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A. DIONNE
HAIR



TASK FORCE TO REVIEW
THE APPLIED TECHNOLOGY CENTERS
AND APPLIED TECHNOLOGY REGIONS

CHAPTER 74, RESOLVES OF 1997

SEN. MARY E. SMALL
REP. JOHN L. TUTTLE
JOANNA M. JONES
ANTHONY H. KRAPP
JOHN R. TURCOTTE
DR. DONALD CANNAN
DENIS L. HOWARD
DR. PAUL RANDY WALKER
JAMES E. RIER, JR.
CHRISTOPHER D. LYONS
STAFF: YVONNE DAMBORG
LLOYD KEAST

March 2, 1998

Members of the 118th Legislature
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
State House
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Members,

On behalf of the members of the Task Force to Review the Applied Technology Centers and Applied Technology Regions, it is my pleasure to forward the final report of this task force to you. The report is organized into "Proceedings," "Findings," and "Recommendations." The "Recommendations" section of the report is organized according to the issue areas as they appear in the Chapter 74 Resolves.

In view of the short time frame for this report, the task force members did not feel that there was adequate time to review some of the areas in as much detail as necessary. Therefore, some of the recommendations call for more in-depth study.

The Chair and members of the committee are prepared to make a formal presentation of the report to you at your convenience. They are also willing to discuss the report in detail and to answer any questions you have regarding the report, the task force deliberations, or the process utilized. You may also contact either Lloyd Keast or me at the Maine Department of Education and we would be happy to respond to your questions or to discuss the report with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Yvonne V. Damborg'.

Yvonne V. Damborg
Staff

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Director, Legislative Council
the Task Force to Review the Applied Technology
and Applied Technology Regions

Proceedings, Findings, and Recommendations of the Task Force to Review the Applied Technology Centers and Applied Technology Regions

established pursuant to Chapter 74, Resolves of 1997

Final Report March 1, 1998



Members of the Chapter 74 Task Force:

Philip A. Dionne, Chair
Senator Mary E. Small
Representative John L. Tuttle, Jr.
Joanna M. Jones
Anthony H. Krapf
John R. Turcotte
Dr. Donald Cannan
Denis L. Howard
Dr. Paul Randy Walker
James E. Rier, Jr.
Christopher D. Lyons

Staff: Yvonne Damborg
Lloyd Keast

PHILIP A. DIONNE
CHAIR



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FINAL REPORT

March 1, 1998

Proceedings:

Chapter 74, Resolves of 1997, passed by the First Regular Session of the 118th Legislature of the State of Maine and signed into law by Governor Angus S. King, Jr., on June 12, 1997 (and hereafter referred to as "Chapter 74"), established a **Task Force to Review the Applied Technology Centers and Applied Technology Regions** (hereafter referred to as the "task force"), consisting of the following eleven members, one appointed by the Governor, two appointed jointly by the President of the Maine Senate and the Speaker of the Maine House of Representatives, five representing other organizations, and three ex officio:

Joanna M. Jones of Bath Iron Works, the former Chair of the Maine Human Resource Development Council, appointed by the Governor to represent the business community;

Senator Mary E. Small of Bath, appointed by the President and the Speaker to represent the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs;

Representative John L. Tuttle, Jr., of Sanford, appointed by the President and the Speaker to represent the Joint Standing Committee on Legal and Veterans Affairs;

John R. Turcotte, Superintendent of MSAD #67 in Lincoln, appointed by the President of the Maine School Management Association as a superintendent who is a member of the cooperative board of an applied technology region;

Anthony H. Krapf, Superintendent of MSAD #59 in Madison, appointed by the President of the Maine School Management Association as a superintendent who is a member of the advisory committee of an applied technology center;

Denis L. Howard, Director of Maine Applied Technology Region 7 in Belfast and the President of the Maine Association of Vocational Education Administrators;

Dr. Donald Cannan, Director of the Lewiston Regional Technical Center, appointed by the President of the Maine Association of Vocational Education Administrators;

Final Report of the Chapter 74 Task Force

March 1, 1998

Page two

Dr. Paul Randy Walker, Team Leader and Policy Director of the Learning Systems Team of the Maine Department of Education (MDOE), designated by the Commissioner of Education;

James E. Rier, Jr., Chair of the State Board of Education;

Philip A. Dionne, former Chair of the Maine Council on Vocational Education (MCVE); and,

Christopher D. Lyons, State Director of Workforce Education of the MDOE.

