EDUCATE MAINE

MAINE STATE CHAMBER of COMMERCE

HELPING DIVERSE STUDENTS THRIVE | 2019

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INTRODUCTION

This is one of a series of policy briefs produced by *Educate Maine*, a non-profit organization that works closely with educators, businesses, and government officials. We believe that investment in education creates lifelong learners, opens pathways to promising careers, grows the economy, and produces civically engaged citizens.

This brief is focused on how to help Maine's increasingly diverse students to thrive. Maine needs to attract and retain young families from the rest of the country and from abroad in order to sustain our workforce and our economy.[1]

People arriving from the outside of Maine invariably will be of more races and ethnic backgrounds, and will speak more languages, than residents here today. This diversity does more than help Maine's economy; it also helps Maine students. Research shows that students who are exposed to a variety of cultures in their schools are more creative and innovative in problem-solving.[2]

For the necessary in-migration to occur and succeed, Maine needs to be a welcoming place. There are many dimensions to being "welcoming." One critical dimension is having an educational system that is able to meet students where they are in their language, social, and technical skills; that is able to help such students achieve success academically and socially; and that is responsive to the identities, cultures, and languages of all its members.

As this report discusses, Maine still has a way to go to effectively help its diverse students thrive *(see pages 3-8)*. Young people from minority races, people with disabilities, and people who do not speak English as a first language, all face steep challenges in school and in life here in Maine.

But as this report also shows, on the positive side there are individual Maine schools and programs that are providing models for achieving success with multicultural, multilingual student bodies. Pages 10-13 contain strategies schools can use to help diverse students thrive.

The policy brief series is brought to you through a partnership between Educate Maine and the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, and through the generous support of the John T. Gorman and Nellie Mae Education Foundations. The production of the report was made possible by the contributions of Lisa Plimpton (research), Frank O'Hara (writing), Tae Chong (writing/editing), Katherine Johnston (editing), and Pica (design and layout).

We want to thank Beth Clifford, Curriculum Coordinator, Maine Indian Education; Ben Donaldson, Principal, Lyman Moore Middle School in Portland; Ruqiya Egal, Education Technician at Lyman Moore Middle School; Julia Sleeper-Whiting, Executive Director of Tree Street Youth in Lewiston; Ian Yaffe, Executive Director of Mano en Mano; and Tae Chong, former School Committee member for their help in describing the experiences of diverse Maine students.

Educate Maine Equity Statement (2019)

All Maine people must have access to a quality education that provides them with the knowledge and skills required for career and economic success.

Education opportunities should not depend upon geography, income, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, race or ethnicity.

Ensuring access and removing barriers will lead to greater equity, a stronger economy, and will allow Maine to achieve our common and state mandated goal: by 2025, 60% of Mainers will hold education and workforce credentials that position Maine and its families for success.

STUDENT DIVERSITY IN MAINE

Student learners who are characterized as "diverse" come from many backgrounds. Some are from minority (in Maine) racial, ethnic, and religious groups; or from migrant families. Some have different sexual orientations and gender identities. Some are English language learners. Some have a disability. Some are homeless. Some have been in jail.

Reliable and standardized data is hard to come by for all of these subgroups. But the situation is improving. *Educate Maine* will incorporate new data on diverse learners into our annual *Education Indicators* report as it becomes available.

Maine's school population is diversifying. The increase in minority populations, combined with a decline in overall school enrollment over the past 20 years, has resulted in an increase in the proportion of non-white students in Maine public schools. White student enrollment has dropped by around 45,000 in the last 20 years, and white students are now only 89% of public school populations. Put another way:

Maine's student population is considerably more diverse, already, than Maine as a whole.

It is noteworthy that those communities that are doing well economically in Maine also have the highest rate of in-migration of minority groups. For example, while only 4% of Maine students in the fall of 2017 were black, in the City of Portland the proportion was 28%, and in Lewiston it was 36% (see table). Androscoggin and Cumberland Counties account for more than 40% of the state's Gross Domestic Product.[3] This reinforces the message that embracing diversity is a key to economic growth.

The Hispanic population in Maine is growing even more rapidly than the black population. Many Hispanics arrive in Maine to work seasonally in agricultural pursuits, and some settle here.

There is also modest growth in Maine's Native American population. Maine is home to three Wabanaki Indian reservations, the Penobscot Indian Island reservation in

Old Town, and the Passamaquoddy Indian Township and Pleasant Point Reservations in Washington County.
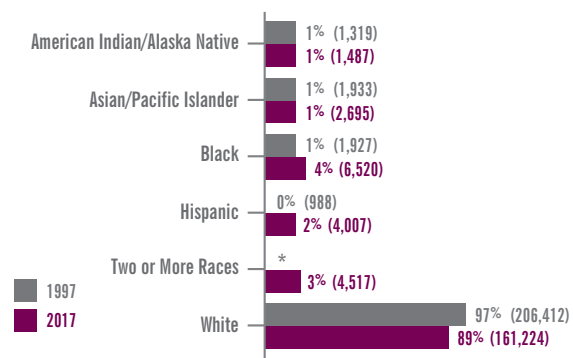
Washington is Maine's most diverse county, with 10% Native American, multiracial, and Hispanic residents.

There is modest growth as well in Maine's English Language Learner (ELL) populations. The top three languages spoken by Maine's ELL students are Somali, Arabic, and Spanish.

Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds have increased to 80,000 or 44% of all students. As has been described in previous *Educate Maine* reports[4], students from disadvantaged backgrounds in Maine are much more likely to fall behind in school and less likely to graduate from high school.

Special education populations, which include students with disabilities, are also increasing modestly, and are now a sizable portion of the total Maine student body. More than 1 in 6 students in Maine is in special education (18%).

