

Maine Schools for Excellence: Questions and Answers

Who is overseeing this project?

Teachers, administrators, school board members, parents, and students all take part in overseeing the Maine Schools for Excellence (MSFE) initiative at both the local and state levels. Each of the participating school districts has assembled a local body comprising teachers, administrators, school board members, parents, teachers association representatives, community members, and others to oversee local implementation MSFE. In addition, two state-level groups—the Executive Advisory Council and the Statewide Practitioners’ Group—provide the opportunity for cross-district collaboration and problem solving.

Which districts are involved in MSFE?

Nine districts are currently involved in MSFE in two distinct but aligned phases. The first group of districts, which began this project in 2010, are Lewiston Public Schools, Maine School Administrative District 24, Regional School Unit 12, Regional School Unit 55, and Regional School Unit 74. The second group of districts, which became involved in 2012, are Bangor School Department, Maine School Administrative District 11, Millinocket School Department, and Regional School Unit 19. There are varying levels of involvement of different schools within each district (i.e., a mix of high needs and non-high needs schools), although teachers and school leaders are involved in decision making at every level.

How is this project funded?

MSFE is funded by the national Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF), which was established by the U.S. Department of Education in 2007. Since then, there have been four rounds of TIF grants awarded to more than 100 grantees. Initially, TIF focused primarily on innovative teacher compensation models. Over time, however, the program’s focus has shifted to broader human capital management systems, of which teacher pay is only one piece. This shift occurred as lessons were drawn from the successes of the original TIF grantees. Maine is a recipient of the third and fourth rounds of funding (TIF 3 and TIF 4).

Is this program only focused on teachers?

Although the project is funded by the *Teacher* Incentive Fund, the focus is actually on providing supports and opportunities for both teachers and school leaders. To that end, districts will be adapting both Teacher Evaluation and Professional Growth programs and Leader Evaluation and Professional Growth programs that share many common elements, such as self-assessment, observations that result in actionable feedback, opportunities for ongoing reflection and goal-setting, and summative ratings that are connected to placement on a personalized growth plan that includes new performance-related leadership opportunities.

Is MSFE a project that will transfer to other schools and districts?

The TIF grants that are funding the MSFE initiative do not provide for scaling up the initiative to additional districts. However, the grants require participating districts to develop long-term plans to sustain the new systems they are developing. Participating districts also expect to share the knowledge, evaluation models, and other resources they gain with other districts doing similar work going forward.