

# School Leadership Development Programs in Maine: Building Statewide Capacity and Addressing Challenges



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## **Overview of the Study**

**Why was this study conducted?** This research project was part of an ongoing series of studies on educational leadership development in Maine (Fairman & Mette, 2018; Mette, Fairman & Dagistan, 2017) commissioned by the Maine State Legislature and conducted by the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI). The broad purpose of the study was to examine current educational leadership development programs in Maine, including both initial preparation and on-going development or support programs and networks. Specifically, MEPRI was charged to examine preparation, training and clinical experiences, as well as opportunities for education leaders to engage in mentoring, coaching and professional networks. Finally, MEPRI was asked to identify strengths and gaps or challenges in education leadership development statewide. We focused this study and report primarily on the development of school leaders, although many of the programs, statewide challenges and needs we discuss also pertain to district leadership development and support.

**What do you need to know to put this study into context?** In 2015-16, a state legislative Task Force on School Leadership examined state needs related to PK-12 school leadership in Maine and identified many challenges and recommended strategies. That report (2016) acknowledged the growing research evidence on the important role of school leadership, particularly instructional leadership, in supporting a healthy school climate and instructional practices that lead to improved student learning outcomes. Yet, both Maine and other states struggle to feed the pipeline to ensure there are sufficient numbers of well-prepared school and district leaders in the coming decades. Overall, the leadership landscape in Maine features larger numbers of school leaders with fewer years of experience, difficulty filling vacant positions, and high turnover particularly in rural and lower resourced districts. In the 2019-20 school year, there were 583 principals in Maine schools with publicly funded students, of whom 23% were in their first two years of experience. Of the 323 assistant principals, 43% were in their first two years. A similar pattern is seen with district leadership: 20% of the 364 superintendents and 52% of assistant superintendents were in their first two years of experience in those roles.

Maine state education policy specifies that educators and principals should receive a minimum of one opportunity for peer support of some type each year and districts determine what they will provide. State credentialing requirements also specify that administrators working on a conditional certificate must have a Maine Department of Education (MDOE) approved plan in place and should be working with a mentor for a minimum of one school year. Once certified, it is expected that administrators will develop an individual action plan at least once every five years to support their professional growth. In reality, principals give mixed reviews about the quality or availability of peer supports like mentoring, professional development or other kinds of opportunities. A report on a MEPRI survey of principals and superintendents conducted in 2016 (Mette, Fairman & Dagistan, 2017) found that principals

were less likely than superintendents to agree that they had access to these supports, and principals serving smaller schools (250 students or less) were less satisfied with the support, supervision and mentoring they received than principals in larger systems.

Many aspiring school leaders are already working in schools as educators in some capacity. Some have definite plans to become certified as school administrators while others want to explore different leadership options. These individuals may pursue leadership preparation part-time while continuing to work as educators full-time. Initial preparation for school principals typically involves coursework and some type of supervised clinical experience or internship where the principal-in-training engages in work in a school under the mentorship of an experienced principal. The internship provides opportunities for individuals to practice their skills in communicating and relating to different groups within their schools. Preparation programs increasingly focus not only on the managerial aspects of school leadership but also the instructional leadership role of principals and other school leaders. Programs also seek to prepare school leaders for the ethical, moral aspects of leadership and challenges they may encounter, and to provide leadership in areas of equity and social justice in their schools and communities.

Ongoing professional development and support for school principals includes both formal and informal professional development experiences. Formal professional development may include induction and mentoring programs, coursework in graduate degree programs, workshops, and professional conferences. Informal mentoring, networking, conversations and professional reading, reflection and work on individual growth plans also contribute in important ways to the professional learning and skills of principals and other school leaders. Research in Maine and nationally has identified more challenges for smaller school districts and rural districts to support the on-going professional development and mentoring needs of school and district leaders. Larger systems generally have greater capacity to support their administrators' professional development in that they have a larger number of administrators who could provide mentoring, and more resources and economies of scale to provide training. Yet it is not clear that larger systems necessarily provide mentoring or training focused on leadership development specifically.

**What did we learn from the study?** Key findings related to the initial leadership preparation programs and post-preparation programs in Maine are described in this section, organized by the primary strengths and gaps or opportunities we found across the programs.

#### **Initial prep programs—strengths:**

- The initial leadership preparation programs we examined in Maine (note 4 of 6 Maine institutions participated in the study) are designed to align with the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), and they are comparable with other high quality programs nationally.
- The four programs examined focus on developing the knowledge and skills of aspiring school leaders with attention to both the school management and instructional leadership

aspects of that professional role.

- The four programs examined also explicitly address important issues of equity and inequity in education in the US, and the role of school and district leaders in promoting equity in their own school systems.
- Increasingly there is a shift in educational leadership development to ensure principals help provide students with access to social-emotional support as part of their effort to provide equitable education and educational success for students. The four programs examined also included this topic in their preparation of aspiring school leaders.
- The four programs examined also seek to prepare aspiring leaders to engage collaboratively and effectively with local stakeholders to address community issues.
- The four programs examined require aspiring school leaders to engage in action research projects focused on real problems of practice in their schools as part of the continuous school improvement cycle.
- Five of the six programs for initial preparation of school leaders in Maine require clinical internship experiences in Maine schools to help aspiring leaders hone their skills under supervision.
- Three of the four programs interviewed for this study use a cohort model of instruction, which provides a natural network for educators enrolled in a leadership preparation program and can also help with retention of students in the program.
- The four programs examined for this study use a wide variety of delivery modes for instruction including: in-person instruction, asynchronous online, synchronous online, and hybrid (asynchronous online and in-person weekends) modalities to meet the different needs and schedules of educators.

#### **Initial prep programs—gaps or opportunities:**

- There is no statewide system or network to attract, recruit, and communicate with aspiring education leaders to help interested educators learn about leadership career options, formal training options, and program information to help build a pipeline for this career track. Educators must try to navigate different institution or program websites to find information and have no central place to go for this information. This indicates a need for closer collaboration and coordination among the institutions providing initial preparation and the state educational agency (MDOE).
- Program communication for some of the educational leadership programs was not always clearly available online, suggesting there is an opportunity to clarify what each of the programs provides in order to help aspiring educational leaders to learn what formal training is required and to select the programs that works best for them.
- Currently, aspiring leaders conduct their internships within their schools and districts of employment. There is a lack of opportunity to gain internship experiences in other schools and districts, limiting the ability of students to be exposed to different leadership styles and approaches. Some barriers include the lack of funding for release time to visit other schools/ districts.
- There is no statewide system or network in place to help new school (or district) leaders after their initial preparation to connect with induction, mentoring and other on-going leadership development programs, networks or supports. A system to allow for stronger collaboration and coordination between initial preparation programs, post preparation

programs and the state educational agency (MDOE) could help to improve development and retention of school leaders.

- Higher education institutions providing initial leadership development preparation are limited in their capacity to enroll larger numbers of students based on their funding for instructors. Program faculty continue to feel stretched as they attempt to fill their dual mission to train new school leaders and also provide service and outreach to practicing school and district leaders in their regions. Supervising field-based internships requires significant time for university faculty.

#### **Post-prep programs—strengths:**

- The post-preparation programs and networks for leadership development examined for this study engage school (and district) leaders in high quality professional development, primarily through synchronous meetings, discussion, shared readings, training and other activities. Some online and remote modalities are also used to deliver these programs to increase participant access and reduce travel time.
- The professional development provided through the programs we examined seeks to build leadership knowledge and skills, and covers important topics such as: the reflective leader, instructional coaching and supporting teachers, shared leadership across the school, the relational aspect of leadership and engaging with various stakeholders, and using data to address identified problems of practice for school improvement.
- Three of the seven post-preparation programs examined for this study engage leaders in action projects, often with other leaders in their schools, to apply their learning to school improvement goals or their own leadership development goals.
- The professional development activities in these programs also provide valuable opportunities for peer interactions across districts, access to new ideas for addressing school improvement or leadership challenges, and allows for participants to expand their own professional networks. Cross-district peer learning and mentoring also provided valuable “safe spaces” for school leaders to discuss personal and professional challenges in confidence.
- Experienced and retired school and district administrators are helping to develop and facilitate most of these programs and networks, drawing on their valuable experience to guide less experienced school leaders.
- Programs and networks actively seek input and feedback from their peers and participants and adjust their programs to better address the needs and interests of practitioners. New topics have been added in recent years, such as equity and social justice, to respond to the ever changing challenges in schools.
- The MDOE has been actively engaged in supporting and expanding the development of new leadership programs and networks for Maine’s education practitioners.

#### **Post-prep programs—gaps or opportunities:**

- The seven post-preparation leadership development programs or networks examined for this study served a minimum of 163 participants in the 2020-21 year (this number includes principals and assistant principals, but also includes some teachers and district leaders). This is a small fraction of the 906 practicing principals/ assistant principals in Maine (2019-2020 data), and an even smaller fraction if teacher leaders or other aspiring

leaders are considered. There is currently insufficient capacity within these valuable programs and networks to serve the vast majority of practicing school leaders and aspiring leaders in Maine who seek leadership development and on-going support.

- Only two programs, both delivered by the Maine Principals Association, specifically target new principals or assistant principals.
- Only one of the seven programs (delivered by MPA), provides formal induction training for new principals or assistant principals.
- Only two programs (MPA's *Mentoring Program* and the recently organized Maine School Leaders Network) provide 1:1 mentoring to principals or assistant principals. In 2020-21, only 22 principals/ assistant principals were mentored through these two organizations.
- Only one program (MDOE's Transformational Leadership Network) provides 1:1 coaching to school leaders.
- While some of the programs and networks provide opportunity for teachers to obtain professional development in school leadership or work on action projects within leadership teams in their schools, none specifically focus on leadership development of teachers and encouraging teachers to aspire to more formal school or district leadership careers.
- While three of the post-preparation leadership programs do involve university faculty in the training or facilitation work, most of the programs are not designed in collaboration with higher education initial preparation programs. This represents a missed opportunity to provide a more seamless, supportive system for education leaders following their initial preparation and throughout their careers. The regional professional collaboratives, like the Southern Maine Partnership, are the exception. These university-district partnerships allow for strong research to practice connections and common goals for preparing and supporting education leaders.

**What did we conclude overall from the study?** This study found several strengths as well as gaps and opportunities among the initial preparation programs and post-preparation programs for school leadership development. Initial preparation programs continue to make adjustments in the delivery modes and topics covered in their training to meet the ever changing needs of schools and practitioners schedules. New post-preparation programs have been initiated in recent years and the state educational agency (MDOE) is committed to expanding opportunities to provide leadership development to more educators and leaders. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the leadership development programs in Maine adapted quickly, using remote or virtual modes to continue delivering training, mentoring, coaching and other supports to school leaders. Despite some positive growth in the leadership development opportunities in recent years, Maine's capacity to support leadership development is still well below the level of need and demand. This will require concerted effort and collaboration among many entities across the state to partner together to build statewide capacity.

We found a clear disconnect between initial preparation and post-preparation programs in terms of the effort to communicate, collaborate, and coordinate on program development and delivery. Instead, programs are created and offered by a variety of entities in an isolated and fragmented way, which reduces consistency in the way leaders are developed and can also make

it harder for educators to find out about programs to meet their needs. Moreover, there is no statewide system or network to attract and communicate with potential or aspiring leaders to inform them about leadership careers, program options or training needed to support this career pipeline. Based on the study's findings, our broad conclusions center around the need for:

- 1) expansion of school (and district) leadership development programs, networks and opportunities in the state;
- 2) closer collaboration and communication between the state educational agency (MDOE), higher education institutions that provide initial preparation, programs that offer post-preparation programs, and school districts;
- 3) a system or network to identify and communicate with aspiring education leaders statewide;
- 4) a system or network to communicate with school leaders after their initial preparation and help them connect with various on-going development supports including: induction training, mentoring, professional development, advanced studies and networking
- 5) innovative strategies to create time for educators and leaders to engage in leadership development
- 6) innovative strategies to support leadership development for small, rural and isolated school districts, and
- 7) increased clarity in state education policies around expectations for district supports for school and district leaders' induction, mentoring and on-going professional development.

**What are some potential implications for education policy, practice or research?** The findings from this study of initial school leadership preparation programs and post-preparation programs and networks have implications for state and local education policy as well as for practice. We outline these implications here, highlighting opportunities for strengthening and expanding education leadership development in Maine.

**Expansion of Leadership Development Opportunities:** Building state, regional and local capacity to support larger numbers of practicing school and district leaders, as well as aspiring leaders, will require a comprehensive plan as well as increased and sustained funding to address the address workforce development needs that were highlighted in the 2016 report of the state's Task Force on School Leadership. To develop a plan, it is necessary to first identify the funding gaps and needs statewide and to investigate district practices and expenditures on leadership development. Next, it is essential to prioritize elements of leadership development with the greatest need. These might include a) building statewide capacity for outreach and development of teachers as school leaders, b) expanding supports for new school principals/assistant principals such as induction training and robust mentoring, and c) expanding development, leadership coaching and mentoring for experienced school and district leaders. Further, it is essential to provide opportunities for new and experienced school and district leaders to engage with peers outside of their districts to expose leaders to new perspectives and

ideas, and to allow for a “safe space” to discuss personal and professional challenges in confidence without fear of professional harm.

