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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
OF THE REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE TO REVIEW
THE STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
SYSTEM OF *LEARNING RESULTS*

March 2003

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This summary was prepared by faculty of the Maine Education Policy Research Institute, University of Maine, to provide a brief overview of the full report submitted by the Task Force to the Legislature of Maine in March 2003. The full report contains a more complete discussion of the data findings, all figures, tables, and survey instruments. Additional copies can be obtained by contacting MEPRI at the University of Maine, 5766 Shibles Hall, Orono, ME 04469-5766, (207) 581-2493 • Fax: (207) 581-9510.

Task Force to Review the Status of Implementation
of the System of *Learning Results*

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Introduction

Background

A Task Force was convened in July 2002 by the Commissioner of Education, as directed by the Maine State Legislature (L.D. 2103, Public Law 660) to conduct an assessment of the current levels of implementation of the System of *Learning Results* by each school administrative unit, and to recommend actions that are needed to meet any identified deficiencies and to adhere to the timelines for implementation. The Task Force was also charged with the task of considering how the requirements of the federal reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*, known as the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA)*, will affect the implementation of the System of *Learning Results*, and to make recommendations on the implementation of NCLBA requirements. (State implementation deadlines are appended to this summary.)

Task Force members represented all major constituent groups including the Maine Department of Education, the State Board of Education, school boards, superintendents, principals, teachers, and business. This group was assisted in their work by Maine Department of Education staff and faculty of the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) of the University of Maine.

Methodology

The Task Force considered relevant state statute and regulation on the System of *Learning Results*, federal statute (NCLBA), and recent sources of data. The Task Force identified indicators or variables which, taken together, reflect school administrative unit progress on the implementation of the System of *Learning Results*. The Task Force authorized MEPRI to develop and conduct a set of surveys to collect current data on these indicators of

progress and to report on the results of the surveys on a statewide and regional basis to the Task Force. The Task Force approved all four survey instruments for school board chairs, superintendents, principals, and teachers.

The survey sample included all school board chairs across the state ($n = 281$), all superintendents ($n = 168$), all principals ($n = 676$), 60% of the teachers in schools with grades K-8 and 9-12, and 60% of teachers in schools with grades K-12 in superintendent region 1 (Aroostook County). A total of 8,617 teachers was surveyed. The sample included all nine superintendent regions of the state and the Unorganized Territories (referred to in this report as region 10). The return rate was about 60% for the superintendent and principal surveys, 30% for the school board chair surveys, and 26% for the teacher surveys. Thus, data was collected from over half the superintendents and principals in the state, about one third of the school board chairs, and from about 16% of the teachers in the state (2,253 teachers). Appended Table 1 shows the number of respondents from each region and grade span.

The surveys included many common items, a variety of question formats, and were field tested to increase reliability. Survey items focused on eight broad categories of indicators identified by the Task Force. Listed in random order, these categories are:

1. Alignment of curriculum with the eight *Learning Results* content standards;
2. Professional development on the *Learning Results* and on comprehensive local assessment;
3. Attitudes and beliefs about the *Learning Results*;
4. Local assessment systems aligned with the *Learning Results*;
5. Available resources to implement the *Learning Results* and comprehensive local assessment;

6. Teaching practice and teacher knowledge to implement the *Learning Results*;
7. Communication about the *Learning Results* within the school community; and
8. Opportunities for students to achieve the *Learning Results* standards.

Surveys were mailed on October 23 with a requested return date of November 15. Data from the surveys were entered into SPSS (a quantitative data analysis software program, version 11.5) and were analyzed using SPSS. Responses to survey items were analyzed statewide by respondent type (i.e., job role), by grade span (K-4, 5-8, and 9-12), by content area, and by region. Surveys from 12 teachers who indicated they were in their first year of teaching were omitted from the teacher sample prior to data analysis.

