

Maine Learning Results Taskforce

Topic: Science of Learning and Development (SoLD) and Design Principles

Date: December 17, 2025

Location: Virtual (Zoom)

Time: 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Meeting Goals

- Review insights from the Early Perspectives Survey to understand Taskforce members' baseline beliefs about standards.
- Ground the Taskforce in core principles from the Science of Learning and Development (SoLD).
- Begin identifying core design principles that should guide the future framework of Maine's Learning Results.
- Connect how students learn to how standards can create the conditions for powerful learning.

Presenters and Facilitators

- Beth Lambert, Chief Teaching and Learning Officer, Maine Department of Education
- Jennifer DePaoli, Learning Policy Institute (LPI)
- Charlie Thompson, Learning Policy Institute (LPI)
- Ellen Cushing and Beth Ratway, Northeast Comprehensive Center (NECC)

In Attendance

Taskforce Members

Brian Cole, Courtney McLellan, Courtney Belolan, Craig Haims, David Dorr, Dee Saucier, Thomas Ambrose, Erica Mazzeo, Erik Blacksmith, Glenn Cummings, Heather Manchester, Heidi Goodwin, Hermenegildo Paulo, Jason Judd, Jenn Belanger, Jennifer Nickerson, Jodi Mezzanotte, Jon Doty, Julie Kimball, Kerry O'Brien, Lee Anne Larsen, Deb McIntyre, Melissa Frans, Mercedes Pour, Paulette Bonneau, Peter Geiger, Renita Ward-Downer Brewer, Ruth Kermish, Shanna Crofton, Stephanie Bresett, Steven Bussiere-Sanford, and Tori Hildreth.

DOE Staff

Beth Lambert and additional staff supporting facilitation and logistics.

Partner Organizations

Learning Policy Institute (LPI) and Northeast Comprehensive Center (NECC).

Discussion Summary

1. Welcome and Framing – Beth Lambert

Beth welcomed members and grounded the Taskforce in its mandate under LD 1701, emphasizing that this session would focus on understanding how standards are shaped and developed. She noted that the Early Perspectives Survey was designed to surface questions and tensions early in

the process and that interim work would be conducted between meetings to advance the Taskforce's efforts.

2. Early Perspectives Survey Highlights – Beth Ratway, NECC

Beth Ratway presented findings from the Early Perspectives Survey, which drew responses from directors, teachers, superintendents, instructors, and others with diverse levels of expertise and experience. Respondents showed strong consensus that standards should create consistency and accountability, with the primary purpose being to establish expectations across grades regardless of student background or location. Current MLR were rated as somewhat effective.

Priorities for improvement included making standards user-friendly, prioritizing essentials, integrating across disciplines, updating for relevance, supporting implementation diversifying assessment, and embedding equity and 21st-century skills. Many emphasized that standards should show clear progression from grade to grade.

3. Learning Policy Institute Presentation: SoLD Implications for Learning Standards

Jennifer DePaoli and Charlie Thompson from the Learning Policy Institute presented on the Science of Learning and Development (SoLD) and its implications for standards design. Key takeaways included:

- The brain is malleable throughout life; development happens through diverse pathways; experiences profoundly impact learning; context rather than genes drives who we become.
- Learning is enhanced by social interaction, rich environments, physical activity, and emotional and cultural well-being. It is impaired by stress, anxiety, loneliness, sleep deprivation, and identity threats.
- Schools enable learning success through positive developmental relationships, environments of safety and belonging, rich learning experiences, development of skills and mindsets, and integrated support systems.
- Barriers to SoLD-aligned learning include misconceptions about standards, shallow interpretations, lack of integration, and factory-model school organization.
- Examples from other states: Minnesota aligning teacher standards with SoLD principles; Washington State creating a Profile of a Graduate; Oakland Unified implementing graduate profile capstones; NY Performance Standards Consortium developing practitioner-developed assessments; Indiana conducting community-engaged standards review.

Discussion highlights: Jon Doty asked how states addressed perceptions of lowering standards—Charlie Thompson noted community engagement proved valuable for explaining that refinement means prioritizing content. Heather Manchester asked about sustaining work across political changes—Jennifer DePaoli noted that greater buy-in across schools, parents, and communities helps work sustain. Glen Cummings asked about systemic authentic assessment—Charlie Thompson noted examples exist but systemic forces work against them.

4. Small Group Discussions and Synthesis

Taskforce members engaged in facilitated breakout discussions to reflect on three guiding prompts:

- What felt most important or resonant from the presentation given your role and perspective?
- If standards are a framework that puts SoLD into action, what would that look like for Maine's Learning Results?
- What tensions or tradeoffs would we need to navigate?

Emerging Themes:

- **Integrated, Multidisciplinary Learning:** Strong desire for standards similar to NextGen Science that are cross-cutting and integrated. Current MLR lack interdisciplinary alignment and connection to graduate outcomes. Connecting subjects and grade levels requires a cultural shift in how education is structured.
- **Portrait of a Graduate:** Maine needs a clear vision for future-ready students, with alignment to skills like collaboration, adaptability, and independent learning. Standards should be backwards mapped from desired graduate outcomes.
- **Assessment vs. Standards:** The issue is not the standards themselves, which are research-based, but rather misaligned and ineffective assessment systems. Focus should be on better assessments and instructional supports.
- **Core Design Principles:** Groups identified six principles—foundation of defined core knowledge, integration across content areas, continuum/progression, prioritization and clarity, flexibility and pathways, and inclusivity and universal design. Key emphasis on streamlining to manageable "power standards" that endure over time.
- **Coherence and Progression:** Need for both horizontal alignment across grade levels and vertical progression building foundational skills, with flexibility for personalized pathways and mastery-based progression.
- **Ease of Use:** Standards should be practical and accessible for educators, creating a big-picture framework rather than exhaustive lists, allowing schools to focus on implementation rather than interpretation.
- **Tensions and Tradeoffs:** Groups identified core tensions including using existing research-based standards versus reinventing them, balancing statewide consistency with local control, pushing for interdisciplinary learning while respecting content expertise, and navigating political and cultural factors. Community engagement is critical to bridge these gaps.

Action Items

- **Next Taskforce Meeting:** February 11, 2026, 3:00–5:00 p.m. via Zoom.
- **Interim Work Assignment:** Taskforce members will be assigned to groups to complete a three-step annotation process on an assigned standard (e.g., Life and Career Ready Standard A.1 Self-Knowledge). Members will individually review the standard and notice what is already there; view it through a SoLD lens considering development over time, demonstration methods, and where identity, culture, and relationships matter; and consider what might shift if the standard were grounded in SoLD. Focus areas include development

over time, coherence and meaning for learners, and multiple ways learning could be demonstrated.

- **Maine DOE Follow-Up:** Maine DOE will share the slide deck and clear instructions for interim work following the meeting.
- **Resource Access:** Meeting slides, recording, and small group notes will be shared in the Taskforce folder for reference.

Looking Ahead

The February 11, 2026 meeting will focus on discussing the interim standard annotation work. Members will come prepared to share insights from their analysis and continue exploring how the Science of Learning and Development can inform the purpose, structure, and design of Maine's next generation of learning standards.