***Funding and resource elements requiring more study:***

- Adequacy and use of EPS funding for school districts to support leadership development of both practicing administrators and aspiring leaders, induction, on-going professional development and mentoring of school and district leaders
- State educational agency resources to support the cost of induction programs for new school and district leaders, school and leadership coaches, and expanded leadership development programs
- State educational agency resources used to purchase leadership development programming from out-of-state organizations. These public funds could be re-directed to invest in and expand existing programs within Maine
- Higher education funding for education leadership program faculty positions within the state university system to support both initial preparation programs as well as on-going outreach and partnerships with districts to support practitioners over the career span
- Opportunities to leverage external grant funding through partnerships between the state universities, school districts and the state educational agency

***Expanding supports for school leaders:*** There is growing recognition in the research literature and among practitioners of the importance of providing induction training as well as on-going individualized support to new school leaders, such as mentoring and coaching, to fully prepare and retain leaders in the profession. There is also recognition that experienced school leaders benefit from on-going professional development and, when needed, mentoring or coaching support. There are few formal programs providing these supports, and prior MEPRI research has found low levels of satisfaction with the supports provided to principals by their districts. Finally, expanded opportunities are needed to develop teachers into school leadership roles and career pathways.

- Expanded opportunities are needed statewide to provide induction training and mentoring to all new school (and district) leaders to support their success and retention in the profession. These programs could consist of a combination of district-provided and regional programs. Regional programs allow districts to pool their resources, and new leaders benefit from the opportunity to learn with other peers across districts and establish new professional relationships.
- Expanded opportunities are needed statewide to provide professional development, mentoring and leadership coaching to experienced school (and district) leaders. These programs could involve collaboration with university partners, the state educational agency, and regional district alliances to support robust development opportunities, cost sharing, and opportunities for school (and district) leaders to engage with their peers across the state to gain new perspectives and expand their professional networks.
- Expanded opportunities are needed statewide to provide training and encouragement for teachers and other educators to consider and pursue school leadership through a variety of pathways. While larger districts may have the capacity to implement teacher leadership and school leadership development for educators, many smaller and rural

districts would benefit from regional collaboration and partnership with universities and/or other programs to support the leadership pipeline.

**Strengthening Collaboration and Coordination Among Programs:** Post-preparation programs are mostly designed and delivered by the state educational agency (MDOE) or other organizations in isolation from the initial preparation programs that exist in Maine's higher education programs. Building statewide capacity for robust programs around shared goals for leadership development in Maine would benefit from stronger collaboration and coordination among the different entities in the state providing and participating in leadership development. These include: the state educational agency (MDOE), professional associations, university preservice programs, school districts and others. Increased coordination would also support efforts to recruit aspiring leaders into the leadership development pipeline, communicate with them about development programs and opportunities and support them for improved retention. University and district partnerships provide a framework for connecting current research knowledge with practice, and prepare school and district leaders to effect change and improvement within their systems.

There are opportunities for increased regional collaboration and sharing of successful models for supporting leadership development. For regions that are underserved, innovative strategies, such as the use of video-conferencing, could increase access to leadership development opportunities. Seed grants from the state can encourage the development of regional programs that share resources for leadership development, as we saw with the effort by the Southern Maine Partnership to create the Maine Center for Leadership and Innovation.

**Creating a System or Network to Identify Aspiring Education Leaders:**

Collaboration and coordination are needed among the entities providing leadership development in Maine to partner in developing a system or network to better attract, recruit and communicate with educators who seek information about leadership development. This might take the form of a consortium of providers to design and maintain a centralized online platform to help educators explore career opportunities, initial training requirements and different preparation pathways. This platform could have embedded links to specific initial preparation programs. In addition, more work is needed to ensure that initial preparation programs communicate effectively with potential students through their websites and other media.

**Creating a System or Network from Initial Preparation to Post-Preparation:**

Collaboration and coordination are also needed among the entities providing leadership development in Maine to partner in developing a system or network to communicate with school and district leaders after their initial preparation and help them connect with various development supports including: induction training, mentoring, coaching, professional development, advanced degree programs, networking and other supports. Again, this might be

accomplished through a centralized online platform to share information about post-preparation leadership development opportunities with embedded links to those programs or networks.

**Innovative Strategies to Create Time for Leadership Development:** Time to engage in or provide professional development (such as mentoring to other leaders), is a scarce resource for school and district leaders, and a significant barrier to participation in leadership development. It can also be a barrier in the way clinical internships are provided during initial preparation of school leaders. While remote participation or video-conferencing can be an efficient way to reduce travel time for professional development, it should be noted that school leaders also value the opportunity to leave their school building to better focus and reflect in their learning experience with other professionals. Addressing this challenge will require a combination of innovative strategies and perhaps some increased funding and could include:

- Redefining job expectations for school and district leaders to allow for time devoted to professional growth and development as well as mentoring others
- Engaging teachers and instructional coaches in shared leadership roles in schools through distributed or shared leadership models, which could include peer observation, teacher leadership development and other activities
- Funding for assistant principal positions to share leadership responsibilities
- Increased use of technology tools such as video-conferencing to allow for remote participation in professional development, mentoring, coaching and networking
- Schools could agree to swap interns to create opportunities for aspiring leaders to conduct their clinical internship in schools and districts outside their own school/ district of employment, to provide broader exposure to new ideas and approaches to leadership and school improvement. Districts also need to be willing to use existing professional development funding for release time for educators to engage in their internship activity.

**Supporting Leadership Development for Rural and Isolated School Districts:** Small, rural and isolated districts face increased challenges in their capacity to attract and retain school leaders. These districts tend to attract less experienced leaders and often have higher turnover among leaders. Further, small districts often have less capacity to provide professional development support to leaders or aspiring leaders within district, in particular, mentoring or coaching supports. A comprehensive statewide plan should consider the particular needs of these districts to ensure their leaders and aspiring leaders have equitable access to leadership development opportunities and on-going supports. Potential strategies to support these districts may include the following:

- Regional collaboratives and university partnerships could prioritize outreach and provision of leadership development programs and supports to these districts.
- The use of online or hybrid programs, courses and professional development resources could be expanded to increase access by reducing travel distance and time. Universities are increasingly adopting these modalities to increase access for practitioners.
- The use of technology tools such as video-conferencing could be expanded to provide direct coaching, mentoring, professional development and other supports to leaders or

- aspiring leaders.
- Alternative pathways to leadership, such as “grow your own” approaches, could be developed and expanded to support small, rural districts in supporting their local educators as they explore and pursue leadership development training. Partnerships with local universities for coursework and flexibility in course delivery modes will be essential for this effort. Districts may need to revise their policies capping the number of course credits educators can be reimbursed for each year, which can be a barrier to accelerated tracks in leadership training.

**Clarifying District Responsibility for Leadership Development:** Examination of state education policies found a lack of clear, specific expectations for district supports for leaders’ induction, mentoring and on-going professional development, as well as support for aspiring leaders and teacher leadership development. Prior MEPRI studies have shown that school leaders feel less supported by their districts and less district attention on teacher leadership than what district leaders perceive. Historically, districts have tended to spend more of their EPS funding for teacher professional development than for administrator professional development. Increasing the clarity around expected district responsibilities for supporting professional development could encourage more consistent attention to this effort across districts. Areas needing further examination and clarity include the following:

- Maine’s PE/PG system requirements currently have vague language requiring only one peer support of some type each year for school principals. More guidance, models and resources for high quality mentoring and other supports could be shared with districts statewide to support more robust and effective practices at the local level.
- Chapter 115 rules for credentialing require administrators working on a conditional certificate to work with a mentor for one school year, but don’t provide guidance on the quality of that mentoring.
- State policy guidance does not address the coaching and mentoring needs of experienced school and district leaders over the career span.

**What methods were used to conduct this study?** This study used a qualitative case study methodology and in-depth interviews with the organizations and individuals who design and deliver initial or post-prep school leadership development programs and networks in Maine. A total of ten interviews were conducted with 11 participants via Zoom video-conferencing in early fall 2020 (see Appendix B) with institutions and organizations that provide leadership development to aspiring school leaders or experienced leaders. Interviews lasted from 40 to 75 minutes and were audio-recorded and transcribed for data analysis. Additional information about state-sponsored programs was obtained through email exchanges with Maine Department of Education (MDOE) staff. Narrative profiles were developed describing each program investigated and tables were used to compare elements across programs.

**How robust are the findings?** The research team cast a wide net to be as inclusive as possible in our search for leadership development programs and networks. The study sample includes

four of the six formal, initial school leadership development preparation programs in Maine (two declined to be interviewed), all known formal post-preparation programs, as well as some informal programs and networks. The sample does not include all of the regional professional collaboratives or professional associations that may offer occasional professional development to school or district leaders but are not specifically focused on leadership development.

Information about these programs and networks was obtained from reliable sources, directly from the program leaders and providers, to ensure accurate information about current practices for these programs and networks. Interviews were fully transcribed and the in-depth interviews generated very rich data and descriptions about both the strengths and challenges for these initiatives as well as thoughtful reflections on leadership development needs statewide. Narrative descriptions of the programs and networks were shared with participants to confirm accuracy.

## **Introduction**

This research project was part of an ongoing series of studies on educational leadership development in Maine (Fairman & Mette, 2018; Mette, Fairman & Dagistan, 2017) commissioned by the Maine State Legislature and conducted by the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI). The broad purpose of the study was to examine current educational leadership development programs in Maine, including both initial preparation and on-going development or support programs and networks. Specifically, MEPRI was charged to examine preparation, training and clinical experiences, as well as opportunities for education leaders to engage in mentoring, coaching and professional networks. Finally, MEPRI was asked to identify strengths and gaps or challenges in education leadership development statewide. We focused this study and report primarily on the development of school leaders, although many of the programs, statewide challenges and needs we discuss also pertain to district leadership development and support.

## **Background**

This section provides some background information describing why school and district leaders are important for improving teaching and learning, broad challenges related to recruitment and retention of leaders, state policies that guide practices related to leadership development and support, and the components of professional development and support needed for new and experienced school and district leaders. We describe both the state education context as well as national research on leadership development.

## **Importance of School Leadership and Broad Challenges**

In 2015-16, a state legislative Task Force on School Leadership examined state needs related to PK-12 school leadership in Maine and identified many challenges and recommended strategies. That report (2016) acknowledged the growing research evidence on the important role of school leadership, particularly instructional leadership, in supporting teacher learning and instructional practices that lead to improved student learning outcomes. Reviews of research on school leadership have concluded that education leaders' promotion and involvement in teacher learning has a high impact (effect size = 0.84) on student learning outcomes, followed by the

actions of establishing goals and expectations (effect size = 0.42) and planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and curriculum (effect size = 0.42) (Hallinger, 2011; Robinson et al., 2008).

Despite the important role school and district leaders play in shaping the quality of education, Maine and other states struggle to feed the pipeline to ensure there are sufficient numbers of well-prepared leaders. Some of the specific challenges for recruitment of new leaders include the aging population of educators and administrators generally where many are at the point of retirement or being called back from retirement to fill vacant positions, increased demands in recent years placed on the administrator's role, and negative perceptions that deter some educators from seeking leadership roles. Some of the barriers for retention of school and district leaders include the expanded role expectations that produce higher job stress and challenges in balancing work and personal life demands, and perceptions that insufficient support for new and mid-career leaders is available when needed. The challenge of recruiting and retaining a pipeline of qualified and competent school principals has been documented at the national and state level for the better part of two decades (Davis et al., 2005; Institute of Educational Leadership, 2000; Malone & Caddell, 2000; Mette et al., 2017; Task Force on School Leadership, 2016). Recruitment, retention, and ongoing support for qualified educators remains a greater challenge for rural schools that are isolated and often lack human resources to help support professional development that larger districts enjoy due to economy of scale (Mette et al., 2019; Miller, 2012).

The leadership landscape in Maine features larger numbers of school leaders with fewer years of experience, difficulty filling vacant positions, and high turnover particularly in rural and lower resourced districts. In the 2019-20 school year, there were 583 principals in Maine schools with publicly funded students, of whom 23% were in their first two years of experience. Of the 323 assistant principals, 43% were in their first two years. A similar pattern is seen with district leadership: 20% of the 364 superintendents and 52% of assistant superintendents were in their first two years of experience in those roles.

## **Limitations of State Policy**

Maine state policies have set broad expectations for the preparation and supports that school or district leaders should receive. Yet, the state's strong tradition of local control reduces the state's ability to ensure that all school and district leaders actually have access to and receive

the training and on-going supports they need to be effective in their roles and stay in the profession. The Task Force report of 2016 cautioned that “a huge increase in the amount of support and mentoring is necessary to produce a larger pool of leaders.” That report also recommended that Maine “generate statewide strategies to bring leadership programs into alignment with best practices,” “a strong role for districts in creating teacher leadership positions,” and “a period of intensive support for new administrators” (Task Force on School Leadership, 2016).

While current state education policies do require districts to provide school and district administrators with support for professional growth and development, those requirements are broadly worded and leave it to the discretion of local school systems to determine what they will provide to principals, superintendents and other leaders. Rule Chapter 180 on Performance Evaluation and Professional Growth (PEPG) systems specifies that teachers and principals should receive a minimum of one opportunity of peer support of some type each year, but does not provide any guidance on what these supports might be. The rule states: “. . . the SAU [school administrative unit] may determine the frequency and intensity of the peer support component, provided that at least one opportunity occurs annually.” Further, Rule Chapter 115 dealing with credentialing requirements specifies that administrators working on a conditional certificate must have a Maine Department of Education (MDO) approved plan in place and should be working with a mentor for a minimum of one school year. But expectations for what high quality mentoring would look like are not described. Once certified, it is expected that administrators will develop an individual action plan at least once every five years to support their professional growth.

