



Maine Charter School Commission

Monthly Commission Meeting

Published on December 7, 2023 at 2:51 PM EST

Date and Time

Tuesday December 12, 2023 at 1:00 PM EST

Location

Room #103, Cross Office Building, 111 Sewall Street, Augusta

The **Vision** of the Maine Charter School Commission is that "***All of Maine's children will have access to a vibrant ecosystem of diverse schools so that all of them can become happy, healthy and thriving citizens.***"

The **Mission** of the Maine Charter School Commission is "***To authorize, monitor and develop unique public charter schools that provide a dynamic, superlative education for every student.***"

Reminders:

- This meeting is being recorded via Zoom.
- We ask members of the public to hold comments until public comments are heard.

Agenda

Purpose

Presenter

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

Rachel Spell

	Purpose	Presenter
B. Call the Meeting to Order		Norm Higgins
C. To Consider the Approval of the 11/14/23 Commission Meeting	Approve Minutes	Norm Higgins
II. Comments from Commission Chair		
A. Comments	Discuss	Norm Higgins
III. Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda		
A. Additions/Adjustments	Discuss	Norm Higgins
IV. Committee Reports		
A. School Performance Committee	FYI	Tori Kornfield
B. Finance Committee	FYI	Leigh Albert
		<i>• FY24 Budget vs. Actual/Dashboard Report</i>
C. Executive Committee	FYI	Norm Higgins
V. Public Comment*		
A. Public Comment	Discuss	Norm Higgins
VI. Presentations		
A. Maine Connections Academy's Independent Third Party Evaluation by Southern Maine Administrative Collaborative	FYI	
B. Maine Virtual Academy's Independent Third Party Evaluation by Dr. Mary Madden	FYI	
VII. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report		
A. School Updates	Discuss	Lana Ewing

Purpose Presenter

B. Organizational Updates Discuss Lana Ewing

C. Media Updates FYI Lana Ewing

VIII. Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report

A. 10/1/23 Student Enrollment Breakdowns Discuss Amy Allen

- SY2023-24 School Enrollment Statistics
- SY2023-24 Demographic Data Breakdowns
- SY2023-24 Resident District Breakdowns
- SY2023-24 Resident Town Breakdowns

IX. Unfinished Business

A. Unfinished Business Discuss Norm Higgins
None

X. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance

A. To Consider the Approval of the Southern Maine Administrative Collaborative’s Contract to Conduct Maine Connections Academy’s Independent Third Party Evaluation Vote

XI. New Business Requiring Notification to the Commission (No formal action to be taken by Commission)

A. New Governing Board Members FYI Norm Higgins
• Maine Arts Academy - Mitchell Thomas

B. Board Member Resignations FYI Norm Higgins
None

C. Board Member Term Outs FYI Norm Higgins
None

XII. Next Month's Topics

	Purpose	Presenter
A. Next Month's Topics	FYI	Norm Higgins
XIII. Announcements		
A. Important Dates	FYI	Norm Higgins
B. Next Regular Business Meeting	FYI	Norm Higgins
January 9, 2024 (111 Sewall Street, Room #103, Augusta, ME 04330) <i>or Zoom</i>		
XIV. Closing Items		
A. Adjourn Meeting	Vote	Norm Higgins

* The Charter School Commission does not allow airing of complaints in public meetings regarding Commission and charter school employees or school employment matters, in order to protect employee privacy, to comply with Maine law and pursuant to our contractual relation with the schools. To the extent that the Commission receives complaints and concerns relating to school employees in writing, those concerns will be reviewed and addressed by the Commission and its staff outside of a public meeting. This meeting is not the appropriate forum for such comments. You are free to direct your concerns in writing to the Commission's Executive Director, if you have not done so already.

Coversheet

To Consider the Approval of the 11/14/23 Commission Meeting

Section: I. Opening Items
Item: C. To Consider the Approval of the 11/14/23 Commission Meeting
Purpose: Approve Minutes
Submitted by:
Related Material: Minutes for Monthly Commission Meeting on November 14, 2023

APPROVED



Maine Charter School Commission

Minutes

Monthly Commission Meeting

Date and Time

Tuesday November 14, 2023 at 1:00 PM

Location

Maine Academy of Natural Sciences, 13 Easler Road, Hinckley or via [ZOOM](#)

The **Vision** of the Maine Charter School Commission is that "***All of Maine's children will have access to a vibrant ecosystem of diverse schools so that all of them can become happy, healthy and thriving citizens.***"

The **Mission** of the Maine Charter School Commission is "***To authorize, monitor and develop unique public charter schools that provide a dynamic, superlative education for every student.***"

Reminders:

- This meeting is being recorded via Zoom.
 - We ask members of the public to hold comments until public comments are heard.
-

Directors Present

Brian Langley, James Ford (remote), Jim Handy (remote), Norm Higgins, Tom Keller (remote)

Directors Absent

Leigh Albert, Tori Kornfield

Guests Present

Amy Allen (remote), Lana Ewing, Rachel Spell

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

Norm Higgins called a meeting of the board of directors of Maine Charter School Commission to order on Tuesday Nov 14, 2023 at 1:01 PM.

C. To Consider the Approval of the 10/10/23 Commission Meeting

Brian Langley made a motion to approve the minutes from Monthly Commission Meeting on 10-10-23.

Jim Handy seconded the motion.

A copy of the minutes was distributed for review and consideration.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

Norm Higgins Aye

Brian Langley Aye

Tom Keller Aye

Jim Handy Aye

James Ford Aye

Leigh Albert Absent

Tori Kornfield Absent

II. Comments from Commission Chair

A. Comments

Reflection of tragedy in Lewiston.

18 seconds of silence for lives lost.

III. Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda

A. Additions/Adjustments

None.

IV. Committee Reports

A. School Performance Committee

Tom presented.

- Considered increased enrollment for MeVa and were supportive in request.

- Discussed annual reports for each school, mid-year reports, and annual report for commissioner.

B. Finance Committee

Amy presented.

- Annual report to commissioner.
- Commission oversight fee. Plan for future, think of putting plan in place going forward. Will help schools prepare. Budget increasing .1% annually until up to 3%.
- Financial health of portfolio, reviewed by Joe Drago.
- Three year financial plans - first year of requiring schools to submit these plans. Staff has been meeting with schools to go over 3YFP.
- Maine Virtual Academy request to increase enrollment discussion (supportive in request).

C. Executive Committee

Norm presented.

- Refine roll of executive committee.
- Legislature: Barbara Bagshaw submitted a change that did not pass. Discussion in future.

Process of Adding 10th School to Portfolio

- Lana proposed amended timeline for application. Draft release of application, 7 months, then official application being released. Would allow for 13 months until due date so schools can have a year to work on and get done.
- Hour long info sessions, webinars, open to public for questions.
- July 1st for official release of application. Letter of intent is due 15 days after official release (July 15th)
- Committee was in favor of this timeline change.
- Other parts of Maine/rural/etc. Seem to be focused on southern Maine. Limited on area. Unless school is very small. Hybrid school? Potential solution?
- Vision of 10th school?
- In rural Maine, populations in schools are declining. Many schools North of Augusta losing population. Southern Maine, school population is growing.
- Hire external help to train MCSC on new application process, use rubric to make determinations based on application. (Rubric is still in revision phase). Review team that consists commission members.
- Has to be brock/mortar because at virtual cap. Hybrid doesn't count, however.

V. Presentations

A.

Maine Academy of Natural Sciences

Matt Newberg presented.

- School is off to a wonderful start.
- Partnered with Acadia. Overnights. Blacksmithing program. Intensive experiences.
- Chronic absenteeism down considerably.
- On track to graduate solid for campus.
- Some open positions with staff.
- Waitlist for threshold program. Blended (remote and teachers home visit) Social anxiety is top factor for students being interested. Some campus students wait to maybe move to threshold program, also teen parents, and students who have issues getting to school even with hub transportation.

VI. Public Comment*

A. Public Comment

None.

VII. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report

A. School Updates

Lana presented.

- Lana thanks everyone for their work in Lewiston area during tragedy.
- Highlight Baxter Academy for an article about a student at Baxter about navigating student admissions for college and how much support she has gotten from her school.
- Student semi-finalist for National Merit Scholarship from Baxter also in an article as well.
- Successful Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at MAA went very well. Excellent student performances.
- HCA final audit complete. Check with remaining balance will be submitted after paying debts. Once accounts settled, board will formally dissolve. In process. Board has thorough and thoughtful in resolving debts and school has shown strong fiscal responsibility in closing year.
- Time to reflect on HCA? Learn from - what to do better, etc. No public formal reflection happened yet but is a good suggestion.

B. Organizational Updates

- Finishing up first quarter of year, Quarter One Summary Report
Progress: All Complete or On Track
Mid-Years Planned

Strategic Planning

New School RFP

Upcoming is MCA (drafting charter contract), draft performance framework revisions, and internal policy review.

- Professional Development Coming up Next Month for Development Session (December 11th) Augusta Civic Center, to Look at Performance Framework, Open to All Board Members and School Leaders.

Look at tool with school data, idea is to see how to use framework to understand and work with.

- Looking at results of self evaluation to discuss strengths and places of development.

- NACSACon

Lana attended on behalf of Maine.

Other state laws vs Maine's laws with charter.

Presented values based authorizing which received good feedback.

- New school application review.

Some changes made.

More categories in mission/purpose sections.

Timeline revision already talked about.

C. Media Updates

VIII. Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report

A. Final SY2022-23 Unenrollment

Presented by Amy

- Unenrollment/Enrollment Project
- Staff keeps track of enrollment monthly, even after 10/1 count.
- Student Demographics. (Language, grade, economic stats, special ed, race, gender, location, etc)
- Better understanding of where students are going and why. (graduating, moving away)
Unenrolled 100 more students than last year but a whole school unenrolled (HCA)
- Schools retaining more students than in past.
- Data will go to commissioner.
- This kind of data can help schools reflect.

IX. Unfinished Business

A. Unfinished Business

None.

X. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance

A. To Consider Approval of Maine Virtual Academy's Request to Increase Enrollment

- Requesting modest (390 to 450) increase. With MCA now at 500, MeVa's increase to 450 will be nearing state cap of 1000 virtual.
School is in good standing with strong performance.
- School has a waiting list.
- One of the chairs impressed with improvements over the years, tracking closely.

Tom Keller made a motion to approve Maine Virtual Academy's request to increase enrollment.

Brian Langley seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

Norm Higgins Aye

Tori Kornfield Absent

Jim Handy Aye

James Ford Aye

Tom Keller Aye

Leigh Albert Absent

Brian Langley Aye

B. To Consider Maine Arts Academy's Request to Amend Bylaws

- Executive committee, request in three parts.
- Extend board term limits to eliminate officer term limits.
- Bylaws timeline to publish within commission's timeline.

Jim Handy made a motion to approve Maine Arts Academy's request to amend bylaws.

Brian Langley seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

Tom Keller Aye

Leigh Albert Absent

Norm Higgins Aye

Tori Kornfield Absent

James Ford Aye

Brian Langley Aye

Jim Handy Aye

C. To Consider Approval of Dr. Mary Madden's Proposal to Conduct Maine Virtual Academy's Independent Third Party Evaluation

- Virtual schools had third party evaluator proposal from Dr Mary Madden to conduct this year's third party evaluation for MeVA,
- Has to be agreed upon with MeVA.
- Dr. Madden has done work with commission in past that were thorough.

Tom Keller made a motion to approve Dr. Mary Madden's proposal to conduct Maine Virtual Academy's Independent Third Party Evaluation.

James Ford seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

Tori Kornfield Absent
James Ford Aye
Leigh Albert Absent
Norm Higgins Aye
Brian Langley Aye
Jim Handy Aye
Tom Keller Aye

D. To Receive and Place on File SY2022-23 Annual Monitoring Reports

- Each school gets an annual monitoring report every year, required to do annually. Reports are long and there are summaries in agenda; school's performance information.
- Generally strong performance within portfolio. All high schools met or exceeded graduation target.
- School year persistence was strong (staying multiple years).
- Chronic absenteeism is improving. 4 out of 10 met or exceeded target. Another 5 schools improved from previous year.
- Release of Maine three year assessment data has been delayed. That data is not available to be included in those reports.
- Two schools double tested their students and both schools met or exceeded academic growth targets.
- Amendment will be made later this year to include this data with re-released reports as full versions.

Tom Keller made a motion to Receive and place on file the SY2022-23 Annual Monitoring Reports.

Brian Langley seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

Tom Keller Aye
Jim Handy Aye
James Ford Aye
Tori Kornfield Absent

Roll Call

Norm Higgins Aye
Leigh Albert Absent
Brian Langley Aye

E. To Receive and Place on File SY2022-23 Annual Report to the Commissioner

- Role of charter schools and their performance? Report, lots of data, what's going well/what needs improvement.
- Charts are helpful, more accurate data.
- Report provides a good picture of where charter schools are in Maine right now.
- First year with no extension having to be filed!

Tom Keller made a motion to Receive and place on file SY2022-23 Annual Report to the Commissioner.

Jim Handy seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

Norm Higgins Aye
Tom Keller Aye
Leigh Albert Absent
Tori Kornfield Absent
Jim Handy Aye
James Ford Aye
Brian Langley Aye

XI. New Business Requiring Notification to the Commission (No formal action to be taken by Commission)

A. New Governing Board Members

None.

B. Board Member Resignations

Fiddlehead - Laura Newman

C. Board Member Term Outs

None.

XII. Next Month's Topics

A. Next Month's Topics

- Presentation on 10/1 Enrollment Data.

- At least one third party evaluation happening next month.

XIII. Announcements

A. Important Dates

None.

B. Next Regular Business Meeting

- December 12th at 1:00pm/Cross Building in Augusta, ME or via Zoom

XIV. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 2:48 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Norm Higgins

Documents used during the meeting

- FY24 MCSC Budget vs Actual Report (Overview).pdf
- NASBE Honors Maine State Board of Educa...pdf
- Bill Lifting Enrollment Cap on Maine's Virtual Charter Schools Slated For Consideration in Legislature Next Year.pdf
- Maine Arts Academy unveils conversion of former veterans' home in Augusta _
Mainebiz.biz.pdf
- Diary of a High School Senior-Navigating college admissions.pdf
- 2022-23 Unenrollment Data-FINAL.pdf
- MeVA - Amendment Request (Enrollment Expansion).pdf
- MeAA - _Amendment_for_Change_in_School_ByLaws_October_2023.pdf
- MEVA 2023-2024 Evaluation Proposal .pdf
- DRAFT SY2022-23 Annual Monitoring Report - ACADIA.pdf
- DRAFT SY2022-23 Annual Monitoring Report - Baxter Academy for Technology and
Science.pdf
- DRAFT SY2022-23 Annual Monitoring Report - Community Regional Charter School.pdf
- DRAFT SY2022-23 Annual Monitoring Report - Ecology Learning Center.pdf
- DRAFT SY2022-23 Annual Monitoring Report - Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences.pdf

- DRAFT SY2022-23 Annual Monitoring Report - Harpswell Coastal Academy.pdf
 - DRAFT SY2022-23 Annual Monitoring Report - Maine Academy of Natural Sciences.pdf
 - DRAFT SY2022-23 Annual Monitoring Report - Maine Arts Academy.pdf
 - DRAFT SY2022-23 Annual Monitoring Report - Maine Connections Academy.pdf
 - DRAFT SY2022-23 Annual Monitoring Report - Maine Virtual Academy.pdf
 - DRAFT SY2022-23 Annual Report to the Commissioner.pdf
 - MeVA - New Governing Board Member (Susan Walters).pdf
-

* The Charter School Commission does not allow airing of complaints in public meetings regarding Commission and charter school employees or school employment matters, in order to protect employee privacy, to comply with Maine law and pursuant to our contractual relation with the schools. To the extent that the Commission receives complaints and concerns relating to school employees in writing, those concerns will be reviewed and addressed by the Commission and its staff outside of a public meeting. This meeting is not the appropriate forum for such comments. You are free to direct your concerns in writing to the Commission's Executive Director, if you have not done so already.

Coversheet

Finance Committee

Section: IV. Committee Reports
Item: B. Finance Committee
Purpose: FYI
Submitted by:
Related Material: FY24 MCSC Budget vs Actual Report as of 12.7.23.pdf



MCSC FY24 Budget vs. Actual *(As of 12-7-23)*

Summary	Total FY23 Budget	Total Actual Cost	Total Difference
	\$839,374	\$364,936	\$474,438

Personnel

	Projected Cost	Actual Cost	Difference
Staff Salaries	\$285,000	\$133,798	↑ \$151,202
Manpower Service Fee	\$104,880	\$48,063	↑ \$56,817
Benefits	\$60,000	\$25,000	↑ \$35,000
Total	\$449,880	\$206,862	\$243,018

Contracted Services

	Projected Cost	Actual Cost	Difference
Finance Consultant	\$49,275	\$16,445	↑ \$32,830
Public Relations/Engagement	\$35,000	\$2,880	↑ \$32,120
Project-Based Support	\$65,000	\$27,638	↑ \$37,363
Total	\$149,275	\$46,963	\$102,313

Projected Annual Revenue

Allotment	\$694,809
Carryover Funds	\$144,565
Grants	
Total Annual Income	\$839,374

Actual Annual Revenue

Allotment	\$766,635
Carryover Funds	\$0
Grants	\$2,163
Total Annual Income YTD	\$768,798

Travel

	Projected Cost	Actual Cost	Difference
Commission Members	\$12,782	\$2,683	↑ \$10,099
Staff	\$7,641	\$5,335	↑ \$2,306
Total	\$20,423	\$8,019	\$12,404

Personal Services (Per Diem/Commission Members)

	Projected Cost	Actual Cost	Difference
Per Diem	\$15,400	\$6,050	↑ \$9,350
Total	\$15,400	\$6,050	\$9,350

General Operations

	Projected Cost	Actual Cost	Difference
Insurance/Risk Management	\$1,776	\$798	↑ \$978
Printing/Photocopying Services	\$500	\$516	→ (\$16)
Dues and Subscriptions	\$6,860	\$5,762	↑ \$1,098
Meeting Room Rental	\$1,000	\$0	↑ \$1,000
Postage	\$500	\$272	↑ \$228
Advertising	\$500	\$200	↑ \$300
Food	\$500	\$0	↑ \$500
General Government Service Center	\$7,529	\$11,278	↓ (\$3,749)
Legal and Professional Services	\$12,546	\$0	↑ \$12,546
Office and Other Supplies	\$1,000	\$367	↑ \$633
Total	\$32,711	\$19,192	\$13,519

Sta-Cap

	Projected Cost	Actual Cost	Difference
Sta-Cap	\$9,775	\$1,011	↑ \$8,764
Total	\$9,775	\$1,011	\$8,764

Technology-For Schools

	Projected Cost	Actual Cost	Difference
NWEA MAP Test	\$13,039	\$0	↑ \$13,039
Panorama Education	\$10,625	\$0	↑ \$10,625
Infinite Campus	\$20,751	\$19,615	↑ \$1,136
Lotterease	\$3,750	\$6,669	↓ (\$2,919)
Epicenter	\$37,900	\$38,710	↓ (\$810)
College-Readiness Diagnostics	\$4,000	\$2,580	↑ \$1,420
Total	\$90,065	\$67,574	\$22,491

Contingency

	Projected Cost	Actual Cost	Difference
Contingency	\$20,000	\$0	↑ \$20,000
Total	\$20,000	\$0	\$20,000

Technology-For MCSC

	Projected Cost	Actual Cost	Difference
Office of Information Technology	\$8,845	\$1,709	↑ \$7,136
Cell Phone Services	\$2,000	\$1,399	↑ \$601
Website	\$5,000	\$0	↑ \$5,000
Remote CART Captioning Service	\$5,000	\$2,350	↑ \$2,650
BoardOnTrack	\$6,000	\$5,495	↑ \$505
Total	\$26,845	\$10,953	\$15,892

Charter School Innovation/Collaboration

	Projected Cost	Actual Cost		Difference
Innovation Fund/Professional Development	\$20,000	\$0	↑	\$20,000
Board Chair Collaboration	\$5,000	\$476	↑	\$4,524
Total	\$25,000	\$476		\$24,524

Coversheet

Maine Connections Academy's Independent Third Party Evaluation

Section: VI. Presentations
Item: A. Maine Connections Academy's Independent Third Party Evaluation
Purpose: FYI
Submitted by:
Related Material: MCA SY2022-23 Independent Third Party Evaluation.pdf



18 Maplewood Avenue
Biddeford, ME 04005
207.282.8280
www.smacschools.me

Dear Members of the Maine Commission on Charter Schools,

It is my pleasure to present the Commission with a copy of this year's Third Party Evaluation of the Maine Connections Academy (MCA). It has been a privilege to collaborate with the dedicated MCA team in assessing the school's performance and making informed recommendations for its continued growth.

