

# Atlas Case Study: Westbrook School District

## *Atlas for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)*

### Westbrook School Department, ME

Westbrook School is a public school district serving 2500 students with 400 teachers and staff. The district houses pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, as well as a Career and Technical Education Center.



### What was the problem?

In line with changing requirements from the state DOE, Westbrook School Department embarked on a journey to transform its curriculum and learning model into a proficiency-based approach aligned to standards by 2018. A large part of this work occurred through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that were used both for professional development and regularly scheduled, weekly meetings around curriculum development for proficiency-based learning.

### How did Atlas help?

Westbrook relied on the Atlas's flexible unit planner templates and designed a template to match their PLC needs. The template included goals, notes, agenda items, and take-aways. Prior to this, PLCs were operating in silos – some worked on google docs, others exchanged emails, and some took notes on paper. The lack of consistency not only in the meeting structure but on capturing the information that was shared made collaboration between PLC's difficult and infrequent.

With the switch to proficiency-based learning, Westbrook's curriculum relied heavily on standards alignment. The standards feature in Atlas enabled teachers to dynamically align to standards in their unit maps and also permitted teachers and school leaders to run reports and analyze standards alignment.

As well, Maine has standards titled 'Guiding Principles', which are over-arching, cross-curricular standards. Within Atlas, the unit planner template is conducive to multiple standards categories. Therefore, Westbrook populated a second standards category with only the Guiding Principles, allowing teachers to drill down within that set of standards and capture them separately of the academic standards.

### What were the outcomes?

Creating a template for PLC's within Atlas made PLC meetings more structured and focused, and made their meeting content easily accessible by other PLCs, allowing for communication and collaboration. As well, using separate standards categories allowed teachers to focus on and align to different sets of standards separately and adhere to different initiatives from the Maine DOE. And, Atlas's built-in reporting capabilities made standards analysis easier – Westbrook capitalized on reporting to make sure all necessary standards were being covered to ensure student proficiency.

### Testimony

"[Atlas] is helping to build that communication. This is allowing our 4th grade teachers to see what is going on in 5th grade. Our 8th grade teachers to see what is going on in 9th" - Dr. Peter Lancia