Principals give mixed reviews about the quality or availability of these professional supports. A MEPRI survey study of Maine principals and superintendents conducted in 2016 (Mette, Fairman & Dagistan, 2017) found that principals were less likely than superintendents to agree that they had access to these professional supports. In particular, principals serving smaller schools (250 students or less), were less satisfied with the support, supervision and mentoring they received than principals in larger systems. That report also asked superintendents and principals about how their school systems were supporting the development of teacher leadership and concluded that teachers were under-utilized for school leadership, particularly for sharing the school administrative workload, and that more effort was needed to develop teacher leaders.

## **Leadership Development of School Principals**

Many aspiring school leaders are already working in schools as educators in some capacity. Some have definite plans to become certified as school administrators while others want to explore different leadership options. These individuals may pursue leadership preparation part-time while continuing to work as educators full-time. Initial preparation programs include different elements including coursework and some type of clinical experience or internship.

Most programs preparing assistant building administrators for conditional certification (045 certification) require 12 to 15 credits of coursework. Typically these courses include: Supervision and Evaluation of Personnel, Organizational Theory and Planning, School Law, and Special Education Law. Programs preparing building administrators for conditional certification (040 certification) require the same courses with additional courses in areas such as: School Finance and Budget, Community Relations, and Cultural Differences.

Increasingly, school principals are not simply managers of a school building, but are also expected to be instructional leaders who supervise and guide teaching practices and continuous school improvement. Thus, initial preparation programs address both the managerial role and the instructional leadership role of school principals and other school leaders. Additionally, programs also seek to prepare principals and others to improve equity and social justice in their schools and to have the communication and relational skills to interact effectively with the broader school community (Clement et al., 2020; Hernandez et al., 2012; O’Malley & Capper, 2015). There is an increasing focus within preparation programs on the quality of the internship and supervised clinical experiences, specifically through university and district partnerships, that are provided to aspiring principals as part of their preparation for school leadership roles (Campbell & Parker, 2016; Sanchez et al., 2019). Yet several studies have shown little to no correlation between principal preparation program qualities, licensure scores, and school leader job performance (Fuller & Hollingworth, 2017; Grissom et al., 2019).

Ongoing professional development and support for school principals after they assume their roles includes both formal and informal professional development experiences that occur over the entire career span. Formal professional development may include induction and mentoring programs, leadership coaching, coursework in graduate degree programs, workshops, and professional conferences. Informal mentoring, networking, conversations and professional

reading, reflection and work on individual growth plans also contribute in important ways to the professional learning and skills of principals and other school leaders.

Further, there is evidence to suggest that ongoing professional development for educators (teachers and principals) is influenced by the socioeconomic status of a community and the perceived value added to the district (Wieczorek, 2017). Larger districts, especially those like the ones supporting by the Wallace Initiative Principal Pipeline Program (2016), benefit from economies of scale to invest in leadership development. The lack of support for rural principals, specifically in the area of professional development networks, often leads to high turnover in rural schools (Hansen, 2018). Smaller school districts may lack capacity for peer mentoring within district given the smaller number of administrators. While larger systems may have some capacity advantages to support professional development for principals and other leaders, it is not clear that larger systems necessarily provide mentoring or training focused on leadership development specifically, or supports that are of high quality.

With respect to developing leaders who are prepared to improve equity and social justice within their school systems and communities, there is evidence indicating a growing need to support rural principals to engage effectively with these issues (Angelle et al., 2020). Mentoring opportunities are critical for new principals and other leaders, but should also be available over the entire career. Clear feedback from veteran principals can help principals be more prepared (Gimbel & Kefor, 2018). Mentoring programs that focus on refining the skills of communication, relationship building, and instructional leadership are critical in the development of less experienced principals (Lipke, 2019).

Given the on-going challenges in recruitment and retention of school and district leaders, it is important for Maine to better understand and assess the current practices, strengths and challenges related the initial preparation of education leaders and what supports are available to them for on-going professional development, mentoring or other supports throughout the career span. While this MEPRI study examined programs and networks that target a wide variety of school and district leaders, our primarily focus for this report is on school principals and aspiring school leaders, given the state and national concern about high rates of turnover in this role.

## **Methodology**

This study used a qualitative case study methodology to examine educational leadership development programs in Maine. This methodology allowed for in-depth interviews with the organizations and individuals who design and deliver these programs, to obtain an accurate description of program goals, structure, content and participation. The study plans were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Maine. The research team sent emailed invitations to participate and informed consent information about the study to individuals known to be leading these programs. We cast a wide net to identify a range of programs.

The Maine Department of Education (MDOE) accredits leadership development programs offered by six institutions (three public and three private). For those programs, emailed invitations were sent to program coordinators for all six programs. Four institutions agreed to participate in an interview for this study, while two others (two private institutions) declined. The data presented in this study reflect the majority of the initial preparation programs in Maine. Some data for the two other institutions were obtained from their program websites.

By contrast, there is no central listing for post-preparation leadership programs and networks. The team solicited information and suggestions from key informants that included professional organizations such as the Maine Superintendents Association and the Maine Principals Association and educational leadership faculty. Working from that list, the team sent emailed invitations to six different groups that offer formal programs or informal collaboratives or networks that are specifically focused on educational leadership development or support. Individuals from those organizations all agreed to participate in the study and an interview. Additional information about state-sponsored programs was requested from MDOE staff through emailed exchanges, and one MDOE staff member was interviewed about a program.

Overall, the study sample is highly representative and inclusive of the leadership development programs and networks in Maine. It includes data from four of the six formal, initial preparation leadership development programs in Maine (two declined to be interviewed). The sample also includes all known formal and informal programs focused on leadership development currently available to acting school leaders, which resulted in seven programs or networks. The sample does not include all of the regional professional collaboratives or professional associations that may offer occasional professional development to school or district

leaders but are not specifically focused on leadership development. Contact information for all of the programs and networks described in this report can be found in Appendix A.

A total of ten interviews were conducted with 11 participants via Zoom video-conferencing using a semi-structured interview protocol in September and October 2020. Interview questions asked about how particular programs or networks were initiated and implemented and the content of focus. Questions for initial preparation programs asked about how clinical experiences were included in training for school leaders. Questions for both initial preparation programs and programs for experienced administrators asked how leaders were prepared as instructional leaders, and to attend to social justice and equity issues. For programs targeting more experienced leaders, we also asked about mentoring, professional development activities and networking opportunities. Finally, participants were asked for their views on the current strengths and gaps or challenges related to leadership development opportunities statewide. The interview protocol can be viewed in Appendix B. Additional information about these programs was also obtained through email exchanges with Maine Department of Education (MDOE) staff.

Interviews lasted from 40 to 75 minutes and were audio-recorded and transcribed for data analysis. One or more members of the research team conducted the interviews and took fieldnotes. The interview questions were provided to participants ahead of time, and the interviews covered all relevant topics. Interview transcripts were read closely to develop a descriptive, narrative profile of each program using a common structure. Narrative descriptions of the programs and networks were shared by email with participants to confirm accuracy.

To assist with cross-case comparisons, tables were used to compare key elements of the programs or networks. These overview tables also helped to inform our findings. From each case, predominant themes were identified in the transcripts related to the impetus for these initiatives, their focus, perceptions of impacts for participants, and perceptions about broader statewide needs. These themes are described within each narrative profile and in the discussion section of this report. The research team examined the findings to reach consensus on the conclusions and implications from the study.

## **Findings**

Findings from the interviews are organized into two broad sections: the first section describes formal degree and certificate programs in Maine for initial preparation of aspiring school leaders who may then seek to gain certification. The second section focuses on programs and networks that provide professional development, mentoring, networking or other supports to school leaders serving in that formal role.

### **Initial Leadership Credentialing/ Preparation Programs**

This section provides an overview of formal programs in Maine for initial preparation of school leaders. These programs are aimed at developing teacher leaders, assistant principals, principals, and district administrators. All four programs examined for this study are designed to align with the National Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL). These programs seek to develop aspiring leaders' knowledge and skills in both school management and instructional leadership, as well as working to improve equity for students, supporting the socio-emotional needs of students, and engaging with stakeholders in their communities. The four programs engage students in action research projects focused on continuous school improvement. Across the six initial preparation programs in Maine, five programs include clinical experiences guided mentors in schools, courses with university instructors, and PSEL standards to ensure quality internships.

Courses within these programs are delivered using a variety of modalities including in-person instruction, asynchronous online, synchronous online, and hybrid modes (a mix of asynchronous online and in-person weekend courses). While all four programs studied offer some sort of online instruction, there are varying degrees of online delivery based on the needs of students. The program at St. Joseph's is the only one among the four studied that is entirely online at present.

Four this study, we reached out to all formal programs in Maine that provide initial preparation in for aspiring school leaders through educational leadership master's degree and certificate programs. Table 1 below describes key components of the master's degree programs in educational leadership offered by six institutions that target educators who are aspiring school leaders. Representatives from four of the six programs agreed to participate in this study and two

declined to participate in an interview. Information for those two programs was obtained from their program websites.

**Table 1. Description of Initial Preparation (Master's Degree) Programs**

Program	# Credits	Clinical Experience	Course Length	# Enrolled Students Each Term
St. Joseph's College	36 credits	6 credits total (24 weeks)	10 weeks	135
Thomas College*	39 credits	3 credits total (15 weeks)	8 weeks	5-10
University of Maine	37 credits	10 credits total (3 semesters)	15 weeks	110
University of Maine Farmington	33 credits	6 credits total (2 semesters)	15 weeks	75
University of Southern Maine	36 credits	9 credits total (3 semesters)	14 weeks	135
University of New England*	30 credits	Not required	8 weeks	200

\*Two institutions declined to participate in an interview for this study.

Narrative summaries describing initial leadership development programs at three public universities and one private college are provided in the following section. Two private institutions declined to participate in an interview for this study.

### ***St. Joseph's College***

St. Joseph's College of Maine offers online Educational Leadership master's degree programs that focus on development of building-level administrators. Unique to St. Joseph's is the opportunity for students to prepare for careers in Catholic school leadership. In the MSEd in School Leadership program, classes are 10-week courses that are aligned with the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) standards, and are increasingly offered through cohort-based instruction, aligned with state competencies as certified by the MDOE. On average, St. Joseph's serves approximately 135 students per instructional term. Students are able to begin the program at the beginning of each 10 week term, so there are five entry points per year. The MSEd in Leadership Administration program adds a 24 week internship. Internships are offered for principal, superintendent, special education director and special education certification. Currently, the St. Joseph's program is focusing on developing school principals who are ready to enter the profession and who can balance managerial and leadership tasks.

**Leadership Development.** The St. Joseph's Educational Leadership program offers several pathways for aspiring educational leaders in the State of Maine. These include a) the MSEd in School Leadership program, which is a 36 credit hour program designed primarily for teachers and those wanting Assistant Building Certificate (045); b) the MSEd in Leadership Administration program, which is a 36 credit hour program which includes an additional 24-week internship that allows students to complete the MDOE requirements for principal, special education director, and/or superintendent certification; and c) the MSEd in Catholic School Leadership Administration which is a 36 credit hour program that focuses on the uniqueness of the principal being the spiritual leader in a Catholic school organization. In these programs, students build a portfolio of work that demonstrates mastery of the PSEL standards.

The focus of the programs at St. Joseph's is to provide a balance of school management and educational leadership. Specifically, the goal of the program is to enable participants to master the knowledge and techniques necessary to select and employ best practices and adapt in real time to the changing needs of leaders throughout the state. These online programs are supported by one full-time faculty member who oversees a variety of adjunct professors, magnifying the importance of this program coordinator and the immense amount of work required to offer a broader array of approaches to educational leadership development.

**Clinical Experiences.** The MSEd in Leadership Administration track ensures that the St. Joseph's programs meet PSEL standards as well as the requirements set forth by the MDOE that are necessary for all preparation programs throughout the State of Maine. Contrasting with the standard 10 week courses that St. Joseph's offers, the internship is a full 24 week experience that provides 350 hours of clinical experience with a mentor and is guided by an SJC instructor. The internship experience results in a 6 credit hour experience that allows aspiring leaders to gain hands-on learning opportunities that inform the foundation of a career in educational leadership.

As mentioned previously, St. Joseph's students are expected to engage in a selection of various internship programs, including those for principal, adult education director, special education director, and superintendent certification. The program coordinator ensures that the internship experience meets all PSEL standards and MDOE requirements while supporting the relationship between student and mentor. Of particular importance is making sure students receive experiences that introduce new leadership paradigms and practices to help schools go through the continual school improvement process.

## ***University of Maine***

The University of Maine (UMaine) offers various Educational Leadership degree and certificate programs that primarily focus on general leadership development, including but not limited to principal certification, teacher leadership, and curriculum coordinator leadership. Classes are 15 week courses, aligned with PSEL standards, offered through cohort-based instruction, and tied to state competencies that are then certified through the MDOE. On average, UMaine serves about 110 students per semester. Clinical internship experiences are project based and focus on individual learning plans, as well as addressing gaps in development based on PSEL standards. The UMaine Educational Leadership program is currently focusing on increasing the ways in which school leaders can address structural inequities in school systems.

**Leadership Development.** The UMaine Educational Leadership program has a variety of pathways for aspiring educational leaders in the State of Maine. These include a) a certificate for *Try on Leadership*, which is a four graduate course program (12 credit hours) that is designed to meet MDOE requirements for conditional assistant principal certification (045) and can provide a foundation for future graduate studies in educational leadership; b) MEd in Educational Leadership that is a 37 credit hour program; c) Educational Specialist (EdS) degree in Educational Leadership that is a 39 credit hour program for people who already have a master's degree in an area other than Educational Leadership, and d) EdS in District Level Leadership that is a 33 credit hour program for people who already have a master's degree in Educational Leadership. These programs at UMaine are aligned to PSEL standards.