I must commend Principal Wallace and his team for their proactive engagement with various stakeholders this year. At your request, they went above and beyond to involve a multitude of voices in the evaluation process, a testament to their commitment to transparency and continuous improvement. Stakeholder engagement and participation in this year's TPE increased exponentially, shoring up the data and expanding the number of voices I heard.

The findings from our evaluation reaffirm that Maine Connections Academy remains at the forefront of delivering an exceptional academic program tailored to the unique needs of remote learners. MCA distinguishes itself as a responsive institution, placing individuals at the core of its mission. The passion and positivity exhibited by the MCA community are truly exceptional, setting it apart from conventional online schools.

Notably, MCA has embraced recommendations for academic enhancement, resulting in significant progress in addressing concerns related to academic outcomes, student assessment, and Board-faculty relations. The Pearson environment has provided valuable longitudinal insights, aiding in identifying students' strengths and areas requiring support.

Reflecting on last year's recommendations, I applaud MCA for their diligence in addressing these suggestions. Achieving an increased enrollment cap of 500 students, enhancing parent engagement, and improving the "customer service experience" are all notable achievements that demonstrate the school's commitment to excellence.

I look forward to meeting with the Commission again in the coming months, and answering any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Indorf".

Chris Indorf
Consultant for the SMAC

Maine Connections Academy

Third Party Evaluation

2022-2023 School Year

September, 2023 • Chris Indorf, M.S., M.Ed., C.A.G.S.

Agreement

At the conclusion of the 2019 school year, the Maine Connections Academy principal contacted the Southern Maine Administrative Collaborative (SMAC) to solicit a request for an external audit of certain functions of the school. Principal Wallace had previously met with the Executive Director and consultants of the Collaborative on several occasions, and following the work performed by the SMAC in 2020, 2021, and 2023 proffered a contract renewal for this year. Mr. Wallace communicated regularly with the evaluator and stakeholders.

The Maine Connections Academy, as required by charter, engaged the SMAC to conduct a wholly independent, third-party evaluation (hereafter, "TPE") to assess the execution of the program as detailed in its charter application. Again this year, the ESP Pearson¹ program, curricula, assessment, and back office functions was assessed. Having longitudinal data allows school leaders and the Board to better assess the efficacy of program function. Four years' worth of alike quantitative and qualitative data provides program leaders with trendlines.²

Research, survey development, and stakeholder feedback collection continued through the last Spring and Summer of 2023.

Maine Charter Schools & MCA

The Maine Charter Commission consists of seven (7) members. Three commissioners must be members of the State Board of Education, appointed by the State Board for 3-year terms, and the other four (4) members are appointed by the Governor, subject to review by the Joint Standing Committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education matters and

¹ Pearson is one of the United States' largest Academic Services vendors. It markets its Connections Academy product as a grade-leveled program where "students take core courses in math, science, language arts/English, social studies, and electives, and work from a state-approved, high-quality curriculum with support from certified teachers."

² The TPEs completed for the MCA during the pandemic may have influenced stakeholder feedback, but determining how, and to what extent, would be sheer speculation, and the TPE's author and editors did not venture an estimate.

to confirmation by the Senate, for 4-year terms. According to the Commission's website, there are no current vacancies on the Board.³

Maine Connections Academy (MCA) is Maine's first full-time, virtual public charter school. The school offers a rigorous academic program to students in grades 7–12 and operates under the authorization of the Maine Department of Education and Maine Charter Commission. MCA was founded during the 2014-15 school year and graduated its first 12th grade class in June 2015. The school has an enrollment of 470 students⁴: one-quarter middle school, grades 7-9 and three-quarter high school, grades 9-12. MCA's catchment area is billed as "from Kittery to Fort Kent." Two-thirds of MCA teachers hold master's degrees or higher.

MCA is fully accredited by Cognia (it was formerly accredited by the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement). Cognia Performance Standards are at the heart of continuous improvement and accreditation. They define the characteristics of a good education institution and provide guidelines for efforts that will "energetically and visibly grow learners, teachers, leaders, and organizations." Cognia accredits schools K-12, postsecondary, and Early and Extended Learning programs.

MCA's canon is comprehensive in nature and is aligned with Maine Learning Results including Common Core State Standards.

Requirement

The requirement to conduct an annual independent third-party evaluation (TPE) can be found in Exhibit B (#13) of Maine Connections Academy's charter contract, and reads as follows:

The school shall hire a mutually agreeable independent third-party to evaluate the school's execution of the educational program contained in the charter application, including an evaluation of the performance of the ESP. The evaluation report shall be provided to the Commission annually no later than September. Upon request the Commission shall have access to the underlying data and information. In addition, the individual(s) who prepared the report shall be made available to the commission, at the sole expense of the School, to present and discuss the report at a commission meeting.

³ There was one vacancy when the 2022 report was submitted to the Commission.

⁴ A ~1% increase over 2022.

Introduction

This TPE contemplates the current state of the school, as well as progress toward recommendations made in last year's TPE. In order to be a practical and usable tool for decision makers at MCA, the report largely mirrors last year's inquiry. The 2022 report was expanded in scope to include questions specific to the functioning of the Academy's largest software provider, Pearson, which provides services ranging from reporting and recording to academics to human resources. The objective for this report is to address the degree to which Maine Connections Academy continued to function well during the school year 2022-2023, and to explore how the MCA Board and leadership addressed lead consultant Chris Indorf's 2022 report, and to assess stakeholders' satisfaction with the Pearson platform. Several questions in the survey instrument were verbatim⁵ over 2022 so that decision makers can make an at-a-glance, apples-to-apples analysis.

Methodology and Rationale

The assessment utilizes a Qualitative Research framework, which is instrumental in providing an intricate portrayal of a program or organization. This approach facilitates a comprehensive analysis of how the program or organization operates and the extent to which it attains its desired objectives.⁶

Qualitative methodologies are often closely associated with techniques such as interviews, survey design, focus groups, and individual case studies. Conversely, quantitative methodologies typically involve rigorously designed experiments featuring control groups when applicable, alongside meticulously controlled dependent and independent variables. Qualitative research design stands out as the most adaptable and inclusive among widely accepted approaches for program evaluation. In the context of this evaluation, "quantitative" specifically pertains to survey data.

The insights gathered from stakeholders should and must guide various aspects such as program design, institutional decision-making, budget planning, staffing requirements, and more. It's worth noting that qualitative research methods have a venerable history, tracing their roots back to ancient Greece. They are in no way less rigorous than their quantitative

⁵ Study after study, across fields, disciplines, and industry find shorter surveys were reliable and produced higher response and completion rates than long surveys, and that consistent language and format year-over-year yields more reliable, statistically valid results.

⁶ Reacher's Note: Qualitative Research, in addition to being a cost-effective strategy, is an open-ended process that more fully incorporates the human experience. It can provide actionable insights and accounts for the nexus of the art and science of education. Bias inherent in the data is contextualized.

counterparts and, in fact, offer a deeper understanding of organizational planning and behavior. Both the evaluator and the MCA principal concurred early in the process that qualitative analysis would align more effectively with the Academy's needs and resonate more meaningfully.

Process

The evaluator developed a suite of surveys in collaboration with MCA's leadership team over the course of several weeks. The collaboration yielded three distinct instruments for each stakeholder group:

- Administration and Faculty
- Families⁷
- Board of Directors

These groups were similarly surveyed in years past. The surveys were based on an established body of work from the field, including self-study tools from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges⁸ (an organization which accredits Maine public schools, Private Schools, most of Maine's Independent ["60/40"] schools⁹, and colleges), as well as emerging tools like the Perceptions of the Blended Learning Environment Questionnaire.¹⁰ In addition, MCA-specific questions designed to specifically probe its relationship with Pearson were crafted.

Letters of introduction explaining the Third Party Evaluation process were emailed to stakeholders, or sent via USPS to nonrespondents¹¹ prior to the administration of the survey instrument. Surveys were administered electronically, and all respondents were afforded up to 20 minutes each for follow-up interviews.

⁷ In previous evaluations, Parents and Students were surveyed separately. While the results were typically consistent, the roughly 20% deviation between parents' and students' perceptions led the Principal and Evaluator to agree to combine these groups into one, unified "family" survey. Beside prompting dialogue between parents and students, a secondary goal of this consolidation was to more finely tune responses and not have parents' perceptions negate students' perceptions. After all, faculty and students are the primary users of the Pearson suite of products. Parents' perceptions and how they deviate from those of their students are grist for a formal accreditation process.

⁸ <https://cis.neasc.org/sites/cis.neasc.org/files/Manuals/Manual%20for%20School%20Evaluation%20Complete%20rev073117.pdf>

⁹ So-called "60/40" schools are private schools where at least 60% of their students are publicly funded and come from towns without their own high schools. The schools are: Erskine Academy, John Bapst Memorial High School, Washington Academy, George Stevens Academy, Liberty School, Lee Academy, Foxcroft Academy, Maine Central Institute, Lincoln Academy, Fryeburg Academy, and Thornton Academy. These schools receive Insured Value Factor funds in addition to the state average secondary tuition.

¹⁰ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0734282919834091>

¹¹ For this TPE, a "nonrespondent" was one who did not complete the questionnaire, or whose email was returned as undeliverable.

In previous years, students, faculty, parents, and Board members were selected at random from a slate assembled from the Principal. The Commission bewailed limited participation from certain stakeholder groups in the past, and Principal Wallace cast a much wider net: in all, responses received from parents, faculty, student, and board members approached 300 total.

Participants were queried on various matters related to the health and performance of the school, and each had the opportunity to respond to open-ended questions and were invited to participate in follow up in-person or Zoom interviews in an “open forum” format.

Inquiry

The survey instruments featured varying lines of inquiry tailored to specific stakeholder groups, thereby serving as a quantitative complement to the qualitative analysis. For instance, students and their parents were queried about their interactions with teachers and the significance they attributed to academic connections within the Pearson online product. In contrast, Board members were surveyed regarding their roles in governance, financial stewardship, and their perceptions of Pearson.

Despite these distinct lines of questioning, both the Principal and Evaluator agreed that each survey should incorporate a set of consistent “throughline questions.” These are questions that share identical wording or thematic content across all stakeholder groups.¹²

“Throughline questions” are a specific type of survey or research questions that are intentionally included across multiple survey instruments or data collection methods within a research study. These questions share identical wording or a common theme and are used to gather consistent data from different groups of respondents or across various phases of the research. Throughline questions serve several important purposes in research:

Consistency. Throughline questions ensure that certain key aspects of the research are consistently examined across different groups or at different points in time. This consistency allows researchers to make meaningful comparisons and draw conclusions based on uniform data.

Cross-Validation. When the same question is asked of multiple stakeholder groups or in various survey instruments, the responses can be compared to validate findings and identify patterns or discrepancies. This can enhance the reliability and credibility of the research.

¹² See, e.g., <https://www.pewresearch.org/our-methods/u-s-surveys/writing-survey-questions/>

Tracking Change. Throughline questions are valuable when researchers want to track changes or trends over time. By asking the same questions in multiple survey waves, researchers can assess how perceptions, attitudes, or behaviors evolve.

Benchmarking. Researchers can use throughline questions as benchmarks for evaluating the effectiveness of interventions or programs. By consistently measuring specific aspects, researchers can assess whether improvements or changes have occurred.

Comparative Analysis. Throughline questions can facilitate comparative analysis between different stakeholder groups. For example, they can help identify disparities or similarities in the perceptions of students, parents, and teachers.

Prioritization. Researchers may prioritize throughline questions as the most critical aspects of their research, ensuring that these questions are consistently addressed even if other aspects of the research vary.

In practice, throughline questions are carefully crafted to be clear, unbiased, and relevant to the research objectives. They are typically designed to elicit specific information or insights that are essential for the research's overall goals. By incorporating throughline questions into surveys or data collection instruments, researchers can ensure that key aspects of their study are thoroughly explored and analyzed across various dimensions or groups

Furthermore, questions were customized to suit their intended recipients. Careful consideration was given to whether a question should be open-ended, allowing respondents to provide their own responses (as was the case with the Board and Faculty), or closed-ended, presenting respondents with a list of answer choices (as was the approach for families).

Why a comprehensive assessment of Pearson is mission critical

Pearson, a renowned educational publishing and assessment company, offers a suite of services to virtual charter schools to support their educational programs and goals. Here is a general overview of the types of services that Pearson typically provided to virtual charter schools:

1. **Curriculum and Instructional Materials:** Pearson often offers a wide range of curriculum resources, including textbooks, digital courseware, and other instructional materials. These resources are designed to align with educational standards and provide engaging content for virtual charter school students.

2. **Online Learning Platforms:** Pearson may provide virtual charter schools with access to online learning platforms and Learning Management Systems (LMS). These platforms facilitate the delivery of educational content, assessments, and interactive activities in a digital format.
3. **Assessment and Testing Services:** Pearson is known for its expertise in educational assessment. They may offer virtual charter schools a suite of assessment tools and services to measure student progress, including standardized tests, formative assessments, and digital assessment platforms.
4. **Professional Development:** Pearson often provides training and professional development opportunities for educators and administrators in virtual charter schools. These sessions aim to enhance teaching and leadership skills in an online learning environment.
5. **Data Analytics and Reporting:** Pearson's services may include data analytics tools that help virtual charter schools track and analyze student performance data. These insights can inform instructional decisions and support personalized learning.
6. **Teacher Support:** Pearson may offer resources and support for virtual charter school teachers, including lesson planning assistance, access to teaching materials, and online communities for collaboration and sharing best practices.
7. **Student Support Services:** Some offerings may include resources to support students, such as tutoring services, academic counseling, and access to additional learning resources.
8. **Customization and Adaptation:** Pearson may work with virtual charter schools to customize their services to meet the specific needs and goals of the school. This can include tailoring curriculum materials, assessments, and platforms.
9. **Technical Support:** To ensure a smooth online learning experience, Pearson often provides technical support and assistance to virtual charter schools, including help with platform issues and troubleshooting.
10. **Compliance and Accountability:** Pearson may offer services to help virtual charter schools meet regulatory requirements and maintain compliance with educational standards.

It's important to note that the services provided by Pearson can vary depending on the specific needs and goals of each virtual charter school. Virtual charter schools often collaborate with educational companies like Pearson to enhance their offerings and provide a high-quality online learning experience for their students. MCA's relationship with Pearson is extensive, and represents a significant annual investment of the school's resources.

Themes

The evaluator embarked on a comprehensive assessment of Maine Connections Academy, aiming to gauge the institution's overall well-being while placing special emphasis on the intricate dynamics of its partnership with Pearson. Pearson plays a pivotal role in the school's operations, delivering a wide spectrum of services encompassing online curriculum management, student information systems, and essential back-office functions. Maine Connections Academy stands as a distinctive educational entity, setting itself apart from the majority of schools in Maine due to its unique educational offerings and approach.

In the realm of assessing the learning environment, it's imperative to recognize that students' perceptions are a fundamental component of the educational journey. Nevertheless, a significant challenge arises when attempting to measure students' perceptions in the context of blended and online learning, as valid assessment instruments for this purpose are notably scarce. Within the framework of this third-party evaluation, the evaluator embarked on a multifaceted exploration, with three overarching themes at the forefront of inquiry.

Firstly, the investigation delved into the perceptions of integration between face-to-face and online learning. This critical aspect of the educational experience was thoroughly examined to understand how students navigate the synergy between these two modes of learning. Additionally, the assessment ventured into exploring students' perceptions of their contributions in the online environment, shedding light on their roles, responsibilities, and engagement levels within the digital realm.

Moreover, the evaluation sought to uncover the diverse spectrum of challenges and opportunities that online learning presents. It delved into the nuanced landscape of students' perceptions regarding the hurdles they encounter and the prospects that emerge in the online learning sphere. Within the Maine Connections Academy program, a notable hallmark is the substantial degree of student autonomy. Research studies, including meta-analyses conducted by scholars like John Hattie,¹³ consistently affirm the significance of "student control over learning"¹⁴ as a potent factor influencing student achievement. This autonomy underscores the unique character of the MCA program, aligning with broader educational research findings.

¹³ Hattie, J. (2010). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement ; Reveals Teaching's holy Grail. The Times Educational Supplement*. Routledge.

¹⁴ Effect of student choice and control over learning is somewhat higher on motivation outcomes than achievement outcomes, but neither have major consequences on learning and too many choices can be overwhelming.

Ultimately, there is a tremendous amount of student autonomy in the MCA program; researchers such as John Hattie have conducted meta analyses of research finding that “student control over learning” is a significant factor in student achievement.

Findings

I. Faculty Abstract - Quantitative Results

- 22 respondents participated in this year’s study. This is a fourfold increase, and is responsive to a request from the Commission following last year’s report.
- Overwhelmingly faculty and staff report that they “strongly agree” with propositions such as, *To what degree do [they] feel the school...*
 - provides a program that is sufficiently broad to meet the needs of all students;
 - encourages teachers to shape programs/classes to include a variety of experiences which reflect the needs of the students enrolled;
 - supports teachers’ desire to take into consideration the individual needs, learning styles and characteristics of students by providing developmentally appropriate programs and activities to help students achieve their potential;
 - treats teachers with respect;
 - supports teachers’ professional development;
 - gives teachers the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process; and,
 - provides teachers with adequate resources for you, as a teacher, to meet the needs of students.
- Faculty and staff are generally positive about Connections Academy (hereafter *CA* or *PCA*) content, both in terms of engagement and alignment with student interests.
- One faculty member consistently gave the school consistently low marks across the board. This is an aberration.
- Assessments of how “engaging” and “relevant” the Pearson content is has improved over the last 3 years; assessments of the usability (defined the

survey instrument as “intuitive and reliable) and “tech support required of instructional personnel and students” remain stable.

II. Faculty Abstract - Qualitative Results

For those who elected to address open-ended questions and invitation for comment, a few consistent themes emerged. These themes revolve around flexibility, individualized learning, strong teacher-student relationships, and a student-centered approach.

One prominent theme is the ability to customize education for individual students. Respondents appreciate that MCA allows students to complete their classwork at their own pace and choose when to engage with the curriculum. Teachers also offer one-on-one support to help students grasp challenging concepts, tailoring their approach to individual needs. This customization ensures that each student receives a personalized learning experience.

