Maine's Education Crisis

- Our schools are struggling with a lack of fully prepared classroom teachers, especially in the subject areas of math, science, modern languages, and special education.
- Because of these conditions, this year Maine schools have over 1,800 classroom teachers who hold only “conditional certification.” Those individuals lack the required professional credentials and preparation for full “permanent” certification.

The Case for New Approaches

- The Maine Legislature is considering a proposal to streamline the process that allows college-educated individuals to change careers and enter teaching.
- Research documents a strong correlation between student achievement and the number of teachers with a Master's degree. The University of Maine is committed to providing teachers with broader, statewide access to graduate-level education, but needs additional resources to do so.
- More of Maine's teachers would undertake the rigorous candidacy process for the prestigious National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification if more local and regional supports were put in place to assist them through the process.
- A number of already-funded multi-year, statewide initiatives are underway in Maine, such as a Gates Foundation high school reform project, an NSF-Maine Math and Science Teacher Education Collaborative, a Center for Research in Math and Science Education, the Maine Learning Technology Initiative, and a federally sponsored Transition to Teaching project. Coordinating these activities, locally and regionally, can improve matching professional development opportunities with the most pressing needs.

Regional Teacher Development Centers

How the RTDCs Would Work

- University of Maine System campuses, the state's school superintendents and the schools they represent, and the Maine Department of Education would create eight teacher development centers throughout the state. The RTDCs would work with each of the existing regional school superintendents groups to create a board of directors that will oversee the center in their respective regions. (See Figure 1)
- The RTDC plan does not require building or acquiring any new facilities. The regional centers would be housed in available space in a school or other facility located centrally in the region.
- Existing formal partnerships between a University System campus and regional schools will be considered for key roles within the RTDCs.

Scope of Services

- The services of each Regional Teacher Development Center would be developed sequentially, starting with alternative certification and continuing through induction support, professional development, graduate degree offerings, and leadership support for certification under the auspices of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. (See Figure 2)

The Benefits of a Regional Approach

- The RTDC plan is consistent with evolving State public policy calling for more regional collaboration of services. The anticipated benefits include improved services and greater efficiencies.
- The RTDC concept creates an enduring infrastructure for future partnership work between Maine's public universities and its PreK-12 schools.
- Current school initiatives tend to focus on broad-based school district needs rather than on the individual teacher's specific professional development needs. Though the RTDC initiative will exist within the context of school improvement initiatives underway in schools, it will focus on assisting the individual teacher and supporting individual teacher development.

Funding

- The annual cost of each center would range from $175,000 (the Aroostook RTDC) to $350,000 (the Cumberland RTDC). Cost estimates are related to the number of teachers employed in the region. (See Figure 1)
- Federal grants, foundation awards, and other external funding sources are being sought to help develop the RTDCs and to support personnel and operational costs.
- The Chancellor of the University of Maine System has committed to providing foundational funding for the initiative. In addition, the University of Maine has received a five-year grant under the Title II Transitions to Teaching program that can assist in supporting a small portion of the development costs of the RTDCs.
- Local school systems are expected to provide support for their participating teachers. (See Figure 3)
Sustaining the Partnership

- The University of Maine System, the Maine Department of Education, and the participating school districts will be expected to share the costs of sustaining the RTDC functions. The combined contributions from these three partners will assure the continuation of these regional services once they complete the development phase. (See Figure 5)

- The University of Maine System, through its Public Education Partnership Action Plan,* has committed to providing greater statewide access to graduate programs for teachers, as well as assisting with induction and alternative certification programs.

*The RTDC initiative is the first step in implementing the University System’s Public Education Partnership Action Plan. For more information on that plan, visit www.maine.edu or call 973-3240.

New federal funding provided to Maine school districts under the No Child Left Behind Act can be pooled regionally to contribute toward the continuing support for the RTDCs.

Maine’s proposed Essential Programs and Services funding model, an alternative framework for funding schools, includes designated funding for professional development as part of the legislative appropriation annually, a portion of which could be dedicated to the support of these regional services.

The University of Maine System is the largest educational entity in Maine, with over 34,000 students enrolled in credit-bearing courses at its seven universities, 10 University College outreach centers, and over 100 community distance education sites. Each year the University System awards over 4,600 two-year, four-year, and graduate degrees.

University of Maine System  •  107 Maine Avenue  •  Bangor, ME 04401  •  207-973-3240

www.maine.edu