MAINE STUDENT ENROLLMENT BY RACE

American Indian/Alaska Native — 1% (1,319) / 1% (1,487)
Asian/Pacific Islander — 1% (1,933) / 1% (2,695)
Black — 1% (1,927) / 4% (6,520)
Hispanic — 0% (988) / 2% (4,007)
Two or More Races — * / 3% (4,517)
White — 97% (206,412) / 89% (161,224)

1997
2017

* Data are not available for Two or More Races in 1997

SELECTED MAINE SCHOOL DISTRICTS WITH HIGH RACIAL DIVERSITY
Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2017-18

	Portland	Lewiston	Westbrook	Eastport	South Portland	Maine
American Indian/ Alaska Native	0%	0%	*	15%	*	1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	5%	1%	5%	*	4%	2%
Black	28%	36%	15%	*	10%	4%
Hispanic	7%	3%	4%	*	5%	2%
Two or More Races	5%	4%	4%	7%	5%	3%
White	54%	55%	72%	76%	76%	89%

* Data suppressed for values of 10 or smaller. Maine Department of Education, https://www.maine gov/doe/data-reporting/reporting/warehouse/chronic-absenteeism

MAINE STUDENT ENROLLMENT, PREK-12

	CHANGE (1997-2017)
ALL STUDENTS	**-15%**
American Indian/Alaska Native	13%
Asian/Pacific Islander	39%
Black	238%
Hispanic	306%
White	-22%
Economically Disadvantaged	29%
Special Education	3%

WHAT DISCRIMINATION FEELS LIKE

Few people think they hold racist or discriminatory views. But many of the majority white culture communicate harmful messages to minority students, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously.

The Maine Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union interviewed 115 minority students, parents, community leaders, and educators in Maine. Unless otherwise noted, the anecdotes below are taken from their 2017 report: *We Belong Here: Eliminating Inequity in Education for Immigrants and Students of Color in Maine, ACLU of Maine, 2017:*

Discrimination by Students

- Muslim students described other students pushing them in the hallways, calling them terrorists, addressing them as "ISIS" and trying to pull off their headscarves.

- Many students of color described white students telling them to "go back to Mexico" or threatening to have them deported.

- A black student described students she didn't know reaching out and stroking, poking, and tugging her hair as she walked through school hallways.

- One third of all LGBT students reported offensive comments or attacks at school or on the way to school because of their perceived sexual orientation.[5] LGBT students were almost four times as likely to have seriously considered suicide in the past year (the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey 2017).

Schools with few diverse students are not exempt from problems

"Some schools with smaller percentages of ELL and immigrant students had more severe problems with harassment. Schools with less diversity tended to have more deeply entrenched assumptions about what constitutes "normal," which were experienced as exclusionary by students who fell outside of that definition, whether because of race, religion, national origin, poverty, disability, or sexual orientation. Schools do not need to wait for a sudden or massive influx of immigrants to begin considering their obligations to minority students."

We Belong Here: Eliminating Inequity in Education for Immigrants and Students of Color in Maine; page 15

Discrimination by Teachers

- In one math class, when black students answered a question the teacher would make sure to double check the answer with a white student, but when a white student answered the question she wouldn't check.

- A teacher once harassed a transgender student by using her birth name over and over again in class until she left in tears, humiliated.

- A 15-year-old from Jamaica said that her teachers always seem surprised that she does so well academically, and their compliments about her achievements are often unintentionally insulting. For example, one teacher praised her work and exclaimed, "You're not supposed to be smart!"

- Students complained that if they approached their teachers to ask for help, the teachers would suggest that their class was probably too hard for them and they should drop it.

- One mother reported that school officials tried to change her child's ADHD medications without consulting her, assuming that she was too ignorant to address her child's health.

Discrimination by Staff

- At the first soccer game of the season, one Muslim high school student from the Middle East was told by a referee that she would not be allowed to play unless she removed her headscarf.

- In the cafeteria, many schools remain largely segregated, and students described stricter enforcement of rules and more monitors on the non-white side of the room.

- Several immigrant families described school bus drivers who refused to pick up their children or complained to administrators that the immigrant children smelled bad and had bad attitudes.

ENGAGEMENT AND ATTENDANCE

The first measure of school success is simply attendance. Do Maine schools provide a supportive and positive atmosphere that keeps kids from different cultures motivated to show up?

A student is considered "chronically absent" if he or she misses 10% of school days in an academic year—which is 18 days in Maine.

Research shows that "chronic absenteeism has a clear relationship to negative consequences for students, including lower achievement, disengagement from school, course failure, and increased risk of dropping out."[6]

In Maine schools as a whole, 1 in 6 students—or 17% —were chronically absent in 2017-18.

This in itself is problematic. But for specific groups, the proportions are much higher. Among Native American students, almost 1 in 3 (31%) are chronically absent. Nearly 1 in 2 homeless students (43%) are chronically absent. Around 1 in 4 special education or economically disadvantaged students are chronically absent. About 1 in 5 migrant students are chronically absent. Asian students and students in military families have lower than average chronic absenteeism (12%).

While the chronic absence rate of black students is at the state average, black students are 2.4 times as likely to be suspended as white students.[7]

Once you fall behind in school, it's difficult to keep up in future years. The effects are cumulative and show up most dramatically in high school testing data (as is described in following sections).

For children in poverty, multiple barriers such as transportation and housing instability are daily challenges that get in the way of regular school attendance.

For children of immigrants, language barriers can make it hard for parents to understand what expectations are for their children.
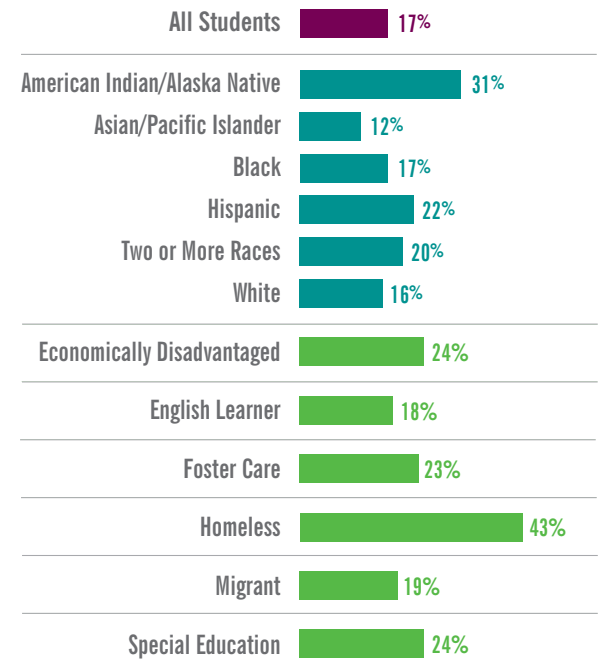
Many Native American students live in parts of the state where economic opportunity is limited. Beth Clifford, Curriculum Coordinator for Maine Indian Education says that educators face the challenge of *"making school work relevant for students, establishing a connection to what lies ahead and helping students invest themselves to set and meet their goals. When relevancy isn't established, long-term goals can seem elusive."*

