

PREP: PDN

The Penobscot River Educational Partnership: A Professional Development Network

A Public School / University Partnership
to improve teaching and learning

Annual Report 2003 – 2004



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The Penobscot River Educational Partnership: A Professional Development Network

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About the Partnership

PREP: PDN is a collaborative effort of local schools and the University of Maine to develop the capacity of member organizations and individuals to improve teaching and learning.

The rapid pace of change and innovation in education, the challenge of identifying scarce resources for teaching and learning, and the persistent social demands for more effective schools require that educators blur the institutional boundaries that have historically existed. Only through identifying common needs and sharing resources can schools and universities meet the expectations of our society.

It is in this spirit that the Penobscot River Educational Partnership (PREP) founded in 1996, and the Professional Development Network, founded in 1997, agreed to merge efforts and become known as the Penobscot River Educational Partnership: A Professional Development Network. PREP: PDN was officially established June 14, 1999.

The agreement was initially between the school units of Brewer, Bucksport, Old Town, Union #87, Union 90, SAD #22, Indian Island, and the College of Education & Human Development of the University of Maine. School Union 91, the United Technology Center, the College of Business, Public Policy and Health and Child Development Services of Penobscot County became full partners since the founding. The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences has been active in PREP: PDN activities since the merger.

Mission

The ultimate purpose of PREP: PDN is to improve learning opportunities for students, Pre-K–16 as well as graduate students. We work to enhance student learning through:

- successful implementation of Maine's Learning Results and effective assessment systems
- monitoring, evaluating and adapting innovations in the field of education and business
- providing high-quality professional development for practicing educators
- collaboratively guiding the professional development of the next generation of educators
- systemic inquiry and research to address critical issues of teaching and learning and inform the work of the partners
- maintaining the Partnership as a learning community which supports teaching and learning, research, and professional development across all levels of the profession
- establishing and implementing a regional plan to generate cost savings/enhancements in the delivery of public education services

Vision Statement

PREP: PDN will continue to develop commitment to meaningful, exemplary teaching and learning, high-quality learning experiences for educators, and a true collaborative spirit.

Governance Committees

- Executive
Superintendents, Deans, Executive Director
Responsible for enterprise, oversight, mission attainment
- Steering
Curriculum Coordinators, Executive Director
Responsible for direct planning, leadership

Action Committees

- Teacher Preparation
Plans collaborative preparation and support of pre-service and practicing educators in Professional Development Schools, which provide a realistic learning laboratory for aspiring and novice teachers and for University and school faculty jointly investigating questions of teaching and learning.
- Professional Development
Initiates, plans and facilitates professional development for Partnership schools and educators.
- Systemic Inquiry & Research
Examines issues in teaching and learning, refines and assesses partnership activities and development based on strategic plan indicators.
- Grants & Funding
Seeks additional resources to support and expand Partnership projects.
- Secondary School Initiative
Addresses special needs of secondary schools, such as responding to state and national initiatives for high school graduation and other reform efforts.

Members

Brewer	SAD 22 (Hampden, Newburgh, Winterport)
Bucksport	Union 87 (Orono, Veazie)
Indian Island	Union 90 (Alton, Bradley, Greenbush, Milford)
Old Town	Union 91 (Orrington, Orland)
The University of Maine	United Technologies Center
Colleges of:	
Education & Human Development	
Business, Public Policy & Health	
Liberal Arts & Sciences	
Maine Child Development Services/Penobscot County	

Executive Director's Report



By Owen Maurais

The 2003–04 year was an exciting time for the partnership. The good work of past years was continued with public school and University faculty working together to focus staff development, collaborate in teacher preparation and in meeting the challenges of the Maine Learning Results. Many new initiatives were begun, having the promise of expanding the influence and impact of the Partnership on the increased achievement of our students. A brief synopsis of successful initiatives follows.

Ongoing Involvement of the Executive Officers

Superintendents of schools as well as the Deans of the College of Education and Human Development and the College of Business, Public Policy and Health met monthly to develop direction and provide resources for newer initiatives and to support ongoing initiatives.

Leadership of Curriculum Coordinators

Curriculum Coordinators met monthly to address the challenges found in the Maine Learning Results. Their good work moved districts into strong positions in developing comprehensive Local Assessment Systems. In addition, their work with principals, guidance counselors and special education directors enhanced their understanding of the realities of the expectations of the Local Assessment System.

