

Seniors:

- 1 ! Review the Fall Checklist to make sure its complete.  
[www.gearupme.org/news.htm](http://www.gearupme.org/news.htm)
- 1 ! Keep your grades up! Colleges will look at your senior grades!
- 1 ! Application deadlines are here! Finalize essays and recommendations.
- 1 ! Get your FAFSA pin (your parents will need one too).  
[www.fafsa.ed.gov/index.htm](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/index.htm)
- 1 ! Fill out our FAFSA as soon as you can after January 1.
- 1 ! Check to see if the colleges you are applying to require their own financial aid forms in addition to the FAFSA.
- 1 ! When mid-year grades come out, make sure they are sent to colleges.
- 1 ! Continue to search for scholarships!
- 1 ! Continue to visit and/or learn about institutions—it will help you make your decision in the spring.

**NEW** Juniors:

- 1 ! Make sure to visit with your guidance counselor and/or GEAR UP Liaison to ensure you are on track with your class schedule for spring.
- 1 ! If you haven't begun, start your college search by going on campus visits and looking up colleges online
- 1 ! The SAT subject tests are offered in the spring, but you must register now to take them. Check with your guidance counselor/GU Liaison.  
  
[www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/about/SATII.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/about/SATII.html)
- 1 ! Take early college or AP courses if your school offers them.
- 1 ! Think about activities or goals you want to complete before high school finishes (volunteering, activities, etc.)

We will have complete checklists for all years on our website soon!



College-Going Strategies

Excerpts from the Principals' Call-In Session at the 2007 New England GEAR UP Conference.

- 1 **1-to-1 Laptops and ConnectEdu.** "We have MacBooks for all our students and teachers...we integrate them into instruction [and] into our...advisory program, which helps enforce the college-ready culture...juniors and seniors start their college lists and searches through ConnectEdu on their laptops... [to] introduce it to parents is we had an open house...their students brought their laptops. And we got everybody online that night and walked them through the basics of how we hoped their students would use it." -*Jeanne Tucker, Principal, Mt. Abram High School*
- 2 **College Savings Information Nights.** "...for the first time, is college savings information nights at the elementary schools to try to inspire parents, help people understand more about saving for college." -*Karen Tilbor, Dean for Postsecondary Planning, Mt. Ararat High School*
- 3 **Capital Area Technical Center.** "We take all of our 8th graders to the Capital Area Technical Center...to expose them to various jobs and careers...and as a transitional activity...so students have an awareness of that option as they move into high school." -*Gwen Robertson Mohlar, Guidance Counselor, Maranacook Community School*
- 4 **College Visits for Everyone, Every Year.** "One thing we do that's been very successful in getting kids excited about postsecondary is that we put every one of our kids on a college campus at least twice a year. So, by the time a freshman gets through the cycle of four years of high school, they've actually been on a college campus eight to ten times." -*Tim Reynolds, Principal, Machias High School*
- 5 **Learning Higher Education Language.** "We try to introduce the language associated with higher education through a vocab matching activity....students learn about what is tuition, a major, a transcript, those kinds of things, and we also do a college myths and realities...to dispel some of the common myths about going to college...we try to have some discussions with students to try to open up possibilities for all of our kids to think about furthering their education or training beyond high school in some way." -*Gwen Robertson Mohlar, Guidance Counselor, Maranacook Community School*
- 6 **U. Start Ahead.** "We want every kid to have an early college experience before they graduate. Our kids are taking courses at the University of Southern Maine and Southern Maine Community College...And we're really going to emphasize it more than APs...from an educational point of view, it really works for kids because it's more choices, and they're actually getting college credit as opposed to potentially getting college credit if they get a score on a test that a college chooses to accept." -*Derek Pierce, Principal, Casco Bay High School*
- 7 **Partnering with Trades for College Info Nights.** "For the first time, we had a college info night that we did jointly with Brunswick High School...we involved three representatives from the trades, two apprenticeship programs and the Maine Oil Dealers Association...I'm ready to try to get these people to come recruiting at the high school." -*Karen Tilbor, Dean of Postsecondary Planning, Mt. Ararat High School*
- 8 **Leadership Teams Chaired by Teachers.** "We created a leadership team in our school six years ago that is chaired by a teacher...administration is on the team, but we all have an equal voice...when the conversations came around about our curriculum...about improving the early college program...it was as much a teacher voice as it was an administrative voice." -*Tim Reynolds, Principal, Machias High School*
- 9 **High School Alumni Panels.** "We do a panel when the alumni are on [holiday] vacation and we're back in school. We schedule it for some time within those two weeks. And we bring them in the library and they're here all day. We give them [alumni] a voucher that they can use for gas or for something that they need to go to college that's worth...\$30 a piece. ...we got good response bringing in kids in with that." -*Jeanne Tucker, Principal, Mt. Abram High School*
- 10 **CAKE Night.** "Caring About Kid's Education. Panels on financial aid, alumni in college currently, the application process, programs at community colleges...and lots of prizes, that's kind of an incentive to get the kids in." (And yes, there is cake at this event!) -*Lucille Wiley, Assistant Principal, Narraguagus High School*

