

Literacy for ME Launch

Lewiston Public Library, Tuesday, September 11, 2012

Commissioner Bowen: You guys all set? [Inaudible] well good afternoon. My name is Steve Bowen, I'm the commissioner for the Maine Department of Education and I thank all of you for coming today for this critically important event. Sometimes the students that we are all here to serve, ask me what our job is at the department and I've yet to find a good, succinct answer to that question; one that captures that I see the department's role as being. We're here to support schools and educators-- that is clear and we are helping them to help our students achieve and aspire and be prepared for success after high school and college and careers and as engaged citizens. But at the end of the day, we're also an economic development agency. We are here to create jobs and that may not be the answer that many people would have expected, but we have a state department of education so that we can help educators and families prepare our young people for the world that awaits them, not just to help them get jobs right out of high school though that is obviously important. And not just to help them prepare for further education after high school which we hope will eventually lead to better jobs, but to help them create jobs, create the jobs of the future by encouraging creativity, imagination, critical thinking, collaboration, and all those other skills and habits of mind that we know will be critical to the future economy. We live in a new age. All around us here in Lewiston are the sights of the old textile mills where kids fresh out of high school-- maybe even many without even a diploma-- would go to work and earn a decent living for the rest of their lives. But those jobs, we know, are gone. They are gone and they are not coming back. Many of the jobs of today and most of the jobs of tomorrow demand new skills-- new kinds of skills and knowledge. The children we serve each day won't simply be asked to do routine work with limited skills and knowledge. They must be able to analyze, interpret, problem solve, collaborate with each other, understand and work with technology in new ways, take information-- floods of information coming at us all the time, 24/7, and make it into knowledge. In a world where 300 billion emails are sent every day, our students need more than anything to be literate. Literacy, let's all remember, isn't just about reading. It is, broadly speaking, how we make meaning out of the world. It is critical not just to our economic prosperity and our ability to keep and create jobs, it is critical to our health and well-being. It is critical to our civic life, and it is critical to our larger culture in our communities. That is why work has been underway for more than a year to develop a comprehensive state-wide literacy initiative that is not just about schools, but is about involving entire communities in a concerted effort to expand and improve literacy education in Maine. This is not another one off initiative. It is part of a strategic plan aimed at improving student achievement through an ABC approach-- one that was outlined earlier this summer by me and the governor. The letters stand for accountability, best practices, and choice. At least two of these-- B and C-- are relevant today. We have a limited capacity in state government to actively support schools with technical assistance, but we can help in identifying and sharing best practices. What we are talking about here today is getting communities to collaborate and develop and share best practices and the department will be sharing resources with communities online also. In terms of choice we're talking about choice in its broader meaning-- changing the way that we do school so that kids have more options for learning in ways that make sense to them. We must develop literacy skills in multiple ways through multiple groups across our communities, not simply inside our schools. So if there's one thing I hope that people take away from today's event, it is this: you, whoever you are, whatever your job and your role in your community, you are an essential part of building literacy, skills, in your community. You should contact your school, or after school program or community program, rotary, YMCA, Delta Education Program. Ask who in your community is going to send one of, one of the, send to one of the six regional workshops coming up in the next two weeks at which the department will be providing assistance and

support to communities that want to embark on these local efforts. Before I close I want to take a second to thank Lee Anne Larsen who is the literacy specialist at DOE and dozens of other people from around the state who've worked tirelessly on the state literacy team and participated in critical friends group meeting that we had a few weeks ago, the enormity of the work that went into this plan will never fully be known to people who benefit from it, but I know and the governor knows, and we thank all of you-- and many of you are here today-- thank you for that effort. So I'm going to go ahead and introduce our lineup of speakers today and we're going to start with one of the people absolutely instrumental to the work of the team, the state literacy team that developed this plan, and that's Sue Reed who's a faculty member at the University of Southern Maine Lewiston Auburn and a pre K consultant for Portland Public Schools and as I say, a critical component, a critical member of the team that helped developed the plan, is going to walk you through the plan and talk to you about exactly what the plan is intending to do. So, Sue?

