

Maine Learning Results Taskforce

Topic: Focusing on Representation and Inclusion: Rethinking K-12 Standards Design

Date: June 17, 2026

Location: Virtual (Zoom)

Time: 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Meeting Goals

- Identify shared learning from the homework.
- Surface key insights from the Maine Learning Results analysis.
- Discuss key questions, tensions, or gaps in the inclusion of diverse cultures, communities, and traditions in standards design.
- Engage with a panel of state leaders to test, refine, and expand Taskforce thinking about standards design.

Presenters and Facilitators

- Beth Lambert, Chief Teaching and Learning Officer, Maine Department of Education
- Brianne Lolar, Wabanaki Studies Specialist (panel moderator)
- Ashley Woolsey-Greene, Social Studies Coordinator, Office of Standards, New Jersey Department of Education
- Maxine Alex, Tribal Consultation Program Supervisor, Washington Office of Native Education
- Bawaajigekwe Boulley, Native Student Success Program Supervisor, Washington Office of Native Education
- Joseph Ulibarri, PhD, Curriculum Specialist (Black Education Act), New Mexico Public Education Department
- Small group facilitators: Cee Belolan, Jen Belanger, Dee Saucier, Nicole Madore, and Connor Pennell.

In Attendance

Taskforce Members

Angela Hardy, Courtney McLellan, David Dorr, Deb Macintyre, Erica Mazzeo, Erik Blacksmith, Glenn Cummings, Heidi Goodwin, Jodi Mezzanotte, Jon Doty, Julie Kimball, Kerry O'Brien, Kim Barnes, Paulette Bonneau, Peter Geiger, Renita Ward-Downer, Shanna Crofton, Stephanie Bresett, and Steve Bussiere.

DOE Staff

Beth Lambert, Cee Belolan, and additional staff supporting facilitation and logistics.

Partner Organizations

Northeast Comprehensive Center (NECC), New Jersey Department of Education, Washington Office of Native Education, and New Mexico Public Education Department.

Discussion Summary

1. Welcome and Framing – Beth Lambert

Beth welcomed Taskforce members and reaffirmed the group's charge under LD 1701, including its mandate to assess the representation of diverse cultures and traditions in the Maine Learning Results (MLRs). She situated the meeting within the Taskforce's broader arc. The group began by grounding the purpose of standards, clarifying the charge, examining the role of statewide standards, and building shared understanding. Meeting #5's focus was on examining representation through a learning lens, including what representation has to do with learning, what responsibility the state has, what authentic representation looks like, and what can be learned from other states. The work ahead turns to designing forward by developing design principles, exploring structure and coherence, centering equity and access, and informing recommendations and statute.

2. Unpacking the Homework – Individual Reflection

Members reviewed their notes from the reading and reflected individually, guided by two questions:

- What responsibility does the state have, and what responsibility does it not have, when determining whose histories, cultures, and perspectives are reflected in statewide learning standards?
- If representation were treated as a design principle rather than a content requirement, what might look different about the structure of the Maine Learning Results (MLRs)?

3. Preparing for the Panel– Small Group Reflections

Members moved into their small groups to share their most important or persistent observations from the homework, cluster similar ideas, and identify key questions for the panel that will help inform the work moving forward.

4. Preparing for the Panel—Large Group Share Out

Each small group reported back to the full Taskforce on the recurring themes that emerged from their discussions. Common themes across groups included the following:

- **State Responsibility and Local Control:** Groups consistently wrestled with balancing the state's obligation to ensure students develop awareness of diverse cultures, viewpoints, and perspectives against Maine's local-control tradition. Members suggested that state standards should serve as a guide or framework while local curriculum is where control lives, and several called for greater consistency across content areas.
- **Specificity and Generality:** Members debated how explicit standards should be. Naming specific groups risks excluding others or creating an "opt-in/opt-out" dynamic, such as naming the Wabanaki while leaving out Franco-American Mainers or African Americans, while keeping standards broad risks vagueness, or "asking for visibility without describing

what that visibility is." Groups expressed a desire for guidance on what and why to teach without being overly prescriptive.

- **Representation as Design, Not Just Content:** Members noted that a new design, not just new standards, is needed, with representation built into the structure. Ideas included a dynamic, developmentally appropriate set of themes, such as anthropology-style themes (food, shelter, religion, and politics) organized by grade span, and starting from an empathy-based foundation.
- **Implementation Gap:** Groups observed that statutory changes lack Maine DOE implementation guidance, that the five-year review window does not require substantive change, and that there is a gap between changes to standards and what students actually experience. This pointed to the need for a research basis for implementation, not only for the content of standards.
- **Educator Support and Resources:** Members noted that educators struggle to teach this content respectfully and without stereotypes and often lack resources. For example, finding appropriate Wabanaki Studies materials at the elementary level proved difficult and required seeking a grant that not every district can secure. Resources such as the MOOSE modules were cited as helpful, and members favored standards that provide structure and guidance to build from.
- **Primary Sources, Structure, and Balance:** Groups discussed grounding the work in the systemic, structural, and primary stories of the people of Maine, including the importance of primary sources and multiple perspectives over time, a willingness to acknowledge fault and regret, and using literature and art as entry points, while approaching the work in a balanced way.

