

October 2005

Dear Educational Leader,

Intuitively, most of us believe that teacher-to-teacher professional development is a powerful tool for improving practice. But does it really make a difference in student achievement? And what impact does it have on the teachers involved?

The enclosed case study summarizes the impact of our recently concluded *SEEDs for Technology* initiative, funded from 1999 – 2005 with a federal Technology Innovation Challenge Grant. As the results demonstrate, **peer-to-peer professional development is a powerful lever for change, and can result in improved student achievement.**

Our SEED initiative is in hiatus this year, but 144 K-12 standards-based curriculum units developed by teachers throughout Maine are still available to teachers online at www.mainecenter.org/SEED. That Web site has received more than 3 million hits, and SEED units have been downloaded over 213,000 times worldwide in the past four years. They will continue to be available throughout this year, so please encourage your faculty to take advantage of them.

If we can find the necessary funding, we plan to resurrect SEED next year as an extension of our other statewide professional development network, the Maine Assessment Cooperative. If we are successful in that quest, the new SEED will focus on standards-based practice at both the classroom and system level, thus saving districts countless hours of development time and – perhaps most importantly – giving people hope that standards-based practice can make a difference in student learning.

Stay tuned for news on that front, and best wishes for a very successful school year.

Sincerely,



Robert G. Shaffo
Executive Director

P.S. If you are not already a member of the Maine Assessment Cooperative – more than 50 districts are – take a moment to check out the services it offers at www.mainecenter.org/assessment.

P.P.S. If you are new to your role or new to Maine and don't know about the Center and its services, we would welcome an opportunity to meet with you and/or your administrative team to talk about your needs and how our organization might be of help.

Study: Teacher collaboration impacts student learning

SEED lessons strengthen work of Maine Assessment Cooperative

Educators who have participated in peer-to-peer professional development almost always agree it's a potent tool for gaining new skills and insights to improve teaching and learning in the classroom.

SEED and the Maine Assessment Cooperative, two programs of the Center for Educational Services, have always recognized and promoted teacher networks as the most successful approach to professional development. Yet, data linking such professional development to student achievement has been lacking. Until now.

A recent independent evaluation of SEED (Spreading Educator to Educator Development) provided that link.

For nearly six years, SEED offered a professional development network for teachers to learn how to integrate technology into their classrooms to help achieve Maine's Learning Results. SEED encouraged and recognized Maine teachers at all grade levels who created, developed, adopted or adapted such innovative approaches, dubbed SEED Packets. With a \$6.8 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education, SEED rewarded the teachers, both monetarily and with professional development opportunities. During the life of its grant, SEED identified 102 Technology Learning Leaders, 144 Developers, 463 Adaptors and 25 Adoptors and provided 436 days of professional development opportunities for 7,560 Maine educators.

The SEED evaluation showed that the use of SEED Packets within a structured process of teacher-to-teacher collaboration did impact student achievement. The study found that Developers/Adaptors who collaborated to implement a SEED Packet were significantly more likely to affect the student achievement of the identified performance indicators of the Maine Learning Results than those Developers who implemented the SEED Packets in isolation.

According to the report: "When the integrity of the teaching unit is assured, a process is in place for collaboration, and a clear expectation for reporting

Assessment/ 4-Point Rubric Category	SAS Control Group	SAS Treatment Group
Does Not Meet/Partially Meets the Standard	33.8%	27.9%
Meets/Exceeds the Standard	66.2%	72.0%

For SEED's Student Achievement Study (SAS), the control group consisted of teachers working alone. The treatment group consisted of teachers working collaboratively. Results indicate the positive impact on student learning of teachers working collaboratively.

student performance results, teacher-to-teacher collaboration on practice is more likely to yield student achievement of the intended outcomes than is teachers working in isolation. A higher percentage of students from the treatment group achieved the standards than did students from the control group."

The evaluators also found that SEED had a profound influence on those Maine educators who were involved as Technology Learning Leaders (peer professional developers) and Developers. Most of them reported that SEED:

- Increased their technology skills and capacities.
- Informed their professional practices in their schools and classrooms.
- Improved their confidence and increased their skills in working with other adults and in designing and leading learning experiences for colleagues and peers.
- Generated energy and motivation for taking on new roles in education, from classroom-based positions to supervisory, professional development and/or leadership roles.
- Stimulated them to write about their practice, to seek out awards, grants and recognition beyond SEED.
- Provided them with new options for serving education beyond the classroom and school (e.g., regional and statewide opportunities).
- Made available a network of professionals that created for them a community of practice that they could draw on for learning and support, and to which they could respond and contribute—thereby decreasing the isolation so common in teaching.



SEED Developer Maryam Emami, a teacher at Rangeley Lakes Regional School, works with colleagues at a professional development weekend for SEED developers.

Finally, Developers, Adaptors and Technology Learning Leaders made statistically significant gains in meeting all six International Society for Technology Education (ISTE) Technology Standards for Teachers, more evidence that peer-to-peer professional development really works.

SEED's work concluded in the spring of 2005, but the Center for Educational Services remains committed to tapping into the power of teacher networks and peer-to-peer professional development. It is the foundation of the Maine Assessment Cooperative, a membership organization created in 2004 to develop local capacity at all levels of the system to use assessment systems effectively. If funding can be found, the Center hopes to revive SEED in the coming year as a tool for supporting the implementation of Maine's Learning Results.



Another example of
Maine educators working with...