

**Maine Department of Education
Office of Truancy, Dropout, Reintegration
And Alternative Education**

**Advisory Committee Report
To the Joint Standing Committee
On
Education and Cultural Affairs
Of the 122nd Legislature
Second Regular Session
January 2006**

**Truancy, Dropout, Alternative Education
Advisory Committee Report
To the Joint Standing Committee on Education and
Cultural Affairs
Of the 124th Legislature
January 2006**

Compiled by:
Shelley Reed

Truancy, Dropout, Alternative Education, Homeless Youth, School
Counselors, Reintegration of Youth from Correctional Facilities

Introduction-Legislative History

The Office of Truancy, Dropout, and Alternative Education was established by the 112th Legislature in 1986. The Legislature also established a fifteen-member Advisory Committee “reflecting the range of individuals and public and private institutions which are involved or interested in the problem and its solution.” The consultant is to serve” as a liaison among the commissioner, department staff, advisory committee, and school administrative units and private schools as it pertains to truants, dropouts, reintegration, and alternative education.” The Legislature’s interest in these areas is expressed by the requirements that the Advisory Committee “report annually by February 1st to the joint Standing Committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education” (20-MRSA, Section 5151 and 5152).

Office and Advisory Committee Activities 2003-2005

Strategic Planning for 2003-2004 was held on October 3, 2003 with meetings set for December 12, and in 2004 for January 9, February 6, April 2, May 7, and May 18 as the date set for the Commissioner’s Recognition Ceremony.

Strategic Planning for 2004-2005 was held on October 8, 2004 with meetings held on January 14, February 4, March 24, April 1, May 16, Recognition Ceremony on May 18, June 10, October 7, November 16, and December 21.

The Strategic Plan for the 2003-05 year consisted of the following components:

1. To explore the impact of students participating in alternatives in education services in regards to Maine’s adoption of the five goals of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, local Comprehensive Plans and the Chapter 127 Diploma Requirements.
2. To form subcommittees to plan the Alternatives in Education Summer Institute, and the Commissioner’s Recognition Ceremony, and to respond to Charter School Legislation.
3. To explore the impact of literacy and early intervention on the at-risk population and to identify elements of the alternative education study.
4. To continue to identify adult education and alternative education issues.
5. To establish a website addressing issues pertaining to dropout prevention, learning alternatives, statewide initiatives, and how to create change.

6. To draft a position paper on “College Ready” to include post secondary ready for career, citizenship, and chosen training.
7. To support the production of the Dropout Prevention Guide, by the Institute for the Study of Students At-Risk which will identify best practice.

Advisory Committee Strategic Plan

1. Federal and State Mandates

Implications for the at-risk community from No Child Left Behind Act, and Chapter 127 Diploma Requirements raised concerns for students who need alternatives and flexibility in the delivery of educational programming.

The Advisory Committee strongly urges small learning communities under Essential Programs and Services. Alternative Education Programs need to maintain a student-teacher ratio of no larger than 10:1. Establishing and maintaining relationships are critical to the programs and to help ensure success for students.

No Child Left Behind seeks to ensure highly qualified teachers. Currently teachers in alternative programs hold at least one certification in a subject taught in the local program. Alternative teachers may teach a subject that they are not certified in 1) as long as students in the alternative education program have access to instruction in regular classrooms taught by certified teachers and 2) when it is deemed in the student’s best interest to receive instruction in that subject at the alternative program and this is stated in the student’s personal learning plan.

In a report issued by the Institute for the Study of Students at Risk authored by Dr. William Davis it states that “Based upon an analysis of study sample results, students enrolled in alternative education programs in Maine obtain positive outcomes. Eighty-one percent (81%) of the students in the study sample graduated from their alternative education program with a high school diploma. Only 9% dropped out of the program... Most, if not all, of these students, before entering their alternative education programs were considered to be at “high risk” for dropping out of school.”

It is recommended that the needs of each student and all types of learning be honored as policies and practices for meeting state and federal mandates evolve in Maine.

2. Subcommittee Work

Alternative Education Summer Institute

The Department of Education, the Alternative Education Association and the Institute for the Study of Students at Risk, three years ago met in Orono at the invitation of the Institute and established the foundation of a solid collaborative providing insight and resources to the field of alternative education. With the Institute providing data and analysis on the issues for alternative education the partnership has responded to needs by providing a two-day summer institute.

The summer of 2003 was the second year of the Summer Institute, which was held on the University of Maine campus. This second institute focused on curriculum development aligned with the Maine Learning Results. A highlight of the summer program was the keynote address describing Belfast’s BECOPE program and how the program has grown due to the vision and insight of its Director Helen Nichols with the support of the Administration and a very active

Dropout Prevention Committee. The second large group gathering was a therapeutic drumming session led by Cindy Perkins. The third large group session was held at the Hudson Museum Learning Center where the group had an opportunity to explore the use of museums as hands on learning tools and utilization of the Hudson's outreach learning packets.

Other presenters included: Jim Corr, (Spurwink Auburn) who organized engineers in the classrooms to help with the Engineering Design Experience; Jim Artesani (UM) on school discipline; Melissa Denick (Kennebunk) an interdisciplinary approach to collecting living history; Bill Davis (UM) Alternative Education Survey Results, Panel on Keeping Youth Connected-Chris Bartlett (DOE) Jeanne Smith (Project Impact) Nancy Connolly (Muskie) Susan Lieberman (Children's Cabinet) Shelley Reed (DOE).

The Alternative Summer Institute has become a place to think, reflect, make connections and create solutions. Participants are offered the opportunity to strengthen what they know and do.

A planned 2004 Alternative Education Summer Institute was not held due to lack of advance participation registration.

The 2005 Summer Institute for Dropout Prevention held July 25-26 at the University of Maine saw the largest gathering numbering a record one hundred and two participants. Schools were encouraged to send teams to the institute which provided information and steps to help schools develop comprehensive K-12 dropout prevention plans. Schools are required in the Comprehensive Education Plan to develop Dropout Prevention Plans and Students At Risk Plans.

Three keynote addresses were given. Motivational speaker Guy Doud of Minnesota, 1986 Teacher of the Year opened the conference with a presentation based on his best-seller book, Moulder of Dreams. Doud's talk demonstrated the power of encouragement, relationships, and caring in reaching youth and building self-esteem.

Vernita Mickens, a lead consultant at Mid-Continent Research and Education and Learning (McREL) discussed the learning's from the National Dropout Prevention Recognition Program, as well as strategies to improve the achievement of students at risk of failure or dropping out of school. She addressed the dynamics of change and becoming a change agent.

William Davis, professor of special education and director of the Institute for the Study of Students at Risk, presented factors and conditions that place students at risk, and dropout prevention strategies. Davis' research and findings are compiled in the Dropout Prevention Guidebook now in draft.

Mary Madden, University of Maine assistant research professor, also spoke to the group and discussed preliminary findings from the state Gender Task Force, working to identify issues and strategies to meet the educational needs of boys and girls.

There are presently no other teacher preparation programs in the area of at risk students as formal programs for graduate or undergraduate teacher preparation. There have been initial discussions with the University regarding formal course work in alternatives in education, stressing relational education. Such course work would provide teachers with strategies in adapting the curriculum to fit differentiated learning styles.

The collaborative efforts of the Office of Truancy, Dropout, and Alternative Education, the Institute for the Study of Students at Risk, and the Alternative Education Association has

only just begun on behalf of students. Work is ongoing to establish formal coursework at the University as pre-service and in-service on identifying issues of at risk students and how to address those issues. It is believed that more students at the University would take advantage of courses and thereby increase their awareness of opportunities in the field of alternative education.

