

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-FIVE

S.P. 627 - L.D. 1543

An Act to Establish the Maine Green Schools Network

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA c. 335 is enacted to read:

CHAPTER 335

MAINE GREEN SCHOOLS NETWORK

§9931. Definitions

As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

1. Green school. "Green school" means a public school that shows exemplary progress in the following areas:

A. Supporting the work of school administrative units to increase efficiencies in and reduce carbon emissions from buildings, energy systems, transportation, food use and landscaping;

B. Constructing an engaging support system and framework for environmental literacy through networking and sharing curriculum units, projects and outdoor activities between educators in this State;

C. Establishing a continuous pathway for career exploration and skill development in climate-ready fields; and

D. Building strong and lasting leadership within youth, educators, administrators and community members to support the initiatives described in this subsection.

For the purposes of this subsection, "climate-ready fields" means occupational fields related to climate or clean energy.

2. Network. "Network" means the Maine Green Schools Network.

3. Student. "Student" means an individual enrolled in prekindergarten to grade 12 in a public school or school administrative unit.

§9932. Network established; administration; composition

The Maine Green Schools Network is established within the department to support environmental education and initiatives within public schools and school administrative units as described in section 9933.

1. Administration. The department shall administer the network. In administering the network, the department may collaborate with the following entities:

A. A nonprofit organization in this State that supports environmental awareness, accountability and action through fostering youth leadership, supporting educators, prioritizing research and evaluation, shifting culture and advancing transformational policy;

B. Other state agencies;

C. Tribal governments; and

D. Nonprofit organizations that support environmental, outdoor and climate learning programs, traditional ecological knowledge, local procurement and other experiential learning initiatives in public schools and school administrative units.

2. Network composition. The department may, subject to availability of funds, invite the following individuals to participate in the network:

A. The director of green schools within the department;

B. The climate education specialist within the department;

C. The Wabanaki studies specialist within the department;

D. One educator with experience teaching in a public elementary or secondary school in the State;

E. One school administrator employed at a school administrative unit in the State;

F. A member of the public;

G. A representative from a climate education nonprofit organization;

H. A representative from a career and technical school;

I. A representative from the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future with expertise in youth engagement or climate education; and

J. A representative from the Department of Environmental Protection.

The department may invite additional individuals or organizations to participate in the network.

§9933. Network duties and other activities

The following provisions govern the network's duties and authority under this chapter.

1. Duties. The network shall:

A. Assist with transportation of students to and from environmentally focused activities;

B. Support school projects that incorporate traditional ecological knowledge and best practices for one or more of the following:

- (1) Waste management and recycling;
- (2) Energy conservation;
- (3) Water conservation;
- (4) Schoolyard habitats;
- (5) Outdoor classrooms;
- (6) Transportation; and
- (7) Health;

C. Support professional development;

D. Increase the number of educators in the State who provide training to support the development of green schools and assist schools with becoming green schools;

E. Develop common resources, trainings and metrics to support educators; and

F. Create a statewide community of practice among educators and administrators for the purpose of sharing curricula, instruction and assessment practices related to community resilience and changing ecosystems.

2. Department authorized to develop grant program. The department may develop a program to offer grants through the network to support initiatives consistent with the network's duties as described in subsection 1. The department may receive support for any grant program developed by the department consistent with this subsection from a nonprofit organization in the State that supports environmental awareness, accountability and action through fostering youth leadership, supporting educators, prioritizing research and evaluation, shifting culture and advancing transformational policy. Any revenues received by and due to the department from all sources other than state appropriation must be retained by the department and must be used in such a manner as the department determines consistent with this chapter or as otherwise provided by law or by the terms and conditions of any gift, grant, devise, bequest, trust or security document.

Sec. 2. Maine Green Schools Network to report to Legislature in 2026. The Maine Green Schools Network, established in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 9932 shall issue a report, including any recommendations developed by the network for new legislation necessary to achieve the goals of the network to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education matters by November 4, 2026. The report must contain an update on the status of the following:

- 1. The schools represented within the network;
- 2. The schools supported by the network; and
- 3. The number of counties participating in the network.

The committee may report out legislation based on the report to the 133rd Legislature in 2027.