Flexibility emerges as a key benefit, both in terms of scheduling and technology. Students can work on their classwork at times that suit them, and the school employs relevant technology to enhance the learning process. This flexibility extends to the robust advisory program, which aids students in setting and achieving their academic goals.

Faculty and staff highlight the strong relationships between students and staff at MCA. Teachers are described as “competent,” “compassionate,” and “invested,” going above and beyond to support their students. This positive rapport extends to administrators, who are supportive of teachers and families. It's evident that MCA places a high value on building a sense of community and fostering relationships among students, staff, and families.

The school's commitment to student success is clear. It uses strategies like welcome calls to get to know students and families, offering individual or small group meetings to enhance understanding. MCA also collaborates with families and other staff members to meet student needs, ensuring that every student has access to educational options they may not have elsewhere.

When asked where the school could improve, responses ranged from addressing tech issues to state retirement, but few clear themes emerged. Some crave more in-person learning opportunities for students, two cited compensation that, from their perspective, lags local public schools, and one chided a requirement to return

to the office. Others called for fine-tuning of the schedule, and three bewailed not having “enough time.”¹⁵

Specific to the Pearson product, which is the focus of this TPE, respondents generally express satisfaction with the service provider, highlighting several key points:

1. **Fast Response and Support:** Many respondents appreciate the provider's quick response when help is needed. They find this aspect of the service valuable and time-saving.
2. **Abundance of Resources and Opportunities:** The service provider offers a wealth of professional development opportunities, resources, systems, and support. This is seen as a major advantage, indicating a commitment to ongoing learning and improvement.
3. **Inclusivity and Platform:** Respondents mention that the provider's platform is inclusive and aligned with their needs, particularly in terms of professional development opportunities. It appears that the provider is responsive to the evolving requirements of users.
4. **Community and Regular Trainings:** The provider offers a sense of community through regular training and opportunities for professional development. This ongoing support is highly appreciated.
5. **Flexibility in Teaching:** Pearson's academic suite offers flexibility in teaching, allowing educators to adapt their methods to better suit their students. This adaptability is seen as a positive feature.
6. **Overwhelming Resources:** While the abundance of resources is praised, some respondents express that the sheer volume of data and reports can become overwhelming. Respondents indicated that the provider has made efforts to streamline certain processes, making them more efficient.
7. **Alignment with Student Tracking:** Pearson tools and features that align with the needs of student tracking. The ability to access reports and create logs is seen as valuable for this purpose.
8. **Effective Communication:** Respondents note that the service provider communicates effectively, offering good training and communication channels. This contributes to a positive experience with the provider.

¹⁵ The researcher has accredited nearly 30 schools spanning four continents and without exception faculties express concerns about 3 of the 4 following issues: time, communication, compensation, decision-making.

In summary, MCA excels in providing a flexible, student-centered, and highly supportive learning environment. The school's emphasis on customization, strong teacher-student relationships, and community building contributes to its reputation for caring about the success of each student. These survey results underscore MCA's commitment to meeting the unique needs of every learner.

III. Family/Parent Abstract - Quantitative

- Last year's report suffered from insufficient parent and student participation. The Commission provided feedback to the evaluator and the Principal that efforts should be redoubled in this area. I commend Principal Wallace; 236 responses were gathered in the Quantitative research.
- Few parents and students don't feel that the Pearson Academic suite is aligned to their/their child's interests (4.8%), or that the content is "engaging" (9.9%). This remains unchanged from previous reports that have been presented to the Commission.
- Parents were overwhelmingly positive in their assessment of the MCA's program offerings, and generally pleased with their child(ren)'s experience with the Pearson product. Parent responses largely mirrored those of faculty; interestingly, parents were more desirous of in-person contact between instructors and students than the students were. This reverses a three year trend.
- In spite of the primacy of online learning, parents reported feeling that their children were well connected to the faculty and that their student(s) were engaged.
- Unlike many public schools, MCA is functionally in a choice environment--a competitive environment. As such, interrogating why families choose MCA is critically important. Those choices reveal to the MCA what families disliked about a public or private school enrollment prior to coming to MCA, and what they seek in programming and personnel from MCA. Asked why they chose MCA, respondents were presented the following options: anxiety or health; teacher quality or program quality at previous school; poor quality of special education at previous school; bullying or unhealthy climate at previous school; or the generalized "previous school 'didn't work' for [my] family, in general." In 2020, each respondent chose the latter.¹⁶ This unanimity was a marked departure from previous surveys which revealed that parents' motives for selecting MCA varied wildly, from special student needs to

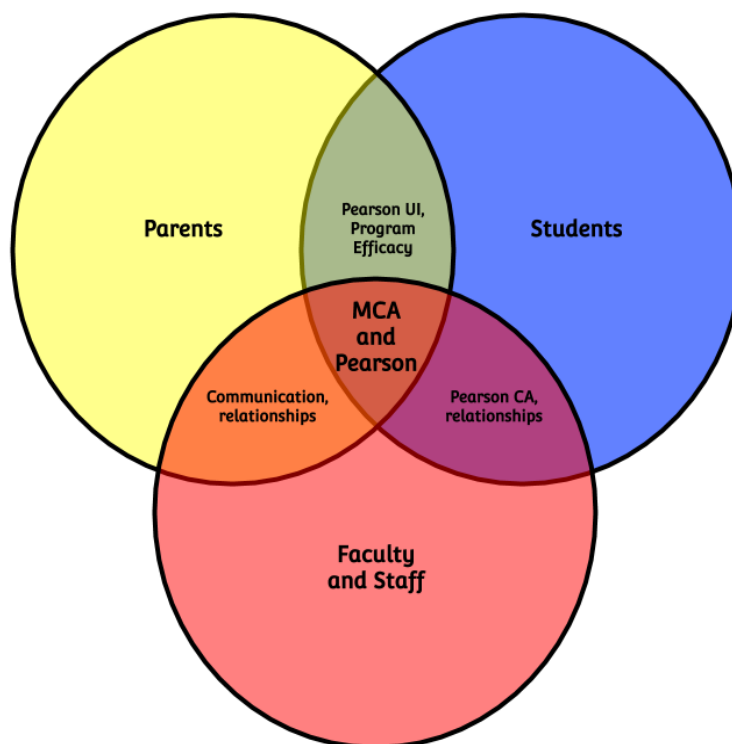
¹⁶ Recall the markedly smaller sample size.

bullying in previous school environments. In 2021, parents returned to the “MCA-as-safe-alternative” to a previous school setting, where special education was considered poor, or the climate unsafe. In 2022, parents reported anxiety and health issues motivated MCA enrollment at the same rate as previous academic settings being poorly suited to the needs of their child(ren).

This year’s data, however, marks a shift worthy of the Commission’s attention. Anxiety and health issues motivate interest in MCA more than any other category. By a wide margin. This is new. The second most frequently cited reason for families’ interest in MCA is to escape bullying or an unhealthy school climate. Taken together, these two represent the lion’s share of what motivated families to choose MCA. Third: poor teacher or program quality. Fourth (which, prior to 2019, and again in subsequent years was more important) families reported that the special education services they were seeking were subpar.

IV. Parent/Family Abstract - Qualitative

Throughline questions triangulated parents, students, and faculty.



MCA's Strengths: Survey respondents consistently praise MCA for its flexibility, effective communication, and dedicated teachers. They appreciate the ability for students to work at their own pace and customize their schedules. The MCA is seen as caring and supportive, offering a safe learning environment. Teachers are commended for their willingness to adapt and focus on individual student needs. Overall, the school's commitment to education, the availability of resources, and its strong teacher-parent communication are key strengths that resonate with respondents. Additionally, the flexibility to work independently while still having support is highly valued.

In the past, vaguely articulated concerns about “fairness” and “assessment validity” found their way into the previous researcher's reports as being pressing issues at MCA. Having not conducted the study myself, even having reviewed the reports it was unclear how this became a “P1 issue” at MCA. Whatever its cause, and whatever awareness the Commission might have about this issue, it has disappeared. Respondents were unanimous in their assertion that the MCA and its Pearson partner “use fair and accurate assessment methods to assess school work.” Given this sea change, this throughline question will be eliminated from next year's report.

MCA's Opportunities to Improve: Parents and students shared their feedback on how the school could improve, and common themes emerged. Communication was a recurring concern, with some feeling overwhelmed by emails and others suggesting clearer communication channels. Socialization in an online environment was seen as challenging, and there were requests for more opportunities for students to connect and engage with each other. Some respondents were unsure about improvements as they were new to the program, while others highlighted concerns related to technology, such as difficulties with the learning management system and the need for better tech support.

Additionally, there were calls for more variety in courses, particularly hands-on classes, and sparse requests for more flexibility in scheduling. Some parents expressed the desire for increased support for special education programs. Overall, the feedback emphasized the importance of effective communication, technological improvements, and a more diverse curriculum.

MCA recognizes its unique opportunity to offer highly customized academic programming for its student body. Indeed, parents both recognize and value the hyper-customized program options for their children, and the important role that

differentiation (especially for students with special learning needs or mental health issues) plays. One parent said it best:

“[I] cannot say enough about the caliber of teachers at MCA. They are amazing, always working hard to make the learning engaging, meaningful, and fun. They work to help students who want more challenges, as well as take a great deal of time to help struggling students. I have not experienced a more individualized educational experience.”

V. Board Abstract

The Board of the Maine Connections Academy has five active members (down from six one year ago) whose governance and fiduciary responsibility mirrors that of most nonprofit organizations. The school’s charter qualifies the role of the board as having responsibilities for all functions of the school. The Board’s full charge is detailed in section 2 of the MCA Charter.¹⁷

As with other stakeholders, Board members were asked about MCA’s strengths and opportunities for improvement. Separately, the Board was queried about matters of governance, resources, mission, and its perception of students’ experiences. For the third year in a row, it is noteworthy how remarks from the Board largely parroted those from parents and students.

As in 2020, 2021, and 2022, all respondents praised the ability of MCA to differentiate and meet the needs of families. Board members cited “flexibility and engagement.” Others cited “high quality, vested [sic] teachers;” it should be noted that the Board’s sentiments toward instructional personnel has been transformed under Principal Wallace’s tenure. A previous report by Dr. Nave called the relationship “toxic.” The Board regards the faculty and school leadership warmly, and readily heaped superlatives like “solid” “competent” “well-functioning” when describing the schools’ employees.

The Board members displayed a high degree of confidence in the operational efficacy of the school. This has been the case year-over-year.

Asked about obstacles and areas of improvement, Board members in previous years discussed improving academic outcomes, social work, and professional

17

<https://www.maine.gov/csc/sites/maine.gov.csc/files/inline-files/FY19%20Maine%20Connections%20Academy.pdf>

development. Those concerns--along with prior gnashing of teeth regarding rigor, mathematics curriculum and outcomes, and the Pearson product--have abated. New this year is an emphasis on growing enrollment and providing more opportunities for students and teachers to connect in person.

The Board unanimously reported that MCA had adequate resources to carry out its mission, as it was last year, and was pleased with the school's relationship with Pearson. One board member called Pearson MCA's most important "silent partner."

Summary

- A. **STUDENTS** The themes that emerged from both the quantitative and qualitative information gleaned from the evaluator did not depart significantly from previous TPEs conducted by me or my colleague Dr. Nave. Students' reasons for choosing MCA were similar, though not exactly the same, as in last year's cohort. Post-pandemic, students are yearning for more in-person opportunities to connect with teachers and each other. Students feel less connected to the curriculum provided by Pearson this year than last, but not by a statistically significant amount.

Year-over-year trends within different student sets were around the flexibility and structure of online education. Further (and equally important) was how much value students placed on relationships with teachers at MCA.

- B. **FAMILIES** MCA's strengths, as acknowledged by survey respondents, include flexibility, effective communication, dedicated teachers, individualized pacing, and strong teacher-parent support. Concerns regarding "fairness" and "assessment validity" mentioned in previous reports have disappeared, with unanimous agreement on fair assessment methods; indeed, this was the only area of the survey instrument with unanimity. MCA is viewed as a safe haven for students for whom a traditional (or parochial, or home school) setting doesn't work. From the student in a traveling dance troupe who needs online classes to the autistic student who was mercilessly bullied at his last high school, MCA truly offers customized learning opportunities for everyone.

However, opportunities for improvement were identified. Some respondents found communication overwhelming and suggested clearer channels. Socialization in an online environment was challenging, and there was a desire for more student interaction. Technical issues, course variety, scheduling flexibility, and special education support were areas highlighted for enhancement. MCA acknowledges the value of customization in addressing diverse student needs.

- C. **TEACHERS** The teaching faculty and leadership group at MCA is as diverse and innovative as the students they serve. The faculty appreciates about MCA what students appreciate about Pearson: flexibility, a recognition of their interests and expertise, and a great deal of support, technical, pedagogical, and in the realm of professional development. Said one teacher,

“MCA has consistently demonstrated growth and evolution. We have high expectations for ourselves, just as we have for our students. These first few weeks have been our most successful start by far. I’m glad to have more ‘face time’ with my colleagues. I appreciate the support of our leadership group. Together, our entire staff/organization is deeply committed to the overarching mission of nurturing our students, helping them achieve academically, and meeting each where they are. It’s a unique and special place.”

Principal Wallace summed it up nicely.

“I can’t imagine a better place to work. The faculty and students here create a magical environment. We offer education tailored to various student needs, whether they come from homeschooling, struggle with anxiety in traditional schools, or require a customized program. Our dedicated faculty and staff, united by our mission, impress me with their care and innovation.”

- D. **BOARD** The board is generally pleased with the operations of the Academy. In a review of my and Dr. Nave’s raw data and notes, the sentiment of the Board in the past (membership has certainly changed, and time has certainly passed) is markedly different than today. The Board was quick to compliment the school’s leadership and heap praise on its teachers. Administrators and staff alike commented on the support they felt from senior leadership; this isn’t always the case.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Maine Connections Academy continues to excel in delivering a robust and comprehensive academic program, meeting the needs of students seeking a remote and highly customized educational experience. Contrary to common perception, MCA isn't just an ordinary "online school"; it operates as a flexible, responsive institution that places people at the center of its mission. Having assessed educational institutions across the globe for 25 years, I can confidently assert that the passion and positivity exhibited by the MCA community surpasses that of the average school.

Notably, MCA has embraced my recommendations, particularly in the realm of academic enhancement. What were once pressing concerns regarding academic outcomes, student assessment, and Board-faculty relations have now taken a backseat, signaling substantial progress.

In the last decade, Maine has conducted various state assessments, though their quality remains debatable. Nevertheless, the shift in assessment methods has made it challenging for conventional schools to analyze normed data effectively (more about which overleaf). MCA benefits from the Pearson environment, offering educators and administrators a unique longitudinal perspective, aiding in identifying students' areas of strength and areas needing support.

The bulk of my research has been dedicated to scrutinizing MCA's operations, relationships, and programs, which form the bedrock of its mission. This effort has focused on understanding stakeholders' perceptions of the Pearson suite of products, a significant component of MCA's annual expenditures exceeding \$1 million. While no product is perfect, my informed conclusion is that MCA's association with Pearson is functional, widely appreciated by stakeholders, and represents a prudent investment in the school's digital infrastructure. It's fair to say that stakeholders overwhelmingly approve of the Pearson suite of products; none suggested abandoning the product or exploring a different vendor or approach.

Reflecting on last year's report, I made several recommendations, including a continuous improvement process for enhancing the "customer service experience." Additionally, analyzing vertical student data to inform decisions and fostering increased parent engagement were advised. Furthermore, the addition of Live Tutor and attention to students' mental health needs were suggested.

After consulting with Principal Wallace and his leadership team, I've found that some of last year's goals have been achieved, while others are still in progress. I commend the MCA team for diligently addressing the 2022 recommendations, going beyond mere checkboxes to thoroughly tackle these issues. These ongoing efforts demonstrate their commitment to continuous improvement and the welfare of their students.

Specific to last year's recommendations, the MCA applied for and was granted an enrollment increase by the Commission. Enrollment is now capped at 500 students, which is the maximum allowable student body. Parent engagement (separate from *communication*) has increased with a moderated Facebook group that has exploded

in popularity, as well as parent engagement sessions that are in the works for each Academic Summit.

Based on interviews and survey data, in the School Year 2023-2024 the MCA Administration and Board are recommended to:

1. Use NWEA and Throughyear assessments to inform instruction and help teachers tailor the Pearson product and “home grown” curricular resources to better meet the needs of students;
2. Continue to shine a light on the social-emotional health of the student body. The MCA the evaluator’s 2022 recommendation for “equitable attention to the mental health needs of students” through the addition of a full-time social worker. Monthly SEL advisory luncheons and the inclusion of mental health awareness with Parent Advisory Councils and in parent engagement sessions are critical; and,
3. To gather more reliable data to inform the practices articulated above in #2, participate in the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey and assemble a team of stakeholders to examine the data. Use the data to inform program and staffing positions related to student health and support.

Coversheet

Maine Virtual Academy's Independent Third Party Evaluation

Section: VI. Presentations
Item: B. Maine Virtual Academy's Independent Third Party Evaluation
Purpose: FYI
Submitted by:
Related Material: MeVA SY2022-23 Independent Third Party Evaluation.pdf

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Evaluation Purpose and Methodology	2
Revised Enrollment Process for New Students	3
Revised Re-enrollment Process	4
Onboarding Process	4
Revised Enrollment Process for New Students	5
Revised Re-enrollment Process	9
Onboarding Process	14
Parent Survey	14
Student Survey	14
Positive reviews.....	22
Constructive advice	23
Negative Review.....	24
Case Studies	24
Student 1	24
Student 2	25
Student 3	26
Student 4	27
Key Takeaways	28
Overall Summary	29
Recommendations	32
Appendix A	33
2021–2022 Executive Summary	33

Introduction

The Maine Virtual Academy (MEVA) is one of two virtual public charter schools authorized by the Maine Charter School Commission. MEVA enrolls seventh through 12th-grade students and is open to any student in these grades who resides in Maine. As with all public brick-and-mortar schools, students must meet eligibility guidelines. The major difference between enrollment at public brick-and-mortar schools and MEVA is the number of available spaces. Public brick-and-mortar schools accept all eligible students with no capacity limits. In contrast, enrollment at MEVA is limited by the number of spaces allotted by the Maine Charter School Commission. All eligible applicants may enroll in the school if there is adequate capacity. If the number of applicants exceeds the available slots, a lottery system selects which applicants can enroll.

A requirement of virtual public charter schools is a third-party evaluation each year. The school administration determines the intent of the evaluation. This report documents the purpose, methodology, findings, and recommendations of the 2022–2023 academic year evaluation for MEVA. The evaluation was designed and administered by Mary Madden, Ph.D. of Dr. Madden and Associates. Dr. Madden also conducted the 2021–2022 evaluation, and this report includes follow-up on those results. (Appendix A consists of a copy of the Executive Summary of the 2021–2022 evaluation report.)

Evaluation Purpose and Methodology

Based on the recommendations provided in the 2021–2022 evaluation of the enrollment processes, both the new student enrollment and re-enrollment processes were revised. This 2022–2023 evaluation assessed the parent/legal guardian (hereafter referred to as parent) experience with the revised procedures. The 2021–2022 evaluation had limited student response on the onboarding process, so additional efforts were initiated to hear from students on the topic. The following questions framed the 2022–2023 evaluation:

1. How well did revisions to the new enrollment process address concerns raised by parents in the 2021–2022 evaluation?
2. How well did revisions to the re-enrollment process address concerns raised by parents in the 2021–2022 evaluation?
3. How did students experience the onboarding process and acclimate to MEVA?

