



EDUCATE MAINE

2024

ANNUAL REPORT



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Each year when I pause to think about Educate Maine's impact, I'm tempted to head straight for the metrics; the numbers of reports, events, conferences, legislation—even the miles logged as EM team members travel to every corner of our state supporting teachers, learners and businesses. There's nothing wrong with those numbers—they are great proof points of our reach and relevance. BUT. In 2023, we saw our impact measured a little differently: in growth.

Maine is great at growing things, from pine trees in our forested north to oysters and mussels in our burgeoning aquaculture industry; from gorgeous vegetables on our 7,000 farms to sleek high-tech vessels sliding out of their berths at Bath Iron Works. We're good at growing industries, too; just look at the life-science, aerospace and adaptive manufacturing sectors emerging across Maine. I'm happy to report that in 2024, Educate Maine grew, too, in ways big and little. Here's a snapshot:

- **We built our newest program, the Teach Maine Center**, to support and advocate for our state's educators. Hundreds of educators across all 16 counties turned out for our listening tour, truly building the TMC “by and for teachers.”
- **Our Maine Mobile Biolab, in its first year**, traversed the state to bring life-science and STEM opportunities to rural middle-school students. Our team grew by two

with the addition of our wonderful BIOLAB educators. More than 4,800 students participated in events and classes and more than 90 teachers worked with us to develop custom science curricula for their schools. Industry partnerships grew to 13 statewide.

- **Project>Login saw an increase in the number of Girls Who Code participants**, laying the groundwork for future overnight camps; in a powerful collaboration with the Maine Mathematics and Science Alliance (MMSA) along with the Maine Department of Education and the University of Maine, the CS Summer of Fun and the CS Summit provided professional development opportunities to more than 100 teachers, affecting more than 2,000 students in Maine. Program Director Angela Oechsle was recognized for her work's expanding impact through a rare second-year Microsoft TechSpark Fellow award.
- **We added a new colleague and the impactful work of early-childhood advocates when Kim Russell joined the team**, representing dozens of leaders from business, retired military and law enforcement.
- **Our registered pre-apprentice and apprenticeship programs grew by nearly 30 percent** and hit important milestones with the “graduation” of participants in both programs.

- **The Teacher of the Year program saw growth in numbers and reputation.** Led by 2024 MTOY Joshua Chard, Maine's teachers were well represented on a national scale. Becky Hallowell, our 2025 Maine Teacher of the Year, is our second TOY to specialize in place-based and outdoor education—a natural for Maine.
- **Hundreds of Maine's teachers may now collect Social Security they earned**, thanks in part to our advocacy which resulted in federal law repealing the Windfall Elimination Provision.

These are just some examples of EM's impact in 2024, and we expect to build on that growth in the coming year. Look for expanded BIOLAB programs; more apprenticeships and other learning programs; focused advocacy to grow and support the teacher workforce, and more. Despite the challenges of managing multiple diverse programs, we are lucky to have support from so many stakeholders who understand that our organization is helping to grow something very valuable: **a robust future economy for Maine.**

Jason Judd, Ed.D
Executive Director



RESEARCH & ADVOCACY

One of Educate Maine’s primary aims is to research and publish important reports on developments and trends in workforce and education. Our work showed significant growth in 2024 with the publication of several new reports and continued progress in EM’s evolution as a thought leader.

The Education Workforce Data report looks at the data Maine collects on its educators: what we know; what we don’t know and what we need to know about this critical workforce going forward. This report is deeply tied to the work of the new Teach Maine Center; the vision is for the TMC to advance timely and comprehensive data collection that will drive meaningful investments and programs, ultimately increasing the number of well-qualified educators teaching young people across Maine.

Much of the teacher workforce information collected by the state of Maine remains unpublished; **this Educator Workforce report is the first publication of its kind.**

Forums with teachers on a listening tour of all counties in Maine also yielded a report on the challenges faced by educators right now as they seek more support in their classrooms and in their careers.

The Education Indicators Report continued to be an important resource for information about Maine school enrollment, early childhood education, K-12, and post-secondary opportunities.

The Growing Annual Cost of the Childcare Crisis in Maine was created and published with ReadyNation, an organization whose work Educate Maine absorbed with the hiring of **Kim Russell**, now our director of special projects. The report warns that the ongoing infant-toddler childcare crisis in the state could impact Maine to the tune of \$403 million per year.

Kim’s arrival also added to Educate Maine’s slate of advocacy work. **Backed by three groups of leaders** from law enforcement, business and retired military, **Kim advocates for family-friendly policies and progress in educational opportunity and equity**, particularly in the early-childhood area acknowledged as crucial for student growth and development.