Summary of Data Findings

The results of the Task Force surveys, together with other recent survey data, indicate that school administrative units (SAUs) throughout the state are strongly committed to implementing the System of *Learning Results* and believe that doing so will benefit their students. SAUs have continued to make steady progress on implementing the System of *Learning Results* during the past year, with considerable progress being made on developing local assessments since the spring of 2002. In general, more work has been completed to date on developing written vision statements and on aligning school system curriculum frameworks than on implementing local assessments. More work has been completed in English Language Arts and in Mathematics than in the other six content areas required by the *Learning Results*. SAUs have purchased new instructional materials, particularly in English Language Arts and Mathematics, specifically to meet the requirements of the *Learning Results*. Most SAUs have been providing professional development on the *Learning Results* to almost all teaching staff and administrators, although this training has been mostly at a general level rather than focused on

content areas. Most teachers and administrators feel that teachers are generally using instructional strategies that support students' achievement of the *Learning Results*. Yet, many respondents feel that it is difficult for teachers to ensure that students with special needs or disabilities are able to meet the requirements of the System of *Learning Results*.

The survey data consistently indicate concerns about the time, expertise, and technical guidance needed to continue implementation work and the funding required for creating time and building expertise. SAUs have engaged in this work within the context of school budgets that have not kept pace with the overall increased costs of education. Although SAUs will undoubtedly continue to work on implementation, it is clear that many SAUs still have a great deal of work to do to meet the implementation deadlines, particularly in the area of assessment.

The following section briefly summarizes the major findings of the Task Force surveys and relevant data sources related to the indicators of progress for implementing the System of *Learning Results*.

Aligning Curriculum Frameworks with the Learning Results:

- Across all grade spans (K-4, 5-8, and 9-12), work on aligning curriculum frameworks with the *Learning Results* is more than half way completed for most content areas and in the planning stages for Modern and Classical Languages and Career Preparation.
- More progress, and more even progress, was reported across all content areas for grades 9-12 than for grades K-8.
- Across all grade spans, more progress has been made on curriculum frameworks in English Language Arts and in Mathematics than in the other six content areas. Work in these two content areas was reported to be about 80% complete on average.¹
- Across all grade spans, progress on curriculum frameworks in content areas of science and technology, social studies, and Health and Physical Education is roughly even. Work in these three content areas was reported to be about 70% complete on average.

¹ The estimated percentages toward completion of work cited in this summary are based on the combined mean responses of principals and superintendents. See full Report of the Task Force to Review the Status of Implementation of the System of *Learning Results*, March 2003, for a more complete discussion of the data findings.

- Across all grade spans, less progress on curriculum frameworks has been completed in Visual and Performing Arts, Modern and Classical Languages, and Career Preparation than in other content areas. Work is generally in the planning stage for these content areas. Considerably more work has been done in Modern and Classical Languages and Career Preparation in grades 9-12 than in grades K-8.
- Steady progress has been made on aligning curriculum with the *Learning Results* during the last year, when data from surveys conducted at different points throughout the year are compared.
- Progress on aligning curriculum frameworks varies across the ten superintendents' regions in the state; respondents from a few regions reported more work has been completed than did respondents from other regions.

Aligning Curriculum and Instructional Materials with the Learning Results:

- Across all grade spans, more work on purchasing new instructional materials has been completed for English Language Arts and for Mathematics than for the other six content areas. About three quarters of the administrators said that work on obtaining new materials was either complete or partially complete in these content areas.
- Across all grade spans, work on purchasing new instructional materials was partially complete or in the planning stages for science and technology, social studies, and Health and Physical Education.
- For grades K-4, about 60% of the administrators said no action had been taken yet to obtain new instructional materials for Modern and Classical Languages and Career Preparation, and about 40% said no action had been taken yet for Visual and Performing Arts.
- More progress on purchasing new instructional materials was reported for Modern and Classical Languages and for Career Preparation in grades 9-12 than was reported in grades K-8.
- Across all grade spans, most administrators (about 75%) said their schools have appropriate instructional materials for teachers and students to support students' achievement of the *Learning Results* for "most" or "all" of the content areas. Teachers were more evenly divided on this question, with slightly more teachers agreeing (47%) than disagreeing (39%) that they have instructional materials that are well aligned with the *Learning Results*.
- Across all grade spans, 62% of the administrators said their schools have enough computers for teachers and students to support students' achievement of the *Learning Results* for "most" or "all" of the content areas. Fewer teachers, 53%, agreed that students have adequate access to computers. Sixty-five percent of the teachers agreed

that teachers have adequate access to computers, with more teachers in grades 5-8 holding this view.²

- Across all grade spans, SAUs reported more progress on purchasing new instructional materials than they reported on adding new curricula or courses. More progress was made on adding curricula or courses for English Language Arts and Mathematics than for other content areas. The least amount of progress was made on adding curricula or courses for Modern and Classical Languages and Career Preparation in grades K-8. About a third of the administrators said, “no additions were needed” for most content areas in grades K-8.