For all minority groups, educators may be too tolerant of absenteeism and poor performance. Ben Donaldson, the Principal of Lyman Moore Middle School[8], says that *"Our school is coming from a place of sympathy for kids who've had a hard time, and one habit is to lower expectations as a way of trying to help. We are trying to shift that. Collective efficacy is the culture we're working to develop: acknowledging hard things students have experienced, maintaining high expectations, and telling kids we will help you and support you to reach your goals."*

In some cases it is simply cultural ignorance on the part of school administrators that reduces student and parental involvement. For example, events held in conflict with weekly prayers lower attendance among students and parents from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The first requirement for academic success is simply having a high attendance rate for school. Some students from diverse backgrounds start out behind because they are not in school for enough time.

CHRONIC ABSENCE RATE, 2017-2018

Category	Rate
All Students	17%
American Indian/Alaska Native	31%
Asian/Pacific Islander	12%
Black	17%
Hispanic	22%
Two or More Races	20%
White	16%
Economically Disadvantaged	24%
English Learner	18%
Foster Care	23%
Homeless	43%
Migrant	19%
Special Education	24%

SOURCE: Maine Department of Education, Temporary Data Warehouse: https://www.maine.gov/doe/data-reporting/reporting/warehouse/chronic-absenteeism

ACHIEVEMENT GAPS SHOW IN 4TH GRADE

The first snapshot of early student performance is the Maine Education Assessment (MEA) for 4th grade.[9]

For English and Language Arts, students must show grade level skills in reading, writing, language, and speaking/listening to be judged "proficient." Examples of required skills in reading include being able to follow a story, to explain the main ideas, to make inferences, to compare to other texts, and to understand the use of evidence.[10] There are similar standards for writing, language, and speaking/listening.

Only about half of 4th grade Maine students (51%) meet all of these English/Language Arts standards. Among black students slightly less than half (45%) are proficient. Poor students (39%), Hispanic students (47%), and Native American students (42%) also perform below the state average. Asian students (78%) do better. White and Hispanic student proficiency declined slightly from 2016 to 2018, while Asian, multiracial, Native American, and black student proficiency showed small improvements.
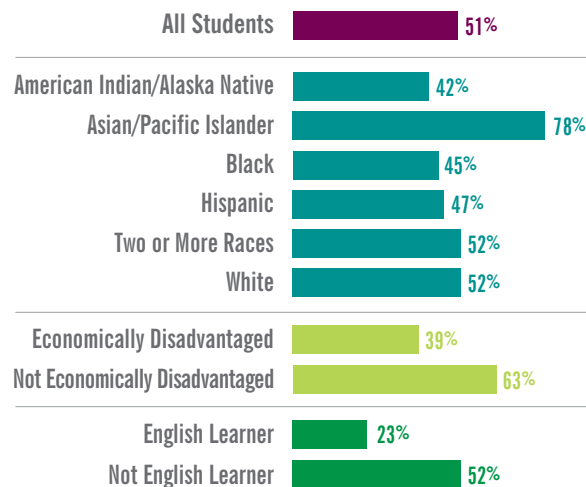
English learners do the poorest of all on the tests – which is to be expected, as the tests are only given in English.

For mathematics, students must show grade-level skills in algebraic thinking, numbers and operations, fractions, measurements, geometry, and mathematical thinking. Operations would include adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing, with fractional results.[11]
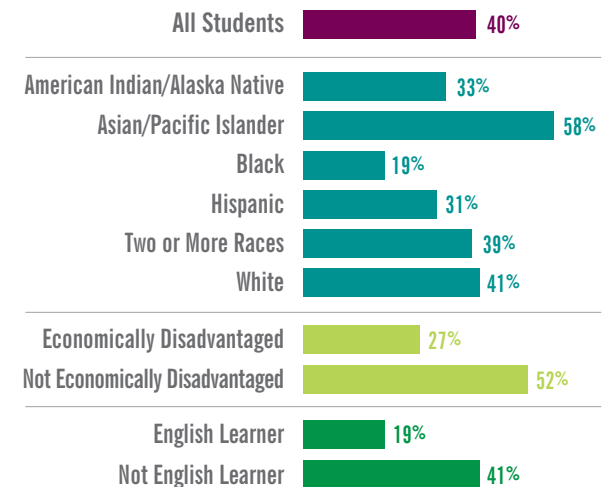
Only 2 in 5 Maine 4th-graders (40%) meet grade-level mathematical standards. Again, Asian students (58%) and students who are not economically disadvantaged (52%) perform well above average, while black students (19%), English learners (19%), and students from low-income families (27%) perform well below the average. Students from all racial and ethnic backgrounds achieved proficiency gains in math from 2016 to 2018, except for white students, whose performance remained the same.

Overall, the 4th grade test scores show that students from poor families and students from immigrant backgrounds are starting off their education at a severe disadvantage compared to the average student.

4TH GRADE ELA PROFICIENCY BY STUDENT SUBGROUP, 2018

Subgroup	Proficiency
All Students	51%
American Indian/Alaska Native	42%
Asian/Pacific Islander	78%
Black	45%
Hispanic	47%
Two or More Races	52%
White	52%
Economically Disadvantaged	39%
Not Economically Disadvantaged	63%
English Learner	23%
Not English Learner	52%

4TH GRADE MATH PROFICIENCY BY STUDENT SUBGROUP, 2018

Subgroup	Proficiency
All Students	40%
American Indian/Alaska Native	33%
Asian/Pacific Islander	58%
Black	19%
Hispanic	31%
Two or More Races	39%
White	41%
Economically Disadvantaged	27%
Not Economically Disadvantaged	52%
English Learner	19%
Not English Learner	41%

SOURCE: Maine Department of Education, https://lms.backpack.education/public/maine
Note: Reported ELA proficiency data by race/ethnicity does not include English learners.

