

NEWS RELEASE

Maine Department of Education, Susan A. Gendron, Commissioner

REPORTERS AND EDITORS: The principals listed below are willing to speak with reporters, give you an opportunity to observe a class using laptops, and connect you with teachers and/or students willing to be interviewed. All three schools are doing great work with laptops and have the improved writing scores to support that.

Falmouth Middle School, Principal Jeff Rodman, 781-3740
Nobleboro Central School, Principal Mark Deblois, 563-3437
Lamoine Consolidated School, Principal Val Perkins, 667-8578

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Gendron, Baldacci Hail Results of Laptop Study Use of laptops in curriculum results in greater writing achievement

AUGUSTA – Education Commissioner Susan Gendron and Governor John Baldacci hailed the results of a study released on Tuesday that offers, for the first time, quantifiable data showing that the use of laptops in classrooms improves learning.

The Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) at the University of Southern Maine released today the results of a study, “Maine’s Middle School Laptop Program: Creating Better Writers.” The study shows that the Maine Learning Technology Initiative has had a clear and significant positive impact on student writing achievement. In fact, twice as many students met “proficiency” standards in writing in the highest-laptop-use group as compared to the lowest-use group.

Maine has been a leader in the deployment of laptops and learning through technology – all eyes around the nation have been on Maine, and an important question to be answered was whether or not laptops are having the desired impact on learning. MEPRI conducted the study at the request of the Legislature. The study is the first in a series aimed at evaluating Maine’s first-in-the-nation laptop program.

Gendron said the report shows promise for the future of technology in supporting the learning of 21st century skills.

“The days are gone when our kids could learn math and reading and go out into the world and be successful,” Gendron said. “Whether going on to a four-year college, or to a job in an automotive shop, our students need problem-solving skills, the ability to research, experience working in

teams, and other critical 21st century skills. This study shows one way in which students are improving learning through the use of technology.”

Gov. John Baldacci, who has supported the laptop program, as well as the effort to expand the program into high school grades, said the report validates the anecdotal evidence we have been hearing from teachers, principals, students and others.

“Since the implementation of the laptops initiative, we have all wanted to know what kind of impact they would have on student learning and achievement,” Baldacci said. “Until now, we have had only anecdotal evidence of success. For the first time we have proof that laptops make a difference in learning, and we also have quantifiable support for students’ and teachers’ belief that laptops make a difference in teaching and learning.”

The report by Dr. David Silvernail will undoubtedly be viewed closely both here in Maine and nationally as other states continue to watch Maine closely because of its nation-leading efforts in the implementation of 1-to-1 laptop use and Maine’s incorporation of laptops into the middle school curriculum.

MEPRI plans to conduct additional research on the impact of laptops in the future.

Here are some of the key findings of the report:

- Use of laptops and a technology instructional program contributed to significant improvement in writing scores for eighth graders from 2000 to 2005 (laptops introduced in 2002).
- An average student in 2005 scored better than approximately two thirds of all students in 2000.
- In 2000, only 29.1 percent of eighth-grade students scored at the proficiency level. In 2005, the percentage increased to 41.4 percent of eighth-grade students meeting the MEA writing proficiency.
- Students who used the laptops in all phases of the writing process scored the highest on the MEA writing test. In fact, twice as many students in the highest-use group as in the lowest-use group met proficiency (43.7% compared to 21%).
- Writing scores improved for all students – regardless of the MEA test medium, i.e., online versus longhand. Laptops in classrooms helped students become better writers in general, not just better writers while using laptops.
- Over 80 percent of the teachers report that the quality of their students’ work has improved since the implementation of the laptop program.

The MEPRI report can be accessed online at: www.usm.maine.edu/cepare.