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CSRD Roll-out in Maine: Lessons from a statewide case study

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CSRD Roll-out in Maine:

Lessons from a statewide case study

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December, 2000

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Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory At Brown University (LAB)

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CREATING A COHORT OF LIKE-MINDED SCHOOLS TO IMPLEMENT LIKE-MINDED CHANGE

With a modest budget of $587,575 in FY 1999 (39th in a ranking of the 52 jurisdictions receiving non-block grant CSRD support), one might expect Maine's deployment of the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program to be similarly modest. However, a series of state-level strategic policy decisions made when the Maine Department of Education (MEDOE) first planned to receive this federal support have made Maine's roll-out substantially different from that of other jurisdictions and perhaps have made Maine an exemplar of the potential of state education agencies (SEAs) to add value to the CSRD program.

While only one third of the schools receiving CSRD funds nationwide are secondary schools, all eleven CSRD schools in Maine are high schools. This circumstance is a product of MEDOE's intertwined decisions to restrict CSRD applications to the secondary level and to attach CSRD implementation to the promotion of the state's secondary reform initiative entitled *Promising Futures* (Maine Commission on Secondary Education 1998). Levinson and Sutton (2001) note that "In the processes of policy formation, problems are constructed for solution and thus the needs of individuals and society become subject to authoritative definition." As part of the *Promising Futures* planning process in 1997 and 1998, Maine educators identified secondary education as the most problematic level in the state's K-12 system and then drafted *Promising Futures* as the 15-Core Practice plan to resolve the identified challenges. When CSRD funding became available, the decision to concentrate CSRD resources at the high school level to enable the implementation of *Promising Futures* was made by the commissioner at the suggestion of several university-based educational reformers.

Maine's adaptations of CSRD have had several consequences, including the creation of a cohort of similar schools (high schools) that have volunteered to pursue similar changes (i.e., changes laid out as core practices in *Promising Futures*). State-level legal and logistical expectations, such as the drafting of 'Rider A' contracts with the finance division of the MEDOE and the creation and maintenance of school portfolios documenting the school's change process, have further contributed to the shared experience and sense of cohort formation among all of Maine's CSRD schools.[1] In a state that is resistant to centralized and mandated anything, CSRD has been used as a 'carrot' to encourage the adoption of the state's otherwise unfunded secondary education reform plan. In many ways, it is constructive to think of *Promising Futures* as a 'research-based, externally developed model' akin to those that all CSRD schools are encouraged to adopt. In this sense, *Promising Futures* (or an adaptation of it) is the model that all eleven Maine CSRD high schools are implementing, although some of the schools identify additional models—e.g., the Coalition of Essential Schools—as informing their implementation. Reiterating the *Promising Futures*-as-model theme, on occasion, Maine's whole CSRD cohort has assembled for professional development activities that are designed to be, in part, vehicles for school-to-school learning.

Because Maine's geography and the relatively small number of recipient schools enable the CSRD coordinator to pursue her inclination for regular communication, including site visits, the Maine CSRD coordinator has been positioned to be a bearer of stories and lessons from one site to another. This personalization of policy implementation provides another intra-cohort mechanism for sharing experiences, lessons, and cautions and has proven to be a key asset in other ways. By design, however, Maine CSRD-supported school learning does not remain only intra-cohort, nor are CSRD schools expected to learn only from each other. The *Promising Futures Summer Academy*, a four-day institute, attracts not just CSRD schools but other Maine high

schools that are seeking to implement the state's reform plan. Thus, there is an annual vehicle for CSRD-supported professional learning to be shared with non-CSRD schools (and CSRD schools are positioned to learn from non-CSRD schools that are also trying to enact *Promising Futures* reforms).

Maine's decisions to concentrate its limited CSRD resources all at the high school level, to integrate CSRD with *Promising Futures*, and to include non-CSRD receiving schools in CSRD-related professional development are all examples of the customization or 'appropriation' of policy that Levinson and Sutton (2001) claim is endemic to the policy process.

> Instead of separating them entirely, we prefer to examine policy formation and implementation (or, as we prefer, 'appropriation') as a dynamic, interrelated process stretching over time. Thus, we investigate 'moments' of official policy formation in relation to moments of policy appropriation to account for the negotiation of policy in daily life…. We believe the conventional distinction between policy formation and implementation as distinct phases of a policy 'process' implicitly ratifies a top-down perspective, unnecessarily divides what is a recursive dynamic, and inappropriately widens the gulf between everyday practice and government action. (pp. 2-3)

Some of MEDOE's customizations have themselves been 'official policies', standing as additions or revisions to federal 'official policy.' But when considering the ongoing negotiations between the Maine CSRD coordinator and the implementing schools, when considering the CSRD coordinator's own evolving understanding of her task and related adaptations to her implementation strategy, the frame of seeing Maine's CSRD policy as an ongoing, daily production shows its explanatory utility.

MEDOE's CSRD-customizing decisions seem to mirror at the state level the 'Yankee' insistence on autonomy and policy ownership that Ruff, Smith, and Miller (2000) of the Southern Maine Partnership have noted is characteristic of individual school cultures in the state. That is to say, the federal CSRD directive became much more palatable at the MEDOE level after being customized and appropriated at that level. This has set up the irony that, in comparison to other states, Maine CSRD schools have had less autonomy than schools in other states to determine their specific CSRD-supported course of action. Avoidance of a school-site understanding of CSRD as too 'top-down' has been greatly enabled by the Maine CSRD coordinator's decision to facilitate the customization/appropriation of state policy at the school level. That is to say, her accessibility, candor, and collaborative leadership style—her personalization of the policy process—have been integral for the relative success of implementation achieved at Maine CSRD high schools to date.

By the account of educators at all of the schools we visited, in Maine, state mandates are routinely resisted at the local level when presented as mandates, but become more acceptable when offered as guidelines that offer substantial chances for customization and appropriation.[2] Indeed, though no doubt partially 'sour grapes', at several Maine high schools we visited that did not receive CSRD funds (some had applied for funding, some had not) school leaders claimed that they were skeptical of CSRD as too 'top-down.' These schools had not received the personal attention of Maine's CSRD coordinator that many of the funded schools had and that served to ease fears that CSRD would be implemented in a top-down manner. Of course, the voluntary

nature of school's applications for CSRD support also helps CSRD in Maine (as elsewhere) to keep from appearing too 'top-down.'

METHODOLOGY

Our research design for this study has been purposeful, thorough, and opportunistic, and guided by the same anthropological orientation that informs Levinson and Sutton (2001) and Wilcox (1982). We have sought to identify the opportunities gained (and lost) by Maine's strategy from both emic and etic perspectives—emic meaning from the perspective of those involved and in relation to what they thought was needed and possible; etic meaning from an external perspective, a perspective cognizant of how CSRD was originally intended (by its federal initiators) and cognizant of how those in other states might want to learn from Maine's experiences. Though we had clear ideas of where and how to start this inquiry (e.g., talking with the Maine CSRD coordinator, reviewing Maine CSRD and *Promising Futures*-related documents, visiting schools with CSRD funding and, for comparative purposes, those without such funding), as Wilcox (1982:459) notes, we could not predict ahead of time precisely where we should focus:

> Because one is attempting to understand a system in its own terms, according to its own criteria of meaningfulness, one cannot predict in advance which aspects of the system will have significance or the kind of significance they will have…. Ready made instruments and overly precise formulations of the problem are seen to close off prematurely the process of discovery of that which is significant in the setting.

The formal framework for this study is the 'ethnography of educational policy' (Levinson and Sutton 2001). As Wolcott (1999) has pointed out, ethnography implies not just a varied assortment of methodologies, but also a particular culturally-cognizant way of looking at things. It is a way of seeing that attempts to reconstruct the cultural logic and the embedded meanings of discourses, institutions, and actions. For this study, we have tried to trace the way an ambitious but ambiguous formal federal policy—the CSRD program—was understood, made meaningful, and changed at the state level and then again understood, made meaningful, and changed at the local level, including through interaction with MEDOE staff.[3] The 'ethnography of educational policy' notes, however, that the flow of policy is neither unidirectional nor only formal. That is to say, both federal policies and state policies have been changed as a result of policy feedback from states and schools. Moreover, the formal policy has been changed by the discussions of CSRD and *Promising Futures* at faculty meetings, by chatter in teachers lounges, and by educators' classroom attempts to implement various components. To understand what has been implemented and how requires looking not just at what on paper was supposed to happen, but also at the less explicit but integral processes of interpretation, adaptation, co-optation, and/or resistance that in effect make new policy through the very effort of trying to implement the original policy. For this study that means identifying and analyzing policy formation at federal, SEA-level, and school-level tiers and, more importantly, as a result of mediation between those tiers.