The Institute for the Study of Students at Risk conducted a study of Dropout Prevention Committees which identified committees in Maine and their activity level and successful strategies that are being used to reduce the rate of dropouts. The study was critical to schools being successful in meeting the requirement for a Dropout Prevention Plan. Shared knowledge will benefit all school districts in formulating successful strategies.

Recognition Awards Ceremony

The Commissioner's Recognition Award Ceremony was held at the Blaine House on May 19, 2004. Co-Chairs Laurie Hall and Nancy Watson facilitated the ceremony with remarks by Governor Baldacci and award presentations made by Commissioner Susan Gendron. The following people were the 2004 awardees. We have included the remarks shared about each recipient at the ceremony.

Ms. Lauren Sterling

Greater Waterville Area Communities for Children and Youth Coalition

We are pleased to recognize Ms. Lauren Sterling as a recipient of the 2004 Commissioner's Recognition Award. Lauren is the founder of the Greater Waterville Area Communities for Children and Youth Coalition, she served as its volunteer coordinator from June 1994 until January 2004 and she continues to serve as a member of the GWCFY executive committee. Under Lauren's leadership the GWCFY coalition was selected as one of 15 local community groups and agencies from around the country to partner with America's Promise as a demonstration site. Also under her leadership, the GWCFY coalition has received almost \$1 million in grant funds to support local programming that promotes the positive development of children and youth, particularly those children and youth considered to be at risk.

Lauren's vision, energy, and enthusiasm are remarkable. The success of the local coalition is directly related to her ability to develop and implement programs, to engage and inform community leaders, and to encourage collaboration and consensus among partners working toward a common vision: to better meet the needs of local children and youth.

Lauren's leadership over the past decade has been exceptional in meeting the needs of local children and youth. She is a tireless champion for the Waterville area children and youth, and she is supremely deserving of the 2004 Commissioner's Recognition Award.

Mr. David Ouellette
Principal, Caribou High School

We are pleased to recognize Mr. David Ouellette as a recipient of the 2004 Commissioner's Recognition Award. Mr. Ouellette is the principal of Caribou High School and has served the high school for 35 years. He is an advocate for young adults and has a vital role in building their self-esteem. Mr. Ouellette has endorsed student's rights and is willing to rebuild a student schedule to help prevent one from dropping out. This undertaking does not happen daily and his decision making process would not compromise the integrity of the school vision and philosophy; however, this process is viewed as an assignment that truly assists a student in a time of needed compassion and understanding.

Caribou currently has an alternative education program which assists students in meeting their individual needs. If however, students are not accepted or unable to enroll in this program, Mr. Ouellette will work tirelessly to develop a program of studies, which will accommodate the individual student and lead to a successful outcome.

One veteran educator of Caribou High School states, "I have known David for thirty-two years as a friend and fellow educator. I know him as a highly effective and visionary educational leader, one who is uniquely dedicated to professional growth. Most importantly, however, I know him as a man of exemplary fairness, a leader who supports staff, yet advocates for students. Few educators can rival his dedication."

Larry Small
Director and Teacher of the MSAD 48 Alternative School

We are pleased to recognize Mr. Larry Small as a recipient of the 2004 Commissioner's Recognition Award. Larry is the director and teacher of the MSAD 48 Alternative School which he helped found and has operated for the past 8 years. During that time Larry has touched and changed the lives of hundreds of students at risk of drop-out and falling prey to other troubles in their lives.

Teaching classes using the credit-by-objective method, he and his Ed techs have helped many students pass courses, earn credits, graduate, obtain a GED, and plan for life after high school. He serves about 33-35 students per year, most of whom have difficulty surviving in the normal high school environment. A majority of the students are part time, coming to the alternative school for a portion of their school day, while about 6-8 are full time.

What sets Larry apart from others is his 24 hour, year round devotion to the physical and emotional needs of his students. In many cases he has taken on the role of an extended family member. Some of his students are homeless. Others need the support of a solid adult role model. When one 16 year old girl was living in a barn, he worked with her and her family, often taking her to the local truck stop for a hot meal and a place to be warm. When winter came he drove her to visit the Limestone Job Corps, where she enrolled and earned two certificates, including a CNA. She is now studying professional nursing at Kennebec Valley Community College.

He helps students get into the job corps, go to technical colleges, enlist in the armed forces and he also helps students graduate with their class. He will go wherever he is called to pick up a student who is in need of a safe place to be. He makes sure that all students in his program study the problems associated with drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and dating violence. That opens the door

to important discussions and disclosures that help him tailor instruction and emergency response to the needs of students.

James Masterson
MSAD #50
St. George School
Tenant's Harbor, ME

Jim Masterson serves as MSAD 50's Middle level Alternative Education teacher at Port Clyde's Herring Gut Aquaculture and Hydroponics Program. The program serves eight students grade 6-8 and is geared to students who are at-risk of dropping out of school. One distinct aspect of the program is that nearly 60% of the students' time is spent at the Center. The program emphasizes a nontraditional approach to learning with hands-on activities, community volunteerism and other "real-world" activities. The students spawn and grow oyster seed stock, trout and salmon to be sold to growers in and around Mid-Coast Maine. The students are involved in all aspects of the enterprise.

Jim Masterson has a very straight forward approach with his students. He expects high academic achievement and keeps his students accountable for their behavior. All of this is done in the context of a caring, supportive environment. Jim genuinely cares about the futures of his students. Judith Harvey, Superintendent of SAD 50, wrote, "Even though I have worked in several other districts that had programs for at risk youth, I have never witnessed the commitment that Jim exhibits as an advocate with this population of students." Jim has the ability to help kids to believe in themselves, a very essential ingredient to both school success and success in life. He works tirelessly to adapt curriculum to individual needs, making sure that all students are challenged and making progress.

In summary, Jim Masterson stands for what he believes and he firmly believes that at risk kids need a chance to succeed like everyone else.

Robert Welch
Principal, Canal Elementary School
Westbrook School Department

We are pleased to recognize Mr. Robert Welch as a recipient of the 2004 Commissioner's Recognition Award. Mr. Welch has been employed with the Westbrook School Department for twelve years including four years as Assistant Principal of Wescott Junior High and eight years as Principal of Canal Elementary School. According to Stan Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools, Rob has been instrumental at introducing alternative learning to our elementary schools, something that is rare among elementary education in Maine. Through Rob's work with the Alternative Learning Steering Committee, he helped put in place the grades 6-8 alternative program at Mission Possible Teen Center as well as their high school alternative school.

According to Jonathan Ross, Director of Adult & Alternative Learning, Rob's peers jokingly refer to him as "The Father of Alternative Learning". Rob serves as the Chairperson of the Alternative Learning Steering Committee which is comprised of a diverse board of professionals. Rob's accomplishments are many and include:

- Created Tech Start in 1993, an 8th grade alternative program that introduces at-risk students to career exploration and hands-on learning at Westbrook Regional Vocational Center.

- Created an action plan in 1997 that led to a long-term commitment for Westbrook School Department to serve at-risk students.
- Took key stake holders such as superintendent, assistant superintendent, school committee chair, special education director, adult education director, and others to Massachusetts to visit the Education Cooperative so the stake holders could see an alternative program that has been successful over the long-term, and see firsthand the lives that have been altered in significant ways.
- Lead the Alternative Learning Implementation Team to action including the development of a K-5 approach to Alternative Learning as well as in-school Alternative Learning support in grades 6-12 with two pullout programs.