ACHIEVEMENT GAPS GROW BY 11TH GRADE

Seven years later, the Maine High School Assessment uses the College Board's Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). It is administered in grade 11.

The Reading/Writing/Language test score reflects the test taker's command of evidence; word understanding; ability to express ideas; and understanding of basic grammar. An SAT score of 460 is considered "proficient;" i.e., makes the student likely to get at least a C in a first-semester, credit-bearing college course in history, literature, social sciences, or writing classes.

More than half of all Maine students (57%) meet the SAT reading/writing proficiency definition. Black students score only half as well—28% meet the proficiency standard. Students from poor families (40%) and Native Americans (44%) also perform below average. Asian students (60%) perform above average. Among English learners, only 1 in 11 performs above average—a slippage from 4th grade.
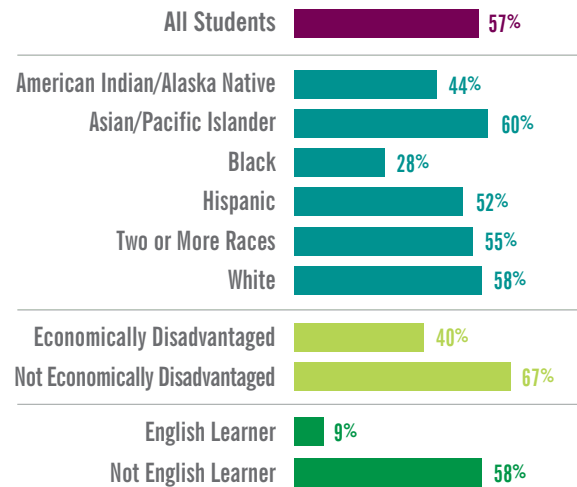
The SAT math test score reflects the test taker's algebra, data analysis, and advanced math. A score of 510 is considered "proficient;" i.e., makes the student likely to get at least a C in a first-semester, credit-bearing college course in algebra, statistics, pre-calculus, or calculus.

Maine high school students do less well in math—only 35% of all Maine test-takers are considered proficient. Among black students, only 1 in 9 – 11%—are proficient in math. All underrepresented minority groups— economically disadvantaged (19%), Native American (28%), Hispanic 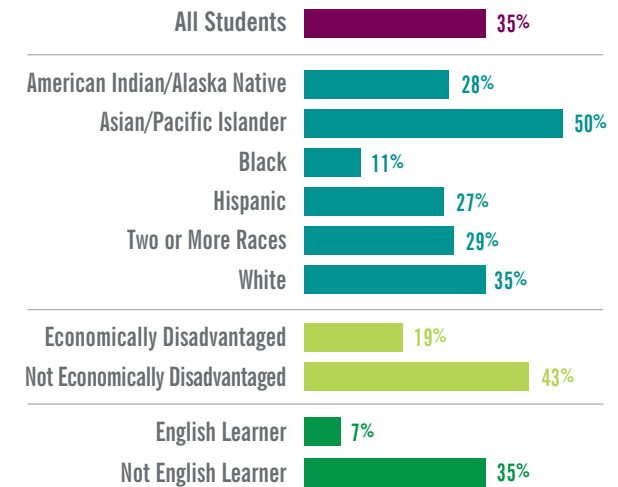(27%), and multi-racial (29%)—perform below the state average. English learners are the lowest, at 7%. Asian students do much better (50%) than the state average.

Maine students as a whole perform slightly below students in neighboring states. So the performance of those minority groups who are well below the Maine average is a matter of grave concern.

11TH GRADE ELA PROFICIENCY BY STUDENT SUBGROUP, 2018

Subgroup	Percent
All Students	57%
American Indian/Alaska Native	44%
Asian/Pacific Islander	60%
Black	28%
Hispanic	52%
Two or More Races	55%
White	58%
Economically Disadvantaged	40%
Not Economically Disadvantaged	67%
English Learner	9%
Not English Learner	58%

11TH GRADE MATH PROFICIENCY BY STUDENT SUBGROUP, 2018

Subgroup	Percent
All Students	35%
American Indian/Alaska Native	28%
Asian/Pacific Islander	50%
Black	11%
Hispanic	27%
Two or More Races	29%
White	35%
Economically Disadvantaged	19%
Not Economically Disadvantaged	43%
English Learner	7%
Not English Learner	35%

SOURCE: Maine Department of Education, https://lms.backpack.education/public/maine

GAPS AT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

There are two ways of measuring high school graduation rates. The first is measuring how many students graduate within four years of entering high school—the conventional path. The second is measuring how many students graduate within six years—slower than the normal path, but still getting to the finish line.

Relative to other New England states, Maine has a slightly lower than average 4-year graduation rate. But the range between the top and bottom is small. Rhode Island has the lowest 4-year graduation rate (84%), Vermont the highest (89%), and Maine in the middle at 87%. However, Maine's rate has improved from 83% in 2010 to 87% in 2017, even as higher standards for graduation have been put in place.

But some groups are lagging far behind in Maine. Only 71% of Native American students graduated within four years in 2017. Students with disabilities only have a 73% 4-year graduation rate. Black, multiracial, and English-learner students graduate at a rate around 80%. Economically disadvantaged students also are around 80%.
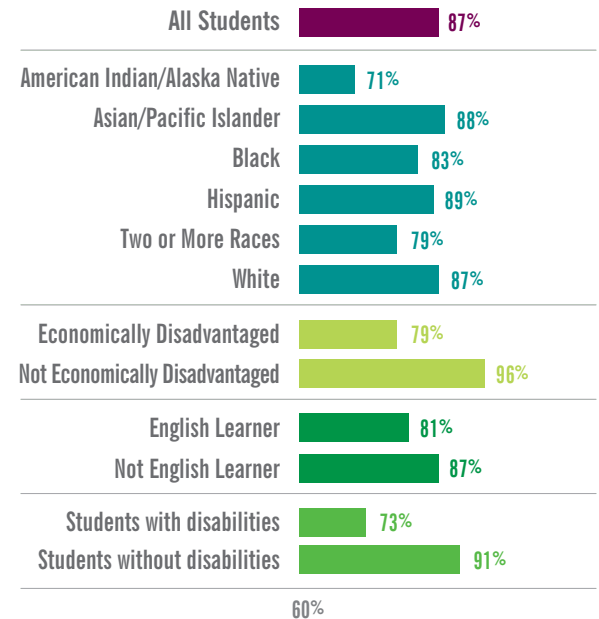
Data on the proportion of Maine students who graduate within six years of entering high school is only available from the years 2011-2015. As of 2015, the 6-year graduation rate in Maine (87.6%) was hardly higher than the 4-year rate (87.2%).[12] By this measure, Maine ranks second-to-last among New England states, just above Rhode Island (87.5%), and well below the New England average (90%).