Implementing Local Assessment Systems:

- Across all grade spans, SAUs have made less progress on implementing local assessments than they have on aligning curriculum frameworks with the *Learning Results*. Most respondents said that work on local assessments was either partially complete or in the planning stage for all content areas and grade spans.
- More progress was reported on local assessments across all content areas for grades 9-12 than for grades K-8, and the levels of progress were more even across the content areas for grades 9-12.
- The progress made on local assessments follows the same pattern across content areas as was found with curriculum frameworks. Across all grade spans, more progress has been made in English Language Arts than in other content areas. Work on implementing assessments was reported to be almost 60% complete on average for English Language Arts and about 53% complete on average for Mathematics.
- Across all grade spans, progress on local assessments for science and technology, social studies, and Health and Physical Education is roughly even. Work in these areas was reported to be about 40% complete on average.
- The least progress on local assessments was made in Modern and Classical Languages and Career Preparation, particularly in grades K-8.
- Considerable progress has been made on developing and implementing local assessments since the spring of 2002, when data from other recent surveys are compared with the Task Force surveys.
- Progress on implementing local assessments varies across the ten superintendents’ regions in the state.

² Views about the level of access to computers for teachers and students have most likely been strongly influenced by the recent implementation of the laptop computer initiative in the state, which provided laptops to all seventh grade students and their teachers. If this program did not exist, it would be expected that fewer respondents would feel teachers and students have adequate access to computers.

- Most administrators (about 75-80% for grades K-8 and 60% for grades 9-12) did not indicate a date by which they expect their local assessments to be complete.
- Most administrators (60-65%) said they were either “not sure” or “somewhat certain” that they would be able to certify that this year’s eighth grade students will meet the *Learning Results* requirements in English Language Arts by high school graduation (June 2007). About the same percentage gave this response for Mathematics.
- Forty-six percent of the teachers agreed they were confident that their local assessments measure students’ progress on the *Learning Results*, while a third was “not sure”.
- Most administrators and teachers (over 80%) agreed that it is difficult to find time to develop local assessments.

Teaching Practice and Teacher Knowledge:

- About 60% of the teachers agreed that the changes they’ve made during the last few years have been driven by the *Learning Results*.
- About 64% of the principals said that “most” or “all” of their teachers use the *Learning Results* to plan lessons. Yet, across all grade spans, two thirds of the teachers feel they do not have enough time to plan lessons that incorporate the *Learning Results*.
- The percentage of administrators who indicated that “most” or “all” of their teachers use instructional strategies that support students’ achievement of the *Learning Results* was 79% for grades K-4, 72% for grades 5-8, and 55% for grades 9-12. Yet, 74% of the teachers agreed they do not have enough instructional hours to support student achievement on all content areas.

Perceptions and Expectations about the Learning Results:

- Across all three grade spans (K-4, 5-8, and 9-12), 56% of the administrators said that “most” or “all” of their teachers use instructional strategies that help students with special learning needs or styles to achieve the *Learning Results*. The percentage of principals giving this response was smaller for grades 9-12 (47%) than for grades K-4 (67%) or grades 5-8 (62%).
- About 70% of the teachers agreed that they find it difficult to help students with special needs achieve the goals of the *Learning Results*. The percentage of teachers giving this response was higher for grades K-8 (72%) than for grades 9-12 (66%).
- Three quarters (76%) of the teachers agreed that they use performance assessment in all subjects they teach. When data from different surveys are compared, it appears that more

teachers are currently using performance assessment than were reported doing so in March 2002.³