Staff assistance to the task force was provided by Yvonne Damborg, formerly of MCVE, and Lloyd Keast of MDOE, in compliance with Chapter 74, §5 ("Staff assistance").

Under the provisions of Chapter 74, §4 ("Duties"), the task force was charged with conducting a review of seven groups of specific issues pertaining to the statewide network of applied technology centers and applied technology regions:

- "1. Enrollment, completion and graduation rates, postsecondary enrollments, and job placements;
- "2. Student transportation, schedule and calendar conflicts, and graduation requirements;
- "3. Costs per pupil, program subsidy, and cost-sharing arrangements;
- "4. Organizational structure, governance, and the laws pertaining to the centers and regions;
- "5. Program direction, development, and accountability;
- "6. Institutional philosophy and accreditation; and,
- "7. Competition with the private sector, including strategies to minimize that competition."

In addition, under the provisions of §7 ("Report"), the task force was mandated to submit a report, together with any necessary implementing legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs and the Executive Director of the Legislative Council, no later than January 1, 1998.

The first meeting of the Chapter 74 Task Force was held on November 20, 1997, called together at the invitation of Representative Elizabeth H. Mitchell, Speaker of the House and Chair of the Legislative Council.

The first meeting was primarily organizational; all votes were unanimous. Philip A. Dionne, former Chair of the Maine Council on Vocational Education, was elected chair of the task force and the second meeting of the task force was set for December 30, 1997.

Final Report of the Chapter 74 Task Force

March 1, 1998

Page three

In addition, as authorized by §7, a request for an extension of the January 1, 1998 deadline for the submission of the report was forwarded to the Legislative Council. Later on November 20, by unanimous vote, the Legislative Council extended the deadline for submission of the report until March 1, 1988.

This document, organized into "Proceedings," "Findings," and "Recommendations," is respectfully submitted to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, the Legislative Council, and the Second Regular Session of the 118th Legislature as a whole as the report and recommendations required under Chapter 74, §7.

The second task force meeting was held as scheduled on December 30, 1997; this meeting was primarily informational:

- Gary Leighton, MDOE Supervisor of School Finance, presented an overview of State funding of applied technology regions and centers;
- Phillip McCarthy, Legislative Analyst for Education and Cultural Affairs, distributed a "Summary of Applied Technology Education Legislation Referred to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on Legal and Veterans Affairs during the 118th Maine State Legislature (1st Regular and 1st Special Session)"; and,
- Chair Philip A. Dionne offered an overview of the State applied technology statute (M.R.S.A. 20-A, Chapter 313) and an analysis of current "Cooperative Agreements" between school units affiliated with applied technology regions and centers.

A task force meeting planned for January 15 was cancelled as a result of the Great Ice Storm of 1998, but a total of four other meetings were held as scheduled, on January 29 and February 5, 12, and 26, 1998.

The first three meetings were broadly concerned with data gathering and analysis, with the January 29 meeting primarily focused on issues 1-3, February 5 on issues 4 and 7, and February 12 on issues 5 and 6.

Opportunities for public comment were provided at the beginning of each meeting. On February 5, Don McIntire of Heritage Printing in Farmington and a group of representatives of the association of Northern Maine Greenhouse and Produce Growers each presented both oral and written testimony.

The final meeting on February 26 was devoted to discussing task force findings and recommendations and this report.

Detailed minutes and attendance rosters for each task force meeting, as well as a variety of supporting documents, are available from the MDOE. Please contact the Workforce Education Team by phone at 207-287-5854 or fax at 207-287-5894, or send an e-mail message c/o Chris.Lyons@state.me.us.

Final Report of the Chapter 74 Task Force

March 1, 1998

Page four

Findings:

The most general conclusions of the Chapter 74 Task Force are consistent with the findings of its predecessor ten years ago, the Commissioner's Task Force to Study Secondary Vocational Education in Maine, whose report—**Education for the World of Work in the State of Maine**—emphasized the essential and growing contributions of secondary occupational skill development programs to the education, workforce development, and economic development of the State.

At one and the same time, the secondary occupational skill development programs offered by the statewide network of applied technology regions and centers—i.e., workforce/vocational/applied technology education—have three distinct roles to play in the preparation of Maine's young people and other students to meet the challenges of the 21st century:

- as *the career-specific, skill development component of public education*;
- as *the State's "first-chance," preventative workforce development system*; and,
- as *the secondary education arm of Maine's comprehensive economic development strategy*.

