



# mainespark

CONNECT TO YOUR FUTURE

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## POLICY PRIORITIES

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**Maine needs 60%** of its workforce to have a credential of value (college degree, trade certificate, etc.) in addition to their high school degree in order to connect to a job in the economy.

**Today Maine is at 43%.** Reaching our goal will require aligning education and training, from birth through adulthood, to provide Mainers with the knowledge needed to fill good jobs.

In addition to best practices and investment strategies, this work requires a supportive and comprehensive policy framework. The following are the **policy priorities** for MaineSpark, organized by the initiative's four tracks. Individual advancements on any of these fronts will improve outcomes for Maine people. Together, these priorities provide a powerful roadmap to achieve our workforce goal.

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### Essential Tools, Supports, and Infrastructure

These underlying technical resource needs span all tracks as top priorities.

- 1 Improve broadband quality and access** statewide, with emphasis on connecting underserved communities.
- 2 Adopt unified definitions** for Adult Learner, Degree & Credential Attainment, Degrees and Credentials of Value, and College and Career Readiness.
- 3 Develop a statewide longitudinal data system** (SLDS) to track learning outcomes, credential attainment, employment and wages.

## STRONG FOUNDATIONS

(birth to Sixth Grade)

Strong Foundations wants all Maine children to begin life with good educational opportunities and plenty of hope. Early investments ensure a lifetime of positive returns.

## FUTURE SUCCESS

(Sixth Grade through post-secondary education)

Future Success prepares Maine's youth for college, trainings and career options so they are ready for a range of opportunities that lead to successful adult lives.

OVER 12,000 CHILDREN ARE BORN IN MAINE EVERY YEAR



OF STUDENTS IN MAINE SCHOOLS QUALIFY FOR FREE AND/OR REDUCED PRICE LUNCH



OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN ARE ENROLLED IN HEAD START (OVER 1,000 CHILDREN ARE ON THE WAITING LIST STATEWIDE)

ABOUT 1/4 OF ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED 4TH GRADERS READ AND DO MATH AT GRADE LEVEL



71% OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS OFFER A PRE K OPTION



45% OF 4 YEAR OLDS ATTEND PUBLIC PRE K

LESS THAN 1/4 OF ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED 8TH GRADERS READ AND DO MATH AT GRADE LEVEL



ONLY 44% AND 20% OF ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED 11TH GRADERS READ AND DO MATH AT GRADE LEVEL



78% OF ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL

46% OF ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED MAINE HIGH SCHOOL GRADS ENROLL IN COLLEGE

8,000 OUT OF 179,000 PRE K TO 12 STUDENTS ARE ENROLLED IN A CTE PROGRAM



ONLY 48% OF ALL MAINE COLLEGE STUDENTS EARN A DEGREE ON TIME, AND MAINE IS 14TH HIGHEST IN THE NATION FOR STUDENT DEBT

### POLICY PRIORITIES (in ranked order)

- 1 Expand access for all children ages 6 weeks to 5 years to Early Head Start, Head Start and other affordable, high-quality learning environments so that any interested parent is able to enroll their child.
- 2 Emphasize proficiency in Reading and Math, as well as in Maine's Guiding Principles; develop and deploy supports for schools to improve proficiency across all learning standards and content areas.
- 3 Develop family-friendly state and local policies and implementation strategies that support children in reaching critical milestones by increasing the value of childcare subsidies and streamlining the access process.
- 4 Create a coordinated educational pipeline from birth through Sixth Grade with policies that support common screenings, assessments, and evidence-based curricula in the early care and public education system.

### POLICY PRIORITIES (in ranked order)

- 1 Successfully and completely transition to a student-centered competency-based system; review standards to ensure alignment to post-secondary requirements.
- 2 Support Maine's public universities and community colleges to provide career pathways and initiatives such as internship programs and trainings.
- 3 Implement guidance and mentoring programs that facilitate the successful transition from middle to high school and high school to college.
- 4 Support professional development to Pre-K to 12 school districts to expand effective post-secondary and career counseling.
- 5 Expand effective early college, dual-enrollment and AP opportunities for all Maine high school students.
- 6 Fully fund the state's 55% share of Pre-K to 12 education per the Essential Programs and Services (EPS) formula.
- 7 Fund state scholarships, mentoring and guidance programs to meet the education and career needs of first generation and economically disadvantaged students.
- 8 Develop a state-level educator recruitment and leader development initiative to work with institutions to address workforce needs.
- 9 Improve student access to and increase participation and completion of CTE programs by Maine students.
- 10 Establish pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs across the state to meet skill needs by industry and region.
- 11 Direct school construction awards to better integrate and consolidate academic and CTE instruction on campuses.

