Rethinking Remote Education Venture (RREV)

The Covid-19 virus disrupted our education system during the past few months, creating a sudden shift to "emergency style" remote learning and resulting in unevenly successful experiences for students. Under-represented students, students of color, students with disabilities, and disadvantaged students, report particularly poor experiences and outcomes during the this emergency provision of remote education. Our proposal for Maine's Rethinking Remote Education Venture offers a multi-pronged solution with the primary goal of generating innovative remote learning models to provide equitable access to high quality educational experiences for all students. RREV will develop a systemwide cadre of "Education Engineers" who will design remote learning prototype models to be field tested, revised, and honed by schools willing to pilot these models. In order to encourage professionals in the field to engage in the invention of exciting and different remote learning models, and to provide necessary supports for schools who are willing to pilot, evaluate, and suggest revisions and improvements to these models, Maine DOE recognizes the need for a significant shift in the culture of our education system. Our proposal provides the necessary resources and supports, through professional development, coursework, and guided engagement in effective use of design processes to empower educators and school leaders as authentic research and development professionals. As new remote learning models are designed and piloted, they will be made available through an open-source community of practice platform to support collegial sharing, ongoing critical and supportive feedback loops, and continual revision and improvement to sustain the culture of innovation and to foster statewide (and nationwide) open access to exciting new remote learning models.

The Key activities ("prongs" in RREV's multipronged approach) include: working with University of Maine and other higher education partners, to make courses in research and development, innovation engineering, and design processes widely available to educators and school leaders; providing six Education Engineering Workshops each year of the project to guide participants through the process of designing new approaches to remote learning; encouraging schools across the state to field-test/pilot the newly designed models through resources and microgrants; leveraging MDOE's "Distinguished Educator" program to bring practitioners from the field onboard as regional coaches to support schools who are willing to pilot the new models and to use action research to collect data and suggest improvements to the models; fostering professional connections among educators and school leaders by providing open access to RREV-produced models through an open-source, online community of practice - EnGiNE (Engaging Innovation in Education); and working with an independent evaluator to create and implement a comprehensive system for assessing our progress. These activities will lead to our key objectives: infusing our education system with a generalized research and development climate; building educators' and school leaders' knowledge, skills, and capacities for engaging in effective innovative design processes; developing and making widely available new, innovative remote learning approaches and models; and – most importantly – increasing the quality and equitable provision of educational services, during – and after – the Covid-19 pandemic. While Maine DOE will lead the implementation of this project, we will partner closely with University of Maine; Maine Community College System; and business and research and development organizations who will offer professional development and training to educators and school leaders. Grant funds will be used to: build internal capacity at Maine DOE (project director and staff / Distinguished Educators deployed in the field); support professional development and training activities; development of a community of practice platform for open sharing of RREV-produced models and professional engagement in continuous improvement of these models; and microgrants to provide necessary resources to the pilot schools as they implement, adapt, and revise the new models.