- Two thirds of the teachers across all grade spans said they are “very familiar” with the *Learning Results* for the grade(s) they teach. Two thirds of the teachers do not feel they need to develop deeper knowledge within content areas to implement the *Learning Results*. Administrators held a different view: about 90% of the superintendents and about 60% of the principals agreed that “most” or “some” of their teachers in grades K-8 need to develop deeper content knowledge.
- Most respondents (over 70%) agreed that the *Learning Results* are the biggest priority in their schools or SAUs.
- Almost 80% of the administrators agreed that the *Learning Results* have had or will have a positive impact on student learning in their schools or SAUs.
- Most respondents expressed doubt that all students will be able to achieve the *Learning Results*. About half of the administrators and almost two thirds of the teachers disagreed that the *Learning Results* are a realistic goal for all students in their schools or SAUs. About 70% of the administrators agreed that the *Learning Results* might not be achievable for some groups of children in their schools or SAUs.
- About 65% of the teachers agreed that their SAUs have made a commitment to enable all children, including those with disabilities, to achieve the *Learning Results*.
- About 75% of the administrators and almost half the teachers agreed that the *Learning Results* have had a positive impact on classroom instruction.
- Fifty-three percent of the superintendents and 45% of the principals agreed that it is difficult to know what it means for a student to attain or meet the *Learning Results* standards.

Developing Written Vision Statements:

- About three quarters of the administrators said their SAUs have completed work or partially completed work on a written vision statement that incorporates the *Learning Results* and Guiding Principles, and 81% of the teachers said their SAUs have a written vision statement.

³ Performance assessment is a way of measuring what students know and can do by requiring them to perform a task and to construct their own responses, rather than simply choosing a provided response—as with multiple-choice tests—or giving a brief written or numerical response. In this way, students are compelled to show the process by which they arrived at their answers or solutions. Performance assessment is generally intended to be integrated with instruction, and students’ performance on tasks is usually rated against a rubric that specifies performance criteria. Performance assessment can take many forms and could include writing prompts, projects, experiments, portfolios, or other assessments. The MEA is a performance assessment.

- About three quarters of the school board chairs said their school boards have completed work or partially completed work on a written statement that supports the *Learning Results*.

Obstacles and Identified Needs for Learning Results Implementation:

- Obstacles to implementation that received the highest significance ranking from respondents concerned resources of time, funding, social and economic conditions in the community, and staffing/personnel to work on curriculum and assessments. (Funding is closely related to time and personnel needs.)
- Obstacles related to SAUs' work on curriculum and assessments were: "not enough time to plan for needed changes in curriculum and assessment", and "not enough personnel to work on developing new curriculum and assessments". Two thirds of the superintendents agreed that efforts to implement the *Learning Results* consume a majority of central office staff/administrator time. Over half the superintendents (53%), a third of the principals, and 43% of the teachers felt their SAUs could not reasonably implement the *Learning Results* within the required timeframe, and about a third of all respondents were unsure.
- Obstacles related to teaching practices and teacher knowledge were: "not enough time for teachers to deliver instruction in all content areas required by the *Learning Results*"; "difficulty creating time for teachers to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to support student achievement of the *Learning Results*"; "difficulty funding teacher professional development or stipends to implement the *Learning Results*", and "difficulty funding new curricula or instructional materials that align with the *Learning Results*".
- Obstacles related to opportunities for students to achieve the *Learning Results* content standards included all the identified obstacles described above, and the additional obstacle of "social and economic conditions in the community that make it difficult for at-risk students to achieve the *Learning Results*".
- The obstacles of insufficient expertise, staffing, and funding were ranked as having higher significance in some superintendents' regions than in other regions.
- Most SAUs have provided general professional development on the *Learning Results* to all regular classroom teachers, special education teachers, specialists, and educational technicians. Most of the training teachers have obtained on the *Learning Results* has been through in-service days within their SAUs. SAUs have relied mostly on their own teachers to deliver or facilitate professional development on the *Learning Results*.
- SAUs provided less professional development on topics that focused on specific content areas, and fewer educational technicians have received this type of training.

- Most SAUs reported that they have provided general professional development on the *Learning Results* to all their principals and to curriculum supervisors, but fewer respondents said they provided this training to the curriculum supervisors.
- Sixty percent of the principals and 45% of the teachers indicated that the criteria which supervisors use to evaluate teachers' performance in the classroom had changed only a "little bit" or a "moderate" amount since the introduction of the *Learning Results*.