Our data collection included school site-observations, collaborative research, and technical assistance with integral non-school-based CSRD implementers (e.g., the Maine CSRD coordinator and university-based school coaches), the collection of pertinent site documents (e.g., CSRD funding proposals and portfolio narratives), and a review of published literature on secondary education in Maine (e.g., Donaldson 2000a, Donaldson 2000b, Ruff *et al*. 2000). In our analysis, we purposefully avoided direct comparisons of the different CSRD implementing

schools. The different schools prioritized different components in terms of emphasis and order of implementation. Moreover, these schools came to CSRD at different starting points, so a raw school-to-school comparison of how far along a continuum of reform various schools were would be misleading. At some schools CSRD appeared to be a mechanism to initiate reform; at others it was a mechanism for continuing reform that was well under way. Figuring it was premature to credit or blame CSRD for changes in student achievement, we collected achievement data as base-line data for future analyses but do not examine it here.

We made two-day site visits to four Maine CSRD schools and made one-day visits to four other Maine CSRD schools. For comparative purposes and to get a clearer general sense of high schooling in Maine, we complemented these visits to CSRD schools with two-person one-day site visits to three high schools that unsuccessfully applied for CSRD funding and one-person one-day visits to three Maine high schools that had shown interest in the *Promising Futures* reform framework but that neither applied for nor received any CSRD funding. All of these visits occurred in either March or May 2000. Additionally, two of us attended and helped facilitate a two-day May 2000 workshop for all eleven Maine CSRD high schools. For that workshop we prepared a one-page handout entitled "Preliminary Observations, Thoughts, and Suggestions Regarding CSRD Implementation in Maine." (See Appendix A.) In July, the lead author of this paper went to one of the two *2000 Promising Futures Summer Academies*, a four-day event that included several CSRD schools both as participants and as invited guests (acting as peer experts on topics like heterogeneous grouping, personalized learning plans, and so on).

Our constant interaction with Maine's CSRD coordinator and irregular interaction with other stakeholders added an iterative dimension to our research where our observations and preliminary interpretations were reinforced and/or questioned by deeply involved individuals.[4] In other words, because of the interactive nature of our research and requested technical assistance, we were routinely able to refine our analyses by asking Maine CSRD implementers 'This is what we think we are seeing; this is what we think is going on; how does this sound to you?' As part of our CSRD work in Maine, we have on three occasions co-presented the 'Maine CSRD story' with MEDOE staff members and we have written the first-year state-level evaluation for CSRD (Lane and Hamann 2000).

While at some level the State of Maine's CSRD strategy is an experiment, with embedded hypotheses that extra value will be derived by concentrating resources at a particular level and by tying new resources to an existing change agenda, our study should not be characterized as experiment/control research. Rather it is best characterized as a case study (with the state border providing an obvious boundary, but not the only one) with important ethnographic dimensions. Like any good ethnography (according to George and Louise Spindler [1987:19]), we have built a comparative element into our research design, looking at three types of schools: those receiving CSRD funds, those that unsuccessfully applied for CSRD funds, and those that have high need student populations but that, for various reasons, did not apply for funding. These comparisons set up inquiry into several issues. Among them, it facilitates distinguishing between 'CSRD effects' and '*Promising Futures* effects' or, more accurately, between the resource enhanced but criteria-reduced rendering of *Promising Futures* required at CSRD schools and the potentially more holistic implementation of *Promising Futures* at non-CSRD schools. To make this comparison more readily comprehensive, the next section further clarifies the links and difference between CSRD and *Promising Futures*.

MAINE'S DECISION TO TIE TOGETHER CSRD AND *PROMISING FUTURES*

Though the product of multiple Maine educators and with input from nationally-reknowned educators like Ted and Nancy Sizer, *Promising Futures* in some ways represents the culmination of Maine Commissioner of Education J. Duke Albanese's educational vision for secondary schools. Commissioner Albanese is broadly known as 'Duke.' One way of telling Duke's biography as an educator appears to be that he sampled broadly from the reform offerings suggested for schools in the 1980s and 90s and from that he distilled a more enduring vision with complementary components for how secondary schooling should be organized and what it should achieve.[5] His central problem diagnosis, embedded in *Promising Futures*, is that for too many high school students, high school is an anonymous, unengaging, rarely academic experience.

Promising Futures, which was released in 1998, has, if anything, become a more central component of Maine's state education strategy than when it was first released (albeit in adapted form, as we explain). We expect that it will remain the centerpiece of Maine's secondary education strategy as long as Duke is commissioner and perhaps well after that. CSRD is a key reason that it has become a centerpiece. When *Promising Future* was first written, scant funds were available to promote its implementation and, reflecting respect for the Maine distaste for mandates, compliance with it was entirely voluntary. By tying *Promising Futures* and CSRD together, the 'carrot' of $150,000 (over three years) available to CSRD schools, became an incentive for schools to write proposals promising to implement core elements of the *Promising Futures* reform agenda.

At the heart of *Promising Futures* are six core principles and fifteen recommended core practices, all of which are derived from recommendations of the educational research literature. *Promising Futures* is based on the works of Boyer, Darling-Hammond, Elmore, Fullan, Gardner, Glickman, Goodlad, Lightfoot, McDonald, Meier, Sarason, Sizer, and Slavin, among others. (See *Promising Futures* pp. 68-71). The six core principles are

- A safe respectful learning environment
- High universal expectations with a variety of learning opportunities
- Understanding and actions based on assessment data
- Teacher practice which values and builds upon the contributions and needs of the learner
- Equitable and democratic practices
- Coherence among mission, goals, actions, and outcomes

The fifteen core practices are recommended as the means to realize the core principles. Some of the recommended practices are politically quite bold. For example, Core Practice #4 recommends that "Every student learns in collaborative groups of students with diverse learning styles, skills, ages, personal backgrounds, and career goals." In other words, it recommends heterogeneous grouping, a controversial topic nationally (Oakes and Lipton 1999) and in Maine, even though the research literature is adamant that tracking disadvantages most students (e.g., Oakes 1985). At Poland High School in Maine, implementation of heterogeneous grouping provoked a public vote for the recall of the principal, director of curriculum, and superintendent (though the petition lost, with all able to keep their jobs and with heterogeneous grouping ostensibly still intact).[6]

Other recommended practices overlap. For example, Core Practice #2 recommends that "Every teacher tailors learning experiences to the learner's needs, interests, and future goals" and

Core Practice #6 recommends that "Every student employs a personal learning plan to target individual as well as common learning goals and to specify learning activities that will lead to the attainment of those goals." A full list of the fifteen core practices can be found in Appendix C. *Promising Futures* also includes a list of 19 common current secondary school practices that should be phased out or de-emphasized because they distract from or impede the achievement of the principles. (See *Promising Futures* pp. 44-46.)

Describing *Promising Futures* and referring to the Maine Commission on Secondary Education that created it, Gordon Donaldson, who co-chaired the Commission, wrote, "[T]he Commission agreed on the importance of an overriding strategy for whole school change: no single core practice could make a significant difference alone, and they were embedded in one another and needed to be undertaken as a whole" (2000b:103). What the commission did not agree on, nor could it because it could not allocate resources, was how to convert *Promising Futures* from a delineation of what 'ought to be' to a program of action. As noted before, few resources were committed to the implementation of *Promising Futures* (and few were available).[7] Moreover, the penchant in Maine to reject mandates from the center still loomed. Responding to these realities, the authors of *Promising Futures* explained, "This document, therefore, is not a set of mandates or requirements. It is instead an invitation to understand the need for change and a call to take up the challenge of school improvement" (1998:5).

In contrast CSRD was a mandate, of sorts, a federal mandate to state departments of education to arrange to disperse an allocation of funds to schools that were willing to honor the nine components of CSRD.[8] In small states like Maine, with relatively few students and comparatively little acute poverty, CSRD risked being a logistic challenge for little tangible gain. Unlike populous states like New York or jurisdictions with high student poverty rates like Puerto Rico (population and poverty determined total CSRD allocation), the federal guidelines that limited total state-level CSRD expenditure to 5% or less of the annual federal allocation meant in Maine that slightly less than $30,000 was available to pay for the arranging of a grant competition, the subsequent management of the program implementation, and the federally required state-level program evaluation.[9] Just initiating CSRD in Maine included drafting a request for proposals, publicizing the opportunity to schools, and coordinating a team of proposal reviewers. Taking on this logistic challenge only became appealing after Maine had successfully petitioned for a federal waiver to allow it to add parameters to federal CSRD program guidelines.