Revised Enrollment Process for New Students

The new student enrollment process occurs twice a year: once for mid-year enrollment and once for fall enrollment. The process is the same for both periods.

Revisions to the process included the following:

1. Parents were provided with a checklist of steps to demonstrate completion of the enrollment process.
2. Parents were reminded to contact school staff if they were experiencing challenges with the re-enrollment process.

Once the enrollment processes were complete, emails with a link to a survey were sent to parents. Several reminders were sent subsequently. The only difference between the two surveys was that the mid-year enrollment survey included questions about onboarding, while the fall enrollment survey did not. At mid-year, 49 new students were enrolled, and 10 parents responded to the survey. For the new student enrollment in the fall, 169 enrolled, and 29 parents responded to the survey. The return rate for the combined surveys was 18%, which is considered low, and thus, the findings may not be representative of all parents who enrolled their child at MEVA for the first time.

Revised Re-enrollment Process

The re-enrollment process began in February 2023 when parents were emailed the request to re-enroll their child if they planned to continue at MEVA for the upcoming academic year starting in the fall of 2023. Revisions to the process, which were made based on recommendations from the 2021–2022 evaluation report, were as follows:

1. The guided walk-through of each step in the process was revised to ensure that it mirrored what parents would encounter.
2. Re-enrollment was consolidated from a two-part process to a one-part process.
3. Parents were provided a checklist of steps for re-enrollment.

To assess the challenges parents experienced with the re-enrollment process during the 2021–2022 academic year, staff disseminated a survey to 324 parents who re-enrolled their child in MEVA. A total of 101 parents responded to the survey, resulting in a response rate of 31%. This rate is considered average overall.

Onboarding Process

Historically, MEVA has provided all new students and their parents with an orientation session done virtually. The typically well-attended session includes information on navigating online classes through the cloud-based learning management system Brightspace. It also outlines the expectations of students and parents and gives instructions for logging student attendance. Students and parents receive a PowerPoint presentation of the information and the phone number for the onboarding coordinator at MEVA. The session is also recorded to give those unable to attend access to the information. Upon beginning at MEVA, students are encouraged to ask for help from teachers as needed. A help desk is also available to answer student questions.

Last year, a limited number of students responded about their onboarding experience. For this evaluation, an effort was made to hear more students' reasons for selecting MEVA and their experience onboarding at the school. Two methods were used to collect data. First, a survey was sent to students a few weeks after the start of a semester to learn about their experience with

onboarding and acclimating to the school. The survey consisted of 12 multiple-choice questions and four open-ended questions. Open-ended questions were analyzed to identify themes, and student responses were coded into one or more identified themes. A total of 69 students responded, 25 of whom entered middle school and 43 who entered high school. Most students who responded were in seventh through 10th grade. One student did not identify their grade.

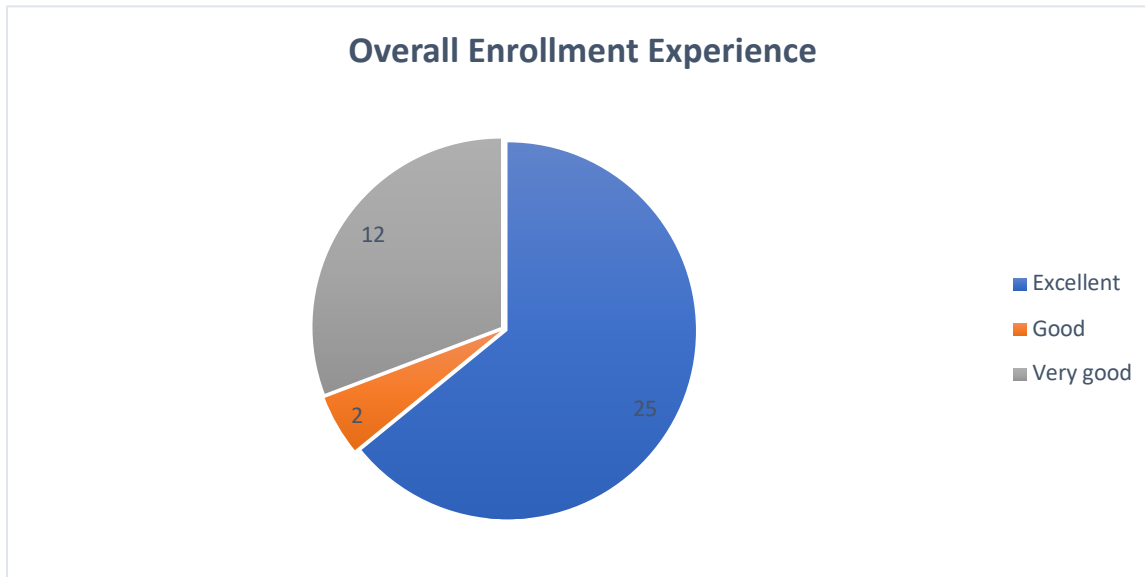
The second data collection method entailed interviewing parents and students. The school asked parents with children who had newly enrolled in the fall for the start of the academic year or mid-year for the spring semester if they would be willing to participate in an interview regarding enrollment and onboarding. Once a parent agreed, their email and telephone number were provided to Dr. Madden as the evaluator. She contacted them to introduce herself and set up an interview. Of the parents referred to her, four responded and set up times for discussions. In these interviews, she spoke with two parents individually, one parent and son together, and one student alone (with the parent's permission). Three interviews were conducted via Zoom and one by telephone. Each interview was completed a few weeks into the student's first semester at MEVA. The interviews, which lasted 20–30 minutes, were recorded and then transcribed for analysis. While the proposed plan was to briefly interview parents and students at the end of the year to check in, Dr. Madden could not set up final interviews despite several outreach attempts.

Findings

Revised Enrollment Process for New Students

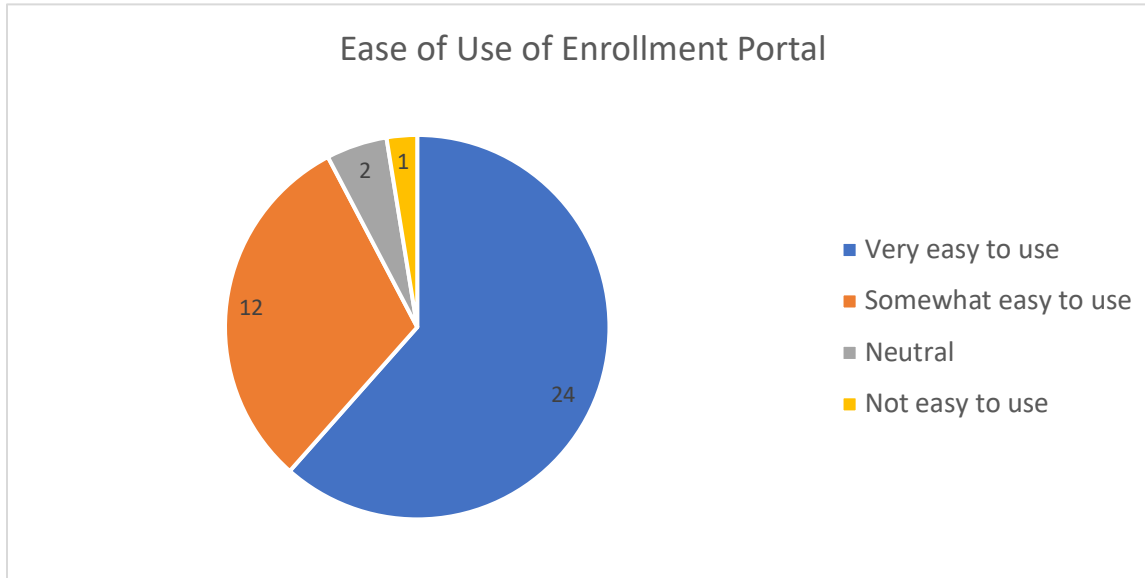
Parents were asked to rate their overall experience with the enrollment process on a five-point scale that ranged from “Excellent,” “Very good,” “Good,” “Fair,” and “Poor.” Most parents n rated the experience as “Excellent” or “Very good.” No parent rated the experience as “Fair” or “Poor.” Figure 1 illustrates the breakdown of responses.

Figure 1: Overall Enrollment Experience



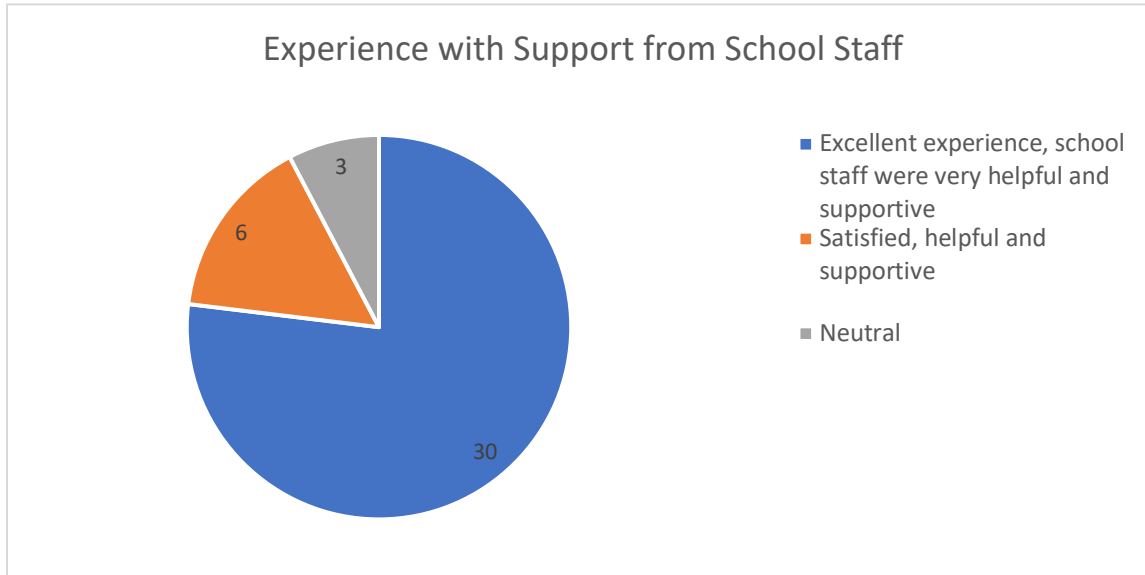
Parents were asked to rate their ease of use of the Enrollment Portal using a five-point scale that ranged from “Very easy to use,” “Somewhat easy to use,” “Neutral,” “Not easy to use,” and “Very difficult to use.” The majority (n=36) said the portal was either “Very easy to use” or “Somewhat easy to use.” The one parent who indicated the portal was “Not easy to use” commented, “I am not great with computers, but Meaghan [a staff member] talked me through the issues that I couldn’t figure out. She is a lifesaver!” Figure 2 illustrates the breakdown of responses.

Figure 2. Ease of Use of Enrollment Portal



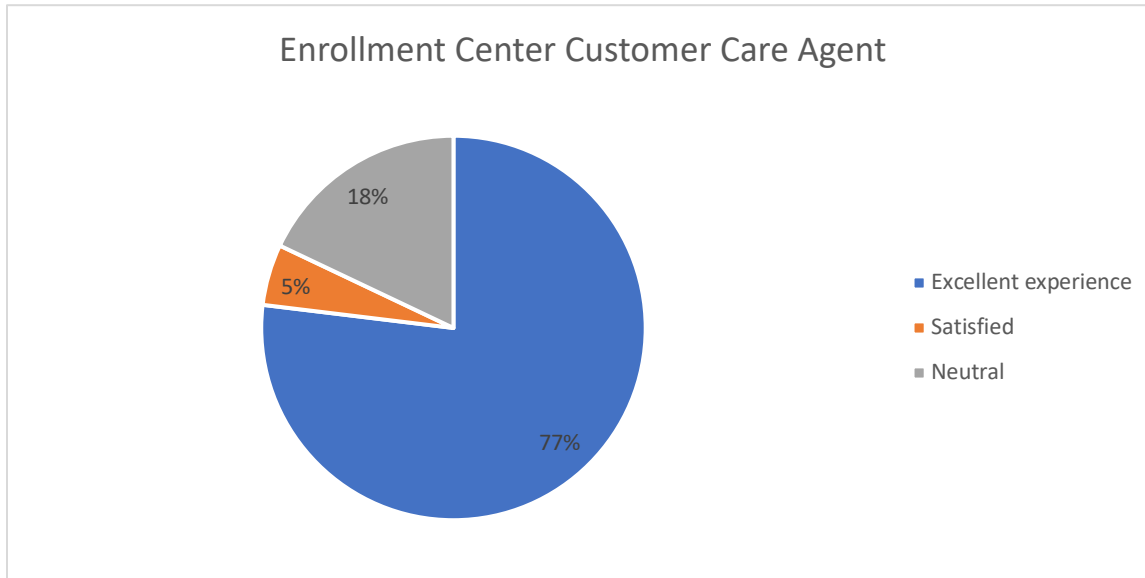
The revised instructions for parents enrolling a new student emphasized that parents should contact MEVA staff for help with any challenges. All parents who responded to this survey received the support offered. They were asked to rate the staff’s helpfulness and support on a five-point scale that ranged from “Excellent experience...,” “Satisfied...,” “Neutral,” “Not fully satisfied...,” and “Poor service.” Most parents (n=30) indicated they had an “Excellent experience.” Figure 3 illustrates the full text of the response options and the breakdown of responses.

Figure 3. Experience with Support from School Staff



In addition to contacting the school, revisions included the option for parents to contact the Customer Care Center of Stride Learning Solutions, host of the online Enrollment Portal. Parents were asked to rate their experience with the Stride’s Customer Care agents using a slightly abbreviated version of the same five-point scale on which they rated their experience with school staff. All parents who responded to this survey had contacted the Customer Care Center. As with support from staff, most (n=30) rated their experience “Excellent.” Figure 4 illustrates the breakdown of responses.

Figure 4. Enrollment Center Customer Care Agent

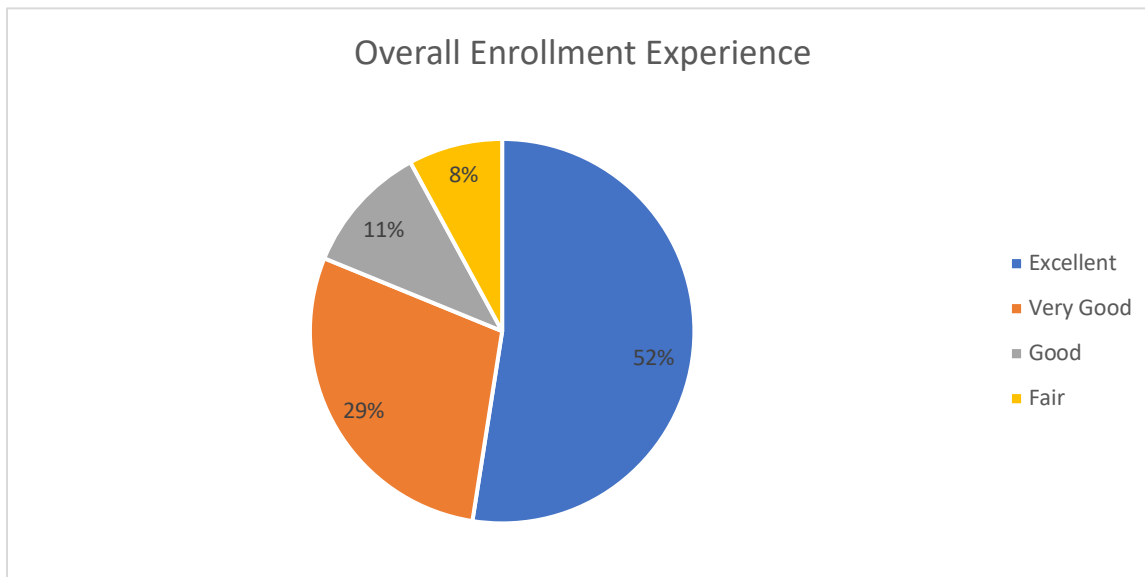


Finally, parents were asked if they received an acceptance letter or email. All respondents replied that they had received notification of their child’s acceptance to the school.

Revised Re-enrollment Process

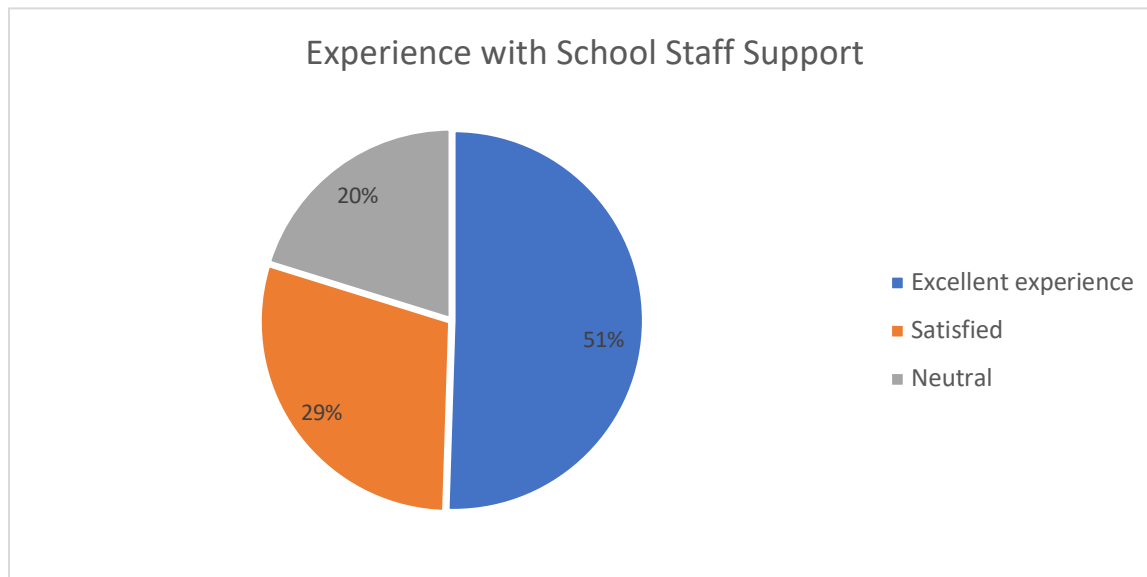
When asked to rate their overall experience with the re-enrollment process using a five-point scale that ranged from “Excellent,” “Very good,” “Good,” “Fair,” and “Poor,” slightly more than half rated it as “Excellent.” No respondent rated it as “Poor.” Figure 5 illustrates the breakdown of responses.