Characteristics of SAUs Reporting the Most and the Least Progress:

- A preliminary analysis of school administrative unit (SAU) characteristics seems to indicate that SAUs with larger enrollments than the statewide average (and which therefore have more teachers), which have more central office administrators than average, and which have a percentage of disadvantaged students that is no higher than the state average or better are, on average, more likely to have completed work on aligning curriculum frameworks. Yet, this relationship is not perfect—some small systems with few administrators and higher percentages of disadvantaged students have managed to complete work in this area.
- Because relatively few SAUs have completed work on implementing local assessment for any of the content areas, it is difficult to see any patterns that could predict which SAUs are most likely to be able to do this work. SAUs reporting the least amount of progress on assessment appear to have smaller enrollments (less than 1,000 students), have very small central office administrative staffing (1-2 administrators), and have a higher percentage of disadvantaged students (percentage of students eligible for free or reduced school lunch programs) than the statewide average.
- SAUs appear to be approaching the task of implementing the System of *Learning Results* in two different ways: One approach is working on curriculum alignment first across content areas and grades, and then moving to work on assessment, while the other approach is to work on both curriculum alignment and assessment simultaneously for only certain content areas or grades.

Recommendations

The Task Force commends school administrative units (SAUs) and their personnel for the hard work they have been doing to implement the System of *Learning Results*. Clearly, SAUs are strongly committed to the goal of implementing the *Learning Results* and to providing education of the highest standard to their students. It is also apparent from the available data that SAUs have made steady progress on aligning the various components of their educational system

(curriculum, materials, professional development, and assessment) with the *Learning Results* content standards and that considerable progress has been made in recent months on developing local assessments to measure students' achievement of the *Learning Results*. The *Learning Results* have encouraged positive changes in teaching and learning, and further improvements will evolve over time as implementation proceeds.

The data also indicate that most SAUs still have a great deal of work to do if they are to meet all the state deadlines for implementing the System of *Learning Results*. Of particular concern is the work to be done to implement comprehensive local assessment systems. While SAUs appear to be committed to moving ahead on implementation, full implementation can only be achieved if the obstacles of time, funding, and expertise are addressed. Therefore, the Task Force recommends the following actions be taken to address these obstacles and related issues:

Recommendations on Time Needed to Implement the Learning Results:

1. The Task Force recommends that the Legislature acknowledge that more time is needed for SAUs to implement the System of *Learning Results* and that time has financial costs associated with it. The Task Force recommends that the Legislature consider various ways to help SAUs create more time.

Time is a critical resource for all aspects of implementation, from the planning and development of curriculum and assessments, to professional development, to classroom instruction. The Legislature can help SAUs create more time by providing financial resources or revising statute.

Some SAUs have created more time for professional development or curriculum and assessment planning with strategies that include: hiring paraprofessionals or using parent volunteers to relieve teachers of non-instructional duties; hiring permanent substitute teachers to create release time from instructional duties; and paying teachers for time they spend on

curriculum, assessment, or professional development work after school or during the summer. The Legislature could provide financial resources to SAUs that cannot afford the additional salaries or stipends needed to create more time. Further, the Legislature could review current statute and practices regarding identification, training, and hiring of paraprofessionals and substitutes, to find ways to increase the current supply of these groups.

In addition to helping SAUs create more time for implementation within the current school day and school year, the Legislature could help SAUs obtain more time by changing statute on the length of the school day or school year. One approach might be to lengthen the school year to allow for curriculum planning and/or professional development weeks throughout the school year. Lengthening the school day or school year could provide more time for instruction and learning. There would be additional costs associated with increasing instructional time. The current data indicate that teachers feel they do not have sufficient time to deliver instruction in all content areas required by the *Learning Results*. State standards and educational research emphasize the importance of engaging students in more complex learning experiences that help students develop deeper understanding and the ability to apply knowledge in real-world contexts. This kind of teaching and learning takes more time.

2. Another option for creating more time for implementation would be for the Legislature to consider extending the deadlines for some content areas. The data indicate that most SAUs are further along in English Language Arts and Mathematics than in other content areas. If deadlines are extended, the Legislature must also consider the deadlines required by the *No Child Left Behind Act* for reading, mathematics, and science.

