

The University of Maine

DigitalCommons@UMaine

General University of Maine Publications

University of Maine Publications

8-27-1998

Webber Energy Fuels Sponsors Statewide Research Project to Provide Definitive Answers on Maine Student Aspirations

Kay Hyatt

College of Education & Human Development, University of Maine

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/univ_publications



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [History Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Hyatt, Kay, "Webber Energy Fuels Sponsors Statewide Research Project to Provide Definitive Answers on Maine Student Aspirations" (1998). *General University of Maine Publications*. 1848.

https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/univ_publications/1848

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in General University of Maine Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Selected News Releases

Webber Energy Fuels Sponsors Statewide Research Project to Provide Definitive Answers on Maine Student Aspirations

AUGUSTA, Maine -- Gov. Angus S. King, Jr. announced today that Webber Energy Fuels, a Maine-based company, is funding a \$300,000 unprecedented research project that will answer some of the most elusive educational questions about student motivation and aspirations.

The Maine Aspirations Benchmarking Initiative, a 10-year project directed by the University of Maine/Maine Principals' Association Research Partnership, will generate a sweeping data base of information from more than 105,000 Maine students and establish a national model of how schools can use their students' perspectives in responsive reform efforts.

Information derived from the unparalleled surveying of every sixth through 12th grader in Maine public schools, plus a sampling of children in kindergarten through grade five, will provide the first comprehensive report on the status of student aspirations in Maine. Extensive analyses will also produce school-specific information about what influences and inspires students to reach their full potential and what supports and conditions they see as present or lacking in their educational experience.

The recognition of the validity and support of school-based action research with the goal of practical application earns high marks from the Research Partnership.

"I am thrilled that the UMaine/MPA Research Partnership, with support from Webber Energy fuels, will be able to fulfill its promise of providing schools with meaningful Maine-based data about students that can be used in decision-making," says Suanne Giorgetti, president of the Maine Principals' Association and principal of Benton Elementary School. "Student aspirations and student achievement are the crux of each and every school's business."

"Webber Energy Fuels has a long history of investing in education and the young people of our state," says Webber Chief Executive Officer and President Larry Mahaney, noting that the company has contributed over a million dollars for scholarships and educational programs in Maine.

"Although the 'bottom line' is the main objective of most companies, I sincerely believe we also have a social responsibility and commitment to invest in other projects," Mahaney says. "Investing in education, teachers and the future of our young people offers a great return. That is why I am so excited about this project. It's a win, win situation for everyone."

Schools have good data on student achievement from the Maine Educational Assessment and other nationally normed tests and have used the results to spur significant changes in academic curricula

and teaching strategies, according to Robert Cobb, dean of the UMaine College of Education and Human Development, who initiated and spearheaded the project proposal on behalf of the Research Partnership, a collaborative between the College and the Maine Principals' Association.

The benchmarking project will provide comparable information on student motivation and aspirations, ending speculation and adult assumptions about critical issues such as why Maine high school graduates do or do not pursue higher education, when children begin to develop a concept of the future, to set goals and understand how to reach them, and what schools and communities can do to help students raise their aspirations.

"Obtaining data from every youngster in Maine gives us incredibly valuable insight into what they're thinking at various stages of development. It also has the potential of prompting them to take stock of their personal choices regarding where they will put their efforts and to what ends," says Cobb.

The vast research and program development project will be conducted in cooperation with the National Center for Student Aspirations and the Center for Research and Evaluation, both within the UMaine College of Education and Human Development, and the state Department of Education.

Beginning in September, the benchmarking initiative will proceed in three stages -- data collection and analysis, providing assessment reports and technical assistance to schools to remedy areas of weakness, distributing information about exemplary aspirations programs and practices in Maine schools to a national education audience, and repeating

the survey during the last year of the decade-long project to identify changes that are positively affecting the aspirations of Maine youth.

The power of data generated by a school from its own students is extraordinary, according to Cobb, because it generates ownership, expectations and incentive to bring about positive change as a consequence.

Released: August 27, 1998

Contact: Kay Hyatt, (207) 581-2761

[Return to Selected News Releases](#)



This is an official publication of the University of Maine. If you have questions or comments, please contact the [Web Master](#). - Updated: 02/22/99