Maine Race to the Top Application Summary – This summary is presented as a blueprint for Maine’s Race to the Top Application and is aligned with the Memorandum of Understanding.

(A) State Success Factors

(A)(1) Articulating State’s education reform agenda and LEAs’ participation in it

(A)(1)(i) The vision for Maine’s educational system is that All Students will Graduate from Maine High Schools Prepared for Post-Secondary Education, Careers and Citizenship. The Maine Legislature is committed to the goal of increasing aspirations of all students by codifying this vision. Maine has embarked on the creation of a holistic and integrated education system we call A Personal Journey for Next Generation Learners. Maine wants to increase our graduation rate and decrease our dropout rate and will work diligently to keep students to remain in school by providing multiple pathways to graduation. Key to success will be: student centered-learning, systems of learning support, performance based learning, and 21st century skills and knowledge. The four assurance areas outlined in the request for Applications will provide a framework for our design of working with our partner schools to create teaching and learning environments in which all students and teachers as well as administrators thrive.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps

Achievement in Maine, as measured by its standardized tests and NAEP is relatively high. Maine scores higher than the national average on NAEP and has high levels of student proficient on its state test, the NECAP. But scores have been relatively flat over the years 2003-2009. Achievement gaps between special education and non-special education students and between Free and Reduced Price Eligible and non-Eligible students have remained relatively steady over time. We can and will do more to increase achievement of all students and decrease the achievement gaps that exist in our state. Race to the Top will allow Maine to accelerate the expansion of bold and innovative reform efforts we have begun to undertake on a smaller scale and it will allow Maine to focus resources and require change in those lowest performing schools and districts where increases in achievement are most needed. Evident by the stakeholder commitment to the State plan, with initiatives focused on improving access to and use of data, increasing teacher and leader effectiveness through improved preparation and ongoing professional development, improving and expanding our innovative and effective Maine Learning Technology Initiative, and increasing options and personalization for students, we will increase achievement across all subjects, including reading/language arts and mathematics.

The same approaches that will increase achievement measured by standardized tests will also contribute to increasing Maine’s stagnating graduation rate and increasing postsecondary enrollment. Our bold approach to personalized learning and multiple course pathways provides options to students who may be disaffected in traditional classroom settings and course
sequences. These state-wide initiatives will empower students to take ownership of their own learning and allow them to demonstrate achievement of state standards in ways besides seat-time yet still allow them to be prepared for postsecondary options and career.

**B** Standards and Assessments

Goals:

- Strengthen and expand quality standards and assessments for teaching and learning for all
- Implement a balanced system of assessment of learning and for learning that informs instructional practice
- Provide support structures for all students to achieve standards

**B(1) Developing and adopting common standards**

In 2009, the Maine Department of Education adopted a set of common standards with New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont and joined these states to conduct the New England Comprehensive Assessment Program (NECAP) statewide assessment required under No Child Left Behind. In addition, Maine has been involved in the development of common standards through active participation and leadership of the CCSSO/NGA Common Core State Standards Consortium Initiative (CCSSI). Forty-eight states, two territories and the District of Columbia have joined the consortium to develop common standards. At each stage of the development of the CCSSI, Maine state specialists have been extensively involved in the review and comment period. In April 2010, the legislature approved LD 1800 that gives the Commissioner of Education the authority to adopt the CCSSI. Maine is poised to proceed to adopt the CCSSI standards when they become final.

**B(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments**

Currently, Maine is part of the New England Comprehensive Assessment Program (NECAP). Using rigorous standards to assess students in grades 3-8, four states work together to share a common assessment.

Maine is also participating with 30 other states as part of the SMARTER Balanced assessment consortium. In March 2010, Maine’s Commissioner led a consortium of 38 states that had signed a Memorandum of Agreement to work together to build a multistate Balanced Assessment System working with, and implementing the research by, Dr. Linda Darling Hammond. By implementing internationally benchmarked assessments, both interim and summative, and practices tied to the instruction, and course syllabi at the high school, appropriate interventions can support students in leaving high school having acquired the skills
and knowledge to be successful in post-secondary education and careers. This consortium aligns with our belief, statutes and rules that there must be multiple measures to assess students’ learning. Thus we have signed the agreement as a ‘Governing State” fully committing to the full implementation of the system.