Figure 5. Overall Re-enrollment Experience



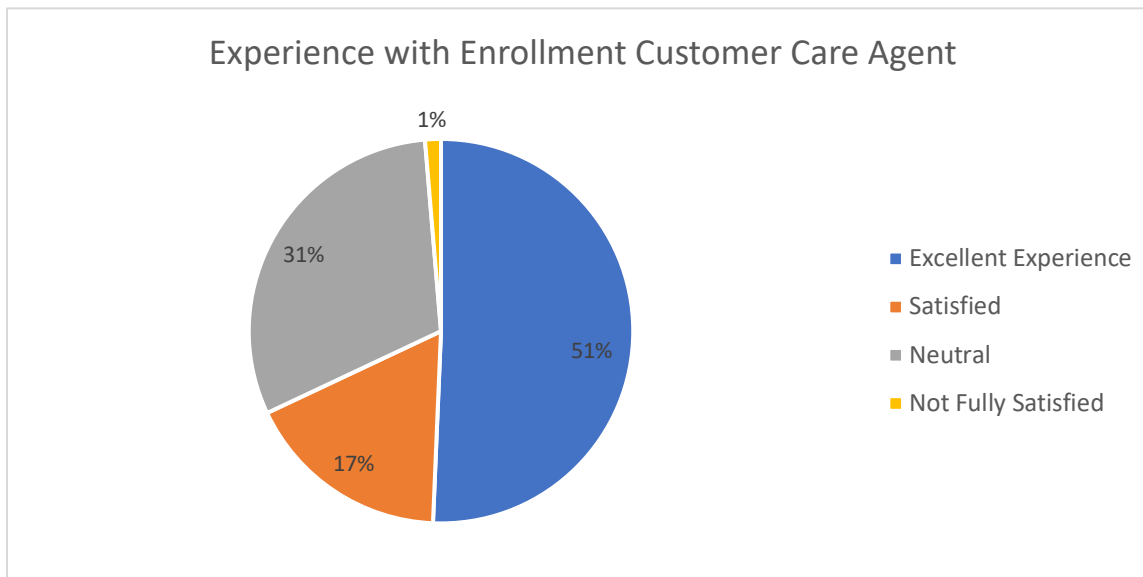
As with the new enrollment process, parents can contact school staff or the Customer Care Center for Stride Learning Solutions, the company that supports the registration process at MEVA. Eighty-two parents indicated that they contacted school staff for support. They were asked to rate the staff’s helpfulness and support on a five-point scale that ranged from “Excellent experience...,” “Satisfied...,” “Neutral,” “Not fully satisfied...,” and “Poor service.” Of those, 80% reported an “Excellent” or “Very good” experience. Figure 6 illustrates the breakdown of responses.

Figure 6. Experience with School Staff Support



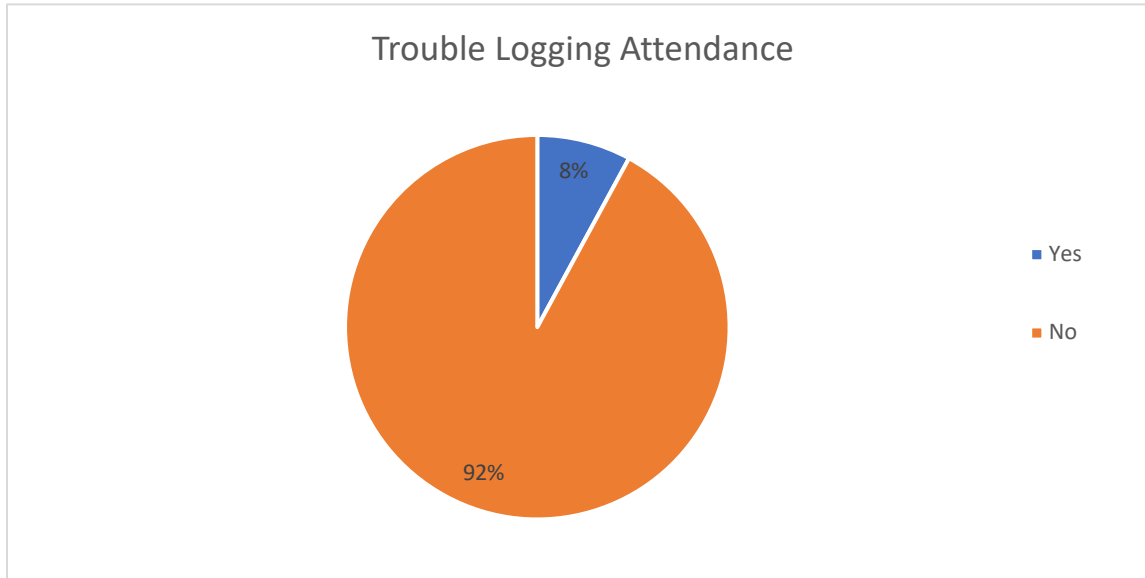
Of the 75 parents who indicated they contacted the Customer Care Center, 68% reported an “Excellent” or satisfactory experience. Figure 7 illustrates the breakdown of responses.

Figure 7. Experience with Enrollment Center Customer Care Agent



Parents of MEVA students are responsible for logging their child’s daily attendance using an application named Pulse. The survey asked if they had begun logging attendance. Response options were “Yes,” “No,” and “I am experiencing difficulties with logging attendance or difficulty navigating to where I need to log.” Most parents (92%) did not have difficulties logging attendance for their child. Three parents reported having problems. One parent could find where she needed to log in, but the logging function failed. One parent said that Pulse is “very glitchy on an Apple computer.” Figure 8 illustrates the breakdown of responses.

Figure 8. Trouble Logging Attendance



All students enrolled at MEVA are entitled to a loaner computer from the school. The survey asked parents whether they had requested the use of a computer. If the parent received a school computer, they were given eight options to describe their experience with the hardware and software, an option for “Other,” and space to write details of their experience. All five parents who requested a computer for their child reported that it was working properly and could access the necessary sites.

Finally, parents were invited to share any additional comments. No themes were identified among their responses, which are below.

Thank you all for everything you do. I have never met a more caring and dedicated staff.

MEVA really needs more school events and functions or a PTO to try to bring the kids together a little more. I believe they could learn a lot from one another.

I really don't like the way that people are essentially telling my daughter that she could just do the work if she can't do it. If she can't understand it, then I feel a different approach needs to be taken, as she has disabilities and special needs. I understand about giving a gentle (push) here and there, but it's being taken a little too far, in my opinion. When we don't listen to our children is when there's problems, and rather than a solution, I feel it's more of a hindrance.

Competence is lacking. Ms. Browne sets rules that teachers ignore, and there are no results or consequences. Students pay a price for teachers who flout rules and disrespect students and coaches. Communication is sadly lacking.

Onboarding Process

Parent Survey

Ten parents who enrolled students mid-year for the spring semester responded to questions about the onboarding experience. These are the results:

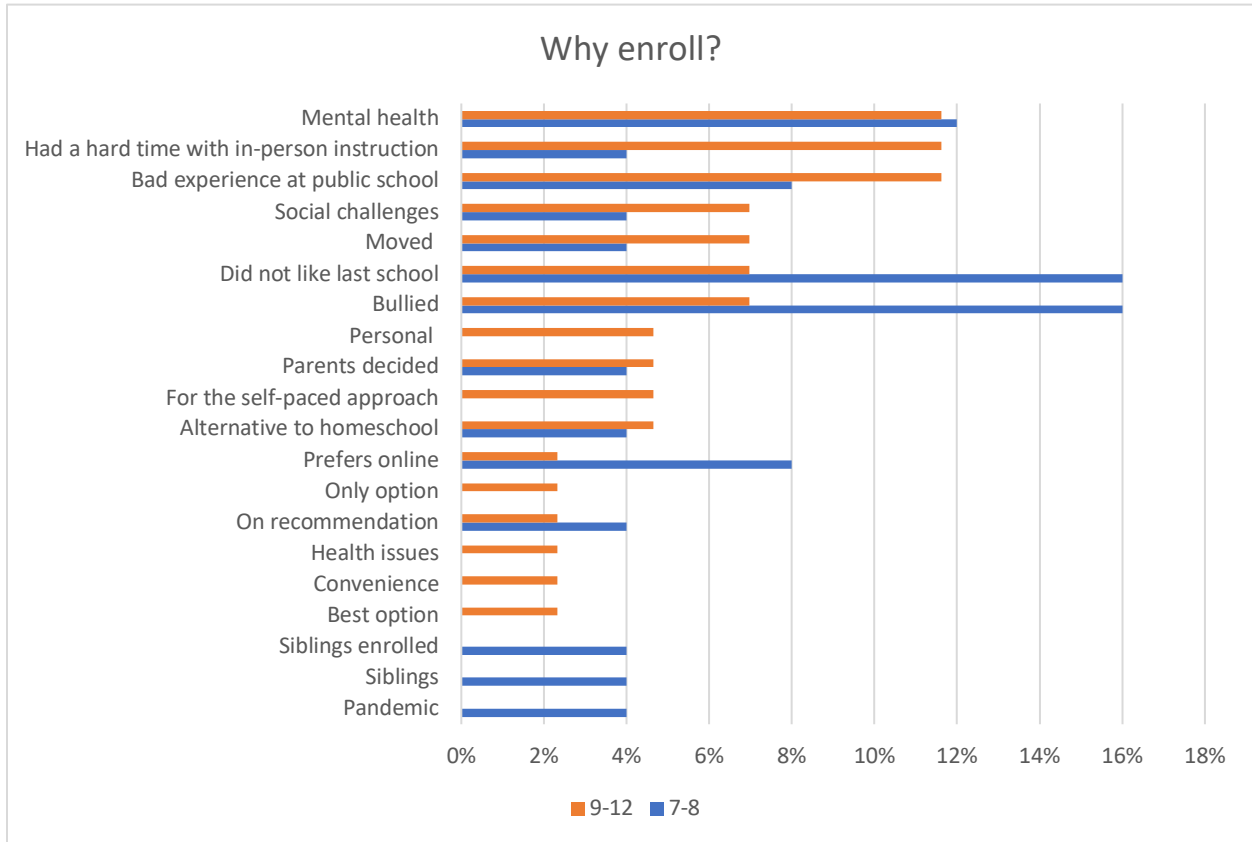
- All found the overall experience to be either “Excellent” (n=6) or “Very good” (n=4) on a five-point scale that included “Good,” “Fair,” and “Poor.”
- All reported that their experience with the onboarding team at MEVA was “Excellent” or “Good” on a five-point scale that included “Neutral,” “Fair,” and “Poor.”
- Nine parents reported attending the orientation session, while one parent watched the recording.
- All parents had begun logging their child's attendance.

Student Survey

A few weeks into their first semester, students were asked to respond to questions about their selection of MEVA and their onboarding experience. When asked why they enrolled at MEVA, most middle school students did not like the last school they attended, had personal reasons, or had difficulty with in-person instruction. High school students were most likely to indicate that

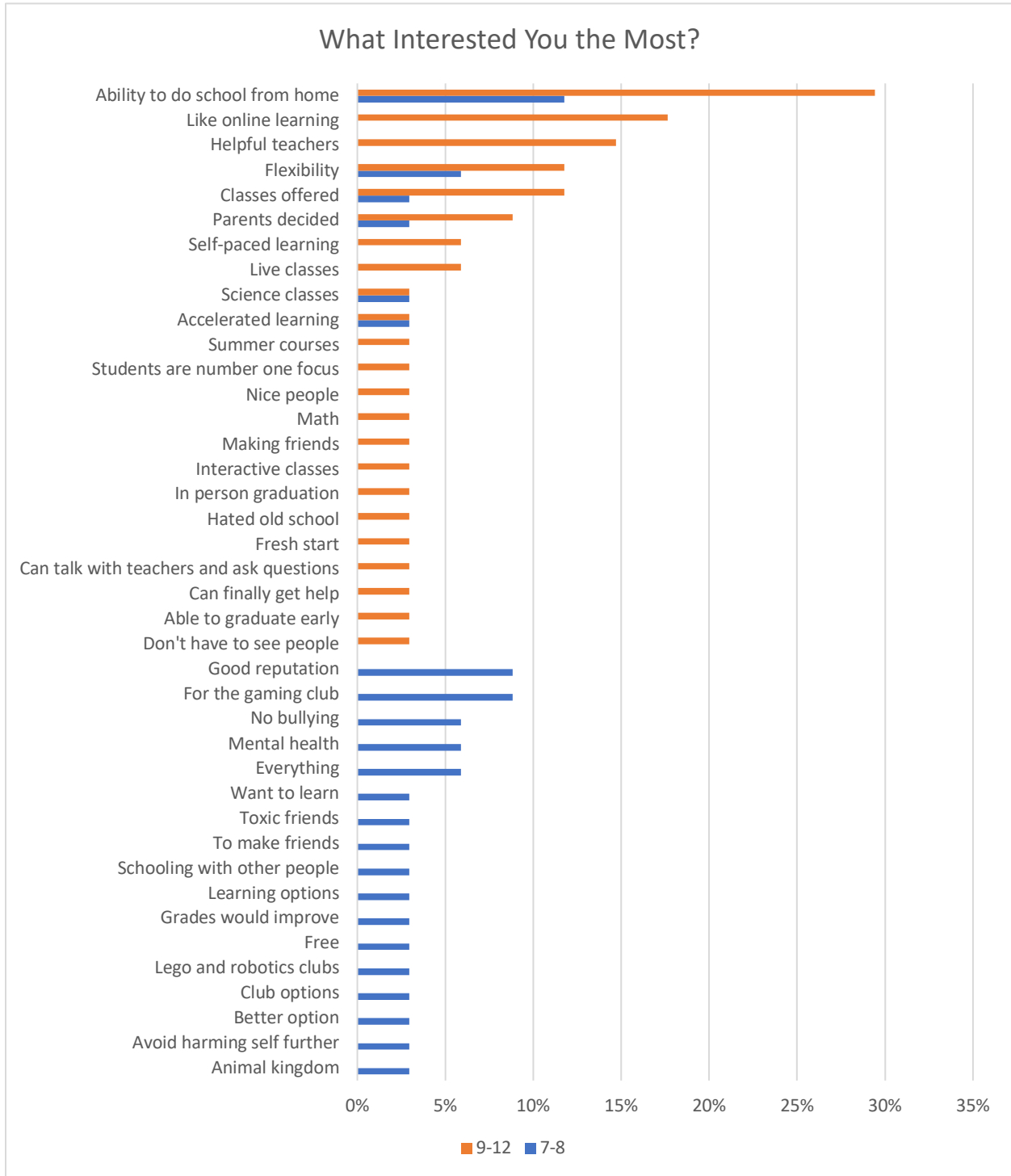
they had a hard time with in-person instruction, had a bad experience at their last school, or experienced mental health challenges. Figure 9 illustrates the breakdown of responses.

Figure 9. Why Enroll at MEVA



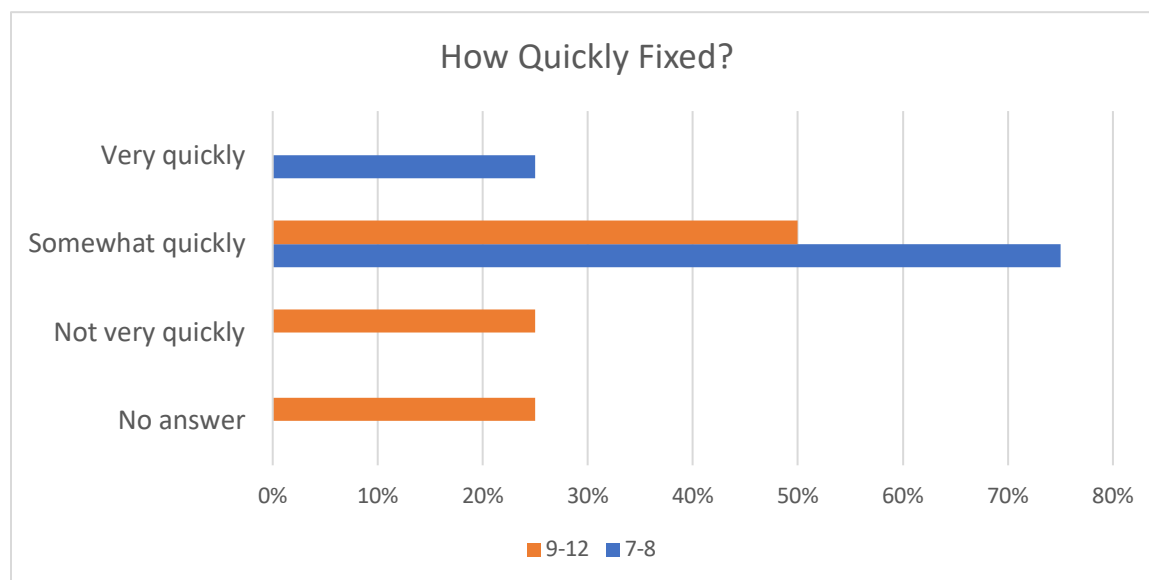
Students were asked what interested them about MEVA. Responses varied widely, and analysis did not reveal specific themes. High school students were most likely to say they liked the ability to do school from home, while middle school students liked online learning. These may or may not have the same meaning. Figure 10 illustrates the breakdown of responses.

Figure 10. What Interested You the Most?



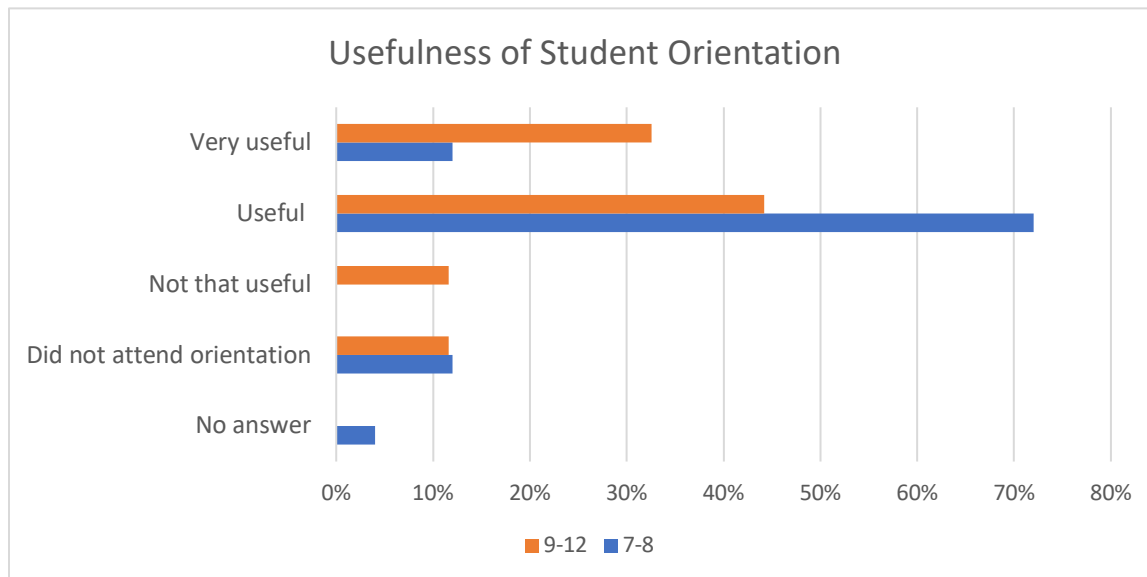
A total of 47 students (17 middle school and 30 high school) reported using a school computer. Eight of the students (four middle school and four high school) indicated that they had a problem with their computer. Six students reported their computer was fixed “Very quickly” or “Somewhat quickly,” with the other option being “Not very quickly.” Figure 11 illustrates the breakdown of responses.

Figure 11. How Quickly Fixed?



Respondents were asked how useful they found the student orientation. All middle school students who attended the orientation found it “Very useful” or “Useful.” Of the 38 high school students who attended orientation, 33 found it “Useful” or “Very useful.” Other options were “Not that useful” and “Not at all useful.” Figure 12 illustrates the breakdown of responses.

Figure 12. Usefulness of Student Orientation



Four high school students offered suggestions for changes to orientation. The following is a list of changes, each offered by one student:

Give clearer explanations.

Have schedules.