A victory for other advocacy work was the federal **Social Security Fairness Act**, championed by Educate Maine and a host of other organizations and signed into law in December. The new law got rid of the Windfall Elimination Provision, which prevented schoolteachers and other public servants in Maine and 25 other states from collecting earned Social Security. The windfall law unfairly penalized teachers and made it difficult for Maine to retain and recruit educators from other states and professions. **An estimated “hundreds” of retired teachers in Maine now qualify to recoup and continue to receive their lawfully earned retirement benefits.**

47.5% MORE applicants to the Aquaculture Pioneers program



40% Girls Who Code UP by



Added waitlist due to DEMAND



MAINE CAREER CATALYST

We're continuing to grow the next-gen Maine workforce with our Maine Career Catalyst programs. And that means that we're growing, too. In 2024, MCC logged

We were especially proud of **Ethan Pinette**, the **first registered automotive pre-apprentice to be offered a full registered apprenticeship in Maine**. The Brunswick native was still an RSD 10 student when his pre-apprentice employer, Goodwin Mazda and Chevrolet, formally offered him the next-step role. They made the offer in a "signing ceremony" akin to those for student-athletes. Ethan is now a full-time apprentice employee at Goodwin.

In Belfast, Consumer Fuel Co.'s workforce officially grew by one—one highly qualified graduated apprentice, that is. **Charles completed an intensive fuel-delivery driver apprenticeship** (including classwork and job-shadow mentoring) **at the age of 52**—when many other workers are starting to think about retirement. He applied for the apprentice role when he realized his previous lifelong work in the building trade no longer made sense for him. Now he's a valuable member of the team and owner John Holmes says he couldn't be happier to welcome Charles to the team.

With nearly **\$300,000 in funding for internship development**, and incredible partnership and collaboration from Focus Maine and dozens of employers, the Maine Career Catalyst program provides professional development, social opportunities, and networking for experiential learners working in Maine. Last year **nearly 400 interns participated** in the program.

EIGHT new approved occupations in the apprenticeship programs, including: Building Construction Craft Laborer, Customer Care Representative, Personal Banker II, Shop Cabinet Maker, CDL-B Driver (Concrete Mixer), Lead Carpenter - Passive House Builder, Medical Assistant, and Aquaculture Animal Care Technician)

SIX new employer partners/ sub-sponsors including Harbor Builders Associates, Camden National Bank, Hay Runner, Hughes Bros., Central Maine Healthcare, MDI Biological Laboratory

THREE new approved pre-apprenticeship programs including Automotive Technology at HCTC, Carpentry at MCST Automotive Technology at Region 10, HVAC Technician at Midcoast Energy Systems)

A **47.5 percent growth** in applicants to the Aquaculture Pioneers program

More than **400 interns supported** in Summer 2024 programs



MAINE MOBILE BIOLAB

It may be one of Maine's most recognizable rolling landmarks. Maine's Mobile BIOLAB had a stellar first year, launching her journey first at the State House in Augusta with a star-studded legislative audience and then at Fort Kent Elementary in Aroostook County, where students vied to be "first on the bus."



The custom-built life-science RV traveled to **23 schools across 11 of Maine's 16 counties**. With her educators, Heather Carlisle and Anna Stehlik, aboard and with big assists from EM team members Meg Krieger and Shelby Bryant, **BIOLAB served 4,899 students and engaged with 94 teachers**. The educators developed and designed shareable curricula with **13 industry partners**. Community visits and collaborations continued after the schools emptied for summer, and the educators worked with scientists at multiple organizations to create localized projects for the Biolab.

Among the highlights were a summer visit from a homeschooled student in Lewiston, who borrowed BIOLAB tech to test Androscoggin water for her studies and a TV-Meets-Real-Life moment when both educators became Ms. Frizzle (Magic School Bus) for Halloween.

So many schools applied for a visit from the lab that a waitlist was created. In 2025, the lab will visit about **25 middle schools** and appear at the **Maine Science Festival** and the **University of New England Brain Fair**, among other community events.



PROJECT>LOGIN

Educate Maine's signature program for digital equity and computer science learning saw significant growth in 2024.

In collaboration with the Maine Mathematics and Science Alliance and powered by support from the Harold Alfond Foundation, Project>Login sponsored the second annual CS Summer of Fun. A highlight of the week in Orono was the first CS Summit in collaboration with the University of Maine and the state Department of Education in August. These desirable professional development opportunities attracted more than **100 educators** and ultimately impacted more than **2,000 students across Maine**.

"I've learned so much this week and can't wait to bring some of these lessons back to my classroom this year," said one educator.