A final quote from Mr. Ross about Rob was “His passion for helping at-risk youth has created the foundation of something that will only grow as we all seek alternative ways of reaching some of our most misunderstood students”.

Dr. William Breton
Director of Special Services Programs
Bucksport School Department

We are pleased to recognize Dr. William Breton, Director of Special Services Programs, of the Bucksport School Department as a recipient of the 2004 Commissioner’s Recognition Award. Dr. Breton, or Bill, as affectionately known by staff members has been involved in public education for many years. He has served young people in variety of public service positions since the early 80’s. He has belonged to numerous professional organizations, published several research articles and papers, and offered workshops around the country.

He is the recipient of the 1999 Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Maine Fort Kent as well as the recipient of the 1999 Founders Award from the Maine Association of Directors of Services for Children with Exceptionalities.

According to Marc Curtis, Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Breton is one of the most passionate, dedicated student advocates in our system. Bill works tirelessly for his students and can often be heard asking ‘What’s best for the kids?’ His advocacy for students is simply based on doing the right thing to provide students with the best educational programs and support in order to accomplish IEP goals. As remarkable as it may sound, Bill knows all of his special education students in each of his three schools by name and most of the students know him. He is consistent, sincere and his compassionate efforts are noticed and appreciated by all.

Bill is a regular, almost daily visitor in each of the schools. He is a hands-on director who wants to know personally how his students are progressing. He works closely with school administrators and all special education staff to ensure successful progress regarding student, school and district goals. Bill will often ask “What can I do to help you to do your job?” His working relationship with staff can be characterized as energetic and supportive while simultaneously having high expectations for everyone. His sense of humor adds tremendously to his effectiveness particularly as he works individually with at risk students.

In summary, Superintendent Curtis said “Quite simply put, Dr. William Breton is a tremendous asset to the Bucksport School Department. He loves kids, loves his work and he is tops in his field at what he does”.

**Richard LaHaye, Jr.
School Resource Officer
Medomak Valley High School**

We are pleased to recognize Richard H. LaHaye, Jr. of Medomak Valley High School as a recipient of the 2004 Commissioner's Recognition Awards. Mr. LaHaye, a former graduate of Medomak Valley High School and a 20+ year veteran of law enforcement, currently works at Medomak Valley High School as the new School Resource Officer. This rural high school of 700+ students has been plagued by truancy, substance abuse, and academic apathy. In his role as school resource officer Richard's approach to students in trouble is one of fairness, firmness, consistency, and honesty. Richard is always there for students whether it is to answer a question about the law or just to listen. Students respond positively to his approach by trusting him as a go to person when problems seem to overwhelm them.

Assistant Principal, Harold Wilson, said of LaHaye "On numerous occasions Richard has transported students home who have been suspended. He uses this time with the students to help review what their options might have been to avoid being sent home. Richard is aware of many community resources that are available to help teens and shares information with them. Many times Richard will sit in on meetings with parents and offers hope and counsel to those parents, presenting strategies that may help parent and student alike overcome what may seem to be insurmountable odds."

Through a Weed & Seed grant from Juvenile Justice, Richard was able to establish a weight room. The intent of the room was to utilize the facility as an alternative to suspension for at-risk students with anger management issues, physically aggressive behaviors, and drug-related school offenses. Richard not only volunteered to supervise the program, but was instrumental in assisting with the implementation of the physical plant and in obtaining additional money from the Knox County Sheriff's Office to subsidize the grant. Twenty students were involved in the program over the course of the year and only one student did not complete the program and only one returned as a repeat offender. Four students from the program joined varsity sports, and twelve others have continued in a regular weight program long after their initial consequence was served.

Principal Bob Strong said "Initiating a new position with a new job description can be a monumental task. The amazing success we have enjoyed in little more than a year is directly attributable to the individual put in that position. Richard LaHaye is the reason we have implemented and maintained a positive and productive School Resource Officer". Assistant Principal Lynda Letteney was quoted as saying that Mr. LaHaye "has greatly improved the climate of the school and is a man of integrity, honesty, and a terrific role-model for our students".

The Recognition Awards Ceremony for 2005

The Commissioner's Recognition Awards Ceremony for 2005 was held at the Blaine House on May 18th and was facilitated by Co-Chair Jonathan Ross with remarks by Governor Baldacci and award presentations made by Commissioner Susan Gendron. The following people were the 2005 awardees.

John Romprey-Social Worker, Thornton Academy

We are pleased to recognize John Romprey as a recipient of the 2005 Commissioner's Recognition Award. John is employed as a social worker for regular educating students at Thornton Academy in Saco, Maine. John has been at Thornton for four years. In his short time at Thornton Academy John has established and supervised a mentoring program in the local school system. This program involves 80-100 Thornton students working with teachers in elementary schools. Hundreds of students have been positively impacted by this program, largely due to the time and diligence John has committed to this concept. John is an energetic, compassionate and dedicated social worker who has had an enormously positive impact upon the student body. Despite having a large caseload, John always seems to have time to take on new referrals. His philosophy is if a student needs him, John will find time for that student.

Leslie Morrill ~ Auburn School Department

We are pleased to recognize Leslie Morrill as a recipient of the 2005 Commissioner's Recognition Award. Leslie is the Assistance Principle at Edward Little High School in Auburn, Maine. She has been in this position for the past five years and was a guidance counselor prior to her current position.

First and foremost for Leslie are the students. She will do whatever it takes to assure that the students at Edward Little High School are safe and in an environment where they can thrive. She works diligently with families and seeks assistance for her students whenever needed. Leslie will make every effort to keep students connected to school, will find ways to work with students in order for them to be successful. Students regularly seek Leslie out for guidance and help in dealing with a difficult situation. Leslie will seek students out who is experiencing difficulty both in school and at home.

One of the highlights for Leslie over the past few years is her work with a changing demographic at the high school. While these changes have been difficult at times, the person seeking help for our students is Leslie. She has worked closely with the Center for the Prevention of Hate Violence at the University of Maine to implement the Unity Project, a program that trains student leaders in the school to work with the student body to deal with harassment and racial conflict.

One only needs to speak to her to see her passion, to understand her motivation and to recognize her commitment to youth. You only need to watch her in action and see that she is a true Walk-the-talk person.

Leslie treats the kids with respect, which in turn earns her the respect of the kids – all kids. Her interactions with youth, including youth at risk, and her fair treatment and non-judgmental approach- bring out the best in students at Edward Little.

Jane-Ann Reinink ~ Camden Hills Regional High School

We are pleased to recognize Jane-Ann Reinink as a recipient of the 2005 Commissioner's Recognition Award. Jane-Ann is a teacher of Art, History and English at our Zenith Alternative Education Program. The Zenith Program has had incredible success at connecting students with school who otherwise may have dropped out. It provides a safe haven for many students who do not have support at home, suffer from mental health issues or who don't find success in the typical learning environment seen at Camden Hills Regional High School.

Jane-Ann has been a steady and reliable force in making the Zenith program what it is today. Fortunately our strengths seem to complement each other such that she has been responsible for the development of core curriculum in all of the social studies and English areas for our 10th – 12th grade no-traditional learners. On top of this she has been responsible for art and photography, as well as multiple roles in coordinating outside contractors who support our program.