This newsletter was produced with GEAR UP funds awarded to the Maine Department of Education by the Office of Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education (grant award #P334S050037) and compiled by;

Maine Support Network, P.O. Box 390 Readfield, ME 04355 p) 866-291-0004 f) 207-685-4455 emily@mainesupportnetwork.org, www.mainesupportnetwork.org, www.gearupme.org



Inside:

- ★ Spotlight on: Mt. Abram Regional High School
- ★ MPF Parent Workshops
- ★ 10 College-Going Strategies
- ★ College Goal Sunday
- ★ Technology Corner

New England GEAR UP Conference: A Success!

Raising Aspirations: New England GEARs UP for College  
By Pam Flood



THE NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL GEAR UP CONFERENCE hosted by the

Maine Department of Education and the Maine Support Network was a huge success. This two day event brought GEAR UP programs from throughout New England to Maine for the first time in the conference's history. This conference was hosted in Maine to ensure that GEAR UP Maine schools had a chance to participate, learn more about GEAR UP, and share how to continuously improve educational opportunities for Maine students. The conference started off with a Kick-Off session and an opportunity for participants to connect. This was well received and seemed to set the tone for collaborative learning for all. Throughout the two-day event, presentations were well received: presenters included GEAR UP programs from most New England states.



Commissioner Susan Gendron

Technology Played an Important Role in this year's conference:

To ensure that Maine youth were included in this presentation of best practices, Betty Jordan and Ken Martin worked closely with Machias High School to arrange a presentation of students and teachers via Skype (the students virtually shared information with all of the conference participants through a live feed). Read more from Ken on page 3 of the newsletter. The conference also hosted a principal call-in session. Principals throughout New England were provided a toll free number to call in and share some of their most promising or unique practices for promoting a college-going culture. The session was hosted by Dan Hart, principal of Dirigo High School. You can find 10 of these strategies on our back page and the full list in an e-book *100 College Going Strategies: New England Principals Lead the Way*. This publication will be available soon on our website.

One of the most powerful and energizing aspects of the conference was the time to learn from and with one another.



Doug Luffborough, Oct. 30 Keynote

Inspiring Keynotes:

We were honored to have the Maine Commissioner of Education, Sue Gendron, provide an inspiring and encouraging introduction to the conference and the first featured speaker, Dr. Russ Quaglia. Russ's humor, passion and straight-forward style was thoroughly enjoyed by all. On the second day, Douglas E. Luffborough III, M. Ed. shared his story of challenge and triumph. Conference participants shared, "Russ! Fantastic!" and "I believe the workshop and keynote speaker Doug Luffborough's words and guidance was extremely valuable."

Connecting with Colleagues:

One of the most powerful and energizing aspects of the conference was the time to learn from and with one another. Meeting others with some of the same challenges, those trying new ideas to address, and connecting with old friends and new were noted as participant highlights.



**Conference Reflections:**  
"Thank you all at MSN for putting together a great conference, it was fun, lively, and informative. The wonderful setting of the Samoset and the way it was decorated was a real lift!"

"I went away with lots of ideas to use with my students at Lawrence High School AND it has been a pleasure sharing new information and activities with our guidance counselors and several teachers."  
- Janet Avallone, GEAR UP Liaison, Lawrence High School

**What aspects of the conferences were most valuable?**  
"The use of technology to connect students and principals from other locations."  
"Meeting people with the same challenges."

MAINE SUPPORT NETWORK WINTER RETREAT 2008

This year MSN is partnering with Maine ASCD to present *Huddling with your Professional Learning Community to Explore the Art & Science of What Works in Schools* February 2-4 at the Samoset Resort. Find out more at [www.mainesupportnetwork.org](http://www.mainesupportnetwork.org).



