



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
23 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, ME 04333-0023

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

PENDER MAKIN
COMMISSIONER

March 12, 2025

The Maine Department of Education (Maine DOE) recognizes the importance of creative education delivery methods. LD 482, An Act to Expand Educational Opportunities and Broaden Educational Services for Students Enrolled in Equivalent Instruction Programs seems to have this goal, but the Maine DOE would like to outline several important details for your consideration.

Private schools recognized by the Maine Department of Education as providing equivalent instruction are not required to engage in the Maine DOE's school approval process. When seeking recognition as an equivalent instruction private school, the school's chief administrator annually submits a letter to the Commissioner within two weeks after the opening of school.

This letter must state that the school provides the following:

- basic curriculum that provides grade level instruction in English language, consisting of reading, writing, spelling, grammar, mathematics, science, American history, Maine history and geography and civil government, health education, and fine arts;
- operates for a minimum of 175 days (or 875 hours);
- building is in compliance with all state and local fire, health, and safety law;
- teachers have been examined and approved for competency by the school administration; and
- attendance notification

Equivalent instruction (EI) schools are not required to submit supporting documentation. Upon receipt of the school's letter, Maine DOE reviews and files the submitted letter, and adds the EI school to the list of recognized schools on the Department website. Maine DOE has no further interaction with these school.

Equivalent instruction schools differ from approved private schools in a number of ways, particularly the requirement that all staff have been cleared to work with children in a school setting. In approved private and public schools, all staff names and roles are submitted into a staff module in the Department's data system, and this allows the Department to review and issue clearances. Families sending their children to attend an EI may assume that this school has been inspected for fire, health and safety; they may also trust that there have been background checks conducted for the adults working with their children. While the EI attests that these are the case, there is no requirement that such assertions are verified. Furthermore, this bill would eliminate the written approval that is currently required, eliminating the small measures of accountability that are currently in place for EI schools.

The Department's focus is ensuring that students attend safe schools with safe adults and receive instruction aligned with an accrediting body as outlined in 20-A MRS section 2901. Anticipating the need to ensure that all Maine children receive quality instruction in safe settings, the Legislature established statute directing the Maine DOE to implement school approval processes for both public and private schools. The existing approval process outlines requirements that must be met by private and public schools. Such a process does not exist for EI schools.



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The Department will be available to provide additional information on L.D. 482 and respond to any questions during the upcoming work session.

Sincerely,
Signed by:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Megan Welter", written over a horizontal line.

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Megan Welter, Ph. D.