## ADULT PROMISE

(those returning to complete degrees or change careers)

Adult learners are the largest population contributing to the MaineSpark goal. Adult Promise offers them information, support and resources.

## NEW OPPORTUNITIES

(professionals looking to move to or begin new careers in Maine)

Maine offers skilled workers a high quality of life. New Opportunities supports Maine graduates to stay and build their careers in the state, and professionals looking to begin a new chapter in Maine.

OVER **36%** OF FULL TIME STUDENTS AND **60%** OF PART TIME STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM ARE 25+

NEARLY **40%** OF STUDENTS IN THE MAINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM ARE 25+

APPROXIMATELY 40% OF COLLEGE STUDENTS 25+ WORK PART TIME AND APPROXIMATELY 30% WORK FULLTIME



21% OF MAINE COLLEGE STUDENTS 25+ ARE TAKING CARE OF DEPENDENT CHILDREN

190,000 MAINE ADULTS (20% OF THE POPULATION) HAVE BEGUN BUT NOT COMPLETED A POST SECONDARY PROGRAM OF STUDY

MAINE IS THE OLDEST STATE IN THE NATION, WITH A MEDIAN AGE OF 44.4



MAINE'S POPULATION HAS PLATEAUED AND WILL CONTINUE TO DECLINE OVER THE NEXT DECADE

MAINE RANKS **48** IN THE NATION FOR POPULATION GROWTH

MAINE IS THE LEAST RACIALLY DIVERSE STATE

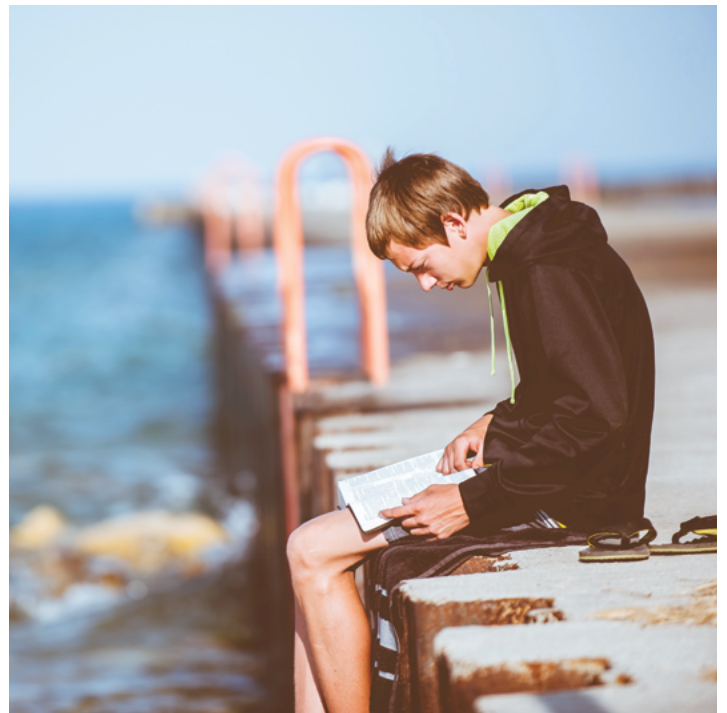
DEATHS OUTNUMBER BIRTHS IN MAINE

### POLICY PRIORITIES (in ranked order)

- 1 Increase local, state, and federal funding for adult learners to access successful support programs and services, such as the Maine State Grant, Parents as Scholars, Competitive Skills Scholarship Program, the Registered Apprenticeship Program and "high-touch" advising.
- 2 Provide funding for agencies to implement creative financing strategies that support adult learners, such as micro-grants, debt-forgiveness, and flexible emergency aid.
- 3 Fully utilize best practices—such as seamless transfer mechanisms, prior learning assessments, stackable credentials, alternative classroom formats (online, evening, and weekend), and competency-based programming—to support adult learner credential attainment.
- 4 Create and promote incentives for employers to invest in employee training and learning.

### POLICY PRIORITIES (in ranked order)

- 1 Expand, promote and simplify student debt relief programs such as Opportunity Maine for wider access and ease of use.
- 2 Establish, improve, and align supports to help immigrants and refugees efficiently transition to education and careers in Maine.
- 3 Support the expansion of industry work experiences such as internships and apprenticeships that bring future professionals to Maine and connect them to the economy and community.



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60%  
by 2025



For more information visit: [mainespark.me](https://mainespark.me)