With the waiver obtained to incorporate elements of *Promising Futures* into CSRD and to restrict eligibility only to high schools, in the Autumn of 1998 the Maine Department of Education hired a half-time CSRD coordinator. Their choice was a former high school teacher who had spent her entire eight-year career at a member school of the Coalition of Essential Schools working for a principal who had co-chaired the *Promising Futures* development team. The practical work of marrying the nine federally-required CSRD components to Maine's *Promising Futures* framework remained, as did the logistic work of drafting an RFP and encouraging a competitive number of schools to apply. This became the new CSRD coordinator's work, though with input from others, notably those affiliated with the Maine Department of Education's new Center for Inquiry in Secondary Education (CISE).[10]

The formal linking of CSRD and *Promising Futures* did not occur all at once, nor was the linkage ever a full merger. Consistent with the theoretical premises of Levinson and Sutton (2001), in the act of conversion of *Promising Futures* from an abstract (if accessible) policy document into a program of action explicitly intertwined with CSRD, both *Promising Futures* and CSRD were

altered. If obtaining the waiver to focus CSRD awards at the secondary level was Maine's first step toward linking *Promising Futures* and CSRD, then incorporating *Promising Futures* into the text of the CSRD request-for-proposals (RFPs) sent to schools was the second. The text of the "Purpose" section at the beginning of that RFP explains:

> The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) Program provides funding to the secondary schools having the greatest need to substantially improve student achievement of the Maine *Learning Results*. CSRD funds are targeted for secondary schools to help them meet the vision and core recommendations made in the report Promising Futures by the Maine Commission on Secondary Education. Schools that receive CSRD funding will work to implement four core practices identified in Promising Futures as key to improving student achievement.

Thus, when high schools in Maine applied for CSRD funding in Maine (or, more accurately, when they accepted their CSRD awards) they were promising to be held accountable for four of the *Promising Futures* Core Practices. Adherence to the other eleven was encouraged but not required. As Maine re-wrote the federal CSRD guidelines, they required schools to implement eight, ten, or thirteen components, depending on how one merges or separates the items on the list. The eight-component version refers to the eight required school portfolio elements described later. The ten-component and thirteen-component versions partially mirror the nine federal components, replacing the first federal requirement of CSRD schools to use "Effective, research-based methods and strategies" with the four Core Practices from *Promising Futures* and adding a component promising fiscal accountability. The discrepancy between ten components and thirteen stems from whether one counts the required four Core Practices as a single component or as four. The four required Core Practices are #6, #7, #9, and #10:

- (#6) Every student employs a personal learning plan to target individual as well as common learning goals and to specify learning activities that will lead to the attainment of those goals.
- (#7) Every teacher makes learning standards, activities, and assessment procedures known to students and parents and assures the coherence among them.
- (#9) Students and teachers belong to teams that provide each student continuous personal and academic attention and a supportive environment for learning and growth.
- (#10) Learning governs the allocation of time, space, facilities, and services.

Heterogeneous grouping was not on the required list, though one CSRD school did attempt to implement it anyway (to loud, though not necessarily majority, protest) and a few others gave that practice at least passing consideration.

At the time first-round CSRD grants were awarded in Maine (i.e., mid 1999), there were thus two extant, overlapping, but not fully synonymous versions of *Promising Futures* in Maine, the fifteen Core Practice version that was vague in regards to the 'hows' of getting all those practices implemented and the four Core Practice-required CSRD version that included additional resources for implementation as well as a fixed timeline. Once the MEDOE division of finance required the CSRD schools to complete 'Rider A' contracts and once the CSRD schools became targets of substantial external personalized support from both the CSRD coordinator and the various school coaches that most CSRD schools had contracted with (to fulfill the external support requirement of CSRD), the *de facto* gap between the two types of *Promising Futures* schools was even wider.

As we highlight this discrepancy we need to emphasize two main points as well as a key caveat. Because of the discrepancy between *Promising Futures* as described in the initial 1998 document versus as practiced at the eleven first-round CSRD schools, educators and policymakers should be highly cautious making assumptions about the viability of *Promising Futures* based on the CSRD schools' experiences. Maine's CSRD schools have not been test implementing *Promising Futures* as originally rendered. Moreover, returning to the caution shared by Gordon Donaldson (the Co-Chair of the Maine Commission on Secondary Education) that the *Promising Futures* Core Practices needed to be implemented collectively rather than as a new practice here and a new practice there, the CSRD schools' version of *Promising Futures* has usually been out of compliance with Donaldson's caution. That is, the CSRD schools have not tried to co-implement all fifteen components at once. These points are not raised as a criticism of how Maine implemented CSRD at the eleven first-round-funded high schools, nor are they raised to suggest doubt about the viability of the *Promising Futures*/CSRD hybrid model that was introduced at these eleven schools. Rather our goal is to point out that the change model implemented at the eleven Maine CSRD high schools was neither strictly the nine component federally-mandated version of CSRD nor the fifteen Core Practice version of *Promising Futures*.

Policies converted to practice deviate from the original policy scripts, sometimes through conscious adjustment, as exemplified by Maine's acquisition of a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education that created a new official policy script, and sometimes as a less explicit but still crucial result of habits and modes of operation that emerge from the interpretive acts and unplanned for opportunities embedded in implementation (Levinson and Sutton 2001). The role of personalized implementation leadership and the value of a frequently interactive cohort, both described in the next section, are examples of this latter quality. If one wants to assess Maine's CSRD implementation, then one should have a clear sense of what the key elements of the implementation were; these last two qualities are part of the list.

IMPLEMENTING CSRD: COHERENCE, COLLEGIALITY, AND PERSONALIZATION

When Maine schools first encountered CSRD, the mixing of state and federal priorities was already in place. Three elements that were not anticipated at the time of the initial distribution of Maine's RFP—Rider A contracts, school portfolios, and personalized leadership from the SEA—however, have substantially shaped the actual roll-out of the program and given it much of its promise. Significantly, the strategy and mechanics of CSRD implementation seem to have so far side-stepped the hazard of overt school-site resistance to 'top-down' management, and site-based educators appear to be willingly and deeply engaged in substantive attempts at school reform. At some of the CSRD schools, however, students seem still to be confused by or skeptical about CSRD, which, while not surprising so early in an implementation, is nonetheless an area that merits future attention.

Rider A Contracts

In the Summer of 1999 after the list of CSRD awards had been publicized, Maine's CSRD coordinator naively attempted to alert the MEDOE division of finance that the CSRD schools were ready to receive their first year allocation. 'Naive' reflects her characterization of that incident. To the surprise of the coordinator, the staff of the division of finance explained that they could not simply write a check for each school and pop it in the mail. For any financial disbursement of greater than $50,000, MEDOE requires the completion of a detailed contract,

also known as a 'Rider A,' between the recipient and MEDOE. To a much greater extent than asked for in MEDOE's request-for-proposals to CSRD applicant schools, the Rider A contracts require schools to specifically demarcate and document the 'deliverables' that their expenditure will create. Moreover, to receive funding in Year Two and Year Three, schools would need to re-draft and re-submit adjusted Rider A contracts for re-approval, re-approval that also depended on success at honoring the first contract.

Just weeks prior to the start of the 1999-2000 school year, the first year of CSRD implementation, the CSRD coordinator was in the awkward position of needing to tell the schools that they could not yet receive their money because they had not passed a state requirement—i.e., the Rider A—of which they, until that moment, were unaware. Furthermore, the Rider A contracts required more substantive and short-term proof of implementation and its consequences than had the schools' CSRD applications. Schools would need to revisit their applications and then be much more detailed in their promised 'deliverables' and promised methods of documentation and measurement of CSRD implementation than they had initially anticipated. They would need to complete a Rider A contract and agree to a mechanism for verifying their compliance with the contract.

From a different vantage point, however, the Rider A requirement meant that each CSRD-grantee school had to review, very early in Year One, their proposal and make tangible and acceptable promises regarding what they thought they could accomplish. To a degree not required in the original proposals and at a time immediately prior to the start of implementation, schools were asked to clarify their goals, benchmarks, and measurement strategies. CSRD became a primary focus at a time when being a primary focus would most ensure its broad incorporation into school's planning and practice. Thus, the moment Rider A contracts were brought to schools' attention became a moment ripe with possibility, as long as a vehicle for documentation and measurement could be created and as long as schools did not retreat into sudden skepticism or resistance to what their foray into CSRD was now requiring.

