



## Certification and Higher Education Committee Meeting

23 State House Station  
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333

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The Certification and Higher Education Committee held a meeting on June 28, 2025, via Zoom. The following members were present: Chair Thomas Keller, and members Victoria Kornfield, Denham Ward and new State Board member Victoria Cohen along with Michael Perry, Mallory Cook, Fiona McDonnell, Jane Loxterkamp. Jon Doty, Erin Straine, Dan Chuhta

Chair Keller called the meeting to order at 10:30 AM.

Victoria Kornfield moved that the minutes from the May 28, 2025 meeting be accepted as written, Denham seconded and all approved.

Public comment - none

#### Maine Higher Ed Update

Michael Perry provided an update on higher education, noting that review committees are being formed for upcoming evaluations.

Michael discussed his conversation with an institution about online degree authorization in Maine, explaining that the rules allow institutions approved for degree granting to offer both online and in-person programs without additional authorization. He noted that while other states may have different requirements, Maine's rules exempt degree-granting institutions from needing separate authorization for non-degree programs. Michael and Tom agreed to revisit and potentially update a previous checklist used for reviewing institutions, with Tom offering to locate existing drafts. They also clarified the distinction between accreditor and state authorization processes, emphasizing that state approval focuses on institutional-level standards rather than specific program content.

The committee discussed 5 Annual EPP reports, first focusing on graduate tracking and program approvals, with Denham noting that while Bates College doesn't formally track graduates, the Development Office likely does. Tom highlighted the strong research work of professors at both Bowdoin and Bates, particularly in rural schools and science education. Michael explained the process for transcript analysis and program approval, noting that while institutions can request a mid-cycle review, the timeline for approval depends on available resources and the institution's established status as an EPP.

The committee discussed College of the Atlantic's educational programs and their participation in teacher residency initiatives, noting concerns about upcoming staff retirements. They reviewed and approved program reports from Bates College, Bowdoin College, College of the Atlantic, Colby College, and Eastern Maine Community College, with Jane confirming Eastern Maine's strong pathways and innovative approach.

Tom mentioned that they have received annual reports from all institutions, which have been simplified to reduce burden.

Michael reported on new legislation requiring public charter school teachers to obtain certification by 2026, with an amendment allowing a three-year transition period.

Tom reported that a resolve directing the University of Maine system to study student teacher compensation has been passed, with a stakeholder group tasked to examine barriers, compensation structures, and administration

by November 6th, though no budget was allocated for this study. Fiona raised concerns about equitable funding for student teachers across different institutions, particularly noting USM's large number of interns, and questioned the administration of these funds.

Fiona expressed concerns about the quality of teacher certification and the need for broader assessment of teaching outcomes, while Tom highlighted the importance of selecting and training cooperating teachers and matching student teachers with experienced educators.

#### Certification update

Michael reported that the certification team processed 2,607 applications in May, which was lower than the previous two years, possibly due to fewer job offers and budget uncertainties. Despite the lower application load, the team maintained high levels of communication, sending 6,295 emails, answering 1,381 incoming calls, and making 280 outgoing calls. They also processed 23,948 pages of documents and handled 230 troubleshooting cases for MIA accounts. Michael noted that the first two weeks of June saw an increase in applications compared to the previous year, suggesting a potential late spring boost.

The committee reviewed teacher shortage areas and approved educator preparation programs (EPPs) in Maine. Michael presented data on shortage areas and EPPs, highlighting that general elementary and special education have the most approved programs, while computer technology has none despite 356 active credentials. The committee discussed the pathways to middle level endorsements, noting that many middle level teachers obtain their credentials through secondary or general elementary programs.

The group discussed legislation regarding alternative pathways for industrial arts certification, with Michael explaining that while there are no approved industrial arts programs in Maine, the State Board has been instructed to create specific alternative pathways for certification.

Tom and Michael addressed a specific example involving an educator with a conditional teaching certification who had been serving as an educational technician without proper reporting, explaining the requirements for certification renewal and potential pathways forward. Michael emphasized the importance of having a clear plan for educators on temporary licensure, noting that success rates are higher when educators and schools collaborate on such plans. Tom appreciated Michael's efforts in working with educators to facilitate certification processes, while also acknowledging the need for better communication with superintendents about the benefits of planning for educators on conditional licenses.

The committee discussed violation reports and data collection, with Michael explaining they are waiting for a letter from the ECA committee regarding what information to report. They discussed concerns about the violations list and its impact on educators, particularly in rural areas.

Denham provided an update on the regional longitudinal data study, which has completed year 2 with 14 pilot schools and is expanding to 80 schools in year 3, aiming to improve data collection and address challenges in defining teacher vacancies.

#### Report from TEAME and EPPS - Dr. Fiona McDonnell

The meeting covered updates from the Teacher Educator Alliance of Maine and the University of Southern Maine (USM). Fiona reported on various initiatives, including collaborations with USM in TESOL, apprenticeship grants, and a bio lab. She also mentioned Thomas College's development of a residency-based model and USM's strong enrollment in their education programs, with 100 students expected this fall. Tom emphasized the importance of collaboration between K-12 and higher education.

#### Other business

The committee reviewed the progress on Chapter 115, which has undergone multiple public meetings, workshops, and feedback sessions. Tom explained that the near-final version is ready for a quick review by the

committee before submission to the Attorney General's office for a 30-day pre-review. Afterward, the State Board will review it for legal compliance and contradictions, followed by a 30-day public comment period with a hearing. Fiona raised concerns about Pathway 3, emphasizing the need for thorough stakeholder consultation and careful consideration of its long-term consequences. Tom clarified that Pathway 3 is intended for career changers and additional endorsements, with the regulations serving as a framework for further development.

The State Board discussed two recent reports on math education in Maine, with Tom presenting findings from the National Council on Teacher Quality and Kids Count that showed concerning performance in math. The group, including Vicky and Fiona, examined how these reports aligned with existing teacher preparation standards and discussed the challenges of interpreting different assessment methods and rankings across organizations. The board considered whether to take proactive measures in response to these reports, with Tom suggesting this could be a topic for broader discussion among the State Board.

Having no other business Tom reminded people that the next meeting would be held on July 23rd at 10:30 AM East Coast time and that this meeting was adjourned.