In a very real sense—today more than ever—vocational education represents one key to a productive and prosperous future, not just for those of our students not heading to professional careers, but for the workforce and the Maine economy as a whole.

In the Maine of the year 2000 and beyond, our standard of living will depend to a significant degree upon high wage occupations in high performance work organizations. A high skills workforce is a primary and necessary tool for the creation of a high performance economy. And high quality vocational education is essential to the development of a high skills workforce.

In addition, the implementation of our new educational standards, the *State of Maine Learning Results*, presents all Maine schools with a tremendous opportunity and a tremendous challenge. If we are successful in ensuring that all Maine students achieve mastery of the Learning Results, we will have positioned Maine far in the lead of the educational community of the nation—and more importantly, we will have built a *universal foundation of high achievement* that can propel all our young people and the State as a whole into a 21st century of success, self-sufficiency, and prosperity.

As spelled out in Maine's school-to-work State plan, it is to be hoped—once the Learning Results are fully implemented—that the large majority of Maine students will master the Learning Results by the end of the 10th grade (around age 16), prior to entry into either vocational education or four-year college preparation. But in the near term, vocational education has multiple critical roles to play in the implementation of the Learning Results.

Beyond that, vocational education also has an emerging role in opening the doors of the Maine Technical College System (MTCS) to our high school graduates. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that nearly half of the occupations of the year 2000 will be those for which at least one but less than four years of postsecondary education is the preferred prerequisite to entry—i.e., the high skilled and technical careers that are the specific educational province of the technical colleges.

Final Report of the Chapter 74 Task Force

March 1, 1998

Page five

But today, far too many of our recent graduates lack the basic academic skills required for success in a high tech program. Vocational education at the secondary level has a vital part to play in preparing students for postsecondary technical education.

Unfortunately, as the cumulative impact of the chronic state budget crisis has fallen more and more heavily on Maine schools, centrifugal forces have begun to undermine the stability of the applied technology network in several parts of the State—even while enrollments at the regions and centers are climbing and new roles and responsibilities are emerging for vocational education in the age of the global technology economy.

On the eve of the 21st century, Maine's vocational education centers face both challenges and opportunities that are quite without precedent:

- Both technology and staff intensive, predominantly shop- and workplace-based, the occupational skill development programs that are the core of vocational education are relatively costly in comparison with pure classroom instruction. But until very recently, they have also received proportionately higher levels of state support (particularly in communities that are above their “circuit breaker”), in the form of applied technology program subsidy. Now, with the average percentage of state reimbursement of program operating costs falling below the 50% level, hard-pressed towns and school units are beginning to wonder if vocational education is a “luxury” Maine can no longer afford;
- Maine's new State Economic Development Strategy depends heavily on the creation of a high skills, high performance workforce as a key to stemming the sharp fall in real wages and the loss of full-time, full-year, “breadwinner” employment opportunities. But faced with increasingly hard budget choices, many school units may elect to concentrate scarce resources on preparing students for four-year college enrollment and professional careers—despite the fact that only 20% of all jobs in the United States actually require a baccalaureate degree or higher as a prerequisite for entry;
- Vocational education represents the first-chance, preventative component of a comprehensive workforce development system—a first line of defense against unemployment, underemployment, poverty, and welfare dependency. But the looming crisis of welfare “reform” may force a further diversion of resources away from education toward remedial, second-chance programs like job training, which are far more expensive and less effective in the long run;
- To fulfill their potential as an economic development tool, vocational education programs must be built around state-of-the-art technology and leading edge program areas. Many regions and centers throughout the State are eagerly embracing priority target areas such as precision metal work, biotechnology, multimedia, fiber optics, tourism, law enforcement, aquaculture, electronic publishing, and others. But the chronic scarcity of resources for equipment and staff development imposes severe constraints on our ability to keep pace with new technologies and the swift transformations of the labor market;

