

Good afternoon, Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Melissa Cilley and I am testifying this afternoon neither for or against L.D. 1332, An Act to Establish the Community Schools Success Fund to Ensure the Implementation and Success of Community School Programs. I represent the Coalition for Community Schools and very much appreciate this opportunity to share with you information and data related to the community schools framework, which is my purpose here today.

Let's start with a brief overview to ground us all in the community schools basics. First, as you all know, community schools are public schools. What makes them highly effective and unique to each community they serve is that they combine resources and people throughout that local community to expand learning opportunities and support for all students, *and for all educators*. This is important to highlight because nationwide, teachers and administrators want to work at community schools. Community Schools are learning hubs that unite families, educators, and community partners around a performance-oriented, highly localized strategy. The community school learning hub promotes practices that improve long-term life changes for *all* of today's students, from birth through graduation.

At the end of this testimony, I've shared with you some of the slides from a Coalition presentation created to raise money and awareness for the Maine community schools initiative. Already, we have funders interested in this work and the way that Maine communities are implementing the community school framework. Part of the reason for their interest is the success of Maine's current community schools. As a quick example, behavior and chronic absenteeism are issues facing many Maine communities. As such, they are a focus for community schools where those issues were identified in their needs assessments. For example, one community school saw office-referred behavioral incidents decline over the 2023-24 school year from 33% to just 4% in their second grade, one of the grades heavily impacted by the pandemic. For the entire 2024-25 school year to date, there have been just 28 second grade incidents *total* at that same school. Just think for a moment what a difference that makes for the students in those classes and their teachers. Another Maine community school saw chronic absenteeism plummet from 22.2% in the 2022-23 school year, to 15.8% in 2023-24, and so far in 2024-25 just 13.6%. That's 69 more students attending school regularly since the implementation of the community school framework at that school.

Another place where community schools work is in out-of-school time care. Another bill is being heard today in the Health and Human Services Committee, L.D. 1389 also known as the BOOST bill (Building Opportunity for Out-Of-School Time). The beauty of the community school framework is that it works *with* other initiatives, like BOOST and First 10, on behalf of students, teachers, and families. Needs assessments for community schools often identify before and after school care as a top priority. Multiple Maine community schools have developed before and after care, plus multiple clubs, in response to their needs assessments. Those programs are full to capacity, often with a waiting list. Out-of-school time learning, like that in the BOOST bill, is one of the key practices of community schools. It will be important that the threshold for receiving OST funding through BOOST allows for local, grassroots organizations to participate because community schools partner with organizations of all shapes and sizes to meet the needs of students and families.

As the State of Maine continues to invest in fully implemented community schools through Title 20-A, Chapter 333, it is important to clarify what that investment is paying for and what it is not. All the funding through Chapter 267 goes directly to the Community Schools through the Maine DOE. This is incredible, appropriate, and critical support. Maine's investment, though, does not provide community schools across Maine with consistent ongoing support to maximize their success year after year. It does not help identify schools and communities that are already on the path to becoming fully implemented community schools, then assist them under Chapter 333. It does not help create partnerships across the State who will work with schools toward meeting the needs of students, or the capacity to develop those partnerships – work few school administrators have time to pursue. Currently, Maine's investment does not train in and around community schools in our communities, and there is no capacity to collect and analyze the data collected nationwide for community schools that will make Maine competitive for funding. Without additional, consistent support, current community schools are at risk and fewer schools who are on the path to becoming community schools will ever reach that destination.



# Maine Community Schools Statewide Resource Center

April, 2025



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- An introduction to Community Schools and historical context
- MCSS Resource Center overview
- Center objectives
- Intended impact
- Core components (not included)
- Proposed structure (not included)
- Summary

# An introduction to Full-Service Community Schools



Full-service community schools are public schools that combine resources and people throughout a local community to expand learning opportunities and support for all students, and for all educators\*.

They serve as learning hubs that:

- Unite families, educators, and community partners around a performance-oriented, highly localized strategy, and
- Promote practices that improve long-term life changes for *all* of today's students, from birth through graduation.

***In Maine, full-service community schools are governed by Title 20-A, Chapter 333, §§9921-9923.***

\*Defined by the National Coalition for Community Schools, the industry leader representing community schools in all 50 states.

