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Strategies to Help Diverse Students Thrive Focus of Educate Maine and Maine State Chamber Policy Brief

Supporting and welcoming Maine's growing number of diverse students will benefit Maine's economy and employers

PORTLAND, MAINE – Educate Maine and the Maine State Chamber of Commerce have released a joint policy brief, *Helping Diverse Students Thrive*, outlining a set of strategies to help Maine's increasingly diverse student learners thrive. Supporting and welcoming diverse students will help attract and retain young families to Maine, grow Maine's workforce and benefit Maine's economy and employers.

Strategies outlined in detail in the policy brief include:

- Ensuring school practices and policies support all students;
- Providing ongoing, relevant professional development for educators and school administrators;
- Engaging parents and communities;
- Recruiting and retaining diverse educators and school staff.

“Maine vitally needs to retain and attract more people to grow our economy and workforce,” said Maine State Chamber of Commerce President Dana Connors. “With Maine school populations diversifying, implementing strategies to help diverse students thrive will be a tremendous benefit to them and their families. It also is a great opportunity to grow Maine's economy, future workforce, and quite possibly attract more needed in-migration to Maine.” (Please see the Maine State Chamber's 2016 *Making Maine Work* report, [Maine's Labor Shortage: New Mainers and Diversity.](#))

“The strategies in *Helping Diverse Students Thrive* aim to build an educational system that is welcoming and responsive to diverse students,” said Jason Judd, Ed.D., Executive Director of Educate Maine. “Identifying and addressing the unique challenges diverse students face will help them succeed academically and position them for successful careers. This will help resolve Maine's workforce shortage, arguably the greatest economic challenge Maine currently faces.”

Student learners who are characterized as “diverse” come from many backgrounds. This brief looks in depth at education indicators pertaining to several diverse student populations, including by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and English learner status. Data indicates Maine's student population is diversifying and is considerably more diverse than Maine as a whole.

Information suggests discrimination against diverse students is still a challenge in Maine schools. Absenteeism and parent engagement are additional challenges. Achievement gaps for diverse

students are wider in 4th grade, particularly for students learning English. The gap widens by 11th grade and impacts high school graduation rates, as well as college enrollment and persistence.

For more in-depth information on specific strategies to help diverse students thrive, models of successful Maine schools and programs, and benefits of diversity in schools, please see the full policy brief at <http://www.educatemaine.org/docs/Helping-Diverse-Students-Thrive.pdf>.

Helping Diverse Students Thrive is one in a series of policy briefs produced in a partnership between Educate Maine and the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, and through the generous support of the John T. Gorman and Nellie Mae Education Foundations.

Both the Maine State Chamber of Commerce and Educate Maine are members of [MaineSpark | 60% by 2025](#). MaineSpark|60% by 2025 is powered by a coalition of organizations -- schools and universities, nonprofits and foundations, government agencies and businesses -- with a common goal: by 2025, 60% of Mainers will hold education and workforce credentials that position Maine and its families for success.

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About Educate Maine:

Educate Maine champions career readiness by increasing the educational attainment of Maine people, enabling all students to succeed in postsecondary education and in the workplace. Landmark programs include the Maine Teacher of the Year program, Education Leaders Experience, and Project>Login. More information is available at www.educatemaine.org.

About the Maine State Chamber of Commerce:

As the state's most influential business advocate, the Maine State Chamber of Commerce works to secure a positive business climate and strong economic future for Maine. The Chamber focuses on **Advocacy**, **Access**, and **Awareness** on behalf of thousands of employers of all sizes and sectors across Maine. For more information, please visit www.mainechamber.org.