

State of Maine  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Testimony of Beth Lambert, Coordinator of Secondary Education and Integrated Instruction

In Support of: L.D. 283

Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 132: Learning Results: Parameters for Essential Instruction, a Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Education (EMERGENCY)

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Sponsored by: Representative Kornfield

Date: February 14, 2019

Senator Millett, Representative Kornfield and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Beth Lambert, and I am here today representing the Department speaking in support of L.D. 283 Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 132: Learning Results: Parameters for Essential Instruction, a Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Education.

Title 20-A, M.R.S., §6209 gives the Department the authority to establish and implement a comprehensive, statewide System of Learning Results. These standards serve as guideposts that define what knowledge and skills students must achieve to be prepared for school, work, and life after high school graduation. Standards set clear and measurable goals. A common misunderstanding surrounding standards is the perception that standards serve as the curriculum or course of study in a particular subject. Rather, standards inform educators about what the outcomes of a course of study should be. Section 6209, subsection 4, requires the Department to conduct a review of the standards on a five-year cycle to ensure that these outcomes remain relevant and based on best practice. L.D. 283 is the first review in the five-year cycle and revises the social studies and science and technology standards.

The Maine Learning Results were last reviewed in 2007. During the fall of the 2017, the Department began a review of the Maine Learning Results. As part of this revision, the Department re-designed the format of the Maine Learning Results to create consistency across all content areas and create a common format unique to Maine. This common format is designed to make it easier for educators to interpret standards as they shift from one content area to another. This new structure divides each content area's standards into three stages of development: childhood, pre-adolescence, and adolescence and further identifies associated grade levels: elementary, middle, and high school. Standardized language has been incorporated to ensure consistency across content areas. These descriptors and their corresponding definitions are:

Strand: A body of knowledge in a content area identified by a simple title.

Standard: Enduring understandings and skills that students can apply and transfer to contexts that are new to the student.

Performance Expectation: Building blocks to the standard and measurable articulations of what the student understands and can do.

Once the Department's team of content specialists redesigned the format, the Department began a 14-step process to review and revise the social studies and science and technology standards. The standards revision process that began in the fall 2017 is a thorough process with multiple opportunities for stakeholder voice. This process includes public input in addition to the convening of a Steering Committee, made up of leaders in their fields representing the geographic diversity of Maine, administrators, and higher education faculty, and Writing Teams composed of Maine educators. The process started with a public comment period on the existing standards. These comments informed the work of the Steering Committee who assisted in determining elements and standards to be revised. Writing Teams of retired and practicing Maine educators utilized this blueprint to inform their work in drafting the revised standards. All educators in the fields of science and social studies were invited to participate on the writing teams and every educator who expressed an interest in participating, 62 in total, were included in the work. Once the Writing Team completed the draft, the revised standards were once again opened for public comment. The Department has attached the 14-step process to this testimony.

Some key highlights of the social studies standards revision process include:

- An emphasis on the guiding principles and their connections to the essential skills and practices of social studies was specifically included during the social studies standards revision and has been achieved by highlighting the guiding principles within the introduction and through embedding examples of what this looks like throughout the performance expectations.
- An increased focus on personal finance in the economics strand including adding "personal finance" to the strand title and the creation of a new subsection that better reflects the importance of personal finance. Through the years, the Department has heard from not only teachers, but also from legislators, about the importance of strengthening the teaching of personal finance. There is a growing call to help ensure that our youngest citizens have an understanding of how to approach their finances even before they leave high school. The Department has worked to ensure that the revised standards are explicit in the teaching of personal finance.
- An increased focus to ensure the teaching of Maine Native Americans occurs more authentically rather than as an add-on to existing performance expectations. The Department continues to see changing dynamics related to cultural awareness of minority groups around the country and in Maine this is probably most true regarding the teaching of Maine Native Americans.
- A clearer progression of rigorous expectations for students as they progress through their educational career.

- Updated language that reflects changes in technology and teacher capacity.