Final Report of the Chapter 74 Task Force

March 1, 1998

Page six

- Technology education and family and consumer science education (FACSE) have multiple roles to play, both as leaders in the implementation of the Career Preparation content area of Maine's Learning Results and as feeder systems preparing students for entry into vocational education in the eleventh grade. But ignoring the crisis in the American family and the dominant role of technology in the new economy, a growing number of school units have declared either "Tech Ed" or FACSE or both to be "nonessential services," prime candidates for downsizing or termination;
- The two governance models developed in the 1970s offer trade-offs between controls and costs; regions generally offer affiliated school units democratic decision-making in exchange for democratic cost-sharing—while centers are controlled by a single unit, which in exchange assumes a disproportionate share of the costs. In each case, relationships between the participating schools have been structured by cooperative agreements spelling out the rights and responsibilities of all parties. But some agreements have broken down as individual stakeholders struggle to shift costs onto the shoulders of other participants;
- Vocational education programs have traditionally played the role of "program of last resort" for significant numbers of students. Beyond its basic mission of specific occupational skill development, vocational education has offered applied learning as a contextual method for teaching basic academics, work-oriented programs as motivational dropout prevention services, and occupational programs as frameworks for experiential career exploration. But many schools have routinely assigned all special education students to attend a region or center, regardless of their individual career plans—leading to confusion between special education and vocational education and the stereotype that secondary vocational education is a "dumping ground."
- The School-To-Work Opportunity Act (STWOA) proposes that vocational education programs should all incorporate, in an integrated fashion, both school-based and structured work-based learning, including some high quality paid work experience. In predominantly rural states like Maine, only a limited number of slots for work-based learning are available in the private sector. Instead, many regions and centers have been moving forward with the development of school-based, student-run enterprises, which combine quality work-based learning with exposure to all aspects of the industrial enterprise and comprehensive entrepreneurship training—a particularly invaluable component of vocational education in any state with a large small business sector and a strong family enterprise tradition. But the slow growth of the Maine economy has fostered fears in parts of the state that school-based enterprises would compete with, rather than complement, local businesses;
- Research has demonstrated conclusively that successful completion of an occupational skill development program at the secondary level offers a major employment boost and earnings bonus in the labor market to students who pursue a career related to their program area. [In fact, a similar labor market bonus for occupational skill development has been documented at *every* educational level (high school diploma, one-year certificate, associate degree, baccalaureate degree, and advanced degree).] But school units may interpret the promulgation of the Learning Results as a mandate to increase conventional academic course requirements for graduation—making it increasingly difficult for students to complete vocational education programs.

Recommendations:

Recommendations Concerning Vocational Student Information (Issue Area 1):

- **Comprehensive and timely information on vocational student enrollments and outcomes should be made readily available.**
- The MDOE Vocational Student Information System should be upgraded and expanded to provide full access to current data on an individual desktop basis without requiring assistance from professional programmers.
- In the course of rationalizing and expanding the *Standard Criteria for Vocational Education Program Approval*, the MDOE and the State Board of Education should establish uniform standards for full- and part-time enrollment, contact hours, and program completion.
- The Departments of Education, Labor, and Economic and Community Development should proceed with development and implementation of the Automated Occupational and Labor Market Information System (AOLIS) proposed by the Maine State Plan for School-To-Work Opportunities, which would provide real-time and non-invasive evaluation of the labor market impact and effectiveness of all educational and employment training programs in the State.
- **Economic development benchmarks should reflect the critical role of high skill occupational preparation programs at the secondary level.**
- The Maine Economic Growth Council and the Maine Development Foundation should expand their roster of "Measures of Growth" with the inclusion, under the existing category of "Skilled and Educated Workers," of a new measure based on "the percentage of Maine people 25 years and older who have successfully completed an occupational skill preparation program at the secondary level."

Recommendations Concerning School Schedules and Calendars (Area 2):

- **The possibilities and benefits of universal block scheduling and a common school calendar deserve exploration.**
- The State Board of Education's Task Force on the School Calendar should assess the impact of new approaches to time management in public schools on both academic and occupational programming and explore the possible implications of block scheduling for the future evolution of the school calendar in Maine. While statutory or regulatory imposition of a common school calendar or a single model of block scheduling is highly problematical in a local control State like Maine, exemplary, proven approaches to block scheduling or regionalized school calendars might well be voluntarily replicated in many parts of the State, especially if staff development opportunities were broadly available.

Recommendations Concerning Program Costs and Subsidies (Area 3):

- **Full State support for secondary vocational education should be restored and continued.**
- The Legislature should restore full funding of applied technology program subsidy as of the 1998-1999 school year, rescinding the 23.59% off-the-top reduction in subsidizable program operating costs.
- The Task Force on Essential Programs and Services should reaffirm the essential and distinct role of secondary occupational preparation programs and services in the development of a high skills, high performance, high wage workforce for the Maine of the 21st century.
- In the course of rationalizing and expanding the *Standard Criteria for Vocational Education Program Approval*, the MDOE and the State Board of Education should explore the development of a standard methodology for computing a cost-per-student index for vocational education.

