in which students engaged, including a teacher

apprentice program with neighboring elementary and middle schools and a school-wide effort to assist the Bangor Homeless Shelter through fundraising and volunteering.

Characteristic #7: School culture fosters strong, respectful, and equitable relationships for all. Research suggests that in higher performing schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: policies and practices of the school provide equitable access to learning that provides opportunities to meet high standards; school presents a safe, welcoming, and healthy environment in which all students are known well.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified <u>considerable evidence</u> of this characteristic, for example:

o *Many students at Site HH were supported and recognized for their involvement in the school community in a variety of ways.* A large percentage of students indicated they were involved in school extra-curricular activities such as athletics, music, drama, clubs, etc. While athletics was certainly a successful aspect of the school, the drama coach said, "The administration supports all aspects of extra-curricular activities. The arts are supported as much as the sports." All members of the school community (students, staff, administration, parents, etc.) spoke with pride about the wide variety of extra- and co-curricular opportunities and achievements of numerous students at HA. While advocating for Student of the Quarter, teachers often referenced the student's involvement in lesser-known clubs or outside community activities, demonstrating their awareness of the child as a whole, even beyond the walls of the school.

o *Diligent work by the school staff to connect with every student on some level was evident.* A strong aspect of preventing students from falling through any gaps was the Site HH Response Team (HART) mentioned above. HART was made up of various school staff members and 8th grade guidance counselors and met weekly for at least one hour to discuss students demonstrating risk factors. There was also discussion of selecting students for Student of the Quarter at the faculty meeting, which included students who had struggled and made significant improvement or students possibly unnoticed for their silent efforts. The school began an Academic Advisory program with grade-level goals and served as another place for students to make a connection with faculty outside of academics. Even the Friday night detention was run (by the same teacher for the past eight years) as an intervention opportunity instead of simply a punishment. A teacher said, "Students make

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choices. Sometimes they make bad choices; sometimes they make good choices. That doesn't make them good or bad students...If they're in detention, they made a bad choice. And we try to help them learn from those choices and move in a different direction and make better choices." HA staff was working diligently to make sure all students felt a connection and was known well to at least one adult in the building.

Characteristic #8: **Resource use is equitable and effectively supports student learning.** Research suggests that in higher performing schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: decision-making at all levels is driven by the goal of supporting the achievement of high standards by all students; focused strategies meet the school's ongoing program development and improvement goals connected to student learning.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified <u>some evidence</u> of this characteristic, for example:

o *The district implemented the Nutri Kids Point of Service (POS) system four years ago doubling utilization of meal services, which enabled Food Services to run in the black after years of running in the red.* The district was also persistent about signing students up for free or reduced price lunch adding a few each month district-wide after the start of the year. Also, running three 25-minute lunches increased meals served and a la carte sales while reportedly leading to more relaxed lunch periods.

o *The district and school have pursued creative and thoughtful actions that increased efficiency and protected learning opportunities for students.* The district continually took many steps — such as joining regional collaborations for purchasing oil and Workmen's Compensation insurance, bidding out transportation services for price and predictability of expense, and cutting non-core areas — to save money while still protecting classroom instruction and programs believed to add high value to the school. The school developed a partnership with Acadia Hospital to share a substance abuse counselor and a social worker who staffs the school's drop-in counseling center.

o *Some restructuring and staffing decisions have improved efficiency of administrative work in guidance and the front office.* The guidance office began a three-year re-structuring in the organization of their department, maintaining the same staff levels but reducing student caseload for a director so he/she could take on more planning and administrative work. The current director indicated that this allowed more focus and clarity in their own schedules as well as their availability to students. The front office administrative assistants both indicated being very

comfortable with technology and had prior experience in the business sector, which appeared to allow them to use data management programs in an effective manner and apparently streamline some methods of record-keeping.

Conclusions

Many wonderful practices were evident during our visit to Site HH. The strongest and most pervasive elements we saw in our review of documents, interviews, classroom observations, focus groups, and conversations during our two-day visit of your school included:

- *Student-focused practices and beliefs that were evident in professional development pursuits, classroom practices, leadership goals, and the general atmosphere of the school.*

- *A solid awareness of student academic performance across the curriculum through school-wide and individual data collection, analysis, reflection, and action.*

- *The school not only communicated high expectations and clear standards, but also took positive action to meet challenges when it was perceived that they as a school were falling short.*
- *School leadership, facilitated by the principal, is collaborative, inclusive and focused on taking strategic actions to ensure better results for all students.*

These were the observations made during the course of the CEPARE school visit and document review, and there are undoubtedly more strengths present in your school that the team did not get a chance to experience. However, the identification of these characteristics may help your school continue the on-going work to educate your community's children.

A Final Word of Thanks and Next Steps

Visiting schools and getting a chance to experience the wonder of what takes place every day for Maine's children is both an honor and a privilege. We appreciate the extreme generosity of the staff, students, and parents at Site HH. We learned a great deal about your school. Your willingness to share stories, open your classrooms to our observations, and help us to see how your school works greatly enhanced the process of this study. The summaries and examples provided above are just a sampling of all we saw and heard. If you have questions about the report, feel free connect with Ken Kunin, Erika Stump, or CEPARE director, David Silvernail.

We will continue our school visits across the state, then the research team at CEPARE will conduct a cross-case analysis of all schools in our study to identify common key practices and characteristics of Maine's higher performing and efficient schools. Our

hope is that this work will support policy makers, practitioners, parents, and communities in collective efforts to improve educational outcomes for Maine's students.

Thank you for all of your efforts on behalf of Maine's most important resource.

Case 3: High School Level Report
Study of Improving Maine High Schools - 2012
Researchers: Erika Stump and Lori Moran Gunn

As part of a research study undertaken at the request of the state legislature, the Center for Education Policy, Applied Research, and Evaluation (CEPARE) at University of Southern Maine (USM) and the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) are conducting a study of high schools that have been identified as improving. CEPARE is exploring the significant practices and characteristics of improving Maine high schools in an effort to identify some practices and attributes that have helped these schools to improve student performance. Several case study high schools have agreed to participate in this study, and in return, CEPARE is providing each case study school with a descriptive report of the observations and data gathered during their site visit.

The CEPARE research team is pleased that Site D High School (NHS), an improving Maine high school, agreed to be part of this important study. The school is part of MSAD 37 and serves approximately 220 students in grades 9-12 from the towns of

Addison, Columbia, Columbia Falls, Milbridge, Harrington and Cherryfield, which are rural communities near the northern coast of Maine. Approximately 69% of the student population is eligible for free and/or price-reduced lunch, 16% is identified as special education, and 6% of students have been identified as English Language Learners

CEPARE researchers Erika Stump and Lori Gunn visited Site D High School in Harrington, Maine on May 21st and 22nd after speaking with Principal John Sawyer at an earlier date to prepare the schedule and gather additional information regarding the practices and characteristics of NHS. In all, the team conducted meetings with teachers, staff, students, parents, and school and district administrators in both interview and focus group settings. Observations were conducted during classroom and non-classroom time. Student and staff handbooks, school and district curriculum documents, newsletters, student work, and school websites were reviewed to help paint a picture of the school as a whole. Researchers obtained additional information from the Maine Department of Education website and from a review of articles in local and regional newspapers over the past three years.

At the outset of the study, CEPARE committed to providing each school with an individualized report of observations from the data collected. Therefore, the following is a *description* of some of the data gathered from the site visit, interviews, classroom observations, and review of documents. These observations are organized into three distinctive features of More Efficient Schools, as referenced in the report, *More Efficient Public Schools in Maine: Learning Communities Building the Foundation of Intellectual Work* (Silvernail et al., 2012). The observations from this site visit are also categorized into four additional areas representing key features found in research literature about improving schools. This report does not provide a complete description of your school, nor of the many programs and activities provided to its students. Rather, it is designed to provide school staff and community a *snapshot* of some of the evidence this school demonstrated in the seven areas. At the conclusion of the study, the research team will provide all schools with a cross-site analysis.

This descriptive feedback will hopefully help schools, districts, and communities examine the working practices, programs, and strategies in your school and guide continual improvement for your learning community. While immersed in the daily work of striving to support all students to meet high standards and expectations, it is difficult for any school to stand back and view the interactions between plans, intentions, actions, and results. These individualized observations, which are intended to summarize key and illustrative points of the field research, are communicated to support your school's on-going efforts.

<u>Characteristic #1</u>: **Student-focused learning communities in which there is systemic evidence of Intellectual Work.** Intellectual work is demonstrated through three cognitive practices:

4. **Understanding:** focused, sustained and thorough academic (content knowledge and fundamental skills) and social/behavioral (interpersonal relationships, social trends, cultural norms, etc.) learning.

5. **Transformation:** constant inquiry using various reasoning processes and all levels of cognitive thinking to work with information and concepts in order to create innovative solutions.

6. **Sharing:** clear communication of invigorating conclusions that enhance existing ideas.

