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# **The Task Force on Learning Results**

## **Plan for Education in Maine**

**Convened by the Maine State Board of Education  
Authorized by PL 1993, Chapter 290, Sec. 20A  
An Act to Enhance the State Board of Education**

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# **The Task Force on Learning Results Plan for Education in Maine**

## **Summary**

### **The Task Force's Charge:**

PL Chapter 290, Sec. 20A, An Act to Enhance the State Board of Education, enacted in the first regular session of the 116th Maine Legislature, makes the State Board of Education responsible for setting goals for education in Maine. To assist the Board in the planning process, the Act establishes the Task Force on Learning Results. The Task Force, led by the chair of the State Board of Education, can include no more than 20 members. The Act gives the Task Force two responsibilities.

First, the group is required to develop a plan for education in Maine for approval by the State Board of Education. The State Board is in turn required to submit the plan to the Joint Standing Committee on Education by February 15, 1994. Second, the Act requires the Task Force to use Maine's Common Core of Learning to specifically identify what all Maine students will be required to know and be able to do by the time they leave school. The Task Force must complete the development of these "learning results" and present them to the State Board of Education by December 1995. In the interim, the State Board must deliver a progress report on the development of the learning results to the Joint Standing Committee in December 1995. The Act expressly prohibits the use of general funds to support the Task Force's work.

### **The Foundations of the Task Force's Plan**

The Task Force's plan for education in Maine is based first on its analysis of the act itself. The implications of the Act are far-reaching. The assumptions, beliefs and values which prompted its passage and which are embedded in the Act's charge to the State Board and to the Task Force on Learning Results dictated many of the elements of the plan. These include:

All Maine children can learn the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective parents, citizens, workers and adults.

Maine's Common Core of Learning is the guide for developing learning results for all students and is the foundation for planning the future of public education.

All Maine schools will work toward the same set of learning results.

By developing learning results which apply to all Maine students and providing support for schools and communities to redesign schools so all children can achieve these results, all Maine students will have an equal opportunity to learn.

Educators, parents, students, taxpayers and policy makers need one integrated, long-term plan for public education which guides decision making at both the state and local levels.

# **The Task Force's Vision for Education in Maine**

In Alice in Wonderland the Cheshire Cat says, "If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there." The Task Force wanted its work to impact the learning of Maine's children and its plan to be the roadmap for making that impact. Building on the underlying beliefs embedded in the Act and its own strongly held beliefs about education, the group developed a picture of education in Maine which illustrates how public education will function after its plan is implemented. The vision the Task Force developed was verified by 350 representatives from 20 education stakeholder groups who met in November 1993 at the Education Summit. The Task Force's vision for education in Maine:

"Every Maine child can claim a promising future, because each enjoys an equal opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to participate in shaping Maine's future.

This equal opportunity to learn is ensured by a common set of learning results which embody high expectations for all students. The learning results, and the standards of achievement based upon them are the work of teachers, parents and citizens across the state.

Each community determines the strategies it will use to help its children reach the learning results. Learning teams, which include students, parents, and teachers develop and periodically review multi-year personalized education plans for all students. Student progress is assessed regularly, using a variety of methods which help students demonstrate what they know and can do. Students advance through school based on their progress in achieving the learning results. Each student, by actively participating in the development of a personal learning plan, understands the expected learning results and takes pride in progress made toward attaining those results. Each student accepts personal responsibility by choosing activities which lead to rigorous intellectual growth.

Educators are mentors who guide this learning process. They use a variety of engaging strategies to support students' personal learning plans. They benefit from teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities emphasizing new technologies and approaches effective in helping students reach the learning results. Educators utilize these approaches as a springboard to help them design creative ways to personalize education for each student.

