

## Search for Maine's Top Imagination Intensive Communities!

*Imagination is our greatest natural resource – but one that we need to grow.*

### **Introduction**

A recent two-year study of arts education in Maine shows:

- The state can be proud of a group of communities that support the creativity of children and youth. These communities can be found in rural, town, and city settings. Whatever their size, location, or resources, these communities use what they have and what they value to ensure that young people have regular learning experiences about how to create and innovate.
- But many Maine students lack regular access to imaginative learning. Currently, a strong -- and inequitable -- link exists between the size, location, and wealth of communities and the opportunities provided for students to learn to create.

To act on these findings, the Maine Alliance for Arts Education (MAAE), the Maine Department of Education and the Maine Arts Commission<sup>1</sup> have formed a partnership to identify, acknowledge, and spread the word about how a wide range of Maine communities invest in the imaginative development of children and youth. Through an open application and juried selection process, six communities that vary in size, location, and resources will be selected as “imagination-intensive” communities.

The purpose of this initiative is to:

- Acknowledge a set of Maine communities that value and invest in the creative interests of young people
- Learn about the creative opportunities they offer children and youth
- Find out how these communities sustain and grow these opportunities
- Figure out how more Maine communities could do the same.

Through this initiative, Maine educators and youth advocates will gain:

- A website describing Maine's top Imagination-Intensive Communities, including contact information for visits by other communities
- A process and community survey tool for on-going identification of new imagination-intensive communities
- A network to incubate ideas for future innovations.

### ***If Selected, What Are the Benefits to My Community?***

- **An award of \$750**
- **An Imagination Day Community Visit idea exchange:** a full-day visit and conversations between community members and statewide panelists to exchange ideas and share strategies about arts- and creativity-rich education and celebrate the community's selection
- **A community survey tool with support** to prepare for the Imagination Day Community Visit

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<sup>1</sup> This work has been generously supported by additional funding from the Kennedy Center and the Betterment Fund.

- **A web-based profile of your community**
- **An invitation to participate in and present at a statewide forum on supporting imagination development**
- **An invitation to an award ceremony** acknowledging the Imagination Intensive Communities
- **A citation** that can be used in advocacy, fundraising, and promotion.

### **How Can My Community Apply?**

Interested consortia of school and community-based organizations can apply by submitting an on-line application describing the range of creative opportunities they provide for young people. A statewide panel of educators, artists, innovators and entrepreneurs will review applications to select six Imagination Intensive Communities.

**1) Forming a Community Consortium:** Applicants should be consortia of schools and youth-serving organizations that collectively provide sustained and high-quality opportunities for young people to develop their imaginations. These consortia may bring together many sectors that support young people’s creativity in a variety of ways; for example, the arts, science, design, technology, agriculture, construction, business and social entrepreneurship.

Consortia could be located in communities such as:

- A rural region
- A small town
- A city
- A network of communities
- A Regional School Union (RSU)
- A regional or state-wide digital community

Consortia must include **at least 1 public school, and at least 1 community organization**, such as a library, parks and recreation facility, cooperative extension program, college or university, cultural organization (for example, museum, historical society, performing arts organization), or other youth-serving organization.

**2) Making an Application:** Consortia should complete the on-line application available on the Maine Alliance for Arts Education website at [www.maineartsed.org](http://www.maineartsed.org) after February 15. Applications should be submitted no later than March 15. A member of the panel may follow-up on the application to collect additional information.

**3) Questions about your application?** Email your questions to Gail Scott, Project Coordinator, at [gail.scott@maine.rr.com](mailto:gail.scott@maine.rr.com)

## What Criteria Will be Used to Select the Communities?

Criteria	Explanation and Examples
<b>Multiple areas of creative learning available</b>	High quality learning opportunities in multiple areas of creative work, including but not limited to the arts (e.g., a community could submit based on its programs in music, visual arts, and technology; another community could submit based on its programs in visual arts and environmental science)
<b>Strong K-12 in-school offerings</b>	Sequential courses for young people allowing them to go from novice to increasingly expert, including electives, special events, and workshops.
<b>Strong out-of-school opportunities</b>	After-school programs, informal learning opportunities, cross-age learning and mentoring, apprenticeships, jobs, etc.
<b>Range of roles for young people</b>	Opportunities for young people to be learners, mentors, apprentices, etc.
<b>Visibility and acknowledgement of young people's creative work</b>	Opportunities for young people to display, perform, and use their work in public, conversations and mentoring, etc.
<b>Quality of student work</b>	Evidence of craftsmanship, excellence, and innovation, and sustained effort
<b>Presence of adults who support young people's creativity</b>	Formal teaching positions, employers, informal roles as mentors and advisors; Evidence of collaborations, cross-visitations, mutual support among this community of adults, etc.
<b>Collaboration across institutions and organizations</b>	Shared planning, facilities, and fundraising, joint efforts to insure sustained creative development for young people

## What Happens After the Communities are Selected?

### Hosting the Imagination Day Community Visit

**Maine's Top 6 Imagination-Intensive Communities** will be notified of their selection, and each community will be offered an award of \$750, a community survey tool, and support to help in planning the Imagination Day Community Visit.

During the Imagination Day Community Visit, panelists will observe, interview, and document the stories of participants in a variety of roles including:

- Teachers and administrators
- Mentors and role-models
- Young people
- Supporters in local government
- Program designers and implementers

Each Imagination Day Community Visit will also include:

- Site visits to in- and out-of-school programs

- Interviews with key persons who help to create that particular imagination-intensive community
- Interviews and focus groups with young people who are engaged in creative work (in school or on their own)
- A brainstorming session about the challenges that Maine communities face in helping their young people to become the innovators and creators of tomorrow. The session will focus on inventing powerful and feasible solutions to these challenges.

**What’s the Timeline for this Initiative?**

Date	Event
February 15	Application up on MAAE website on or after this date
March 15	Applications due
April 1	Selections announced; planning for community visits begins
April 15-May 15	Community visits
May 30	Community visits and documentation concluded
June	Award Ceremony
September	Imagination Intensive Communities Website: Live <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Profiles with Award Citations</li> <li>• Interactive Map with Contacts for Visits</li> </ul>

**Who are the Project Partners and Funders?**



Maine Alliance for Arts Education  
[www.maineartsed.org](http://www.maineartsed.org)



Maine Department of Education

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