Research suggests that in More Efficient schools intellectual work may be demonstrated in the following ways: students engaging in academic knowledge and skills as well as social and behavioral learning; and adults creating instructional practices, curricula, professional learning programs, and leadership roles that improve student performance and are informed by assessment and experience.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified **some evidence** of this characteristic. For example:

   o *In many classroom activities, students and teachers were engaged in tasks that demonstrated understanding of the academic content knowledge.* 88% of classroom observations (n=32) identified a learning activity with at least some expectation of demonstrating "understanding" a majority of the time. 50% of classroom observations identified of students demonstrating "understanding" a majority of the time. {Note: According to the Center for Authentic Intellectual Work's *Teaching for Authentic Intellectual Work: Standards and Scoring Criteria for Teachers' Tasks, Student Performance and Instruction* (Newmann, King and Carmichael, 2009), the goal for a high quality learning experience is to engage all students in activities which have higher order thinking (i.e. "transformation") as their primary tasks 60% - 100% of their learning time and lower order thinking (i.e. "understanding") 0% - 40% of their learning time.} While 41% of classroom observations indicated that the learning activity had some expectation of "transformation" (see Appendix A: Table 1), 41% of classroom observations also indicated that the learning task's primary expectation was that students demonstrate "understanding" (see Appendix A: Table 2). In the majority of

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observations, students and teachers demonstrated an accurate understanding of the information and knowledge being discussed.

o *Conversations with various teachers suggested that there was a significant intellectual capacity within the adult educators to think critically about the craft, pedagogy and content of teaching.* Common rubrics (including writing rubric used across the content areas) had been internally developed by school educators that reflected an expectation that students demonstrate transformation in order to meet and exceed the standards. A student said, "[Rubrics] are used a lot. We use the writing rubric in biology research papers as well as research essays for Photo, Art, Spanish and of course English." A parent agreed, "School-wide rubrics are systemic, not just in English." Assessment of student learning, such as graded assignments and progress evaluation, (especially in English, Art, Science, Math and the self-contained Special Education classroom) upheld these standards, appeared rigorous, and reflected the expectation that students demonstrate transformation to meet the standards. Although minimal time for professional collaboration was provided during the contractual day, educators were evidently dedicated to engaging in analytical and evaluative conversations with their professional peers when possible.

o *Classroom activities that thoroughly engaged students in transformation, substantive conversation and critical thinking were observed.* Although students and teachers working independently was the most commonly observed lesson format (see Appendix B - Table 3: Classroom Observations - Educator Role), examples of direct teacher and student interaction involving transformational thinking were evident. For example, one English teacher was facilitating a discussion with a heterogeneous ability group of students who had recently read *Romeo and Juliet*. Numerous students were verbally participating in the discussion and demonstrating a thorough understanding of the plot and characters. They were engaged in a whole class conversation comparing film versions of a specific scene that exhibited nuances of a crucial relationship in the play. Students were speaking clearly and specifically, referencing the text and offering provoking insights about the language of the text, dynamics of power structures among the characters as well as cinematic interpretations of the play. The conversation as well as a related writing activity required students to defend and revise their conclusions and analysis, and the students energetically demonstrated this during the class activity as well. (See Appendix C: Substantive Conversation Rubric)

<u>Characteristic #2</u>: **Student-focused learning communities in which there is systemic evidence of Equity.** Research suggests that in More Efficient schools equity may be demonstrated in the many ways, including: teachers and leaders demonstrating their belief that they have a moral obligation to focus on the intellectual development of students as a means towards a better world; and high standards and high expectations held for <u>all</u> members of the school community.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified **considerable evidence** of this characteristic. For example:

o   *A strong guidance program advocating for challenging and productive post-secondary pursuits was clearly raising the aspirations of students, educators and the community.* The guidance counselor said, "We promote and get excited about the options after high school; I've seen a great difference over the years." Students corroborated on the school's enthusiasm and focus on post-secondary learning opportunities for ALL students, "It's gotten better. They are pushing a lot more to get you to think about your future and college." Another student said, "A lot of the students think they can't go to college. They guidance counselor makes them apply, and when they are accepted they are in awe because they never thought they could." The school hosted an annual Pie Night that was reportedly very well attended. During this evening session, students of any age could attend and were offered informational sessions about FAFSA, college applications, a panel discussion of college-attending NHS alumni as well as various homemade pies. NHS also requires PSAT/SAT preparation lessons for all mainstreamed 9th, 10th and 11th grade students in Learning Lab and English courses. An Early College program was also provided through University of Maine at Machias offering online courses for college credit at a discounted rate that were monitored by the NHS librarian. This arrangement was unique to these two institutions and was negotiated by the NHS guidance counselor, and district-funded 1:1 computing (laptops) appeared to support this as well as other online opportunities. For each college course successfully completed (up to 18 credits), the student was awarded an elective credit towards high school graduation. The guidance counselor saw this as a real incentive for continuing to college, "With eighteen credits, how could you not keep going?"

o   *A supportive and rigorous program for English Language Learners students reflected the school's dedication to high expectations for a diverse population of learners.* While native Spanish speakers whose families have come to a community to work in

the agricultural industry are all too often marginalized in such geographically isolated and culturally homogenous areas, the approximately 13 English Language Learners enrolled at NHS appeared to be thoroughly engaged in the aspirations work for college readiness mentioned above (many of these students did attend college), enrolled in all mainstream courses as well as supported with an ESL course taught by a dedicated trilingual instructor who was an ESL student herself. This program included written and auditory tools for working with English course texts and content materials, and students usually read the required texts in both English and Spanish. The school also collaborated with a local non-profit organization, Mano en Mano, to provide after school and supplemental programming. However, both students and the ESL teacher indicated that the diversity this population of students and their families provide should be more celebrated in the school and community as well as further enveloped into the popular culture of the school beyond the classroom.

o *The self-contained Special Education program provided relevant and invigorating learning experiences for its students.* Several students with significant special needs and physical disabilities were actively engaged in learning experiences involving communication skills (verbal and non-verbal), adaptive physical therapy, and social interaction. The program appeared well funded, well staffed and well equipped in a large, sunny classroom with 1-to-1 iPads for its students, adaptive technology, physical therapy equipment, adapted furniture, and a full working kitchen. The educators appeared to be eager to learn more about their specific field and had transformed the limited professional learning they had experienced directly into relevant, engaging learning tools and opportunities for their students. The program director indicated that external professional learning experiences for the educators in this program were crucial since their geographic isolation limited the students' exposure to certified professionals in the field.

Characteristic #3: Student-focused learning communities in which there is systemic evidence of Efficiency. Research suggests that in More Efficient schools efficiency may be demonstrated in the following ways: human and financial resources are used efficiently to maximize learning opportunities for students and staff. For the purpose of this study of improving schools, we did not directly analyze the exact fiscal practices of the school. Rather, we are focusing on how school personnel and systems demonstrate the use of human and other available resources.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified <u>some evidence</u> of this characteristic. For example:

o *The district and school appeared to use external and grant funding in a manner that enhanced student learning experiences.* NHS has had a MELMAC grant since 2003 that supported the previously mentioned post-secondary aspirations programming that had evidently raised aspirations in students, educators and families. The guidance counselor said, "We have to credit the MELMAC grant because they fund [college and career readiness] things our district couldn't fund locally." The school had also used grant funding to equip four classrooms with SmartBoards. Additionally, the school received significant funding from the Maine Department of Education several years ago as a model district engaging in professional learning experiences surrounding Silver & Strong's 16 Best Practices.

o *The school utilized community collaborations with non-profit organizations to supplement student learning experiences.* As mentioned above, NHS worked with Mano en Mano to provide ESL programming and after school learning opportunities to English Language Learners. The school also worked with the Maine Sea Coast Mission through the Ed Greaves Education program (EdGE), which has a $4.5 million endowment subsidy and works with AmeriCorps volunteers to provide students with tutoring, enrichment, mentoring, teambuilding, and summer credit recovery. Low-performing or at-risk students were often actively encouraged to participate in these programs but many of the offerings were also available to all students free of charge.

Characteristic #4: A visible change symbolizes significant and sustained reform within the school. Research suggests that in improving schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: "quick wins" within the first few months of initiating reform efforts to represent action and sincerity to the school community and the community at large; positive, consistent public relations with community; and a clear message that the school's role is to "support education" not be the "sole source of education" within the community.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified <u>some evidence</u> of this characteristic. For example:

o *In the past several years, changes to the school's daily schedule and program of studies reflected an attempt to adapt to student needs.* In 2003, NHS adopted semester-long courses and a block schedule but after reflection on daily practices and student

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performance the school revised this schedule. In 2008, a blended block schedule was implemented and yearlong courses were re-introduced. This blended schedule appeared to allow for more flexibility to incorporate personalized courses such as Learning Lab, Advisory and Guided Study. A few teachers also cited this as a major catalyst for change in improving instructional practices. The schedule changes were coupled in the same year with the development of a school-level teacher-led Leadership Team, which acted as a liaison between educators and administrators as well as leaders in school improvement efforts, including the NEASC accreditation process that was successfully earned in 2010.

o *Recently, NHS began to use internally developed tools geared towards making students' educational experience at the high school more personalized and consistent.* Several teacher-developed school-wide rubrics were developed and available for use in all content areas. Our analysis of student work indicated that some teachers in various subject areas were using these rubrics, and students corroborated that the writing and oral presentation rubrics were used regularly. The guidance department was practicing a process of developing Personalized Learning Plans, which involved talking about post-secondary learning options and completing a college application, with every senior level student.