Maine is also a member of the Career-Technical Education Consortium of States in which fourteen states share development and costs of instructional resources, identification of industry based standards and assessments to ensure that students are leaving high school career and technical education programs ready for not only careers but able to gain college credit for their secondary work but also ready to enter the workforce prepared for further training and education as well as being successful at work. Maine is an active member of several other standards and/or assessment consortia. Together participation in these consortia demonstrate a willingness and commitment to work with other states to improve assessment and accountability for a better educational system for our students as well as a commitment of the participating states to work together to adopt and implement the standards and assessments.

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments

The Maine Department of Education is well organized to support the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments. Maine will work with participating school districts to implement the CCSSI through continuing and new initiatives, including:

- Develop a plan to incorporate the CCSSI standards into the rollout of the current state’s standards in all eight areas.
- Review the state’s other content area standards as part of the regular review cycle.
- Participate in the multistate effort to develop internationally benchmarked content standards in science, the arts and others as they develop.
- Collaborate with LEAs and states in SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium to unpack the CCSSI standards and develop aligned assessments.
- Develop and implement rubrics/scoring guides for all content areas as the standards are validated as college and career ready.
- Develop and implement industry based standards and assessments for all CTE programs.
- Expand of Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI) to provide virtual learning opportunities for students and teachers, including an expansion of the AP4ALL program of AP courses for low income students.
- Expand Maine Course Pathways, a system of reviewed syllabi that provide a tool for implementing multiple pathways and ensuring opportunities for students to demonstrate achievement of standards.
• Develop systems of interventions for grades Pk-12 as required by statute and assures timely interventions.
• Develop and implement state designed STEM assessments including enhanced technology, simulations and gaming strategies.
• Support the adoption and implementation of performance based assessment systems of multiple measures, such as Cognitively Based Assessment of Learning (CBAL) being implemented in two Maine districts under the guidance of ETS researchers.
• Implement a Board Examination system, such as the Cambridge International Examination’s International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and their AICE program, the College Board’s Advanced Placement (AP) program, the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma program, ACT’s Quality Core or Pearson/Edexcel’s IGCSE and A-level programs.
• Increase participation and access to Advanced Placement (AB) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses.
• Expand Jobs for Maine Graduates in the lowest achieving high schools.
• Implement early learning standards/guidelines for universal, inclusive early learning programs.

Please see appendix for project descriptions

(C) Data Systems to Support Instruction

Goal:

• Implement and use longitudinal data systems to support teaching and learning

(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system

Data Quality Campaign’s 2009 annual survey identified Maine having a majority of all ten “Elements” implemented. Maine is proud of this accomplishment, along with the recently awarded contract to develop a Data Warehouse (DW) and Decision Support System (DSS). Meeting the remaining elements will enable Maine to move rapidly towards the data integration and infrastructure investment our state seeks to ensure every child is taught by an effective teacher and every teacher is supported by an effective leader and will support personalized learning by providing the individual level data and records needed.

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data

The MDOE currently has a Data Management Team (DMT) that meets monthly to review any issues related to education data collection and dissemination and to ensure that state and federal policies are properly implemented. The DMT monitors the development of the State
Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) and other data related projects and initiatives. The DMT is focused on the interface with and impact of the MDOE’s data systems on the data collection activities at the SAU/RSU and school levels. Collaboration efforts with the SAUs/RSUs on the SLDS longitudinal data system has (and continues to) included (a) Focus groups with local functional and technical staff to help determine and review the features and requirements for each of the components in the system; (b) Regular meetings with SAUs/RSUs superintendents to discuss the implications and benefits of the longitudinal data system; (c) Pilot testing the system components, including user interface design, SIF data transmission, coordination with local student information vendors, and providing feedback on the system’s reporting capabilities. Other activities used to include end-users are: (a) Designing data cubes for SAU/RSU analysis of longitudinal data from the DW; (b) Creating data elements needed for supporting local decisions and the timeliness of the data; and, (c) Selecting query tools for ad hoc report creation.

Maine currently participates, and will expand its involvement, in the National Student Clearinghouse’s (NSC) StudentTracker Service. State and NSC data will be used to learn about graduates’ college persistence and completion rates. Information acquired from these activities will drive additional efforts to prepare students for post-secondary education. Seamless access to robust and comprehensive data on high school student and teacher performance represents a foundational element for Maine’s continued reform agenda. Longitudinal data across the PreK-16 is critical to ensure that the MDOE has appropriate information available to support core policy decisions and ongoing operational improvements, while driving the allocation (and reallocation) of scarce resources (time, people, material, and capital investments).

