



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
23 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0023

PAUL R. LEPAGE
GOVERNOR

THOMAS A. DESJARDIN
ACTING COMMISSIONER

January 23, 2015

Mike Hammer
Superintendent of Schools
MSAD 29
PO Box 190
Houlton, ME 04730

Dear Superintendent Hammer:

This letter acknowledges receipt of MSAD 29's request for an extension to meet the proficiency-based graduation requirements at Houlton High School. The Department commends you and your staff for your efforts to improve student academic success and student scores and for your efforts to advance proficiency-based education. Included among these efforts are:

- Worked to close achievement gaps for students
- Established PLG work on curriculum, instruction and assessment K-12
- Convened a Future Search event with a primary emphasis on developing a framework for proficiency-based education
- Established Grading Guidelines for all teachers
- Developed and joined the Northern Maine Educational Collaborative (NMEC)
- Selected Empower reporting system and MCCL curriculum

We understand that you will continue to build on the important steps you have taken and the momentum it has created within your school system.

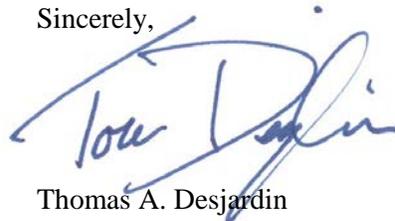
Maine DOE is charged with assessing whether or not the district has met all the proficiency-based graduation requirements needed to approve MSAD 29's Extension 4 application. We have identified the following evidence that would be necessary for granting your current application:

- Evidence of graduation standards, performance indicators, and course benchmark standards in ELA, mathematics, health education and physical education
- Evidence of criteria to determine proficiency of the two Guiding Principles (responsible and involved citizen and self-directed learner) and the methodology for determining overall proficiency

- Clarification regarding the determination of proficiency and the determination of earning a credit in mathematics.
- Provide one sample of an ELA, one sample a mathematics, one sample of a health education, and one sample of a physical education assessment and rubric used to determine proficiency
- Clarification regarding whether MSAD 29's Graduation Requirements are adopted policy
- Benchmarks for progress in 2014-2015 and the metrics for determining success in meeting these implementation benchmarks. Include the activities and actions that will occur to support the phase-in of the graduation requirements for the Class of 2019
- Transition plan for shifting from Power School to Empower as the reporting platform

We suggest that MSAD 29 resubmit the Extension 4 application and provide evidence to address the bullets above or consider resubmission of an application for Extension Option 3. Such an extension need not represent a change in your plan or timetable but would recognize that the identified bullets have not been yet completed in order to meet all the proficiency requirements and could provide additional time to accomplish your goals and meet the proficiency requirements. Please provide the requested evidence and/or submit an application for an extension option by February 6, 2015.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Desjardin", written over a faint, larger version of the same signature.

Thomas A. Desjardin
Acting Commissioner of Education