Maine also has “Community School Districts” under Title 20-A, Chapter 105, §§1601-1654. This descriptor, often referred to as a CSD, references a type of SAU structure, like AOS or RSU. CSD schools are typically called “community schools,” meaning they serve more than one community. *The word “community” in a school’s name does not necessarily equate to being a full service community school under Title 20-A, Chapter 333. To distinguish in this presentation, we will reference community schools under Chapter 333 as “full-service community schools” or “FSCS.”*



# Maine's Full Service Community Schools (FSCS) (Title 20-A, §§9921-9923):

**employ these six key practices of full-service community schools (holistic, purposeful implementation of all six key practices is critical):**

**Powerful  
student &  
family  
engagement**

**Expanded &  
enriched  
learning**

**Shared  
leadership,  
power &  
voice**

**Integrated  
systems of  
support (e.g.  
health centers)**

**Rigorous  
community-  
connected  
classroom  
instruction**

**A culture of  
belonging**

*and*

**are recognized by the local school board as a Community School under Title 20-A, Chapter 333.**

**In Maine, there are also**

- **schools employing key practices, though not implementing the FSCS framework,**
- **schools that are on the path to implementation, though not yet in compliance with Chapter 333, and**
- **additional school leaders who are interested in implementing the FSCS framework unique to their community.**

Through Full-Service Community Schools, local communities and schools team up to focus on improving efficiencies of academic and non-academic resources, *effectively* accelerating student outcomes.

- There are more than 5,500 Full-Service Community Schools across the nation, including 6 in Maine and 7 additional schools on a Community Schools path through the First 10 model.
- Employing this highly localized, partnership framework is more important than ever because student needs have grown beyond what local schools can provide alone. In Maine,
  - MIYHS shows increasing mental health distress among middle and high school students, and
  - statewide, our teen suicide rate remains above the national average.
- Local communities have untapped resources that can help schools meet the learning and other needs of students, and give them the skills and inspiration to thrive.

# Full-Service Community Schools are cost-effective stewards of public and private funds, maximizing student support and delivery of services to meet student and community needs.

- Full-Service Community Schools are educationally effective, efficient, and promise returns on our investments for schools, students, and our communities.
  - One case study shows that each \$1 invested in a Community Schools Coordinator returns over \$7 in net benefits to a community.
  - A 2013 Children's Aid Society study showed an average social return on investment of \$12.55 for every dollar invested in community schools over a 3-year period.
- Full-Service Community Schools can increase funds and other resources for students by catalyzing public investment and combining funding and resources – mixing short- and long-term funding from multiple sources.



# Full-Service Community Schools authentically engage families, community organizations, and others to advance student learning and outcomes locally and individually.

- In partnership with school leaders, parents and communities have more input into the operation, direction, and outcomes of Full-Service Community Schools.
- Communities work together to find and use new and existing resources to support learning, and to address local issues in a local context.
- Full-Service Community Schools foster hyper-local decision-making between parents, communities, and educators, making it easier to meet the needs of each learner.
- Communities experience mutual benefit from community schools because diverse sectors work together, strengthening local economies and community engagement.

Full-Service Community Schools promote better educational outcomes.


Students are ready and able to focus when they are in the classroom, so teachers can teach and students can learn.




# Full-Service Community Schools Context in Maine



- In 2015, the Maine legislature passed Chapter 333, “Community Schools,” within Title 20-A, Education. The statute sets out the establishment and designation of a full-service community school.
- The Maine Coalition for Community Schools was formed in 2018, based on the framework provided by the Institute of Educational Leadership.
- Under Chapter 267, the Maine Department of Education is authorized to provide up to \$250,000 to develop and support community schools each year.

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- There are multiple pathways through which schools move toward implementation of the Full-Service Community School framework, including the First 10 model. (See slides 13 and 14)
  - Currently, there are 6 full-service community schools in Maine funded through Chapter 267, and 7 First 10 Community Schools funded through the Preschool Development Grant (PDG).

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- The Office of School and Student Supports (OSSS) at Maine DOE currently holds limited technical assistance and training for FSCS.
  - The Early Learning Team at Maine DOE currently supports First 10 Community Schools through the PDG by providing TA and coordinating with CS efforts in the OSSS.



