

State of Maine
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Testimony of Beth Lambert, Chief Teaching and Learning Officer

In Support of: L.D. 2182

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 Brennan

Date: February 8, 2024

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, 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. 2182, 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).

This rule revision is part of a periodic review of the Maine Learning Results as required under §6209, subsection 4. Per statute, the Department of Education (DOE) follows a scheduled, periodic review of the Maine Learning Results every 5 years. To stagger the implementation of the revised standards, the Department revises 2-3 content areas per year: social studies and science in year 1, life and career ready, English language arts, and mathematics in year 2, and health and physical education, visual and performing arts, and world language in year 3 of the cycle. The 5-year standards review cycle is part of a continuous improvement process and does not need to result in a major revision during each cycle. The current 5-year revision cycle began in 2023 with the science and social studies standards which were last reviewed and revised in 2018.

Maine's state education standards, the Maine Learning Results, serve as guideposts that define what knowledge and skills students must achieve to be prepared for school, work, and life after high school graduation. A common misconception surrounding the Maine Learning Results is the perception that the standards serve as the curriculum or course of study in a particular subject. As you know, our local school administrative units and school boards determine local curricula. The standards serve to inform our school administrators and teachers about what the outcomes of a course of study should be, as determined by their peers in the field. As such, the standards are organized by three stages of student development: childhood, pre-adolescence, and adolescence; and further identified by corresponding grade level: elementary, middle, and high school. Standardized language has been used throughout the Maine Learning Results to ensure consistency across the 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.

The standards review process for the science, technology, and engineering and social studies standards began in March of 2023 with a public comment period and a public hearing on the current science, technology, and engineering and social studies standards. After this initial public comment period, steering committees, made up of content area experts, were convened for each content area. These committees were charged with developing a blueprint for the revision process that would guide the writing team's revision. These blueprints consider the committee's own review of the existing standards, the comments received during the public comment period, and any relevant statute that has been passed since the last revision. The relevant statute for this revision was PL 2021 Chapter 247, (LD 1664), which amended §4706 to require that Wabanaki studies, Maine African American studies, and the history of genocide, including the Holocaust be included in the review of content standards and performance indicators of the learning results. The development of the blueprints in each content area was completed according to Title 5, §8051-B regarding consensus-based rule development process. Once these blueprints were created, writing teams, consisting of retired and practicing Prek-12 Maine teachers representing the diverse geographical regions of Maine assembled to draft the standards revisions. Writing team participation is open to all Maine educators and we had 50 educators participate on the writing teams for this revision process.

Science educator input received through public comment asked the committee to limit the revision of the science standards considering the impacts of the pandemic on student instruction since the last adopted revisions. Therefore, the proposed science, technology, and engineering standards continue to be adapted from the Next Generation Science Standards with the strand, standards, and performance expectations unchanged from the last adoption in 2018. The only revision to these elements was to add statements to the existing standards. These statements do not replace the previous standards, but serve to explain what a student knows and is able to do. An example of this revision is in the standard called Matter and Its Interactions. We have now added a statement to clarify what a student should know and be able to do regarding Matter and Its Interactions, i.e. "students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the structure, properties, and interactions of matter." These statements were crafted by using the essential questions from the Framework for K12 Science Education, from which the Next Generation Science Standards were based.

The steering committee was tasked with determining how to balance the request from the field to limit the revisions and the mandated statute that required certain revisions be made. They did this by asking the writing teams to incorporate Maine Wabanaki studies, Maine African American studies, and the history of genocide, including the Holocaust into the "further explanation" section. It is important to note that the "further explanation" section is intended to provide additional information, give examples, and to make connections to our students' world. Teachers are only required to teach the standards; the further explanation is there to provide clarity and guidance on the possibilities; there is no expectation that a teacher would incorporate everything that is listed in the further explanation into their classroom. The purpose of this section is to offer guidance to Maine educators on how they might incorporate context in their own classroom. As

the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) states in their position statement on Teaching Science in the Context of Societal and Personal Issues, “Contextualizing science learning through compelling issues not only showcases applications of science and engineering, but doing so can also transform the learning experience itself such that more impactful learning outcomes can be achieved,” (Zeidler 2014). The NSTA further suggest that science instruction “provide an authentic learning context by examining the societal dimensions of scientific issue, such as political, economic, and ethical considerations.”

And so, following both the steering committee’s guidance and the position statement of the National Science Teachers Association, the writing team, made up of professional educators from kindergarten through high school levels carefully considered where best to incorporate the important concepts contained in §4706 in age and grade-appropriate ways into the further explanation section. The Maine DOE devoted substantial resources to ensuring that community advisors from the areas of Wabanaki studies, Maine African American and Black experience, and representation from the Maine Human Rights and Holocaust Center advised the revision process. Additionally, these community advisors continue to work with Maine DOE as we create professional development resources to support the implementation of these revisions.

Similarly, the proposed social studies standards revision writing team worked with community advisors to incorporate the updated requirements of §4706. The social studies revision, guided by the steering committee’s blueprint and enacted by the writing team, integrates Wabanaki studies, African American studies, and the history of genocide, including the Holocaust, throughout the standards document. There was repeated request during the public comment period for support on incorporating these important areas into social studies and great care was taken to work with the community advisors to make relevant and meaningful connections. Additionally, like with the science revisions, the Maine DOE, in collaboration with these community advisors and educators, is already developing professional development resources to support these updates.