Sue Reed: I've had the privilege of serving on the state literacy team for almost two years and I'm very excited to see the plan launched into the local communities of Maine. I'm here to give you just a brief overview of Literacy for ME. First of all, it is important to think about literacy from the broadest definition possible and commissioner Bowen just alluded to that, it's not just reading and writing, and it's not just for schools. As Maine's plan states, quote, "Strong literacy skills enable humans to be clear and effective communicators, self-directed and lifelong learners, creative and practical problem solvers, responsible and involved citizens, and inter-[inaudible] and informed thinkers", end quote. Literacy is part of all of our lives, from birth through adulthood, both at home and at work. As you heard from Commissioner Bowen, literacy impacts our community, towns, cities, and state as a whole. Literacy is a cultural imperative, not a cultural elective. Maine is lucky to have an array of wonderful literacy programs already in place. Some that are at the state level, and many at the community level. These programs often target specific populations across the birth to adult continuum. The purpose of Literacy for ME is to increase coordination of Maine's literacy resources, build on existing strengths, and address current gaps. What makes Literacy for ME different from previous state level initiatives is its emphasis on supporting local communities to engage in their own comprehensive literacy planning. Local communities are encouraged to form literacy [inaudible] that will identify literacy resources, determine current literacy strength, and acknowledge underlying challenges. Comprehensive local literacy plans will help community to advance what is working well and address areas of need. So here are just a few concrete examples of what that might look like in a community literacy plan. Public schools engaging learning opportunity with local businesses and employers that demonstrate literacy skills necessary for jobs, or, university, community college, and cooperative extension programs partnering with public schools and early childhood providers to strengthen ongoing literacy for educators and to develop family outreach. Expanding family literacy programs into upper elementary, middle, and high schools. And another example might be developing middle school and high school learning in which students work as literacy tutors for preschool and elementary students. In addition, Literacy for ME will serve as a road map to guide state level support of literacy. Specific recommendations have been proposed to support increased literacy achievement, and here are just a few. A literacy resource clearinghouse on the main Department of Education website, and that will contain things like an online tool kit, needs assessment, brochures, etcetera, for communities to use. Sample curricula for pre k to 12 aligned to state literacy standards. Coordination of literacy related outreach activities across state agencies. The Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services, Corrections, and Labor. And systematic literacy professional development for pre k to 12 educators. Our, as the commissioner mentioned, we will be having six meetings across the state within the last two weeks of December-- September, excuse me-- and those meetings will be in: Presque Isle, Machias, Bangor, Augusta, Lewiston, and Portland.

We encourage communities to form literacy teams or just come as an individual to one of these free workshops so you can become part of this initiative. The details for registration are on the DOE website. Thank you.

Commissioner Bowen: Thank you, Sue. I want to go next to Jessica Crabtree who's a staff person at Ready. . . Read!, a new initiative to encourage parents to read to kids 20 minutes a day from ages birth to five, and an example of one of these community based literacy initiatives that we want to build on and expand.

Jessica Crabtree: Hi, I'm Jessica Crabtree. I work with Lewiston Adult Education and I've had the pleasure to help out with the Ready Read Project for the past five years. Ready Read is dedicated to spreading awareness of the benefits of early literacy with the motto 20 minutes a day, ready for K, Ready Read's goal is to remind parents that reading to a child daily will help prepare him or her for success when they enter kindergarten. Adult education programs are in an ideal position to support family literacy. At Lewiston Adult Ed we work directly with many parents who are building their own reading skills. These parents are then better equipped to go home and help their children work on those critical [inaudible] literacy skills. To encourage adult learners to work on pre literacy with their own children, we've developed a Ready Read website, a Facebook page and a variety of brochures and bookmarks all featuring reading tips, strategies, and fun pre literacy games for parents and kids. These materials have helped many of our students better support pre literacy in their children. To be honest, even though I always believed in Ready Read's mission, I had always wondered why such a pervasive awareness campaign was necessary. Isn't it obvious that reading to a child is beneficial? And reading with a child seems like such a sweet bonding activity, why wouldn't parents want to do it all the time? And then I had a baby. And I realized how fast the day gets away from you just trying to keep up with the endless cycle of feeding, changing and rocking, pleading, praying for the baby to go to sleep. I now understand just how easy it is to forget to make time to read. Honestly, if I hadn't had the message of Ready Read drilled into my head, I probably would've put the reading off until my boy was a little older. I would not have realized how important those pre literacy skills are, and how many fun ways there are to start working on those skills from birth. Even though my four month old doesn't understand what reading is all about, he pays attention to the rhyme and rhythm of stories that have a singsong cadence, he likes to handle and play with the book after we finish it, and he enjoys the snuggle time that comes with reading together. Most importantly, he is learning to associate reading with a positive, happy feeling. All these things are helping to develop is interest in reading. I know that I'm glad that I was so heavily exposed to the Ready Read message. When I was nine months pregnant, I made sure to pack a few books in my hospital bag just so I could start reading to my son the day he was born. And I'm happy to report that we've been reading together ever since.