Every Maine citizen is a lifelong learner. Schools therefore are the educational service centers for all residents in each community. Learning activities continue all day, every day, and learning groups are multi-aged and inter-generational. As education centers, schools use telecommunications, technology-intensive library and media centers and other technological tools to advance learning. The community itself is used as a classroom, where students further their studies of academics and human relations, explore global and multi-cultural concerns, and address environmental issues. Businesses provide additional avenues for students to use in learning, and post-secondary education contributes its learning resources to support both adults and students. Through all of these activities and the involvement of all segments of the community, the community itself takes

responsibility for helping its students reach the common learning results.

Accountability for ensuring that all students continue to progress toward the learning results is shared by all the stakeholders of Maine's public schools -- students, parents, teachers, community members and policy makers. Every community can depend upon receiving equitable, predictable and adequate funding as well as the technical resources necessary to provide a rich learning environment. When schools and communities have difficulty helping students progress toward the learning results, more intensive assistance is provided. Assistance may include support services, additional funding, or sanctions if necessary. This view of accountability redefines the responsibilities of each member of the educational system, and requires shared decision making and decentralization at all levels of the system. At both the state and local levels, policy makers act on the belief that our top priority is to create and maintain an environment in which all students can and do achieve the learning results."

## **Making the Vision a Reality for Maine**

The Task Force's plan has two major components -- developing the learning results and supporting local implementation of the results. In developing goals for education in Maine, the Task Force recognized the necessity of action in six major areas (see the Appendix for the Task Force's complete action plan):

### **1. The learning results must reflect high expectations and high standards for all students. (High Standards and Expectations)**

**Actions:** The learning results will be established through a four-step process which involves Maine schools who are already involved in developing local learning results, and educators, parents and community members across the state. Using the Common Core of Learning, the Task Force, the State Board and the Department of Education will use a broad-based collaborative process to develop specific learning results. This process will build on the department's work during the last two years in helping 60 schools develop learning results at the local level. The process will also involve community members all over the state in discussions about what Maine students should know and be able to do. Once the learning results are developed, schools will work with their communities to develop a local implementation plan.

### **2. All activities to support the local implementation of the learning results must be designed around what students need in order to learn. (Learner-centered education)**

**Actions:** Planning teams, composed of teachers, parents and the student, will create a learning plan for each student so that all children have an equal opportunity to work toward the learning results. Once initial mastery of the results have been reached, the same planning teams will develop transition plans for each student. Transition plans may include in-depth academic study, apprenticeship or internship, concentrated pursuit of a personal talent, or any combination of these activities. Students will select the point in their school career in which they want to demonstrate initial mastery and the transition plan will help each student determine when exit from high school takes place. A state-



level collection of student assessment tools (including the Maine Educational Assessment Test) will be developed to help schools and students determine initial mastery.

**3. Continuous state and local level student assessment which provides multiple ways for students to demonstrate what they know and can do is necessary to build accountability into the system. (Assessment and Accountability)**

Actions: Local school districts will receive assistance in developing local assessment tools to provide information about student progress in reaching the learning results. Schools will also receive assistance from teams of educators from other schools, which will also help schools and their communities evaluate their plans for implementation of the learning results. Regional support centers will be established to assist schools in the following areas:

- planning to help students achieve the learning results;
- the development of new instructional strategies
- the development of local authentic and performance assessment tools
- involving parents and community in shared decision making
- recruiting, placing and supervising volunteers in schools
- forming partnerships with businesses and community organizations;
- the implementation of older students' transition plans;

The centers will also:

- identify and broker public and private funding
- create regional coordination systems for social services which impact children and families, and connect schools and teachers with these services;
- prepare visiting teams to provide assistance and feedback, and coordinate the formation of these teams;
- create school-to-school networks;
- serve as clearinghouses for ideas, strategies, community-as-a-classroom projects, and educational research and information.

In order to ensure that all schools are striving to help students reach the learning results, a system of rewards and sanctions will be developed during the next two years.

**4. Schools and communities must have equitable, adequate and predictable resources and technical support if they are to be held accountable for student progress toward the learning results. (Equitable Resources)**

Actions: As recommended by the School Funding Task Force, "essential programs and services will be defined for school funding purposes. Local school districts will identify what portion of the total school budget will be allocated to social services in order to determine equitable pupil funding for all other essential school programs. The legislature will establish predictable funding levels by March 1st for the subsequent biennium.