School Portfolios

The way Maine's CSRD coordinator solved the Rider A dilemma was highly successful as measured by school's continued willingness to try to enact CSRD and was the source of two additional factors that contributed to the creation of the CSRD schools as a tightly-knit and optimistic cohort—school portfolios and personalized implementation. After offering a *mea culpa* regarding the Rider A contracts, in her early interaction with CSRD schools the coordinator simultaneously indicated both a seriousness of purpose and a receptivity to suggestions regarding how to solve the Rider A dilemma. Rider A contracts were not an obstacle that could be sidestepped or resisted, but how to meet the Rider A requirement for careful documentation was an open topic for discussion and shared problem solving. Using Victoria Bernhardt's (1994) *The School Portfolio: A Comprehensive Framework for School Improvement* as a guide, in September 1999, with each school aware that the dilemma of documenting Rider A compliance needed to be solved and after each school had been solicited for input, the CSRD coordinator determined that each CSRD school would produce a school portfolio that would describe the change process they embarked upon and the learning and consequences that resulted. The portfolios would meet the Rider A reporting requirement. At the end of each school year, each CSRD school would share its portfolio with the CSRD coordinator and would make a formal presentation of it to the CSRD coordinator and whomever else the coordinator had recruited to review the presentation. Though continued CSRD funding was contingent on successful completion of the portfolio task, the

portfolio review process was explicitly much more akin to formative evaluation than summative.[11] The portfolio guidelines the coordinator subsequently created—a.k.a., "The Continuum of Evidence"—gave schools straightforward guidelines and benchmarks around which to coordinate their implementation and their portfolio drafting.

Crucially, the CSRD coordinator promised that she would be available throughout the course of the year to answer questions about the portfolio development process or any other CSRD-related matter, a promise that she used several strategies to keep, including drafting and distributing "The Continuum of Evidence" and making "Mid-Course Review" site visits to each school in March 2000. The Continuum of Evidence offered an eight-point guide for portfolio elements. This made explicit both what kind of information needed to be gathered for the portfolio and how it was to be arranged. Schools could also see clearly the criteria or expectations within each category, so during the course of the year, in both the implementation of CSRD and the assemblage of the portfolio, schools were in a position to appraise their efforts in relation to portfolio element benchmarks. A sample "Continuum of Evidence" is attached as Appendix D to this report.

The coordinator was explicit in acknowledging that none of the schools had formal experience in creating a school portfolio and that she had no previous experience reviewing such documents (though she had reviewed student portfolios in her previous capacity as a teacher). The process of drafting a portfolio and using it to spawn external guiding feedback would be shared by school personnel and the coordinator, and for both it would be a learning process in which each would be sympathetic and responsive to the concerns of the other. As part of "Mid-Course Review" visits, she spent a day at each school considering draft portfolios, reviewing Rider A contracts, discussing requisite Core Practices from *Promising Futures*, and collecting information regarding where schools felt they were struggling or needing support. This last bit of feedback (gathered in other ways too) informed the agenda for both the May 2000 day-and-a-half CSRD school retreat and for the July 2000 *Promising Futures Summer Academies*. Communication of expectations to schools was continuous, but so too was the gathering of feedback from schools which resulted in customized responsiveness to each school as well as adjustment of the overall state implementation strategy.

Personalization

Much of the coherence of Maine's CSRD implementation—coherence that clarified the reform tasks of individual schools and that lent similarity to the efforts of each school—stemmed from deliberate courses of action taken by the MEDOE. Taking full advantage of the flexibility for customized implementation allowed by the U.S. Department of Education, Maine restricted its eleven CSRD allocations to the high school level and further asked that recipient schools implement four core practices from the *Promising Futures* framework. It then attached the MEDOE's Rider A funding policy and the requirement that each school document its change process by crafting a school portfolio to the list of implementation requirements. This strategic adaptation of a federal policy initiative added much clarity to the school-to-school coherence of CSRD implementation, as well as clarity to the within-school implementation task. The mediation of the same Maine CSRD coordinator at each of these schools further contributed to the clarity and school-to-school coherence of the implementation task. These actions collectively created a cohort of similarly situated CSRD schools that could engage in substantial inter-school but intra-cohort learning. Though these reforms were themselves made at the top (i.e., at MEDOE), they meant that during their attempts to implement the reforms the various schools

were not MEDOE-dependent (or model-provider dependent), but rather could rely substantially on their cohort for support and suggestions. This mattered substantially in a state where guidance from the center was automatically considered suspicious. Implementers could turn to colleagues rather than, or in addition to, managers.

Guidance from the center, of course, was not entirely avoidable. Nor was it *per se* bad, despite the school-level knee-jerk skepticism toward it. The challenge for the CSRD coordinator was to overcome this skepticism by building her personal credibility at each school and simultaneously reducing skepticism about state and federal requirements, particularly those requirements that schools had not volunteered to comply with when they first drafted their applications (i.e., the Rider A and portfolio requirements which were not known at the time of initial application). Assisting her task was the match between her previous experience as high school teacher and the fact that the whole Maine CSRD cohort consisted of high schools. Moreover, with the entirety of her teaching experience being at a school where the required *Promising Futures* Core Practices were enacted (i.e., she had experience with interdisciplinary teaming, personalized learning plans, and so on) she had procedural knowledge that schools could tap.

At the heart of Maine's dubiousness to top-down initiatives is a skepticism about formal authority. Functional authority is not regarded with similar suspicion. The CSRD coordinator's functional authority—i.e., authority granted to her by virtue of her expertise rather than official position—was substantial, and for topics in which she lacked functional authority (e.g., the portfolios) she opted for a collaborative leadership style ('let's figure this out together') rather than a hierarchical one. Epitomizing the personalized nature of her interaction with each school, she proclaimed at the end of a day-and-a-half CSRD school training workshop in May 2000: "You all have my phone number." They did and they were accustomed to calling her or e-mailing her for guidance. As leaders of the CSRD implementation team at one of the high schools we visited said of her, "She's been a key person. We'll call her and talk for an hour."

That same May workshop is illustrative of inter-school, intra-cohort learning. At that workshop, for example, schools shared several challenges regarding the development, implementation, and appraisal of personalized learning plans. A teacher from one school raised a concern that the expected benefits of personalized learning plans, like increased and clearer college aspirations, might not be captured by conventional measures, notably the Maine Learning Results (statewide exam). This comment generated several bits of advice. A principal at another school pointed to the website of a high school in Vermont where the principal of that school has posted several tips regarding how to capture the value of personalized learning. A university-based researcher who was the 'external coach' of another CSRD school suggested that the question had implications regarding not only *what* a student learns, but also *how* a student learns, and an even bigger question about proposed changes in teacher practice. The Maine CSRD coordinator turned the question back to each assembled school group, pointing out the question's overlap with a question on a workshop handout. The third question on the handout entitled 'Reflection and Projection Questions for Building Your Rider A Contract' asked, "What evidence do we need to collect in order to inform our understanding of the effect of _____ on student achievement?" Eleven smaller conversations attempting to generate substantive answers to the initial question followed.

Evidence of success

Tracing the links between this discrete act and the success of Maine CSRD implementation, or for that matter tracing the links between any of the particular features of CSRD in Maine and the success of implementation there, may seem difficult, particularly absent reference to student achievement. However, in the discrete act of question posing and question responding briefly sketched in the last paragraph were visible some habits and modes of operation that, according to the research literature, are characteristics of successful school reform. Sarason (1990) emphasizes that reform initiatives will fail if educators do not encounter conditions for their own productive learning. Steigelbauer (1994) notes that successful school districts need to develop an ongoing, institutionalized capacity to change and that institutionalized change requires institutionalizing the habit of inclusion. That is to say, the comparatively modest act of convincing a teacher to implement personalized learning plans will only be successfully enacted if (a) the teacher has the chance to understand and embrace the logic for such a practice and (b) if that same teacher has access to colleagues and external sources of expertise who can ensure that implementation is sufficiently adept (i.e., that implementation missteps are corrected rather than understood as proof that a practice will not work). However briefly, the public consideration of the teacher's question and the subsequent smaller group discussion of it were indicators of healthy school reform habits, in this case the habit of honoring and trying to respond to a teacher's question about practice.