New Partner

In January 2004, the College of Business, Public Policy and Health joined the PREP Partnership. The expertise found in the faculty and full involvement of the Dean provided the foundation for enhancing the breadth and quality of initiatives of the Partnership.

Enhanced Staff Development Opportunities

Extensive planning led to the development of expanded opportunities for staff development beginning with the 2004–05 school year. Faculty will access a wide variety of activities, all provided by educators with connections to the classroom.

Collaboration with the State Department of Education

Strong connections have been developed with the State Department of Education. Common interests and a commitment to work together have been established. In August 2004, work began in identifying specific improvement initiatives focusing efforts of PREP and DOE staff. Areas of collaboration include: Finances and Resources; Achievement/Assessment/Support to Students; and Information Management.

Child Development Services

Beginning with the 2004–05 school year, Child Development Services of Penobscot County has become a full partner in the partnership. Close collaboration between Child Development Services and public schools will help ensure a smooth transition from the pre-school setting to public schools.

Enhanced Guidance Services

Working with the Mitchell Institute, high school administrators and guidance staff are focusing on enhancing guidance opportunities for students with the goal of increasing attendance in post-secondary education. Planning for this work began in the spring of 2004 with ongoing efforts beginning in August 2004.

Special Education Initiative

Representatives from PREP schools are working through a state grant to enhance pre-referral initiatives for students in grades 1–2, to develop regional student assessment and direct service opportunities and to implement upcoming modifications to the special education identification criteria.

“We have another opportunity to be pioneers in Maine — for sustainable, replicable models of career guidance.

— J. Duke Albanese, policy adviser, Great Maine Schools Project

Strategic Plan

A strategic plan was finalized during the 2002–03 school year. This plan provides ongoing direction for our continuing efforts. With the addition of our newer initiatives, the plan will continue to be updated.

Commitment of the Membership

The individual professionals involved with the partnership continue to exhibit a high degree of commitment to enhancing educational opportunities for our students. Leadership provided is a catalyst for change at the district, school and classroom level.

Staff Development

Staff development offerings, based on Partnership recommendations, were developed for Fall 2004 and will be followed in the spring with another agenda.

NCATE Review

PREP: PDN has been an active participant in helping the University prepare for its upcoming reaccreditation review with the National Association for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. From establishing a conceptual framework to continuing work on various standards, PREP: PDN has been an active partner in this crucial process.

Promoting the Partnership

The Partnership continues to maintain a comprehensive website at www.preppdn.org. During the past year, PREP: PDN created a PowerPoint display explaining the Partnership, its goals and initiatives. The PowerPoint was distributed to all PREP: PDN superintendents for presentation to their school boards. The Partnership also revised and distributed a general information brochure.

*“We need to build a common understanding.
Everyone needs to be heard. Then we focus.”*

— Owen Maurais

Steering Committee

The curriculum coordinators of the Partnership schools meet during the morning of every PREP: PDN general meeting. Group members agree that these meetings are valuable professional development experiences. Together we have accomplished or are working to accomplish the following:

- Districts collaborating on joint projects (Example: Union 87 and Brewer on developing and offering a locally based course on differentiation of instruction).
- Two special informational sessions — one for Special Education directors and one for middle school/high school guidance staff in the partner districts.
- Supporting each other through the development and implementation of local assessment systems, as well as No Child Left Behind required initiatives.
- Taking on more of an advocacy role with the state, as we become more of a regional entity, beginning with an informational session with Deputy Commissioner Patrick Phillips and Local Assessment Coordinator Pam Rolfe, from the Maine Department of Education.
- Initial discussions of future regional summer school programs.
- Collaboration in the development of a slate of focused professional development activities for 2004–2005.

In addition, we are working together to share responsibilities. Various individuals, who comprise our committee membership, sit on state committees or regional groups and routinely report back to the rest of the group.