She realizes success in any learning environment is based on establishing positive, trusting relationships with each and every student. Jane-Ann is a natural. She intuitively knows when to have the compassionate ear and when to hold the hard line with tough talk and tough action. Her love for her work is evidenced with the excitement and enthusiasm she mixes into creative and meaningful lesson plans.

Jane-Ann has a broad perspective of the many issues of alternative learners and is a master at developing strategies to assist them in their learning and life's challenges. She is what the education world is starving for – real, dedicated people, who truly love kids and who want to model positive values while filling their lives full of love.

Francis Wheeler-Berta ~ The Community School

We are pleased to recognize Francis Wheeler-Berta as a recipient of the 2005 Commissioner's Recognition Award. Fran first worked at The Community School for six months in 1980. She returned in 1990 and is now the Residential Program Coordinator, serving as a mentor and model for residential teacher/counselors. Fran offers a depth of commitment to her students that are rare even at The Community School. She has worked with some of the most challenged students, tackling issues of addiction, sexual abuse, and sexual orientation. She has been an invaluable support to numerous parents who maintain a relationship with her long after graduation.

Fran also runs the Jobs program at the school, working with local employers and mediating conflicts on the job, enlisting the support of the community in the mission of the school. She is a highly gifted teacher/counselor, able to confront negative behavior with enormous appreciation for the student and his/her dilemma. One of Fran's most characteristic qualities is her laughter, which is infectious and a tonic for students and colleagues alike. Fran has personally and profoundly touched the lives of over 200 students during her tenure at the school.

William “Pop” Mangum ~ Old Town

We are pleased to recognize William “Pop” Mangum as a recipient of the 2005 Commissioner’s Recognition Award. Bill has worked for the Old Town School Department for 17 years. During his tenure, he has served as a mentor to “at risk” students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. He has provided support to students that are disenfranchised with their school experience, and in many cases, have all but “dropped out of school.” Bill has provided students with a listening ear and sage advice to guide their lives, while at the same time, has held students accountable for their social and academic development. Working closely with teachers and administrators, “Pop” has helped to give students greater skills in self-monitoring their own needs and growth, which has resulted in increased self-worth and motivation. As a result of his work with his students, many have successfully completed their public school education and discovered how important their present actions impact their future goals.

Even when he’s holding their feet to the fire or holding a mirror up to a child, their response seems to be that “this man cares enough about me to want to get me to change.” He has a subtle way of dealing efficiently with the details of a child’s life while effecting change in that child holistically, without ever raising the typical defense mechanisms in that child. William “Pop” Mangum uses a simple formula: he respects them as individuals, genuinely listens, is honest when speaking with them, and is a man of his word.

Donald Mendell ~ Nokomis Regional High School

We are pleased to recognize Donald Mendell as a recipient of the 2005 Commissioner’s Recognition Award. Don is the senior of two social workers at Nokomis, charged with a variety of duties including such things as liaison for the homeless, screener for Alternative Education Job Corps promoter, crisis counselor, and a member of PET’s. He is also the host of the “Breakfast Club” which is a hang-out for disenfranchised kids who connect with each other through rock music. He is member of the athletic eligibility committee, which adjudicates requests for exceptions to the eligibility rules, and a SAT founding member, to name just a few.

Don makes things happen. He advocates. He counsels. He calms. He chases kids down. He hosts the kids. He creates a small haven in his room for those kids who would otherwise have no real connection with adults in the school. Ultimately, that is the strongest drop-out prevention strategy one can offer. He connects with those kids who throw every barrier your way, because he refused to accept that the kid cannot be reached.

Kids trust him. Not because he is their buddy, but because he genuinely cares about them, leads them toward personal growth, and he calls it like it is. He reaches across those lines of mistrust that separate so many cliques of teenagers. When a school-phobic kid needs to be brought to school, Don goes to the house to coax him or her.

Our community is lucky to have a man of such skill and dedication working in our school on behalf of the lost and lonely.

Norman Davis ~ Union 29

We are pleased to recognize Norman Davis as a recipient of the 2005 Commissioner's Recognition Award. Norm is a long-time Poland School Committee member, who helped found Poland Regional High School. Every community should be so fortunate as to have a Norm Davis. In addition to serving on boards for social agencies, Norm is a tireless advocate for young people and especially at-risk youth. Norm is a dedicated supporter of Union 29's Bakerstown Alternative Program. Every time there has been a Bakerstown Task Force, Norm has been an active volunteer.

Norm's business, Morin Brick Company, is in Auburn, where Norm has played a leading role in Auburn's Books to Business initiative. This program helps at-risk students finish school while holding a job. Let it be noted that Norm's business does not benefit from hiring high school kids who participate in Books to Business. Norm serves on the advisory committee to improve the community and to help kids. He understands that one strong connection, be it academic or co-curricular, will keep teens from dropping out of school. He acts as a bridge between academic and the marketplace. People say Norm is a voice of reason that both educators and business people trust.

Henry "Hank" Lunn Volunteer Hope Elementary School

We are pleased to recognize Henry "Hank" Lunn as a recipient of the 2005 Commissioner's Recognition Award. Hank served as Hope Elementary School's Guidance Counselor from 1992 to 2002. He also served as the Guidance Counselor at Appleton Village School from 1991 to 1999, but his impact goes beyond these responsibilities. The youth of our communities has always been Hank's First priority. He has taught the required skills to all students but has also been the one to go to a student's home, visit a student in the hospital (or jail for that matter) attend a sports event, and even chaperoned many middle school dances. He truly understands adolescents and is able to communicate with them and gain their trust.

Since retiring from his Guidance position he still hasn't left the school or the students. Hank continues to provide instruction to students in grades six and seven through the All Star Program sponsored by the Know County Coalition Against the use of Tobacco. He also works through the Communities that Care program to continue to find ways to meet the needs of adolescents in our five town area. His work with the Tobacco Coalition keeps him connected with the youth of the community, as does his work with "Boys Night Out" (an evening event with boys and their days, finding ways to interact in positive ways) and the recent "Boys to Men" conference that generated great community support. In the Midcoast area, Hank Lunn is well-known, respected, and truly appreciated.

Reverend David Olsen

Community Volunteer

Mt. Ararat High and Middle School

We are pleased to recognize David Olsen as a recipient of the 2005 Commissioner's Recognition Award. David has been a very active volunteer in the mentoring program at Mt. Ararat Middle School for three years and is currently working with the administration and guidance department at Mt. Ararat High School to establish a mentoring program there.

Dave is currently volunteering as a mentor for four young men, two at Mt. Ararat Middle School and two at Mt. Ararat High School, and meets with each of them regularly. He has served on our Middle School Mentoring Steering Committee since 2003, and has secured funds from the Brunswick/Topsham Rotary Clubs for this program. He has organized workshops and staff development opportunities for both the Topsham and Brunswick mentoring programs. He has helped to organize after-school activities such as pizza parties and bowling for the MAMS Mentoring Program.

Dave is an incredible resource and promoter of mentoring in our school district and is deeply committed to the idea of mentoring as an effective intervention for at-risk youth. He has provided advocacy and leadership for this program, which is safe to say, would probably not exist today without his tireless efforts.

