

RSU 54/MSAD 54

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Chair Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Honorable Members
Education and Cultural Affairs Committee
Maine State Legislature

Testimony of Dr. Jonathan D. Moody in support of LD 2175
Superintendent of Schools
MSAD 54
Canaan, Cornville, Mercer, Norridgewock, Skowhegan, Smithfield

February 24, 2026

Dear Chair Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Members of the Committee:

I write in my role as a life-long PreK-Grade 12 educator with over 30 years' experience in the field – I write as the Superintendent of Schools for MSAD 54, as the Liaison to the Maine State Board of Education, and as a father of three children who have gone through public schools in our great state; I write in strong support of LD 2175 and the proposed revisions to Chapter 115. Although I understand there will be those who oppose this legislation, I urge you to consider what my mother taught me when I was young – words that have quite literally defined my life and approach with the kids under my care – “Do not let perfect be the enemy of better; if you are always working to be better, you'll find yourself getting closer to perfect...”

For the past two years as Liaison, I have had the privilege of working closely with members of the State Board, Department staff, and education partners across Maine as this work unfolded. What brings us here today is not a hurried response to a single issue, but the result of sustained, thoughtful, and collaborative engagement. Through comprehensive feedback from the field through public meetings, listening sessions, written comments, and extensive dialogue with PK–12 educators, higher education representatives, and professional associations, the Board has engaged in one of the most comprehensive reviews of certification standards in recent memory.

The thoughtful revisions before you reflect that work. They preserve rigor. They both maintain high expectations and modernize our system in ways that better align with research around how adults learn and how professional competence is best developed.

For me, the portfolio pathway, one of several pathways to certification, is the most significant positive addition to the revisions. It does not replace traditional teacher preparation programs, which will and should remain central to educator development. Instead, it creates a structured, research-aligned pathway for individuals who already hold a four-year degree and seek to enter education as career changers, as well as currently certified educators who wish to expand their endorsement areas to support their students/schools.

This pathway is built around locally developed, targeted, job-embedded professional learning supported by mentorship, instructional coaching, and administrative oversight. Candidates meet with district or regional representatives to determine what competencies must be demonstrated. They then engage in a supervised, practice-based process designed to ensure growth in authentic classroom settings, and specific to their needs as educators in the endorsement area. My colleagues have created exemplars of the structure and process that would be followed. For detailed information of the process the Board will approve visit: <https://bit.ly/45Krrp8>

Importantly, the portfolio pathway process outlined in LD2175 is not a lowering of standards — it is a shift from educators working through often non-relevant online course material (as reported in countless testimony of educators and educational leaders) measuring inputs such as credit hours to targeted and meaningful instructional support specific to the credential and focused on growth toward professional competence.

Research consistently shows that meaningful, job-embedded professional development, especially when paired with mentoring and instructional coaching, has a greater impact on educator effectiveness and student achievement than disconnected coursework. Yet, our current system often incentivizes a “check-the-box” approach, where busy professionals enroll in out-of-state online coursework that may satisfy credit requirements but does little to transform practice. If our goal is to improve outcomes for students, then we must prioritize the forms of professional growth that research shows are most effective. (1)

Over the past two years, feedback from educators across Maine has been remarkably consistent. Teachers, instructional coaches, principals, superintendents, and professional organizations have voiced strong support for creating multiple rigorous pathways to meet certification standards. The field recognizes the power of portfolio pathways and the models that already exist (mentoring) which will support its implementation.

This legislation responds to workforce realities without compromising quality. Across Maine, districts encounter talented individuals eager to serve students, but who face barriers in navigating certification systems designed primarily for traditional undergraduate candidates. At the same time, experienced educators seeking additional endorsements often find portions of required coursework misaligned and not relevant with their professional experience and educational and instructional needs to bring benefit to their students.

Perhaps most importantly, this proposal acknowledges something fundamental: educators in the field have a genuine vested interest in maintaining high standards. We are deeply committed to ensuring that only highly qualified professionals stand before Maine’s students. We are, quite simply, the best judges of who we would want teaching our own children, and we are equally committed to mentoring, supporting, and holding accountable those who pursue certification through the portfolio pathway.