3. The Task Force recommends that the Legislature undertake a study of school system plans for use of time and organization of the school day and year. Each school system must

prepare such a plan to meet the requirements of the Comprehensive Education Plan by the end of the current school year (2002-2003). The Comprehensive Education Plans submitted by SAUs is one possible source of data for this study, but other sources of data would also be required. Such a study could address how SAUs have created more time to work on implementation within the existing school day or school year, the costs of these approaches, and the impact on students' achievement. The resulting information should be shared with SAUs throughout the state.

Recommendations on Funding Needed to Implement the Learning Results:

1. The Task Force recommends that the Legislature review the per-pupil funding level for components of the Essential Programs and Services funding model to be sure that these funding levels are based on current data, and sufficiently fund the work of implementing the System of *Learning Results*. The data indicate that many SAUs feel that funding for curriculum and instructional materials and teacher professional development is an obstacle to implementation. Some SAUs indicated they do not have sufficient personnel to do the work of implementation, which is also a funding issue. Superintendent regions 1, 4, 5, 7, and 8 ranked funding needs as more significant obstacles to implementation than did other regions.⁴
2. The Task Force recommends that a greater effort be made to encourage and support school system sharing of resources to more efficiently use the limited time, personnel, and financial resources SAUs have. School system sharing of resources would help SAUs that do not have sufficient resources to do the work of implementation on their own.

One strategy would be for the MDOE to set up a database that SAUs can access on the Internet, with information about what SAUs in various regions are doing on curriculum, assessment, or professional development to implement the System of *Learning Results*. E-mail or other communication systems could help facilitate communication and collaboration between

⁴ Superintendent regions cited include: 1 (Aroostook), 4 (Hancock), 5 (Mid-Coast), 7 (Cumberland), 8 (Kennebec).

SAUs and teachers. One example is the Internet-based and E-mail communication systems being used for implementation of the Maine Learning Technology Initiative.

Another strategy would be for the Legislature to provide financial supports or incentives. Financial support could be targeted to SAUs that need help with travel costs or the expense of hiring substitute teachers so teachers and administrators can travel to other SAUs. Financial incentives could be used to encourage collaboration efforts.

3. The Task Force recommends that the Legislature identify SAUs that have a critical shortage of expertise, personnel, curriculum or instructional materials to implement the *Learning Results*. The Legislature might target these SAUs with financial aid and/or technical guidance to encourage greater progress on implementation, given that the Essential Programs and Services funding model may not be fully implemented for several years.

The available data indicate concerns about the adequacy of instructional materials and access to computers in classrooms. Access to computers in classrooms has increased this year, under the Maine Learning Technology Initiative, but continued funding of this program will be necessary to maintain this level of access.

4. The Task Force recommends that the Legislature undertake a study to determine how some SAUs have made greater progress on implementation of the System of *Learning Results*. Some SAUs may have shifted resources within the school system to make certain areas a priority, or may have economized by collaborating or sharing resources with other SAUs. Information about SAUs' funding decisions and their consequences should be shared with other SAUs throughout the state.

5. The Task Force recommends that the Legislature fund the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) at a level that will enable the MDOE to conduct the required tasks of

providing oversight, coordination, guidance, assistance, and data management. The Task Force believes that the current capacity of the MDOE is inadequate to support SAUs' implementation of the System of *Learning Results*, and that additional financial/personnel resources are needed to increase this capacity.

In order for the MDOE to be able to support SAUs' work on implementation the System of *Learning Results*, the MDOE will need to have sufficient staffing and funding to provide information, data, guidance, and assistance. The *No Child Left Behind Act* requires that data management systems be in place so that assessment data can be used to inform and improve instruction. The *No Child Left Behind Act* also requires that schools targeted for improvement be given guidance or assistance. The MDOE will need to be sufficiently staffed to respond to the federal requirements, to communicate these requirements to SAUs, and to assist and support SAUs' efforts to meet these requirements.