Debra Hannigan

Administrator of Special Services

MSAD 53

We are pleased to recognize Debra Hannigan as a recipient of the 2005 Commissioner's Recognition Award. Debra serves as the district's truant officer, attendance coordinator and Dropout Prevention Committee Chair. In this combination of roles, Ms. Hannigan has a lengthy history of the district's work toward reducing truancy and dropouts through preventative methods

To address the number of dropouts from MCI, Debra, working with the dropout prevention committee, assisted in developing a 7 – 12 grade Alternative Education program. Working with the dropout prevention committee, Ms. Hannigan formulated the plan, wrote the job description for the teacher, obtained building space, interviewed and recommended the teacher, screened student applicants, coordinated services and transportation needs, interviewed each student, had parents participate in their child's alternative education admission, and coordinated several sources of funding for program initiation.

In the fall of 2004 MSAD 53 implemented its first ever Alternative Education Program. The program began slowly with 2 middle school and 9 high school age students. The dropout number at MCI this year is 7; one year ago it was 16, and two years ago it was 17. It is without question that her extraordinary efforts have created a situation for which the district is proud and students can succeed.

Mary Moore
Director of Guidance
Brunswick High School

We are pleased to recognize Mary Moore as a recipient of the 2005 Commissioner's Recognition Award. Mary Moore has worked with Brunswick students for many years at many different levels. She is currently a Guidance Counselor, Teacher, Advisor, and Department Head. Throughout the school year she has contact with many students. In many instances she is the first adult to learn that a student is losing interest in school or worse, about to drop out. She can help those students because in many cases she has already established a relationship with them. She sees the importance of individuals. In addition to the attention Mary gives to individual students, she teaches classes and organizes workshops and seminars. These events give students who normally have difficulty imagining themselves in the future a sense of purpose and hope. Mary is a multi talented, compassionate educator who loves children and sees futures for all of them.

She is a very personable, inviting and caring individual who seeks out those students at risk and those in need of support to make good choices in their lives. Additionally, she is very responsive to unlimited parental demands and requests.

There are times when students lose direction and fall. Those are the times when they are in danger of walking (or running) away from school. Mary is often there to lift students up, dust them off and keep them moving in a positive direction.

Ed Krawic
Lincoln Academy, Alternative Education Director
Newcastle

Linda Niemeyer
Lincoln Academy, Alternative
Instructor, Newcastle

We are pleased to recognize Ed Krawic and Linda Niemeyer as recipients of the 2005 Commissioner's Recognition Award. Ed Krawic and Linda Niemeyer have been working together since 1991. At that time Ed, who had just initiated the Alternative Education program at Lincoln Academy, brought Linda on board to help him run the fledgling program. Theirs is one of the longest standing programs in Maine. Approximately 200 students at risk for dropping out of high school have benefited from their care and encouragement. Although not every student in the program ultimately finished school, a substantial percentage of them have.

According to John Grant, a colleague of Ed and Linda's, "The reason the Alternative Education program has been so successful lies in the simplest of answers. Both Linda and Ed can see the good in every young person who comes through the door. They have the ability to challenge inappropriate behavior without condemning the whole child. They have the honesty that engenders the same in students. They have enthusiasm that draws forth a student's energy and makes a place of ownership for learning within that youth".

A final quote from Superintendent Robert Bouchard, "Ed Karwic and Linda Niemeyer are exceptional educators who have touched many lives and continue to do so. Their enduring dedication to those students who might otherwise have fallen through the cracks is admirable."

Charter Schools

The Advisory Committee supports the development of Charter Schools in Maine. As a committee whose primary focus is on disengaged students who are underserved by the current system we see the availability of public Charter school options as helpful in providing additional learning and teacher options for disaffected students, families, and teachers. A concern is that Charters not be set up as sites for chronically acting-out students or other populations to be excluded from the mainstream but as sites for research-based alternatives in education. With Charter schools Maine students can have more options for assistance in finishing high school and contributing to higher percentages of students seeking post secondary experiences. As Charters tend to be small schools, these are perfect settings for relational education to blossom creating positive environments for disengaged students. Perhaps we will find that Charter Schools will help public schools by serving as lab schools to help design curricular and relational approaches that will also be helpful in mainstream schools.

3. Literacy and the at-risk population

The Maine Education Assessment results brought about a look at gender issues and the impact on results. Males in general showed poorer results in the areas of reading and writing. Males also represent a larger portion of students attending alternative education programs. Future professional development for alternative educators should include assistance with this issue.

The Maine Educational Assessment results reveal that girls are out performing boys in the areas of reading and writing in grades 4, 8, and 11. Although the most recent data on the National Assessment of Educational Performance shows that Maine students are out performing their peers nationally it also points to a gender discrepancy as a national phenomena. The gender gap is a larger pattern of differences in academic performance, aspirations, and self esteem of boys and girls as they proceed through the educational system.

The Guiding Principles of the Maine Learning Results establishes that each Maine student must leave school as a clear and effective communicator. Reading and writing” form the foundation for effective communication which depends upon a person’s ability to construct meaning through reading, listening, and viewing and to present ideas though writing, speaking and visual media.” *Maine Learning Results* These skills have become more important in the world of immediate communication. Devices that enable us to communicate over long distances are only as helpful as the expertise of the communicator.

While efforts on behalf of girls to raise performance in the areas of math and science have been successful our classroom efforts on behalf of boys have not achieved the desired results in reading and writing.

School engagement is a critical measure of student success. According to the National Center for Student Aspirations who surveyed over 46,000 Maine students, males spend less time than females doing homework, fewer males than females report putting forth the necessary effort to reach a goal, fewer males than females report being eager to learn new things in school. The U.S. Department of Education surveys of 4th, 8th, and 12th graders revealed that more males than females report that they usually or often come to school without supplies, or in other ways prepared for class.

Among contributing factors that researchers have considered include; boys are more likely to drop out of school, obtain lower grades, more likely to suffer from learning disabilities

or Attention Deficit Disorder, are more frequently in need of support such as Title I services and alternative education, more widely enrolled in Child Development services, have significantly higher abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs, have emerging anger and depression issues, and more often are successful in suicide attempts than females. These factors suggest that education and developmental factors need to be addressed with new energy, focus, and collaboration with communities.

To address this issue the Department of Education is looking into the cultural aspects of literacy. For example, who is the role model for reading and writing activities? Is reading considered to be a female activity? 17% of elementary teachers are male. At the secondary level 47% of all teachers are male, but only 25% of those spend any portion of their time teaching English. Males need to be recruited to teach in the early formative years and in the English Arts areas.

The Department is also looking at ways to address the educational aspects of this issue. Boys tend to need more explicit teaching than girls and tend to prefer active, hand-on methods of instruction. The relationship with the teacher plays a big role in their academic success. Thus teacher preparation programs must include training in literacy strategies in all content areas, at all grade levels, and include strategies of instruction that includes meeting the needs of various learning styles. Secondary level teachers of content areas facing students with struggling abilities also must know how to help remediate the deficiencies in reading and writing.

In 2004 the Department of Education established a Task Force on Gender Equity in Education. Its charge was to summarize recent studies and gather data on the discrepancy between male and female achievement in Maine students; identify societal norms and specific factors associated with the discrepancy; develop proposals for action to guide both state and local educational policy and program development designed to ensure gender equity for Maine students; and to suggest additional areas of study that may contribute to an understanding and effective response to the gender equity issues identified, and to identify indicators to monitor progress on promoting gender equity. The Truancy, Dropout, and Alternative Education coordinator and representatives of the alternative education community participated on the committee and presented at Gender Task Force meetings to assist in research findings.

A survey of Alternative Education Programs regarding gender issues showed that programs used to be predominately males but there is an increase in female participants.

