



# EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING

## King Middle School

“At King, even though 55% of the kids are on free lunch and 33% of them are second-language learners—and speak 31 different languages—we score above the state average in every curriculum area at every grade level.”

Principal Mike McCarthy

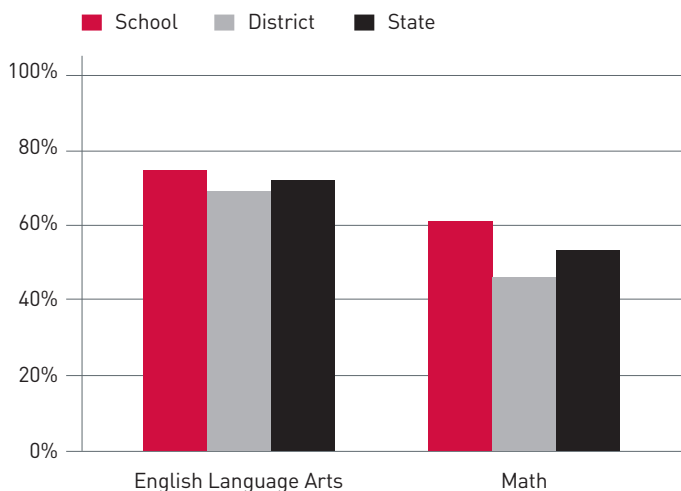
One of three public middle schools in Portland, Maine, King serves the most racially, ethnically, and economically diverse neighborhoods in the state.

A large refugee resettlement program in the city of Portland has brought students from 17 foreign countries to King. Students speak 31 different languages, and many begin school with little or no experience with the English language.

Since becoming an EL school in 1992, King has fully reinvented itself—from a low-performing school to one of the highest-performing schools in the state of Maine and a model school within the EL network.



English Language Arts & Math  
% of Students Proficient (2008–2009)



**CITY: PORTLAND, ME**  
**GRADES SERVED: 6–8**  
**STUDENT ENROLLMENT: 493**  
**EL PARTNER SINCE 1992**

## Expeditionary Learning at King

When Principal Mike McCarthy arrived at King in 1988, he described it as a school that “no one would want to go to.” Achievement, as well as student and staff morale, was low. He turned to EL to build a sense of community among his teachers, unite them behind the school’s mission, and lay the groundwork for improved instruction and curriculum design.

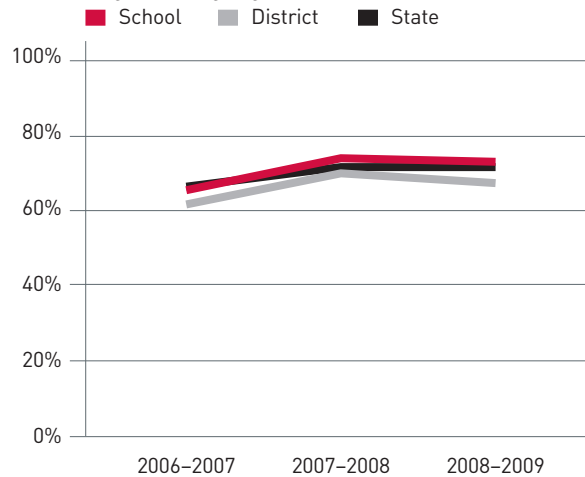
This is what King looks like now:

- Students are outperforming district and state averages at every grade level and in every subject area on state tests.
- Teachers design learning expeditions that require students to get their hands dirty, conducting original research and extensive fieldwork.
- Technology is used in every classroom, enhancing the quality of student projects and allowing teachers to meet the needs of diverse learners.
- Teaching teams organize their own schedules to allow maximum flexibility for fieldwork and interdisciplinary lessons.
- Student-led portfolio presentations and exhibitions regularly bring parents and community members into the school as students demonstrate and reflect upon their learning.
- Hallways are safe and respectful, and students from all backgrounds describe the school as a welcoming place.
- Classrooms are untracked, with full inclusion of special-needs students and English language learners.

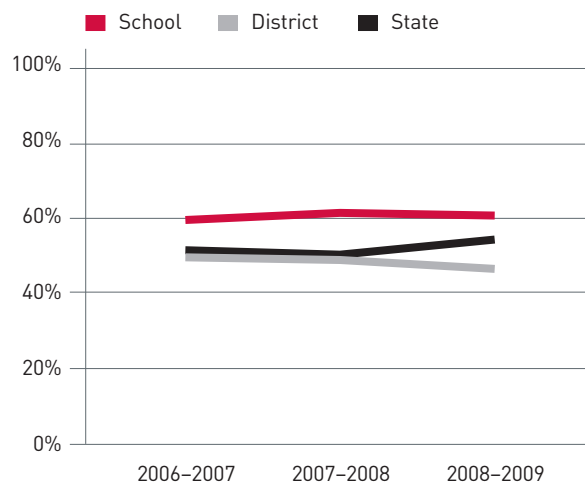
## Evidence of Success

- Principal Mike McCarthy was Maine Principal of the Year in 1997 and 2010 and was a finalist for 2011 National Principal of the Year.
- Edutopia’s *Schools That Work* series has featured King numerous times, highlighting their exemplary use of technology as a tool for project-based learning and their strong leadership.
- King has been a New England League of Middle Schools “Spotlight School” every year since 2003.
- Through Maine’s laptop initiative, King students have made more than 20 multimedia CDs (many of them for sale on their website) documenting their learning expeditions.

English Language Arts % Students Proficient

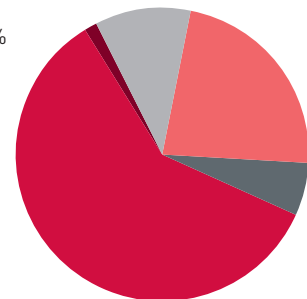


Math % Students Proficient



Student Profile (2008-2009)

- Asian 10.8%
- Black 22.8%
- Hispanic 5.7%
- White 59.5%
- Other 1.2%



Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible 55%  
 Special Education 14.3%  
 English Language Learners 33.4%