Recommendations on Expertise Needed to Implement the Learning Results:

1. The Task Force recommends that the MDOE make greater use of existing regional centers or collaboratives as a vehicle for communicating state and federal educational policies and models of best practice for all content areas required by the *Learning Results*. Regional centers or collaboratives provide SAUs and teachers with information, professional development, assistance, and materials to use in curriculum and assessment development and classroom instruction, but are often focused on specific content areas. One example is the State Systemic Initiative in Mathematics and Science, funded by the National Science Foundation. Another example is the Maine Learning Technology Initiative, which has established a system of regional content mentors and training for teachers to integrate technology with instruction. Other regional

collaboratives exist across the state, but do not provide SAUs with guidance and support on all eight content areas required by the *Learning Results*.

2. The Task Force recommends that the MDOE collect information on the broad range of partnerships that exist between SAUs and other nonschool groups, and share this information with SAUs statewide. The Task Force recommends that the Legislature encourage the development of partnerships through statute and financial support and incentives.

Partnerships exist between SAUs and universities (e.g., the Southern Maine Partnership and other such partnerships across the state), and between SAUs and nonprofit organizations (e.g. the Gates Foundation and Education Development Center, Inc.), and between SAUs and industry (e.g., Apple Computer). These partnerships provide information, guidance, assistance, professional development, and materials to SAUs and teachers. Yet, many SAUs and teachers may not be aware of these partnerships or know how they can join or form partnerships on their own. The MDOE could collect and communicate information about partnerships to inform SAUs and teachers.

The Legislature could review current statute to see how partnerships could be encouraged and supported. The Legislature could provide financial support or incentives to encourage SAUs, universities, and industry to develop partnerships that focus on the *Learning Results*.

The MDOE could also encourage SAUs and universities to make greater use of the state's ATM system (two-way, audio-video connecting sites), so that teachers can have greater access to professional development opportunities. The ATM system could be an important vehicle for building the expertise of teachers in more remote regions. The ATM system could also be used to facilitate collaboration between SAUs on curriculum or assessment work.

3. The Task Force recommends that the MDOE collect information from SAUs that have provided more focused professional development opportunities, along with data on student achievement, so that this information can be shared with other SAUs as models of best practice for teacher learning and instructional practices that are associated with improved student achievement. The Task Force also recommends that the MDOE collect information about ways SAUs have organized their programs to meet the needs of students with disabilities, students with Limited English Proficiency, low achieving students, and other at-risk students. These programs could include both the regular instructional program as well as extended learning opportunities or interventions for students that need extra help to meet the *Learning Results* requirements.

4. The Task Force is aware that the State Board of Education and the MDOE are currently reviewing the certification rules for educators. The Task Force feels this work is important to ensure that certification rules are adequate to allow SAUs to meet the federal requirements for hiring highly qualified personnel under the *No Child Left Behind Act*. SAUs will need to review their hiring practices to ensure that the personnel they hire are sufficiently qualified in terms of educational attainment, knowledge of content areas, and certification. SAUs will need to consider the availability of professional development opportunities for educational technicians who were “grandfathered” and promoted to the educational technician 2 or 3 level. Of particular concern are the educational qualifications of educational technicians at level 1 (ed tech 1s), and the need for professional development opportunities for educational technicians. The educational qualifications and preparation for educational technicians will need to be aligned with the federal requirements.

More broadly, the Task Force recommends that the Legislature support the inclusion of standards-based instruction and assessment in teacher preparation programs throughout the state.

Appendix

Table 1. Sample Size for Task Force Surveys

Superintendent Region	Principals			Superintendents			School Board Chairs		
	Total Population (Surveyed)	Returned	Return Rate	Total Population (Surveyed)	Returned	Return Rate	Total Population (Surveyed)	Returned	Return Rate
1 Aroostook	53	35	66%	23	13	57%	36	8	22%
2 Penquis	103	57	55%	28	16	57%	43	13	30%
3 Washington	35	20	57%	10	5	50%	33	8	24%
4 Hancock	39	22	56%	13	5	38%	32	9	28%
5 Mid-Coast	61	35	57%	18	11	61%	33	13	39%
6 Western Maine	90	50	56%	18	13	72%	32	10	31%
7 Cumberland	110	69	63%	20	14	70%	20	8	40%
8 Kennebec	100	60	60%	23	17	74%	36	12	33%
9 York	78	39	50%	15	11	73%	16	4	25%
10 Unorganized Territories	7	6	86%	0	0		0	0	
Total	676	393	58%	168	105	63%	281	85	30%

