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School Restructuring in Maine

Submitted to

The Joint Standing Committee on Education

and

The Executive Director of the Legislative Council

Maine Department of Education and the State Board of Education

In Response to L.D. 1189

An Act Relating to Restructuring the Public Schools"

December, 1992

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Contents

Summary	1
Program Descriptions	3
Department of Education	3
Champion Paper Company	7
Maine Aspirations Foundation.....	7
Maine Math and Science Alliance	7
Southern Maine Partnership	9
The Center for Educational Services	10
Assessment of Effectiveness	11
Changes in Maine Schools	11
Problems	12
Assessment of Department Approaches.....	13
Recommendations	14
Appendix	16
Department Process	17

School Restructuring in Maine

Summary of Findings

School restructuring is defined in L.D. 1189 as "the process by which schools and communities make significant changes in the existing school structure, including the policies, roles, relationships and schedules that influence teaching and learning in the school." Section 5 specifies that this report include the following information: "a summary of the number of schools participating in restructuring programs, a description of the types of restructuring programs, the number of school and educator program approval waivers requested and granted and a listing of the specific rules for which waivers were requested....an assessment of the effectiveness of school restructuring, including recommendations on how restructuring may become more effective, how replication of successful efforts may be encouraged and how dissemination of information on school restructuring may be enhanced."

Summary of Schools Participating

It has been determined that:

- 72 school districts (43% of all districts) are involved in the process of restructuring.
- 57 districts (79% of those involved) receive funding in support of restructuring activities.
- 86% (49 of the funded districts) receive funds from the Department of Education, 44 districts from the Department's Innovative Education Grant Program, three from the Early Childhood Demonstration Sites Grant Program, and two from the federally-funded ServeAmerica Grant Program.
- 8 districts are known to receive funding from sources outside the Department of Education, 6 from private foundations and 2 from federal sources.
- 35 (49% of the participating districts) are at the beginning stages of restructuring.
- 76% (29 districts) of these beginning districts are funded by the Department of Education; 4 districts are funded from other sources, and two receive no funding.
- 29 (40% of participating districts, 17% of all districts) have at least one school which has made progress and is committed to continue restructuring. The Department's goal is a "critical mass" of 50% of all districts.
- 55% of these continuing districts are funded by the Department of Education, 4 are funded by others.

Types of Restructuring Programs

The Department of Education's restructuring approach is used by 51 of the 72 participating districts. Other programs and approaches represented among the remaining districts include the Champion Paper Company Common Core of Learning Institute, the Center for Educational Services cluster of programs, the Southern Maine Partnership Renewing Schools Project, the Western Maine Partnership's Cooperating Schools Project, (a description of this project is not available) and the Maine Aspirations Foundation's UNUM Restructuring Project. In some cases, districts involved with the Department are also involved with at least one of the other projects.

Number of Waivers Requested and Granted

Thirteen waivers related to restructuring in schools have been requested and granted since June, 1991: 11 requesting variations in instructional days to allow teachers time to work together (Chapter 125); one requesting science credit for an interdisciplinary course (Chapter 127); and one requesting changes in the focus of summer school for secondary-level students (Chapter 313). No waivers have been requested from educator preparation programs.

Program Descriptions

Department of Education

Program Development

The Department of Education began to support restructuring schools through its Innovative Education Grant Program in 1988. Ten schools received three-year Innovative Grants to explore restructuring. A state-level advisory group was created to provide direction for this aspect of the Innovative Grants Program and the Department provided five seminars yearly for teams from each school. No on-site consultation was provided by the Department and each school was charged with finding their own way through the complexities of restructuring.

In 1990, the Department became involved with the Coalition of Essential Schools. Part of the Innovative Grant Program was used to support schools and school districts who wished to pursue the Coalition's Nine Common Principles as an organizer for restructuring. In 1991, the Coalition of Essential Schools and the Education Commission of the States formed a national partnership called Re:Learning, to unite policy, rules and governance from the "schoolhouse to the statehouse". Re:Learning was adopted by the state and Maine was formally included among 13 other Re:Learning states in May, 1992.