Gender adaptations that are made by programs include:

Programs try to balance out male and female staff ; select mentors according to gender need, select literature by program participants as males will not generally read stories with female leading characters, hold separate health classes for males and females; hold expectant mom classes(baby's are welcome at school), hold boys to men conferences; include and invite college students male and female to be positive role models, give opportunities for personal development including programming for teen moms and dads and encouraging vocational opportunities.

Rollout of the results of the study are to occur in the spring of 2006 with school districts and education preparatory programs sending teams which will apply the lens of gender equity to academics, career prep and personal/social aspects of the school environment with an eye towards considerations for change.

4. Adult Education and Alternative Education

As school districts undertake strategies to help at risk students the lines of demarcation between some Adult Education and Alternative Education programs are being blurred. Sixteen to twenty year olds eligible to attend Adult Education programs are doing so in greater numbers. Students are not only attending programs to catch up on one or two classes but in some cases are fulfilling a good portion of their credits for a diploma in the Adult Education program. This is causing concern as Adult Education programs are funded at a different level than regular day programs. The Advisory Committee recommends a study to ascertain the scope of the issue and the need for adjusting funding equitably to programs.

5. Website Development

The office of Truancy, Dropout, and Alternative Education now has a website which defines the work of the committee and is poised to post help to school districts looking for steps to implement a comprehensive K-12 Dropout Prevention Plan and Students At Risk Plan. Website element designs are part of the strategic plan to be developed. The website address is www.state.me.us/education/tdae/.

6. Position Statement on College Ready Concept

A position statement paper was prepared and sent to the Education Commissioner outlining how this concept relates to those students participating in alternatives in education programming. Sections of the letter include statements regarding the importance of post secondary planning for all aspects of life- career, training, 2 year and 4 year college possibilities, the role of relationships in the educational process, community input and partnerships, personal learning plan development and the necessity for staff development in differentiated instruction, to support the elimination of tracking, promoting school to work connections, and the need for courageous leadership on behalf of all students.

7. Dropout Prevention Guidebook

The office and Advisory Committee for Truancy, Dropout, Reintegration, and Alternative Education supported the work of William Davis, PhD, Leslie Forstadt, and Roxanne Lee in the development of the Maine Dropout Prevention Guide which was conducted as part of the Institute for the Study of Students At Risk's activities related to its contract with the Division of Special Services. The Guide, in draft form, was presented at the Dropout Prevention Summer Institute and is now ready for publication. "The overall purpose of the Guide is to provide Maine public school personnel with a basic resource tool to assist them in their efforts to (1) keep currently enrolled students in school and on track toward completing their high school graduation requirements; and (2) encourage those students who have already dropped out to return to school and complete their secondary school graduation requirements. "...The Maine Dropout Prevention Guide is designed to provide Dropout Prevention Committee members and school personnel with research-based information about effective dropout prevention programs and strategies." *Maine Dropout Prevention Guide*

Plans are underway to extend the Guide by utilizing media and the website to share success stories from alternative education students and staff, and to provide visual/auditory examples of strategies.

Homeless Education

McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance was reauthorized with the *No Child Left Behind Act* in 2001. This act seeks to ensure that homeless children and youth are identified, enrolled, and provided the tools for academic success by local school districts. Each district appoints a local liaison whose role it is to act on behalf of homeless children in families as well as unaccompanied youth. Several training sessions have been available to school districts to ensure that local liaisons understand the McKinney-Vento Law, to help them become sensitive and aware of the issues facing homeless children and youth, and to help liaisons understand their role in meeting the needs of enrollment, transportation, and forming links to community services.

Training sessions were conducted in Presque Isle, Machias, Portland, Augusta, Saco, Lewiston, and Bangor and provided for educators, school secretaries, administrators, outreach workers, Shelter personnel, and state and private agencies. Regional meetings were held in conjunction with Keeping Maine's Children Connected Liaisons to provide networking and information sharing opportunities for school and state agency professionals to build bridges for closer working relationships on behalf of students.

The state of Maine received \$ 204,656 in 2004 and \$234,495 in 2005, 75% of which must go to direct grants to Local Education Agencies. Three communities including Portland, Lewiston, and Bath applied for the three-year grants. As part of the state education agency application for McKinney-Vento funds, SEAs are required to assure that information will be forwarded to the Education Secretary. For FY 2003-2005 Maine sites provided the following information that was reported by the Maine Department of Education to the United States Department of Education:

- a. The number of homeless children and youth that were identified and serviced by Maine sub grants. 138 unaccompanied youth.
- b. The grade levels that were identified by Maine for statewide assessment purposes in reading and math were grades 4, 8, and 11 (MEA).
- c. Maine had no students that were identified in the next three categories:
- d. The number of homeless children and youth by grade level that were identified by Maine and included in the assessment.
- e. The number of homeless children and youth by grade level that was identified for assessment that is identified with disabilities under IDEA, and Limited Language Proficient students.
- f. The number of homeless children and youth by grade levels that were identified on the assessment that met or exceeded the state's proficiency level or standard.

The Portland Street Academy works to ensure that homeless youth have access to educational opportunities. The staff works to engage or reengage youth into the educational system helping them to create defined goals based on the Maine Learning Results. Support services include: GED preparation, Learn to Earn Employment training program, coordination of transportation, Wilson reading Program, tutoring and supplementary instruction, reading and math assessments, helping with post secondary experiences, and make referrals for health, housing, and well being needs.

The Merrymeeting Project with Bath, Brunswick, MSAD 75, Union 47, works to establish a local network that serves homeless and at risk youth. The project works primarily with unaccompanied youth ages 16-19 to match youth needs to services that include: the identification

of homeless youth; the development and implementation of appropriate educational services; maintaining a collaborative network of service providers to meet the comprehensive needs of homeless youth including housing, counseling, dental, legal, transportation and medical needs.

The Lewiston project’s goal is to assist homeless adolescents build healthy and productive futures by reconnecting them to educational and employment services in a non-traditional setting. A collaborative effort among the Lewiston School system and Jobs for Maine’s Graduates combine expertise in education, employment, and meeting social needs of youth.

This year the sites will be participating in a new evaluation program developed by the New England Comprehensive Assistance Center at Education Development Center in Newton, Massachusetts. The New England Homeless Education Coordinators have met regularly for the past two years to develop liaison training materials, develop state plans for submission to USDOE, and for formulation of implementation strategies. The LOUIS on Liaison Online Unified Information System originally developed by EDC and the Connecticut Coordinator is now available and being piloted in New Hampshire and Maine as part of the New England collaboration. LOUIS is an online evaluation program, which allows programs to identify its own goals and objectives from 8 stated goals and 49 objectives. The Sub grants will answer questions specific to its programming making it useful for both state use to assess program success and for the sub grantee to use as a self evaluation tool.

The number of homeless children and youth enrolled in public school:

In the past 2 years all school districts must forward information through their local homeless liaisons to the state homeless education coordinator as requested by the Secretary for the United States Department of Education which provides the following information.

	2003-2004	2004-2005	
Primary night time residence	Shelters	707	637
	Doubled-up	321	343
	Unsheltered	177	210
	Hotels/motels	16	9
	Unknown	71	72
	Other (bus,camper, Trailer)	66	39
	Transitional living/ Group home		9

Shelter Education Meetings

The Department of Education continues to hold monthly meetings with personnel representing districts with emergency youth shelters or programs with homeless youth. Programs attending include the Lewiston School District’s program at New Beginnings, the Skowhegan School District which works with the Halcyon House, Falmouth School District with Youth Alternatives, and South Portland School District. The meetings focus on strategy sessions on transitioning youth to appropriate educational services, and to facilitate dialogue between shelter/facility staff and schools.