The effectiveness of teachers matters because research suggests that among all school resources, teachers have the greatest impact on student achievement (Goldhaber, 2006). One planned use of SLDS data will be manifested in Maine’s Value-Added Assessment Model (MeVAAM). This model will compare students’ performance on the current year’s summative assessment (MeCAS and NECAP) with scores for prior years, to create a projection “path” towards higher levels of performance. These data, stored and retrieved through the DW, will provide results for all students, teachers, and schools in tested grades and linked to identified teachers (within classes), schools, and educational programs. Particular emphasis will be placed on underperforming subpopulations (e.g., students with disabilities) within the state. This initiative will be lead by an integrated team of MDOE staff and national experts in the area of applying growth models in K-12 settings.

MDOE anticipates that results will give educators objective data that can guide decisions regarding instruction, professional development, school improvement initiatives, and personnel
assignments. The MeVAAM is a key component of the larger Educator Improvement System (EIS).

C)(3) Using data to improve instruction

The state will develop SLDS data portals for use by districts, schools, leaders, teachers, students, researchers, and community members. Expanded local data collection, (i.e. other student data such as benchmark data), will be part of the SLDS and will provide more data for driving instructional and school improvement. The state will engage in comprehensive training in using data for improving instruction.

(D) Great Teachers and Leaders

Goal:

- Prepare and mentor teachers and leaders for creating the personal journey required for the success of Next Generation Learners

(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals

There are no alternative route teacher programs currently operating in Maine that meet the definition set forth in this RFP. Currently all programs that service "non-traditional" route candidates are operated by institutions of higher education. Therefore Maine's State Board of Education has passed a resolution to open the regulations governing and defining alternate routes to certification programs. The state will develop or seek providers for alternate route providers targeting underserved subject areas.

In Maine the determination of teacher shortage area designations is based on the most recent data available on the number of vacancies for teachers in the content areas as reported to the Maine Department of Education for the previous and current academic years. Other data concerning teachers having less than full credentials, as determined by the number of less than full certificates (transitional, conditional and targeted needs certificates) and waivers issued for teachers in the indicated subject areas are factored in, as well as the total number of FTEs of all classroom teachers in the State. Officials in all public and private districts/schools are contacted to seek input as to any additional content areas in which shortages may exist.

For the 2007-2008 school year, which is the most recent data available, the total number of teachers in shortage areas was 6,016 representing 37.59% of the total FTE of all teachers which was 16,005.3. Of the total of those 6,016 teachers teaching in shortage areas, 788 or 13.1% were serving under emergency certificates.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance
In April 2010, LD 1799, Public Law 646 allowed the linkage of student achievement data to teacher and principal evaluation systems used in the State of Maine when the local evaluation system uses a model approved by the "Evaluation Model Stakeholder's Group". The core to our approach of improving teacher and principal effectiveness is Maine's EQE Comprehensive Program (MEQEP). MEQEP plans to build and maintain support from a broad group of stakeholders. MEQEP proposes to use multiple measures to assess teacher and principal performance. These include measures of school-wide student achievement/growth, evaluation of individual classroom performance, and classroom level student achievement/growth. This allows the system to identify how much an individual teacher or school has contributed to student growth within a school year to assess teacher and principal effectiveness. Principal effectiveness is assessed using school-wide data; teacher effectiveness is assessed using school-wide and classroom-level data. Teacher effectiveness is also measured by multiple in-class evaluations each year by multiple, certified evaluators. The evaluators (master and mentor teachers and the principal) use a set of clearly defined, research-based standards and rubrics to assess teacher classroom performance.

Maine proposes to design an evaluation system that is able to identify effective teachers. The success of any such this system is based on training, certifying and monitoring the results of teacher evaluations to ensure high quality, fairness, and consistency. Teachers are observed through multiple evaluations each year by trained evaluators. To ensure inter-rater reliability, teacher evaluation data will be monitored using an online data system. After every evaluation, the evaluated teacher has a conference with his or her evaluator to discuss the outcome of the evaluation, and evaluations are directly linked to professional development growth plans.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals

MEQEP’s career advancement component provides the opportunity for highly effective teachers to take on expanded roles and responsibilities and boost their compensation without having to leave the classroom. Maine’s population is distributed over a wide geographic area. The farther north one goes the more rural. Outside of the established communities, it is difficult to recruit teachers. Maine will establish a blue ribbon panel to research strategies to encourage teachers and administrators to move to those communities and areas. By looking at similar systems across the country and developing specific plans, Maine will increase its effectiveness in retaining effective educators in high need schools – thus improving the distribution of effective teachers.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs

First steps have been taken and plans are in place to move from a process of documenting the presence of required preparation program elements linked to performance-referenced
standards to a process using a truly standards-based system of assessing students, and graduates of education preparation programs.