However, some minority groups did much better on the 6-year standard in Maine. Students with disabilities had a 73% 4-year graduation rate in 2015 in Maine, but by 2017, 81% had graduated. English language learner students improved from 81% to 86%. Economically disadvantaged students improved from 79% to 82%; Native American students from 82% to 89%; and Hispanic students from 81% to 85%.

The takeaway from this data is that **appropriate curriculum and student pacing can provide a distinct benefit to disadvantaged students.** Programs that provide after school and year-round instruction may help more students graduate on time, better prepared for college and career.

MAINE 4-YR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES, 2017

All Students	87%
American Indian/Alaska Native	71%
Asian/Pacific Islander	88%
Black	83%
Hispanic	89%
Two or More Races	79%
White	87%
Economically Disadvantaged	79%
Not Economically Disadvantaged	96%
English Learner	81%
Not English Learner	87%
Students with disabilities	73%
Students without disabilities	91%

60%

SOURCE: New England Secondary Schools Commission, https://www.newenglandssc.org/resources/common-data-project/

COLLEGE AND BEYOND

Performance after high school graduation is measured in three ways in the New England Secondary School Consortium's *Common Data Project*.

1) **Enrollment** – the proportion of high school graduates who enroll in college in the fall;

2) **Persistence** – the percentage of enrolled college freshmen who return for a second year; and

3) **Completion** – the proportion of enrollees who earn a degree within 6 years of entering college.

Overall, Maine does not do as well as other New England states in any of these measures. Fewer Maine high school graduates enroll in college, fewer stay for a second year, and fewer earn a degree.
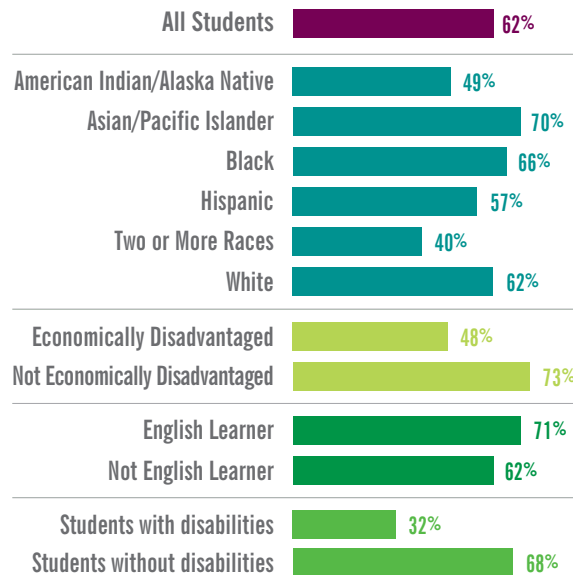
But within this general picture, three groups in particular seem to have challenges in post-secondary education. Economically disadvantaged students perform below Maine students generally and compared to economically disadvantaged students in other states in all three measures. Likewise, Native American students, and students with disabilities, lag even further behind Maine and New England averages.

On the other side of the ledger, English learner students in Maine do much better than their New England counterparts.
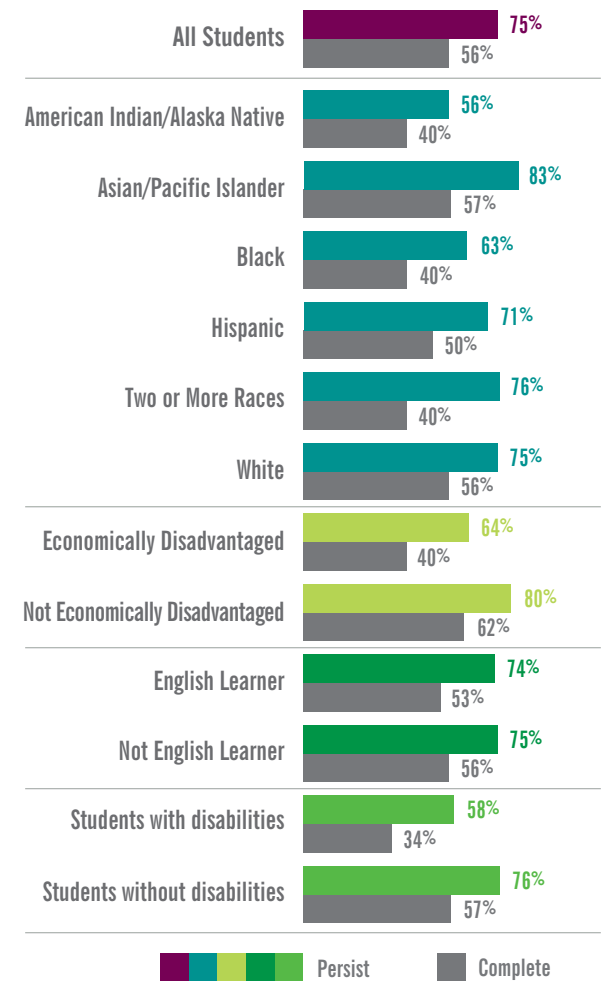
The challenge of a creating a thriving, diverse culture in Maine doesn't end with school. The Maine Center for Economic Policy reports that, in the workplace, minorities earn less than white workers. There is work to be done in all institutions in Maine.

There are a number of promising programs that address barriers to college completion faced by diverse learners. The Maine Adult Degree Completion Scholarship supports older students returning to school. The MaineSpark coalition has two dedicated tracks for supporting educational attainment—Adult Promise and Future Success—that include resources for economically disadvantaged individuals and immigrants new to our education system. Family Futures Downeast offers services required to help participants succeed, including transportation and technology; a personally relevant curriculum; access to educational remediation; and strong emotional, social, and career supports.