Reflection is another crucial habit that is characteristic of viable efforts at school and system improvement. The school portfolios are the most potent of several vehicles embedded in Maine CSRD that enable reflection. As our handout from the July 2000 IAS Summer Institute on "Strategies for Turning Around Low-Performing Schools" indicates (see Appendix B), there was ample evidence from the school portfolios and portfolio presentations that Maine had found a vehicle to ensure reflection (and correction) on practice by CSRD schools. This was more obvious and more profound at schools that had refined rather than voluminous portfolios (refinement indicating review and analysis and related winnowing of contents), and broad input into the portfolio's creation and/or broad review of the portfolio as a vehicle for organizational learning. In addition, schools that had stopped viewing the portfolios as a task to be complied with, but instead as a task that could be appropriated as a highly useful vehicle for self-acknowledgement, self-praise, and self-scrutiny, benefited.

We were also witness to acts of reflection and substantive involvement with the challenges of reform implementation at each of the schools we visited. At one school, we were proudly shown a faculty and administration-generated matrix which aligned faculty generated beliefs, the school's vision statement, the promises of their CSRD application, the *Promising Futures* Core Practices, and the school's action plan for improvement. At another school, we heard how a $200 stipend per teacher for participation on "Action Teams" had led to the commitment of dozens of hours to try to figure out personalized learning plans, interdisciplinary teacher teaming, and other elements of reform. Though the $200 which came from CSRD funds was functionally quite modest (if calculated on an hourly basis), its power came from the act of acknowledgment embedded within it. Teacher input was expected, needed, and had value.

The habits of honoring teacher learning and institutional reflection are not intrinsically expensive. Though CSRD funding and personalized encouragement from the Maine CSRD coordinator may be important explanations for the emergence/expansion of these habits at Maine CSRD schools, the value of these habits is becoming increasingly self-evident. The promise of these habits is that they will enable reflection regarding the instructional program and

improvement of students' achievement. That part of the story, however, is still more promised than realized.

Voices of students

The elements of *Promising Futures* that have been borrowed for CSRD focus on 'student-centered learning.' Building from a constructivist orientation and borrowing from the Coalition of Essential Schools' principle that teachers need to be positioned to know students well, the use of personalized learning plans and the creation of interdisciplinary teams that permit teachers to exchange information on a shared cohort of students both embody this student-centered orientation. A key premise of student-centered learning is that students have means to control much of their schooling and thus consent to learn. This does not mean that learning to formally articulated standards—in this case Maine Learning Results—is negotiable, but the path to mastery of those standards, the *how* of learning, is supposed to be. In this sense, one can suggest a parallel with Maine's CSRD program; the standards—i.e., the four *Promising Futures* core practices, the Rider A contracts, the school portfolios, etc.—were not negotiable, but there was much autonomy and prospective cooperation for helping realize them.

During our visits to the CSRD schools, visits that always included a day or more of shadowing students, we did not encounter students who could articulate more than a vague awareness of CSRD or *Promising Futures*. When we asked about more discrete elements of their schools' reforms, students did describe their experiences with being teamed, with having personalized learning plans, and so on. Though we do not want to overgeneralize from our modest sample of 'shadowees,' we do want to raise the concern that perhaps an opportunity and *Promising Futures*-embedded expectation for student inclusion was not yet being realized. During our visits we heard frequent though not constant complaints about one new practice or another (e.g., that personalized learning plans were a waste of time). We wonder if one explanation of those complaints is that students are not seeing the coherence and complementarity among the initiatives being pursued at their school. Students may lack the holistic perspective regarding CSRD that most of the teachers we encountered had and thus not be well positioned to trust a new activity to engage with it fully and sincerely. Remembering the MEDOE CSRD coordinator's success at appealing to schools to stay enthused despite the Rider A surprise, we note that her success relied both on her message of 'I'm learning along with you' and her ability to help schools recognize how the Rider A contracts were a mechanism for going forward with a holistic change process upon which they had indicated in their applications they wanted to embark. At the time of our visits, we did not see teachers positioning students to see how the initiated changes were coherent and potentially centrally consistent with what a student aspired to do. We suspect that at each school there are myriad opportunities for teachers to engage students using personalization strategies akin to those used by the CSRD coordinator with those same educators. For all of our excitement about what the CSRD program in Maine seems to be generating, we are less sure that those opportunities are being recognized and pursued.

LESSONS FROM NON-FUNDED SCHOOLS

If the previous segment is a largely favorable rendering of Maine's CSRD experience, it is still worth remembering that the CSRD process has consequences beyond its eleven school base that are not automatically positive. The interest of the three unsuccessful CSRD applicant schools that we visited in re-applying for CSRD funding was modest at most (albeit for different reasons), as was their continued interest in reform. This muted continuing interest has several

implications for the continued development of CSRD, particularly its purported demonstration element, and for the related larger task of promoting *Promising Futures* in Maine. One non-funded school was skeptical of reapplying because it was sure the relative wealth of the community it served was a reason for its failure in the first round. While CSRD applicant schools in Maine can 'win' up to 24 points (of 144 total) based on socio-economically defined need, a better explanation for the rejection of this school's CSRD application was that their proposed reform was modest and not overtly consistent with the 'student-centered learning' championed within *Promising Futures*. The school had proposed using CSRD funding to facilitate more teaming by faculty within academic disciplines. Unlike interdisciplinary teaming, the type of teaming proposed by this school does not bring together faculty who share the same students; thus it does not position teams of faculty to collectively consider particular learners academic habits and proclivities nor to assemble and be responsive to any other personal information.[12] As a further component of this school's processing of the rejection of their initial proposal, school leaders were derisive in their characterizations of several of the awarded schools, noting for example that one was not even accredited.[13] Their receptiveness to see CSRD schools as favorable demonstrations of anything seemed unlikely, while their reaction to the state's recommended reform plan (i.e., *Promising Futures*) was of cautious dubiousness.

At a second non-funded school, the principal explained that she felt she had expended too much personal capital in the first round convincing faculty as a demonstration of their faith in her to vote in favor of the proposed changes described in the CSRD application. With affirming nods from the three or four senior teachers who were also present when we interviewed her, the principal went on to explain that though she had 'won' the requisite support during the vote, many of her faculty felt the CSRD process was too 'top-down' and had pressed them to change quickly, rather than deliberatively. They expressed relief that they had not been funded.

At the third unsuccessful applicant school that we visited, the CSRD proposal had been assembled quickly by a small group of change-oriented faculty with limited involvement by the principal. Subsequent to the application's denial the principal had vaguely promised the proposal authors that he would push for the changes they had proposed to be implemented anyway. According to the authors and a contingent of their allies, however, the principal had not followed through on that pledge and had otherwise shown little interest in enabling more student-centered learning. They were quite cynical about the process and many told us they were actively seeking work at other Maine high schools. We were told that the superintendent still seemed interested in CSRD, but few at the school had much interest in re-applying. CSRD at this school was a source of schism, though not the only one.

We sketch these schools' experiences for several reasons. They suggest that the CSRD process can have negative consequence even in a state with better strategies than many to bridge learning at CSRD sites and non-CSRD sites. As such, they are a reminder that, if we take the 'D for demonstration' seriously, the experience of non-funded schools is salient for overall program appraisal. Proposal rejection discouraged those who felt they had worked hard to propose school reforms (supporting the skeptics instead of those inclined to change) and deepened schisms, yet did not yield the thoughtful consideration about student-centered learning that is the philosophical crux of *Promising Futures*. Though our sample is clearly small, none of these schools' responses to rejection suggest they will be willing to learn from and/or adopt reforms enacted at CSRD schools. For those who aspire to have CSRD in Maine be a source of systemic rather than just school site change, this is an obstacle that will need to be overcome.

This obstacle does not consistently apply to non-applicant Maine high schools, at least this seems to be the case based on our visits to three schools that were wholly uninvolved in CSRD. To be sure, our sample was not random, as we went to sites suggested by the Maine CSRD coordinator in consultation with one of the Co-Chairs of the committee that had drafted *Promising Futures*. Thus, two of our non-participating schools sample were buildings where at least some substantive portion of the educators there were interested in learning more about *Promising Futures* and CSRD and who were clearly interested in the next round of CSRD funding. These two schools had also on their own initiative created a number of internal communication and planning structures that were already pushing each school along the school reform road. In contrast, the third school seemed hostile to the idea of CSRD because of its tie-in with *Promising Futures* and, as noted earlier, its lingering bitterness towards the state commissioner.