In addition, with Maine's newly designed Student Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) student performance and growth information with individual practicing teachers linkages to Education Preparation Programs will be developed and implemented. This will allow data to be used as feedback and act as an accountability system for Education Preparation Programs. MEQEP will provide data on teacher effectiveness that could be linked to teacher preparation programs. More than a single test score, it will provide multiple measures of effectiveness that will assist the State of Maine in determining which teacher education providers are doing the best work.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals

Maine’s priorities and plans for professional development are aligned to its primary objective of preparing, developing, and mentoring teachers and leaders for creating the personal journey for learning required for the success of next generation learners. All participating LEAs will select from and adopt models of leadership and teacher development that are research and standards-based, rooted in adult learning theory, and are informed by student achievement data. The areas of focus for professional development in participating LEAs will be standards-based learning, Maine's Comprehensive Assessment System, implementation of initiatives such as CCSSI, curriculum pathways, developing mentoring and induction systems, whole school improvement, and, of course, continued focus on literacy and numeracy. In the initial six-months after grant award, Maine DOE, with stakeholders, will investigate and vet comprehensive models of teacher and leader development for districts to select and implement. These models will be customized as necessary to align with, support, and be informed by the new evaluation systems discussed in (D)(2) above and will include the following topics and components:

- The importance of data for driving school improvement;
- The alignment of assessment with curriculum and instruction;
- The provision of quality staff development with research-based content;
- The necessity of learning communities that work collaboratively;
- The study of implementation of planned change;
- The formative and summative evaluation of planned change for its impact on student learning; and
- The guidance of strong leaders operating collectively and collaboratively to govern the staff development/school improvement system.
Leadership development is an essential component of the state’s overall strategy to spark school improvement and innovation. In addition to the strategies discussed above the State will develop and provide educator leadership institutes for current and aspiring leaders. Maine will organize and conduct a series of ongoing cohort-based leadership academies each year to develop the critical knowledge and skills needed for leading change and turning around underperforming schools. The Academies will be based on models such as the successful Governor’s Academy in Maine organized by the Maine Mathematics and Science Alliance, and principal academies in the state. These models provide in-depth learning for teams of educators from districts, including central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders coupled with ongoing implementation of improvement plans in the local sites.

The State and participating LEAs will ensure professional development meets the highest standards through developing professional development, mentoring and coaching activities that are informed by the National Staff Development Council’s Standards for Staff Development (http://www.nsdc.org/standards/).

(E) Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

Goal:

- Improve student achievement in our lowest performing schools through whole school improvement

(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs

The State of Maine’s current statutory and regulatory language to support intervention provides for multiple junctures at which the State may intervene directly in the state’s lowest performing schools. The power of the Commissioner to intervene in low performing schools comes from the Department of Education, chapter 125, Section 13 and 14 http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/05/chaps05.htm. Specifically, Section 13.02 states, “The Commissioner will initiate a comprehensive review of a school administrative unit when student performance in a school indicates that a review is warranted, in accordance with Me. Dept. of Ed. Reg. 127. The purpose of the review shall be to determine how to improve student performance on the content standards of the system of Learning Results.”

In addition, Section 13.03 provides parents, registered voters, school board members and superintendents with the option to petition the Commissioner to, “inspect a school administrative unit.”