**5. Investment in high quality, meaningful educator development is required at all levels of the education system. (Educator Development)**

Actions: Resources equivalent to a minimum of 5% of each school district's personnel budget will be allocated to educator development. The focus of all educator development activities will be on helping students reach the learning results and on

continuous learning about teaching as a profession. Educator development will include adequate time for teachers and administrators to: develop materials; explore new strategies and approaches; locate needed resources; use appropriate technology; arrange student learning experiences; develop student assessment tools; meet with students, parents and other educators. Certification of Maine's newest educators will be performance based. Prospective teachers enrolled in the state's pre-service education programs will learn curriculum, assessment and instruction practices which lead to student achievement of the learning results.

**6. All stakeholder groups must learn to work together to help all students reach the learning results. (Community Involvement)**

Actions: Each school will adopt a site-based decision making approach to planning, assessment and evaluation which involves all community stakeholders. Employers and other community stakeholders will reinforce student achievement of the learning results by: providing learning opportunities in the community and the workplace; supporting school-to-work transition plans for students; developing and expanding school volunteer programs to include all community stakeholders, especially senior citizens; and creating employee volunteer programs which allow employees to volunteer.

## Implementing the Plan

During the next 18 months, the Task Force will work with the Department of Education and the State Board of Education to oversee the development of learning results. The process will involve thousands of educators, parents, students and Maine citizens and will be based on Maine's Common Core of Learning. Once the learning results have been developed, the Task Force's plan for education in Maine will be the vehicle for helping local schools redesign education so that all students have an equal opportunity to achieve the results. During the same period, the support system outlined in the Task Force's plan will be developed. The Task Force will continue as a standing body during this two-year development process, providing oversight and ensuring continuity among the components of the plan. It will report regularly to the State Board of Education, which has ultimate responsibility for monitoring the entire process.

Following the design of the learning results and implementation of the support structures necessary to help schools integrate them locally, a continuous evaluation process will be instituted among all organizations responsible for helping children reach the learning results. As assessment information at both the state and local levels is collected, all aspects of the education system will be continuously examined. It is expected that both the learning results themselves and elements of the support system will change as a result of continuous evaluation.

The Task Force on Learning Results and the State Board of Education need additional support in order to continue the work required by the Act. The section of the statute which prohibits general fund expenditures must be repealed and general funds appropriated in order to support the broad-based collaborative process the Task Force will use to develop the learning results. The Governor will submit a bill to support the implementation of the next steps in the Task Force's plan.

# **The Task Force on Learning Results**

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especially Heidi McGinley and Mary Majorowicz  
University of Maine

# **Action Plan**



### **Theme #1: High Expectations & High Standards Based on Common Core of Learning**

**Goal I. Implement a broad-based collaborative process to develop learning results and performance standards, with a goal of achieving shared agreement concerning high expectations for public school students.**

Action Steps:		Responsible	Time to
#	Description	Stakeholders	Complete
1	With assistance from DOE and pilot project school districts, the Task Force will adopt a format and framework which describes learning results and standards by disciplines and across disciplines.	Task Force	6/94
2	The Task Force will develop a list of essential learning results. To do so, the TF will build upon the work of the DOE, the Common Core and Maine schools, and it will enlist the participation of a broadly diverse representation of educational constituents.	Task Force, DOE	12/94
3	The DOE will be charged to convene and guide broadly representative groups to designate academic content standards for each discipline.	DOE	6/95
4	Following that initial work (steps 2 & 3), the DOE will convene and guide a group of Maine educators and citizens to identify the major <u>integrated</u> learning results and standards, and to ascertain the adequacy of the MEAs and other assessment means to evaluate these integrated learning results and standards.	DOE	12/95
5	The DOE will establish field-based teams charged with annual comprehensive review of the learning results, standards and MEAs. DOE consultants will provide guidance. The purpose of annual review is to insure that high expectations and rigor are maintained.	DOE	

