

Supporting Maine's Education Innovation and Improvement Through Rethinking K-12 Models Education Grant

ED# 2019-R1-I-0003



High-Leverage Problem

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were large gaps in Maine's high school graduation rates, high school dropout rates, college persistence, and college completion across socioeconomic status, racial and ethnic groups, English learner status, and disability status. The pandemic highlighted and exacerbated existing inequities and challenges, especially for rural students and students of color who disproportionately represent the state's COVID-19 cases. To help address this issue, Commissioner of Education Pender Makin and her administrative team have committed to finding innovative solutions to persistent problems. Because of these efforts, Maine Department of Education (DOE) was awarded a Rethinking K-12 Education Models Grant from the U.S. Department of Education to support districts in designing and implementing innovative solutions to systemic challenges. While attendance rates improved slightly over the 2022-23 school year, chronic absenteeism remains higher than in the years preceding the pandemic. The Region 1 Comprehensive Center (R1CC) has been asked to continue to support Maine DOE leadership in implementing the grant and applying evidence-based solutions to these persistent problems of practice.



R1CC Approach

Over the course of the 3 years of implementation of the Rethinking K-12 Education Models Grant, the nine original innovation pilots grew to 41 awards. Because the grant leadership team remained small, R1CC technical assistance activities prioritized technical assistance support as a thought partner and materials co-developer to the Maine DOE Rethinking Responsive Education Ventures (RREV) leaders. R1CC worked to build the capacity of staff and coaches to support the innovation pilots' district awardee teams' implementation and sustainability efforts. Activities included facilitating meetings with Maine DOE RREV grant staff and innovation leadership to identify emerging challenges and brainstorm potential approaches and solutions, helping to identify research and evidence related to coaching and creating a culture of innovation, and applying evidence-based tools for improvement. Additional technical assistance included identifying strategies necessary to disseminate lessons learned and approaches embedded in materials developed during Years 1-3.

Key Partner(s): Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast and Islands

● — ⊙ — ⊙ → Key Milestones

- Identified continuous improvement and evidence-based resources for RREV leadership and coaches to support district innovation pilot teams.
- Supported the assessment of innovation coaches' progress and needs through the development and analysis of a coaches' assessment survey.
- Co-developed a dissemination plan outlining key messages, audiences, and approaches to sharing the impact of the collective RREV work.
- Supported the development and hosting of a resource matrix in the Maine DOE RREV EnGINE environment.
- Supported the use of evidence-based tools for district pilots to sustain and scale RREV innovations.

“The first word that comes to mind is thought partner, and that has truly been the essence of the experience.”

“I think we’re helping to understand and build things that did not exist before, and ways of looking at that with the support of R1CC.”

“I mean, it feels like family. I think we’ve been developing a RREV family. It really does. ... And so, as far as the trusted relationship, I feel that’s very strong, very high.”

? → Outputs

- Summary of continuous improvement resources and literature to support sustaining and scaling innovations.
- RREV coaches' assessment survey and data analysis.
- Survey questions to uncover innovation measures and impacts for RREV District Teams.
- Dissemination plan outlining messages, audiences, and approaches to communicate materials and work of RREV grants.
- Resource matrix of innovation and coaching support materials.

Outcomes

- RREV leadership and coaches have increased their capacity to use evidence-based tools and resources to support district innovation pilot teams.
- RREV innovation pilot teams increased their capacity to apply evidence-based approaches to sustain and scale their innovations.
- RREV innovation pilots made progress toward achieving the desired outcomes identified in RREV pilot applications.