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools
Maine defines “persistently lowest-achieving schools” as those schools ranking lowest based on a three year average of proficiency in Reading and Math combined from 2007-2009, and also demonstrating a level of progress less than the median rate of progress of all schools ranked. The level of progress is determined by calculating the change in the yearly averages for proficiency in Reading and Math from 2007 to 2008 and 2008 to 2009. This definition was used to generate a list schools identified as Tier I or Tier II schools eligible for school improvement funding through the Title I School Improvement Grants (SIG) program authorized by section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). More specifically:

Tier I schools are defined as any Title I school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that —

(i) Is among the lowest-achieving five percent of Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring or the lowest-achieving five Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring in the State, whichever number of schools is greater; or

(ii) Is a high school that has had a graduation rate as defined in 34 C.F.R. § 200.19(b) that is less than 60 percent over the last three years;

Tier II schools are defined as any secondary school that is eligible for, but does not receive, Title I funds that —

(i) Is among the lowest-achieving five percent of secondary schools or the lowest-achieving five secondary schools in the State that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds, whichever number of schools is greater; or

(ii) Is a high school that has had a graduation rate as defined in 34 C.F.R. § 200.19(b) that is less than 60 percent over a number of years.

In 2009-2010, Maine identified 5 schools in Tier 1 and 5 schools in Tier II. The state will develop and support “turnaround teams” to support the lowest-achieving schools. Teams will oversee and support turnaround work of 15 lowest achieving schools.

Also, Maine will identify two additional groups of schools to provide “intervention teams” to support turnaround efforts. The first is a group of secondary schools not currently eligible for Title I funds that are either lowest-achieving or that has a graduation rate that is less than 60% over the last three years. In order to support increased achievement and graduation, Jobs for Maine’s Graduates will expand to high schools in this group. The second group of schools to receive the “intervention teams” is those where less than 30% of students fail to achieve proficiency on the state assessment.
other state provided support for school turnaround includes training and professional development in key areas, such as assessment literacy, and the development and support of an “improvement network” that includes training principals and other educational leaders.

**Priority 2: Competitive Preference Priority -- Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).**

One of seven new jobs in Maine is expected to be related to a STEM field. In order to meet the demand with our own citizens it is critical that we work to prepare students for these opportunities. The legislature stated its support by passing a bill supporting the development of a plan for STEM by May 1, 2010. The STEM plan is a cooperative effort by the K-12 education community, the University System, industry, the Department of Labor and community organizations. The goals of the STEM plan cut across the four assurance areas and include:

- Increase teacher effectiveness and address inequities in the distribution of highly qualified teachers: Target teachers in high needs LEAs with research-based professional development strengthen teaching in the STEM areas and provide supports to identify and recruit qualified and effective teachers to these areas. This work will be leveraged using Maine’s existing robust cyber network and unique 1:1 laptop interface available to all Maine teachers in grades 7-12, extending coverage to all teachers in grades 3-6. Teacher effectiveness will be further supported through the delivery of pre-service STEM endorsements and in-service STEM academies.
- Establish and use PreK-through-college and career data systems to track progress and foster continuous improvement: The STEM plan measures teacher and program effectiveness by tracking changes in teacher understanding, changes in student achievement and aspirations, and student participation in STEM careers and STEM educational pathways.
- Make progress toward rigorous college- and career-ready standards and quality assessments: Maine will adopt core standards in mathematics and will support and adopt similar core standards in science and other STEM related areas, measuring student achievement through both formative and summative assessments. Maine will expand participation in multistate efforts to improve and expand STEM assessments including enhanced technology, simulations and gaming strategies.
- Support targeted, intensive support and effective interventions to turn around schools identified for corrective action and restructuring: The plan targets high needs LEAs on multiple fronts to improve education for all students. This will be accomplished through combination of teacher professional development; student after school and summer programming and programming to include integrated STEM instructional activities annually from grades 3-8 and high school in high needs LEAs. The 1:1 laptop initiative
will be expanded to all Maine students and teachers in grades 3-12, in these needs LEAs.

**Priority 3: Invitational Priority – Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes**

Maine has a long-standing commitment to early childhood education to support the development of school readiness and healthy outcomes for all children. This commitment is evident in the long-standing inter-agency Governor’s Children’s Cabinet, authorized in statute (1998) and currently chaired by the First Lady of Maine, with the Commissioners of Education, Health and Human Services, Public Safety, Corrections, and Labor serving as members, alongside the Governor’s Senior Policy Advisor. The Maine Department of Education has three priorities to increase inclusive quality early education for all students, but especially for those with highest needs:

- Expand state-supported public preschool (4-year old) programs so that each district has at least one such program, with a goal of statewide, universal access in a diverse delivery system.
- Require public preschool program standards of practice based on state and national criteria of best practice for early learning.
- Fund the development of a comprehensive Birth-Five Early Learning hub which advances the philosophy and quality principles of Maine’s Educare site.