The UMaine program attempts to provide a focus on leadership development through equity-oriented coursework the first two years of the program. After that, an increasing focus on managerial training is provided but tied back to leadership beliefs about equity. For example, leadership development occurs through a sequence of action research projects that require students to address a problem of practice that bridges the first and second year of the UMaine program. Afterwards, students focus on issues of instructional leadership, including supervision and evaluation skills through hands-on application and portfolio development. Courses in the third year and toward the end of the program focus more on managerial tasks, including financial management, school law, and application of both leadership and managerial tasks in the internship coursework.

**Clinical Experiences.** The internship experience at UMaine is a combination of courses in the third year of the cohort program that result in 10 credits of coursework over three semesters that are designed to support interpersonal skills for educational leaders (3 credits), field experience through the internship course (4 credits), and a capstone course (3 credits). During these courses, students select leadership development plans (LDPs) to improve their leadership while also aligning these experiences based on self-assessed gaps through portfolio analysis of PSEL standards. Students gain hands-on experience in leading school improvement efforts and go through a variety of role- plays, including but not limited to how to interview for their first job. In the capstone course, students self-reflect on their cohort experience through journaling and establish goals for formal leadership positions as they move out of the program.

Increasingly, UMaine students are expected to develop leadership experiences *prior* to their formal internship coursework. These action research projects not only require the analysis of data to help drive school improvement efforts, but they also require UMaine students to practice leadership skills to mobilize others to improve outcomes for students. In recent years, the program has begun to showcase these experiences in the UMaine Student Symposium where students present their problem of practice as part of research and creative activity competition. Examples from the past year include student inquiry addressing issues of chronic absenteeism, diversifying a Eurocentric curricula, and low numbers of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds accessing advanced classes.

#### ***University of Maine Farmington***

The University of Maine at Farmington (UMF) offers Educational Leadership degree and certificate programs that are designed to prepare professional educators for leadership roles in educational settings, including but not limited to principal certification, teacher leadership, math coaching and intervention specialists, and English Language Learner (ELL) intervention. Classes are 15 week courses, are aligned to PSEL standards, are offered through cohort-based instruction, and are tied to state competencies that are then certified through the MDOE. On average, UMF serves about 75 students per semester. Clinical experiences focus on action research experiences and help connect theory to practice to help drive school improvement processes. Students may be admitted to the program with start dates of Fall, Spring, or Summer terms. Students are admitted to the Master of Science in Education (MSEd) program as a cohort

and are typically comprised of 20-30 students, depending on demand in a given year, and forms the core of an emerging leader's professional network.

**Leadership Development.** The UMF Educational Leadership program offers a variety of pathways for aspiring educational leaders in the State of Maine, and all students in the cohort take the same core courses; the core experience is considered a pillar of the program. Pathway options include a) Administration Certificate, which is a four graduate credit program (12 credit hours); b) a variety of certificates (12 credit hours) in Educational Technology, ELL, Math Coaching, and Math Intervention; and c) MSEd in Educational Leadership that is a 33 credit hour program. These programs at UMF are aligned to the PSEL standards.

The MSEd in Educational Leadership requires the completion of a 33 credit hour program, including 21 core credits. The core coursework is grounded in leadership theory applicable across a variety of roles within the field, reflecting the fact that the Educational Leadership degree was not designed to only serve students pursuing careers in administration. Most people in the UMF program have been in the classroom for five years or more, while others have more of a non-traditional background that allows people to learn about the public education system more holistically. Most people end up pursuing formal leadership positions, however many also stay as teacher leaders or in auxiliary education systems. A focus of the UMF program is on developing action research, which serves as a compass point for the program and helping develop leaders that can better analyze data to examine how educational organizations function and how to increase equitable outcomes to improve schools as learning organizations. Additionally, the program also explicitly focuses on ethical decision-making for various decisions centered on equity.

**Clinical Experiences.** The internship experience through UMF's MSEd in Educational Leadership includes a fieldwork component; the standalone Administration Certificate has no requirement for fieldwork. Students pursuing the Master's degree engage a 6 credit internship that blends internship hours and action research experiences in the final year of their program. The internship allows students to demonstrate proficiency in the PSEL standards and meets the 320 hour internship required for MDOE building leadership certification. During this time, students revisit theory they have explored and tie to real world experience.

Part of the UMF clinical experiences is to support students in the ever-changing nature of the role of the principal in the State of Maine. Additionally, a goal is for graduates to continue to

develop professional development networks, particularly in schools that don't benefit from economies of scale, all of which can result in professional isolation, particularly in more rural schools and districts. UMF tries to arrange for some experiences outside of the educator's building, however this can be difficult to accomplish in small Maine schools. If this cannot happen, students are expected to take on new leadership challenges outside of what they already have for experiences. The cohort experience helps develop a professional network that gives leaders a foundation as they start their career as formal leaders and give feedback to each other about leadership. Although the curriculum is aligned with PSEL standards, the Master's degree program is not specifically designed to ensure completion of MDOE certification requirements for building administrators. Requirements for MDOE certification may be completed via the Administration concentration.

### ***University of Southern Maine***

The University of Southern Maine (USM) offers various Educational Leadership degree and certificate programs that primarily focus on general leadership development, including but not limited to principal certification, teacher leadership, curriculum coordinator leadership, and special education leadership. Classes are either 14 week courses or seven week accelerated online courses, aligned with PSEL standards, a mix of individually-selected courses and cohort-based courses, and are tied to state competencies that are tied to state competencies that are then certified through the MDOE. On average, USM serves about 135 students per semester. Clinical internship experiences are a blend of field experiences and university classroom discussions to help facilitate conversations about leadership development, all of which are tied to PSEL standards. The USM Educational Leadership program places an emphasis on equity focus, equity responsive practices, and instructional leadership experiences.

**Leadership Development.** The USM Educational Leadership program has a variety of pathways that they offer for aspiring educational leaders in the State of Maine. These include a) a certificate of Graduate Study in Assistant Principal, which is a five course program (15 credit hours) that is designed to meet MDOE requirements for assistant principal certification (045) and can provide a foundation for future graduate studies in educational leadership; b) MEd in Educational Leadership that is a 36 credit hour program; and c) Certificate of Advanced Study (CAS) in Educational Leadership that is a 30 credit hour program for people who already have a master's degree. These programs at USM are aligned to PSEL standards.

The USM program attempts to provide a balanced approach to leadership development and teaching about managerial tasks. Regarding leadership development, the program has a specific emphasis on equity focus, equity responsive practices, and instructional leadership. In addition, USM's program focuses on continuous school improvement, school reform, and the needs of adult learners. Regarding managerial tasks, the program focuses on application of knowledge, specifically supervision and evaluation, human resource development, hiring practices, and school finance management that is interwoven throughout the internship experience.

**Clinical Experiences.** The internship at USM is a 9 credit internship experience over three semesters that combines university classroom discussions to help facilitate conversations with field experiences to log internship hours. During the internship, USM students self-assess the gaps in their experiences based on PSEL standards and target activities to fill these gaps. Students journal about these experiences and USM faculty debrief with cooperating internship mentors and students to gain insights about the next steps in the individualized internship experience. The students then complete a written reflection of each of the PSEL standards and identify next steps and goals as they move out of the program and into more formal leadership opportunities.

Students at USM are also responsible for a leadership project in the last two semesters semester of their program. This is based on a real-world need of the school they work in, which is agreed upon with the cooperating mentor. These projects are then presented to their peers, and the next group of USM students are invited to come and see what type of leadership development they might partake in. Examples of these leadership projects include student inquiry on incorporating leadership strategies that support the equitable instruction for an increasingly diverse student population in the southern part of Maine.

### **Post-Preparation Leadership Development Programs and Networks**

In this section, we describe six programs or networks that focus on and provide leadership development to Maine school principals and other school and district leaders after initial preparation and assumption of those roles. Some of these are formal programs while others (such as the Southern Maine Partnership and the Maine School Leaders Network), are more informal collaboratives or networks. Some offer paired mentoring, leadership coaching,

school coaching, and/ or professional development events. Only a few programs specifically target new administrative leaders (e.g., those offered by the Maine Principals Association), while others tend to attract or include mid-career or veteran leaders. Five of the seven programs or networks are led and facilitated by current or former Maine school and district administrators, two programs or networks have strong involvement and leadership from educational leadership faculty through the University of Maine System, and three programs or networks are funded and have oversight from the Maine Department of Education (MDOE).

It should be noted that this sample does not include all of the regional professional associations such as regional superintendents' associations, collaboratives operated in partnership between universities and school districts, or other professional networks that exist throughout the state, all of which offer some occasional professional development and networking opportunities to school or district leaders, but are not specifically leadership development programs. We did include the Southern Maine Partnership in our study, which is a regional professional collaborative that is also a university-school partnership, whose members organize and participate in professional development events and cross district school visits. Table 2 below describes who initiated the programs or networks included in this report, their targeted audience and their most recent levels of participation. Table 3 describes the different components featured in these programs or networks.

**Table 2. Initiation and Participation in Post-Preparation Programs and Networks**

Program/ Network	Number of Participants in 2020-21	Targeted Practitioners	Initiated/ Supported by MDOE	Initiated/ Supported by Practitioners	Involves University Partners or Faculty
MPA's <i>Great Beginnings</i> Program	19	new principals/ assistant principals		yes	
MPA's <i>Mentoring Program</i>	19 mentors, 19 protégés	new and experienced principals/ assistant principals		yes	
Transformational Leadership Network (TLN)	25	principals in Title I schools receiving Tier III support and other principals	yes		yes
MDOE's <i>Maine Leadership Development Program</i>	17	teachers, school leaders, and district leaders	yes	yes	yes
Maine Center for Leadership and Innovation (MCLI)	50	teachers, school leaders, district leaders, and others participate as teams	yes	yes	
Southern Maine Partnership	30 member districts	teachers, school leaders, and district leaders		yes	yes
Maine School Leaders Network (MSLN)	7, 2019-20 3, 2020-21	principals, assistant principals, and other school leaders		yes	

**Table 3. Components of Post-Preparation Programs and Networks**

Program/ Network	Professional Development	Induction training of new principals	Coaching	Mentoring of School Leaders (1:1)	Professional Network of Peers
MPA: Great Beginnings	yes	yes			
MPA: Mentoring	yes			yes	
TLN	yes		school teams, principals		yes
MDOE: MLDP	yes				
MCLI	yes		school teams		
So. Maine Partnership	yes				yes
MSLN	no			yes	yes

Each of the six programs or networks is described in a narrative summary in the section that follows. Each summary describes: 1) background information on who initiated it, why, and when; 2) an overview of the broad goals, structure and funding of the program/ network, and specific components that support leadership development; and 3) program/ network leaders' thoughts about current needs for supporting leadership development in Maine with suggestions and areas needing attention. We begin with the more formal programs or networks and then describe those that are less formal and more recently implemented.

#### ***MPA's Great Beginnings and Mentoring Programs***

An important part of the mission for the Maine Principals' Association is to provide professional development to principals and assistant principals. The organization accomplishes this through statewide and regional meetings, as well as formal leadership professional development programs. Previously, the MPA ran a week-long summer Principals' Academy open to all members. About ten years ago, the MPA restructured their programming with a focus on induction training and mentoring for new principals and assistant principals, to meet the high demand and need. Currently, the MPA has two induction programs: Great Beginnings and a Mentor program, both of which target new school administrators in their first or second year in

that role. With 15 years of experience as a school principal, Holly Couturier has been involved in leading professional development for the MPA for seven years and facilitates the Mentor Program. She and two other principals with experience at the elementary and secondary levels facilitate the sessions for the Great Beginnings Program. Both induction programs are intended to provide new principals and assistant principals with the guidance and support they need to succeed in their new role, for example, by strengthening their instructional leadership, relational and coaching skills through active listening and empowering others to find solutions to problems. Couturier explained, “That’s all part of instructional leadership. It’s working with your teachers and staff and not just being the sole leader in the building. It’s also about fostering shared leadership.”

Great Beginnings brings principals and assistant principals together for full or half-day sessions on a quarterly basis from August through April, focusing on topics and tasks that principals and assistant principals would be working on at certain points in the school year. For example, the August meeting provides training on a successful start to the school year and getting acquainted with staff and community members. Couturier commented, “It makes the job less overwhelming and manageable because it’s really focused in on the first quarter of the school year.” The October meeting explores ways to conduct parent-teacher conferences and conducting supervision and evaluation of teaching staff. In January, principals and assistant principals learn about aspects of school law, developing a school budget, and have time to reflect on the first few months of their experience. They may also hear panels of school leaders, school board members, superintendents, or students talk about how their schools are addressing civil rights and social justice issues and looking at student discipline. A final meeting in April focuses on closing out the school year, evaluation, and recommendations for continuing and non-continuing teaching staff.

The structure of Great Beginnings allows principals and assistant principals to meet in smaller groups: elementary, middle, or secondary levels and discuss “thorny issues” of building leadership. These small peer group discussions run for about two hours each day. Facilitators take the role of asking “guiding questions” rather than offering advice, and participating principals and assistant principals benefit from peer mentoring. Couturier explained,

Thorny Issues are very specific, unique challenges that someone might be experiencing. The small groups are a very confidential way to get some constructive feedback from

colleagues . . . this helps them formulate some possible solutions to their challenges. It helps makes their role as building leaders manageable.