Characteristic #5: Focused, effective leaders throughout the school and district guide improvement. Research suggests that in improving schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: leadership, students and other adults in the school community are focused on learning; building administrator's role is to lead instruction, not just manage the school; school leaders initiate progress then collaborate to sustain improvement; open and explicit feedback and evaluation is conducted constantly.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified **considerable evidence** of this characteristic. For example:

o *Stable administrative and school board leadership indicated that improved instruction was a school focus.* The current principal and assistant principal worked within the district for many years. The principal spoke clearly about focusing teacher evaluations, observations and professional work around improving instruction and student learning. Teachers also said that the principal was very visible and frequently visited classrooms. The assistant principal was strongly dedicated to the school and community. Many teachers indicated that the assistant principal was an important leader in focusing improvement on instruction, using data to guide this work and advocating for valuable professional learning practices.

Teachers said the assistant principal was "good with data and knows what to do with it." School board members indicated that, historically, the board had been student-focused and supportive of efforts to improve student learning. Various educators said that the district had by and large supported past fiscal requests that were seen as supporting and enhancing student learning. A few teacher-leaders commended the new superintendent as being open to ideas that benefit students. They described his approach: "If you think it's going to benefit students, then go for it."

o *Three years ago, the school developed a Leadership Team consisting of teacher-leaders to act as a "liaison between teachers and administration."* Membership on the leadership team was open to all teachers and serves as an advocate for the needs of the high school at the district level. For example, the Leadership Team redesigned the district mandated "Teacher Rounds" practice of observing colleagues as more of a peer coaching model of collaboration and shared expertise that includes peer observations, conversations about best practices, and school-selected thematic professional learning. "Feedback from the rest of the staff has been positive. It's more collaborative and takes into account our professionalism, our craft." Other teachers also appeared to be leaders in their subject areas and capable of contributing to the Leadership Team if they chose to participate in future years, especially in Art, English, Math and Science.

Characteristic #6: Thorough and sustained learning is provided for school professionals. Research suggests that in improving schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: regular professional learning time for all classroom practitioners to work collaboratively and independently; professional development focused on instruction and building intellectual capacity; external learning opportunities utilized to develop internal experts.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified **some evidence** of this characteristic. For example:

o *The school's educators and leaders modeled practices of mind by building a strong foundation of professional learning from past and current initiatives and development opportunities.* In 2002, district work focused around literacy adapted to incorporate Silver Strong & Associates' Thoughtful Education approaches that included identifying and developing the districts' "Best Practices Program." This professional work and focus was led and organized by the school's Leadership Team and building administration. A school staff member said, "Teachers were

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ready to do it, but needed someone to guide them." On-going research and professional development was integrated into the "Best Practices Program," including recent learning involving "A Better Education: Brain Rules" by Dr. John Medina. Some of these practices were also adapted to better fit the needs of the high school, such as the Teacher Rounds that use collegial observations and collaborative lesson planning as well as further training in iWalkthrough observations. In addition, we observed educators' on-going contributions to the staff room's "museum wall" of effective classroom practices and strategies shared by the high school educators. As one school board member and parent said, "We have internal experts within the system. Professional development continues today. That's part of our culture, and we do that mostly internally now."

o *The school's educators demonstrated a great capacity and desire for engaging in intellectual work at all stages (understanding, transformation and sharing).* A vast majority of teachers we interviewed expressed an interest in individually and collectively continuing their professional development to improve their craft, content knowledge and student performance. Some teachers pursued collaboration even though formal time was not offered, such as the science teachers who had worked together to create a common curriculum and various individual teachers who were engaged in external content-specific organizations and workshops. Educators and school leaders indicated that they believed focused professional collaboration would be even stronger if they had regular embedded common time.

Characteristic #7: The school focus holds steadily on student and adult learning. Research suggests that in improving schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: a pedagogical emphasis on improving student learning; protected, focused learning time for all students; student learning emphasis on depth of core skills (reading, writing, numeracy and thinking); "a laboratory of adult learning" developing cognition and intellectual capacity among educators and leaders.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified **some evidence** of this characteristic. For example:

o *The school and district had developed an atmosphere that allowed students to focus on academic work.* 72% of classroom observations (n=32) showed that at least a majority of students were engaged in the learning task at hand (see Appendix B: Table 4). There was also a clear expectation that even if students were not directly engaged in the learning task (such as those students who had completed a test or

chose not to do homework during Guided Study), they were required to maintain a quiet respectful environment conducive to academic focus for those students who were studying. School board members also indicated that the board was historically very supportive of any measure that improved or supported student learning, describing the school board as "student focused" in its budgets and policies.

o *As mentioned above in the section regarding professional learning, adults in the school were enthusiastic about professional learning opportunities, and leadership spoke in a manner that clearly supported and encouraged adult learning.* Numerous educators we interviewed demonstrated a significant capacity for intellectual work that would invigorate their profession, their subject area and student performance. Teachers had clearly thought deeply about their course material, often attending content area conferences and trainings, and translated that into rigorous, innovative coursework for students. Especially in English, Science, Math, Special Education, ESL and Art, lesson plans, assignment descriptors, rubrics and assessed student work demonstrated transformative work on the part of the educator. Various teachers referenced the recent professional development surrounding Best Practices and "Brain Rules" as thought-provoking learning experiences that enhanced their lessons and instruction.

Conclusions

Many wonderful practices were evident during our visit to Site D High School. In the research literature, some common distinguishing characteristics of Improving Schools include: visible change; focused, effective leadership; thorough, sustained professional learning; and a school focus of both student and adult learning. The research also identified key elements for sustaining successful school improvement, including: common language and vision; interventions for underperforming and excelling students; data analysis; sustained, dedicated resources; intellectual capacity; and district-level support. Site D High School exhibited some of these characteristics and elements of an Improving School during our two-day visit and in our review of documents, interviews, classroom observations, focus groups, and conversations. The strongest and most pervasive of these attributes included:

- *A clearly understood professional focus on improving students' learning experiences and the ability to build upon and adapt professional development to maintain this focus.*

- *A willingness among educators and administrators to work collaboratively.*

More Efficient Schools, as defined in the first phase of this multi-year study, are student-focused learning communities in which there is systemic evidence of **intellectual work**, **equity**, and **efficiency**. Site D High School exhibited some of these features of More Efficient Schools during our two-day visit and in our review of documents, interviews, classroom observations, focus groups, and conversations. The strongest and most pervasive of these attributes included:

- *A thorough dedication to providing a quality education and raising aspirations for all populations of students, including English Language Learners and Special Education students.*

- *School educators and leaders demonstrated the enthusiasm and intellectual capacity for professional learning at the transformational level.*

These were the observations made during the course of the CEPARE school visit and document review, and there are undoubtedly more strengths present in your school that the team did not get a chance to experience. However, the identification of these characteristics may help your school continue the on-going work to educate your community's children.

A Final Word of Thanks and Next Steps

Visiting schools and getting a chance to experience the wonder of what takes place every day for Maine's children is both an honor and a privilege. We appreciate the extreme generosity of the staff, students, and parents at Site D High School. We learned a great deal about your school. Your willingness to share stories, open your classrooms to our observations, and help us to see how your school works greatly enhanced the process of this study. The summaries and examples provided above are just a sampling of all we saw and heard. If you have questions about the report, feel free to connect with Erika Stump, Lori Gunn or CEPARE director, David Silvernail.

We will continue our school visits across the state, then the research team at CEPARE will conduct a cross-case analysis of all schools in our study to identify common key practices and characteristics of Maine's improving high schools. Our hope is that this work will support policy makers, practitioners, parents, and communities in collective efforts to improve educational outcomes for Maine's students.

Thank you for all of your efforts on behalf of Maine's most important resource.

Case 4: High School Level Report
Study of Improving Maine High Schools - 2012
Researchers: Erika Stump and Lori Moran Gunn

As part of a research study undertaken at the request of the state legislature, the Center for Education Policy, Applied Research, and Evaluation (CEPARE) at University of Southern Maine (USM) and the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) are conducting a study of high schools that have been identified as improving. CEPARE is exploring the significant practices and characteristics of improving Maine high schools in an effort to identify some practices and attributes that have helped these schools to improve student performance.

The CEPARE research team is pleased that Site SE District High School (SDHS), an improving Maine high school, agreed to be part of this important study. The school is part of RSU #20 and serves approximately 175 students in grades 9-12 from the towns of Site SE, Frankfort and Stockton Springs, which are rural communities on the northeast coast of Maine. Approximately 58% of the student population is eligible for free and/or price-reduced lunch, 21% is identified as special education, and no students have been identified as Limited English Proficiency.

CEPARE researchers Erika Stump and Lori Gunn visited Site SE on April 2nd and 3rd after speaking with Dean of Students Ruth Fitzpatrick at an earlier date to prepare the schedule and gather additional information regarding the practices and characteristics of SDHS. In all, the team conducted meetings with teachers, staff, students, parents, and school and district administrators in both interview and focus group settings. Observations were conducted during classroom and non-classroom time. Student and staff handbooks, school and district curriculum documents, newsletters, student work, and school websites were reviewed to help paint a picture of the school as a whole. Researchers obtained additional information from the Maine Department of Education website and from a review of articles in local and regional newspapers over the past three years.