- Judy Pusey (Old Town) participates on the Maine Native American Studies Commission and the Maine Center for the Arts Outreach Committee.
- Clayton Holmes (Union 90) represents the group on a Partnership of Partnerships Board, which promotes and funds high-quality regional professional development activities.
- Elaine Emery (Brewer) is working with science educators at the University of Maine to develop and implement a physical science education project.
- Meredith Higgins (Union 87) has kept up to date on technology initiatives and Gifted/Talented program requirements, keeping the rest of us well informed.
- Associate Dean Anne Pooler (UMaine) sits on several state advisory boards and keeps us updated on current and future events, and serves as co-chair of the No Child Left Behind Task Force established by Senators Collins and Snowe.
- Joanie Speyer (SAD 22) has led a few special projects, most notably a policy advocacy project, promoting some sensible changes in the diploma requirements for Maine students.
- Ruth Townsend (Union 91) participates with several state advisory groups, including the Maine Center for Educational Services (MCES) Small District Assessment Network and the MCES Assessment Cooperative.
- Julie Hackett (Bucksport) is spearheading an initiative to obtain corporate sponsorship for our efforts.

- Greg Miller (United Technologies Center) is taking a leadership role regarding technical and career education and the Maine Learning Results standards.
- New members, such as Kyle Ritter (SAD 22) and Tracey Nute (Maine Indian Education), are encouraged to spend their first year just becoming familiar with all the initiatives we work on.

“Collaboration between the training institution and the schools we are training students for is crucial. Performance outcomes are driving K–16 education today, and we are all going through a major transition. In the public schools No Child Left Behind and the Maine Learning Results require major assessment work and information. Our effort in higher education is similar as we develop proficiency standards and assessments for our students. We are all learning from one another.”

— Anne Pooler, Associate Dean for Instruction



Systemic Inquiry Committee

The Systemic Inquiry Committee began the year by identifying five goals:

- assist with implementation of the Strategic Plan ensuring that completion of “Next Steps” is documented in an “Evidence Notebook”
- review/revise Strategic Plan as necessary and set 2004–2006 “Next Steps”
- revisit NCATE Standards and determine the process for evaluation of our Professional Development Schools within PREP: PDN
- assist in the presentation of data to the NCATE visiting team if asked to do so
- assist or advise other PREP: PDN subcommittees, upon request, in the development of a structure for the evaluation of specific projects.

A big accomplishment this year was the completion of the Strategic Plan Responsibilities Listing by Committees. Each committee was provided with a document which outlined the committee’s task completion responsibilities with a timeline attached. The purpose of the listing is to ensure that all tasks are completed to allow the organization to move forward.

The committee also worked to gain approval for a University of Maine course titled, “EDU 590 Creating Professional Development Schools in PREP: PDN.” The course aims to increase participants’ knowledge about PDSs; allow participants to create a plan for a PREP: PDN district to develop a PDS; give participants an opportunity to clarify their roles in developing PDSs in PREP: PDN; and help participants develop strategies for continued support in PDS development after the course ends.

After much discussion with the General Assembly, it was decided that this offering might be best if it were done as a series of workshops or seminars in the next school year rather than as a course. Several PREP members offered to work collaboratively with UMaine faculty member Jim Rog to plan and present these seminars.

Another project in the works is the creation of a rubric designed to help districts assess their level of participation as a PDS as measured against the NCATE standards and PREP expectations. This will allow each district to determine the level they are at presently, and then where they want to be in the future.

Committee members

Pamela Kimball, Chair	Brewer	Katie McLeod	Bucksport
Clayton Holmes	Union 90	Kyle Ritter	SAD 22
Elaine Emery	Brewer	Linda McLeod	Indian Island
Victoria Wilson	Union 91		

*“The four principles of any effort we undertake should be:
Effectiveness, Efficiency, Equity and Excellence.”*

*— Robert Cobb, Dean,
UMaine College of Education and Human Development*

Teacher Preparation Committee

The Teacher Preparation Committee’s focus this year has been on collaborating with the College of Education and Human Development in preparation for its upcoming accreditation with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. The College will be undergoing this review in the fall of 2005. In preparation, College faculty members are focusing on six standards, one of which deals with clinical practice relating to teacher candidates.

We are helping the College take a close look at field experience policies currently in place, what practices UMaine students experience while in the field, what evaluations are used, and how the field experiences help the students demonstrate proficiency with the Maine Beginning Teacher Standards.

A survey was developed for classroom teachers within the PREP: PDN schools to gather data about current field experience practices. This data will be used to better understand current practice in field experiences and to recommend future policies and practices.