Group discussions provide direct support and validation for new principals and assistant principals, but also peer networking opportunities for ongoing professional connections. Couturier said,

When they are in the large group setting, with 20 to 35 other people, it makes them feel that they are no longer on an island and then they realize, “you know what? I’m not the only one experiencing this challenge” . . . And they become an amazing resource for each other.

The Mentor program is designed as a two-year program with professional development for both experienced principal-mentors and for new principals and assistant principals. Most participants continue for both years. New principals and assistant principals often start the program in their second year, after participating in Great Beginnings their first year.

Superintendents apply on behalf of their new principals and assistant principals, and the program facilitator matches each new principal with a mentor from outside their district who works at the same grade level. MPA also considers common school demographics and geographic proximity in matching pairs.

All mentors have a full day of mentor training. Mentors meet together in Augusta eight times a year where they discuss strategies for coaching and mentoring from the book *Blended Learning: Skills and Strategies to Support Principal Development* by Bloom and Castagna, and other shared readings, as well as common challenges in leadership that mentors share through monthly reflective writing. Couturier commented, “Every one of them said that this book has helped them to be a better building leader because it assists them not to necessarily tell the answers . . . but to guide people into creating their own solutions.” The facilitator also meets with each mentor and protégé at least once a year to provide individual feedback on their coaching session.

Protégés meet together four times a year. Mentoring pairs are expected to meet face to face monthly and decide how best to connect at other times. Couturier noted, “. . . the purpose of the mentor is to be a non-evaluative, non-judgmental resource for that protégé . . .” Mentors can guide protégés in building stronger relationships with their administrators, teaching staff, parents or students, and ideas on handling other challenges. Couturier sees both induction programs as

being helpful in supporting retention of principals and assistant principals, and MPA has found that many new principals and assistant principals completing the induction programs stay in administration. She reminds participating principals and assistant principals, “We are here for you. We are your resource, you know, if you start to feel overwhelmed, that’s the time to reach out.”

With the advent of COVID-19, the program shifted temporarily to remote participation using videoconferencing, and mentoring also used phone, emails and videoconferencing instead of face-to-face meetings. The post-COVID-19 plan is to return to in-person meetings. Couturier said one of the biggest issues emerging this year is how to support the mental health needs of educators, leaders and students. She anticipated that civil rights issues would emerge as another topic of interest, particularly in the Mentor program.

Initially, the Mentor program had grant funding from the Wallace Foundation to defray the cost to districts. Currently, districts support the cost for their principals and assistant principals to participate in Great Beginnings and the Mentor programs, which includes stipends for mentors. Even so, the demand for these induction programs has been strong and participation has increased. In the 2020-21 year, 19 principals and assistant principals participated in Great Beginnings and 38 principals and assistant principals participated as mentors or protégés in the Mentor program. MPA’s induction and mentoring programs appear to be the only formal programs of this kind for new principals and assistant principals new to that role. Other informal networks for school and district leaders exist in the state, but they are not formal induction or mentoring programs. Couturier sees a larger statewide need to have formal programs available for professionals taking up various school and district leadership roles, not just principals and assistant principalship.

### ***MDOE’s Transformational Leadership Network***

The Maine Department of Education has provided a school coaching program since 2006 to schools meeting certain criteria. Schools needing tiered supports are identified according to requirements specified in the federal education statute, initially through the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and more recently the Every School Succeeds Act (ESSA). Schools that receive Title 1 funding, have already received Tier I support, have chronic absenteeism, and where all student populations are continuing to experience significant challenges in academic performance may qualify for Tier III support. That support includes a school leadership coach

assigned to the school to assist in developing goals for continuous school improvement. Targeted schools have primarily been K-8 elementary schools and most are Title 1 schools. Maine currently has 75 Tier III identified schools receiving this support, and most are PK/K-8 elementary schools. There are 15 coaches who work with schools. Coaches are experienced, retired district and school leaders who maintain frequent contact with the principals, attend the monthly, virtual leadership meetings, and visit schools.

In 2010, the MDOE augmented the school coaching supports with a new networking and coaching program for principals. The program, known as the Transformational Leaders' Network (TLN), currently includes six facilitators who are retired principals and/ or retired educational leadership faculty. Participation has averaged around 30 principals per year. Facilitator Sarah Mackenzie stated, "The purpose was really to focus on the principal and the learning of the principal so that he or she could implement the work toward the [school improvement] goals that the school was working toward." The professional development offered through the Network seeks to help principals develop in their own leadership role and relationships but also to help strengthen principals' coaching, support and collaboration with others who lead in the school.

Principals from all regions of Maine have participated in the Network meetings. Based on positive feedback from participants, the MDOE opened up the TLN to any Maine principal in 2019. About 40 principals attended a three day summer workshop in 2019. From that group, 25 principals continued in the TLN program for the year. For 2020-21, 25 principals from Tier 3 and other schools participated.

In prior years, the TLN would meet face to face as a whole group twice a year and in two regional groups four or five times per year for a full day each time. Each regional meeting might include about 15 principals who then break down into smaller Leader Learning Teams of four or five principals with their designated facilitator. Teams are structured with multi-district representation to maintain confidentiality. Title 1 funding is used to support both the coaching and networking components of the program while schools help to defray the meal costs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Network shifted to a video-conferenced meeting at the end of spring 2020. In fall 2020, facilitators used input from participants to plan six or seven shorter, monthly video-conferenced meetings from December through June, which include both the full Network and breakouts for the Leader Learning Teams.

In addition to these group meetings, facilitators have also provided remote coaching to individual principals in the Network, checking in by phone to see how they are doing with their school improvement goals and what topics they wanted to address in the regional meetings.

In the Leader Learning Teams, principals share and discuss common challenges in school leadership, while their particular school improvement focus or goals may vary. Conversations in these small peer groups address areas where principals may struggle with the intrapersonal aspects of leadership (for example, developing confidence to lead veteran teachers) and the interpersonal skills needed to engage productively with individuals or groups (for example, building support among teachers for change or sharing leadership with a superintendent).

They've used two books by Kouzes and Posner to support their learning: *Encouraging the Heart: A Leader's Guide to Rewarding and Recognizing Others* and *Learning Leadership: The 5 Fundamentals of Becoming an Exemplary Leader*. Given the increased isolation of students during the pandemic, more principals last year recognized the need to implement school efforts to support students' social/ emotional learning. Mackenzie explained that the Leader Learning Teams

are constant through a whole year, and they're the ones that you can share your struggles with . . . things that you can celebrate and be honest about yourself. You know, a lot of times in a school, the principal doesn't have anybody to talk to, so it's a group of people in the same position in a different school.

Within these small groups, principals benefit from the informal coaching from the facilitators as well as informal peer coaching and brainstorming. Mackenzie noted that more experienced principals mentor newer principals, providing a perspective that encourages newer principals to maintain a work-life balance and to learn to delegate and empower others in their schools. The professional relationships developed within these small peer groups also provide on-going contacts for principals when they need to discuss a leadership challenge or problem in confidence. Mackenzie believes the Network both supports the success of current school leaders, and also helps with morale and retention of principals who may be at high risk of burning out and leaving the profession. This peer support was especially important she said during the COVID-19 disruption to normal school operations. Principals had a ready network of peers to call on to share ideas and provide advice, both validating their own experiences and recognizing their hard work.

Mackenzie noted another important element of the Network meetings is the opportunity for school leaders to get out of their school buildings to have some time and space to reflect on their leadership efforts. Unfortunately, the pandemic made it impossible to continue the face-to-face meetings in the same room for this year. Mackenzie shared the observation,

I think that's the other thing that a lot of them appreciate, was just being allowed to leave, because it's very hard for principals to get outside their schools and to really allow them time to step back and really think about and reflect on, and just get some distance.

Since its inception 11 years ago, about 100 elementary grade principals and a few additional secondary level principals have participated in the Network. Both new and more experienced principals of seven years or less have joined the Network, and several have continued beyond the initial one year commitment, providing evidence that "this kind of learning and sharing situation is really valuable and they want to keep doing it," according to Mackenzie.

Yet, Mackenzie also noted that state, federal and private funding for these types of leadership networks was higher in the 1990s and early 2000's and has since declined, prompting the disappearance of some earlier networks, such as the Maine Academy for School Leaders, the Maine School Leadership Network, and other networks that supported a wide range of school and district leaders. Funding and political support for these programs has been a challenge, time to write grant proposals, and the travel distances for leaders to meet face to face. MDOE funding for the Transformational Leadership Network to support planning and facilitation was reduced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chelsey Fortin-Trimble, MDOE's Director of Policy and Government Affairs, managed the TLN programming from 2016 to 2019. She shared by email that the MDOE plans to use more video-conferencing for coaches to meet with small groups of principals, to reduce the barriers of time and travel and to reduce program costs. She noted the powerful impact of this leadership development program and the value participants place on the opportunity to be part of a "community of practice" that supports and celebrates their professional and personal growth. She also stated that the Department is in the process of partnering with stakeholders to develop more programming to support a larger number of education leaders statewide.

### ***MDOE's Maine Leadership Development Program (Maine LDP)***

The MDOE initiated the Maine Leadership Development Program (Maine LDP) in 2019-2020 to help build local leadership capacity and strengthen instructional leadership skills for participants that include teacher leaders, school and district leaders, and other leaders in education. Individuals apply to the program and are admitted as a cohort. The program consists of 12 two-day units over 12 months, delivered through a blended learning approach that includes online courses with shared reading and synchronous meetings for discussion, as well as individualized, job-embedded projects. Participants may earn credit hours or use the course credit toward an advanced degree, for example, a master's degree program in educational leadership. To date, 39 individuals have participated in this program over the past two years, with 22 participants in 2019-20 and 17 in 2020-21. The MDOE plans a third cohort for fall 2021.

The MDOE partnered with a non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C., the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) founded in 2005 for the program content and to provide training for facilitators. Facilitators for the Maine LDP include current and former Maine school and district leaders. They receive training through NISL, which is a program of the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE). The MDOE created a crosswalk between the NISL curriculum and the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) to ensure the training is consistent with Maine goals for leadership training. Emily Doughty, Educator Effectiveness Coordinator in the MDOE, explained that the program has been attractive to mid-career leaders who seek to improve instruction and student learning outcomes in their schools and also want to learn more about education leadership.

The year-long curriculum covers multiple topics in educational leadership including: an in-depth look at characteristics of high-performing systems around the world, a leader as a strategic thinker, high quality instructional practices, the instructional coaching model and how to work with teams in schools to transform instruction, ethical leadership and working with multiple stakeholder groups.

The central focus of this one year program is helping school and district leaders learn how to collect and use data to collectively identify needs in their schools and form strategic plans to improve teaching and learning. Participants complete a series of inventories to reflect on their own leadership strengths and gaps and conduct needs assessments in their schools. School teams form a plan of action based on that data. Each participant engages in action learning throughout

the year, and they are supported by trained coaches. Doughty said the intent of the individualized project is to help “educators or leaders think about something that they can impact while addressing the pressing needs in their school or district.” Doughty noted that participants particularly appreciate the coaching support and would like to continue to engage with leadership coaches in other ways. Some participants visit other peer schools to learn more about how they are using data for instructional improvement.

According to Doughty, the cohort structure for the Maine LDP program provides participants with a community of practice for honest conversations in a safe space, which can also become a new professional network of peers for leaders who may feel isolated in their work. She explained,

One thing that just keeps coming up is a need for a community. And I think that in any district, a leader can feel isolated or like they don’t have support, but they just need other leaders to talk to you. And so I feel like one of the elements of NISL that is strong is that community of practice, that we have a safe place that everyone can come together that we can share ideas.

Doughty shared that participants value this peer support and often continue to tap into this network beyond their year of participation in the program. She noted there are several programs supported by the MDOE, institutions of higher education, professional organizations and regional collaboratives, all doing excellent work and building professional networks for leaders. The need to expand opportunities for leadership mentoring is an element that the MDOE is exploring.

Chelsey Fortin-Trimble, Director of Policy and Government Affairs at the MDOE, was formerly involved in the development of the Maine LDP. She wrote through an email:

MDOE’s current educational leadership development programs were designed to provide support, training, resources, and tools to Maine educators as they strive to maximize their effectiveness in our classrooms, schools, districts, and communities. Investing in our leaders is an essential lever in our collective work of eliminating educational inequity. Current and past TLN participants and Maine LDP fellows are actively engaged in long-term, systemic change with a focus on expanding opportunities for students and improving student outcomes. Both programs create a space for educational leaders to clarify their vision, engage in strategic planning, inventory personal skills and assets,

receive targeted coaching, strengthen and refine leadership skills, and broaden professional networks.

Fortin-Trimble indicated that the MDOE plans to facilitate meetings in the coming months with educational leaders to explore how the agency can support current and aspiring school and district leaders.

### ***Maine Center for Leadership and Innovation (MCLI)***

In 2018, Maine statute (Title 20A-MRS Chpt. 123) established 12 regional education service centers across the state, which operate as regional collaboratives of member school districts. The “centers” are really a concept, rather than a physical building or place. Through collaboration, districts share services, educational programs and professional development opportunities for the purpose of improving student performance and increasing fiscal efficiencies. The centers are supported by state funding (including 55% of the executive director’s salary and benefits) and contributions by member districts. We investigated the effort of one regional group to initiate a new program for leadership development and school improvement.

The Greater Sebago Education Alliance (GSEA) is a regional service center or collaborative in Southern Maine that started with four or five districts and currently includes 11 districts including Portland and neighboring districts. Beyond collaborating on shared services, curricula, and teacher professional development, the group also recognized a need to support leadership development. Their proposal to create a leadership program was one of four proposals selected by the MDOE out of 17 proposals to be funded in 2019 through the Fund for Efficient Delivery of Educational Services (FEDES) as a seed grant. RSU 6 serves as the fiscal agent for both the GSEA and for the FEDES grant.