The testimony provided by my colleagues Dr. Heather Perry and Dr. Jon Doty (2026 Maine Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of the year respectively) will offer district-level illustrations of how this pathway can support educator development, address workforce needs, strengthen local partnerships, and provide far more rigorous and targeted training and professional development than check-the-box online coursework often provides. Together, our perspectives reflect both the universal testimony of Pre-K through grade 12 educational professionals across the state and the on-the-ground experience and examples of what implementation of the portfolio pathway will look like. <https://bit.ly/45Krrp8>

Although not perfect, LD 2175 represents a thoughtful, research-informed, collaborative step forward. It strengthens our certification system and prioritizes the very real needs of our educators. It maintains and enhances rigor while opening meaningful pathways for educators and career changers to work with our kids. It honors the professionalism of our educators and educational leaders in the field. And most importantly, it centers what matters most: having quality educators work to improve outcomes for our Maine students. I respectfully urge your support of Maine’s educators by passing the bill and supporting the portfolio pathway as written.

Respectfully,



Jonathan Moody
Superintendent of Schools

(1) – references can be found at <https://bit.ly/4aylz5n>

Chapter 115 - Portfolio Pathways Reimagined

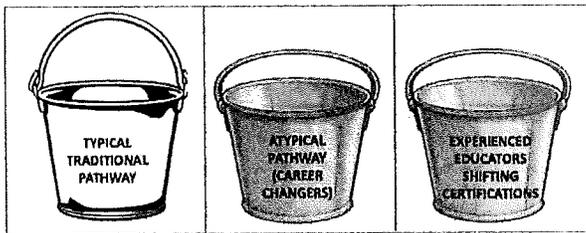
PORTFOLIO PATHWAYS: After months of feedback from the field and in collaboration with the DOE Certification team, the State Board has supported the expansion of portfolio certification under Ch. 115. This move allows districts/regions, under a State Board approved pathway plan, to establish review teams that manage candidates local portfolio plans, support candidates with mentorship and meaningful professional development, and work with the Department of Education throughout the process for initial conditional and final certification.

PURPOSE: To support students by enabling school district employers to overcome staffing shortages by developing a comprehensive and efficient Portfolio Pathway to full teacher certification. This innovative pathway integrates life experience, workplace learning, and traditional coursework, providing a flexible and robust solution that not only meets but exceeds the current certification requirements established by the State of Maine.

HISTORY: For years districts and educational partners have provided meaningful professional development and work experiences that counted for recertification, but not for certification. The portfolio, which has existed through DOE for many years, neither provided the ongoing support or meaningful learning that districts/regions provide their staff with.

ELIGIBILITY: The Portfolio pathway is designed to support lifelong educators seeking additional certifications as well as career changers who are interested in joining the field of education but for whom certification rules had previously created barriers to them becoming educators.

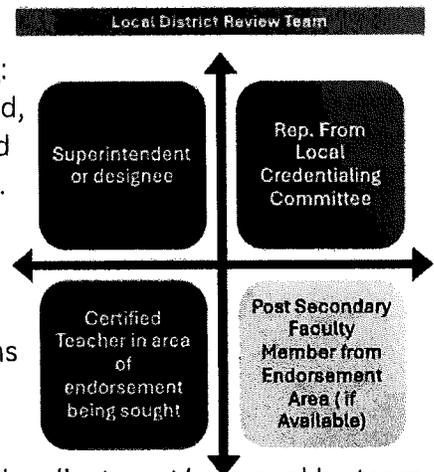
The Three Buckets



The Portfolio Pathway allows educators who have years of experience and those seeking to move into education, the opportunity for a meaningful pathway to certification. Hands-on work experience, targeted PD, mentorship and support, and partnerships with both higher ed and groups like the MEA, MADSEC, MCLA, etc., will further strengthen the supports provided to staff seeking certification. This narrow pathway is designed to be at least equivalent to that of a novice educator entering through traditional preparation.