Region Superintendent Region	Teachers														
	K - 8 Schools					9 - 12 Schools					K - 12 Schools				
	Total Population	Total Surveyed (60%)	Returned	Return Rate	% of Population	Total Population	Total Surveyed (60%)	Returned	Return Rate	% of Population	Total Population	Total Surveyed (60%)	Returned	Return Rate	% of Population
1 Aroostook County	494	296	101	34%	20%	154	92	29	32%	19%	252	151	50	33%	20%
2 Penquis	1,298	779	205	26%	16%	516	310	83	27%	16%	33	0	0		
3 Washington County	314	188	58	31%	18%	78	47	16	34%	21%	23	0	0		
4 Hancock County	470	282	78	28%	17%	162	97	32	33%	20%	0	0	0		
5 Mid-Coast	723	434	123	28%	17%	284	170	55	32%	19%	39	0	0		
6 Western Maine	1,470	882	215	24%	15%	675	405	101	25%	15%	53	0	0		
7 Cumberland County	2,249	1,349	312	23%	14%	959	575	134	23%	14%	13	0	0		
8 Kennebec	1,466	880	229	26%	16%	595	357	92	26%	15%	30	0	0		
9 York County	1,574	944	240	25%	15%	612	367	98	27%	16%	37	0	0		
10 Unorganized Territories	20	12	2	17%	10%	0	0	0			0	0	0		
Total	10,078	6,046	1,563	26%	16%	4,035	2,420	640	26%	16%	480	151	50	33%	10%

State Timeline for Implementation of the System of *Learning Results*

Legislation and administrative regulations on the implementation of the System of *Learning Results* require school administrative units (SAUs) to include the *Learning Results* content standards in their curriculum, to implement local assessments to measure students' progress on achieving the *Learning Results*, and to award high school diplomas based on students' performance on comprehensive local assessments within specified time frames (Chapter 125, Chapter 127, Maine Department of Education). Specifically, the relevant deadlines for implementation required by the state are the following:

- By the 2002-2003 school year, school administrative units must include five content areas of the *Learning Results* in their curriculum: English Language Arts, Mathematics, science and technology, social studies, and Health and Physical Education.
- By the end of the 2003-2004 school year, school administrative units must implement comprehensive local assessment systems to measure students' progress on achieving the *Learning Results* content standards, and must certify that the local assessment systems meet the assessment system standards established in Chapter 127 for five content areas: English Language Arts, Mathematics, Health and Physical Education, science and technology, and social studies. The regulations specify how performance on assessments must be reported across grade spans.
- By 2007-2008, school administrative units must certify that their comprehensive local assessment system meets the assessment system standards established in Chapter 127 for three additional content areas: Modern and Classical Languages, Visual and Performing Arts, and Career Preparation, contingent upon funding based on Essential Programs and Services or its equivalent. (Originally, the deadline was 2006-2007.)
- By September 2007, school administrative units must include all eight content areas in their curriculum (including Modern and Classical Languages, Visual and Performing Arts, and Career Preparation), contingent upon funding of Essential Programs and Services or its equivalent. (Originally, the deadline was September 2006.)
- By the high school graduating class of 2007, school administrative units must begin to award high school diplomas based on students' achievement of the *Learning Results* content standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics as demonstrated by students' performance on comprehensive local assessments in these content areas.
- By the high school graduating class of 2008, school administrative units must begin to award high school diplomas based on students' achievement of the *Learning Results* content standards in the additional content areas of: Health and Physical Education, science and technology, and social studies as demonstrated by students' performance on comprehensive local assessments in these content areas.
- By the class of 2011, school administrative units must award high school diplomas based on students' achievement of the *Learning Results* content standards in the additional

content areas of Modern and Classical Languages, Visual and Performing Arts, and Career Preparation), as demonstrated by students' performance on the comprehensive local assessments in these content areas.⁵ (Originally, the deadline was the graduating class of 2010.)

⁵ Chapter 125 and 127, "Regulations for the Implementation of the System of *Learning Results*", Maine Department of Education, Aug. 9, 2002.