Michael (Mick) Roy is a former Assistant Superintendent of RSU 6 and has served as the Executive Director of the GSEA for the past four years. He has 20 years of broad educational experience in Maine as a teacher, assistant principal, assistant superintendent and interim superintendent, and several years of business experience. Over the years he sought out leadership development opportunities himself, but saw few were available and that they often focused on specific topics of leadership management rather than instructional leadership focused on improving student learning. Like his colleagues, he also saw a broader need to encourage more educators to pursue leadership roles. He recalled, “I started getting more involved with some

leadership things and found something that was obviously missing, and it was missing because we didn't have a pipeline for bringing on new [school leaders]." Through his master's degree program in educational leadership at USM and subsequent professional interaction with faculty there, Roy developed a deeper understanding of the need to support leadership development and draw on research to inform that work. Roy stated, "I really developed a strong rapport and relationship from a leadership program point of view with them, and they've been instrumental in helping me continue to learn more about leadership." This background and interest helped Roy to play an instrumental role in helping his regional collaborative to develop a successful proposal for a new leadership program.

The FEDES seed grant will run for three years, through June 2022. The pilot project entitled "Maine Center for Leadership and Innovation (MCLI)" is a professional development program for educators, instructional coaches, counsellors, administrators and other school and district leaders. Roy explained, "So almost anybody who's an educator can participate. And the purpose of this was to develop leadership more in a collaborative way." Roy outlined three broad goals of the leadership development program: 1) To support the development of professional and sustainable leadership practices, 2) To develop high-functioning leadership teams, and 3) To empower teams to transform core instruction and leadership practices. Participants develop their understanding of leadership as a collaborative effort rather than a solitary undertaking. They also work within teams to strengthen local leadership capacity to support local improvement efforts.

In 2019-20, the MCLI ran five full-day workshop sessions which involved 75 educators from nine districts within the regional collaborative, who met together at one site. Districts sent teams generally consisting of teachers and administrators. Learning Sciences, Inc. and other trained facilitators ran the sessions which drew on Marzano's book *Leaders of Learning* and research on Six Team Conditions that help teams work collaboratively and effectively, whether in business or education (<https://6teamconditions.com/>). District teams took a diagnostic survey to learn about their strengths as teams and also provided feedback on the program. Roy explained the focus of the professional development: "Those core sessions were really around how to engage your teachers and students in these conversations, and how do you collect data to enable you to make decisions to improve instruction." Each team picked a particular focus for improvement such as instruction. Some district teams also focused on improving equity and social justice for students. In between the sessions, district teams had access to support and

coaching from program facilitators. During the workshop sessions, teams enjoyed the opportunity to interact with other teams in smaller breakout groups to share ideas. Roy recalled, “. . . all of a sudden they were sharing what they had done. So they really liked that piece of the networking and they loved the idea of trying to do more of that.”

According to Roy, several teams “thrived” and made good progress last year on their goals. He described how one district team forged closer communication across school administrators and reached consensus on a district-wide improvement plan. Roy explained,

The superintendent said “your focus is going to be on Response to Intervention (RTI)”.

And they came out of that with a plan with some agreements. And it was a good start for them, and they were excited about it. But there's an example of one district who took off because they had something, and this was just from those five sessions.

However, the pilot program also revealed some important gaps for some district leadership teams. One challenge was having a shared sense of purpose or improvement focus. “What it opened up was the lack of clarity around data, the lack of clarity around compelling purpose, and the lack of understanding if they're on a team or not.” Another problem was the lack of a team approach or for some districts, where administrators often worked in isolation. Those teams struggled to make headway without a coherent leadership purpose and structure. Roy reflected,

Some of these were district teams. Some of these were the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and principals. They never got off the ground from day one to the fifth session, because they couldn't even come together as a team to try to understand how they can impact their district. Because they are so they were so siloed in their own schools.

Roy was disappointed that some districts only sent teachers who lacked involvement of their administrators and a clear purpose or focus. He noted,

Some sent all teachers and had no principals from the system. And those poor teachers were almost practically lost. And some of them would step up and you could see the potential in their leadership, because they wanted to get something out of this. So they utilized the facilitator to help communicate with their leaders or at least with their superintendent back in their district to help them with that compelling purpose so they could get something out of this training.

A third challenge Roy described was finding time to implement the improvement plans developed over the year. He commented,

And what we discovered is that very few of them had the time to apply it. Many of them tried to build in the time to apply it. That was good. But they still struggled with their own internal schedules and structures to make it happen.

Through feedback surveys from participants last year, some changes were made in the leadership program for the 2020-21 year. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic reduced the training time to four half-day sessions conducted with video-conferencing. Yet, the broad purpose of the training is still focused on learning about leadership through collaborative district teams. In the current year, 50 people from five of the initial nine districts continued to participate in the training. Teams received team coaching from the program facilitators twice a month in between sessions and had access to other online resources. Roy hopes they will be able to return to in person training sessions for the next year. The GSEA hopes to sustain this leadership development program after the seed grant ends, and to open up participation to districts outside the region.

Statewide, Roy continues to see a need for broader leadership development programs in Maine to support current leaders, develop leadership capacity within schools and districts, and to encourage aspiring leaders. He advocates for more leadership training that would help leaders work collaboratively within their systems and to focus on instructional improvement. He reflected, “I’ve attended many of those things, and they’re all helpful. But when it really comes down to improving the student achievement in the classroom, where I think my heart is and where I believe that’s where the focus should be . . . I don’t see that too many places [focusing on that] here in Maine.”

### ***Southern Maine Partnership***

The Southern Maine Partnership is one of several regional university-school partnerships in Maine where university faculty partner with school districts to support explicit research to practice linkages. These partnerships help educators and administrators access relevant evidence-based models, practices and professional development to support their school improvement work. At the same time, universities obtain important feedback from educators and school systems to improve their preservice and advanced degree programs, and can encourage practicing educators to enroll in graduate programs. An on-going relationship naturally evolves

between a university and the regional school districts where students do their internships and are hired as teachers. Educators seeking advanced study often return to the university where they completed their initial preparation and to faculty they know. The Southern Maine Partnership is funded jointly by the University of Southern Maine (USM) and the 30 member districts.

Leadership development opportunities planned by the Partnership are aimed broadly at educators from classroom teachers to district administrators. Participation fees and grants also cover some costs of professional development activities and conferences.

Several USM faculty in educational leadership have been involved in the Southern Maine Partnership over the years, helping to facilitate workshops or bring in nationally-known speakers to conferences, and participating on team visits to member districts. Jeff Beaudry, Professor in the Educational Leadership program at USM, described the broad goals for establishing the partnership.

What the Southern Maine Partnership did from the early 1980s on, was to foster an intentional dialogue between schools and the university to address a variety of issues. I think the most important thing was to make sure that we had a strong connection between our academic programs and the practical work that schools were doing. And so it really then represents a nice practitioner and research connection and the theory to practice idea.

Activities of the partnership have included evening workshops as well as multi-day conferences with participation ranging from 30 to 100 practitioners at workshops and 250-300 at the annual conference. Beaudry said these are planned collaboratively, where the trainings, presentations and discussions address topics identified by member districts as needs or issues of interest. Sometimes participants attend sessions as one large group, and other times sessions are customized for job role groups, for superintendents, principals or teachers. Leadership topics include both managerial aspects as well as instructional leadership, with an increasing focus in recent years on instructional leadership and school improvement. Recent topics include leadership mindset and assessment for learning. In the 2019-20 school year, the Partnership shifted its focus from assessment to the topics of equity, inclusion and anti-racism, as that was an important part of the USM's strategic mission as well as a topic of increasing interest to school districts. Beaudry explained, "That was something for us to really think more deeply about. And their on-going questions, that school leaders had, and incidents with systemic racism, were important for us to address head on." Eight to ten districts from the Partnership also linked up

with a mid-Atlantic consortium to develop ideas on how district and school leaders can address equity and racism.

Another important activity of the partnership consists of multi-district teams of 8-30 educators who visit a school using a walkthrough approach to focus on a particular problem of practice and share ideas. The partnership typically organizes 4-5 school visits of this type per year. Beaudry commented, “People would come from all over southern Maine to visit each other. So it wasn't just for them . . . people will come from all over the place.” He explained that a school might showcase how they addressed an improvement goal, or they might use the team visit as an opportunity to seek new ideas from peers. “Others are more than willing to say, ‘I need help, this is an open kind of question and any and all people are welcome to come along and join in the dialogue.’” The team visits also include practitioners enrolled in USM’s Educational Leadership graduate programs as part of their leadership development, helping to foster on-going professional relationships all of the practitioners involved.

Whether participants meet each other at workshops, conferences or school visits, Beaudry said they enjoy the rare opportunity to connect and share ideas and concerns with their peers across school districts. He noted that school and district leaders don’t often get the chance to network in person given their busy schedules and demands of the job. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of these activities were put on hold. Other professional development occurred remotely with video-conferencing.

In past years, the Partnership has also held education policy forums on issues of the moment. For example, discussing proposed changes in student testing and providing input and technical advice to the MDOE. This effort allows practitioners to engage with education policymakers at the state level.

Beaudry described some of the challenges in supporting and sustaining university-school partnerships. Chief among these, and common challenges across the state, are reduced budgets for universities and school districts in recent years and shrinking numbers of educational leadership faculty, that deplete the university system’s capacity to support robust partnerships. At USM, the faculty shrank from eight to three positions in educational leadership, with similar reductions at the University of Maine. A related challenge is for faculty and educators to find time to plan meetings and participate in events. Beaudry asserted that universities play an important role in supporting the leadership and school improvement work of school districts, and

need to be adequately funded and staffed to play that role. Finally, school districts are increasingly challenged to find substitute teachers to release educators for meetings or conferences, so more interactions have shifted to shorter events in the evening.

### ***Maine School Leaders Network***

The Maine School Leaders Network is currently in its second year, having been established in 2019-20 by school leaders for school leaders. Chris Record is a former principal and assistant principal at the secondary level and has been the Assistant Superintendent in Gorham for the past five years, with a total of 17 years of experience in administration. Josh Ottow has been a middle school principal and assistant principal during the last 14, most recently in Mt. Ararat. He stepped down from his position in fall 2020 to assist his own children with their remote schooling at home during the COVID-19 pandemic, but hopes to return to his position. Prior to developing this network, Record and Ottow participated in the MPA's program for new school leaders and mentor training and also completed doctoral degrees in educational leadership.

In their joint interview, both administrators shared that the impetus for creating a new network for peer support came from their own experience in school or district leadership roles, and particularly the challenge of balancing personal life with the multiple demands of an administrative role, but was also influenced by what they learned through their research on Maine school leaders. Record explained,

When I was a high school principal, I realized very quickly that it was near impossible to be an effective principal, partner and parent. The immense pressure and stress and time commitment of the job, of all those jobs, was immensely challenging.

At the same time that he was a high school principal, Record was also in a doctoral program. His research involved interviews with relatively new and veteran high school principals and examined the sources of their job stress, coping strategies, preparation or lack of preparation for the job role, and available supports or the lack of supports such as mentoring. Record said that his research findings indicated a “lack of legislation around supporting principals or school administrators through that work.” Record was invited to participate on the state’s Task Force on Leadership in 2015. He was disappointed in the lack of success getting legislation into statute to require mentoring supports for school leaders, after repeated vetoes by former Governor LePage.

Ottow shared that he has always liked the job of school administrator, even during the COVID-19 pandemic, which created some new challenges for principals. “I really, really love and still do love the work of a principal even in a pandemic, though it definitely makes it harder to love during a pandemic.” Through his doctoral work and personal experience, he became aware of the negative perceptions that many teachers have about the principalship and how that contributes to challenges for recruitment for this professional role. “It became really troubling knowing that we had a pipeline problem and that because of the first thing, this negative perception of the principalship by key stakeholders, like teachers.”

Ottow and Record both wanted to help improve perceptions of school leadership roles and help other administrators in Maine. They compared notes on the challenges Maine districts were experiencing in filling principal and superintendent positions. Ottow explained, “There then was this clear issue of a lack of people going into the profession. . . . There was just a significant [number of] school districts that typically would not have trouble filling principal positions that were having trouble filling principal positions.”

Through discussion, Record and Ottow focused on the lack of peer support for more experienced principals. Record’s own doctoral research uncovered evidence of Maine principals lacking support from their superintendents or school boards and feeling they needed to solve their leadership problems on their own. Further, he found that job stress often led to health problems and other negative impacts for principals’ personal and family lives. Record described these impacts, “All had major medical issues. Whether it was heart issues, anxiety, feelings of PTSD, eating disorders, diabetes . . . struggles with their own children or their partners or spouses.”

Record and Ottow decided to start a new peer network for principals, assistant principals and other school leaders. They reached out to school leaders who have been recognized as successful by their peer group within the state. A small group of leaders met to discuss the problems they were seeing and how to be part of a solution, and 15 male and female administrators agreed to provide peer support.

Instead of planning formal, in person meetings, they decided to use a more informal approach. They created a website that could help administrators seeking support to connect with experienced peers referred to as “partners”. They announced the website launch in fall 2019 at MPA and MSMA meetings and had a positive response. The website describes the

administrators who have volunteered to provide support, and administrators seeking support can sign up for a partner. The need to maintain confidentiality is an important consideration in matching peers. These peer interactions can occur by phone, email, video-conference or in person, and may consist of one brief contact or on-going interactions over the longer term.