One problematic area the steering committee noticed was that all the social studies performance expectations focused on the lower order thinking of recalling facts and explaining ideas and did not require students to demonstrate higher order thinking such as making connections across ideas, justifying decisions, and constructing new ideas from information learned. The writing team incorporated a progression from lower order to higher order thinking into the performance expectations to ensure students are able to apply information they learn to solve complex problems.

The social studies revision also strengthened the personal finance standards to more closely align with the Jumpstart national standards and are more focused on decision-making, knowledge, and skills, and using more equitable and inclusive language. Additionally, the writing team revised the civics and government strand to strengthen the areas concerning civil discourse to encourage students to be exposed to a variety of perspectives in order to draw the best conclusion and encourage collaboration and innovation as well as discussion and debate. And finally, the geography standards have been revised to be more inclusive and relevant for students by allowing them to understand the place where they live and how they are connected to other places. The standard itself, in concept, changed only minimally, but was reworded to make it easier to understand and include the new requirements of §4706. The performance indicators were also reworded to provide more clarity, inclusion, and relevance.

Following this extensive process, the Department submitted the draft you see before you to another public comment period pursuant to the Maine Administrative Procedures Act, Title 5, §8052. This public comment period was open from October 11 through 5 pm on November 14, 2023, and included a virtual and in-person opportunity for the public to participate on October 30. Notice of the public comment period was filed with the Secretary of State's Office on October 4, 2023. The DOE carefully considered all of the public comment feedback, reviewed the entire document for more human-centric language and has updated our terminology as a result of the thoughtful feedback we received. Subsequent revisions will endeavor to do the same.

Now, as part of this review process for major substantive rules, the Maine Department of Education has submitted the revisions in compliance with Title 5, §8071. Once finally adopted, the necessary materials, resources, and support personnel will be deployed to assist Maine educators with delivering high-quality instruction to Maine students. As described on the Maine Department of Education website, the year following standards final adoption will include professional learning to support the revision. In anticipation of these changes, the Department has already begun to plan for the development and delivery of these resources to assist teachers.

This year's revisions focus exclusively on elements outlined in the Science and Social Studies content areas. No other aspects of the Learning Results were modified in any way. The result is the product of a thorough process derived from the expertise of individuals from the DOE, higher education, district and building administration, as well as dozens of Maine educators, and the public. 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 Department of Education is in support of L.D. 2182 that was developed by teachers in schools and districts that 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.

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-ONE

H.P. 1235 - L.D. 1664

**An Act To Integrate African American Studies and the History of Genocide
into the Statewide System of Learning Results**

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

Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §4706, as amended by PL 2009, c. 313, §§8 and 9, is further amended to read:

§4706. Instruction in American history, African American studies, Maine studies ~~and~~, Maine Native American history and the history of genocide

Instruction in American history, African American studies, government, citizenship ~~and~~, Maine studies and the history of genocide must be aligned with the parameters for essential instruction and graduation requirements established under section 6209.

1. American history. American history, government and citizenship, including the ~~Constitution of the~~ United States Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the importance of voting and the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship, must be taught in and required for graduation from all elementary and secondary schools, both public and private. African American studies must be included in the review of content standards and performance indicators of the system of learning results conducted in accordance with section 6209, subsection 4.

2. Maine studies. Maine history, including the Constitution of Maine, Maine geography and environment and the natural, industrial and economic resources of Maine and Maine's cultural and ethnic heritage, must be taught. A required component of Maine studies is Maine Native American studies, ~~which~~. Maine Native American studies and Maine African American studies must be included in the review of content standards and performance indicators of the learning results conducted in accordance with section 6209, subsection 4. ~~The~~ Maine Native American studies must address the following topics:

- A. Maine tribal governments and political systems and their relationship with local, state, national and international governments;
- B. Maine Native American cultural systems and the experience of Maine tribal people throughout history;
- C. Maine Native American territories; and

D. Maine Native American economic systems.

3. History of genocide. The history of genocide, including the Holocaust, must be included in the review of content standards and performance indicators of the system of learning results conducted in accordance with section 6209, subsection 4.

Sec. 2. Resource development; advisory group; curriculum audit; report. The Department of Education is responsible for fulfilling the requirements of this section.

1. Development of resources. The department shall identify and make available to schools resources and materials for teaching African American studies, including Maine African American studies, pursuant to this Act.

2. Advisory group. The department shall, within 30 days after the effective date of this Act, convene a volunteer advisory group to collect information and prepare materials for the teaching of African American studies and Maine African American studies. The advisory group must include scholars of African American history and culture; representatives from African American civil rights organizations in the State, African American history and cultural organizations and the Gerald E. Talbot Collection at the University of Southern Maine; the Maine State Archivist; and members of the public with personal experience that would inform the collection of information and preparation of materials under this section. The department shall include at least one member from the advisory group in any group or committee convened to review the parameters for essential instruction and graduation requirements for social studies pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 6209, subsection 4.

3. Guidance; best practices; exemplar modules. The department shall develop guidance, best practices and exemplar modules to support the integration of African American studies and Maine African American studies into the instruction of American history and Maine history.

4. Curriculum audit. The department shall develop a process that supports and enables a local school administrative unit to conduct an internal audit of its curriculum to ensure an equitable representation of African American voices and an accurate historical account of African American history and culture.

5. Reporting. The department shall submit a report on the progress of the implementation of this Act to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education matters no later than April 1, 2022.

Sec. 3. Effective date. That section of this Act that amends the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 4706 takes effect July 1, 2023.