

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
“EXTENDING MAINE’S LAPTOP PROGRAM INTO OUR HIGH SCHOOLS”
JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS
BRIEFING BY COMMISSIONER SUSAN A. GENDRON
JANUARY 27, 2004

- Governor John Baldacci, declared his intention in his State of the State address to extend Maine’s successful middle school laptop program to Maine’s high schools, stating that if we expect all Maine students to meet the 21st Century skills embedded in the *Learning Results*, we must provide each of those students with 21st Century tools for learning—wireless laptop computers.
- To establish the program for next year’s 9th graders, I am recommending a funding proposal that will not impact the General Fund or result in any additional local costs. Using the Revolving Renovation Fund, priority 3 upgrades and improvements, in the amount of \$8,000,000, the State will pay all costs in the first year. Consistent with the definition of priority 3 renovation projects, the Revolving Renovation Fund would be used in the first year to support wiring and building infrastructure upgrades necessary for laptop deployment in nearly 160 high schools.
- The laptop initiative will not impair scheduled disbursements from the revolving renovation fund for **Priority One** (health and safety) and **Priority Two** (other building system repair and improvement) projects currently being processed by the Department. Estimated disbursements from the fund from now through December 2004 total just over 11 million for priority one and two projects.
- **Priority Three** (learning space upgrade) project applications, recently received by the Department, will undergo their final evaluation with site visits scheduled over the next few weeks. After prioritization those projects are expected to result in a total of 9 million in fund disbursements by December 2004. Support for the first year of the laptop proposal at the high schools would add another 8 million to fund disbursements for priority three wiring and infrastructure upgrades required in approximately 160 high schools and vocational centers and regions. That brings the total estimated disbursements for priority three projects to 17 million and 28 million for all projects by December 2004.
- The Revolving Renovation Fund will be used as a bridge to a longer-term approach, building in high school laptop costs to the Essential Programs and Services model. In this way, the high school laptop program will differ from Maine’s approach to the middle school program and will be built on State and local cost sharing.
- Costs for the second year, extending the program to both 9th and 10th graders, are anticipated to be roughly \$11.8 with a State share of \$6.5 million and local share of \$5.2 million.
- The long-term goal is to continue to add one class of laptops each year over the next four years, resulting in one-to-one computer for all 7th-12th-grade students. This long-term

commitment (from 2007-08 forward), including the eventual replacement of existing laptops in the middle schools, will require an annual investment of approximately \$31 million, with the State share of approximately \$17 million and local costs of \$14 million.

- Recent data obtained through the TAGLIT survey of administrators reveals that districts in Maine are currently spending upwards of \$47 million on instructional technology. 32% of this amount, or roughly \$15 million is devoted to hardware purchases. Successfully transitioning to a State and local cost sharing approach will be based on districts reallocating some of these existing funds to support the high school laptop program.
- Maine was the first state in the Union to provide one-to-one computing capability for every student at a grade level. By extending the program into the high schools, Maine can lay claim as the nation's leader in preparing its students for the Information Age. Governor Baldacci stressed the economic development and workforce development implications of Maine's laptop program.
- Maine's current laptop program provides Apple iBook computers to all 7th and 8th grade public school students and their teachers, roughly 37,000 devices. The current contract with Apple Computer includes wireless networks, server back up, laptop computers, four-year warranty, service and support, software, and professional development and training for teachers in each of Maine's approximately 240 middle schools.
- Numerous details remain that must be worked through in time to provide laptops to next year's 9th graders: resolve necessary contract arrangements, install wireless networks, provide staff development and training, and complete specific funding mechanisms within the state budget.
- A key component of current middle school program that will be extended into the high schools is professional development and training. In the first year of the high school program, professional development support will be provided all high school teachers, librarians, technology specialists, and career technical center teachers to make the most of the laptops as tools for learning. Maine is currently seeking grant support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to help underwrite this critical component.
- A recently released preliminary report by the Mitchell Institute found that the high school laptop program at Piscataquis Community High School, where all 7th-12th graders have laptops, has produced very positive results. Most significantly, the most powerful impact has been with students who have traditionally been less engaged with school. These students report that they more frequently get homework in on time, are more likely to maintain regular attendance, and are more optimistic about their educational future.
- Maine also hopes to establish a repair center here in the state that would provide additional opportunities for highly skilled worker training, as well as immediate economic development in form of job creation.