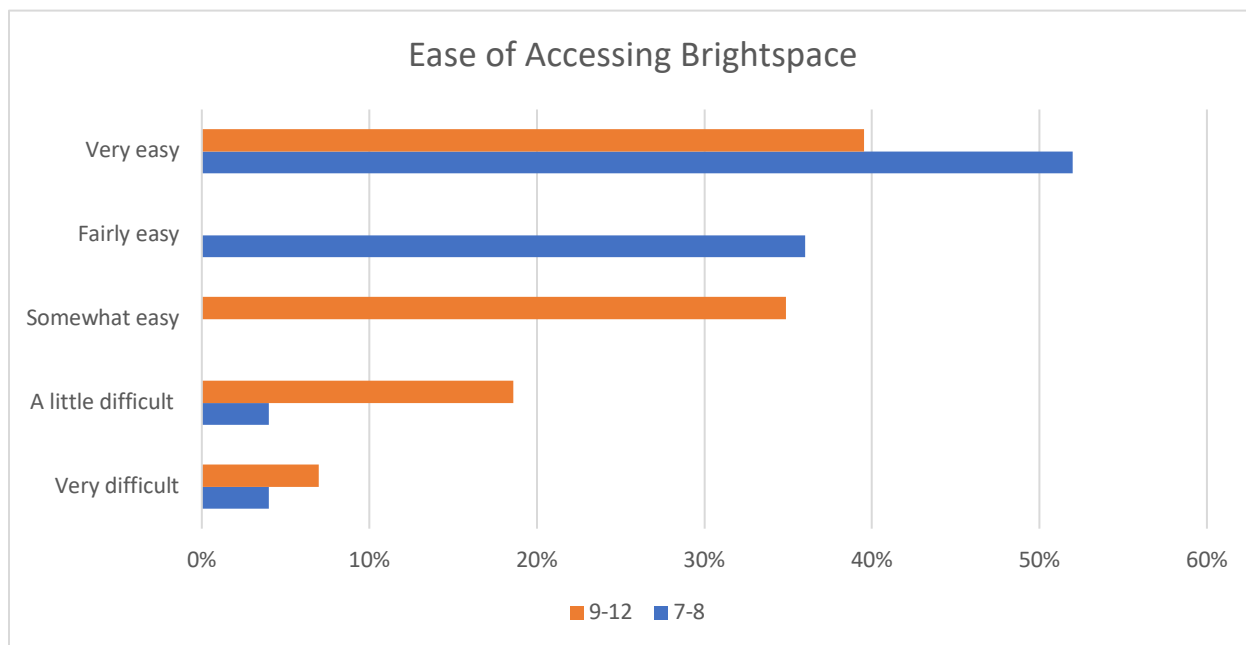
Make it shorter.

It was good but could have been a little more in deep about the classes and how to play back a class that is missed.

When asked about the ease of accessing Brightspace, students were given a five-point scale that ranged from “Very easy,” “Fairly easy,” “A little difficult,” and “Very difficult.” Most middle school students reported that accessing Brightspace was either “Very easy” or “Fairly easy.” Approximately 75% of high school students indicated that it was either “Very easy” or “Fairly

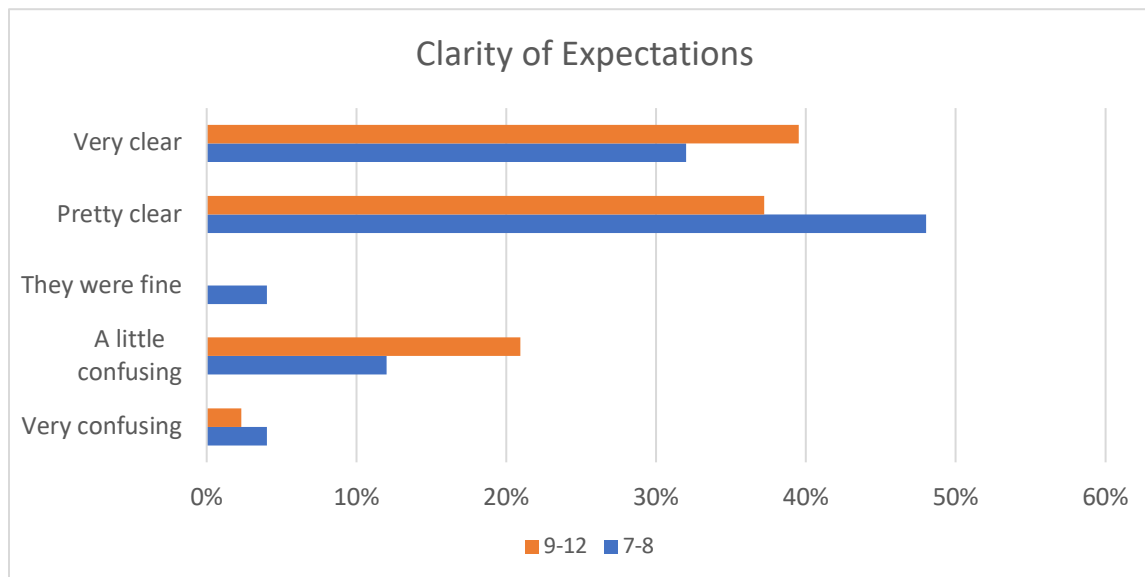
easy,” but 26% reported that it was “A little difficult” or “Very difficult.” Figure 13 illustrates the breakdown of responses.

Figure 13. Ease of Accessing Brightspace



Students were asked about the clarity of the expectations at MEVA based on a five-point scale that ranged from “Very clear,” “Pretty clear,” “Fine,” “A little confusing,” and “Very confusing.” Most of the students found them to be “Pretty clear” or “Very clear.” Three middle school students and nine high school students found the expectations “A little confusing,” while two students (one middle school and one high school) found the expectations to be “Very confusing.” Figure 14 illustrates the breakdown of responses.

Figure 14. Clarity of Expectations



When asked for their thought on how to make the expectations clearer, the following suggestions were offered:

Clearer schedule, expectations, and more organized.

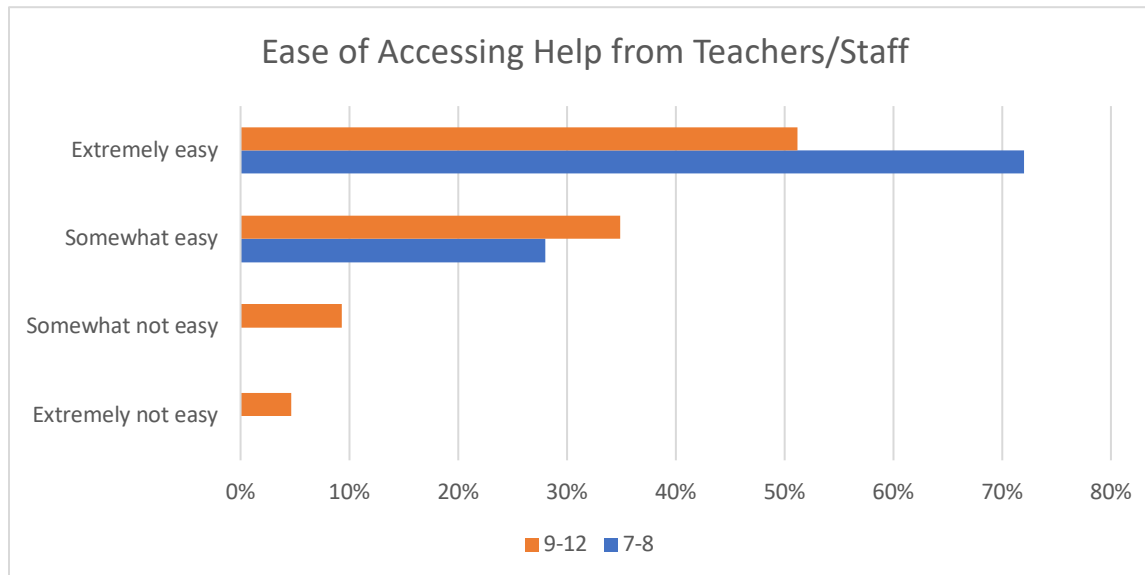
Clearer instructions on how to navigate the classes and play back the videos.

Offer demonstrations of the expectations.

Provide more instructions on navigating Brightspace.

Students were asked how easy it was to get help from teachers or staff. One hundred percent of middle school students and 86% of high school students found it “Extremely easy” or “Somewhat easy.” Six high school students found it “Somewhat not easy” or “Extremely not easy.” Figure 15 illustrates the breakdown of responses.

Figure 15. Ease of Accessing Help from Teachers/Staff

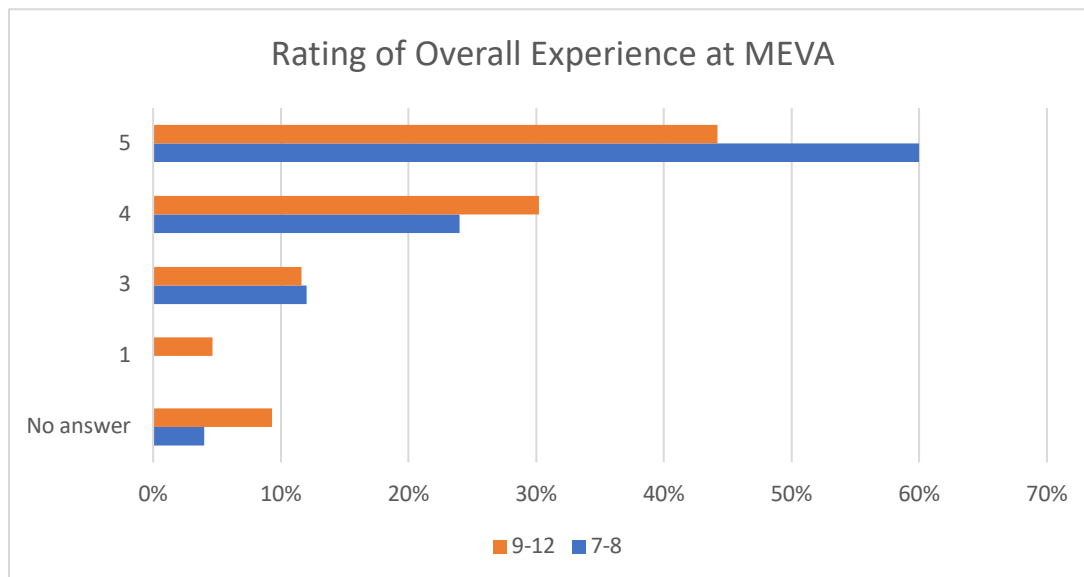


When asked for additional comments on accessing help, nine students said teachers and staff were very helpful, while 22 had nothing to add. The following themes were identified in the comments of those who said it was not easy to access help:

- Teachers or staff delayed their responses or ignored their questions (n=4)
- Vague responses to question (n=1)
- Help desk was unhelpful (n=1)
- Need an easier way to find the right person to answer questions (n=1)

Students were asked to rate their overall experience at MEVA using 1 to 5 stars, with one being low and five being high. Fifty percent of students rated their experience as 5 star, while 28% rated it 4 star. As seen below, middle school students were likelier to rate their experience as 5 star than high school students (60% versus 44%). Figure 16 illustrates the breakdown of responses.

Figure 16. Rating of Overall Experience at MEVA



Finally, students were asked, “If a friend were considering enrolling at MEVA, what advice would you give them?” The following separates the responses into three categories—positive reviews, constructive advice, and negative reviews. Four students gave an outright positive review, while only one gave a negative one. Most student responses provided constructive advice for succeeding at MEVA. The following are direct student quotes, but spelling and punctuation were corrected.

Positive reviews

Four students endorsed the school and added the following comments:

It’s a good school, so I would do it.

Do it.

I would say give it a try. The teachers and students are very nice.

I would tell them it’s a great school, and they should give it a try.

Constructive advice

Starting something new and talking to new people is challenging, but it will get easier over time—like breaking in a new bike. It might be weird at first but is comfortable after time of use.

I would say don't be afraid to ask questions because everyone has questions.

I wish my friend enrolled here. The real school's not very nice to her. She has friends and all, but the staff is extremely unhelpful, and most of the kids behave terribly. I would tell her it's different here.

To pace yourself with the work, and if you can't figure out the set-up of Brightspace, it takes a little to get used to, but ultimately, it is an incredibly easy-to-use source for school.

Just pay attention to your schedule.

That they need to ask the teacher about what times/days they are able to do school related stuff and check emails and such.

To try to keep up with the work because once you're behind it is difficult to get caught up.

It's challenging but gets easier over time.

Don't be afraid to ask for help.

It's different here. Better than old school, where staff was unhelpful, and kids behaved terribly.

Negative Review

It's really confusing here. I am in the fifth week, and I still have no idea what's going on.

Case Studies

Student 1

Student 1 is a male in his junior year. He decided to leave his brick-and-mortar school due to “unrelenting bullying” from staff and administrators about his political beliefs. He also found the academics at his school to be lacking. He commented, “Most classes were just like hanging out.” Neighbors had children who had attended and graduated from MEVA and had nothing but great things to say about the school. This high praise led to his decision to enroll.

The student's mom was very impressed with the enrollment process. She was particularly happy that the school personnel listened to her son's needs. She recognized the need for him to have a 504. Despite trying to have an assessment at his brick-and-mortar school, the administration had not responded. A 504 meeting came together quickly at MEVA, and everyone who should have been there was there. The suggestion was made that this student had ample credits and would be able to graduate early. Also, he would be given credit for his work experience. He was able to participate asynchronously in his classes.

This student did express concerns about himself and the lack of socialization. MEVA suggested he could participate in extra-curricular activities at his district school. However, when Mom requested that he be able to join sports, the administration at the brick-and-mortar school denied the request, indicating they had just passed a rule that required students to be enrolled at the school to join extra-curricular activities.

The student said he was enjoying being a student at MEVA. A person at MEVA suggested that this student could take classes at the community college, but the student was uninterested.

The student's mom especially liked the school but had one challenge. She serves as her son's learning coach and finds this difficult as he is a “procrastinator,” according to her. He does not

disagree with her assessment. She would like him to have a coach other than her. Her ideal situation would be for him to have a teacher or staff person to whom he must report daily. She commented that when you are not self-motivated, there needs to be someone other than Mom for daily accountability.

Mom would recommend MEVA to other parents. She believes they care about students, work hard to meet their needs, and try hard to provide a good learning environment. She believes MEVA could market itself to students who have selected a career path but need a high school diploma to make their choice a reality. She also suggested that more people at Maine schools need to know about MEVA as a choice for struggling students. Lastly, Mom strongly believes that local public schools must make some classes, such as those in the trades, available to MEVA students and should allow students in their district to join extra-curricular activities.

This student reports that he has especially enjoyed his time at MEVA. He finds the teacher and staff to be the nicest people and says it is 100% better than his brick-and-mortar school. He “definitely would recommend the school to a friend, especially one that needs a 504 accommodation.”

Student 2

Student 2 is a female who entered MEVA as an eighth grader mid-year for the spring 2023 semester. She has Asperger’s and was “constantly bullied” by her peers at her brick-and-mortar school. The student’s mom attempted several times to get the administration to address the bullying but received no response. After doing some research, they chose to apply to MEVA. The student registered for the fall semester but decided to give public school another chance. She instead began at MEVA in the spring. Mom found the staff, particularly Meaghan, to be very helpful in activating her daughter’s application and enrolling her. Overall, she found the enrollment process to be very easy with the support of the staff.

The student has been at MEVA for about a month. Mom reports that she feels listened to when communicating with staff about her daughter’s needs. She “always gets prompt and helpful responses” when communicating with them.

According to Mom, her daughter is settling in quickly. The student communicates regularly with teachers and is doing especially well academically, enjoying school, and making friends.

“Making friends is a big deal for my daughter because of her Asperger syndrome.”

Mom would like to see upgraded computers, but she also stated that she understands budgets are tight and computers are expensive. Her advice to other parents considering MEVA is, “Do it. It will change your child’s life.”

Student 3

Student 3 is a female who entered MEVA as an eighth grader. I interviewed this student by herself, with her mother’s permission. The student described that she experiences anxiety. She describes her brick-and-mortar school as “socially and academically bad.” The student explained she did not want to move to a virtual school, but her parents wanted her to try it, so they enrolled. When asked if being at a virtual school had helped her anxiety, she replied, “It’s about the same as it was at her last school.”

The student described orientation as “a little helpful,” but said she basically figured out how to navigate classes herself. She explained that the toughest part was learning to upload her assignments to Brightspace, but then a teacher showed the class how to do it.

The student reports that she has good communication with her teachers and advisors. She commented that a couple of teachers will put her in a breakout room and give her one-on-one help when she is struggling. She said, “There is always someone there if I need help. They have done really good.” She reports that her academic progress and performance are approximately the same as at her last school.

The student also reports that she doesn’t like the virtual experience because of the lack of communication with her peers. When asked if she would recommend MEVA to a friend, she said, “If you are a really social person, don’t do it. But if you have really bad anxiety, then do it.”

Student 4

Student 4 is a female who entered MEVA in the seventh grade. She has an older sibling currently attending the school. Both students have special needs. I interviewed the student's mom, but the daughter was offscreen in the background, listening and occasionally commenting. Mom said her daughter was "uncomfortable with some topics" at her brick-and-mortar school. The daughter did approach the administrator to share her discomfort. According to Mom, her child then found herself subject to locker searches, to which the daughter added in a yell, "for no reason." Mom explained that her daughter felt violated and asked if she could go to MEVA with her brother.

Mom found the enrollment process easy with several staff members' help. She commented that if she had questions, all she had to do was call. She said the staff were always very helpful. She found orientation helpful but remarked that there are simply some things you need to do to figure them out.

Mom is very impressed with the school. She likes that students are not pushed forward if they are confused. If her daughter does not understand something, they help her until she gets it. She sees the teachers helping her daughter to think critically and believes that will make her successful. Mom also noticed neither of her children could spell very well. After she raised this issue with the school, MEVA provided support to help her children learn spelling.

Mom is very happy with both her children's progress at MEVA. She says they figure out how they learn best and then use strategies specific to their learning style. She intends to keep both children at MEVA through graduation.

When asked what advice she would give other parents considering enrolling their child in MEVA, she said they should do it. She commented that there is no bullying even though everything is online and that parents have more input into their child's education. One of her concerns is the lack of connection with other students. She advises other MEVA parents to ensure their child is involved in out-of-school activities with other kids regularly and monitor for signs of depression or other mental health concerns.

Key Takeaways

While the cases are different, they have some similarities and important takeaways. All the students had some type of special need. At their previous school, two became the target of peer bullying, and the administration targeted two for expressing their views or concerns.

The three parents who participated in the interviews said the staff were extremely helpful and responsive during enrollment. All felt heard by the staff. They believed their child's needs were being well met, and accommodations of varying kinds were implemented to support their child's success. Both parents and students experienced that staff and teachers were always there to help them understand their lessons and accomplish the goals of classes.

Regarding the onboarding process, parents and students generally found it helpful. One student said that Brightspace presented some challenges, particularly with uploading assignments. However, once a teacher showed the class how it worked, the student could do it. Both parents and students commented on how accessible and helpful staff and teachers are to students.

One area where the two students expressed concern was the lack of social connection with other students. They experienced isolation. One student requested to be enrolled in extra-curricular activities in the local district school they had attended, but the administration denied the request. One mom advised other parents to ensure their child had regular connections with other youth through out-of-school activities.

The parent of the one high school student who participated, while happy with most aspects of the school, felt that being her child's learning coach was not a good situation. She and her son agreed with her assessment of him as a procrastinator. She thought it would be best if he were accountable daily to a staff or teacher in the school.

Perspectives on the overall experience with MEVA were obtained by asking parents and students if they would recommend MEVA to a fellow student or another parent. The responses from the three parents were positive. As for the two student participants, their perspectives varied somewhat. The one student I interviewed alone was missing social connections, which colored

her experience. The other student was able to recognize the benefits of the experience at MEVA but still felt he would have benefited from peer interaction.