The Taskforce surfaced the following questions for the panel:

- As a local-control state, how do you balance local control with ensuring students receive the content about cultures they should have?
- How does a student gain multiple perspectives on an event such as genocide while also developing a broader understanding of many cultures?
- How do you bridge the gap between changes to standards and actual changes in what students experience? There is a research basis for the content of standards, so how do we build a research basis for implementation?
- Are the standards preparing students for what they need post-graduation, is the rigor correct, and is that being captured in testing?
- Is there a way to provide guidance in the standards about what and why to teach without being overly prescriptive?

5. Panel Discussion—Learning from Early Childhood Standards Design

The panel, moderated by Brianne Lolar (Wabanaki Studies Specialist), featured leaders from the New Jersey, Washington, and New Mexico Departments of Education: Ashley Woolsey-Greene (New Jersey), Maxine Alex and Bawaajigekwe Boulley (Washington Office of Native Education), and Joseph Ulibarri (New Mexico). The discussion was organized around several themes.

- **Grounding in Foundational Purpose and the "6 Rs":** Bawaajigekwe Boulley described a worldview built on the 6 Rs (i.e., respect, relationships, reciprocity, relevance, responsibility, and representation), emphasizing that representation is an outcome that cannot be achieved without the others. Drawing on "Nothing about us without us," she noted that authenticity emerges not from representing communities but from including those most impacted in the design itself. In her words, representation is something created with people, not for people. She encouraged the group to revisit the foundational question of why the work matters before building the product.
- **Layering Legal Mandates with Relational Practice:** Building on the 6 Rs, Boulley described layering federal and state mandates onto a foundation of relational understanding, with tribal consultation serving as a template for how states engage marginalized groups. Once legal obligations are identified, the 6 Rs provide a way of interacting with stakeholders so that each community, including tribal communities, has an equal voice.
- **Where Representation Lives in State Standards:** Panelists described different approaches. In New Jersey, representation is explicit in the social studies standards and embedded in instructional supports across other content areas; Ashley Woolsey-Greene noted a one-page educator checklist to gauge whether students see themselves and are prompted to question the world, framing standards as a tool for educators rather than the "end all be all." In New Mexico, Joseph Ulibarri described a culturally and linguistically responsive framework attached to the standards, including 30 culturally competent "elements" used in professional development, and a multi-layered system of support that embeds cultures in practice. In Washington, Maxine Alex described a tribally developed curriculum originally based in social studies standards that now cuts across subjects, developed with tribal input and approval, with attention to teaching educators to adapt the lessons and to building accountability measures.
- **Principles and Resources for Native Students:** Bawaajigekwe Boulley described ELA standards and Native literacy guidance built as a set of principles, rather than standards, for approaching Native students and communities in a respectful, holistic way, framed around student success broadly with dedicated effort for Native students. (Resource shared: Washington OSPI Native Literacy Guidance, https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2026-03/ospi-native-literacy-guidance-2026_0.pdf.)
- **Practical Structures for Community Engagement:** Panelists offered concrete examples, including community and tribal representatives serving on standards-writing teams, dedicated funding for consultation and community engagement, and scheduled review cycles with communities after implementation.
- **Impact and Implementation:** Panelists reflected on early signals of impact. Boulley described a deliberate language shift, moving from "reduce barriers to academic achievement" to "innovations that create the conditions for student success," along with

work alongside data teams within a multi-tiered system of support. Alex pointed to sovereignty training for educators, flexible and place-based tribal partnerships ("purpose without uniformity in practice"), and a shift from "teacher as expert" toward vulnerability, co-learning, and co-design, moving from culturally responsive to culturally sustaining practice. She stressed that sustaining the work over time requires supportive policy. Ulibarri reported that 62% of New Mexico districts have adopted high-quality instructional materials meeting a culturally responsive framework, supplemented by an Open Educational Resources library (<https://oer.ped.nm.gov/>), and noted that the state's Black Education Act requires 90 minutes of cultural training each year.

- **Language and Systemic Change:** Ashley Woolsey-Greene emphasized that language matters and that systemic change depends on helping people see what is absent from a written statement, since bias narratives can exclude marginalized populations. Maxine Alex added that the goal is to foster belonging in an asset-based context without a scarcity mindset, in which including one group is seen as excluding another.

Action Items

- Next Taskforce Meeting: August 12, 2026, 3:00–5:00 p.m. via Zoom.
- Interim Work: Revisit the patterns, tensions, and design criteria created in March, and reflect on whether the early childhood discussion, a developmental or whole-child lens, and today's panel discussion inform or refine your assigned design criteria.
- Homework: Review the Patterns and Tensions document and the Design Considerations and Patterns survey data.

Looking Ahead

The August 12, 2026, meeting will focus on the interim work, refining the draft design criteria and principles through the lens of representation and inclusion. Members will bring forward how the panel's examples, including treating representation as a design principle, grounding the work in relational practice, and pairing broad standards with supporting guidance, help inform their assigned design criteria as the Taskforce continues its bi-monthly work toward the February 2027 final report and proposed updates to the Maine Learning Results and statute.