Recommendations Concerning Regional Structure and Governance (Area 4):

- **Alternative approaches to the regional delivery, organization, governance, and cost-sharing of secondary vocational education should be explored.**
- In collaboration with the State Board of Education, Maine School Management Association, the Maine Association of Vocational Education Administrators, the business community, and other stakeholders, the MDOE should convene an ad hoc study group on the organization and governance of the applied technology regions and centers, to examine and make recommendations on proposals and options for new structures and cost-sharing strategies for secondary vocational education and revisions to 20-A M.R.S.A., Chapter 313.

Recommendations Concerning Program Direction and Development (Area 5):

- **Vocational education program improvement, staff development, and technology upgrading should receive continuing support.**
- The Legislature should support program improvement, staff development, and technology upgrading at the applied technology regions and centers, by establishing a continuing annual General Fund appropriation of \$1,000,000, to be administered by the MDOE.
- The Commissioner of Education should continue to ensure access for vocational educators and administrators and the applied technology regions and centers to professional development programs and opportunities keyed to the implementation of the Maine Learning Results.

- **New Standard Criteria for Vocational Program Approval and new accountability measures should be promulgated.**

- Coincident with the development of a new State plan for vocational education, and with the involvement of the business community and other stakeholders, the Department of Education and the State Board of Education should proceed with revising and rationalizing the *Standard Criteria for Secondary Vocational Education Program Approval*—incorporating the *State Criteria of Program Quality*, *State Standards of Service to Students with Special Needs*, and *Core Measures and Standards of Performance for Applied Technology and Technical Education Programs*, and expanding and standardizing the leadership role of the private sector in program and center advisory committees.

- **Vocational education should play a leading role in the implementation of the Maine Learning Results.**

- The MDOE and the Learning Results Steering Committee should support efforts to develop and fund a comprehensive and integrated initiative to develop state-of-the-art program standards for all vocational education and related programs in the State, articulate the Learning Results content of each of those programs, and mobilize the vocational education community to play a leadership role in the implementation of the Learning Results.

- **Unique vocational education facility construction, expansion, and upgrading needs must be addressed in a timely fashion.**

- In cooperation with the MDOE School Support Systems Team, the State Board of Education should work to ensure that vital needs for applied technology region and center school construction projects are addressed in a timely and sufficient fashion, with an initial focus on establishing appropriate central facilities for the proposed new region in Coastal Washington County and for Region 9 in Northern Oxford County, as well as on meeting facility expansion and upgrading needs in other parts of the State.

Recommendations Concerning Philosophy & Certification (Area 6):

- **Occupational skill development and other dimensions of vocational education must remain viable and essential components of secondary education.**

- The Commission on Secondary Education should reaffirm the multiple unique roles of secondary vocational education:
 - the career-specific, occupational skill component of secondary education;
 - the school-based, “first chance” form of workforce development; and,
 - the proactive, educational dimension of economic development.

Final Report of the Chapter 74 Task Force

March 1, 1998

Page ten

- **The unique skill requirements and professional development needs of vocational teachers should continue to be recognized and supported.**
- The State Board of Education and the MDOE should include appropriate representation of the vocational education community and the business community on the Task Force on Initial Teacher Certification and reaffirm the unique skill requirements and continuing professional development needs of occupational and technical educators.

Recommendations Concerning School-Based Enterprises & Competition (Area 7):

- **New guidelines should be developed for school-based enterprises and “live work” projects.**
- In conjunction with development of the new *Standard Criteria for Vocational Program Approval*, and in cooperation with the business community and other stakeholders, the MDOE should promulgate comprehensive guidelines for the conduct of school-based and student managed enterprises and “live work” programs, emphasizing the need to obtain strong support and leadership from the local and State business communities, to avoid any negative impacts on private business due to predatory pricing or other unfair, tax-subsidized competitive practices, to establish a formal process for problem solving and dispute resolution, and to comply with uniform cost and income reporting and accountability systems that can measure and evaluate the operations, effectiveness, and business and community roles of these enterprises and activities.
- **The business community should play an active leadership role in program and center advisory committees.**
- In cooperation with the Maine Association of Vocational Education Administrators, the business community, and other stakeholders, the Applied Technology/School Improvement Subcommittee of the State Board of Education should carry out a review of the composition and role of program and center advisory committees, with a focus on expanding and standardizing the leadership role of the private sector and ensuring that all sectors and segments of private industry related to each program area are appropriately represented on the corresponding program advisory committees.