The first two non-applicant schools both expressed interest in applying for CSRD funds in the forthcoming second round of applications. Similarly, the non-applicant schools that attended the *Promising Futures Summer Academies* also seemed favorably disposed towards the prospect of obtaining CSRD funds. Thus, we think there is a pool of Maine high schools that are not formally part of CSRD that are willing to learn from the CSRD schools and similarly share their own learning. However, the whole cohort of high schools in Maine does not fit into this 'favorable disposition' category with those who had negative experiences with CSRD (i.e., having their applications rejected) being among the most reluctant.

CONCLUSION

Maine's experience with CSRD to date has been marked by the appropriation and customization of federal guidelines to create a coherent, targeted, and distinct program. This customization has allowed Maine to try to change one of the most intransigent segments of the public education enterprise, the high school. The customizations promise student-centered learning, inter-school learning (as a mechanism of professional development), and habits of operation that may make Maine's CSRD high schools sites of internally-driven ongoing reform. The customizations have allowed Maine to take advantage of the match between the CSRD coordinator's professional background and the type of schools she is working with. This has allowed her to use her functional authority (i.e., authority based on expertise not rank) and collaborative *modus operandi* in a state where other styles of external leadership are viewed with great skepticism. Though 'appropriation' is an apt word to apply to the customizations of both the federal guidelines and the guidelines sketched in the Promising Futures document, 'appropriation' should not be mistakenly understood as weakening or 'watering down.' Maine's CSRD strategy seems to be going forward with explicit acknowledgement that change agents need to understand and subscribe to the change they are proposing to enact. This applies to MEDOE-level practitioners as much as school-site based ones.

The attempt at improvement being enacted in Maine is not immodest and, because it is attuned to both local dispositions and contemporary understanding regarding organizational change and improvement, it is promising. The efforts of the eleven Maine CSRD schools, however, should not be misunderstood as a test of the viability of Promising Futures. Promising Futures clearly informs the CSRD initiative, but the CSRD initiative both transcends and falls short of Promising Futures. It fall short in the sense that not all Core Practices are included, but, more substantially, it transcends Promising Futures because unlike that document, Maine CSRD now embeds a number of specific implementation means and mechanisms that have no corresponding match in the original CSRD framework. For example the Rider A contracts, the

portfolios, and the “Continuum of Success” benchmarks all steer organizational procedure in ways perhaps consistent with Promising Futures but in regards to which Promising Futures is silent. The day-to-day enactment of CSRD in Maine has created a living policy that differs from both the Promising Futures blueprint and the federal CSRD blueprint and that includes more than the insights of the authors of these two policies as its antecedents. Indeed the Maine CSRD coordinator and the practitioners at the various schools we visited are themselves also important contributors to Maine’s CSRD policy.

ENDNOTES

[1] Single quotation marks are used in this report to convey paraphrasing, local or vernacular phrasing, or a changed authorial perspective (for example, the adoption of the point of view of one of the people discussed). Double quotation marks and indented block quotations are used to identify directly quoted statements or print sources.

[2] For example, in the case of the Maine Learning Results state standards, the ' hows ' of accomplishing them are presumed to be the professional prerogative of schools and districts, with the SEA offering a supportive hand rather than a prescriptive one. The implementation of the Learning Results has thus been largely accepted at Maine schools. (See Ruff *et al.* 2000:165.)

[3] We use the terms 'ambitious' and 'ambiguous' because that is how various state CSRD coordinators who assembled at the U.S. Department of Education's CSRD National Conference on February 18, 2000 characterized the program.

[4] In June 2000, one of us, plus another Education Alliance colleague who has been involved with the drafting and promotion of *Promising Futures*, joined Maine's commissioner of education and its CSRD coordinator on a panel at the U.S. Department of Education's National High School Restructuring Conference in Washington, DC. In July 2000, two of us helped formatively evaluate the school portfolio presentations of six of the eleven Maine CSRD schools and we conferred with Maine's CSRD coordinator regarding the others. The school portfolios were massive, thorough documents that the schools assembled as chronological and categorical records of their CSRD implementation. Finally, in both July and September the lead author of this paper co-presented in Washington, DC with the Maine CSRD coordinator, first at an Improving America's Schools (IAS) Summer Institute on "Strategies for Turning Around Low-Performing Schools" and later at a forum for staff of the U.S. Department of Education's Office on Educational Research and Improvement (OERI). Overheads from the July IAS conference are attached to this report as Appendix B. The list in Appendix B reviewing schools' experience with portfolios was co-assembled by the lead author and Maine's CSRD coordinator. All of these co-presentations are mentioned first to illustrate the rapport we had with Maine education leaders and second to account for another source of data; at these presentations, we, like the rest of the audience, were able to hear Maine education leaders' accounts of what they thought they were doing with CSRD, what were the challenges and successes, and what were the purposes.

[5] From educators at a high school in a district where Duke was superintendent, we heard that Duke regularly brought new reform models to the district only to replace or supplement them after a short time for another reform. He has not repeated this history of frequent strategy change as commissioner, which, by one interpretation, suggests that after years of sampling, *Promising Futures* represents a distilled, experience-based, stable vision.

[6] It was clear, however, from our conversations with school leaders at other Maine high schools that the Poland experience was being watched closely by them and interpreted as a cautionary tale. That is to say, that even though several of these educators conceded a personal pro-heterogeneous grouping disposition and even though Poland was ultimately able to preserve its heterogeneous format, leaders of other schools interpreted Poland High School's experience as reason to shy away from heterogeneous grouping. School leaders who were more skeptical of heterogeneous grouping also used the Poland experience to strengthen their determination to not attempt such a change in their school.

[7] According to *Promising Futures* (p. 3), Maine ranked 32nd in the U.S. in per capita wealth, but 15th in per capita education spending. According to *Education Week*'s "Quality Counts 2000", in 1997 Maine was third in the nation in education spending per $1,000 of gross state product, trailing only Vermont and West Virginia (*Education Week* 2000:83).

[8] Technically, SEAs were not required to apply for CSRD funding and states could skip participating in CSRD. However, though some states were slow to apply for funds, none of the 52 SEAs eligible for the program opted out.

[9] Using some of our CSRD allocation, we, the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory, were subsequently taken up on our offer to Maine to conduct and fund their Year 1 CSRD evaluation. (See Lane and Hamann [2000].)

[10] CISE was the principal state-funded vehicle created after the drafting of *Promising Futures* to encourage its adoption. As of December 2000, it had two core staff members, two additional MEDOE staff who contributed as their workloads permitted, and two support staff. One of the core staff members was the Maine CSRD coordinator (her CISE salary and CSRD salary made her almost full-time). For more information on CISE, see their website: http://janus.state.me.us/education/cse/cse.htm (January 19,2001).

[11] See Herman, et al. (1987) for detailed explanation of the differences between formative and summative evaluation.
[12] Intra-disciplinary teaming does have several virtues, however. For example, it enables alignment of the curriculum with state standards. This type of effort is consistent with *Promising Futures*, but it is indirectly related to *Promising Future's* central emphasis on changing the nature and mechanics of the teacher-student relationship at the secondary level.
[13] One CSRD school, whose academics were neither notably better nor worse than the other Maine CSRD schools we visited, was denied accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). The key reason for this rural school's failure to be accredited was the marked shortcomings in its physical plant. This point was unacknowledged, however, by leaders at the wealthier but rejected CSRD applicant school. They did not acknowledge that anything in the experience of this unaccredited school could be superior to their own processes and practices and thus believed that the CSRD award to the unaccredited school only revealed the awarding process to be flawed.

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Appendix A:

Our handout for the May 2000 Maine CSRD School Workshop

Preliminary Observations, Thoughts, and Suggestions Regarding CSRD Implementation in Maine

(based on 24 days worth of site visits at 8 of Maine's eleven CSRD implementation sites)

COMMENDATIONS

- There is a core assumption obvious at all schools we visited that teachers will be centrally involved not just in implementing CSRD, but in the planning and coordination of CSRD. This is a crucial (and in other jurisdictions too often rare) starting point for creating self-renewing schools because enduring change requires consent, not just compliance.

- The tie-in to Promising Futures and (B) the personalization of state department/ school communication together contribute to the general coherence of implementation and the real prospect of schools learning from one another.

- At the schools that have embraced the school portfolio idea, that mechanism seems to be serving as a useful tool for reform coordination and documentation of progress and change and for compelling the habits of reflection that will sustain the reform impulse after CSRD funds are no longer available.