**Goal II. Develop local implementation of standards, including strategies and responsibility for implementation of standards.**

Action Steps:		Responsible	Time to
#	Description	Stakeholders	Complete
1	Each LEA will develop a local plan to implement instructional practices, curriculum design, and a comprehensive system of assessment with the goal of insuring that learning results and standards will be achieved.	State Supt of Education & LEAs	
2	The DOE will provide technical assistance to school units to assist them in achieving step 1.	DOE	

## **Theme #2: LEARNER-CENTERED EDUCATION**

**Goal I. Our schools and communities will demonstrate the belief that all children can learn and achieve results which reflect our high expectations & high standards.**

Action Steps:		Responsible	Time to
#	Description	Stakeholders	Complete
1	Each community will have a <i>dialogue</i> about the learning results to discuss ways by which all of its students can succeed.	LEA	1995-1997
2	Each school board will establish graduation requirements that include mastery of the learning results.	School Boards	9/01/97
3	Each community will provide training and coordinate all existing resources in order to assure readiness of all children to begin school.	Community agencies, Schools, Businesses & State departments	

**Goal II. Learning will be personalized so that each student will demonstrate to a high standard mastery of Maine's established learning results before graduation.**

Action Steps:		Responsible	Time to
#	Description	Stakeholders	Complete
1	Planning teams composed of parents, teachers and students will develop and monitor a personal learning results plan for each student from school entrance through initial mastery of learning results. The plan must include periodic assessment means to provide ongoing evaluation of the student's progress & achievements.	Parents, Teachers & Students	1995-1998
2	The DOE will establish a consortia of regional schools to develop a pilot process for assessment of student achievement of initial mastery of learning results.	DOE	1995-1998

**Goal III. Each school will have a system in place to provide each student with a personalized learning plan for the transition period between initial mastery of Maine's learning results and exit from high school.**

Action Steps:		Responsible	Time to
#	Description	Stakeholders	Complete
1	A formalized assessment procedure to evaluate each student's initial mastery of learning results will be developed and implemented for Maine's schools. [See Theme #3, Assessment & Accountability]	Task Force, State Board Legislature, DOE, LEAs, Higher Educ et al.	9/1/98
2	Planning teams (per Goal II, step 1) will further provide a personalized transition plan for student learning from completion of initial mastery until exit from HS at graduation.	Parents, Teachers & Students	9/1/98

### **Theme #3: ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Goal I. Students must have access to a rich variety of assessment methods (e.g. portfolio, MEA, exit exhibitions) by which they can demonstrate progress toward achievement of the learning results. These methods must be developed.**

Action Steps:		Responsible	Time to
#	Description	Stakeholders	Complete
1	The DOE will oversee the integration of content standards within its ongoing revisions & development of the MEAs and other assessment methods in order to assess students' achievement of learning results.	DOE	1998
2	DOE will provide technical assistance to LEAs in order to create and/or improve local assessment methods.	DOE	1996
3	DOE will create Regional Resource Centers throughout the state to provide local access to technical assistance.	DOE	1998

**Goal II. School units' progress toward achievement of the learning results will be assessed periodically by MEA, by visiting teams and through periodic self-evaluation by each school unit with community participation.**

Action Steps:		Responsible	Time to
#	Description	Stakeholders	Complete
1	Technical assistance, summer institutes, etc. will be made available to schools. LEAs in each region will be encouraged to form networks to share their progress.	DOE, university system & professional org.	Ongoing
2	Visiting teams of 3-5 educators will be formed to provide a resource for the implementation of each school unit's comprehensive plan (Theme 1, goal II). Team members will be selected from a pool of trained educators.	DOE	1998

**Goal III. Stakeholders will have increased responsibility to help students and schools to achieve the learning results; they will receive training to enhance their readiness for assuming this responsibility.**

Action Steps:		Responsible	Time to
#	Description	Stakeholders	Complete
1	The DOE will take action to publicize widely current collaboration models.	DOE	1995
2	State resources for child services will be coordinated to eliminate barriers which prevent delivery of unified, comprehensive services at the community level.	Governor and State Agencies	1998