# Timeline of Development

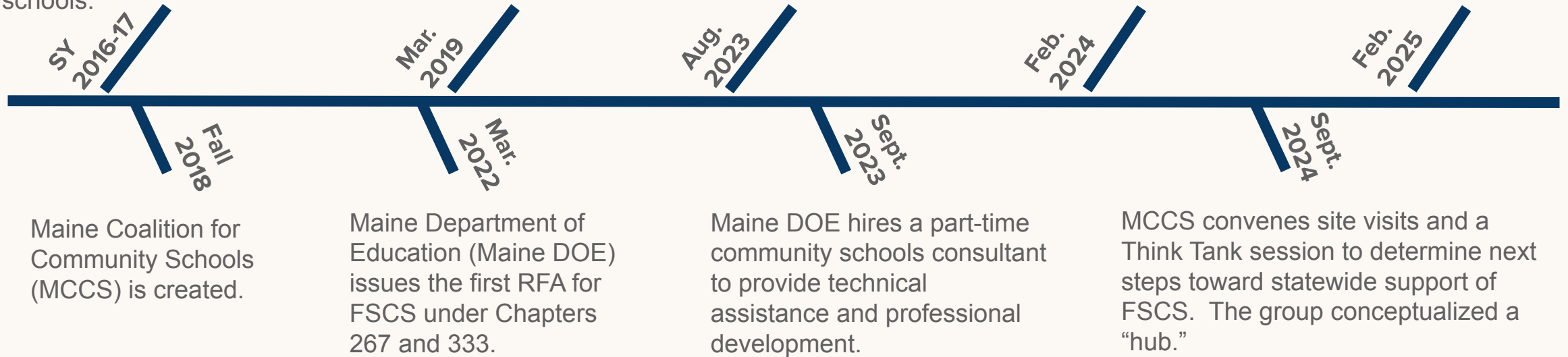
The Maine legislature allocates funding for a 5-year pilot project to support the implementation of full-service community schools.

The Maine legislature increased funding for FSCS through Ch. 333.

MCCS and Maine DOE host a Visioning Session with educators and other stakeholders.

MASN (Maine Afterschool Network) hires a consultant to assist in moving MCCS and statewide efforts forward.

MASN contributes to MCCS coordination by completing a concept plan for Maine Community Schools Statewide Resource Center.





# How do Full-Service Community Schools look in Maine?\*

A Community School framework is being implemented in two tribal schools in Maine, **Indian Island School** and **Sipayik Elementary School** at Pleasant Point. These schools are participating in the Tribal Communities In Schools program through a partnership with Communities in Schools and the National Indian Education Association. The Superintendent of Maine Indian Education identifies their shared vision to create “Communities Committed to Learning through Rigor, Relevancy, and Relationship,” bringing together all aspects of the school and seeing those functions as “interrelated and functioning for a singular purpose.”

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The new **Margaret Chase Smith Community School** in Skowhegan will be the first of its kind in Maine to serve children as young as 6 weeks and as old as 11 years in one facility. The Skowhegan community school is partnering with the Kennebec Valley Community Action Program, with whom they have partnered for 30 years, to provide early education head start and childcare for the youngest students. Students in the Somerset Career and Technical Center’s early education program, also housed at the school, will help staff the programs.



\*The pathway and plan for implementing the Community School framework is different for each school in each community; they address unique needs and assets.

# How do Full-Service Community Schools look in Maine?\*

The School Board for RSU 9 committed to supporting **Cape Cod Hill School** in New Sharon as a full-service community school under Maine law. The school implemented the First 10 and BARR programs as part of their CS framework, in response to local needs around attendance and parent engagement. Additionally, Cape Cod Hill operates their own before and after care programs, offers a health center, and collaboratively developed a ride-share system, all under the CS framework – because that's what their community needs and wants.

