



Expanding Our Practices to Improve Our Communities

The Interdisciplinary Instruction Team

<https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/ii>



Our students are

Healthy

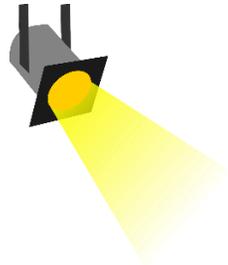
Engaged

Safe

Supported

Challenged

Prepared



By: Morgan Dunton

Interdisciplinary Instruction Specialist



Pauline Hilton Dunton
Multi-age Classroom
Dresden, Maine
c. 1930

Everything Old is New Again!

Interdisciplinary Instruction is not a new idea. Many of us have experienced some version of interdisciplinary instruction over the years. What makes Maine DOE try again as an innovative practice?

My grandmother told me as I entered the teaching profession that everything in education has already been done. Things come back time and again with fresh paint, but old souls. The idea behind interdisciplinary instruction is to help students learn both deeply and broadly, to understand the essential concepts of a discipline then apply those concepts in a whole variety of situations, some familiar and some entirely unique.

Current trends suggest that our students will be working in a variety of careers throughout their lifetimes. Many will do jobs that haven't even been invented yet with technologies yet to be developed. The 21st Century workplace requires flexibility, clear communication skills, creative thinking, analytical depth, and an ability to juggle tasks and blend knowledge of many different areas to meet the workplace demands in an ever-changing world. We have certainly experienced this ourselves as many of us were forced to pivot (are you sick of that word?) instantly and teach in a way we didn't know we could.

As we emerge from an unexpected challenge, we reflect on what we have learned about ourselves and our own work. We developed expertise or at least some degree of comfort with technologies that we had never heard of before. We utilized tools that had been peripheral in our classrooms but suddenly became essential. We challenged our own capacity for learning as we provided continuous education for our students.

What is most apparent is that we cannot afford to become so powerfully masterful in one narrow area that we cannot function in the face of unplanned detours. We draw on all our skills, work collaboratively to explore problems and design solutions, fine tune our learning, and try a different approach. We take risks with a measure of caution and a full dose of reflection, then adjust our course and keep going.

So here we are, forging a new normal. Maine DOE is adopting interdisciplinary instruction to focus on deep learning and create the flexibility we all need to face the next unexpected challenge. We know much more about brain-based learning than we did in past efforts. We also have seen the world change dramatically with a very different workplace than the one we envisioned just a few years ago. We look forward to collaborating with Maine educators to create the next normal and make some overdue updates to our practices. Please visit the [Interdisciplinary Instruction website](#) for frequent updates.



What's UP: Timely Information

Office Hours: Hosted by the Interdisciplinary Instruction Team

Daily office hours provide an opportunity to chat with a specialist, learn what is happening right now at DOE, explore recent tools and resources, and ask your questions. Office hours will be repeated daily but the same information will be provided for an entire week.

Zoom meeting link ID: 811 9062 1334 Passcode: 5fB4jh			
Mondays	Tuesdays	Wednesdays	Thursdays
9 – 10 am	3 – 4 pm	4 – 5 pm	3 – 4 pm
Dates		Office Hours Topic	
4/4/22 - 4/7/22		Welcome to Interdisciplinary Instruction	
4/11/22 - 4/14/22		Types of Interdisciplinary Instruction	

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Reading in High School: Addressing Frustration

A four-part series

When students enter high school reading below grade level, it can be very challenging and often frustrating to present complex content. Each session will dig deeper into instructional strategies for helping students engage with complex text in any content area.

To learn more about this series, [click here](#).



The Last Word

Next issue: Why revising the system is essential to making meaningful change. Maya Angelou implored us to “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.” After education was thrown topsy-turvy by a global pandemic, there was a natural longing to return to “normal,” yet we have an opportunity to do better. What could that look like?

Resources: professional texts, websites, podcasts, etc.

[Introduction to the Interdisciplinary Instruction Team at the Maine Department of Education](#)

Watch this short video from Jason Anderson, Interdisciplinary Instruction Team Coordinator, as he shares the work of this new team!

[What is Interdisciplinary Learning?](#)

This blog from Education Scotland clearly articulates the strengths of interdisciplinary learning from simple to complex approaches.

[What is Interdisciplinary Teaching?](#)

From SERC and NSF, this website provides a variety of sources to support an understanding of interdisciplinary teaching with resources and examples.