Keeping Maine's Children Connected Initiative, A Children's Cabinet Initiative

Keeping Maine's Children Connected is an integrated approach to help children and youth who experience school disruption due to: homelessness, foster care placement, correctional facility placement and In-patient psychiatric care. There are an increasing number of children and youth who are experiencing transitions into or out of their home, school and community resulting in disruptions in their education. The child serving agencies are working together to develop an integrated protocol among school districts, state agencies, correctional facilities, and in-patient psychiatric faculties so youth feel more supported as they live through difficult transitions. It is a collaborative effort among Department of Corrections, Department of Education, Muskie Institute and the Department of Human Services and Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services.

For systems a coordinated effort will standardize a system of communications among state agencies, facilities, and school districts through a shared database of contact people and an integrated protocol. It will increase the capacity of staff to work and support students in transition through an increased awareness of strategies, resources, and networking. This effort will increase the understanding of issues and policies affecting youth in transition.

For youth this initiative will reduce the number of transitions in a student's life, increase a student's sense of belonging to school and community, enable the youth to be involved in their own reintegration plan, and improve educational outcomes through better continuity of educational programming.

To date there are 180 Keeping Maine's Children Connected Liaisons representing regional state agency offices, juvenile correctional facilities, in-patient psychiatric hospitals and 95% of school districts actively participating in the process.

In order to increase knowledge of issues and policies affecting the target population initial trainings have been held across the state and regional meetings have been held in Presque Isle, Machias, Bangor, Waterville, Lewiston and Portland. Over 125 people attended those meetings.

The Muskie Institute is currently measuring the effectiveness of the model in order to institute program and policy changes.

Six school districts are participating in pilot projects to develop protocols to guide staff in responding effectively with students who experience disruption with their educational program.

Truancy

At the request of the Education Committee in 2004 a focus group was assembled to rework the truancy legislation. The focus group identified three elements they considered to be effective in reducing truancy which were prevention, intervention, and recovery work.

Prevention work might include: immediate notice of irregular attendance by the Attendance Coordinator, immediate notification to the parent when a student is not at school, Home Visits, intervention by the school counselor, or school social worker, referral to the Dropout Prevention Committee, and an examination of appropriate educational planning. Intervention would include a plan developed by a comprehensive, collaborative, interagency team working with the family to resolve issues contributing to truancy. Recovery work includes the ability for law enforcement to pick up youth and bring them to school, fines, and civil

violations, for parents not getting youth to school. Sanctions for youth might include curfews and community service.

LD 1082 was passed and has become statute under Title 20-A Section 5051-A. Habitual Truancy.

The office of Truancy, Dropout, and Alternative Education has responded to school districts, parents and law enforcement providing technical assistance to issues of truant youth. The Truancy, Dropout, and Alternative Education Advisory Committee is producing a brochure to provide information on the truancy statute. Workshop information has been for principals and at the Kids Legal Aid conference.

Habitual truancy is defined as “A student of compulsory school age (age 7-17), who has 10 full days of non-excused absences or 7 consecutive school days of non-excused absences during a school year is habitually truant.” Department information is gathered thru school districts reporting on the EF-I-25 form.

Data shows that from 1985-1995 truancy rates in Maine went from 915 students truant to 1,425 students truant. In 2000-2001 there were 2,166 habitually truant students. 2001-2002 figures of truancy total 2,396 students.

Habitual Truant Report for 2004-2005: Total of 2,007 habitual truants

Ages 7-14		Ages 15-16	
Males	437	Males	608
Females	387	Females	575
Total	824	Total	1,183
Total Resolved cases	639	Total Resolved cases	845
Total Unresolved cases	169	Total Unresolved cases	287

Compulsory attendance waived **4** males Compulsory attendance waived **1** female ages 15-16

Total Cases prosecuted by formal court **1**

Total Parent(s) referred to District Attorney **2**

Total district funds spent for referral or prosecution **\$0.00**

Excused from compulsory attendance/permission to withdraw **18**

Habitual Truant Report for 2003-2004 : Total of 2,630 habitual truants

Ages 7-14		Ages 15-16	
Males	639	Males	777
Females	558	Females	656
Total	1,197	Total	1,433

Compulsory attendance waived **3** males Compulsory attendance waived **4** female ages 15-16

Excused from compulsory attendance/permission to withdraw **20**

Other categories **0**

Dropout Prevention Committees and District Dropout Prevention Plans

As part of the Comprehensive Education Plan each local district must have a Dropout Prevention Plan. Technical Assistance for the development of the Dropout Prevention Plan builds on Title 20-A Section 5103 Dropout Prevention Committee. The focus of the 2005 summer institute as a collaborative effort among the Office and Advisory Committee for Truancy, Dropout, Alternative Education and Reintegration the Institute for the Study of Students At Risk and the Alternative Education Association was dropout prevention. Participants were to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop the Dropout Plan and Students At Risk Plan for their school district. (As stated previously in this document under Section 2). Subcommittee Work-Alternative Education Summer Institute keynote speakers presented research based foundational information to guide the thinking of participants. The second part of the summer institute was guided workshop time in K-12 plan development.

Information previously sent out to schools invited school districts to consider steps for getting started including:

1. Who will be meeting to develop the plan?
2. When will this work be done, what is the work timeline?
3. What are the critical elements of the plan? What informs the development of the plan?
4. Who or what comprise the resources to help with the development and the implementation of the plan?

Title 20-A Maine Education and School Statutes section 5103 refers to the formation of Dropout Prevention Committee established annually by the Superintendent for each individual school unit under the Superintendent's supervision. Committee membership is to be composed of:

School administrator, teacher, school counselor, school board member, parent, school Attendance Coordinator, high school student, a dropout, and a community resident.

A district wide Dropout Prevention Planning Committee could be made up of representatives from individual school prevention committees. The Planning Committee should represent the K- Adult Education spectrum including special and alternative education programs.

Chapter 125 specifies that:” A plan for identifying students at-risk of school failure in kindergarten through grade 12 including, but not limited to, truants and dropouts, and the development of appropriate alternative programs to meet their needs.”

Summer Institute participants were given templates in a logic model that walked them through Title 20-A section 5103 which identifies six components of a Dropout Prevention Committee plan.

1. Reasons why students drop out.
2. Maintenance of contact with recent dropouts
3. Education of staff about the dropout problem
4. Use of human services programs to help dropouts.
5. The school administrative unit's policies on suspension, expulsion and other disciplinary action
6. Discriminatory practices and attitudes within the school administrative unit.

Components for the Comprehensive Education Dropout Prevention Plan include but are not limited to:

- Collection of data regarding the dropout problem in the community (school records, information submitted to the Department of Education, Counselor office data, and anecdotal data from students and dropouts.)
- Develop informed statement on the dropout problem in the community
- Identify cluster of dropout reasons, formulate strategy to address primary issues.
- Identify gaps in services
- Assemble school and community resources and referrals.
- Review policies impacting students such as on discipline, SAT referrals, alternative education intake.
- Develop Professional Development regarding at-risk youth.
- Investigate, identify and implement strategies for dropout prevention
- Personal Learning Plans, mentors, tutors, learning style inventories, school climate, school structure/flexibility of the school day, harassment issues, advisor/advisee groups, small teacher-student ratios, differentiated instruction, counseling, alternatives in education, adult education, alternative programming, activities/clubs/sports programs.
- Write annual report to school board

Resources to help with the development and implementation of the dropout prevention plan and the students at risk include:

The Department of Education provides technical assistance through Shelley Reed, Consultant for Truancy, Dropout, and Alternative Education
The Alternative Education Association and
The Institute for the Study of Students At-Risk.