The popular **Girls Who Code day camps** nearly doubled in number and attracted **40 percent more campers** for a week of CS learning and fun. The model was so successful that plans are underway to add an overnight-camp option for 2025.

In Old Town, Maine, one GWC camper was inspired to start a GWC club at her school to energize her peers and a younger cohort around computer-science learning.

Program Director Angela Oechsle's critical work was recognized by Microsoft for the second year in a row with a rare 2nd-year fellowship in the Microsoft Spark program. As a Spark Fellow, Angela increases the visibility of her digital equity programs in Maine and has access to multiple Microsoft resources.

Also in partnership with the Maine Mathematics and Science Alliance, Project>Login designed and sponsored the first **Computer Science Connected Learning Experience**, which brought classroom teachers and other educators on a tour of Maine businesses and industry to learn how CS learning can make their students "work force ready." The successful program, which included businesses from the Maine Mineral and Gem Museum to Maine Grains to the Sugarloaf resort, is on track to repeat in 2025.



MAINE TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Teachers are among the busiest workers anywhere. Yet they will be the first to add “one more thing” to their plate, particularly if that thing is the tremendous professional development opportunity that is Teacher of the Year. Whether it’s legislative/advocacy training, networking, curriculum development or other activities, the TOY program is more than just a recognition; it’s a year of learning and growth for all participants.

This year’s Maine Teacher of the Year program saw a diverse and active cohort of County honorees, who were quick to take advantage of the programs and opportunities during their year as CTOYs. On the national level, Maine was well represented by **Joshua Chard**, who traveled to Washington and elsewhere with the national TOY cohort and was an invaluable help to his fellow Mainers at home. Joshua is a multi-talented teacher who spans the student age-range; while he is an elementary classroom teacher, he also advises high-school drama students and is a leader in local theater.

The 2025 Teacher of the Year, selected in 2024, is also a groundbreaking pick: **Becky Hallowell**, a fourth-grade classroom teacher at Wiscasset Elementary, specializes in place-based or outdoor learning (what a Mainer!) and has helped multiple other teachers add an outdoor dimension to their work.

One aspect of the TOY program is the remarkable support and learning experience it provides the CTOYS each year. In 2024, that professional learning included advocacy technique, team-building and accountability experience, and unmatched statewide networking opportunities.



POWERFUL PROGRAMMING



Education Leaders Experience

Last year saw the close to a successful program for the **Mu Class of Education Leaders Experience and Educate Maine** proudly introduced the “Nu” cohort of **30 professionals** ranging from school leadership to classroom teachers and counselors, to career and technical leaders and instructional experts from all over the state.

ELE is a program developed and funded by Unum. Educate Maine administers the program in partnership with the Maine Principals’ Association and University of New England Online. The yearlong program consists of an opening and closing retreat; visits to Maine businesses, institutions of higher learning and the State Legislature.

The program attracts multiple applicants each year. Ten days of intensive experience at businesses and school sites provide an immersive look at Maine’s evolving workforce and economic opportunities. Thousands of students reap the benefits as educators return to their schools.

Education Symposium

More than 400 attendees, presenters and speakers thronged the Holiday Inn By the Bay Dec. 13 for Educate Maine’s biggest event of the year—the annual Education Symposium.

Business and community leaders, educators and others gathered for more than a dozen engaging and informative panels and speeches. Symposium grew in new directions this year with the amplification of student voices on several panels and an added bonus: a Maine Department of Education computer science learning showcase.

Thomas College President **Emerita Laurie Lachance** was honored with the annual Weston L. Bonney Award.



Teach Maine Center

What started as a promising idea—what if there were a program **built by and for teachers**, to support and advocate for educators in Maine—grew beautifully in 2024 to become the Teach Maine Center.

Maine and the nation face significant teacher workforce shortages. To get to the heart of the challenges educators face and hear what they need to sustain and grow their profession, Educate Maine set out on an ambitious educator listening tour between October 2023 and May 2024. Forums were conducted in every county in Maine and more than 240 educators from all grade levels attended.

Educators had robust discussions around three critical themes impacting the educator workforce:

- 1) growing and diversifying the educator workforce,
- 2) supporting and strengthening the educator workforce,
- and 3) elevating and empowering Maine educators.

The findings from these convenings will inform the initial development and programming of the Teach Maine Center, a **statewide hub for education innovation and professional support**. The Teach Maine Center, designed by teachers and for teachers, will engage, empower, and unite educators across the state by developing, piloting, and scaling strategies that advance Maine’s teaching profession. Educate Maine worked in collaboration with the Maine Department of Education (which financially supported and helped host the convenings.) Critical support and resources have been provided by the U.S. Department of Education and the John T. Gorman foundation.

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