Observations and Cautionary Notes

- Different schools are prioritizing different components in terms of emphasis and order of implementation. Moreover, schools seems to have begun CSRD at different starting points so a raw school-to-school comparison of how far along a continuum of reform various schools are would be misleading. At some schools CSRD appears to be a mechanism to initiate reform, at others it is a mechanism for continuing reform that is well under way.

- The same terminology has different meanings in different schools, which reflects both different understandings and different degrees of understanding. For example, personalized learning plans (PLPs) at some schools refer to a specific document filled out by students at a certain grade level, whereas at other schools PLP seems to refer to a much broader philosophy of personalizing learning that includes student-led conferences, student-initiated independent study, and a four-year relationship between student and advisor.

- Some schools seem excited by the prospect of creating advisories and PLPs. At other schools implementation of those components so far seems to have generated uncertainty. Having schools share ideas regarding these two components in particular could be quite beneficial.

- Perhaps because of the experience of writing and filing Rider A contracts, the 4 components of Maine CSRD from Promising Futures seem to have a more obvious priority in schools than the 9 components identified in the national CSRD authorization.

Appendix B:

Overheads from the July 13, 2000 IAS Summer Meeting

Successes and Challenges of Maine's CSRD Portfolio Evaluation Process

SUCCESSES

1. Schools have created a single document that describes the school-wide improvement efforts undertaken for CSRD.

2. The school portfolio is a physical entity that documents the depth and breadth of the comprehensive reform activities. Many schools presented the CSRD portfolio to their school board in a "state of the school" address.

3. Schools were able to identify successes and recognize faculty at the end of the school year.

4. Many schools used the Continuum of Evidence to self assess implementation progress at the mid- year as well as at the end of the year.

5. Educators described a sense of increased accountability as they prepared to present the portfolio to a panel.

6. The narrative, portfolio, and panel presentation together gave the Maine Department of Education another comprehensive means to assess, guide, and support each school's school reform efforts, which enhanced the technical assistance SEA-level educators could provide.

7. School narratives and portfolios are being utilized by state and local evaluators.

POTENTIAL SUCCESSES

1. Schools were able to identify challenges and begin planning to address those challenges.

2. Many schools presented the narrative and portfolio to their whole faculty in an effort to be more inclusive in planning and to trouble shoot possible resistance to school reform efforts.

CHALLENGES

1. Getting schools to use data to support their claims about implementation and the impact of CSRD on student achievement. (Data has often been collected and claims made, but the link between data and claims often has not been clarified.)

2. Getting more faculty involved in putting the portfolio together and reflecting on school reform progress.

3. Getting schools to see the portfolio process as learning opportunity and not simply a compliance activity.

4. Helping schools to identify those activities that truly were leverage points.

5. Helping schools discern which materials deserve preservation in a portfolio (because they are illustrative of a success or challenge, for example) versus that which can be discarded. Schools need this help to avoid being overwhelmed by the collection of too much data.

Appendix C:

Promising Futures' 15 Core Practices

Core Practices for Learning and Teaching and Core practices for School Support

CORE PRACTICES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

Core practice 1
Every student is respected and valued by adults and by fellow students.

Core practice 2
Every teacher tailors learning experiences to the learner's needs, interests, and future goals.

Core practice 3
Every teacher challenges learners both to master the fundamentals of the disciplines and to integrate skills and concepts across the disciplines to address relevant issues and problems.

Core practice 4
Every student learns in collaborative groups of students with diverse learning styles, skills, ages, personal backgrounds, and career goals.

Core practice 5
Every student makes informed choices about education and participation in school life and takes responsibility for the consequences of those choices.

Core practice 6
Every student employs a personal learning plan to target individual as well as common learning goals and to specify learning activities that will lead to the attainment of those goals.

Core practice 7
Every teacher makes learning standards, activities, and assessment procedures known to students and parents and assures the coherence among them.

Core practice 8
Every student who receives the secondary school diploma has demonstrated, through performance exhibitions, knowledge and skills at a level deemed by the school and by the state to be sufficient to begin adult life.

CORE PRACTICES FOR SCHOOL SUPPORT

Core practice 9
Students and teachers belong to teams that provide each student continuous personal and academic attention and a supportive environment for learning and growth.

Core practice 10
Learning governs the allocation of time, space, facilities, and services.

Core practice 11
Every teacher has sufficient time and resources to learn, to plan, and to confer with individual students, colleagues, and families.

Core practice 12
Every staff member understands adolescent learning and developmental needs, possesses diverse instructional skills, and is a constructive model for youth.

Core practice 13
Every school has a comprehensive professional development system in which every staff member has a professional development plan to guide improvement.

Core practice 14
Staff, students, and parents are involved democratically in significant decisions affecting student learning.

Core practice 15
Active leadership by principals inspires and mobilizes staff, students, and parents to work toward the fulfillment of the school's mission and, within it, their own learning and life goals.

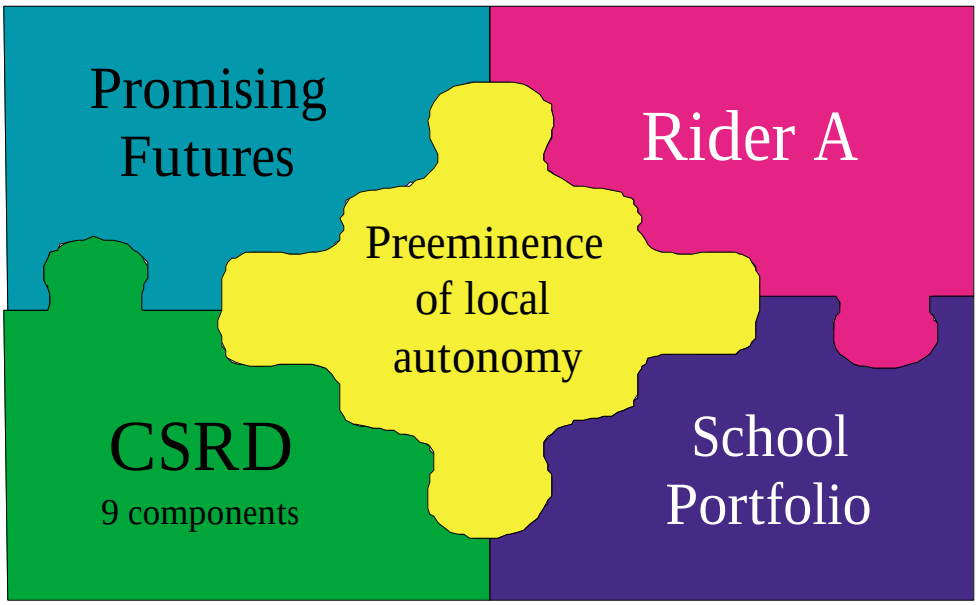
Source:

"Promising Futures: A Call to Improve Learning for Maine's Secondary Students", Maine Commission on Secondary Education, Department of Education: Augusta, Maine, September 1998.

Appendix D:

The "Continuum of Evidence" Guide for School Portfolios

CSRD and Formative Evaluation in the State of Maine —5 Factors



Prepared by Ted Hamann
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Portfolio Element #1

Effective Teaching and Learning Practices Core Practice #6 & #7

The school's implementation of its CSRD Program and Model is resulting in improved academic performance of students on the Maine Learning Results.

Indicators

By the End of Year One:

A. The school has developed and is employing personal learning plans that targets individual, as well as common learning goals, specifies learning activities that will lead to the attainment of those goals.

B. Student, teacher(s), and parent(s) collaborate in the plan s development execution, and review.

C. Student progress is reviewed regularly; past activities and assessments are used to revisit and, if appropriate, revise learning plans.

D. Parents and staff use the plan as a planning device for the transition from secondary school to a future appropriate for each student plans and assessments constitute a portfolio that exhibits, for future purposes, the student s talents, challenges and future potential.

E. The school is working to make learning standards, activities, and assessment procedures known to students and parents and assures the coherence among them.

F. The school has aligned the assessments it is using with the Maine Learning Results and with the CSRD Program and Model.

No Evidence	Little Evidence	Some Evidence	Strong Evidence

Portfolio Element #1

Effective Teaching and Learning Practices Core Practices #6 & #7 (Continued)

By the End of Year One:

G. The school is using performance data to make decisions about the school's CSRD Program and Model.

H. The school has established benchmarks that express the adequate yearly academic progress they expect students to demonstrate and these benchmarks or expectations have been communicated to staff and parents.