## SPOTLIGHT ON: Mt. Abram Regional High School

### State-of-the-Abram Series: MTA Students Sound Off on Laptop Experience

By David Hart, *The Original Irregular Staff*  
Edited, printed with permission

SALEM -- As we look into starting a technology series and study the everyday education at Mt. Abram Regional High School, we quickly understand the significance of the students' laptop computers and how they've grown accustomed to using them.

Every student at Mt. Abram has been issued a school-owned laptop and the seniors have now been on them for six consecutive years due to the middle school statewide laptop initiative for seventh and eighth graders. Some say this could be one of the reasons why Mt. Abram, based on their percentage of economically disadvantaged students is outscoring schools of similar statistics.

The State Department of Education has come out with a recent report claiming the use of laptops in middle-school over the five-year program is paying off with improved writing skills noticed in student achievement.

Teachers and administrators are making claims that their students' education is truly enriched with the use of laptops and learning has become transformational at MTA.

We met with seniors Jason Parrett, Chelsea Lecander, Nate Kinney, Kim Borden and junior Amber Heikkinen to get their perspective. It was a five-minute interview and the pertinent question was "Can you guys all pick up email from home?" The group all could and answered emailed questions from their laptop on their laptop experience over the weekend.

"I do feel that I have learned more. Integrating this piece of technology prepares us for the real world, as so much technology is used daily. We are able to practice skills of diverse programs and typing everyday," said Nate Kinney.

Amber Heikkinen said she definitely feels like she's learned more. "It's just a more fun way in general and gives you extra motivation to keep learning. Having all of our sources with us each day on our laptops, Internet and dictionaries are all such useful tools."

Oh ya," said senior Jason Parrett. "When you have a laptop in class you can be working with a whole bunch of things at the same time. Anything I need to know for class or a project I'm working on, I can find in seconds."

Kinney added that he's learned to how take notes quickly, as well as how to organize them effectively.

Some of the students were asked how their experience at MTA would have been if they had limited access to laptops or had to use a computer lab for research and Internet access like most high schools.

"We would get a lot less done in class and out," Parrett explained. "The quality of what we do would also be less, without the number of resources at our fingertips. In general I don't think I would have learned half as much in four years as I have," using laptops.

Mt. Abram High School is fully equipped with high speed Internet access, which provides unlimited world-wide resources with one click of the mouse.

**"It makes me proud to be from Maine and proud to be from Mt. Abram where our school has worked hard to incorporate advanced technology into its framework for the good of the students."** *Chelsea Lecander, Mt. Abram senior*

Chelsea Lecander said access to wireless has been unbelievably helpful in all of the classes she's taken. "There are no cords holding you down and no allotted or exclusive times to utilize the Internet. Our wireless network makes my life so much easier," Lecander said. She explained that almost every class requires some use of the Internet.

Kinney said that unlimited high speed Internet has vastly helped him in all of his projects over the years. "Using the Internet has allowed me to broaden my research sources; finding information that may be more current. Also it is an easier and faster way of obtaining information. I especially enjoy how in the morning I can open up the Internet and check out the daily current events around the world."

Kinney said that the MTA program puts all individuals at an extreme advantage. "This provides (all students) with the opportunity to be exposed to computers that are used in today's workforce, when they might not have ever had this chance."

"It's especially great for (those without home computers) because now they have a whole new ability that they wouldn't have had if they went to school somewhere else," Parrett said.

Lecander explained, "I feel privileged that MTA has prepared me with both knowledge and ability in the realm of technology. The purchases I make in the future will be largely based on what I've been familiarized with at Mt. Abram High School."

In all the students had nothing but good things to say about their six years using laptops throughout their career and had a bunch to say for those who made it possible.

Lecander said she's very grateful that Mt. Abram has tried and succeeded in bringing advanced technology to the student body. "I feel that the technological skills I will graduate with will surpass many of my collegiate peers because of the SAD 58 laptop program," she explained.

"It's really all thanks," Parrett said, "to those people who did the grant writing and budgeting that we have these laptops. I know I'm very grateful for all they did for us."

"In general," Lecander said, "I think quite a few students, including myself, have at one point or another taken the laptop program for granted," Lecander explained in a story. She explained a conversation she had with a cousin who didn't have a laptop in high school. "I then explained to her that everyone at our high school and many at our district's middle schools, are issued Apple MacBooks; she was astounded. After that exchange I thought to myself, it is truly amazing that our school has done this for us!