Emerging Issue for Resolution

An issue in need of resolution for youth whose educational experience has been disrupted or whose education has occurred in multiple settings is the transfer of academic work to credits towards graduation. Academic work occurs in psychiatric facilities, homeless education support in shelters, youth development centers, treatment centers, and for youth in foster care who may have multiple placements. In these various locations youth participate in educational experiences. Sadly when they return back to their home school district often the work they have done is not accepted for credit. When received by Principals and school counselors with a traditional eye at credit accumulation, not necessarily an alternative in education approach.

The implementation of standards based assessments in core subjects has further complicated the process by awarding credits or determining mastery of subject matter.

Students who have had difficult life experiences than meet with another blow to progress. They have satisfied requirements adults have put before them, but in the end it doesn't count. Numerous advisory groups including Keeping Maine Children Connected, Truancy, Dropout and Alternative Education, Juvenile Justice Advisory Group, and Project Impact are reviewing strategies to change this.

Suggestions are to have a common standards based transfer record amongst all alternative educational placements or to establish a regional or state review panel to evaluate student work. This panel would have expertise in special education, or alternative education. Focus groups will continue to enlist input from all impacted groups to formulate a workable solution.

Dropout Data for Students in Special Education

We cannot compare the rates of regular education students to special educating students as rates are calculated differently. Regular education data is collected by grade or class the student is in, special education data is collected by age. While the dropout rates represent an attempt at comparability, they may not be the most accurate calculations possible due to the assumptions that had to be made (e.g., assigning a special education student to a specific grade based on age) in constructing the data set. With Maine now collecting data for special education students using the same method as for all students, calculations of special education dropout rates using the cohort methodology described above can begin. However, the necessary data will not become available until 2007, when the first graduating class cohort matriculates through the system.

Of the 6,870 students with IEPs who exited in 2004-05, 500 or 7.3% of them exited by dropping out. Data indicates that dropping out begins to increase at age 15, reaches its peak at between age 17 and 18 then begins to decline after that. The data also shows that the dropout problem is getting worse for students with IEPs. The key point to be gleaned from these data however is that intervention programs need to begin prior to age 14.

Historical data for students age 14 to 19 shows dropout concentration:

Year	Age 14	15	16	17	18	19
2001	0%	6%	16%	26%	22%	21%
2002	0%	5%	16%	23%	20%	10%
2003	0%	0%	14%	25%	16%	10%
2004	1%	3%	15%	24%	31%	22%

Other Initiatives around Dropouts for Special Education Students as cited in the State Performance Plan for 2005-2011 as required by the Reauthorization of IDEA is as follows:

“Maine is fortunate to have a university system that houses the “Institute for the Study of Students at Risk.” In collaboration with the Department, the Institute will develop and implement a comprehensive plan designed to assist Maine public school personnel in their efforts to improve the graduation rate for all Maine students, while simultaneously reducing dropout rates.

The Institute works closely with the Department’s Homeless Liaison (Shelley Reed) and each year offers a two day workshop on dropout prevention. They will work closely with the Department to develop and implement appropriate technical assistance strategies to increase the rate of successful school completion for all Maine students with particular emphasis on: 1) students identified as having a special education disability under current Maine special education regulations; and 2) students considered to be “at risk” for dropping out of school. The Institute disseminates research-based information to public school personnel, especially members of Dropout Prevention Committees within each Maine SAU, to assist them in their efforts to “keep Maine students on track toward graduation”.

The Institute also conducts research and performs follow-up studies that build upon the findings and recommendations of the Institute's Final Project Report: Improving the Graduation Rate for Maine Students with an Emphasis on Students with Disabilities: Dropout Prevention Strategies (June, 2005). This work will improve the understanding and capacity of Department personnel, parents, legislators, SAU administrators, regular and special educators and related personnel, to prevent dropouts and improve high school completion and graduation rates. They will compare and contrast a sample of "high" and "low" SAUs (with respect to student dropout rates) to determine specific factors and conditions that appear to contribute to these rates. Current year and five-year trend data, with a particular emphasis upon students with disabilities from each SAU, will be collected in an expanded database, analyzed, and disseminated. Students identified within the Emotional Disability (ED) category represent the highest percentage dropout rate (of all disability categories) in Maine. But, because some Maine schools have a "high" rate of graduates who are identified within the ED category, a specific focus of this project will be to further analyze those factors and conditions that appear to contribute to a positive school graduation rate for ED students. The Institute will investigate strategies to improve the graduation rate for all Maine students identified within the ED category.

Several other initiatives are also currently underway that are expected to have a positive effect on the dropout rate. GEARUP grants and activities have been implemented in selected schools. Maine's homeless liaison is working with truancy and dropout and the Keeping Maine's Children Connected initiative has a contact person trained in each LEA. There is also a State Improvement Grant (SIG) sponsored Career Aspirations Program at Calais High School. Additionally, one of the objectives of the current General Supervision Enhancement Grant (GSEG) is on dropout and dropout prevention. Scientifically based rubrics have been developed and piloted around evaluating LEA and school based dropout prevention programs. In addition, a student risk/asset rubric has been developed and piloted. Preliminary analysis suggests that it may have potential as an early predictor of students at risk of dropping out."

Reintegration of Youth from Long Creek and Mountain View Youth Development Centers

In 2001 LD 1306 passed by the Legislature authorized Reintegration Teams. Revisions to the Department of Education and Department of Corrections agreement were initiated in 2001 and were finalized in 2004. The agreement spells out the roles and responsibilities of the two departments to transition youth in and out of the facilities. Title 20-A Maine Education and School Statutes, Section 1055 Superintendents; powers and duties speak to the development of reintegration teams to ensure the transitioning of students from the youth development centers back to school. The section outlines that superintendents are to convene teams to carry out reintegration planning upon receipt of information from the Department of Corrections, team member participation is spelled out, and confidentiality of criminal justice information regarding juveniles is to be ensured. With this statute and the signing of the agreement between the Departments of Corrections and Education roles and responsibilities were clearly designated. Training sessions in March of 2005 and again in October 2005 were held at the youth development centers for teams of school personnel and regional correctional personnel in the steps necessary for reintegration, and tours were given of the facilities.

Training goals included:

- Outlining the legislative mandates pertaining to reintegration
- Reviewing the updated Interagency Agreement
- Strengthening relationships between Juvenile Community Corrections officers and school Reintegration teams.
- An understanding of the role of Project Impact
- An overview of the operations of the youth development center
- The role of Juvenile Community Corrections Officers and the Superintendents in the transition process
- Participants had an opportunity for corrections and education personnel to discuss how the process is working in their districts.

Project Impact staff, personnel funded by the Department of Education and housed at the facilities, have been following up the training with personal visits to the school districts unable to attend state wide training and to provide reintegration training.

The Project Impact end of the year report for July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2005 shows an increase in reintegration planning between the youth development centers and school districts.

Schools participating in Reintegration planning	Long Creek 65	Mountain View 33
School Reintegration Team meetings	Long Creek 42	Mountain View 33

(At Long Creek 23 students went to Adult Education)