Meanwhile, in 1990, Maine's Common Core of Learning was completed and distributed to all Maine teachers and administrators. During that school year, the Department's Division of Curriculum conducted two sets of day-long regional workshops in eight regions of the state. Division consultants also led hundreds of informational workshops for local school and community groups and discussed the Core at conferences and professional educational group meetings around the state.

During the 1991-92 school year, a group of consultants representing all the subdivisions of the Department designed and led a series of two-day seminars for school-community teams in four regions of the state. The seminars trained teams to discuss the Common Core of Learning with their communities and with whole school faculties. Division of Curriculum consultants also led local teachers and community groups through this discussion process in 20 school districts and designed a restructuring process based on the Common Core of Learning to test with a small group of willing districts.

Changes in the Department's Approach

In the spring of 1992, the Department assessed its restructuring work and made the following changes as a result:

The Coalition of Essential Schools' Nine Common Principles and the Common Core of Learning were combined into one comprehensive picture of restructuring. Schools no longer choose one approach as an entry point, but select strategies from any approach which meets their needs.

The Innovative Education Grants Program was refocused to provide local schools with funding for restructuring. The traditional project orientation of the grant program had succeeded in moving many schools to realize that they needed to restructure, but the same project orientation would not result in fundamental school change.

Each Innovative Grant recipient also received the services of a Department of Education consultant. The Department had tried providing restructuring funds without consultant support and had tried providing consultant support without funding. Neither approach resulted in substantial local movement toward change. Experiences outside Maine indicate that a percentage of schools attempting to restructure will not be successful, but the acceptable failure rate has not been determined.

Existing consultant positions within the Department were restructured to provide the minimal time and expertise needed to help schools restructure. Six consultants, five in the Division of Curriculum and one in the Division of Special Education, voluntarily contribute all or part of their time to work with restructuring schools.

The six consultants changed their approach to working with schools, so that they were no longer visiting "experts" in a specific curriculum area. The six now take a broad range of roles in their work with schools, including facilitator, process designer, assessor and intervener. These consultants are skilled in group dynamics, conflict resolution, organizational development, problem solving, strategic planning and the school change process.

Sixteen of the funded schools were chosen for intensive assistance in the restructuring process. These schools are beyond the beginning stages and what the Department learns from working with them will increase the effectiveness of its work with the large group of beginners. Research provides a great deal of information about the first steps and little information about what comes next.

The training system the Department uses to help restructuring schools was changed. The Department learned that bringing school teams together at a central location and teaching them about restructuring or some aspect of it resulted in minimal transfer of the information and in minimal restructuring progress when the teams returned home. It is now expected that teams, with the assigned consultant's help back home, will incorporate new ideas within the entire faculty. An "admissions policy" was established to ensure that schools attending state-level seminars, meetings and institutes were in fact ready to use the information or the experience back home. In some cases, schools need to supply evidence that they have completed necessary preliminary work. State-level activities for restructuring school teams now fall into one of three categories:

networking, to learn what other schools are doing and how;

planning, to completely understand a new step in the restructuring process and assess local readiness to move on to it;

introduction of new instructional approaches based on the Common Core of Learning, to learn and practice a new approach and then assess the readiness of the entire school staff to learn and implement it.

Due to the small number of skilled consultants available to work with restructuring schools, **it was decided to offer restructuring support to districts in any of three categories:** those who received an Innovative Grant; those who applied for a grant and were recommended for funding but could not be funded (40 schools) and those with whom the Department had a preexisting restructuring process relationship, but who did not request funding. Consultants working directly with restructuring schools spend an average of three days each week in these schools. Since September, eight additional districts requesting (and by all indications ready to benefit from) the same level of intensive consultation have been referred to one of the other restructuring programs listed above.

Each school receiving an Innovative Education Grant is working with the Department consultant to create a portfolio which will be used to assess its progress at the end of the school year. This portfolio assessment system is the most staff and time effective way to evaluate both school progress toward change and the effectiveness of the Department's school change process.