At the outset of the study, CEPARE committed to providing each school with an individualized report of observations from the data collected. Therefore, the following is a *description* of some of the data gathered from the site visit, interviews, classroom observations, and review of documents. These observations are organized into three distinctive features of More Efficient Schools, as referenced in the report, *More Efficient Public Schools in Maine: Learning Communities Building the Foundation of Intellectual Work* (Silvernail et. al, 2012). The observations from this site visit are also categorized into

four additional areas representing key features found in research literature about improving schools. This report does not provide a complete description of your school, nor of the many programs and activities provided to its students. Rather, it is designed to provide school staff and community a *snapshot* of some of the evidence this school demonstrated in the seven areas. At the conclusion of the study, the research team will provide all schools with a cross-site analysis.

This descriptive feedback will hopefully help schools, districts, and communities examine the working practices, programs, and strategies in your school and guide continual improvement for your learning community. While immersed in the daily work of striving to support all students to meet high standards and expectations, it is difficult for any school to stand back and view the interactions between plans, intentions, actions, and results. These individualized observations, which are intended to summarize key and illustrative points of the field research, are communicated to support your on-going efforts.

Characteristic #1: **Student-focused learning communities in which there is systemic evidence of Intellectual Work.** Intellectual work is demonstrated through three elements:

7. **Understanding:** focused, sustained and thorough academic (content knowledge and fundamental skills) and social/behavioral (interpersonal relationships, social trends, cultural norms, etc.) learning.
8. **Transformation:** constant inquiry using various reasoning processes and all levels of cognitive thinking to work with information and concepts in order to create innovative solutions.
9. **Sharing:** clear communication of invigorating conclusions that enhance existing ideas.

Research suggests that in More Efficient schools intellectual work may be demonstrated in the following ways: students engaging in academic knowledge and skills as well as social and behavioral learning; and adults creating instructional practices, curricula, professional learning programs, and leadership roles that improve student performance and are informed by assessment and experience.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified considerable evidence of this characteristic, for example:

o *Instruction that encouraged students to engage in transformational intellectual work was regularly evident in classroom practices.* 70% of classroom observations (n=20) indicated that the learning activity required at least some transformation (4 out of 20 observations indicated "little or no expectation that students demonstrate

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transformation," 9 out of 20 observations indicated "some expectation that students demonstrate transformation," 5 out of 20 observations indicated the "learning activity's primary expectation is transformation"). {Note: According to the Center for Authentic Intellectual Work's *Teaching for Authentic Intellectual Work: Standards and Scoring Criteria for Teachers' Tasks, Student Performance and Instruction* (Newmann, King and Carimichael, 2009), the goal for a high quality learning experience is to engage all students in activities which have higher order thinking (i.e. "transformation") as their primary tasks 60% - 100% of their learning time and lower order thinking (i.e. "understanding") 0% - 40% of their learning time.} This type of transformational practice was evident in several observations, including a ninth grade English class that was engaged in a lesson that had apparently been scaffolded to introduce the concept of symbolism. In this lesson, students were asked to identify and share with the class a symbol to represent themselves. The class discussion was facilitated by the instructor who incorporated the idea of other symbols in society then used that to segway into a conversation about a short story that had been assigned to the whole class. The culminating assessment of the lesson was an analysis essay that asked students to read another short story by the same author then identify and analyze similar or common symbols within that text.

o *Educators and students engaged in a high level of sharing that was focused on learning.* Classroom observations (n=20) indicated that teachers often took an active role in interacting with students: "conference" (10 out of 20); "facilitate" (5 out of 20); "present" (4 out of 20); "monitor" (4 out of 20); and 2 observations reported teachers "working independently." [Note: Multiple roles could be identified in one observation.] Observations noted, "Teacher gave very specific feedback to students regarding their process in working through math problems." and "Teacher modeled how to use vocabulary in a sentence with a 'story starter' then continued to help students, giving feedback as he conferenced with students." Students were clearly engaged in academic work for the great majority of their scheduled school day, which required students to be in an active learning environment including facilitated interventions throughout the day. 85% of classroom observations (n=20) indicated strong levels of student engagement: "all" (30%), "all but a few" (30%), "a majority" (25%), and "less than half" (15%).

o *Significant time and a positive environment were provided for adults to engage in intellectual work.* The district superintendent indicated that a crucial element of improvement was to "provide [staff] with every professional learning opportunity that you can...give them the opportunity to learn." This philosophy

was evident in practice at SDHS with daily time for adults to work collaboratively or independently, which was evidently used quite regularly for substantive discussions about common assignments/assessments, student performance, and building curriculum. One observation reflected a grade level team spending approximately forty minutes engaged in thoughtful analysis and discussion about one teacher's writing assignment. The teacher had brought the task, the rubric, scaffolding notes and samples of assessed student work to the meeting. Colleagues then used a loosely followed protocol to address the teacher's questions about the students' level of analysis and evaluation in the final essay as well as his concern that the student work reflected too much of his own intellectual work instead of their own independent thought. Also, in conversations with school leaders, it was clear that the constant pursuit of new research and external resources (grants, volunteers, community programs, etc.) to support the school's focus and practices were "applied not added" to existing work.

Characteristic #2: Student-focused learning communities in which there is systemic evidence of Equity. Research suggests that in More Efficient schools equity may be demonstrated in the following ways: teachers and leaders demonstrating their belief that they have a moral obligation to focus on the intellectual development of students as a means towards a better world; and high standards and high expectations held for <u>all</u> members of the school community.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified <u>considerable evidence</u> of this characteristic, for example:

o *Extensive interventions and personalized learning experiences provided all students with the fundamental skills and knowledge necessary to continue their academic pursuits.* All mainstreamed students and most students with an IEP were required to complete a course of studies that included four years of math, English, science and social studies. Within these core courses, students were required to meet the school-developed standards for each summative assessment; failure was not an option. Students were required to re-do any part of a summative assignment that was assessed as not meeting the standard until the assessed grade indicated the student had demonstrated proficiency in all relevant standards. Extended learning time was provided for students to revise their work with the direct guidance of the teacher who had assigned the task in intervention sessions during lunchtime, before/after school (Academies), study hall (LAB), and during

school vacations for more extensive work. Our observations indicated that the vast majority of these intervention sessions were used diligently by students who could clearly explain why they had to revise an assignment and with teachers providing direct assistance when needed. The expectation of meeting the standards before earning course credit (and therefore graduating) had become an accepted part of the school culture. In fact, one student said that interventions "allow learning to really happen."

o *Site SE District High School had apparent, significant success in raising post-secondary aspirations from its students, families and staff.* Numerous staff members and adult community members indicated that in previous years the culture of the community had not embraced the importance of continuing education beyond (or even within) high school. However, several key changes developed the current atmosphere in the school and community that pursuing lifelong learning in the form of challenging work experiences, college, or other educational opportunities after completing high school was a valuable, beneficial part of a successful life. Various programs were put into place to encourage "students and parents to realize they can be successful, they can go on to colleges then return and better their own communities." Some of these programs include providing online college courses, Early College and collaboration with the University of Maine's outreach campus at the Hutchinson Center, as well as formal and informal college counseling starting in the middle school.

o *SDHS appeared to value every adult professional on its staff as a potential leader in the school's progress.* Education technicians, both in special education roles and other supporting roles, were invited and encouraged to participate in regularly scheduled grade-level team meetings with content area teachers. Collaboration among classroom teachers and other staff members was evident in collective curriculum work with teachers and the assistant librarian in addition to various student-written behavioral expectations posted in the cafeteria that were signed by the cafeteria staff as well. There was also a school-wide advisory program in place that paired students with adult school staff members (teachers and others).

Characteristic #3: **Student-focused learning communities in which there is systemic evidence of Efficiency.** Research suggests that in More Efficient schools efficiency may be demonstrated in the following ways: human and financial resources are used efficiently to maximize learning opportunities for students and staff. For the purpose of this study of improving schools, we did not directly analyze the exact fiscal practices of

the school. Rather, we are focusing on how school personnel and systems demonstrate the use of human and other available resources.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified some evidence of this characteristic, for example:

o *Selection and use of grant funding aligned with the school's vision and enhanced existing successful practices.* SDHS had a school coach as part of a long-term grant, and she helped the school administrators identify, write and submit grants. The school coach indicated that their goal in selecting grants was to extend or enhance a current program that had been demonstrating improvement in student performance. At times, this meant pursuing new grants but often it included applying for extended support from on-going funding sources. Teachers were often closely involved in the decision to apply for external funding, and some educators were even involved in the application process.

o *Although the town's that send students to Site SE were small, rural communities, there were some very engaged and dedicated alumni, former school employees and community members.* In 2002, a community group organized to raise funds within the townspeople and gain a match from a local corporate business that provided a significant amount of the funds to improve and increase the size of the school facility. This group recently gained non-profit status as an alumni organization and continued to work to support the school in numerous ways. The school also appeared to work well with community-based education programs that directly enhanced their students' learning experience at the next-door Penobscot Marine Museum, University of Maine's Hutchinson Center and AmeriCorps' VISTA.

o *School staff appeared to be highly trained to effectively provide educational and social supports to their students.* Teachers demonstrated that they were well versed in various professional protocols that focused on improving student learning and allowed them to use professional development time efficiently and effectively. Education technicians were encouraged to participate in these professional development opportunities as well as regular grade-level team meetings so that they could be more familiar with content standards, curriculum and course assignments. Thereby making their time to work with students more explicit, concise and efficient. According to our classroom observations (n=20), educators were most often engaged in instruction that involved direct interaction with students during class time: "conference" (10 out of 20) and "facilitate" (5 out of 20). This was a common practice that distinguished the More Efficient Schools as indicated in our report, *More Efficient Public Schools in Maine: Learning Communities*

Building the Foundation of Intellectual Work.

