

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

Please consider this a sincere testimony absent of hyperbole.

I have been a public school educator for thirty-five years, including roles as classroom teacher, coach, advisor and administrator. In 2018 I was lucky enough to be recognized as New Hampshire Principal of the Year. After serving as Principal of Marshwood High School, South Berwick, for the last four years, I assumed the role of Extended Learning Coordinator.

During my career, I have experienced numerous initiatives, crafted countless strategic plans, reviewed an infinite number of learning platforms and developed an indefinite amount of curricula. I offer this as context from which I submit the following.

Extended Learning Opportunities (ELOs) provide the most engaging, relevant, hopeful learning experiences to help students become college, career, life ready. Extended Learning Opportunities authenticate classroom learning, extending to an experience-often community based-where students apply their knowledge. This formula provides the most dimensional, relevant learning for students as they exhibit not only *what they know* but *what they can do*. By coordinating with community partners, the learning experience becomes exponential-exposing students to situations we could never provide in the classroom.

Whether inspired by the post-pandemic learning (and social emotional) needs of students or whether you have believed for years that ELOs are invaluable, the time has come to make ELOs a learning pathway in Maine. Frankly, it would be negligent not to. Unlike so many of the other initiatives I have experienced, this is not a vogue, fleeting trend that will dissipate after energy and resources have been committed.

All stakeholders-parents, community members, business owners, teachers, administrators and most importantly, students are supportive of ELOs. Few educational frameworks are so universally accepted. Our students need more meaningful, relevant learning experiences to prepare them for a life and world that is much different than even ten years ago. Our businesses need support in developing a productive workforce. Schools are anxious to supply opportunities that might only be available by partnering with local businesses. And, the overall health and vibrancy of the community is enhanced when the school is an integral part of the fabric.

In considering identifying ELOs as a learning pathway, please know that there are numerous resources and amazing educators ready and willing to support schools/communities in developing their programs. As mentioned, I have been

around long enough to have seen innovative ideas fail when the spirit was willing but obstacles could not be overcome. I have never experienced a more generous, thoughtful, effective learning organization than the ELO community.

Therefore, because extended learning opportunities are engaging, relevant learning experiences, because these experiences are universally supported by all stakeholders, because program development can be supported, please identify extended learning opportunities as a learning pathway.

I welcome any further dialogue and offer my assistance with any additional efforts being made in this area.

Thank you so much for all you do for Maine and its students.

Sincerely,
Rob Scully