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT RATES IN MAINE, 2016

Subgroup	Rate
All Students	62%
American Indian/Alaska Native	49%
Asian/Pacific Islander	70%
Black	66%
Hispanic	57%
Two or More Races	40%
White	62%
Economically Disadvantaged	48%
Not Economically Disadvantaged	73%
English Learner	71%
Not English Learner	62%
Students with disabilities	32%
Students without disabilities	68%

COLLEGE PERSISTENCE & COMPLETION RATES IN MAINE BY STUDENT SUBGROUP

Subgroup	Persist	Complete
All Students	75%	56%
American Indian/Alaska Native	56%	40%
Asian/Pacific Islander	83%	57%
Black	63%	40%
Hispanic	71%	50%
Two or More Races	76%	40%
White	75%	56%
Economically Disadvantaged	64%	40%
Not Economically Disadvantaged	80%	62%
English Learner	74%	53%
Not English Learner	75%	56%
Students with disabilities	58%	34%
Students without disabilities	76%	57%

Persist ■ Complete ■

STRATEGY 1: ENSURE SCHOOL PRACTICES AND POLICIES SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

On the following pages are four broad strategies, and 14 specific actions, that a school can use to address the issues raised in this brief.

Action 1: Identify and Eliminate Discriminatory School Policies

In 2019, Maine became the first state to ban Native American mascots in public schools. Maulian Dana, the tribal ambassador for the Penobscot Nation, said that the law "sends a message of truth and honor and respect... [Mascots] make us invisible and turn us into stereotypes."[13]

Many schools and districts may be unintentionally upholding policies that are biased against the full inclusion of their student population. For example, policies such as school dress codes that prohibit head coverings discriminate against cultural traditions of students from diverse religious backgrounds. School leaders should conduct a review of school policies with the participation of diverse learners to ensure that all student identities and abilities are honored and expressed within the community.

Action 2: Incorporate Restorative Practices into School Discipline

Restorative justice is a theory of justice that focuses on mediation and agreement rather than punishment. Schools in Maine and across the nation that have successfully implemented restorative practices have seen significant decreases in suspension rates along with improved school culture.[14] At Tree Street Youth,[15] staff use reflective writing assignments rather than traditional punishments when a student breaks the rules. This approach puts the responsibility on the student to reflect on the harm he or she has caused and to undertake corrective activities in the community. Tools for how to bring restorative justice practices to your school are available in the resources section of this brief and online.[16]

Action 3: Collect Data to Better Understand Diverse Student Needs and Experiences

Subtle factors in the school environment can have an immense impact on academic outcomes. Schools and districts should collect data by student sub-group in order to illuminate issues and start conversations.

There is an increasing number of options for schools and districts looking to collect more information about topics related to the student experience such as bullying and discrimination, school values, relationships, and climate and culture. For example, Panorama Education (see resources section) provides a range of free surveys that schools can use to better understand the experiences of students, teachers, and parents in their community.

In Maine, Principal Donaldson at Lyman Moore Middle School says, *"We're trying to use our achievement data, discipline data, and participation in co-curricular activities to see if participation is demographically representative. Then trying to increase participation to get subgroups to participate at the same rates as the most represented groups. So we work to identify opportunity gaps and what barriers exist for, say, multilingual students to attend dance, participate in drama, or join a team? Once we know the barriers we can work to remove them and help students access these opportunities."*

Action 4: Develop and Incorporate Culturally Inclusive Curriculum

Curriculum and extracurricular activities should reflect the cultures of students and their families. For example, the Wabanaki Studies Commission has created curricula for teaching about Native Americans in Maine.[17] In the past year, Portland Public Schools revived a districtwide effort to create a Wabanaki Studies curriculum.[18] Calais High School offers a Passamaquoddy Culture and Language course that "bridges divides between Native and non-Native communities, creates a shared experience, and develops empathy and deepens ties between the communities."[19]

For children of migrant workers—mostly Latinx and Indigenous—Mano en Mano[20] has developed the Blueberry Harvest School, a summer learning program for migrant children and youth during the blueberry harvest in Washington County. Executive Director Ian Yaffe explains: *"It is designed around an appreciation and celebration of students' identity, language and culture... We incorporate different ideas, identities, and languages into classrooms on a daily basis. Choices of literature and curriculum should not reflect only the students in that room, but the whole world we all live in."*

STRATEGY 2: PROVIDE ONGOING, RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS

Teacher and staff training is necessary for school communities to be inclusive, welcoming, and effective environments for diverse student populations.

Here too there is a growing range of resources. For example, Teaching Tolerance *(tolerance.org)* is a national organization that has a plethora of classroom and professional development resources for educators and school administrators.

Teacher training has been a special area of emphasis at Lyman Moore School. Principal Donaldson reports: *"At Lyman Moore we've done professional development sessions on the history of race/racism in the U.S., privilege and bias, and micro-aggressions. People have been overwhelmingly grateful to commit time to this and have honest conversations about these topics. It's challenging, uncomfortable, and can be difficult, but at the same time people seem to think it's overdue."*

Action 5: Hold All Students to High Expectations

The writer Michael Gerson coined the phrase "the soft bigotry of low expectations" to characterize what happens when well-meaning teachers don't push students to succeed. Educators should be encouraged and supported toward holding all students to high expectations, even when they are tempted to lower standards from a place of sympathy and good intentions.

Julia Sleeper-Whiting of Tree Street Youth says: *"We need more recognition that, for kids of color, immigrant kids, EL kids, dropping the standard is a disservice. What educators need to do is employ some different methods and practices to help all students get to that standard."*

Action 6: Provide Emotional Support to Educators

Students who face steep challenges in their lives in and out of school – including deep poverty, violence, and discrimination – have extensive needs that stretch their teachers beyond the role of educator. The emotional impact of this on teachers has many names, including vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue. Julia Sleeper-Whiting adds that teachers must be trained to take care of themselves: *"To teach more vulnerable kids, you must educate teachers on how to take care of themselves. Classroom management is really emotional regularity of the teachers. Recognize what you can and can't control, and don't feel guilty about what you can't. It seems like they're all on fire, so stressed, feeling bad. At the end of the day, we're not addressing the adults in schools."* Several schools around the nation are taking steps to support their educators through counseling support, mindfulness training, and group trainings on how to handle vicarious trauma and promote self-care.