Process Steps

- 1. Individual Assessment:** A candidate's background, professional learning and experience are reviewed.
- 2. Plan Development:** Candidates work with local review teams to develop meaningful plans targeted to their unique needs.
- 3. Review Team Approval:** adjustment/approval by team.
- 4. Initial DOE Approval:** DOE Review & Approval of Plan.
- 5. Plan Implementation:** With support of team/mentor the candidate moves forward with their certification plan.
- 6. Team Review / Final Approval:** Team reviews plan & final submission to DOE for Credential.
- 7. DOE Final Approval:** Certification Granted



Chapter 115 - Portfolio Pathways Reimagined

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Portfolio Process: Remember this is tailored to candidates who are either current educators seeking additional certifications, or credentialed career changers looking to transition into the field of education. The process is high support, focused on certification and practical experience, and tailored to the needs of that candidate.

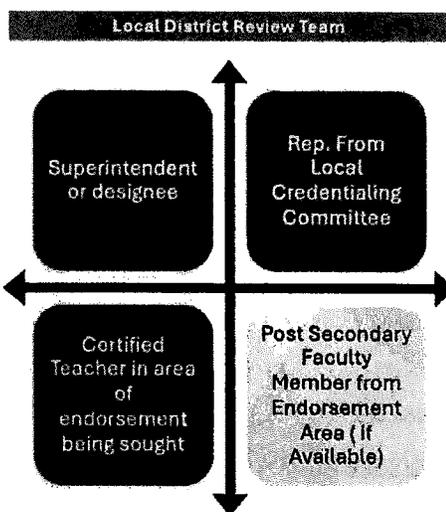
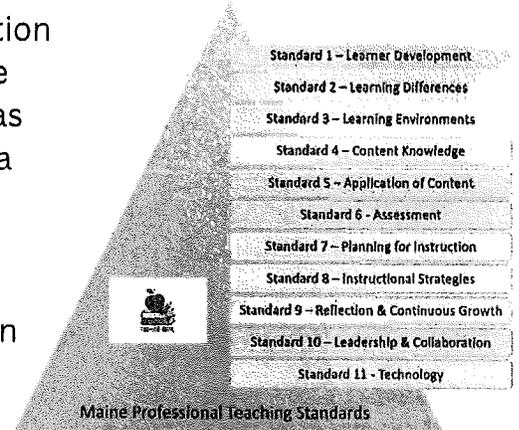
Scenario: Certified middle school teacher who is seeking to gain certification in elementary education. The candidate has a strong background in mathematics and science instruction but little to no coursework in literacy. Upon review of the candidate's portfolio the team sees that the candidate has taught summer-school for the past 7 years, working with a certified literacy specialist to deliver targeted literacy interventions to kids in grades three through five.

Additionally the candidate is participating in the district book talk coordinated by the MPCL (Maine Partnerships in Comprehensive Literacy) on targeted literacy instruction for early learners.

The Individual Assessment: reveals the candidate, although middle level certified, has significant experience in literacy interventions. **Plan Development:** includes expanding on that knowledge/experience, is based in the Maine Professional Teaching Standards, and is tailored to the needs of the individual and the expertise in the district/region.

Team Approval: The portfolio review team meets to review the plan that was developed, they may bless the plan, or provide feedback for it to be revised/modified. Once finalized the plan is sent to **DOE for Initial Approval.** **Plan Implementation** is

Standards



about supporting the candidate along their journey - including meaningful professional development, work experience, targeted coursework, and mentorship to support them in completing the plan. Once completed the candidate, with the assistance of their mentor, submit evidence of completion for review. The **District Review Team will do a final review** and either return the plan for further clarification, or support submission to DOE for certification. The final step will be the **review of the plan by DOE**, who after verification of plan completion will issue certification.

Result: The candidate is far more prepared to step into the role elementary educator than one who simply took unrelated online courses.

* Below you will find examples of what a State Board Approved comprehensive plan should look like, including this process in more detail.

1/5/26

