



Family, students and schools: always keeping students at the center

By the 2014 Maine County Teachers of the Year
July 28, 2014

Nothing impacts a child's academic and social success in school more than a healthy relationship among schools, families and the community.

As the 2014 Maine County Teachers of the Year, a new cohort of 16 teachers representing every area of our state, we are working together to strengthen student achievement. The key to our success is *you*.

It is vital that we work together—student achievement relies on school and family partnerships. Our relationships and collaboration will help students enjoy learning, meet state academic standards, and ensure their success.

Our schools are evolving as they transition to “proficiency-based learning”. Gone are the days when, regardless of gaps in knowledge, skills, and understanding, a student received his/her high school diploma based on just completing the required coursework. Now, all Maine students are required to apply knowledge and demonstrate skills in order to earn a diploma. The change to proficiency-based learning creates challenges for schools, students, and families, and the only way to navigate these challenges is to work together.

We all want our students, and every child in Maine, to achieve academically and socially. So what can *you* do to help our schools and children succeed?

Everyone is responsible for helping to overcome truancy and disengagement—the result of the growing number of children in crisis due to poverty and other family stressors. To address these obstacles, it is crucial to have strong relationships between families and schools. These relationships require shared responsibility among teachers, administrators, students, families and the community. Consistent attendance is crucial, so please help us get students to school each day.

Families, help schools by meeting with your child's teacher at every opportunity, from prekindergarten through grade twelve. Know what is expected of each child, and hold him/her accountable. Take the time each day to ask children about successes and challenges in school.

Educators, reach out to families and communicate regularly about each child's progress, sharing both concerns and praise. Build meaningful relationships with students and their families, and discover their interests and motivations. Administrators, support teachers by providing the time to contact every student and his/her family.

Students, take charge of your learning. You must challenge yourself even when it is difficult. Take risks and take pride in your accomplishments. Realize that many people have invested in your future—and believe in you.

Community members, visit your schools. The best way to be informed is to talk with students and teachers. Have high expectations of Maine's children and schools. Look for ways we can help one another, and be willing to contribute time, talent and resources.

Elected officials, make education a priority. Involve educators when making decisions by visiting our schools and talking with us about what is going on in the classroom. Engage students and families in conversations about the challenges their schools face. Turn these challenges into opportunities, and celebrate the accomplishments we make. Your advocacy is key to our success.



Building relationships among schools, families, and the community is crucial to addressing the challenges in today's classrooms. Regardless of your role, we urge you to always ask the question: "how will my actions impact our students?"

We need your help to make our platform, and student achievement, a success. So what will you do?

2014 Maine County Teachers of the Year:

Jeffrey Bailey (Oxford)

Kara Beal (Aroostook)

Andrea Beardsley (Hancock)

Sarah Brokofsky (Cumberland)

Cory Chase (Lincoln)

Dan Crocker (Kennebec)

Gordon "Skip" Crosby (Androscoggin)

Jennifer Dorman (Somerset)

Phyllis Frkuska-Heeren (Waldo)

Victoria Grotton (Penobscot)

Ann Luginbuhl (Washington)

Dyan McCarthy-Clark (Piscataquis)

Sarah Reynolds (Franklin)

Kate Smith (York)

Kristi Todd (Knox)

Eric Varney (Sagadahoc)

About Maine's County Teachers of the Year

The Maine County Teachers of the Year is a new initiative of the Maine State Teacher of the Year program. The expansion named 16 County Teachers of the Year to ensure more teachers, in more schools, in more communities, get the recognition they deserve. The County Teachers of the Year serve as ambassadors for teachers, students, and quality education, and represent thousands of excellent educators in Maine. In 2014, 376 Maine teachers were nominated under the expanded program, and selected by a distinguished panel of teachers, principals and business leaders. Each of the chosen teachers participates in the Maine State Teacher of the Year selection process, known as one of the most intensive in the nation. Once selected, the State Teacher of the Year will complete a year of service representing Maine's great teachers. The program is managed by Educate Maine in partnership with the Maine Department of Education, and supported by the Maine State Board of Education and the Maine State Teacher of the Year Association. Funding support comes from Bangor Savings Bank, Geiger, Hannaford Supermarkets and Unum. For more information, visit www.mainetoy.org and www.educatemaine.org.