A generic process for school change was designed by the six consultants, based on education research, the Common Core of Learning, the Nine Common Principles, information about approaches used across the country, and knowledge of how schools work. The process is constantly evolving as new information is integrated. (A roughly sequential overview of the major steps in the Department's restructuring process is included in the Appendix.)

The Department, the Center for Educational Services in Auburn and the University System began meeting on a regular basis to identify common needs and approaches to restructuring. These discussions led to the receipt of a \$500,000 three-year grant from the Pew Charitable Trust for the Restructuring Support Project. The project's goal is to create a self-sustaining, statewide infrastructure to support the development and maintenance of local educational systems in which both adults and students learn well. The grant is administered by the Center for Educational Services and activities connected with it have just begun.

In order to increase consultant ability to help the adults in schools and communities work more effectively together, **the Division of Curriculum formed a partnership with Pratt Whitney**, which is releasing staff to train Division of Curriculum consultants in the company's Total Quality Management approach.

Department of Education Restructuring Resources:

- \$300,000 Innovative Education Grant Program (supports 44 districts)
- \$ 48,000 Maine's ServeAmerica Grant award (supports two districts)
- \$ 40,000 Federal Chapter II state leadership grant (supports all state-level restructuring program activities)
- \$150,000 Early Childhood Demonstration Sites Program
Equivalent of four full-time consultants

Champion Paper/University of Maine Common Core of Learning Institute

In the winter of 1992, Champion Paper Company awarded the University of Maine at Farmington a \$300,000 grant to create a Common Core of Learning Institute on campus. The project selected two school districts to receive grants of \$8,600 to create Common Core of Learning curricula. The project's goal is to foster change in both schools and in the University faculty involved with teacher preparation and staff development. By working directly with teachers from the two school districts, faculty will learn more about school change and the Common Core of Learning and will develop inter-disciplinary projects of their own as part of their teacher preparation responsibilities.

The Maine Aspirations Foundation

The mission of the Maine Aspirations Foundation is to raise the aspirations of all Maine youth by increasing their personal expectations, expanding their career, educational, and personal choices, and improving their academic performance and the achievement of other learning outcomes. The Foundation believes that this requires a long-term commitment and, in some cases, fundamental changes in schools and other community organizations. Among other projects, the Foundation has created 10 school-community partnerships designed to connect schools, communities and at least one key business. Five of these partnerships involve liaisons from UNUM who work directly with the partnerships to develop strategic plans.

The Maine Math and Science Alliance Statewide Systemic Initiative (SSI)

The Maine Math and Science Alliance is a non-profit organization created in 1992 as a result of a \$10 million National Science Foundation grant to the state. The Alliance serves as the fiscal agent for this grant and for matching public and private funds dedicated to the Initiative. This new organization is composed of a broad membership with the President of Bowdoin College serving as Board Chair, the Director of Inventory Control at L.L. Bean serving as Vice Chair, the Commissioner of the Maine Department of Education as Treasurer, and the Associate Director of the Maine Science and Technology Commission as Secretary. There are 30 members of the Board of Advisors representing individuals and constituencies such as the Maine Science Teachers Association, the Association of Teachers of Mathematics in Maine, National Semiconductor, Bigelow Laboratories, and school administrators. The Board membership reflects the public, quasi-public and private educational leadership necessary to bring about systemic change in Math and Science Education.

This project is a second year effort of the National Science Foundation (NSF) through its Statewide Systemic Initiative (SSI) program. Directed at the improvement of mathematics and science education, SSI expects to impact education from pre-kindergarten through graduate schools of education. The Statewide Systemic Initiative is based on the following premises: all students can learn; every student must have equal access to mathematics and science; mathematics and science must be connected to life outside the classroom.

The restructuring effort is overseen by four committees the work of which is coordinated by the staff of the Maine Mathematics and Science Alliance. The four committees are: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment; Professional Preparation and Development; Community Integration; and Systemic Planning and Evaluation. Each committee is chaired by one of the project's Principal Investigators.

The Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Committee is responsible for developing statewide curriculum standards and frameworks in mathematics and science. It has also established seven school sites, called Beacon Schools, to serve as laboratories for these undertakings. At each site, a math and a science facilitator serve as change agents.