Action 7: Provide Implicit Bias Training to Teachers and Staff

Implicit biases are the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our actions, understanding of events, and decisions in an unconscious manner.[21] Many schools across the country have been sponsoring implicit bias training in order to advance equity in their communities, which can have a large impact on a range of outcomes, including improving academic achievement gaps and disparities in suspension rates. There is a wealth of online resources about implicit bias, in addition to many training providers across Maine that offer regular workshops on implicit bias for educators.

Ben Donaldson, Principal of Lyman Moore Middle School says: *"We want to believe that everyone is included and treated the same, but once you dig in, you see the biases that are so ingrained, you didn't realize the harm you could be causing. Cultural competence and responsiveness is a process. Honoring people as individuals rather than treating them equally—that's understanding the difference between equity and equality. Then we have to translate that into our practice."*

STRATEGY 3: ENGAGE PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES

Students and their caregivers from diverse backgrounds bring a wealth of assets to the table. Rather than seeing differences as a barrier, communities should recognize and capitalize on this diversity as a value. Caregivers from all backgrounds need to be welcomed into the school community. This will take some time, as traditional communication techniques have to be adapted for new populations.

Julia Sleeper-Whiting describes the approach of Tree Street Youth: *"You have to really know your community. Kids and families will tell you what they need. We build frameworks and programs from there. Not a single program here has been our own idea—everyone has come from the needs that kids and parents tell us. We constantly iterate to stay relevant."*

Ben Donaldson, Principal at Lyman Moore Middle School in Portland, agrees: *"It can be scary, but I would say find ways to listen to kids and to families. Be courageous to just listen. Don't jump to fixing it or finding one solution. There's no formula for listening and building a community around who is in it. Start with the kids. They'll tell you, especially the youngest kids—they love to talk about themselves and their experiences."*

The following are some actions that schools have taken to be more inclusive:

Action 8: Implement an Inclusive School Calendar

School leaders and staff can begin by becoming aware of holidays and cultural traditions observed in their communities that may conflict with programming, such as student shows or parent-teacher conferences. Free online resources[22] can help you identify customs and traditions that you can celebrate as part of your culturally inclusive curriculum—and also help you avoid scheduling the community potluck during Ramadan, for example.

Action 9: Adopt Culturally Inclusive Communication

Language—spoken, written, and body language—is a powerful component of interaction that can enhance or inhibit a person's experience in the educational system. Educators and school staff should be given training and information about how to communicate with students from different backgrounds. For example, many adherents of the Muslim faith do not shake hands or make physical contact with members of the opposite sex. Being aware of this ahead of time can help prepare school staff to be welcoming to new students.

Donaldson of Lyman Moore Middle School doesn't use the term "English Learner" to describe immigrant kids. They are referred to as "multilingual students," in honor of the skill that they have that those in the wider American culture don't have. School communities that are well versed in inclusive practices will be able to provide a more welcoming environment to students and families of all backgrounds.

Action 10: Provide Translation

A relatively straightforward way to include students and families from diverse backgrounds is to translate common school documents into multiple languages. Permission slips, invitations to school events, parent-teacher communications, report cards, and school policies can all be translated into multiple languages to improve communication and relationships. Schools can hire translators or use free services such as Google Translate. Popular services for sending school-wide emails, such as MailChimp, can be linked to Google Translate so recipients can choose to have the message displayed in the language of their choice.

Action 11: Pilot New Ways of Engaging Parents and Caregivers

Tae Chong of Portland suggests that school districts connect directly with parents to improve community engagement. *"Many immigrant parents are unaware of the education process. A successful parent academy model from Arkansas offered afterschool tutoring for kids, classes for adults, and community dinners. Adult Education agencies here have adults studying English, many of whom have kids in the school system—that's the perfect place to have parent academies."*

STRATEGY 4: RECRUIT AND RETAIN DIVERSE EDUCATORS AND STAFF

Student outcomes improve when students can identify with their teachers. For example, research shows that black male students who have a black teacher in 3rd, 4th, or 5th grade are less likely to drop out before graduating. [23] But in Maine, 97% of teachers are white, while only 89% of students are white.[24]

Recruiting and retaining diverse educators and staff will require creative and flexible recruitment and retention approaches at every level, from the state to the district to the school.

Action 12: Integrate Inclusive Practices in the Hiring Process

Credentials and years of experience are important when it comes to selecting the people who will educate our youth. However, credentials don't always signal the best-fit person for a particular role. Julia Sleeper-Whiting says of her staff, *"Credential-wise, they're not therapists or teachers. But they are the best people to do this job. It's really hard—many of their skills are grounded in personal experiences that make them good at this job but would never be captured on a resume."*

Hiring teams should ensure that their screening practices are not excluding qualified candidates due to overly narrow hiring criteria focused on formal training rather than broader experience. Consider non-traditional experiences, relationship-building skills, and community connections that could be assets to the school community when selecting candidates to interview.

Action 13: Support Salary Increases, Loan Assistance, and Loan Forgiveness Programs for New Educators

Teaching is demanding work, and starting salaries are not typically competitive with those in other industries. In order to make the teaching profession more accessible to individuals from diverse backgrounds, Maine legislators should look to sponsor bills that support a diverse pool of new entrants the teaching profession, in particular laws that promote higher base salaries for teachers, loan support, and loan forgiveness programs for educators. These laws will not only help to address our statewide teacher shortage, but also support direct and indirect pathways into the profession for candidates from diverse backgrounds.

Action 14: Promote Non-traditional Pathways into the Teaching Field

There are many different options for expanding and diversifying our teaching workforce, many of which will have to be implemented to address the looming teacher shortage statewide. States such as Arkansas and Tennessee are implementing grow-your-own initiatives that aim to recruit, retain, and advance talented local educators.[25] National initiatives such as AmeriCorps can provide an on-ramp to the profession for young people.