I. The school demonstrates through local and/or state measures that students are making academic progress.

J. Students have, at all times, learning goals that focus and direct their activities; they pursue learning activities until their learning goals are attained.

K.

No Evidence	Little Evidence	Some Evidence	Strong Evidence

Notes:

Portfolio Element #2

Effective Organizational Practices Core Practices 9 and 10

The school has organized students and teachers on teams and learning governs the allocation of time, space, facilities, and services.

Indicators

By the End of Year One:

A. Students and teachers belong to teams that provide each student continuous personal and academic attention and a supportive environment for learning and growth.

B. The school schedule provides time regularly for the team s planning, assessment, and parent/student communication activities.

C. The team provides a significant portion of the student s academic learning experiences, the individual goal-setting, planning, and review activities of the personal learning plan, and a respectful home base where every student has an equal voice in team affairs.

D. Teams are not larger than 100 students and 6 faculty; they include a cross-section of students and remain together for the duration of the student s secondary educational career to the degree possible.

E. Parental participation in their students learning occurs through the team structure and, within it, the personal learning plan process.

F. The school allocates each team sufficient space and equipment to facilitate its work and to give each student work space to support her/his continuous learning activities.

No Evidence	Little Evidence	Some Evidence	Strong Evidence

Portfolio Element #2

Effective Organizational Practices Core Practices 9 and 10 (Continued)

Indicators

By the End of Year One:

G. Teacher teams, in concert with students and parents, have the flexibility to shape schedules, facilities, and other resources to meet student learning goals.

H. The timeframe in which learning occurs is unlimited; the length and form of a learning day, week, and year are shaped to meet student learning goals.

I. The co-curriculum is an essential part of the curriculum; students are expected to learn valuable skills and attitudes in each; and all curriculum is designed to address common and individual learning goals and standards.

J. Resources for learning are not limited to the school building and budget and include social services, universities, businesses, and public service agencies among others.

No Evidence	Little Evidence	Some Evidence	Strong Evidence

Notes:

Portfolio Element #3
LEADERSHIP TEAM AND EXTERNAL SUPPORT

The school has a leadership team that guides the faculty in its work and makes appropriate use of high quality external technical assistance to implement its CSRD Program and Model.

Indicators

By the End of Year One:

A. Leadership team is made of representatives from school stakeholders, has an established decision-making protocol, communicates regularly to and from all constituencies and it s decisions are reflective of school community input.

B. The leadership team meets regularly to discuss and monitor CSRD activities. The team uses school data to inform its decisions and plan next steps.

C. The school has identified the areas where it will need technical assistance.

D. The school is aware of a variety of external technical assistance, beyond the Model developer, that is available and has begun utilizing technical assistance from multiple sources as needed.

E. The school has identified other assistance that it needs in order to successfully implement its CSRD Program and Model.

F. The school is aware of and is requesting, as appropriate, assistance from the District office.

No Evidence	Little Evidence	Some Evidence	Strong Evidence

Notes:

Portfolio Element #4
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In implementing the CSRD Program and the CSRD Model, the school is providing appropriate high quality, continuous professional development and training to administrators, faculty, staff and parents designed to increase the school's capacity for continuous, comprehensive improvement of student achievement.

Indicators

By the End of Year One:

A. The school has a detailed, articulated professional development plan that includes sufficient resources to support the CSRD Program and the goals set by the school for improvement of student performance.

B. The school-wide system of professional development provides resources tailored to the individual goals and career needs of each employee which include support teams, peer observation and consultation, and access to learning beyond the school and the school day.

C. Time devoted to professional learning and growth are considered an integral part of the staff member s work day, week, and year.

D. Professional development is scaffolded to build knowledge and skills over time rather than isolated, one shot trainings.

E. There is evidence that the opportunities for professional development are varied and include knowledge and skill acquisition, modeling, practice, reflection, coaching, networking, and follow-up.

No Evidence	Little Evidence	Some Evidence	Strong Evidence

Portfolio Element #4
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (Continued)

Indicators

By the End of Year One:

		No Evidence	Little Evidence	Some Evidence	Strong Evidence
F.	Parents and representatives from community-based organizations are involved in CSRD professional development activities as appropriate.				
G.	Core administrators and faculty have received in-depth training in the CSRD Model. All administrators and faculty have received a comprehensive orientation and are able to articulate how the CSRD Model complements the school's CSRD Program and Goals.				

Notes:

Portfolio Element #5
STAFF SUPPORT AND PARTICIPATION

The school administration, faculty, and staff are knowledgeable about, and supportive of, the CSRD Program and Model and are actively engaged in implementation.

Indicators

By the End of Year One:

		No Evidence	Little Evidence	Some Evidence	Strong Evidence
A.	The school principal and other key administrators are conversant in, and supportive of, the CSRD Program and Model and play active leadership roles in implementation.				
B.	The majority of faculty and staff are supportive of the CSRD Program and Model; have received an orientation and initial training and are actively involved in implementation.				
C.	Implementation of the CSRD Model in the school is proceeding appropriately and is not jeopardizing the fidelity or integrity of the model's framework.				
D.	There is a process in place for administrators and faculty to collectively address barriers to CSRD Program and Model implementation.				
E.	Key District Office personnel (superintendent, asst. supt., curriculum coordinators, etc) have been oriented to the school s CSRD Plan and Model.				
F.	The Superintendent has taken steps to address issues/problems that are related to the support and implementation of CSRD at the district and school level.				

Notes:

Portfolio Element #6

PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The school provides opportunities for meaningful parent and community involvement in the CSRD Program.

Indicators

By the End of Year One:

		No Evidence	Little Evidence	Some Evidence	Strong Evidence
A.	There is a building level decision-making committee (may already exist) that includes parents in discussions, plans, and implementation of school improvement initiatives.				
B.	Parents and community members have received an orientation on the school's CSRD Program and Model and receive periodic information on the progress of the CSRD Program and Model.				
C.	Parents and community members are actively engaged in meaningful roles related to the implementation of the CSRD Program and Model.				
D.	Community-based organizations working with the school have received an orientation on the school's CSRD Program and Model and receive periodic information on the progress of the CSRD Program and Model.				
E.	The School Board has been briefed about the school s CSRD Plan and Model and has received a general orientation. The School Board receives periodic progress reports on CSRD.				

Notes:

Portfolio Element #7
EVALUATION

The school has prepared and is conducting an evaluation of the implementation and impact of the CSRD Program and Model.

Indicators

By the End of Year One:

		No Evidence	Little Evidence	Some Evidence	Strong Evidence
A.	The school has identified or developed, and implemented instruments, monitoring and feedback procedures and information systems that will provide information about CSRD implementation.				
B.	The school is collecting and analyzing school level data that will provide information, along with state and district assessments, about the impact of the CSRD Program and Model on student academic performance.				
C.	There is evidence that school administrators, faculty, parents and other key stakeholders have examined evaluation information (implementation and impact) that could result in modifications or changes in the CSRD Program or Model.				
D.	The school is disaggregating, analyzing, and interpreting student data by factors such as grade level, race, gender, poverty, dominant language, migrant status, and handicapping condition.				
E.	The school has created a school portfolio for self-assessment and uses it to organize its school-wide reform efforts. Teachers and other members of the school community are aware of the portfolio and the process for updating and adding information.				
F.	The school evaluation of its CSRD activities has had an impact on the school s plan for activities in the second year.				

Notes:

Portfolio Element #8
ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

The school identified the resources (personnel, materials/equipment, service, funds, etc.) that it needs to implement the CSRD Program and Model and has begun the process of realigning resources to sustain the CSRD Program after funding ends.

Indicators

By the End of Year One:

A. The school has included a budget summary that clearly documents expenditures and they are related to CSRD activities.

B. The school has done an analysis of the budget summary from Year One on what resources are needed to implement the CSRD Program and Model and has proposed a budget summary for Year Two based on this information.

C. The school has analyzed its existing resources (local/state/federal funds, personnel, equipment/materials, etc.) and is in the process of realigning those resources to sustain the CSRD Program and Model.

No Evidence	Little Evidence	Some Evidence	Strong Evidence

Notes:

Portfolio Review Summary Feedback

Indicators
By the End of Year One:

	No Evidence	Little Evidence	Some Evidence	Strong Evidence
A. The school is meeting the terms and conditions of the CSRD grant.				

Summary Feedback by Reviewers: