

# Readiness: Community Compass, Branding & Communications

## Expanding the View of Educational Excellence: Maine DOE Engages Communities Statewide

### OVERVIEW

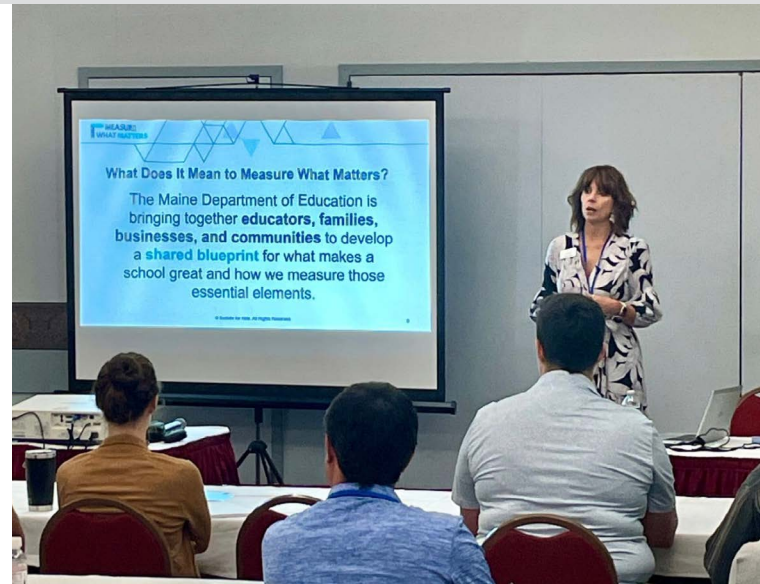
The Maine Department of Education (Maine DOE) partnered with our AASA District Services team members to spark conversations statewide about understanding Mainer views of educational excellence. Community Compass (formerly FuturesCoLab) sessions were held on 19 separate occasions during the engagement across every county. Nearly 100 individual interviews, and Community Compass sessions with nearly 500 students, families, educators, business leaders, and policymakers that helped shape “The Expanding View of Educational Excellence in Maine” report and an accompanying video series. Together, they share a broader vision of student success rooted in life skills, well-being, and aspirations unique to each Maine community.

### THE CHALLENGE

Traditional measures of student success, focused largely on standardized test scores, no longer captured the complete range of skills and experiences students need to thrive after high school. Maine DOE sought to create a statewide, community-driven conversation around what success looks like in today’s world and in the future. This reflected both academic outcomes and broader life skills like resilience, collaboration, adaptability, and critical thinking.

### WHAT WE DID

- Facilitated Community Compass sessions in every county, engaging educators, families, students, and community and business leaders.
- Guided participants through future thinking exercises to surface hopes, aspirations, and concerns about Maine’s educational future.
- Conducted nearly 100 one-on-one interviews to amplify different voices, including students from K-12 and higher education.
- Synthesized insights into the statewide report, outlining key themes and emerging portraits of great schools and future-ready students.
- Partnered with Maine DOE to launch a video series highlighting real stories from communities, students, and educators across the state.



## KEY IMPACTS

- **Shared Statewide Vision:** The statewide report articulates ideas for a potential new definition of student success that balances academics with well-being, life skills, and real-world readiness.
- **Elevated Student Voice:** Youth perspectives shaped the framework, ensuring authenticity and relevance to future learners.
- **Public Engagement & Visibility:** The video series brought the report to life, amplifying local voices and sparking conversations statewide.
- **Future Alignment:** The findings are helping guide Maine DOE and influencing how districts are thinking about how to measure what matters so students are future-ready.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Statewide change is possible when communities are authentically engaged.
- Storytelling—through both data-rich reports and human-centered video—creates momentum and sustained public interest.
- The groundwork for change can be successfully presented when there are representative voices at the table.



## Call to Action

Maine demonstrates how statewide listening and storytelling can begin the process of re-thinking how we measure what matters and reshape education systems. Community Compass has not only been used in Maine to achieve this, but is embedded as part of the Portrait of a Graduate design process when school districts or statewide agencies partner with AASA. It has also been used by districts like Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools in North Carolina to engage their community in future-focused conversations around their statewide Portrait of a Graduate. AASA District Services can help states and districts launch similar processes that surface local aspirations, broaden definitions of success, and build shared ownership for transforming learning.