Record described the website and peer support,

It describes us and it says what our strengths are areas where we think we have something to offer. So it's almost like match.com. It's informal, and every one of us in the network is doing this voluntarily. So it could be a long standing relationship, or you meet regularly, or it could be just an emergency phone call, "Hey, I need help with this."

In the first year, seven acting or permanent school leaders with less than two years of experience in the role were supported by peers who had roughly 14-25 years of school leadership experience. The acting leaders had stepped into their roles at the beginning of a school year or mid-school year, and had not received induction training. Ottow described his peer support of a school leader who worked on a Maine island and felt professionally isolated without other peers to talk through his/her challenges with the school board and superintendent.

I don't think this guy would have made it if he didn't have some support. . . . I listened to him. And it was such a challenging situation that he was in, and he had nobody to talk to Like, literally, nobody. If it wasn't me, it was his wife . . .

The pandemic has interrupted peer coaching which continued in a more limited way in the 2020-21 school year. Record and Ottow argue that peer support including mentoring should be more widely available to all school leaders and hope that one day it will be viewed as a regular part of the job role. One barrier they identified is a perception of stigma around reaching out for peer support or mentoring. Another barrier is the ideal of a principal as a "lone ranger" or leader on a "pedestal" as Record put it, which can feel isolating for administrators. A third barrier may be a lack of capacity to provide peer support or mentoring within some districts. Yet, Record and Ottow see some clear advantages when administrators obtain peer support from outside their districts, to gain new perspectives and allow for discussion of professional and personal challenges.

Beyond the need for peer support or mentoring, Record and Ottow also observed a lack of consistent or robust induction programs for new school leaders at the district level statewide.

Ottow commented, “I haven’t observed a lot of cohesive principal induction [programs] . . . I see a lot of principals start in August and they’re kind of alone in their school for a month or so and then school starts.” Record agreed, “I think that’s exactly right. I think it’s, ‘Hey, you’re hired. Welcome to the community. Here’s your school and get after it.’ And all the other principals in the district are busy doing their thing.”

Pre-certification programs for school leaders is another area where Record and Ottow recommend more attention needs to be given to topics like stress management and work-life balance, and how to obtain peer support. Ottow concluded, “Given all that’s on the principal’s shoulders, I think it’s extra important that they have it.”

### **Key Findings Across Programs**

We drew several important findings from our examination of the six formal initial educational leadership preparation programs in Maine and the seven post-preparation leadership development programs or networks that support the development of school leaders and other leaders. These findings are presented below. We describe the primary strengths and gaps or opportunities we found across these programs.

#### **Initial Preparation Programs—Strengths:**

- The initial leadership preparation programs we examined in Maine (note 4 of 6 Maine institutions participated in the study) are designed to align with the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), and they are comparable with other high quality programs nationally.
- The four programs examined focus on developing the knowledge and skills of aspiring school leaders with attention to both the school management and instructional leadership aspects of that professional role.
- The four programs examined also explicitly address important issues of equity and inequity in education in the US, and the role of school and district leaders in promoting equity in their own school systems.
- Increasingly there is a shift in educational leadership development to ensure principals help provide students with access to social-emotional support as part of their effort to provide equitable education and educational success for students. The four programs examined also included this topic in their preparation of aspiring school leaders.
- The four programs examined also seek to prepare aspiring leaders to engage collaboratively and effectively with local stakeholders to address community issues.
- The four programs examined require aspiring school leaders to engage in action research projects focused on real problems of practice in their schools as part of the continuous school improvement cycle.

- Three of the four programs interviewed for this study use a cohort model of instruction, which provides a natural network for educators enrolled in a leadership preparation program and can also help with retention of students in the program.
- The four programs examined for this study use a wide variety of delivery modes for instruction including: in-person instruction, asynchronous online, synchronous online, and hybrid (asynchronous online and in-person weekends) modalities to meet the different needs and schedules of educators.

### **Initial Preparation Programs—Gaps or Opportunities:**

- There is no statewide system or network to attract, recruit, and communicate with aspiring education leaders to help interested educators learn about leadership career options, formal training options, and program information to help build a pipeline for this career track. Educators must try to navigate different institution or program websites to find information and have no central place to go for this information. This indicates a need for closer collaboration and coordination among the institutions providing initial preparation and the state educational agency (MDOE).
- Program communication for some of the educational leadership programs was not always clearly available online, suggesting there is an opportunity to clarify what each of the programs provides in order to help aspiring educational leaders to learn what formal training is required and to select the programs that works best for them.
- Currently, aspiring leaders conduct their internships within their schools and districts of employment. There is a lack of opportunity to gain internship experiences in other schools and districts, limiting the ability of students to be exposed to different leadership styles and approaches. Some barriers include the lack of funding for release time to visit other schools/ districts.
- There is no statewide system or network in place to help new school (or district) leaders after their initial preparation to connect with induction, mentoring and other on-going leadership development programs, networks or supports. A system to allow for stronger collaboration and coordination between initial preparation programs, post preparation programs and the state educational agency (MDOE) could help to improve development and retention of school leaders.
- Higher education institutions providing initial leadership development preparation are limited in their capacity to enroll larger numbers of students based on their funding for instructors. Program faculty continue to feel stretched as they attempt to fill their dual mission to train new school leaders and also provide service and outreach to practicing school and district leaders in their regions. Supervising field-based internships requires significant time for university faculty.

### **Post-preparation programs—Strengths:**

- The post-preparation programs and networks for leadership development examined for this study engage school (and district) leaders in high quality professional development, primarily through synchronous meetings, discussion, shared readings, training and other activities. Some online and remote modalities are also used to deliver these programs to increase participant access and reduce travel time.

- The professional development provided through the programs we examined seeks to build leadership knowledge and skills, and covers important topics such as: the reflective leader, instructional coaching and supporting teachers, shared leadership across the school, the relational aspect of leadership and engaging with various stakeholders, and using data to address identified problems of practice for school improvement.
- Three of the seven post-preparation programs examined for this study engage leaders in action projects, often with other leaders in their schools, to apply their learning to school improvement goals or their own leadership development goals.
- The professional development activities in these programs also provide valuable opportunities for peer interactions across districts, access to new ideas for addressing school improvement or leadership challenges, and allows for participants to expand their own professional networks. Cross-district peer learning and mentoring also provided valuable “safe spaces” for school leaders to discuss personal and professional challenges in confidence.
- Experienced and retired school and district administrators are helping to develop and facilitate most of these programs and networks, drawing on their valuable experience to guide less experienced school leaders.
- Programs and networks actively seek input and feedback from their peers and participants and adjust their programs to better address the needs and interests of practitioners. New topics have been added in recent years, such as equity and social justice, to respond to the ever changing challenges in schools.
- The MDOE has been actively engaged in supporting and expanding the development of new leadership programs and networks for Maine’s education practitioners.

### **Post-Preparation Programs—Gaps or Opportunities:**

- The seven post-preparation leadership development programs or networks examined for this study served a minimum of 163 participants in the 2020-21 year (this number includes principals and assistant principals, but also includes some teachers and district leaders). This is a small fraction of the 906 practicing principals/ assistant principals in Maine (2019-2020 data), and an even smaller fraction if teacher leaders or other aspiring leaders are considered. There is currently insufficient capacity within these valuable programs and networks to serve the vast majority of practicing school leaders and aspiring leaders in Maine who seek leadership development and on-going support.
- Only two programs, both delivered by the Maine Principals Association, specifically target new principals or assistant principals.
- Only one of the seven programs (delivered by MPA), provides formal induction training for new principals or assistant principals.
- Only two programs (MPA’s *Mentoring Program* and the recently organized Maine School Leaders Network) provide 1:1 mentoring to principals or assistant principals. In 2020-21, only 22 principals/ assistant principals were mentored through these two organizations.
- Only one program (MDOE’s Transformational Leadership Network) provides 1:1 coaching to school leaders.
- While some of the programs and networks provide opportunity for teachers to obtain professional development in school leadership or work on action projects within

leadership teams in their schools, none specifically focus on leadership development of teachers and encouraging teachers to aspire to more formal school or district leadership careers.

- While three of the post-preparation leadership programs do involve university faculty in the training or facilitation work, most of the programs are not designed in collaboration with higher education initial preparation programs. This represents a missed opportunity to provide a more seamless, supportive system for education leaders following their initial preparation and throughout their careers. The regional professional collaboratives, like the Southern Maine Partnership, are the exception. These university-district partnerships allow for strong research to practice connections and common goals for preparing and supporting education leaders.

## Conclusions

This study sought to identify and describe programs and opportunities for school leadership development in Maine. We investigated six initial preparation programs that include certificate and degree programs through higher education institutions in Maine for aspiring school leaders, and four institutions participated in interviews. We also explored all known formal post-preparations programs in Maine as well as some informal programs and networks that support practicing school leaders and others, for a total of seven post-preparation programs or networks.

Overall, we found evidence of continuing high demand for these programs and strong participation in them. Both initial preparation programs and post-preparation programs are continuing to make use of varied types of programs to fit different needs of educators and leaders, as well as increased access via online, hybrid or remote modalities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the leadership development programs in Maine adapted quickly, using remote or virtual modes to continue delivering training, mentoring, coaching and other supports to school leaders. Despite some positive growth in the leadership development opportunities in recent years, the state's capacity to support leadership development is still well below the level of need and demand. Current programs and networks can serve only a small fraction of the new leaders and aspiring school leaders in Maine. This will require concerted effort and collaboration among many entities across the state to partner together to build statewide capacity. Further, it seems prudent to focus those capacity-building efforts on growing programs currently within the state that show quality and success, rather than diverting public resources to programs outside of Maine.

As noted in the previous section, we found many strengths across both the initial preparation programs and the post-preparation programs and networks, as well as some gaps and areas that indicate opportunities for improvement and innovation. Initial school leadership preparation programs are aligned with the National Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), support leaders' school management and instructional leadership knowledge and skills, require aspiring leaders to conduct action research projects and clinical experiences in schools, and include attention to the role of school leaders in promoting equity in education. However, there is no system to ensure that new school leaders will be connected to on-going development supports once they leave the initial preparation programs, and no statewide networks connecting practicing school leaders or aspiring leaders with development opportunities across the state. Websites for the various leadership development programs (both initial and post-prep) vary in the quality of information they provide and ease of finding relevant information.

On the post-preparation side of the equation, new programs and networks have been created recently to expand opportunities, and participants' have expressed appreciation for these supports. Like initial preparation programs, post-preparation programs also seek to deepen school leaders' knowledge of both managerial and instructional leadership concepts and skills, include attention to educational equity and engagement of the community, connect less experienced leaders with more veteran leaders, focus on action projects to address school improvement goals, and use participant feedback to make program improvements. However, only one program provides formal induction training for new school leaders, only two of the seven programs specifically target new school leaders, only two programs or networks provided 1:1 mentoring of school leaders, and only one program provides coaching to school leaders.

We found a clear disconnect between initial preparation and post-preparation programs in terms of effort to communicate, collaborate, and coordinate on program development and delivery. Instead, programs are created and offered by a variety of entities in an isolated and fragmented way, which reduces consistency in the way leaders are developed and can also make it harder for educators to find out about programs to meet their needs. Moreover, there is no statewide system or network to attract and communicate with potential or aspiring leaders to inform them about leadership careers, program options or training needed to support this career pipeline. Based on the study's findings, our broad conclusions center around the need for:

- 1) expansion of school (and district) leadership development programs, networks and opportunities in the state;
- 2) closer collaboration and communication between the state educational agency (MDOE), higher education institutions that provide initial preparation, programs that offer post-preparation programs, and school districts;
- 3) a system or network to identify and communicate with aspiring education leaders statewide;
- 4) a system or network to communicate with school leaders after their initial preparation and help them connect with various on-going development supports including: induction training, mentoring, professional development, advanced studies and networking
- 5) innovative strategies to create time for educators and leaders to engage in leadership development
- 6) innovative strategies to support leadership development for rural and isolated school districts, and
- 7) increased clarity in state education policies around expectations for district supports for school (and district) leaders' induction, mentoring and on-going professional development.

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

The findings from this study of initial leadership preparation programs and post-preparation programs and networks have implications for state and local education policy as well as practice. We outline these implications here, highlighting opportunities for strengthening and expanding education leadership development in Maine.

### **Expansion of Leadership Development Opportunities**

Building state, regional and local capacity to support larger numbers of practicing school and district leaders, as well as aspiring leaders, will require a comprehensive plan as well as increased and sustained funding to address the address workforce development needs that were highlighted in the 2016 report of the state's Task Force on School Leadership. To develop a plan, it is necessary to first identify the funding gaps and needs statewide and to investigate district practices and expenditures on leadership development. Next, it is essential to prioritize elements

of leadership development with the greatest need. These might include a) building statewide capacity for outreach and development of teachers as school leaders, b) expanding supports for new school principals/ assistant principals (as well as new district leaders), such as induction training and robust mentoring, and c) expanding development, leadership coaching and mentoring for experienced school and district leaders. Further, it is essential to provide opportunities for new and experienced school and district leaders to engage with peers outside of their districts to expose leaders to new perspectives and ideas, and to allow for a “safe space” to discuss personal and professional challenges in confidence without fear of professional harm.