Some key highlights of the Science standards review include:

- Based on 83% of the over 100 public comments from Maine educators and science experts, the science and technology standards revision adapted the Next Generation Science Standards© (NGSS) to Maine’s standards format.
- The revised standards utilize a three-dimensional approach to science incorporating the actual “doing” of science.
- The revised standards build coherent learning progressions and provide students multiple opportunities over various grade bands to develop a deeper understanding of each of the three dimensions of science.
- Students also engage with real-world problems and design solutions. This three-dimensional approach to science promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills which are vital to student’s post-secondary success.
- To help make the standards relevant and meaningful to Maine students, the Writing Team provided examples from our Maine economy, ecosystem, and lifestyle wherever possible.
- And finally, the name of the standards has been updated to science and engineering standards to reflect the new three-dimensional approach.

It is important to note that, in the Department’s review and revision of the current science standards, the Department opted to adapt the standards of the Next Generation Science Standards. All standards and performance expectations between the Department’s version and the Next Generation Science Standards are identical. During the public comment period, we did receive requests to include other supporting elements of the Next Generation Science Standards in this document such as the “foundation boxes, assessment boundaries and appendices”; however, in order to keep the standards format streamlined and consistent, the standards and performance expectations are included. The Department will include foundation boxes, assessment boundaries and appendices as supporting materials and will make them easily accessible on the Department website.

L.D. 283 is the result of a thorough process that began in the fall of 2017 with multiple opportunities for stakeholder voice, and is the result of expertise from Department staff, representatives from higher education, district and building administration, as well as dozens of Maine educators. The Department believes deeply in the professional judgement and experience of Maine’s educators, and we urge you to support their voices going forward in the development of standards for the State of Maine.

For these reasons, the Maine Department of Education supports L.D. 283: Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 132: Learning Results: Parameters for Essential Instruction, a Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Education (EMERGENCY), that was developed by teachers in the schools and districts you represent. I would be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have, and I will be available for work sessions on this bill.

Standards review process: *Each year the Standards and Instructional Support Team will begin a review and revision of selected content area standards in the Maine Learning Results.*

Step #1 (fall): Commissioner gives approval to begin standards review process.

Step #2 (fall): Public comment period and hearings on current content standards.

Step #3 (winter): Steering Committee: A committee of content area experts who represent the cultural diversity found in Maine and a range of viewpoints as to the content of the standards is formed and tasked to:

- review all comments submitted during the initial public comment period;
- develop a blueprint for the revision of the state standards in their assigned content area;
- address and advise the writing committees when deadlocks occur; and
- determine when the writing teams have completed their work.

*The Maine State Board of Education will appoint one member of the Steering Committee*

Step #4 (winter): Maine DOE approval of the Steering Committee's recommended blueprint for standards revision.

Step #5 (summer): Writing Team: Teams of pk-12 teachers who represent Maine's cultural and geographical diversity are formed and broken into smaller groups, facilitated by the Maine DOE content specialist, to revise content standards based on the blueprint developed by the steering committee and approved by the Maine DOE.

Step#6 (summer): The Writing Team submits draft of proposed changes to the Steering Committee.

Step #7 (summer): The Steering Committee submits draft proposal to the Maine Department of Education.

Step #8 (fall): The Maine DOE does a final review of standards revision.

Step #9 (fall): The Maine DOE files the standards revision document as proposed rules with the Secretary of State.

Step #10 (fall): Maine DOE will hold a public hearing followed by a public comment period on the proposed rules.

Step #11 (winter): Maine DOE prepares and submits provisional adoption of standards revision to the Secretary of State and Legislative Council. The Legislature, once in session in January, will refer the rule as a legislative document to The Education and Cultural Affairs Committee where they will be given an LD Resolve to revise during session.

Step #12 (winter): The Education and Cultural Affairs Committee will hold a public hearing and work session before sending the proposed rules on to the full legislature.

Step #13 (spring): Final adoption of revised standards by the Maine State Legislature.

Step #14 (spring): The Maine Department of Education will prepare the standards regulation for final adoption.