

Maine's Whole Student Approach Strategic Planning

ED# 2019-R1-I-0003



High-Leverage Problem

Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Maine's educational leaders and practitioners increasingly reported that students have returned to classrooms with a heightened number of socioemotional, physical, and academic needs. To address these needs, Maine Department of Education (MDOE) leaders adopted a "whole student" approach for supporting students, which recognizes the importance of students feeling physically and emotionally safe, being well nourished, and having rich and relevant learning experiences, to develop the skills and knowledge for academic and future career success. MDOE developed a Whole Student Approach (WSA) framework in summer 2022 to help MDOE offices, district leaders, and educators operationalize the main tenets of the WSA framework. This framework sought to support education leaders in aligning priority initiatives, policies, and resources in service of the WSA.

As the WSA was introduced, the field requested additional guidance and support in operationalizing the WSA tenets. Recognizing the importance of clarity within MDOE on how to integrate WSA within existing priorities and initiatives, MDOE requested support from the Region 1 Comprehensive Center (R1CC) in convening MDOE office leaders to (a) calibrate on the definition and purpose of WSA, and (b) support office-level efforts to strategically integrate WSA.



R1CC Approach

Because the WSA framework focuses on socioemotional, physical, and academic needs, operationalizing the WSA framework requires an interdisciplinary approach. The project focused on supporting the MDOE's organizational changes needed to operationalize the WSA. The R1CC team used a design thinking process to facilitate meetings, with the purpose of developing processes and strategic plans that were designed with the end user (MDOE staff) in mind.

The project team started by conducting interviews with office leaders to determine (a) how offices currently understood and operationalized the WSA tenets, (b) how current MDOE office priorities aligned or supported the WSA tenets, and (c) opportunities for the integration or alignment of priorities and WSA tenets (by office and across MDOE). Then, R1CC facilitated regular meetings with MDOE's leaders to develop a vision statement for Maine's WSA that served as a roadmap for the strategic efforts and investments across the MDOE offices. In spring/summer 2023, R1CC facilitated two in-person meetings and one virtual meeting with MDOE office leaders to explore how they could incorporate the WSA core tenets into their strategic priorities.

● — ⊙ — ⊙ → Key Milestones

- Facilitated meetings with MDOE to develop a vision statement for the WSA.
- Created an interview protocol, conducted and analyzed interviews, and reported to MDOE on WSA operationalization within MDOE offices.
- Conducted a literature review and provided resources to the MDOE related to the WSA.
- Developed materials (i.e., handouts, slides) and facilitated a discussion with MDOE to develop a strategic plan for aligning and implementing the WSA.
- Developed guiding documents to identify challenges and successes in aligning programmatic initiatives with Maine's WSA framework.
- Facilitated meetings with MDOE's program leaders and used a design thinking process to establish a foundation for redefining the MDOE's strategic plan.

? → Outputs

- Maine's WSA vision statement.
- Summary of WSA interviews.
- WSA problem identification alignment meeting materials and summaries.
- Design thinking workshop facilitation and planning materials.

Outcomes

- MDOE departmental office leads have enhanced knowledge of Maine's WSA.
- MDOE strategic plan updated to align with WSA.