Commissioner Bowen: Thanks, Jessica. I'll tell you that passion for books becomes a huge thing too. We, my daughters are now 10 and 13-- I've got to brace myself for that-- and we were doing some cleaning out over the summer and found a little box full of the board books, and when the board books went in the pile to go out of the house someplace else, we got a lot of pushback. Like wait a second, what are you doing with that? Well, I know you've read this 5,000 times but it needs, so that passion for reading locks in really early. So next I want to move on to Linda St. Andre who's the principal over at Longley Elementary School and was doing a summer reading program, summer school program focused on literacy engaging older students to tutor younger students, and with her is Yusif Ahmed, sixth grader over at Longley and they're going to talk [inaudible].

Linda St. Andre: A critical piece of moving literacy forward in future generations is engaging our students. And at Longley we did that through the Learning Together tutoring program this summer. Yusif is going to tell you what he learned as one of our most devoted tutors. He is a sixth grader who was born in Yemen. He speaks Somali and Arabic and is now learning English. He came to the United States when he was 10, moved to Georgia for a year. Last year for fifth grade he came to Maine and he is now in the sixth grade. And I was so pleased today when yesterday after I taught him a little bit about what people select to wear in front of an audience when they're speaking, he decided that his Learning Together, Reading Together uniform was the best thing for him to wear today. So Yusef, tell us a little bit about what you learned as a tutor.

Yusif Ahmed: It's not easy to be a teacher because when the students are not listening and [inaudible] just like paying attention and [inaudible] like talking to his neighbors. Like let's say he's sitting right next to his teacher is yelling and one thing I did was in summer school when the student's not listening I snapped my finger to, so he can listen. And one thing, if you don't respect the student, he won't respect that. And anything you do encourage him, everything [inaudible] he does. And I don't give a hard time to my teacher. I used to give a hard time to my teacher in fifth grade but I don't right now because [inaudible] [laughter] in fifth grade I used to get write ups too much, like I got over 30 write ups. Now I only get like-- I got no write ups. I mean I'm [inaudible] teacher and a better reader. I used to be, it used to be hard for me to read little books, now my [inaudible] tells me to read big books, but I still read it. But I still read it. And I became a better writer because any day in summer school when we finish, when we finish reading, when we finish like the tutoring, we write a whole page of what we did today. And so when I was in fifth grade, writing [inaudible] was too hard for me but now I [inaudible] writing. And tutoring's all about teaching the little kids so you can get teaching him and he's teaching you [inaudible].

Commissioner Bowen: I don't know if we have any representatives from the university system's teacher preparation programs but I want to see Yusif in a classroom here in a few years, so let's get on that. [laughter] Going to introduce next Joan Macri who's the associate director of the College for Maine, College for ME Androscoggin Program. Joan's been working with us on the early college initiative that we've been doing for a year, year and a half and has been tremendous in that effort and is going to talk a little bit about the adult literacy program aspirations [inaudible].

Joan Macri: I'm so delighted that you're in Lewiston today. It's the perfect location for this launch. You've heard about reading to babies. You've heard about sixth graders having the opportunity to tutor others. You've watched people come up here and speak with passion, and we are expanding, figuratively and literally, in a space that bridges the 20th to the 21st century-- the library that was built by Andrew Carnegie in the early 1900's, here we are in 2012 and it is keeping up with the times. I have the great good fortune to work for College for me Androscoggin and our goal is to double the number of degree holders in this county by 2015 and we're serious about that. One of the groups that we focus on is adults, and literacy is key to our efforts for their aspirations. If you're an adult, what dominates your world is your job, and if you're lucky, it's your career. But a lot of people don't have careers, they have jobs. And we've found that when adults are exposed to things that they can aspire to-- careers, they will then move towards getting more education. So one of the things we've done over the last five years is have what we call an aspirations fair for adults. It takes place right here at the library. All the local adult education groups in the county are invited and we have representatives from not only every college that will send one-- we usually have about 20 different representatives-- but we also have groups that come from the career center. We have adult ed people. We have anyone