The Professional Preparation and Development Committee is in charge of the year-long staff development institutes built around the curriculum standards and frameworks. The second major activity of this committee is the development of a Beacon College to assure that educators receive the training and staff development necessary for world-class math and science education to occur in Maine schools.

The Community Integration Committee is responsible for working with the Community Action Teams that each Beacon site and many non-Beacon sites establish to involve parents and the community directly in education. This committee is also responsible for the MERITS (Maine Educational and Research Internships for Teachers and Students) program, which matches teachers and students with businesses, research laboratories, and universities for paid summer internships.

The Systemic Planning and Evaluation Committee is responsible for facilitating the overall process of the project and for overall project evaluation.

The Math and Science Alliance expects to develop state math and science curriculum frameworks and standards based on Maine's Common Core of Learning.

The Southern Maine Partnership

The Southern Maine Partnership is a collaboration of the University of Southern Maine, twenty-two school districts and three private schools. It is part of John Goodlad's National Network for Educational Renewal, which has a dual purpose: the renewal of schools and the renewal of teacher education. The partnership supports itself through membership dues and funds from the UNUM Charitable Trust. The Partnership works in the following areas:

- A network of reflective practice groups for educators, convened by university faculty. Each group sets its own agenda, but offers regular opportunities to read, reflect and discuss teaching and learning with colleagues from other member districts.
- Foxfire involves over 100 classroom teachers in learning about and using this dynamic student-centered approach. Teachers take an intensive graduate course and then meet monthly to share experiences and improve practice.
- Forums and Seminars are held for superintendents and principals involving leadership in teaching and learning. The Partnership also arranges for lectures and seminars with prominent educational thinkers and practitioners.
- The network of Renewing Schools, formed in 1991, consists of self-selecting schools pursuing school-wide renewal/restructuring efforts. Renewing schools commit to the following core practices:
 1. Rethinking curriculum, instruction and assessment with emphasis on how students learn;
 2. Developing and using assessment tools appropriate for new conceptions of teaching and learning;
 3. Staff development approaches based on adult learning and active intellectual engagement with issues;
 4. Rethinking the organization of the school with the goal of improving the learning environment for students and the professional environment for teachers;
 5. Exploration of roles for parents, businesses and community members as partners in education;
 6. Evaluating renewal efforts and their benefits to students.
- Mini-grants are awarded to teachers who develop new assessment tasks and share them with others at an annual conference on assessment.
- Demonstration Schools Project involves three schools in school-wide restructuring based on outcome-driven change.
- Teacher education is important to the Partnership, so it is actively involved in USM's Extended Teacher Education Program, which has replaced the undergraduate major in teacher education. Students are placed in Partnership schools for one-year post baccalaureate internships.

The Center for Educational Services

The Center for Educational Services is a non-profit organization serving public and private Maine schools. Founded in 1975, its mission is to stimulate and support school improvement activities that strengthen education in Maine by providing services that enhance learning, professionalism, leadership and collaboration. The Center's major purpose is to identify unserved needs in Maine schools and develop innovative services to help educators meet those needs. The Center's services cluster in three major areas: curriculum and instruction, technology, and human resource development. Each area provides support for restructuring schools. Of particular interest is the human resource development component. The Center's human resource development staff provide organizations with help to become more effective and efficient. Staff provide models, methods and training to help groups accomplish tasks and achieve goals effectively, offering services in strategic planning and goal setting, team building, conflict resolution, leadership development and staff development system planning.

Restructuring Support Project (RSP)

In partnership with the Department of Education and the University of Maine, this project is designed to help schools involved with restructuring. Activities include documenting the work currently being done in Maine schools, improving communication among and between schools engaged in the change process; informing the legislature about the reform process, providing support to professional associations in the state as they work with their membership, and providing direct assistance to schools.