Overall Summary

The 2021–2022 evaluation report made six recommendations to improve enrollment processes for new students and re-enrollment for continuing students. These recommendations were largely built upon the overwhelming comments about support staff offered to parents who reached out for help and parent suggestions. The following is a shortened version of the recommendations, the full text of which can be found in Appendix A.

1. Reinforce for parents that staff are available to assist them if they encounter challenges in the enrollment process. Remind them of the general help sessions available.
2. Provide a checklist of enrollment steps for parents to help them feel confident that they have completed the process.
3. Inform parents that they should reach out for technical assistance if they have challenges submitting compliance documents or photographs.
4. Review the re-enrollment email with instructions and screenshots to ensure they match the online process exactly.
5. Survey parents directly after re-enrollment to determine whether issues have been resolved.
6. Encourage student participation in the new student survey regarding onboarding.

The design of the 2022–2023 evaluation, in part, was to assess if the changes in the enrollment process made by Stride Learning Solution’s Customer Care Center and the MEVA staff addressed parent challenges with the enrollment processes. The results of parent surveys on new enrollment and re-enrollments provide evidence, sometimes by lack of comments about

challenges, that the changes implemented positively impacted parents' enrollment experience and addressed the concerns expressed during the 2021–2022 academic year.

First and foremost, parents in either enrollment process were encouraged to contact staff for assistance when they met various challenges, including trouble logging in or uploading required documents. A few surveyed parents reported problems but shared that staff members were very helpful in resolving issues. They were also reminded of general help sessions, which also offered assistance with the process.

Last year, some parents, especially those enrolling new students, had difficulty knowing when they had completed the process. The recommendation was enacted to provide parents with a checklist of steps for the applicable enrollment process. Given that there were no comments about the uncertainty of completion of the new or re-enrollment process, this revision was a success.

One frustration the parents who re-enrolled their students last year experienced with the process was that the written walk-through guide did not match the steps on the Enrollment Portal. Staff revised the walk-through guide to ensure that it matched the steps online. Again, the lack of comments on this issue suggests that the revised walk-through guide matches the online process well. The second issue some parents found frustrating last year was that the re-enrollment was divided into two parts. This year, those parts were redesigned and combined into one. Again, there were no comments on this aspect of the process.

Next, a survey was emailed a couple of weeks after the start of the fall and spring semesters to gather information about students' onboarding experience and acclimation to MEVA. Students were asked about their reasons for enrolling in MEVA, including the most enticing aspects. Responses varied widely, but doing school from home or the online learning experience were the most common.

Most students found the school's expectations of them, introduced during orientation, clear. The few students who found the expectations confusing mentioned issues such as navigating classes,

watching videos of the class, and using Brightspace. When they needed help, most found it easy to access assistance from a teacher or staff person.

The final question asked students what advice they would give to a friend considering enrolling at MEVA. Most students offered constructive advice, which they likely learned from their own experiences. Advice included assuring prospects that while MEVA is different and has some challenging aspects, one gets used to it. Students also emphasized that asking for help is okay. They advised others to be responsible by knowing their schedule, keeping up with the work, and pacing themselves.

Finally, a limited number of case studies (four) explored students' reasons for enrolling at MEVA and their experience with onboarding and acclimating to MEVA. In addition to the small number of case studies, the results are limited because only two students participated directly, while parents represented the other students' experiences. Furthermore, zero parents or students responded to the request to participate in an end-of-year interview, leaving the outcome and perspectives of the academic year unknown. Despite these limitations, these case studies provided a glimpse into student and parent experiences and highlighted some important issues.

Overall, parents were highly satisfied with their child's experience enrolling in and onboarding at MEVA. All the students had special needs, and all parents felt that the school met their child's needs. All the students did well in their academics at the outset. Both parents and students felt that teachers and staff were readily available for help.

The two students who participated in the interviews expressed that the lack of peer connections was problematic. A parent of another student commented on the importance of ensuring her child was involved in community activities to provide that peer connection. One student struggling with the lack of peer connection was told he might be eligible to join extra-curricular activities at his local school. However, when he and his parent requested that he be allowed to enroll in the activities, the request was denied by administrators. Unfortunately, the local school's decision is out of the control of MEVA.

One concern raised is worth further investigation. The only parent of a high school student stated that she did not feel that she was the most effective coach for her son. She concluded that her son would benefit from a staff person from the school to whom he could report daily. The only way to know if this experience is more widespread is to ask a wider pool of parents.

Recommendations

Based on the findings in this report, I offer the following recommendations to MEVA.

Recommendation 1: Continue the changes implemented in the new and re-enrollment processes.

Recommendation 2: Continue to administer the new student survey and consider including more specific questions about aspects of onboarding that students might find challenging (e.g., playing back videos of classes).

Recommendation 3: Explore whether having parents as coaches of their own children is challenging for more than just the parent who raised the issue. Seek to identify if there are commonalities among students whose parents are experiencing this challenge.

Recommendation 4: Explore ways to create connections among students who desire more peer interaction.

Recommendation 5: Explore ways to increase participation in the annual evaluation process. Consider incentivizing parents and students to complete written surveys and participate in in-person interviews with the evaluator.

The last recommendation is not within the control of MEVA but might be considered by the Maine Department of Education and the Charter Commission.

Recommendation 6: Consider a regulation that students enrolled in a public charter school be eligible to participate in extra-curricular activities at their district public school.

Appendix A

2021–2022 Executive Summary

The Maine Virtual Academy (MEVA) is one of two virtual public charter schools authorized by the Maine Charter School Commission. MEVA enrolls students in seventh through 12th grade and is open to any student in these grades who resides in Maine. All eligible applicants may enroll in the school if capacity limits allow. A requirement of virtual public charter schools is a third-party evaluation each year. This evaluation focuses on parent experiences with the enrollment processes, which were modified during the past year.

Surveys were conducted with three groups of parents, including those who (1) enrolled their child mid-year, (2) enrolled their child for the first time for fall 2022, and (3) re-enrolled their child for fall 2022. The survey included both multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions. Response rates ranged from 32% to 50%. Since the process was the same for mid-year and new enrollments for fall 2022, data from these two surveys were analyzed together. Re-enrollment survey responses were analyzed separately.

The following are the key findings of the mid-year and new fall enrollments:

- The three top ways parents learned about MEVA were through an online search, a parent whose child attends MEVA, and staff from the student’s previous school.
- Important considerations for parents searching for an alternative to the local brick-and-mortar school included a public option, a strong success rate, strong academics, supportive staff, inclusion, innovation, an individualized approach, flexibility, a strong curriculum, and ease of access.
- Most parents found the enrollment process “Very easy” (N=21), while 16 parents found it “Somewhat easy.” The average rating for the enrollment process was 4.6 out of 5, with 5 being the highest score.
- Most parents found the clarity of the next steps provided in the enrollment process “Very clear.”

- Challenges in the enrollment process identified by parents included difficulty obtaining or uploading the required documents and knowing if they had completed the process. Those who experienced obstacles and reached out to staff found the staff very helpful.

Parents who enrolled their child mid-year were also asked about the onboarding process. Most found the new student orientation “Somewhat beneficial” or “Very beneficial.” When asked how their child was settling into MEVA, parents rated their child’s experience as 4 or 5 out of 5. Only one parent who requested a computer for their child had technical difficulties when the computer arrived, and support from staff easily fixed the problem.

A total of 391 students enrolled for the academic year beginning fall 2022. Of the 24 students that enrolled in January 2022, 21 have re-enrolled. In addition, 249 students who entered the school before fall 2022 have re-enrolled, and 121 are new. Student addresses span 169 different Maine towns and cities.

Parents were asked what factors they considered when they decided to re-enroll their child. In addition to enthusiasm about their child’s experience at MEVA, they identified the following considerations:

- Child’s desire to re-enroll
- A strong curriculum
- Child’s academic success
- Staff support of students and families
- Child’s improved mental or emotional health
- Flexibility and class schedules, including the ability to complete school early.

When asked about the ease of the re-enrollment process, 75% of parents found it “Very easy.” While 56% of parents found the clarity of each step of the enrollment process “Very clear,” 42% found identifying the next steps “Fairly clear” or “Unclear.” Many stated that the entire process or the order of steps was confusing and inconsistent with email instructions. A few mentioned technical issues.

Parent's suggestions for improving the process can be summarized as follows:

1. Make the process "cleaner," "clearer," and "simpler."
2. Ensure directions are consistent.
3. Communicate better between steps.
4. Create a checklist for parents to make the process more concrete.
5. Create a better system to track submitted documents.
6. Provide an updated course selection for the upcoming year.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are offered:

Recommendation 1: A strength of MEVA is the staff. Noted were their friendliness and the helpful technical assistance they provided. Reinforce for parents that staff are available to assist them if they encounter challenges. Encourage them not to spend time struggling and to reach out for help instead. Remind them of the general help sessions available.

Recommendation 2: Once parents complete the enrollment process, they receive a pop-up message thanking them for completing registration. However, a checklist of the steps for initial enrollment and re-enrollment, emailed to parents, could serve as an additional assurance to parents as they progress and confirm upon completion that they have completed all the steps.

Recommendation 3: Inform parents that they should reach out for technical assistance if they have challenges submitting compliance documents or photographs. Staff can load documents into the system on parents' behalf.

Recommendation 4: Review the re-enrollment email with instructions and screenshots to ensure they match the online process exactly. Once staff complete this review and make needed

modifications, other staff should conduct user testing by acting as parents enrolling or re-enrolling their child to verify consistency between the written instructions and actual steps.

Recommendation 5: Survey parents directly after re-enrollment to determine whether issues have been resolved. Furthermore, it is recommended that parents receive an email with a link to the survey immediately upon completing the re-enrollment process.

Recommendation 6: Despite initial attempts to survey students who enrolled mid-year, data collection was unsuccessful. It is recommended that staff examine why communication with students about the survey was unsuccessful and develop a plan to reach students more effectively and encourage their participation. Data from newly enrolled students for both mid-year and fall can provide important information on their experiences with onboarding and settling into the school.

Coversheet

Media Updates

Section: VII. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report
Item: C. Media Updates
Purpose: FYI
Submitted by:
Related Material:
Maine students are missing more school days than before the pandemic.pdf
MCSC For Immediate Release.pdf

LOCAL & STATE

Posted November 24

Updated November 24

Maine students are missing more school days than before the pandemic

Chronic absenteeism rates are more than 10 percentage points higher than the 2018-19 school year. Experts say resources to get students to class aren't back on track.



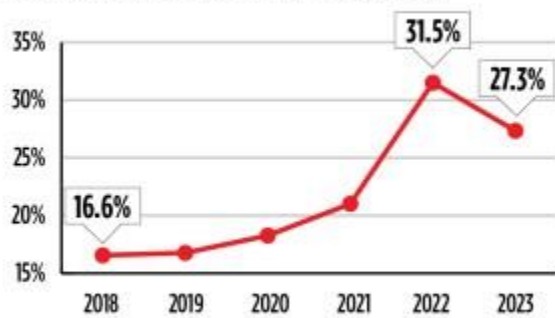
BY [LANA COHEN](#) PRESS HERALD

Almost one-third of Maine's K-12 students missed at least 18 days of school last year.

Chronic absenteeism nearly doubled during the pandemic and has yet to taper off. And though it has improved slightly in the last year, there are still far more absences than in the years preceding the pandemic, according to new state data provided in response to a request from the Press Herald.

Education experts say this is because of transportation issues, [youth mental health crises](#), increased financial and family obligations on students, and general disengagement following years of online learning.

Chronic absenteeism in Maine schools



SOURCE: Maine Department of Education

STAFF GRAPHIC | JAKE LAWS

Students who miss at least 18 days of

school, or 10% of the school year, are marked as chronically absent.

During the 2018-19 school year, 16.8% of Maine students met that definition. In the 2021-22 school year, the year most schools resumed regular scheduling following the height of the pandemic, that jumped to 31.5%.

Attendance rates improved during the 2022-23 school year, dropping to 27.3%, according to Maine Department of Education data released Nov. 17. But the sustained, elevated rate shows that the issue may have significant staying power and that reengaging students is likely to be challenging and require considerable resources.

Maine's data aligns with national trends. During the 2018-19 school year, around 15% of the nation's K-12 students were chronically absent. That number jumped to 30% in the 2021-22 school year, the latest year for which national data is available.

Chronic absenteeism has long been a problem, but like many issues, it was exacerbated by the pandemic.

Now schools need to work on engaging students, said Hedy Chang, the executive director of Attendance Works, a nonprofit working to improve school attendance nationwide.

“People don’t always see how important attendance is,” Chang said. “But if kids are absent, all the other investments you put into schools won’t do anything.”

Experts say missing a lot of class days can negatively impact academic, social-emotional and socioeconomic growth.

Schools need to connect with students and their families, help them see the value of school, connect them with appropriate mental health and social service resources, get students involved in activities and community, and help them build connections, Chang said.

“Schools open doors to opportunities,” said Jess Anderson, executive director of Count ME in Maine, an organization working to increase school attendance in the state. “If you don’t walk through the doors every morning you can’t have access to those opportunities.”

Schools are tasked with educating the nation’s students – teaching them to read, write, understand mathematics and think critically. But they often do much more than that. Schools are where students make friends, participate in extracurricular activities, have fun, and learn to create community and interact with peers and adults. Schools also provide meals and access to social services including mental and medical health support.

Experts say chronically absent students are less likely to achieve a variety of positive education outcomes from mastering early reading skills to graduating high school. High levels of absenteeism also threaten to hinder [COVID-19 learning loss](#) recovery and could grow inequality, they say.

Economically disadvantaged students were more likely to be chronically absent than their more well-off counterparts, according to the Maine education data. As were Indigenous, Hispanic and mixed-race students.

According to experts on attendance in Maine, students in western and northern parts of the state struggled more with chronic absenteeism than those attending school in southern Maine.

Understanding why students are missing school is a key question. Family and financial obligations, anxiety, sickness, lack of transportation and general disengagement are all reasons kids don't show up, experts say.

Physically getting to school has become harder and more time consuming since the pandemic. That's because of the national [bus driver shortage](#) that worsened during the pandemic. In recent years, school districts across the state have [canceled bus routes](#) due to the shortage, leaving students from families without another transportation option out of luck.

At the same time, [more students are homeless, food insecure, living in poverty](#) and facing [anxiety and other mental health issues](#), all significant issues that can make education take a back seat.

Additionally, the [teacher shortage](#) and turnover make it challenging for educators to meaningfully engage with students and gives them one more reason not to show up.

The Maine Department of Education said that while it is encouraged by the decline in chronic absenteeism since the pandemic peak, it sees that there are improvements to be made.

“Regular school attendance is incredibly important to student success,” Marcus Mrowka, a department spokesperson, said in a statement.

“The Maine Department of Education is committed to supporting educators and schools to foster learning environments that deeply engage students and provide them with multiple pathways to cultivate and pursue their passions.”



For Immediate Release

December 7, 2023

Media Contact:

Lana Ewing, Executive Director
(207) 446-8898 or lane.ewing@maine.gov

New Report: Maine Charter Schools Rank Among State's Best Schools

New research from U.S. News & World Report highlights Maine Connections Academy, Maine Virtual Academy, Baxter Academy for outstanding performance

AUGUSTA, Maine – Today, the Maine Charter School Commission (MCSC) — which authorizes, monitors, and develops unique public charter schools that provide a dynamic, superlative education for every student — highlighted new research from U.S. News & World Report, showing that charter schools are some of the most successful schools in the state. The report specifically showcased Maine Connections Academy, Maine Virtual Academy, and Baxter Academy for Technology and Science as three of the best performing schools in Maine.

In its annual listing, U.S. News & World Report analyzed more than 103,000 pre-K, elementary and middle schools, in addition to nearly 25,000 public high schools across America. The ranking can be accessed [here](#).

According to the new report, Scarborough-based Maine Connections Academy (MCA), Augusta-based Maine Virtual Academy (MEVA), and Portland-based Baxter Academy all ranked in the top 10 in Maine for their respective age groups. MCA finished first among middle schools, while MEVA ranked 10th overall. Baxter Academy, meanwhile, finished 10th among all high schools. MCA's performance is especially noteworthy, with U.S. News & World Report showing that 98 percent of MCA students scored at or above the proficient level for math, and 98 percent scored at or above that level for reading.

"All of Maine's children deserve access to a vibrant ecosystem of schools, and we are proud to see our state's charter schools perform so strongly," said Lana Ewing, Executive Director of the MCSC. "From Augusta to Portland and Scarborough, charter schools clearly rank among Maine's best schools, and it goes to show that there are many viable options for students to maximize their learning potential. Especially as we address the state's post-pandemic challenges, MCSC is committed to helping charter schools build on these promising results, on behalf of students, parents, and the teachers we depend on so much."

To schedule an interview, please contact Lana Ewing, lana.ewing@maine.gov.

###

About Maine Charter School Commission:

The Maine Charter School Commission (MCSC) authorizes, monitors and develops unique public charter schools across Maine that provide a dynamic, superlative education for every student. Founded in 2011, MCSC aims to improve student education and educational opportunities, provide alternative learning environments and encourage the use of different, high-quality models of teaching. MCSC's vision for the future is to make sure all of Maine's children will have access to a vibrant ecosystem of diverse schools so that all of them can become happy, healthy and thriving citizens. For more information, go to www.maine.gov/csc.