**Goal IV. Each school unit's progress toward achievement of the learning results will be facilitated by a system of recognition, supplemental technical assistance and, if necessary, sanctions.**

Action Steps:		Responsible	Time to
#	Description	Stakeholders	Complete
1	School units will publicize their progress toward achievement of the learning results.	LEAs	1996



- |   |   |             |      |
|---|---|-------------|------|
| 2 | School units which make outstanding progress toward meeting the learning results will be publicly recognized and rewarded.  | State Board | 1996 |
| 3 | School units that do not demonstrate adequate progress toward achieving the learning results will be provided with supplemental resources and technical assistance. | DOE         | 1996 |
| 4 | The State Board of Education will develop the means to establish appropriate rewards and sanctions for schools vis-à-vis achievement of the learning results.       | State Board | 1997 |
| 5 | The DOE will re-evaluate the relevance of the existing school approval plan process vis-à-vis this goal.  | DOE         | 1998 |

**Theme #4: EQUITABLE, ADEQUATE, PREDICTABLE RESOURCES**

**Goal 1. For all children in all communities of Maine, adequate and predictable resources will be invested to permit each child equal access to essential programs and services, and equal opportunity to achieve the learning results.**

Action Steps:		Responsible	Time to
#	Description	Stakeholders	Complete
1	<i>"Essential programs and services"</i> will be defined for school funding purposes in order to determine each LEA's appropriate level of resources as recommended by the School Funding Task Force.	State Board	
2	The State Legislature must provide sufficient funds to assure an appropriate education for all children.	State Legislature	
3	The State Legislature must establish predictable funding levels by March 1st for the subsequent biennium in order to permit local communities and LEAs to complete long-term planning.	State Legislature	
4	The DOE must identify what portion of the total school budget will be allocated to social services in each LEA in order to determine equitable pupil funding for all other essential school programs.	DOE	

#### Theme #5: EDUCATOR DEVELOPMENT

**Goal I. Resources equivalent to a minimum of 5% of each school district's personnel budget (salaries & benefits) will be allocated to professional development, including adequate training days for each educator.**

Action #	Description	Responsible Stakeholder	Time to Complete
1	Each LEA will establish a planning committee [for relevant professional development for personnel in schools] to determine the necessary resources to implement and evaluate in-service educator development which is intended to promote students' mastery of the learning results.	LEAs and Higher Education	1995-1998
2	Each LEA Planning Committee will develop budgets for educator development activities. Budgets will include local, federal, grant/foundation and In-kind support for annual and long-term staff development.	LEAs, Higher Education and Business	1995-1998
3	Staff development opportunities will be arranged such that students' programs are not interrupted.	LEAs	1995-1998
4	Staff development will focus on helping students meet the goals of their personalized learning plans and will uphold teaching as a reflective practice.		

**Goal II. Staff development must include training for the use of new technologies, and must incorporate information resources & skills into the curriculum.**

Action Steps #	Description	Responsible Stakeholders	Time to Complete
1	Each LEA will identify training facilities available to be used for staff development, particularly facilities for technology and information resources and skills.	LEA and community orgs i.e. Chamber of Commerce, churches and businesses	1995
2	A coalition of business people and educators must be developed to identify and plan for the application of technology tools for schools.	DOE, Cable operators, Ed Network of ME, ME Center Tele Co, LEAs & Higher Ed	
3	Every school district will have access to technological consultative expertise for acquisitions & maintenance and to achieve effective and efficient use of technologies.	DOE, Higher Ed, Partnerships i.e. Southern ME, ME Center, other professional orgs.	1995
4	The State of Maine will communicate to LEAs through the use of technologies.	State Agencies, LEAs	1998
5	Each educator will have access to computers, computer networks and other computer-based info.	LEAs, State of ME	1998