Characteristic #4: **A visible change symbolizes significant and sustained reform within the school.** Research suggests that in improving schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: "quick wins" within the first few months of initiating reform efforts to represent action and sincerity to the school community and the community at large; positive, consistent public relations with community; and a clear message that the school's role is to "support education" not be the "sole source of education" within the community.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified extensive evidence of this characteristic, for example:

- o *Community and staff indicated that the 1999 loss of NEASC accreditation prompted several improvement measures dealing with both the school's physical plant and educational practices.* In 1999, SDHS lost its NEASC accreditation due to the inadequate school facility. In 2002, a community group led by alumni raised $600,000 and received a matching donation from a local national corporation. This money funded improvements to the school's infrastructure, physical plant and a new wing of the building. Several community members and retired teachers said that the upgraded facility jumpstarted various on-going efforts surrounding improving low student academic performance. On former teacher said it was "an opportunity for staff to have a more professional place and students to have a more respected place to do their work." Since that time, various grants, initiatives and a dynamic new principal in 2006 led to numerous visible changes: block scheduling, students grouped by age/grade level (not ability level) for courses, teacher teaming supplemented with common, embedded professional development time without students, more explicit use of relevant research and student performance data as well as implementing standards-based curriculum and assessment practices that included proficiency-based graduation requirements.

- o *All members of the school continued to value the role of community and family support in on-going improvement efforts.* The improved school building in 2002 appeared to represent a greater awareness that the school needed to be more effective in their efforts to build a culture of support from outside the walls of the school. Teachers purposefully piloted reform programs with selected students. If the program demonstrated improvement in student learning and performance, students and staff shared testimonials with the School Board in efforts to gain fiscal and

philosophical support. School leaders developed several methods for expanding communication with students' families and interested community members: written documents (both extensive descriptions and more summative brochures) describing various initiatives and practices were distributed regularly at school events and to school visitors; external researchers, visitors, and members of the press were welcomed to observe new practices; and district and school leaders provided extensive communication to business groups, community organizations and invested individuals about the successes and reforms at SDHS. The superintendent said it was important to "take the opportunity, take the time to explain" and even expressed an understanding of the role of social media (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.) in building a positive image of the school. A former principal said, "Look everywhere for evidence of growth and celebrate successes."

Characteristic #5: Focused, effective leaders throughout the school and district guide improvement. Research suggests that in improving schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: focusing leadership, students and other adults in the school community on learning; building administrator's role is to lead instruction, not just manage the school; school leaders initiate progress then collaborate to sustain improvement; open and explicit feedback and evaluation is conducted constantly.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified <u>extensive evidence</u> this characteristic, for example:

o *SDHS appeared to attract, value and support effective school leaders.* The former principal (2006-2011) was referenced with great admiration and respect by numerous adults we interviewed. The assistant superintendent said that the school's improvement was "a very intentional process" by a "visionary principal." The reform efforts led by this principal included close evaluation and analysis of SDHS student performance and needs; developing standards; aligning curriculum, grading practices and graduation criteria to standards; building, analyzing and evaluating an intervention system; using research and data to guide progress; and establishing protocols to provide teaching staff with formal and informal feedback on practice and student performance. The current principal was clearly supporting and working to sustain the effective practices in place while also serving as an instructional leader and using data to drive improvement. The dean of students appeared to be a very organized, efficient school manager while also serving as a thoroughly aware and involved leader in the practical and pedagogical work to improve student learning experiences. In addition, the school

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embraced a school coach who worked with SDHS as part of an existing grant. The school coach worked with teachers across the curriculum, assisted with grant writing and application, and was observed working one-on-one with individual students as well.

o *Formal and informal leaders were developed, encouraged and challenged among staff from every part of the school.* SDHS had created "a culture of school leaders" in which "every staff member is a potential leader in terms of instruction and [intellectual] gifts." This appeared to be done by encouraging or even requiring all teaching staff to be involved in key professional learning experiences that directly dealt with student learning and/or instructional practices. School leaders said teachers were encouraged to pursue relevant external professional development opportunities, implement small pilot programs, continue with research and evaluation of their learning and then become internal leaders.

o *The school demonstrated a clear culture of collective responsibility and work among teaching staff.* Most decisions and changes had been approved with a "fist to five" consensus protocol during staff meetings. When consensus was built, teachers remained engaged in the initiative. For example, sixty-three of the sixty-five staff members were involved in developing the "Academy" intervention, which included required after-school help sessions for students not meeting standards. One teacher said that when change is proposed, "we have a conversation about it." The district superintendent agreed that to make change successful, "you can't mandate it." However, teaching staff also appeared to understand their role in school improvement and appreciated the "constant feedback" they received from both colleagues and administrators, generated from internal classroom observations, and analysis of internal and external data.

Characteristic #6: **Thorough and sustained learning is provided for school professionals.** Research suggests that in improving schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: regular professional learning time for all classroom practitioners to work collaboratively and independently; professional development focused on instruction and building intellectual capacity; external learning opportunities utilized to develop internal experts.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified <u>considerable evidence</u> of this characteristic, for example:

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o *Our observations and conversations with leaders and practitioners indicated that educators used common embedded professional time effectively to improve practice and student performance.* Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) were well established within grade-level teams and met regularly to analyze student work and assessment tools. PLCs used tested protocols to guide discussions, remain on task and provide feedback on practices and work. Grade-level teams met for one hour every other day to do collaborative work, including the PLC work mentioned above. There was also forty minutes within the daily block schedule for teachers to work independently. Our observations indicated that this time was used productively for class preparation, working independently with individual students, sharing ideas with colleagues, and other tasks that enhanced practice or student learning.

o *The school and district apparently encouraged and paid for teachers to participate in external professional development opportunities.* Teachers were encouraged to participate in national conferences and workshops to share their own successful practices and learn about new practices. For example, a science teacher designed a workshop session featuring her unit on Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and was invited to present at the National Science Teachers Association Conference. Teams of teachers have also presented at the Coalition of Essential Schools Forums. Educators also indicated that they had attended various summer institutes in their content areas and been provided release time to participate in collaborative professional work that extended beyond the school day.

<u>Characteristic #7</u>: **The school focus holds steadily on student and adult learning.** Research suggests that in improving schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: a pedagogical emphasis on improving student learning; protected, focused learning time for all students; student learning emphasis on depth of core skills (reading, writing, numeracy and thinking); "a laboratory of adult learning" developing cognition and intellectual capacity among educators and leaders.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified <u>extensive evidence</u> of this characteristic, for example:

o *Despite the hard work, struggles and temporary setbacks, the school has sustained their on-going, focused reform work for at least the past twelve years.* The former principal indicated, "Everything we initially did failed." A teacher said, "The first few years were really hard." The district superintendent believed it took "little steps" over the course of "four to five years" to "get everything solid." However, leaders and educators maintained constant analysis and evaluation keeping the school's vision

evident in practice. One teacher referred to their use of the school's vision by saying, "We breathe it." The school had developed systems to encourage and even require reflection, evaluation and continuous improvement at all levels. For example, a leadership group of teachers advised the principal on issues that affect teaching, learning and school culture. One such teacher leader said they had been dealing with issues such as student-centered learning strategies, reinstatement of the Honor Roll, school-wide recognition events, and cell phone use policy.

o *Significant time was provided for adults to engage in reflective and evaluative professional learning experiences.* As mentioned in a few prior characteristics, there were numerous opportunities for educators and support staff to engage in substantive learning experiences. One observation reflected a grade level team of teachers spending approximately forty minutes during a common period analyzing and discussing a writing assignment one English teacher had brought to the meeting. Colleagues then loosely followed a protocol to address the teacher's questions and concerns about the task and resulting student work. We also observed several informal professional discussions between teachers, teachers and the school coach, teachers and support staff, as well as teachers and administrators that focused on programming, curriculum or student performance. Educators also said they were encouraged to pursue external learning experiences at national conferences, content-area workshops, and visits to model schools. The district superintendent said it was important to "provide [staff] with every professional learning opportunity that you can...give them the opportunity to learn."

o *Systems, programs and practices were in place at SDHS that encouraged and even required a culture of focused learning during the entire school day.* The school's daily student schedule required most students to attend classes for approximately six hours. Early release and late arrival were not granted to students. In fact, some students who had not demonstrated proficiency were required to spend their lunchtime or after school in an intervention support session working on tasks. Likewise, study halls had been replaced with targeted intervention LAB. These practices reflect similar practices evident in More Efficient Schools, as indicated in the study report, *More Efficient Public Schools in Maine: Learning Communities Building the Foundation of Intellectual Work.* LAB teachers used GoogleDocs to keep track of any incomplete assignments from any SDHS course for each student on their class roster. Observations of these LAB sessions showed students working independently and teachers conferencing with individual students on various assignments. In fact, 85% of our classroom observations (n=20) indicated strong levels of student engagement: "all" (30%), "all but a few" (30%), "a majority" (25%).

