

# Maine ASCD NEWS

## 21st Century Skills: Diversity and Global Understanding



State of Maine curriculum *Guiding Principles* state that each child must leave school as a responsible and involved citizen who:

*. Understands and respects diversity*  
*. Displays global awareness...*

To thrive and constructively contribute in their school and in their future post-secondary studies, work, and community life students need to respect differences. Whether diversity is apparent, such as in Portland schools, where more than 1,800 students come from homes where over 50 different languages are spoken or Lewiston, where since 2001 approximately 4000 Somalis, Sudanese, Congolese and other African immigrants have brought new vibrancy to the city - or in schools and towns where, outwardly, people seem similar - diversity exists. Differences exist in family configuration, family culture, age, ethnic ancestry, temperament, social background, sexuality, economics, religion, spiritual belief, gender, town, neighborhood, politics, concerns, needs, academic strengths, talents, and hobbies.

As University of California researcher Carlos Cortes (2002) writes, all of our students belong

### 21st Century Skills and Proficiencies

- Mastery of Core Subjects/ Themes
- Critical Thinking/ Problem-Solving
- Communications
- Collaboration
- Creativity/Innovation
- **Global Awareness**
- **Work Effectively in Diverse Teams**
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Appropriate use of technology

(Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009)

to an infinite number of groups. But because the strength of affiliation with various groups differs and because of the different arrays of groups, each of our students is one of a kind. Our classrooms are teeming with diversity.

Not only that, our students are going out to work, learn and live with people of even more diverse cultures, values, ways and strengths.

All this diversity can create challenges - but it also creates great opportunities.

Throughout the state, as reported on the State of Maine Department of Education, Maine Citizen Action Task Force web site (2007) students have been involved in activities that promote understanding and respect for diversity. Lessons and programs help students appreciate their own qualities and those of others, experience a safe, accepting environment, and prepare students to thrive in the diverse world they will enter.

**Edward Little High School, Auburn** held a Diversity Day, at which over sixty speakers visited the school to lead discussions. A Canadian dance troupe performed a dance skit highlighting issues

such as drug and alcohol abuse, diversity, sexual orientation, domestic violence, and gender equality. Teachers taught lessons focusing on diversity, tolerance and acceptance. The Civil Rights Team created a video about tolerance and the many facets of diversity, which was shown to all students, during a closing ceremony.

At **Albert S. Hall elementary school, Waterville**, students ran a "Character Store." Students turned in cards they had received for making appropriate decisions when others were being bullied or for having positive attitudes and helping students who were excluded by others. Students conducted surveys to assess school climate. The Civil Rights Team also put on a skit based on the book, *Say Something*, to demonstrate the harmful effects of bullying and the difference that bystanders can make.

At **Searsport District High School** students chose civil rights quotes, talked about what they meant to them, and then hung them around the school. Students report courageous acts that they see others doing in their school that increase school safety and acceptance of all students. A group of students went to the legislative hearing and testified on LD1196, "An Act to Prohibit Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation." Students also created and conducted a mock vote on LD 1196, the results of which were sent to the legislature to let the members know what percentage of the students, at the High School, supported the bill. The team also began work on a video to demonstrate the hurt that is caused by discrimination.

**Livermore Falls Middle School** was the site of a student led Civil Rights Activity Day. Forty one students facilitated activities pertaining to the Maine Civil Rights Act. Assistant Attorney General

**"International knowledge and skills are no longer just a luxury for a few would-be specialists but are a new basic for all students. Preparation for a competitive global job market and for citizenship in the interconnected world of the 21st Century is critical for all young people."**

(Stewart, 2010, p. 101)

## MAINE ASCD SPRING CONFERENCE

Monday, APRIL 29, 2013

### A Day with Bea McGarvey ~ Looking at Formative Assessments & Grading In Your Standards-Based System

#### GOALS FOR THE DAY:

- Understand how to use standards as the focus of instruction, formative assessments and grading practices
- Understand the characteristics of feedback from formative assessments
- Apply grading formats that accurately represent student learning
- Connect curriculum, instruction and assessments so that all three reflect state and district standards
- Use a grading scale that provides students with accurate feedback about their progress toward standards

Ramada Conference Center  
Lewiston Maine, 9:00-3:00  
\$125 Maine ASCD Members/\$150 Non-Members/\$50  
Student Registration

Registration form is at: <http://maineascd.org/registration-2013.pdf>

for Civil Rights Education and Enforcement, Thomas Harnett, addressed the students. Livermore Falls students also presented a School Spirit Week with a School Safety Summit, which included participation by police officers and the Sexual Assault Center.

Branching out from understanding diversity within their school, students also connect with diverse communities across the state, nation and world.

In many districts, technology has been a boon in supporting global understandings and collaborations. For example, as discussed by Stewart (2010), at a high school in Chicago where each student studies a world language, partnerships have been made with schools in China, France, North Africa, Japan, Switzerland, Italy, Chile and South Africa. Videoconferences connect the students to their partner schools and to experts around the world.

A public elementary school in Washington state is connected to an impoverished school in Mexico, for which the elementary school raises funds for school supplies. In the same school, during an after school program, students videoconference with a school in Japan.

As Stewart notes, programs such as these support respect for other cultures and motivation for engaging responsibly as an actor in the global context.

### **References and Resources**

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### **Maine ASCD News**

Our April issue will focus on **formative assessment strategies** and **grading systems**.

You are invited to submit a brief article (approximately 200-250 words) describing a strategy or program in your classroom, school or district. Provide your name, job title, school, district, your e-mail address and other contact information. Deadline for April issue is March 18.

Topics for upcoming issues will be: arts in schools, STEM, health and physical education, evaluation of teachers.

E-mail articles to Lee Anna Stirling at [leemandu@earthlink.net](mailto:leemandu@earthlink.net) with **Maine ASCD News** in the subject line.

Your feedback and suggestions for *newsletter topics* also are welcome.

**Editor/Design:** Lee Anna Stirling