



## **Smaller Learning Communities Program Grant Maine SLC Consortium 2006–2009**

In September 2006, the United States Department of Education awarded a large grant to Maine School Administrative District #6 on behalf of a consortium of five Maine schools: Bonny Eagle High School, Lewiston High School, Noble High School, Oxford Hills Comprehensive High School, and South Portland High School. For three years, the five schools will receive annual grants of approximately \$160,000 to help them achieve several ambitious goals aimed at improving the aspirations and achievement of all students. Each school will spend roughly \$60,000 each year on school coaching, project management, and project evaluation, with the remaining grant monies subsidizing specific school-improvement initiatives. If all five schools are deemed to have made adequate progress at the end of the initial three years, and if the federal government appropriates more funding for smaller learning community projects across the country, the grant program will be extended for another two years. The Great Schools Partnership is providing school coaching, technical assistance, and project-management services for the grant, while the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute is conducting the evaluation.

The Maine Smaller Learning Communities Consortium, as the five high school partnership is known, has one overarching goal: graduate all students prepared for college, work, and citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In all five high schools, the school-improvement efforts are led by the principal, assistant principals, a leadership team, faculty grant coordinators, a school coach from the Great Schools Partnership. Although each member of the Consortium has an action plan that addresses specialized teaching, learning, and leadership needs, the five schools are also adopting a variety of common strategies to achieve their individual and shared goals:

1. Each school is restructuring its academic program into smaller learning communities that group students and teachers on interdisciplinary teams at the 9<sup>th</sup>- and 10<sup>th</sup>-grade levels. These learning communities are designed to enhance personalization and interdisciplinary learning, while ensuring that all students are well known by adults in the school. Similar but more flexible structures are also being developed for grades 11 and 12. The goal of this effort is to increase overall student outcomes, such as academic achievement and educational aspiration, while reducing disciplinary and attendance problems. In addition, each senior will be required to create a meaningful postsecondary plan and participate in at least one early college credit experience.
2. Each school is committed to creating a more rigorous, equitable, personalized, and relevant academic program that will help ensure all students are truly prepared for postsecondary learning without the need for remediation. Related initiatives include (a) expanding and improving the use of differentiation, literacy, numeracy, interdisciplinary, and technology-integration strategies; (b) increasing the number of classes in which honors-challenge options are provided; and (c) increasing and improving intervention systems to ensure that all students are performing at grade level in math, reading, and writing.
3. Each school is working to make professional development more job-embedded. All teachers are participating in school-based Professional Learning Groups that meet at least once per

month and are facilitated by trained faculty members who participates in monthly facilitator seminars led by a principal or school coach. In addition, all teachers are participating in three-day, cross-school seminars designed to expand their repertoire of instructional strategies in differentiation, literacy, writing, numeracy, interdisciplinary, and technology. The iWalkthrough classroom-observation system is also being used to collect meaningful data that is regularly analyzed by the faculty for the purpose of improving school-wide classroom instruction.

For more information about the Maine Smaller Learning Communities Consortium:

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