Conclusions

Many wonderful practices were evident during our visit to Site SE District High School. The strongest and most pervasive elements we saw in our review of documents, interviews, classroom observations, focus groups, and conversations during our two-day visit of your school included:

- *A strong, systemic curriculum and instructional focus on core skills of reading, writing, numeracy and thinking to build an equitable knowledge base for ALL students at Site SE District High School.*

- *A culture of collective responsibility and professional collaboration among educators and leaders.*

These were the observations made during the course of the CEPARE school visit and document review, and there are undoubtedly more strengths present in your school that the team did not get a chance to experience. However, the identification of these characteristics may help your school continue the on-going work to educate your community's children.

A Final Word of Thanks and Next Steps

Visiting schools and getting a chance to experience the wonder of what takes place every day for Maine's children is both an honor and a privilege. We appreciate the extreme generosity of the staff, students, and parents at Site SE District High School. We learned a great deal about your school. Your willingness to share stories, open your classrooms to our observations, and help us to see how your school works greatly enhanced the process of this study. The summaries and examples provided above are just a sampling of all we saw and heard. If you have questions about the report, feel free connect with Erika Stump, Lori Gunn or CEPARE director, David Silvernail.

We will continue our school visits across the state, then the research team at CEPARE will conduct a cross-case analysis of all schools in our study to identify common key practices and characteristics of Maine's improving high schools. Our hope is that this work will support policy makers, practitioners, parents, and communities in collective efforts to improve educational outcomes for Maine's students.

Thank you for all of your efforts on behalf of Maine's most important resource.

Case 5: High School Level Report

Study of Improving Maine High Schools – 2012

Researchers: Erika Stump and Lori Moran Gunn

As part of a research study undertaken at the request of the state legislature, the Center for Education Policy, Applied Research, and Evaluation (CEPARE) at University of Southern Maine (USM) and the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) are conducting a study of high schools that have been identified as improving. CEPARE is exploring the significant practices and characteristics of improving Maine high schools in an effort to identify some practices and attributes that have helped these schools to improve student performance. Several case study high schools have agreed to participate in this study, and in return, CEPARE is providing each case study school with a descriptive report of the observations and data gathered during their site visit.

The CEPARE research team is pleased that Site CC Area High School (SAHS), an improving Maine high school, agreed to be part of this important study. The school is part of RSU 54 and serves approximately 890 students in grades 9-12 from the towns of Canaan, Cornville, Mercer, Norridgewock, Site CC, and Smithfield, which are rural communities in western Maine. Approximately 61% of the student population is eligible for free and/or price-reduced lunch, 18% is identified as special education, and 1% of students have been identified as Limited EnglishProficiency.

CEPARE researchers Erika Stump and Lori Gunn visited Site CC on April 23rd and 24th after speaking with Principal Rick Wilson at an earlier date to prepare the schedule and gather additional information regarding the practices and characteristics of SAHS. In all, the team conducted meetings with teachers, staff, students, parents, and school and district administrators in both interview and focus group settings. Observations were conducted during classroom and non-classroom time.

Student and staff handbooks, school and district curriculum documents, newsletters, student work, and school websites were reviewed to help paint a picture of the school as a whole. Researchers obtained additional information from the Maine Department of Education website and from a review of articles in local and regional newspapers over the past three years.

At the outset of the study, CEPARE committed to providing each school with an individualized report of observations from the data collected. Therefore, the following is a *description* of some of the data gathered from the site visit, interviews, classroom observations, and review of documents. These observations are organized into three distinctive features of More Efficient Schools, as referenced in the report, *More Efficient Public Schools in Maine: Learning Communities Building the Foundation of Intellectual Work*

(Silvernail et al., 2012). The observations from this site visit are also categorized into four additional areas representing key features found in research literature about improving schools. This report does not provide a complete description of your school, nor of the many programs and activities provided to its students. Rather, it is designed to provide school staff and community a *snapshot* of some of the evidence this school demonstrated in the seven areas. At the conclusion of the study, the research team will provide all schools with a cross-site analysis.

This descriptive feedback will hopefully help schools, districts, and communities examine the working practices, programs, and strategies in your school and guide continual improvement for your learning community. While immersed in the daily work of striving to support all students to meet high standards and expectations, it is difficult for any school to stand back and view the interactions between plans, intentions, actions, and results. These individualized observations, which are intended to summarize key and illustrative points of the field research, are communicated to support your school's on-going efforts.

Characteristic #1: Student-focused learning communities in which there is systemic evidence of Intellectual Work. Intellectual work is demonstrated through three elements:
1. **Understanding:** focused, sustained and thorough academic (content knowledge and fundamental skills) and social/behavioral (interpersonal relationships, social trends, cultural norms, etc.) learning.
2. **Transformation:** constant inquiry using various reasoning processes and all levels of cognitive thinking to work with information and concepts in order to create innovative solutions.
3. **Sharing:** clear communication of invigorating conclusions that enhance existing ideas.

Research suggests that in More Efficient schools intellectual work may be demonstrated in the following ways: students engaging in academic knowledge and skills as well as social and behavioral learning; and adults creating instructional practices, curricula, professional learning programs, and leadership roles that improve student performance and are informed by assessment and experience.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified **some evidence** of this characteristic. For example:

o *In many classroom activities, students and teachers were engaged in sharing their solid level of understanding regarding the academic content knowledge.* 78% of classroom observations (n=23) identified the educator demonstrating "understanding" a majority of the time. 61% of classroom observations identified a majority of students demonstrating "understanding" a majority of the time. {Note: According to the Center for Authentic

Intellectual Work's *Teaching for Authentic Intellectual Work: Standards and Scoring Criteria for Teachers' Tasks, Student Performance and Instruction* (Newmann, King and Carmichael, 2009), the goal for a high quality learning experience is to engage all students in activities which have higher order thinking (i.e. "transformation") as their primary tasks 60% - 100% of their learning time and lower order thinking (i.e. "understanding") 0% - 40% of their learning time.} While 30% of classroom observations indicated that the learning activity had some expectation of "transformation" (see Appendix A: Table 1), 70% of classroom observations indicated that the learning task's primary expectation was that students demonstrate "understanding" (see Appendix A: Table 2). It was noted that some instructors were observed using higher level questioning (How? why? In what way...? Etc.) in the facilitation of class discussions and individual conferencing.

Several students said that most of their classes incorporated the Cornell Notes method/template that asked student to take notes, talk about the material, reflect on the ideas then draw conclusions about the information. In the majority of observations, students and teachers demonstrated an accurate understanding of the information and knowledge being discussed.

o *Core common curriculum and graduation criteria in mathematics required students to demonstrate a solid foundation of math skills and embedded collaborative professional time for math instructors.* Students were required to earn three full credits in math in order to meet graduation criteria at SAHS.
Student performance data from common summative assessments using Core-Plus Mathematics Project tools was regularly analyzed collectively by math educators during the contractual day, utilizing substitute teachers to release educators from their classes. This time was dedicated to identifying students who were not meeting standards. These students were then received an additional forty minutes per day of math instruction. Highly qualified math tutors also volunteered to be available for students three or four days per week. Additionally, it was reported that math courses incorporated Mental Math exercises and/or problems to quickly start every class meeting with a fundamental skills refresher.

o *Since a district wide literacy initiative started in 2002, student performance appeared to improve in reading and writing. Staff was also provided with some focused, invigorating professional learning opportunities during the beginning of this initiative.* A 2006-2008 external literacy audit instigated cross-curriculum literacy work in SAHS. Although this formal time for professional collaboration was not maintained, many educators indicated that it was a useful learning experience and they still informally shared ideas and materials about improving literacy instruction. In 2006, Scholastic Read 180 program was implemented to assess students, provide an intervention course for struggling students, as well as offer curriculum and instruction tools. One science

teacher said the program had made a huge difference in her instruction, incorporation of content vocabulary and development of a common language among colleagues and students. A knowledgeable, focused Literacy Specialist guided this work for grades 7-12 and also taught Read 180 intervention courses.

