

Connecting Teachers

While Maine is geographically New England's largest state, its population, especially in rural areas, is small. AP teachers at rural high schools are often the only teacher in a subject area, and sometimes the only AP teacher at the school. The student numbers at these schools present significant challenges to expanding AP course offerings and developing faculty to teach them. The Maine Mentoring Program was developed out of a desire for all of Maine's high school students to have access to AP courses, not just those who attend the state's largest high schools. It aims to give the needed professional development and ongoing help to new AP teachers and to schools trying to expand their AP program.

Teachers participating in the Mentoring Program attend weekend workshop retreats focused on their subjects. Teachers travel to the retreat site after school on a Friday and spend the evening at dinner, talking with other teachers in their field. Saturday is devoted to a particular topic, such as Experimental Design in AP Statistics or the Fundamental Theorem in AP Calculus. There is a fall workshop, a midyear retreat to keep teachers on track, and a year-end retreat to evaluate the year. However, workshops can be tailored to address specific issues and topics based on needs that teachers have shared. Maine's Mentoring Program also hosts one-day exam preparation workshops a month before AP Exams; these are designed to help AP teachers make the exams less intimidating for their students.

Who are the Maine mentors? Some are College Board consultants; others are simply experienced teachers who organize a workshop to share their expertise. As the Mentoring Program grew, additional mentors were selected primarily by word of mouth as colleagues shared names of teachers they knew to be good presenters and experts in their field.

Teachers, too, have benefited. Through the Mentoring Program, more than 500 Maine teachers have received professional development training in the various AP disciplines.

What you need:

- Funds to provide stipend for mentors. Maine mentors receive \$2,000 per year.
- A workshop facility and lodging for a two-day event.
- Mentors who are experienced AP teachers (half of Maine's mentors are College Board consultants).
- Incentives for attending — teachers love free food and takeaways that say thank-you.

What you need to know:

The Maine Mentoring Program was initially funded by a grant. When the grant money was exhausted, state leaders believed the program was important to continue, but needed help paying for it. The workshops themselves were scaled down to just one full Saturday and no longer include lodging. Participating teachers now pay \$25 to attend a workshop. This fee helps cover the costs of facilities and food.

A Bridge to Success

Participating in the subject- and strategy-based workshops helps teachers gain confidence in their subjects and build an AP program in their schools. Teachers also receive continuing education units through IACET. The Mentoring Program exposes teachers and principals who may have been geographically isolated from developmental opportunities to the message of equity and access and makes them aware that AP classes are for all students. From 2001 to 2010, the percentage of seniors in Maine who had a successful experience in an AP class went from 11 to 19. Additionally, Maine had one of the greatest five-year increases in students scoring a 3 or higher on at least one AP Exam during their high school careers, at 4.8 percent.

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"Teachers go back to their school after a mentoring workshop and feel more confident. Not only are they more comfortable teaching their own course, they return to their school saying, 'We need to offer more courses, we need to open up the doors to kids.'"

— Brendan Murphy, AP Calculus Teacher, John Baptist Memorial High School

Demographics

Maine Department of Education