Assessment of Effectiveness

The Department has begun to see the following changes in Maine schools:

- ◆ a dramatic increase in the number of ungraded elementary-level classrooms;
- ◆ an increase in elementary-level team teaching;
- ◆ school readiness and transitional classes phased out at the elementary level;
- ◆ schools at all grade levels focusing learning on what is developmentally appropriate for children of a particular age span;
- ◆ more programs for four-year-olds created, often in collaboration with Head Start and public and private child care providers;
- ◆ high schools moving to extended class time blocks;
- ◆ common teacher planning time integrated into the regular school day;
- ◆ the school year extended for teachers;
- ◆ a core curriculum, designed and taught by interdisciplinary teacher teams is being implemented for heterogeneous groups of students at the high school level;
- ◆ along with the development of core curriculum, elimination of student tracking;
- ◆ the local development of comprehensive student assessment systems based on the student's ability to demonstrate mastery of key knowledge, skills and attitudes in a variety of concrete ways;
- ◆ schools at all levels moving toward individual student education plans; at the high school level the move is to involve students heavily in the design of their own learning plans, at the elementary level, schools are providing time during the school day for children to plan and carry out their own learning activities;
- ◆ widespread high school level adoption of advisor-advisee systems;
- ◆ conscious movement to teach students the skills they need to accept responsibility for their own learning;
- ◆ a growing realization that the Common Core of Learning is the guide for curriculum and instruction at all grade levels.

Schools at more advanced levels of restructuring are currently trying to find solutions to the following problems:

1. How to help parents understand that the changes being made in the school will result in more effective practices. Parents of honors and advanced placement students are uneasy about the elimination of tracking and the adoption of heterogeneous grouping. Portfolio and other forms of non-standardized assessment seem to them to work against admission into top colleges. These parents want to be sure the school is challenging their children to learn.
2. How to help the school board understand why these changes are necessary.
3. How to replace report cards, which seem to furnish little important information, with another format which will accurately communicate the child's real progress.
4. How to implement a reorganized school year when parents and community members are concerned about the price tag.
5. How to create a balance between organizing so that every student can master the Common Core of Learning and being realistic about the ability and willingness of students to do so.
6. How to create student assessment systems which provide information as reliable as standardized tests (which are seen as measuring only a portion of what students should leave school knowing and able to do) and which also make the school and its teachers accountable for results.
7. How to manage the transition from traditional practices to radical new approaches. Many schools at this stage are operating with two systems -- the old side-by-side with the new. For example, many of these schools still provide traditional report cards while their teachers spend extra hours also writing a narrative description of the child's progress and evaluating the child's portfolio of work.
8. How to develop new formats for teacher professional development so that new approaches are truly and completely integrated into classroom practice.
9. How to teach adults in the school and the community the skills they need to solve problems, work well together and resolve philosophical differences for the benefit of students. An important aspect of systemic school change is how to create a climate which supports school change while leading to strong, positive relationships between adults and children.
10. How changes made in individual schools can be supported at the district level, when only one school may be ready to restructure.

Assessment of Department of Education Approaches

So far, the state has no common agreement regarding the characteristics of effective restructuring approaches. The Restructuring Support Project is working to collect information and identify common characteristics of success, but that work is just beginning. In the absence of a common system for assessment, the Department of Education can report only on its own work.

In the spring of 1992 the Department evaluated the effectiveness of its restructuring efforts to date and determined that:

Department restructuring efforts and initiatives were scattered and confusing to many school districts.

Many educators believed that there was no road map to follow in beginning and continuing restructuring, yet **research and practice indicated that all approaches had common components.**

By focusing on large masses of people, Department activities had increased interest and heightened awareness among a large group of schools, but the same **shotgun approach was ineffective in helping schools** make fundamental changes.

The determination of the **"effectiveness" of school restructuring efforts to date was largely in the eye of the beholder.** Neither schools or the Department had been able to collect objective information about acceptable levels of progress, and the Department had no capacity to do so.

As other organizations created their own restructuring projects, **communication** among these projects and the Department became crucial.

Restructuring takes place one school at a time. The most effective way to help schools restructure is to provide intensive school-by-school support. Schools which can afford to purchase this kind of help and to pay staff for extended leave time for planning and learning have succeeded in making fundamental changes.