Characteristic #2: Student-focused learning communities in which there is systemic evidence of Equity. Research suggests that in More Efficient schools equity may be demonstrated in the many ways, including: teachers and leaders demonstrating their belief that they have a moral obligation to focus on the intellectual development of students as a means towards a better world; and high standards and high expectations held for all members of the school community.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified **some evidence** of this characteristic. For example:
o *The implementation of interventions – some with a systemic focus – provided extended time for students and instructional focus for educators to address gaps in skills and/or content knowledge.* In 2006, SAHS implemented Read 180, a school-wide literacy intervention program, designed to use both adaptive assessments for students and data differentiation for teachers to address the needs of Site CC Area High School - 5 readers reading below grade level. Data gleaned from NWEA tests (twice a year) and the Scholastic Reading Inventory had led to "more informed placement" of students in ability grouped courses. Through some professional development, teachers across content areas had been equipped with tools to differentiate instruction. One science teacher said she noticed immediate student engagement upon using such strategies as graphic organizers for note taking, "quickwrites" to check understanding, and development of content vocabulary to establish a common language in her classroom. Math teachers used Moodle in their math program to track student progress and used data to differentiate their instruction. Other initiatives in place at SAHS that focused instruction on fundamental skills included forty minutes of Daily Algebra that allowed students to make up work, receive additional help, and engage in skill-based work. In addition to skills augmentation, other interventions-- Homework Lab, Summer School, and Winter School--provided included additional time to complete coursework.

o *The consistency and structure of the in-school suspension program staffed by a full-time (grant-funded) teacher had reportedly improved student attendance and decreased suspensions overall.* A recently implemented in-school suspension program changed past discipline procedures to primarily address the issues of students who missed too much school because of behavioral difficulties but also appeared to reinforce social and behavioral standards throughout the school. Students who had committed non-violent infractions were required to be in school in a detention room where an educator facilitated academic help. Students who were disciplined for physical or violent altercations were

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suspended out of school for one day and then spent an additional four days in this in-school suspension program. According to one administrator, the message to kids was three-fold: "school is important and you're welcome in the classroom BUT you're not allowed to hinder others' education."

o *While not yet systemic, the practice of providing some common academic experiences for students had been an intentional effort made by some teachers and/or departments.* An attempt at a 9th grade teaming focus— though not a true team model of shared students—had allowed for more common planning and collaboration for teachers and some shared academic experiences for students. For example, each 9th grade Geography teacher taught a "Consultant" level class (including students performing below grade level and students with an IEP) in which reportedly eighty percent of the assessments— including a portfolio--were common. Other common experiences beyond the ninth grade level included: common core texts and skills included in the "College Options" English curriculum at all grade levels; compiling a 4th quarter portfolio in English where students reflect on, revise and organize 1st quarter work; and participating in Daily Mental Math activities in all math classes.

Characteristic #3: Student-focused learning communities in which there is systemic evidence of Efficiency. Research suggests that in More Efficient schools efficiency may be demonstrated in the following ways: human and financial resources are used efficiently to maximize learning opportunities for students and staff. For the purpose of this study of improving schools, we did not directly analyze the exact fiscal practices of the school. Rather, we are focusing on how school personnel and systems demonstrate the use of human and other available resources.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified **some evidence** of this characteristic. For example:

o *The district and school leadership highlighted the strengths and needs of its community in order to receive grants and external funding for educational and professional programming.* SAHS began its work with the University of Maine's Maine Content Literacy Project in 2002. This grant provided funding for the Literacy Specialist in grades 7-12 who analyzed student performance data, provided curriculum and instruction support as well as taught Read 180 courses at the 9th grade level. In addition, it funded a two-year external literacy audit in 2006-2008. The positive effect of these programs was evident in the literacy strategies and instruction techniques seen during our visit within conversations with educators and students, classroom observations, as well as analysis of curriculum documents. Also, SAHS used Reading First monies to fund SIPPS (Systematic Instruction in Phoneme Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words) professional development opportunities. Since 2010, the Nellie Mae Education Foundation has funded the district's Community Assets Mapping Project that included collaboration between SAHS and the Somerset Career and Technical Center to provide students with a variety of learning experiences in the Multiple Pathways program. SAHS recently combined grant funding from 21st Century Community Learning

Centers and Nellie Mae Education Foundation to implement the school's Extended Learning Opportunities after-school program in 2011. The school also used this funding to work with a school coach and provide training in Professional Learning Communities. Additionally, individual educators who opted to participate in select professional development opportunities were provided funds from the Open Educational Resources in Mathematics grant.

o *Technology was evidently utilized and maintained in an efficient manner.* SAHS provided laptops for all educators and frequently used the nine classroom laptop carts to support collaborative technology integration. The Technology Integration Specialist indicated that one of their technology goals was to provide in-house computer access for the school community. She appeared to manage the resources at hand in an efficient and effective manner by piloting new technology with a small number of highly capable educators, analyzing the results of the pilot, and then offering whole staff access and training to programs and/or equipment that were proven effective. In fact, her goal was to "put the machine where it best fits." Therefore, trained and enthusiastic staff were given new hardware with more sophisticated features, while staff members with more basic knowledge of technology were provided with less advanced hardware that did not overwhelm them. Internal experts were often relied upon to provide technology training to staff, and students with the necessary training and skills did some technical repairs and installation. Classroom observations indicated that classrooms did frequently use the technology that was available to them, such as laptop carts, LCD projectors, instructor laptops, SmartBoards, and Promethean Boards.

Characteristic #4: A visible change symbolizes significant and sustained reform within the school. Research suggests that in improving schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: "quick wins" within the first few months of initiating reform efforts to represent action and Site CC Area High School - 7 sincerity to the school community and the community at large; positive, consistent public relations with community; and a clear message that the school's role is to "support education" not be the "sole source of education" within the community.

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified **some evidence** of this characteristic. For example:
o *Changes made to intervention systems and remediation programs targeted student needs and an instructional emphasis on fundamental core skills.* SAHS recently incorporated the use of adaptive assessments and computer-based programs such as NWEA, PLATO, Accussess and Accuplacer to assess student proficiency and set performance goals for remediation. According to one teacher, after data analysis in science, the sequence of science area courses was re-organized to offer Biology at the 9th grade level to address previous gaps in content knowledge by the time students had reached 11th and 12th grade. As mentioned above, Read 180 was implemented approximately five years

ago to provide a comprehensive reading remediation program serving 50-75 students this past year in SAHS. Other recently implemented remediation efforts included forty additional minutes per day of reading instruction and Algebra (9th grade) for identified students, which allowed students below targeted proficiency levels to receive further instruction and engage in core skills work. Summer School remediation was changed to be goal-oriented: once student had reached targeted goals for skills and/or content knowledge, then their time in Summer School was complete. The principal indicated that this "shifted summer school from seat time to learning time." These visible changes were intended to signal to students, parents and community members that the shift to focus on core skill proficiency was crucial to the overall improvement efforts at SAHS. Additionally, SAHS expanded Advanced Placement course offerings in the last eight years, including a greater effort to encourage students to participate in the Maine's statewide program, AP4ALL, which offers AP courses online.

o *SAHS had recently implemented or enhanced various programs and resources to address the social and behavioral needs of their student population.* Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO), an after-school program funded by grants from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers and Nellie Mae Education Foundation, served approximately 100 students in the SAHS school community over the course of this past school year and focused on community service work. The ELO Coordinator explained that there was a loyal following of students who relied on the program for its consistency, structure and familial quality. The ELO program mission was to provide personalized learning experiences for all students by connecting them with the greater community. Implemented just a year ago, ELO was just in its infant stages and had yet to expand its offerings into the mainstream school culture. Some example ELO projects thus far included: a computer help-site at the Grist Mill in downtown Site CC staffed by students who help local wheat farmers integrate technology into their practices; high school students mentoring middle school students; and the Digital Graphic Arts program at the Somerset Career and Technical Center (SCTC) working with downtown businesses to start up and/or improve the look and efficacy of their websites. Additional supports for SAHS students included a school-based social worker hired in the past few years — whose regular student sessions continued year round at the Site CC Area High School - 8 school, even through vacations and summer. These support programs were attributed with improved attendance. Several teachers and staff recognized these recent programs and initiatives as having a positive effect on the school's culture because they addressed the realities of many of their students' lives.

o *An attempt at constructing a freshman teaming focus allowed for more common planning and collaboration for teachers and some common academic experiences for students.* According to our interviews with administration and faculty, the teaming model was implemented a few years ago with the following goals and intentions: to create a more smooth transition for students moving from the teamed structure of the middle school to the high school; to foster a sense of community among students and collaboration among

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teachers; and more practically, to decrease the amount of time 9th graders spent in the hallway. While the initial teaming focus helped meet these goals to a degree, it was only maintained over the years as a hybrid of the old and new structure. Despite this, teachers agreed that this structure allowed for more collaboration. For example, all 9th grade Algebra teachers tracked student progress with Moodle and used this information in collaborative work to inform instruction and student placement. In another example, each 9th-grade Geography teacher taught a "Consultant" level class (including students performing below grade level and students with an IEP). Therefore, Geography and Special Education instructors had been able to collaborate in a few ways: developing and implementing common assessments, revising curriculum and working with colleagues in their content area both in the middle school and high school. Some teachers indicated that they had a renewed sense of commitment to making the grade-level teaming model work to its fullest potential due to the promised addition of a paid team leader position for the upcoming school year.