and everyone who can help these adults understand what they can aspire to. Then they start thinking, well maybe I could do this but I need to get some college. And a quick time out-- when I say college, a little vocabulary here, I mean any post-secondary program. It could be an apprenticeship. It could be a certificate. It could be an associate, bachelors, honestly I don't care, just more post-secondary education because once they are launched on that journey, many of them don't stop. They get the certificate, they get the associates, they get the bachelors. Quick aside, go to our website and check out our virtual degree monument. We have almost 600 people who have registered their names and the college they attended, but the requirement is you have to live or work in Androscoggin County. We're serious here about aspirations. Literacy is the key. And so if I meet a student, an adult, and they don't have their GED, they may not even be ready to test for their GED, I start where they are. I talk to people at adult ed. We do adult basic English. We then go onto the college transition program. We get them enrolled in one of our great college partner schools here in the county and they're launched and they stay that way. The key is literacy. And remember, it's not just knowing how to read, it's reading to hold onto that knowledge. It's learning to think critically and that's when they become successful in the college classroom. Thank you.

Commissioner Bowen: Joan is serious. I know Joan and she is serious. She's not kidding, I'm telling you. It's now my pleasure to introduce Peter Geiger who's, I don't think I need to introduce to anybody in this room. Certainly has been a force in education policy in Maine for a number of years, served on the state board a few years ago, has now been named to the state board again. So I'm looking forward to working with Peter very closely on education moving forward and is obviously very involved in education here with his work at Montello and one of the highlights of my 16, 18 months on the job was getting to play a role at the "Night of the Stars" over with the Montello kids. Absolutely terrific. So we're going to have Peter talk a little bit about the business connection.

Peter Geiger: Thank you very much. If there's one issue that I feel comfortable speaking on behalf of all businesses, it happens to be literacy. Our definition of literacy is obviously reading, writing, ability to understand documents, interpret manuals, communicate with others, and master the latest technologies. It's all part of literacy. As you can see, literacy is the complete package of life skills. Geiger employees over 400 associates in both an office and a manufacturing setting. Without literate people we could not be competitive in today's environment, nor could we continue to grow beyond our 135 years. There isn't a business in Lewiston-Auburn who could survive without basic literate skills. The fact is, the jobs that do not require literacy are gone. These are the jobs you hear are transferred to China, India, Vietnam, and every other part of the world. Literacy is at every level. It is true for the students we partner at with Montello Elementary School and now for every new hire at Geiger. Several years ago we would administer a math and a literacy test to new hires and only one third of the applicants could actually pass both areas of literacy and math. Today we've raised the standards of who qualifies for a job. There is no positions that can support someone who lacks necessary skills and we have to be responsible that all of our associates maintain and improve their, these skills as the jobs demand. That is why I support Literacy for Maine.

Commissioner Bowen: It's now my pleasure to introduce Bill Webster as the superintendent of the Lewiston Public Schools. Bill's been doing no end of initiatives and great innovative things that have been going on. I've been over here a number of times meeting with Bill and talking to his folks about the work that's been going on in Lewiston and he's going to talk a little bit from the superintendent and school administration.

Bill Webster: Thank you commissioner, and thank you to the Department of Education for this great initiative. Literacy is one of the key components of being a strong nation and I like to think of it as a stool with three legs. One leg relates to the ability to read and learn to be qualified for employment, professional and technical opportunities. The second leg is, it's a cornerstone of our democracy. It requires illiterate people to research, to understand issues and to participate in the democratic process. The third leg relates to the pursuit of happiness. Through literature, and more than one author has said, it allows us to explore and travel to places that we otherwise would not go. I'm delighted that we in Lewiston are participating in this initiative sharing the good things that we're doing with others and we also look forward to learning from the other participants across this state in this wonderful effort. Thank you very much.

Commissioner Bowen: And last up we've got Eva Giles from Lewiston Adult Ed. She's the adult education director for Lewiston and is going to talk a little bit about the adult ed and early childhood components.