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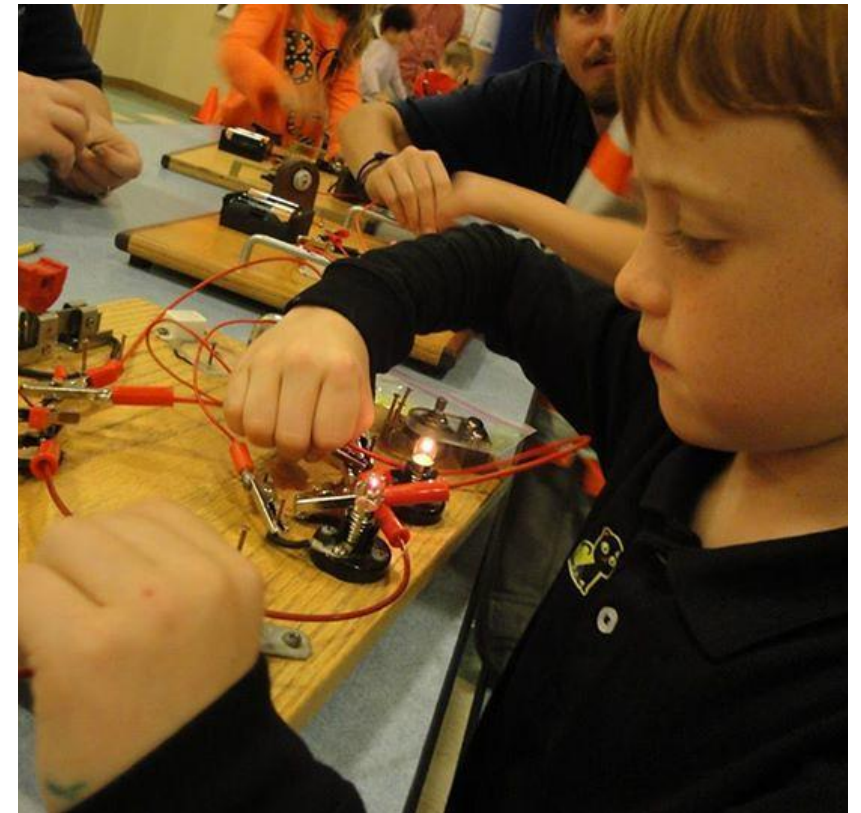
**Sanford Schools** are not yet full-service community schools under MSA Chapter 333, though they are implementing many of the key practices. The elementary school is a nationally recognized First 10 community school, responding to identified needs around pre-K transition. The First 10 Outreach Coordinator operates like a Community School Coordinator, with the CS framework as the umbrella for First 10 and other programs serving Sanford's unique community.



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# What is the purpose of creating a Statewide Resource Center?

The Maine Community Schools Statewide Resource Center will serve as the statewide backbone organization for the Maine community schools initiative.



# The vision



Statewide cohesion through an independent backbone organization, possibly known as the Maine Community Schools Statewide Resource Center (“Resource Center”), which serves as a hub focused on professional development, advocacy, community coordination, and partnership-building across Maine. The MCSS Resource Center has affirmative endorsement from State leadership to fulfill the whole child/community collaborative approach.\*

\*This language was developed during the collaborative Think Tank in September of 2024.



# Resource Center prospective mission



To grow the number of full-service community schools across Maine by supporting the existing cohort, maintaining a diverse network of partners to promote sustainability, increasing visibility, and clarifying pathways for schools to uniquely implement the community schools framework.

# Resource Center Objectives

- **IDENTIFY**, through outreach and community dialogue, schools and communities that want to adopt the full-service community school framework (including those already on a pathway like First 10 community schools).
- **BUILD** an active network of partners across the state invested in the success of Maine's full-service community schools; work with schools to engage those partners toward meeting the needs of students.
- **DELIVER** ongoing technical assistance to current community schools, and schools on the path of framework adoption/implementation.



# Resource Center Objectives (cont.)

- **COMMUNICATE** through diverse platforms to increase awareness around community schools and ensure all resources are accessible
- **TRAIN** through coaching, professional development, and community education
- **COLLECT AND ANALYZE** data and other metrics to support sustainable and diverse funding opportunities, including federal, state, business, and foundation funding

# Intended impact of the Resource Center:

- All students experience improved outcomes
- A sustainable home for statewide full-service community school support and development
- Cohesion of multiple approaches under an overarching framework – support of existing Maine initiatives (e.g. First 10 and Maine's Family Safety & Well Being Plan)



# Intended impact of the Resource Center (cont.):

- Regional networks of strategic partners to introduce and support partnerships at area full-service community schools
- Mutually beneficial relationships with universities and others to promote sustainability (e.g. research)
- Ongoing support for the existing FSCS cohort to ensure Maine's investment succeeds
- Overall increased awareness across Maine around FSCS



# Summary

**The goal of the Resource Center is to facilitate multi-source funding, support, communication, and coordination among and about Maine Full-Service Community Schools, their partners, and communities by:**

- providing cohesive support for current programs and initiatives
- leveraging the already-existing, diverse network in support of Full-Service Community Schools, while building an even larger network
- coordinating all efforts and experts to position our state and our communities for funding, while providing training and resources that promotes sustainability through braided and blended funding
- facilitating shared learning and support to ensure Full-Service Community Schools across Maine have the resources to succeed



# Questions/Contact

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