Characteristic #5: Focused, effective leaders throughout the school and district guide improvement. Research suggests that in improving schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: leadership, students and other adults in the school community are focused on learning; building administrator's role is to lead instruction, not just manage the school; school leaders initiate progress then collaborate to sustain improvement; open and explicit feedback and evaluation is conducted constantly. Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified **some evidence** of this characteristic. For example:
o *The most successful and embraced school initiatives in SAHS were usually introduced and supported by administration then continued and sustained by teacher leaders.* In 2002, SAHS used the Maine Literacy Project grant to hire a high school Literacy Integration Specialist who led the initiative that comprised an external audit in 2006, adaptive assessments, content literacy strategies, and reading remediation. With literacy as the professional development focus from 2007 to 2009, SAHS teachers were equipped with content literacy strategies and reading instruction techniques. We observed some teachers using these content literacy strategies--such as graphic organizers for note taking, "quick writes" to check understanding, and development of common content vocabulary--in their classroom instruction. Teachers and the Literacy Integration Specialist continued the work surrounding literacy by sharing materials and Site CC Area High School - 9 discussing ideas through email and informal conversations even after formal professional development opportunities and focused collaborative professional time were no longer required. With the support of administrative leadership, the Technology Integration Specialist, who provided teachers with ongoing support, resources, and professional development, developed technology initiatives. We found further evidence of embedded leadership in the collaborative efforts of teachers within the various subject area departments. For example, Math department leaders frequently analyzed student performance data from various sources, including internally developed common assessments, to improve instruction, curriculum and

student placement practices. Teachers indicated that although some departments met inconsistently, department heads were important leaders and their collaborative content area work was "valuable and concrete." Teachers cited the "diverse, experienced and committed" educational staff as a key strength in their improvement work.

Characteristic #6: Thorough and sustained learning is provided for school professionals.

Research suggests that in improving schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: regular professional learning time for all classroom practitioners to work collaboratively and independently; professional development focused on instruction and building intellectual capacity; external learning opportunities utilized to develop internal experts. Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified **some evidence** of this characteristic. For example:

o *The SAHS mathematics educators had created a collective culture within their department that encouraged, supported and pursued relevant, invigorating professional learning opportunities that appeared to contribute to improved student performance.* Members of the math department had collaborated with other Maine districts and Education Development Center, Inc. to integrate technology into their curriculum and instruction through the Open Educational Resources in Mathematics project. SmartBoards or Promethean Boards were used regularly by math instructors to integrate online information into classroom presentations as well as utilizing other features that allowed them to save and print classroom presentation notes for students who were absent or needed further instruction at a later time. Math department members also indicated that they used Moodle to collectively track student progress, collaboratively and individually analyze data, as well as use student data to inform instruction and curriculum development. The department's dedication to collaboration allowed them to develop common summative assessments and "work together in small teams" to build "a focus on curriculum, not just textbooks" according to a school administrator.

o *Thorough and sustained technology training, led by the Technology Integration Specialist, was provided to staff in a variety of ways.* The Technology Integration Specialist said, "I try to meet everyone where they're at." Various optional professional learning opportunities were offered to staff, such as "GoogleDinners" where educators were provided with dinner and training in various educational resources and tools within Google, a "Technology IEP" for individual teachers to earn CEUs for individualized training surrounding personally identified technology goals, and "Project Lab" after-school one-hour sessions in which technology experts worked with Site CC Area High School - 10 individual teachers on a classroom or curriculum project that would be implemented in the classroom. The Technology Integration Specialist also worked with specific educators to pilot new technology that, if found useful and effective, may be introduced to the staff as a whole using the cooperating educator as an internal expert.

o *As part of a district wide literacy initiative started in 2002, staff had been provided with some focused, invigorating professional learning opportunities.* A 2006-2008 external literacy audit instigated crosscurriculum literacy work in SAHS from 2007-2009. Although this formal time for professional collaboration was not maintained, many educators indicated that it was a useful learning experience, and they still informally shared ideas and materials about improving literacy instruction. In 2006, Scholastic Read 180 program was implemented to assess students, provide an intervention course for struggling students, as well as offer curriculum and instruction tools. One science teacher said the program had made a huge difference in her instruction, incorporation of content vocabulary and developing a common language among colleagues and students. A knowledgeable, focused Literacy Specialist guided this professional work for high school and middle school educators.

Characteristic #7: The school focus holds steadily on student and adult learning.
Research suggests that in improving schools this may be demonstrated in the following ways: a pedagogical emphasis on improving student learning; protected, focused learning time for all students; student learning emphasis on depth of core skills (reading, writing, numeracy and thinking); "a laboratory of adult learning" developing cognition and intellectual capacity among educators and leaders

Through our observations, discussions, and exploration of policies and practices at your school, we identified **some evidence** of this characteristic. For example:
o *District and school administration demonstrated an understanding that improving student learning was a key element of school improvement.* The SAHS principal indicated that one of his goals was to increase the student focus of the school. District administrators applauded the principal's "kidoriented" beliefs and on-going work in "identifying the issue." While teachers suggested that more focused, sustained and collaborative methods could be used in their school's work to improve, they also said that "a lot of the initiatives could be great" and "the academic [initiatives and reforms] are what do work." Another school administrator added the insight that deep improvement "is a slow process." It was clear from our observations that classrooms were well-managed and students were attentive, even though the majority of learning was engaging students and educators at the "understanding" level (see Appendix A: Tables 1 & 2). 78% of classroom observations indicated that at least "a majority" of students were engaged with the task at hand, and 52% of classroom observations indicated that at least "all but a few" students were engaged with the task at hand (see Appendix B: Table 4). These observations correlated with the school administrator's description of orderly classrooms and the school's related goal to increase students' engagement in higher order thinking.

o *The school's efforts to emphasize its reform work on improving student learning in the areas surrounding core skills such as reading and numeracy appeared to contribute significantly to the improvement in student* Site CC Area High School - 11 *performance in those areas over the*

past few years. As mentioned in previous sections of this report but worth repeating, some focused work surrounding literacy in the past ten years seemed to contribute greatly to increased student performance in related areas. In 2002, the district-wide literacy initiative was established with professional and fiscal support from the University of Maine's Maine Content Literacy Project. In 2006, this work dovetailed with a "literacy audit" conducted by an external consulting firm and focused literacy professional development and collaboration for the subsequent two years. Additionally, the district hired a Literacy Integration Specialist to work with grades 7-12 and teach reading remediation courses. For the past five years, the specialist implemented elements of the Read 180 program to replace and supplement reading instruction for students performing below grade level as well as share content literacy strategies for professionals in all content areas. A similar collaborative focus on student learning was evident in the Math department's work to make student placement, curriculum scope and sequence as well as daily instructional practices more strategically resulting in improved student performance. Math educators spoke fluently about their departmental analysis, using collaboration and the Moodle database, of student performance data on internally developed summative assessments as well as standardized assessments. This "focus on curriculum not textbooks" resulted in the implementation of Core-Plus Math practices, extended math interventions for struggling students, daily Mental Math activities and other practices to improve student learning in numeracy.

Conclusions

Many wonderful practices were evident during our visit to Site CC Area High School. In the research literature, some common distinguishing characteristics of Improving Schools include: visible change; focused, effective leadership; thorough, sustained professional learning; and a school focus of both student and adult learning. The research also identified key elements for sustaining successful school improvement, including: common language and vision; interventions for underperforming and excelling students; data analysis; sustained, dedicated resources; intellectual capacity; and district-level support. Site CC Area High School exhibited some of these characteristics and elements of an Improving School during our two-day visit and in our review of documents, interviews, classroom observations, focus groups, and conversations. The strongest and most pervasive of these attributes included:

□□*Individual educators and specialists with strong potential to develop intellectual capacity were working to maintain cross-curriculum and content area collaboration to improve instruction, curriculum and student performance.*

□□*A school focus, especially in past years, on developing professional learning opportunities and improving student performance in reading and mathematics.*

More Efficient Schools, as defined in the first phase of this multi-year study, are student-focused learning communities in which there is systemic evidence of **intellectual work, equity,** and Site CC Area High School - 12 **efficiency.** Site CC Area High School exhibited some of these features of More Efficient
Schools during our two-day visit and in our review of documents, interviews, classroom observations, focus groups, and conversations. The strongest and most pervasive of these attributes included:

☐ ☐*A solid understanding of content knowledge demonstrated by both educators and students.*

☐ ☐*Initial efforts to provide collaborative opportunities for educators that result in some shared academic experiences for students.*

These were the observations made during the course of the CEPARE school visit and document review, and there are undoubtedly more strengths present in your school that the team did not get a chance to experience. However, the identification of these characteristics may help your school continue the on-going work to educate your community's children.

A Final Word of Thanks and Next Steps
Visiting schools and getting a chance to experience the wonder of what takes place every day for Maine's children is both an honor and a privilege. We appreciate the extreme generosity of the staff, students, and parents at Site CC Area High School. We learned a great deal about your school. Your willingness to share stories, open your classrooms to our observations, and help us to see how your school works greatly enhanced the process of this study. The summaries and examples provided above are just a sampling of all we saw and heard. If you have questions about the report, feel free to connect with Erika Stump, Lori Gunn or CEPARE director, David Silvernail.

We will continue our school visits across the state, then the research team at CEPARE will conduct a cross-case analysis of all schools in our study to identify common key practices and characteristics of Maine's improving high schools. Our hope is that this work will support policy makers, practitioners, parents, and communities in collective efforts to improve educational outcomes for Maine's students.

Thank you for all of your efforts on behalf of Maine's most important resource.