***Funding and resource elements requiring more study:***

- Adequacy and use of EPS funding for school districts to support leadership development of both practicing administrators and aspiring leaders, induction, on-going professional development and mentoring of school and district leaders
- State educational agency resources to support the cost of induction programs for new school and district leaders, school and leadership coaches, and expanded leadership development programs
- State educational agency resources used to purchase leadership development programming from out-of-state organizations. These public funds could be re-directed to invest in and expand existing programs within Maine
- Higher education funding for education leadership program faculty positions within the state university system to support both initial preparation programs as well as on-going outreach and partnerships with districts to support practitioners over the career span
- Opportunities to leverage external grant funding through partnerships between the state universities, school districts and the state educational agency

***Expanding supports for school leaders:***

There is growing recognition in the research literature and among practitioners of the importance of providing induction training as well as on-going individualized support to new school leaders, such as mentoring and coaching, to fully prepare and retain leaders in the profession. There is also recognition that experienced school leaders benefit from on-going professional development and, when needed, mentoring or coaching support. There are few formal programs providing these supports, and prior MEPRI research has found low levels of satisfaction with the supports provided to principals by their districts. Finally, expanded opportunities are needed to develop teachers into school leadership roles and career pathways.

- Expanded opportunities are needed statewide to provide induction training and mentoring to all new school (and district) leaders to support their success and retention in the profession. These programs could consist of a combination of district-provided and regional programs. Regional programs allow districts to pool their resources, and new

leaders benefit from the opportunity to learn with other peers across districts and establish new professional relationships.

- Expanded opportunities are needed statewide to provide professional development, mentoring and leadership coaching to experienced school (and district) leaders. These programs could involve collaboration with university partners, the state educational agency, and regional district alliances to support robust development opportunities, cost sharing, and opportunities for school (and district) leaders to engage with their peers across the state to gain new perspectives and expand their professional networks.
- Expanded opportunities are needed statewide to provide training and encouragement for teachers and other educators to consider and pursue school leadership through a variety of pathways. While larger districts may have the capacity to implement teacher leadership and school leadership development for educators, many smaller and rural districts would benefit from regional collaboration and partnership with universities and/or other programs to support the leadership pipeline.

### **Strengthening Collaboration and Coordination Among Programs**

Post-preparation programs are mostly designed and delivered by the state educational agency (MDOE) or other organizations in isolation from the initial preparation programs that exist in Maine's higher education programs. Building statewide capacity for robust programs around shared goals for leadership development in Maine would benefit from stronger collaboration and coordination among the different entities in the state providing and participating in leadership development. These include: the state educational agency (MDOE), professional associations, university preservice programs, school districts and others. Increased coordination would also support efforts to recruit aspiring leaders into the leadership development pipeline, communicate with them about development programs and opportunities and support them for improved retention. University and district partnerships provide a framework for connecting current research knowledge with practice, and prepare school and district leaders to effect change and improvement within their systems.

There are opportunities for increased regional collaboration and sharing of successful models for supporting leadership development. For regions that are underserved, innovative strategies, such as the use of video-conferencing, could increase access to leadership development opportunities. Seed grants from the state can encourage the development of regional programs that share resources for leadership development, as we saw with the effort by the Southern Maine Partnership to create the Maine Center for Leadership and Innovation.

## **Creating a System or Network to Identify Aspiring Education Leaders**

Collaboration and coordination are needed among the entities providing leadership development in Maine to partner in developing a system or network to better attract, recruit and communicate with educators who seek information about leadership development. This might take the form of a consortium of providers to design and maintain a centralized online platform to help educators explore career opportunities, initial training requirements and different preparation pathways. This platform could have embedded links to specific initial preparation programs. In addition, more work is needed to ensure that initial preparation programs communicate effectively with potential students through their websites and other media.

## **Creating a System or Network from Initial Preparation to Post-Preparation**

Collaboration and coordination are also needed among the entities providing leadership development in Maine to partner in developing a system or network to communicate with school and district leaders after their initial preparation and help them connect with various development supports including: induction training, mentoring, coaching, professional development, advanced degree programs, networking and other supports. Again, this might be accomplished through a centralized online platform to share information about post-preparation leadership development opportunities with embedded links to those programs or networks.

## **Innovative Strategies to Create Time for Leadership Development**

Time to engage in or provide professional development (such as mentoring to other leaders), is a scarce resource for school and district leaders, and a significant barrier to participation in leadership development. It can also be a barrier in the way clinical internships are provided during initial preparation of school leaders. While remote participation or video-conferencing can be an efficient way to reduce travel time for professional development, it should be noted that school leaders also value the opportunity to leave their school building to better focus and reflect in their learning experience with other professionals. Addressing this challenge will require a combination of innovative strategies and perhaps some increased funding and could include:

- Redefining job expectations for school and district leaders to allow for time devoted to professional growth and development as well as mentoring others
- Engaging teachers and instructional coaches in shared leadership roles in schools through

distributed or shared leadership models, which could include peer observation, teacher leadership development and other activities

- Funding for assistant principal positions to share leadership responsibilities
- Increased use of technology tools such as video-conferencing to allow for remote participation in professional development, mentoring, coaching and networking
- Schools could agree to swap interns to create opportunities for aspiring leaders to conduct their clinical internship in schools and districts outside their own school/ district of employment, to provide broader exposure to new ideas and approaches to leadership and school improvement. Districts also need to be willing to use existing professional development funding for release time for educators to engage in their internship activity.

### **Supporting Leadership Development for Rural and Isolated School Districts**

Small, rural and isolated districts face increased challenges in their capacity to attract and retain school leaders. These districts tend to attract less experienced leaders and often have higher turnover among leaders. Further, small districts often have less capacity to provide professional development support to leaders or aspiring leaders within district, in particular, mentoring or coaching supports. A comprehensive statewide plan should consider the particular needs of these districts to ensure their leaders and aspiring leaders have equitable access to leadership development opportunities and on-going supports. Potential strategies to support these districts may include the following:

- Regional collaboratives and university partnerships could prioritize outreach and provision of leadership development programs and supports to these districts.
- The use of online or hybrid programs, courses and professional development resources could be expanded to increase access by reducing travel distance and time. Universities are increasingly adopting these modalities to increase access for practitioners.
- The use of technology tools such as video-conferencing could be expanded to provide direct coaching, mentoring, professional development and other supports to leaders or aspiring leaders.
- Alternative pathways to leadership, such as “grow your own” approaches, could be developed and expanded to support small, rural districts in supporting their local educators as they explore and pursue leadership development training. Partnerships with local universities for coursework and flexibility in course delivery modes will be essential for this effort. Districts may need to revise their policies capping the number of course credits educators can be reimbursed for each year, which can be a barrier to accelerated tracks in leadership training.

### **Clarifying District Responsibility for Leadership Development**

Examination of state education policies found a lack of clear, specific expectations for district supports for leaders' induction, mentoring and on-going professional development, as

well as support for aspiring leaders and teacher leadership development. Prior MEPRI studies have shown that school leaders feel less supported by their districts and less district attention on teacher leadership than what district leaders perceive. Historically, districts have tended to spend more of their EPS funding for teacher professional development than for administrator professional development. Increasing the clarity around expected district responsibilities for supporting professional development could encourage more consistent attention to this effort across districts. Areas needing further examination and clarity include the following:

- Maine's PE/PG system requirements currently have vague language requiring only one peer support of some type each year for school principals. More guidance, models and resources for high quality mentoring and other supports could be shared with districts statewide to support more robust and effective practices at the local level.
- Chapter 115 rules for credentialing require administrators working on a conditional certificate to work with a mentor for one school year, but don't provide guidance on the quality of that mentoring.
- State policy guidance does not address the coaching and mentoring needs of experienced school and district leaders over the career span.

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**Maria C. Frankland** is Lecturer in Educational Leadership at the University of Maine. Her research interests center around institutional barriers to rural student success, the impact of trauma on rural students and teachers, and ways in which trauma-informed approaches may support the academic, career, and social/emotional development of rural students.

## **Appendices**

**Appendix A: Contact Information for Programs**

**Appendix B: Interview Protocol**

## Appendix A: Contact Information for Programs

For further information on the programs, please refer to the contact information below.

### **Initial educational leadership preparation programs described in this report:**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Website</b>	<b>Contacts</b>
St. Joseph's College	<a href="https://www.sjcme.edu/academics/online/programs/master-science-education/">https://www.sjcme.edu/academics/online/programs/master-science-education/</a>	Dr. Suzan Nelson <a href="mailto:snelson@sjcme.edu">snelson@sjcme.edu</a>
Thomas College	<a href="https://www.thomas.edu/education-leadership-ms/">https://www.thomas.edu/education-leadership-ms/</a>	Dr. Pamela Thompson <a href="mailto:pamela.thompson@thomas.edu">pamela.thompson@thomas.edu</a>
U. of Maine	<a href="https://umaine.edu/edhd/graduate/educational-leadership-masters-cas/">https://umaine.edu/edhd/graduate/educational-leadership-masters-cas/</a>	Dr. Ian Mette <a href="mailto:ian.mette@maine.edu">ian.mette@maine.edu</a>
U. of Maine Farmington	<a href="https://www.umf.maine.edu/grad-studies/msed-educational-leadership/">https://www.umf.maine.edu/grad-studies/msed-educational-leadership/</a>	Dr. Erin Connor <a href="mailto:erin.l.connor@maine.edu">erin.l.connor@maine.edu</a>
U. of Southern Maine	<a href="https://usm.maine.edu/educational-leadership">https://usm.maine.edu/educational-leadership</a>	Dr. Anita Stewart McCafferty <a href="mailto:anita.stewart@maine.edu">anita.stewart@maine.edu</a>
U. of New England	<a href="https://online.une.edu/education/degrees/online-masters-degree/">https://online.une.edu/education/degrees/online-masters-degree/</a>	Dr. Jayne Pelletier <a href="mailto:jpelletier4@une.edu">jpelletier4@une.edu</a>

### **Post-preparation leadership development programs and networks described in this report:**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Website</b>	<b>Contacts</b>
MPA's Great Beginnings and Mentoring Programs	--	Holly Couturier, Exec. Dir. of Professional Division, MPA: <a href="mailto:hcouturier@mpa.cc">hcouturier@mpa.cc</a>
MDOE's Transformational Leaders Network (TLN)	--	Facilitators--Fran Farr: <a href="mailto:franfarr522@gmail.com">franfarr522@gmail.com</a> or Steve MacDougall: <a href="mailto:smacdougall831@gmail.com">smacdougall831@gmail.com</a>
MDOE's Maine Leadership Development Program (Maine LDP)	<a href="http://www.maine.gov/doe/educators/maineldp">www.maine.gov/doe/educators/maineldp</a>	Emily Doughty, Educator Effectiveness Coord., MDOE: <a href="mailto:emily.doughty@maine.gov">emily.doughty@maine.gov</a>
Maine Center for Leadership and Innovation (MCLI)	--	Michael (Mick) Roy: <a href="mailto:mickroy.net@gmail.com">mickroy.net@gmail.com</a>
Southern Maine Partnership	<a href="http://usm.maine.edu/southern-maine-partnership">usm.maine.edu/southern-maine-partnership</a>	Jeff Beaudry, USM: <a href="mailto:jeffrey.beaudry@maine.edu">jeffrey.beaudry@maine.edu</a>
Maine School Leaders Network (MSLN)	<a href="http://www.maineschoolleadernetwork.org/">www.maineschoolleadernetwork.org/</a>	Founders: Chris Record: <a href="mailto:chris.record@gorhamschools.org">chris.record@gorhamschools.org</a> or Josh Ottow: <a href="mailto:ottowj@gmail.com">ottowj@gmail.com</a>

## **Appendix B: Interview Protocol**

### **MEPRI Study of School Leadership Development in Maine**

#### **Leadership Development:**

- Describe how your program provides leadership development for aspiring school principals. How is it structured? What is the focus? What specific aspects of leadership does the program seek to develop?
  - How and in what ways do you focus on the initial preparation of principals?
  - How and in what ways do you support recruiting and retaining of principals?
- To what extent do you differentiate between managerial tasks versus leadership development of principals?
  - How do you support principals to address issues of inequity and social justice?
  - In what ways do you help develop instructional leaders?
  - How do you support the development of leaders who can attend to the needs of community stakeholders?
- As you consider programs for initial development of school principals across the state of Maine, what do you feel is working well? What are the gaps or areas to be strengthened?

#### **Clinical Experiences:**

- Describe how your program incorporates clinical experiences and/or internships that provide for hands-on training in school settings. How are these structured? What is the focus? How are trainees supervised? (other?)
  - How and in what ways do you collaborate with school districts to ensure quality clinical experiences?
  - Do trainees get experience in more than one school setting (e.g., rural and non-rural schools?)
  - In what areas are these experiences usually proficient in when considering leadership development?
  - In what areas could clinical experiences be improved upon?
  - Are there specific opportunities that could be better incorporated into clinical experiences to prepare aspiring principals for the realities of the job?
  - Have you noticed any correlation between the quality of a clinical experience and job readiness to be a principal?

#### **Professional Networks:**

- Describe how your program incorporates professional networks for aspiring or current school leaders. How is it structured? What is the focus? Who participates? How long has the network existed?
- Describe other professional networking opportunities that are available to school leaders throughout the State of Maine that you are aware of.

- What are the current strengths of the professional networks for educational leaders across Maine?
- What are the current gaps or opportunities for improvement with regard to professional development networks?
- Are there some educators who benefit from professional networks more than others due to the size of their school or school district? If so, why?

### **Ongoing Mentoring:**

- Discuss the mentoring opportunities provided to new principals throughout the Maine.
  - How and in what ways is mentorship tied to clear feedback and performance evaluation?
  - What are the successes in the ways principals are mentored in Maine?
  - What areas do you feel need improvement regarding mentorship in Maine?
  - What are some differences in the mentoring available for new principals versus experienced principals throughout their careers?
  - How do established mentoring programs focus on communication, relationship building, and continually improving as an instructional leader?