Eva Giles: Thank you. I'm very honored to be part of today's Literacy for ME kickoff. As you can imagine, literacy is a hot topic for all educators, especially the hundred plus adult education programs throughout the state. Whether it's basic, functional literacy, family literacy like the Ready Read program, vocation literacy projects like the Aspirations fair, financial literacy, computer literacy, or college transitions, the work of the adult educators focuses on improving people's lives ensuring they have the ability to access and comprehend information, communicate effectively, and make informed decisions. Literacy instruction is the core component of our lifelong learning programming. Even with advancements in instruction, there are still adults who are unable to access information, unable to compete for jobs, or pursue advanced training programs. The need for high quality literacy instruction remains great. We know that adequate literacy skills impacts more than just the success of individuals, but also the growth and prosperity of an entire community. A community is only as successful as its residents, so one of our most important goals is to help strengthen each community by assisting individuals to build the skills they need. As an educational issue, literacy is of primary importance for schools and educational personnel, but literacy is an all-encompassing topic that affects people of all ages. Because the need is so great and the task so immense, literacy has a direct impact on most community based organizations as well as schools. To ensure that all residents in a community have the literacy skills they need, it will take schools and community based organizations working together. We need to unify our efforts by developing a plan to share resources, divvy up tasks, and address the needs starting at birth and continuing throughout adulthood. The project examples here in Lewiston show some of the ways in which education and community partners have had success when they come together and combine forces. Just think of what could happen in your community once partners commit to working together. That's why I support Literacy for ME comprehensive state plan and the local planning sessions that will begin over the next few weeks. As Commissioner Bowen returns to the podium to provide details about next steps, I challenge you to think about how you and your organization can support the Literacy for ME efforts in your community. Thank you.

Commissioner Bowen: Thanks Eva. So I'll just finish up here by hitting on what I think is sort of the three big takeaways here. One is the definition of literacy is not what it used to be and you heard all of these folks up here talk about how this is not simply about learning to read, this is about being able to process all the information that comes to us through our lives, through all the different ways that it comes to us, making meaning out of that and doing something about it. Solving problems with it, being able to communicate effectively, being able to present to groups, being able to make your case in a democratic society for how things need to change. It's a very broad definition that is not just about reading scores. It has to be about something more than

that, and it is. This is also, number two, about a community effort, a community wide effort. Our schools are maxed out. They're doing the best they can but there's only so much they can do when they have those kids for a few hours a day for a number of days out of the school year. An effort like this is going to require everybody to get involved and that means your, all the folks that we heard about here today, the higher education community, adult education, career and technical education, our community organizations, our YMCA's, our scout troops, our 4H's, our libraries like this one, all of our community organizations, the charitable foundations. We need to make a major push on this issue and we need to involve everyone. We can't expect the schools to do this on their own. That's why, three, we are asking everyone to step up, everyone to be involved, everyone to take a role, everyone to think about how can I help out with this effort? And that's why we've launched the community forums. All of the materials are available on the department's website. You can go on there and read the plan. The pieces that we're going to be working on at the state level, the pieces at the community level, the community forums. We'll talk about giving tools to communities to help build these community wide efforts and we really, really want to see a big push here, and we, this isn't another new thing. That's the other thing I want to reinforce. It's not about putting more on our plates and more on the plates of our schools, it's about how do we align all the terrific work that's going on in communities across this state in some way that is going to have a profound impact on literacy for both our kids and our early, and our adult learners. So I'm going to stop there and as I said, all the information's available and we've got all staff, we've got the teams here. Happy to take any questions for myself, for anybody [inaudible].

[Inaudible audience question]

Well, I mean it's hard to put a number on that because it's hard to put a number on the kind of literacy that we're talking about. I mean certainly we've got test scores in reading we know are flat. The standardized tests that we do in the schools. We know those scores over the last few years have been flat and even in decline in some instances. So we know just in sort of tests of sort of basic levels of reading literacy, those scores are not going in the direction we need to go [inaudible]. But I think you heard today, especially from business community and others, that employers are not simply looking for people who can read. It's about making, understanding and making meaning, communicating effectively, working with others. Kids like Yusef are going to be working with folks around the world to solve problems. Not just kids here but he's going to be working over the course of his life-- he'll probably have a number of careers that he'll be a lifelong learner, he'll have to learn new skills constantly. He'll have to work with people from other countries and other cultures. We've got to build a much more, a much broader concept of what literacy is. So the report talks about some of those indicators and those are in there, but it's really that high level concept of literacy that I think is different than what we've talked about.