**Goal III. Maine's newest educators will demonstrate a high level of scholarship in their areas of study upon completion of their educator prep program, and will develop and demonstrate expertise as educators by means of a field-based professional development system within the State's public schools.**

Action Steps:		Responsible	Time to
#	Description	Stakeholders	Complete
1	Each new teacher must demonstrate teaching ability or must have a minimum of one year field-based experience in primary or secondary school.	State Board DOE, Teacher prep programs	
2	Certification for Maine's newest educators will be performance-based.	as above	
3	Maine's educator pre-service program supports a system based on personalized learning and the achievement by all students of the learning results.	as above	
4	Pre-service training must include familiarity with information skills & resources so that these can enrich students' learning.	as above	

**Theme #6: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

**Goal I. Each school unit will adopt a site-based decision making approach that includes all community stakeholders.**

Action Steps:		Responsible	Time to
#	Description	Stakeholders	Complete
1	Each LEA will establish a forum for <u>all</u> community stakeholders to explore continuous improvement toward student achievement of the learning results. Progress on this activity will be included in the periodic assessment (Theme #3, Goal II)	LEA	1995
2	The State Board will create a statewide stakeholder forum as a model to local school units.	State Board	By 12/94
3	Each LEA will regularly evaluate and present evidence of the efficacy of its site-based decision making approach.	LEA	1998

**Goal II. Employers, professional people and other community stakeholders will be expected to reinforce in students their need to achieve the learning results.**

Action Steps:		Responsible	Time to
#	Description	Stakeholders	Complete
1	Employers will cooperate with schools to provide learning opportunities in the workplace.		Ongoing
2	Employers will develop communication means to make students and guidance counselors aware of the importance of achievement of the learning results.		Ongoing
3	TV stations will develop and contribute public service spots about the value of education and the relevance of the learning results to success in the workplace.		Ongoing
4	Employers and community stakeholders will support and expand school-to-work transition programs such as Youth Apprenticeship.		Ongoing

**Goal III. Volunteerism must be encouraged at state and school unit levels and must promote the participation of senior citizens.**

Action Steps:		Responsible	Time to
#	Description	Stakeholders	Complete
1	School units will develop active participatory roles for senior citizens. Progress in this effort will be addressed in periodic assessment (Theme 3, Goal II)		
2	School unit volunteer programs will include and reach out to all stakeholders.		
3	Employers will be encouraged to permit employees at least two hours per month of paid leave to volunteer for school support activities.		
4	Regional volunteer coordinators positions will be included at the Regional Resource Centers.		

# Glossary

**Common Core of Learning** -- Developed by a 36 member Commission in 1989-90, the Common Core is a statement of what Maine students should know and be able to do by the time they leave school. Over 40,000 copies have been distributed in Maine, to eight countries and to 160 school districts in 38 states.

**Learning Results** -- A comprehensive list of what students should know and be able to do by the time they leave school. Learning results, as defined by the Task Force, will provide a more detailed picture of knowledge and skills than does the Common Core of Learning. However, the learning results will use the Common Core of Learning as the foundation for development.

**Results-based Learning** -- Results-based learning is built on the idea that all students should be expected to work toward high levels of achievement. The idea is that it is possible to identify common ends for all students, but that in order for students to reach them, uncommon means are necessary. Traditional practices assume that all students learn at the same rate and in the same ways and that the number of hours and the number of courses students take are meaningful indicators of learning.

**Assessment** -- Assessment refers to the tools used to measure student achievement. Standardized tests are one form of assessment which can provide information about the level of knowledge students have acquired. In order to measure students' ability to use and connect knowledge, other types of assessment are developed at both the state and local levels. These assessment tools may include collections of a student's best work over time in one academic area or across many areas (portfolios), or performances and demonstrations which allow students to fully display their skills in several areas.

**Education Stakeholders** -- The beneficiaries of public education. Stakeholder groups include students, teachers, administrators, parents, senior citizens, businesses, non-profit organizations involving and serving youth, professional education associations, unions, taxpayers without children in school, local public officials, religious institutions, and state-level elected officials and policy makers.