The concept of **creating a "critical mass" of educators and community members** in each school and across the state who recognize the need to change, which was the goal of the Department's widespread Common Core of Learning activities, needed to be applied to the number of schools restructuring. At the school level, the Department defines the critical mass of faculty as 80%; at the community level 30% to 40%; at the state level, we believe that if 50% of Maine schools show strong commitment to restructuring, their work will redefine policy, legislation, teacher preparation and evaluation, student assessment, and allocation of education resources.

The changes made as a result of this assessment are described in the Program Description section of this report. Anecdotal information collected during the last four months indicate these changes are welcomed by Maine schools. Every state-level event has been well attended and the six consultants have seen steady progress in virtually every school. The portfolio assessment process is expected to provide detailed information at the end of the school year.

Recommendations

L.D. 1189 requests recommendations in three areas: how restructuring can become more **effective**, how **replication** of successful efforts can be encouraged and how **dissemination** of information can be enhanced. Since this legislation was enacted, much has been learned about the restructuring process. One key finding is that strategies which work in one school will not necessarily work in another. Because each school and community is unique, the restructuring process must allow for individual differences, while still providing a template to keep the process moving. The Department's process (described in the Appendix) seems to meet both criteria. Schools can start at any spot in the process.

In light of this, the Department recommends that:

1. The legislature expand the Innovative Education Grant program by providing the Department of Education with a formal statement of support for the program and for its approach to school change, thus allowing the Department to secure a private match for the existing funds. (effectiveness, dissemination, replication)
2. The legislature partner with the Department in the search for the business funding and expertise needed to create an electronic network for restructuring schools and a "case management" record keeping system within the Department which allows for analysis of the data already collected from restructuring schools. (dissemination, replication)
3. The Department of Education continue to grant waivers, based on L.D. 1189, to restructuring schools hampered by education policies and rd regulations.
4. The Department, through its Re:Learning partnership between the Coalition of Essential Schools and the Education Commission of the States continue to explore state education policies and regulations which hamper the change efforts of schools, and to explore the concept of "levels of regulation". This idea would leave regulations in effect for schools struggling to meet the basic educational needs of their students, while releasing other schools who can prove these needs are met. The effect could be the release of Department of Education employees from regulatory responsibilities, allowing them to be retrained to work as restructuring consultants to schools. (effectiveness, replication)
5. The legislature provide the Department of Education with sufficient funds over a three-year period (estimated at \$60,000 yearly for three years) to contract for continuing, detailed evaluation of restructuring progress and the efficacy of the Department's process. (effectiveness, replication)

6. The legislature maintain funding for the six consultants currently assigned to work with restructuring schools and formally support the search for private funding to match their work with additional staff and resources. (effectiveness, replication)
7. The legislature allocate new state funds so the Department can award competitive grants to other organizations to improve the restructuring knowledge level of school boards and to build the capacity of local districts to design public relations and community involvement plans. (effectiveness, dissemination)
8. The Department continue to support the Restructuring Support Project, the partnership between the Department, the University and the Center for Educational Services. (effectiveness, dissemination, replication)

Appendix

The Department of Education's Restructuring Process

Vision



Beliefs



Student Outcomes

What do we believe is important about teaching, learning, education?

What do we want all students to know and be able to do?



Concrete Picture

What would be happening if our beliefs were alive every day in school? What would be happening if we were organized so that all students left school with the outcomes we desire for them?



Characteristics of the Future School

What primary components or themes are inherent in this picture?

Reality



What are we doing now to support or move toward our picture in each of the characteristics identified?



Where are our practices out of alignment with the beliefs and student outcomes



Climate Scan

What are the characteristics of a climate supportive of change in the school? In the community?



Climate Assessment

Where are we now in relation to these characteristics? What evidence do we have to support this assessment?



Change Scan

Where are we now in relation to the key conditions for change? What evidence do we have to support this assessment?

6. Identify changes in curriculum and instruction as a result of exhibition design

7. Identify policy changes as a result of the exhibition approach.

8. Develop the assessment plan for the district.