"It made me proud to be from Maine and proud to be from Mt. Abram where our school has worked hard to incorporate advanced technology into its framework for the good of the students. Sometimes I forget that this is a big deal; not every teen in America has a MacBook to use for school! We are a very lucky group of students at MTA."

Among many other questions, students were asked if they thought they were more proficient on computers than most adults today.

"Hands down I feel I am more adept on computers than my parents, and even some of my peers," Kinney said. "My dad rarely uses a computer, but when he wants to, you can count on me pulling up a chair right next to him."



## Technology Corner

### "What can ConnectEdu do for me?"

Whether you're a parent, student, counselor, college staff, or employer, visit [www.connectedu.net](http://www.connectedu.net) to find out how ConnectEdu can help connect students with colleges. Are you a student? Talk to your guidance counselor or GEAR UP Liaison to find out if your high school has joined ConnectEdu (it's free!). Some cool features: research colleges and how they "fit" you, apply to colleges online, track your tasks and application deadlines, fill out the FAFSA, compare financial aid awards, talk to counselors, parents and admissions officers, and much more!!

### New Podcast Episodes!

We will debut a new episode every month!

#### For DECEMBER:

**College essay writing.** Admissions Officer and Rockland High School alumni Caitlin Snow shares her expertise.

#### For JANUARY:

**High school students** ask their burning questions about college and college administrators from across the country answer!

To listen, visit the GEAR UP Maine website and click the "Podcast" link.: <http://geadenrupme.org/>



### Student Panel and Polycom technology in Washington County

By Ken Martin, Distance Learning Director for Washington County

**AT THIS YEAR'S NEW ENGLAND GEAR UP CONFERENCE,** attendees in Rockland, Maine were able to interact with students and teachers 130 miles away in Machias by using some of Washington County's extensive network of distance learning technology.

Machias Memorial High School's Senior English teacher Sue Willey and Guidance Counselor Cara Cirillo presented the details of their Senior Seminar program which combines senior literature and writing with steps in the college application process. They then introduced three students from the schools GEAR UP program who described how the program is helping them prepare for their next step in life. Every school in Washington County is equipped with videoconferencing technology which is used for events like this as well as ongoing courses.



Interestingly enough, the planned videoconference over the school's Polycom system was not able to complete the connection to Rockland, but the students jumped in and made the connection using Skype technology available on the school's laptop computers. Distance Learning Director for Washington County, Ken Martin commented, "Technology may not always be grand, but our kids certainly are!"

#### Washington County utilizes the Polycom technology in a variety of ways:

- To make courses available from one high school to another
- To receive courses from the University of Maine and other institutions
- To connect classes in different schools to partner on a curricular piece or to share presentations
- Virtual field trips to connect a class in Washington County with some kind of content provider, like a zoo or museum, for a 30-60 minute presentation. They are fully interactive so students get to ask questions and talk with the experts. "It's pretty cool, and very engaging for students."
- Administrative meetings for people around the county and professional development workshops.



## MAINE PARENT FEDERATION (MPF) WORKSHOPS for Parents

The Maine Parent Federation's GEAR UP Parent Involvement Coordinators will be offering three new workshops for parents involved in helping their children get to college.

### Opening the Door to Higher Education for Your Child

Information and advice gathered from high school and college educators, financial aid advisors, experienced parents and students is shared with parents during this workshop. Useful suggestions for parents on how to be helpful in the college-going process are also presented.

### Goodbye High School, Hello College

A presentation of tips and cautions for parents as they help their young adult get successfully through the "Transition Time" --- that period of time that begins as your child is ready to pack and continues until he or she is a comfortable, confident college student.

**The College Advisor presents Bob Stuart, Director of the Maine College Circle** in three regional workshops to demystify the college and financial aid application process and demonstrate to parents how college is a real option for their children.

Specific dates and locations have not yet been selected for these workshops.

If you are interested in scheduling a workshop or would like to assist in coordinating one of the regional workshops, please contact **Ray Cook**, GEAR UP Parent Involvement Activities Coordinator. Ray can be reached at Maine Parent Federation by calling 1-800-8707746 or by e-mail at [rcook@mpf.org](mailto:rcook@mpf.org). You can also learn more about MPF by visiting their website at <http://mpf.org>.