

Penobscot River Educational Partnership 2007-08 Annual Report

The Penobscot River Educational Partnership (PREP) is a school and University collaborative effort serving the Penobscot River Valley. The partnership has been in place since 1996 and supports member school systems in their provision of staff development, educational planning, provision of student support services and is currently initiating the provision of business related services. Focusing on efficiency and effectiveness has led to increased collaboration, trust and support to the member school units.

PREP partners include Brewer schools, Bucksport schools, Orland Elementary School, School Union 90 (Alton, Bradley, Greenbush, Milford), Indian Island School, Orrington, University of Maine (College of Education & Human Development, College of Business, Public Policy & Health, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences), Old Town schools, School Administrative District 22 (Hampden, Newburgh, Winterport) Union 87 (Orono, Veazie), SAD 63 (Clifton, Eddington, Holden), United Technology Center (Bangor), and Maine Child Development Services/Penobscot County.

The following is a listing of current initiatives involving schools within the PREP Partnership.

Executive Officers

This group meets four times yearly and provides overall direction for PREP Initiatives. The Executive Officers are comprised of school superintendents and the Dean of the College of Education and Human Development and the Dean of the College of Business, Public Policy and Health.

Curriculum Coordinators

This group meets monthly to provide planning, direction and support for professional improvement, student achievement and planning for improvement.

Professional Development/Professional Learning Community Development

Guidance Initiative

This is the fourth year of this groups functioning. Overall leadership has moved from the Mitchell Institute to a group involving guidance counselors and university faculty. This group will meet five to six times a year. Members consistently speak of the support received from this community. These activities are provided at no cost.

Response to Intervention K-1 Literacy

This is the third year of this communities functioning. A significant staff development initiative is ongoing with the provision of eight days of staff development to public school staff supporting K-1 Literacy. These activities are

provided at no cost. University professors in literacy and special education are providing these trainings as service to PREP Schools.

Pre-Referral Initiative

This expectation is found in the updated special education regulations. It focuses on regular education and in many ways are a continuation of the work already begun in the Response to Intervention Initiative. Dr. Marcia Davidson, Dr. Jim Artesani and Owen Maurais have offered to facilitate long term planning for all PREP and SPRPCE districts around this issue.

The initial planning is provided at no cost to PREP school units. A proposed summer institute is projected at costing each involved school unit \$1,000.00 for the involvement of their school staff.

Professional Learning Community Development

Sue Card is providing 4 days of staff development supporting the development of a Train the Trainer format for PREP Schools around the development of Professional Learning Communities. Sessions are provided for K-5 and 6-12 staff. Copies of the evaluations of the first days for each group are provided with this summary. Cost to each school unit for this training is \$1,000.00. This funding provides access to eight full days of staff development training for 12-15 staff members from each school unit.

Curriculum Coordinators

Curriculum Coordinators are involved with a book study focusing on assessment for learning.

Adult Education

A committee has been established to review the current status of Adult Education staffing and programming within PREP school units. Initial recommendations regarding possible efficiencies in program administration and the maximizing of course offerings will be made to PREP superintendents in mid December 2007.

Teacher Preparation Committee

Representatives from school units and the University of Maine continue to refine a format to formalize communication and collaboration around a Professional Learning Community Format. Hundreds of candidates from the University of Maine are involved with PREP schools on a yearly basis. Enhancing communication and collaboration between the University of Maine and PREP schools provides for increased quality of programming for all individuals involved.

Virtual High School Initiative

There is interest in continued planning for the use of technology to support the development of and access to on line courses. A committee has been established

to plan for and implement this initiative. A University of Maine Associate Professor in Information Technology will be assisting this committee in their initial planning. It is anticipated that recommendations will be made to PREP superintendents in late Winter 2008. Funds remaining from a previous Secondary School Initiative will fund the initial planning and development efforts.

Special Education Related Services Initiative

A psychologist, a certified psychological service provider and two speech therapists are providing evaluative and direct services to students served by the PREP partnership. They have been hired as employees. Speech services are being provided in schools where services were previously unavailable. Psychological services are being provided at a significant saving over the rate provided in a typical contracted services arrangement.

Maine Municipal Bond Bank Initiative

The Penobscot River Educational Partnership was awarded a \$100,000.00 grant from the Maine Municipal Bond Bank to support the development of efficiencies within PREP schools in areas supporting business functions. The following initiatives are supported by this grant. Some of these initiatives involved all PREP public schools and some involve a more limited pilot population of schools.

Food Service Initiative

A consultant, Kevin Freeborn, has been hired and has met with representatives of school units, making several extended visits to gather additional information prior to developing and analysis and recommendations regarding efficiency and effectiveness. PREP Superintendents will be meeting to discuss Mr. Freeborn's report and recommendations in mid December 2007.

Health, Safety and Efficiency

Three committees have been developed and are focusing on efficiencies in purchasing school safety and training needs. Each committee is identifying possible areas involving collaboration around increasing efficiencies. An update on each committee's functioning will be provided to PREP superintendents at their December meeting.

Financial Services

One PREP school unit will be initiating use of software for the management of timekeeping and payroll data. Information on this implementation will be made available to all PREP schools in the spring of 2008. Also, all PREP school units are eligible for a reduction in technical assistance costs, if they wish to access technical assistance from ADS.

Substitute Teachers

Three PREP school units will pilot a software program in early winter 2008 utilizing technology to enhance the current system of securing substitute teachers.

Information gathered on effectiveness and efficiency will be shared with other school units.