Committee members:

Mary Bagley, chair	Old Town
Todd McKinley	Old Town
Beth Kingsbury	Indian Island School
Mary Smith	SAD 22
Carla Leathem	SAD 22
Nancy Knowles	Brewer
Cherie Roy	Milford
Nancy Minott	Union 91
Shelly Johnson	Union 87
Scott Nichols	Union 87
Dennis King	The University of Maine
Jim Rog	The University of Maine
Jim Artesani	The University of Maine
Marilyn Rice	The University of Maine
John Maddaus	The University of Maine

“The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is proud of its role in helping educate future teachers through partnerships with the College of Education and Human Development and PREP: PDN. Faculty in Art, Modern Languages and Classics, Music, Physics and the Intensive English Institute are active in the preparation of teachers. CLAS faculty members contribute not only to the training of undergraduates for teaching careers, but also to post-graduate programs of secondary teachers and a variety of outreach efforts in Maine schools.”

— Kathryn J. Olmstead, Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Professional Development Committee

The Professional Development Committee began the year by shifting the focus of the group's work to more long-range planning for professional development than had been practiced in past years. To begin this process, committee members reviewed and discussed Achieving Results, a framework for effective professional development published by the state. This discussion led the committee to some key goals for the year, including:

- Conduct a thorough needs assessment on the professional development needs and priorities across all PREP districts.
- Identify priorities for professional development and create a plan for on-going professional development and support in these areas.
- Evaluate professional development offerings.

The committee began by designing a professional development needs assessment and asked all participating districts to have teachers complete these surveys. Many completed surveys were returned to the committee and results were compiled. This information was then used to provide input to the professional development planning that the entire PREP: PDN General Assembly was engaged in during the spring. The result of this work is the beginning format for a long-range professional development plan for PREP: PDN.

The committee also worked on a format for documenting participation in PREP: PDN professional development activities. This documentation was compiled for 2003–2004 activities.

The committee's goals for next year are:

- Design and implement an evaluation process for PREP: PDN professional development activities.
- Continue long-range planning for professional development offered through PREP: PDN.
- Recommend how PREP: PDN should support teachers pursuing National Board Certification.
- Continue to explore ways to support new teachers.

Committee members:

Patricia Currie-Wright, Chair	Union 91
Faye Brown	Union 90
Meredith Higgins	Union 87
Judy Hamilton	Indian Island
Linda McLeod	Indian Island
Lori Matthews	SAD 22
Judy Pusey	Old Town
Deb YOUNCIS	Union 91
Connie Perry	The University of Maine

“This initiative is important for our faculty and students and is a direct benefit for the state of Maine. If we can bring better business practices to the schools, we can help them be more effective at what they do best.”

— Daniel Immis, Dean, College of Business, Public Policy and Health

Grants & Resources Committee

The need for more time, money and materials is a universal theme these days, and throughout the year the Grants and Resources Committee (GRC) focused on securing additional resources to assist PREP: PDN in achieving its mission of “developing the capacity of member organizations and individuals to improve teaching and learning.”

To achieve such a mission requires a plan. Members of the GRC began their work by defining and restructuring the role of the group. The committee’s purpose is to “promote the achievement of the PREP Strategic Plan through researching and publicizing existing resources and to lead efforts to obtain additional resources.” In addition to identifying various regional resource needs, the GRC will also explore various grant possibilities and assist grant writers by compiling a demographic profile, which will be needed to secure funding.

The GRC also intends to: promote regional resource needs on the website, serve as a liaison with the University for grants and resource needs, develop a job description for work study students and grant writers, and determine grant management procedures.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act, as well as our own state standards, the Maine Learning Results, have challenged educators to assist all students in meeting high standards. In order for all students to demonstrate proficiency, educators must learn new strategies and skills to help them do so. This is an enormous challenge, and a major initiative of the GRC this year was to develop a partnership with a local business that is willing to invest in our continued success. This work continues, and we look forward to forging a relationship with a business partner or sponsor.

Another exciting initiative organized by the GRC will be a monthly “Resource Sharing.” During our regularly scheduled PREP: PDN meetings, the GRC will share useful materials, such as books, websites and articles to assist members of our Partnership in helping all our students achieve high standards. With a new purpose and clearly articulated goals, members of the Grants and Resources Committee are confident that we will secure the much needed resources to forward the mission of PREP: PDN.

Committee Members

Julie Hackett	Bucksport
Elaine Emery	Brewer

“Our most pressing issue is how to do more with less. Our needs and standards are higher, but our resources are fewer.”

— Betsy Webb, Superintendent, Brewer Schools



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Union 90

Alton, Bradley, Greenbush, Milford

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