In Portland, the local Adult Education and public schools are working together on a pipeline program where immigrants with backgrounds in education are being groomed to work as educators in the school system. Ben Donaldson at Lyman Moore Middle School is also working on the issue in myriad ways: *"We're talking to kids about becoming teachers, filling in other staff roles in the school with more diverse staff of people who may not yet be certified to teach, developing alternate routes to certification."*

RESODURCES

Reports

We Belong Here: Eliminating Inequity in Education for Immigrants and Students of Color in Maine

ACLU of Maine Report, 2017
https://www.aclumaine.org/sites/default/files/webelonghere_report.pdf

Web Resources

Colorín Colorado

https://www.colorincolorado.org

Colorín Colorado is a national multimedia project that offers a wealth of bilingual, research-based information, activities, and advice for educators and families of English language learners (ELLs).

Edutopia

https://www.edutopia.org/topic/culturally-responsive-teaching

Edutopia's Culturally Responsive Teaching section shares resources and strategies to engage students by connecting to and honoring their cultures, experiences, and backgrounds.

National Equity Atlas

https://nationalequityatlas.org

A data and policy tool for community leaders and policymakers who aim to build an equitable, resilient, and prosperous economy.

Panorama Education Surveys

https://www.panoramaed.com/resources

Free school surveys designed to give educators more information about their school climate and culture, relationships, professional learning, and more.

Racial Equity Tools

https://www.racialequitytools.org/home

Racial Equity Tools offers tools, research, tips, curricula, and strategies for individuals and groups working to achieve racial equity.

School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation System (SHAPE)

https://theshapesystem.com/trauma

The Trauma-Responsive Schools Implementation Assessment is a free, evidence-informed self-assessment that measures eight key domains of trauma-responsive schools and districts.

Teaching Tolerance

https://www.tolerance.org

Teaching Tolerance provides free resources to educators—teachers, administrators, counselors and other practitioners—who work with children from kindergarten through high school. Educators use the materials to supplement their curriculum, to inform their practices, and to create civil and inclusive school communities where children are respected and valued.

U.S. Department of Education English Learner Toolkit

https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/index.html

Comprehensive tools and resources to help state and local education agencies support English learners.

Books

Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Multicultural, Anti-Racist Education and Staff Development

From Teaching for Change

Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools
By Glenn E. Singleton

Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students
By Zaretta Hammond

Educating Everybody's Children: Diverse Teaching Strategies for Diverse Learners, Revised and Expanded 2nd Edition
Edited by Robert W. Cole
Note: the entirety of chapter 2 ("Diverse Teaching Strategies for Diverse Learners") complete with research and classroom examples is available online at: http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/107003/chapters/Diverse-Teaching-Strategies-for-Diverse-Learners.aspx

Everyday Antiracism: Getting Real About Race in School
By Mica Pollock (Editor)

Moving Diversity Forward: How to Go From Well-Meaning to Well-Doing
By Verna A. Myers

Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty: Strategies for Erasing the Opportunity Gap
By Paul Gorski

What If I Say the Wrong Thing? 25 Habits for Culturally Effective People
By Verna A. Myers

Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations about Race
By Beverly Daniel Tatum, Ph.D.

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ENDNOTES

1 See http://www.mainechamber.org/makingmainework.php

2 See https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter/

3 U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, https://www.bea.gov/data/gdp/gdp-county

4 See page 6, *Education Indicators for Maine, 2018*, at http://www.educatemaine.org/research-reports

5 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (2017)

6 See https://mainedoenews.net/2018/05/23/maine-doe-releases-chronic-absenteeism-data-in-an-effort-to-support-student-success/

7 See https://projects.propublica.org/miseducation/state/ME

8 One of three public middle schools in Portland, Lyman Moore Middle School serves about 450 students in grades 6-8. About half of Lyman Moore students are eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch, meaning that their family income is below 185% of poverty. 55% of Lyman Moore students identify as white, 26% as black, 7% as multiracial, 6% as Asian, and 6% as Hispanic.

9 All Maine test scores reported here are from the Maine Department of Education's Maine Assessment and Accountability Reporting System (MAARS) website, https://lms.backpack.education/public/maine

10 See https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/content/ela/standards/reading

11 See http://www.corestandards.org/Math/Content/4/introduction/

12 Page 23, *Common Data Project, 2018 Annual Report*; New England Secondary School Consortium.

13 New York Times, www.nytimes.com/2019/05/22/us/native-american-sports-logos.html

14 https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB10051.html

15 Tree Street Youth supports the youth of Lewiston-Auburn through programs rooted in academics, the arts, and athletics in a safe space that encourages healthy physical, social, emotional, and academic development while building unity across lines of difference. Tree Street offers after school, enrichment, college prep, teen leadership, professional internship, and summer programs.

16 https://www.edutopia.org/blog/restorative-justice-resources-matt-davis

17 Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library, *A Law to Teach About Maine's Native Americans in Maine Schools*, http://lldc.mainelegislature.org/Open/Rpts/e78_m2w35_2004.pdf

18 Maine Public, www.mainepublic.org/post/2001-law-says-maine-schools-must-teach-native-american-history-many-still-don-t

19 Maine Department of Education, *Washington County Educator Profile: Lynn Mitchell*, https://mainedoenews.net/2019/07/11

20 The mission of *Mano en Mano* in Milbridge (Washington County) is to work with farmworkers and immigrants to settle and thrive in Maine. *Mano en Mano* offers access to essential services, community advocacy, housing, migrant education, and scholarships. Its Blueberry Harvest School summer learning program for migrant children and youth is designed around an appreciation and celebration of students' identity, language and culture and funded by the Maine Department of Education's Migrant Education Program.

21 National Education Association, *Confronting Implicit Bias Through Exemplary Educator Preparation*, https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/23840%20Confronting%20Implicit%20Bias%20Thru%20Exemp%20Teacher%20Prep-v2.pdf

22 First Book, https://firstbook.org/blog/2018/10/16/use-this-calendar-to-celebrate-diversity-and-inclusion-with-your-students/

23 *The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers*, IZ—Institute of Labor Economics, 2017, http://ftp.iza.org/dp10630.pdf

24 See https://www.aclumaine.org/en/news/why-its-crucial-maine-hire-more-teachers-color

25 https://ednote.ecs.org/addressing-teacher-shortages-through-national-service/