[Inaudible audience question]

Well again this is part of the reason why we involve community members to get those kinds of definitions. We've even been talking about college and career readiness. So for instance one of the other pieces of work we're doing is looking at our learning standards, looking at the curriculum, looking at all of those kind of pieces to understand what is it that our college [inaudible] our higher education community, what is it that employers like Peter are looking for in its employees? How can we measure those [inaudible]? We are going, looking at some new type of assessment tools, smarter balance and some of these new assessment instruments that are much, looking to dive to greater depths in terms of understanding and being able to measure that, so we're on the cusp here of some new types of instruments that we'll be able to use to set some of those benchmarks.

[Inaudible audience question]

Well I think if this goes the way we want it to, all across the state we're going to have these centers, these regional units, these community based centers where everybody in the community, everybody here in Lewiston is going to know, wow, if I need help with literacy, I know where to go. I know who to see. I know that there's a concrete plan for this community, that young parents who may not know will get information so they know what kind of things they need to do with their kids, where those resources can be had, that we could follow that all the way through early childhood into the schools, that the schools can rely on the outside community, all the community providers to help support those efforts and really, you know, again and we've heard it here today, it's not as though good stuff isn't already happening. We have tons of good stuff going. It's about how do we create a system where that's very seamless from the point of view of the young parent, from the point of view of the student, that those-- the adult learner-- that those resources are easy to get to and that the pathway to get higher levels of literacy is clear. So it's both about building those community pieces all over the state, but also at the state level, our ability to help replicate those as much as we can. Talk about best practices, talk about what's working, help the community that's here, work with the community over here, about expanding these initiatives and then continuing to build on that as we go.

[Inaudible audience question]

Well again, this isn't, I don't see this as a new, extra thing. I see this as, as you heard today, all kinds of great initiatives going on all over the place. You could talk to any of the members of the team here, they could tell you about promising literacy pieces that are going on in communities all over the place. So it's not about creating something new, it's about taking what we're doing and building it into a coherent sort of vision, a coherent plan, a coherent package so that all those pieces are tied together. And you hear about this in education constantly that it's siloed. I hear about it in state government. The state government is siloed. That states and counties and municipalities are siloed. The school districts are siloed. So how do we break down those barriers because we don't know when there's going to be new resources. We're living in a very, an age where there's not a lot of certainty about that. You know I had a budget meeting with the governor and his staff here a couple of weeks ago. We're looking at the numbers. It's hard to say what kind of revenues we're going to have, added revenues that we might be able to put into this initiative. So it means we just have to be smarter about the resources that we have. How can we take advantage of what's already working? How do we duplicate it? How do we replicate it? How do we maybe reach people-- philanthropic community, these community organizations that may not know those opportunities are out there that they could take advantage of be a part of. So it's really about how do we take the assets that we have in place, the resources we have in place and make them go further? That's the key to this. Question?

Yeah.

May be a program that is not only more effective but maybe less costly than some of the things we're doing now. When school districts across the state of Maine are spending literally millions of dollars on literacy, we want to make sure that we're using the best programs, and I suspect that we and other districts in this initiative will find that there's some things we're doing that we need to change.

[Inaudible audience question]

I'm going to throw you up here to talk about, I mean as the, or Lee Anne or somebody from the team, as you guys worked on this, you know how did you get to that concept of, I mean from the team's perspective, that concept of literacy? Is that the question?

Yeah.

What it is?

Right. [Inaudible audience comments]

Lee Anne Larsen: So because the definition of literacy is much broader than what we have often thought it to be when we thought it was just being able to read, it means we have to look at a lot more [inaudible] to figure that out. So we have to look at how our kids are doing as writers and we do have some state data that we can look at for that [inaudible]. We have to look at how our students are doing being able to move on into college because if they don't have basic literacy ability-- they can't read, write, and speak in very proficient ways, it's extremely difficult for them. They don't pass the entrance exams as they're going in. They require remedial coursework and that's [inaudible] that we can track. If we're doing better with this initiative in place then we should see fewer students who are entering into higher education requiring remedial coursework. And that should go a long way to keeping them in college because we also know that students who require remedial courses in college often either do not finish college at all, or it takes them an incredibly long period of time to get through the program. That's another indicator we can pay attention to. We can look at indicators in early childhood education. We can look at the percentage of our students in the state who are enrolled in kindergar- excuse me, in preschool programs who either our school system or other community based resources that help to give them those building blocks they need before they're coming into school. We can work with community providers to see how many of our [inaudible] are taking advantage of the various resources available to them in the community. But no matter how we do that we've got to look at a whole lot of indicators in order to figure out that we're making a difference. Lee Anne Larsen, a literacy specialist in the Department of Education. L-A-R-S-E-N. Oh yeah. [laughter] The first name is actually two words, it's L-E-E and then a space, A-N-N-E. If you should need to email me though-- [laughs]

[Inaudible]

You have to leave the E off of the Anne [inaudible] my name in the state government email system. Okay.

[Inaudible audience question]

Commissioner Bowen: Yeah. That's, yeah that's bas- it's how do we connect these disconnected efforts that are [inaudible]? It's how do we take advantage of all these resources? And it goes back to the resource question. You know I think we have to assume that we're not going to have a big influx of new money to support this. So the question is, what resources do you have in Lewiston that are impacting literacy levels in Lewiston? Are they aligned in the right way that we have a concrete, comprehensive approach here where there aren't any gaps, where somebody, where we're missing some early childhood piece? Or we're missing, you know, a community connection. And how, where do we find, and maybe Lewiston can learn from what we do up in Bangor or what we do in [inaudible] because there's a program up there that works. So again the team that's done this can pinpoint promising-- and we've heard from a couple of them today-- promising practices sort of here and there, early college opportunities,

aspirations programs, early childhood programs and adult ed programs. I was in up in Waldo County at Mountain View and they've got a terrific adult ed program with an early childhood component where they're going in and doing the adult ed with the moms and dads and doing the early childhood stuff with the babies. And they've got a visitation program. I mean they've got a sort of a fully integrated piece. So how do you then make sure you can also bring in those other community components [inaudible] to really create that seamless system? And so we want the young moms and dads. We want the English language learners who have come here to Lewiston to know there's a really concrete comprehensive approach here where the community members have gotten together and laid out an approach here that provides a lot of options for people, and a clear pathway so that people know what they need for skills and know how we can get them. And what the school's role is in all of that as well.

[Inaudible audience question]

Well I think we always have to assume there's not going to be new funding. And I can't, I mean I can't-- I don't get to determine how much money we have. That's not part of my job. So I mean when we get back to the legislature and the legislature comes back in session after the election in the spring, this will be one of the initiatives we talk about. The legislature will have very much these same questions. They'll want to know how it's been going. They'll want to know what did we learn between today and when legislature starts about what kind of resources may be needed. And one of the pieces we need to do is see how these community forums go, get a sense of what the assets and resources are that we have and whether there is a need for some type of additional effort there. I mean what we've tried to do is be a connector, you know to connect, put this team together and connect all of these initiatives, talk about best practices, put stuff up on the website, put links out there, provide this toolkit to the communities so they can sort of see how this process lays out. I mean we've tried to do those pieces and as we go along and we get some data and we figure out what's working and what's not working, we check, adjust and if, I mean at some point we may go to the legislature and say, or we may go to the charitable foundations for instance, or we may go to the communities. We may go to, you know, community organizations. Go to the chambers of commerce, or go to the business community and say here's our plan, here's what we've learned. These are the resources that we think we might need that could really get this over the top. Here's what we'll buy with them. Here's how you'll know whether we're making a difference and lay that all out. But at this point it's about getting communities engaged in this discussion so that we can lay all of that out. Name of the program of Waldo County is--

[Inaudible]

I'll get it when I, I've got it.

[Inaudible]

Yeah I can get it.

[Inaudible]

Yeah it is [inaudible]. It's--

[Inaudible]

SPICE, that's what it is. Thank you. Yeah it's the SPICE program. Yeah, which means something but I don't know what it means.

[Inaudible]

Yeah it does, but it's a, it's an acronym so. Yeah it's--

[Inaudible]

Yeah, something like that so, it's a great [inaudible]. Any other questions for, we've got a whole slew of literacy specialists here [inaudible] happy to take any of your questions even though they're hiding [inaudible]. Any other questions?

[Inaudible]

Plan's on the website. Great. Thanks everybody.