Coversheet

10/1/23 Student Enrollment Breakdowns

Section: VIII. Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report
Item: A. 10/1/23 Student Enrollment Breakdowns
Purpose: Discuss
Submitted by:
Related Material: 2023-24 School Enrollment Statistics.pdf
2023-24 Demographic Data Breakdowns.pdf
2023-24 Resident District Breakdown.pdf
2023-24 Resident Town Breakdown.pdf

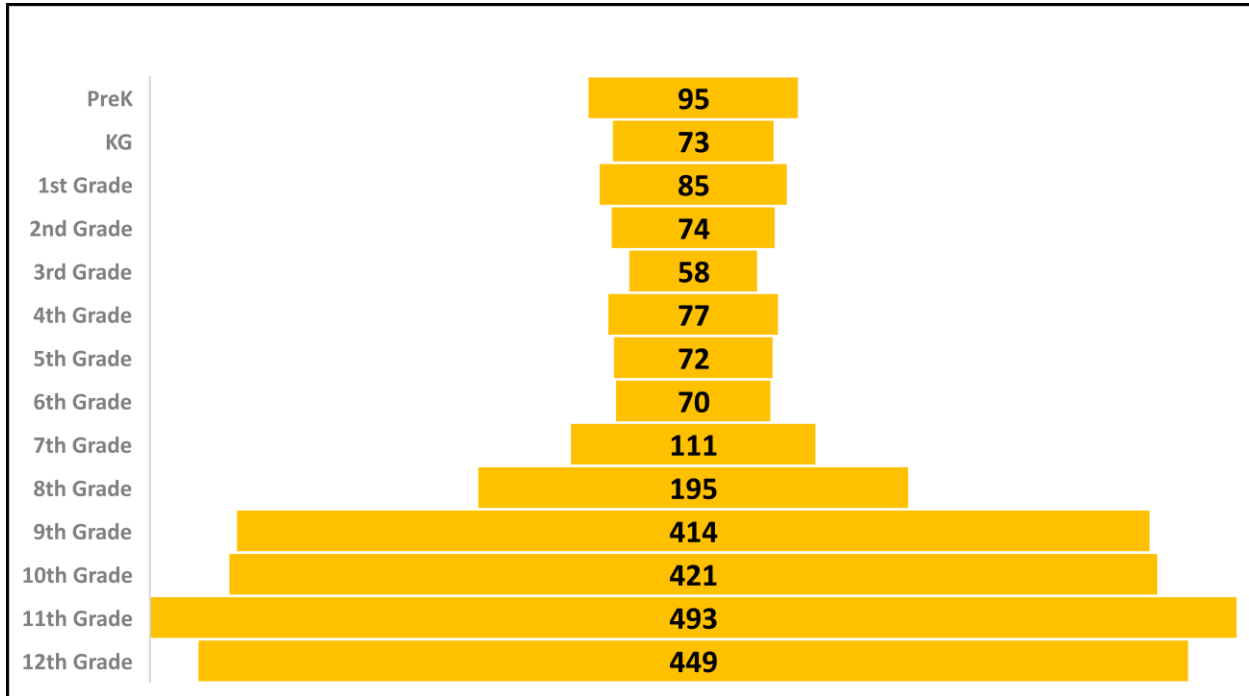
SY2023-24 Enrollment Statistics

School	Grades Served	Contracted Enrollment (+/- 10%)	Actual Enrollment	Number on Waiting List	Special Education Count	Special Education Percentage	Economically Disadvantaged Count	Economically Disadvantaged Percentage
ACADIA Academy	PK-6	272 (245-299)	246	76	33	13.41%	62	25.20%
Baxter Academy	9-12	400 (360-440)	373	0	82	21.98%	41	10.99%
Community Regional Charter School	PK-12	352 (317-387)	381	8	89	23.36%	226	59.32%
Ecology Learning Center	9-12	96 (86-106)	107	6	26	24.30%	34	31.78%
Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences	PK-8	208 (187-229)	197	80	59	29.95%	18	9.14%
Maine Academy of Natural Sciences	9-12	190 (171-209)	194	9	50	25.77%	127	65.46%
Maine Arts Academy	9-12	220 (198-242)	237	0	46	19.41%	90	37.97%
Maine Connections Academy	7-12	500* (475-525)	510	269	106	20.78%	206	40.39%
Maine Virtual Academy	7-12	390 (351-429)	442	86	113	25.57%	239	54.07%
Totals			2,687	534	604	22.48%	1,043	38.82%
					2021-22 State Average	18.8%	2021-22 State Average	35.10%

**MCA has a +/-5% enrollment variance for SY2023-24 only; next year they will be capped at 500 maximum enrollment.*

School Year 2023-24 Demographic Data Breakdowns

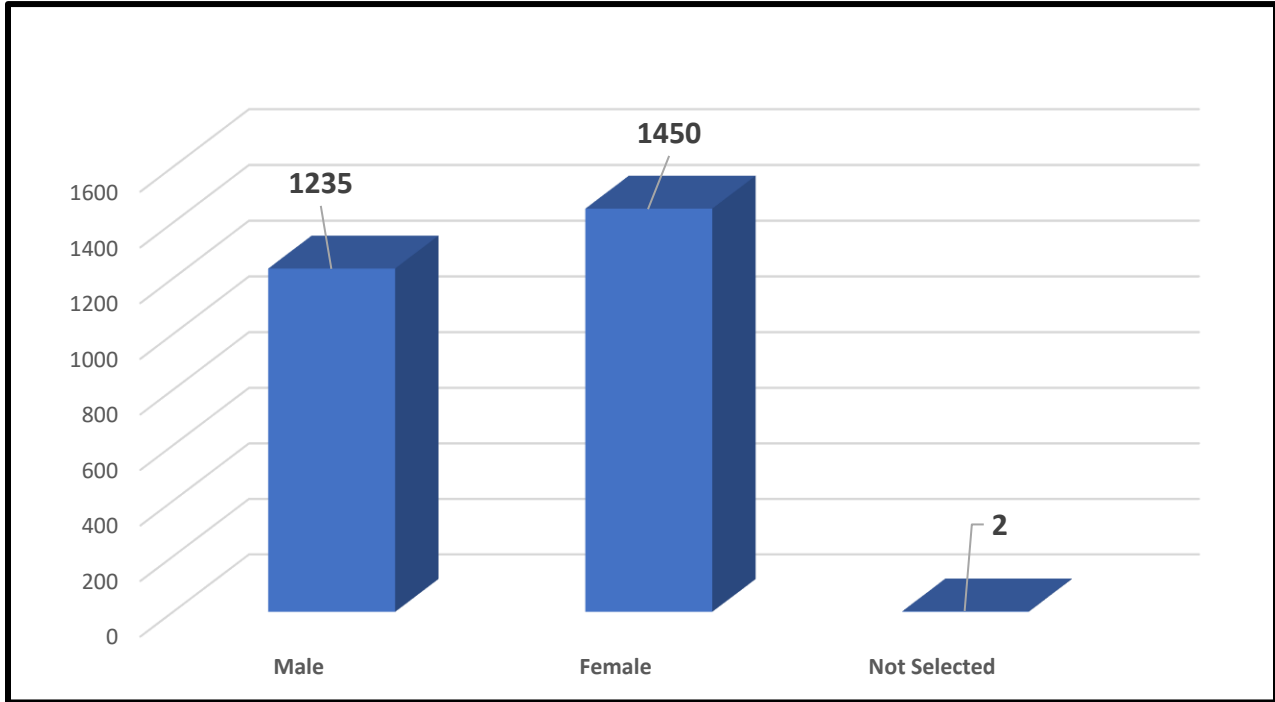
Grade



	ACADIA	Baxter	CRCS	ELC	FSAS	MCA	MeAA	MeANS	MeVA
PreK	31		44		20				
KG	33		20		20				
1st	34		30		21				
2nd	34		19		21				
3rd	27		16		15				
4th	34		29		14				
5th	26		25		21				
6th	27		22		21				
7th			14		22	49			26
8th			28		22	78			67
9th		110	32	26		72	60	38	76
10th		89	37	28		87	51	53	76
11th		92	37	25		107	68	55	109
12th		82	28	28		117	58	48	88

School Year 2023-24 Demographic Data Breakdowns

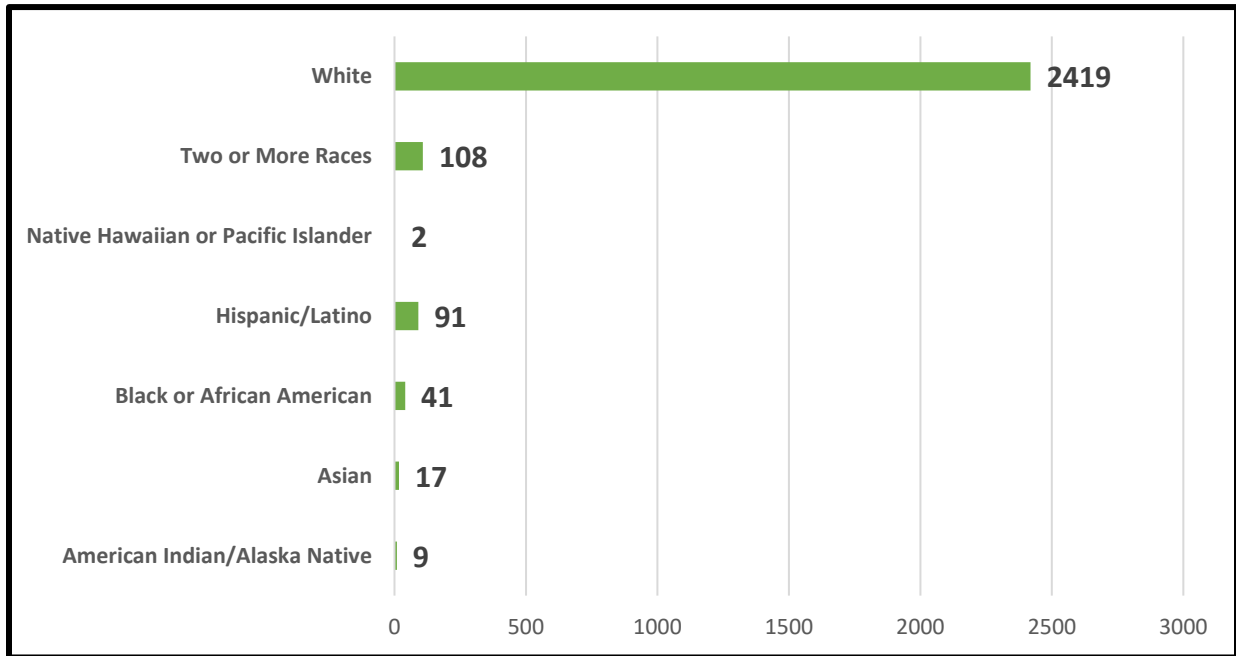
Gender



	Male		Female		Not Selected	
ACADIA	116	47%	130	53%		
Baxter	222	60%	151	40%		
CRCS	201	53%	180	47%		
ELC	45	42%	60	56%	2	2%
FSAS	106	54%	91	46%		
MCA	205	40%	305	60%		
MeAA	45	19%	192	81%		
MeANS	101	52%	93	48%		
MeVA	194	44%	248	56%		

School Year 2023-24 Demographic Data Breakdowns

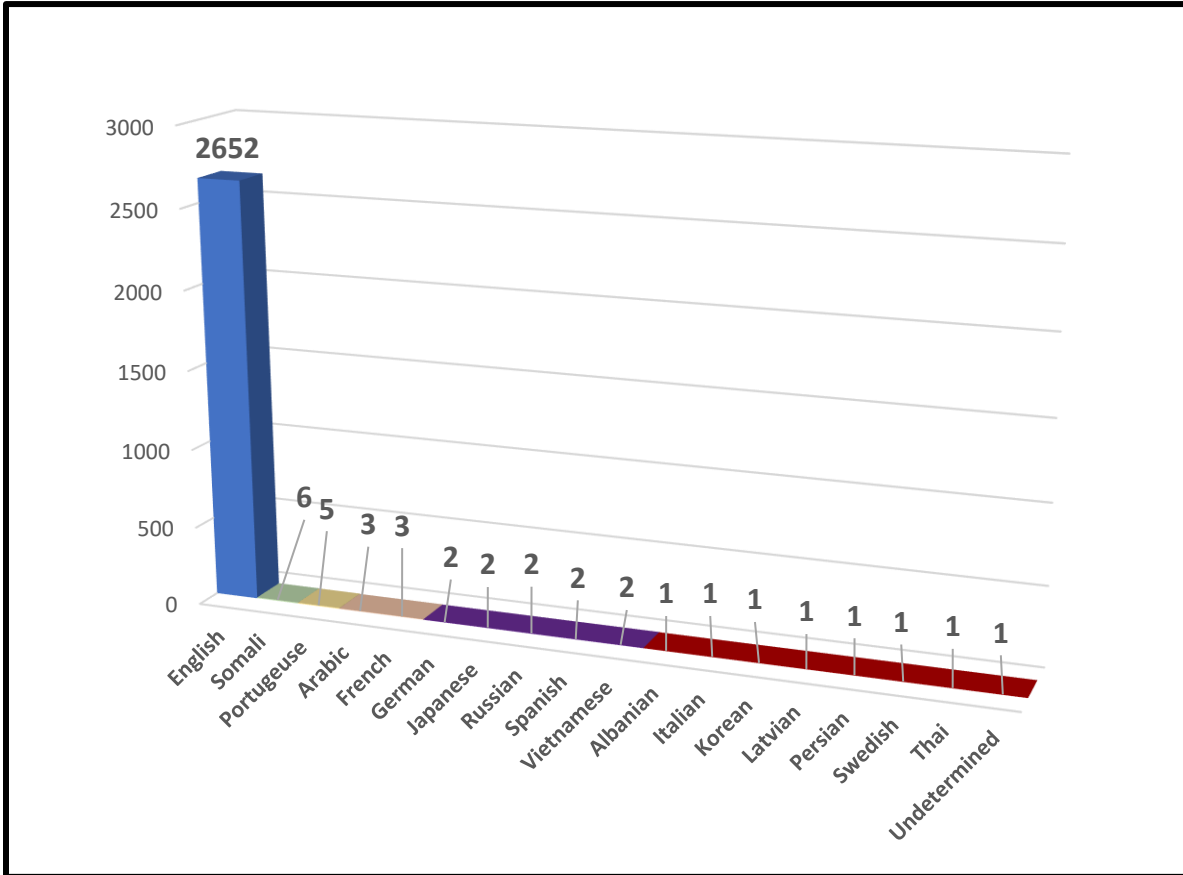
Race/Ethnicity



	ACADIA	Baxter	CRCs	ELC	FSAS	MCA	MeAA	MeANS	MeVA
White	222	320	359	101	182	464	209	182	380
Two or More Races	5	17	10		6	25	17	4	24
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander				2					
Hispanic/Latino	6	9	10	2	3	18	10	3	30
Black or African American	11	16	2	2	3	2		2	3
Asian	1	11			2	1	1		1
American Indian or Alaska Native	1				1			3	4

School Year 2023-24 Demographic Data Breakdowns

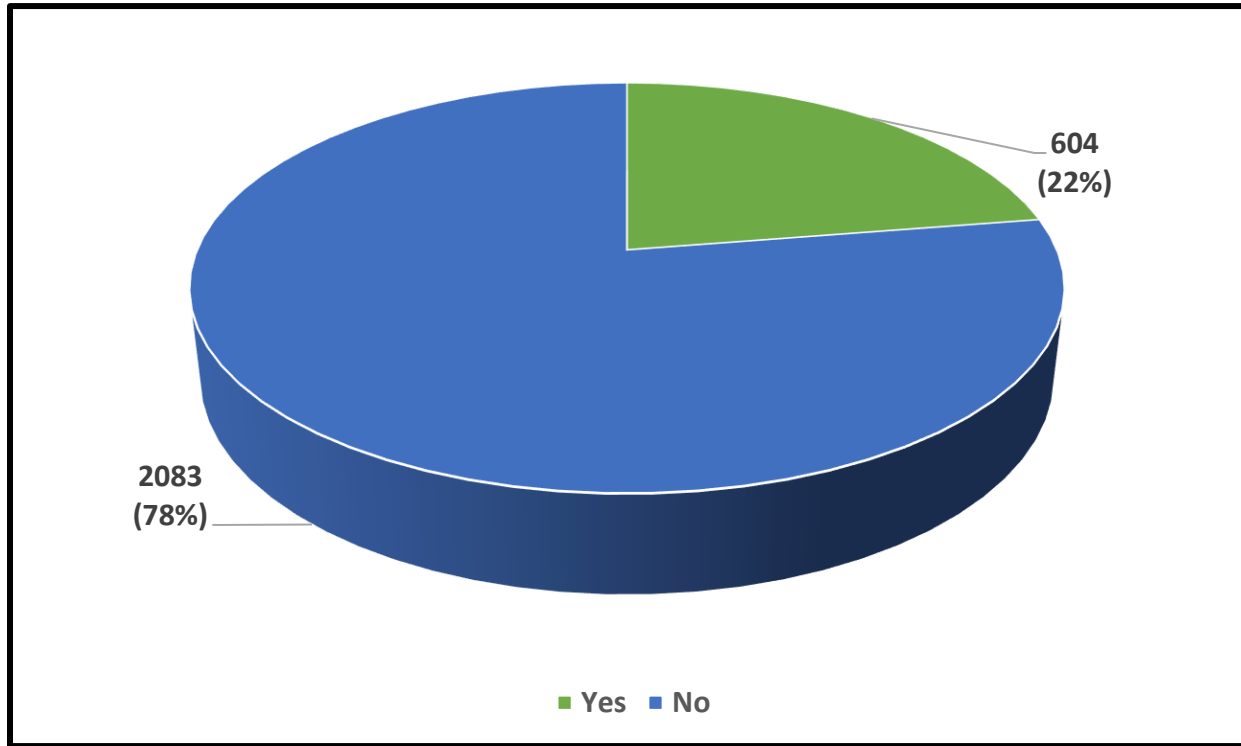
Language



	ACADIA	Baxter	CRCS	ELC	FSAS	MCA	MeAA	MeANS	MeVA
Albanian							1		
Arabic								3	
English	246	356	381	107	197	502	232	191	440
French		3							
German		2							
Italian							1		
Japanese		2							
Korean		1							
Latvian							1		
Persian						1			
Portuguese		4				1			
Russian		1					1		
Somali		2				4			
Spanish									2
Swedish		1							
Thai							1		
Undetermined		1							
Vietnamese						2			

School Year 2023-24 Demographic Data Breakdowns

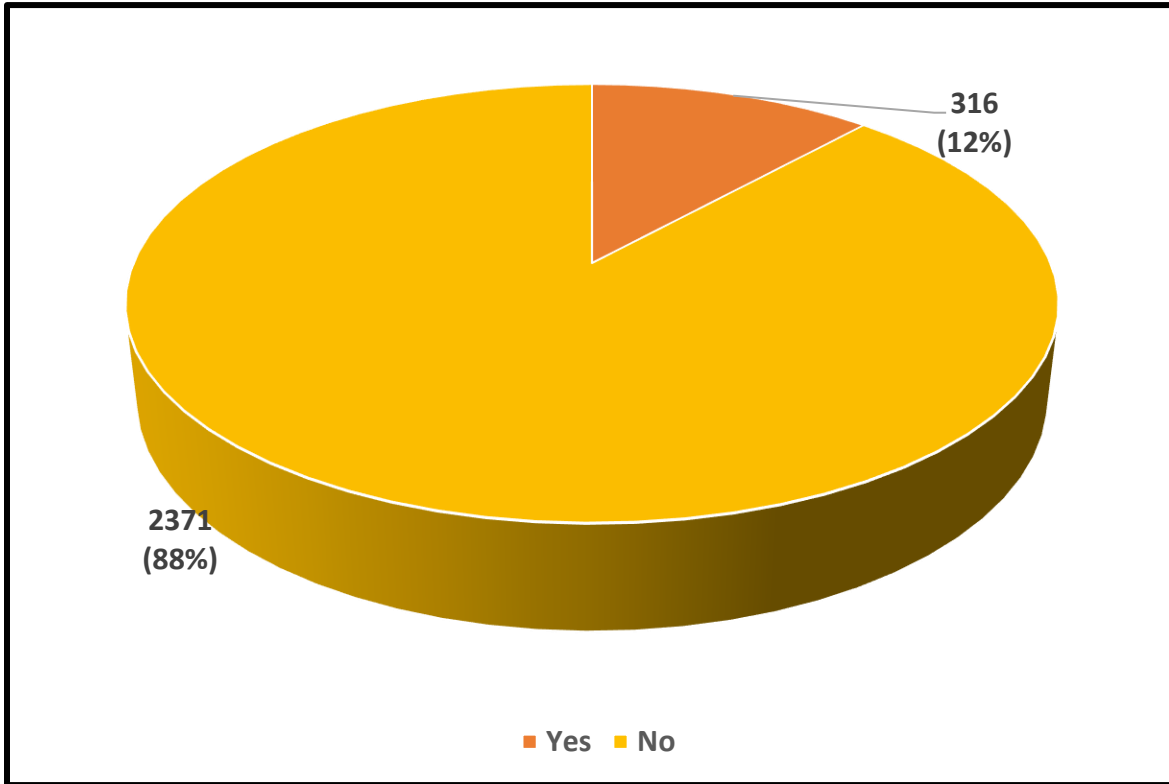
Special Education



	Yes		No	
ACADIA	33	13%	213	87%
Baxter	82	22%	292	78%
CRCS	89	23%	292	77%
ELC	26	24%	81	76%
FSAS	59	30%	138	70%
MCA	106	21%	404	79%
MeAA	46	19%	191	81%
MeANS	50	26%	144	74%
MeVA	113	26%	329	74%

School Year 2023-24 Demographic Data Breakdowns

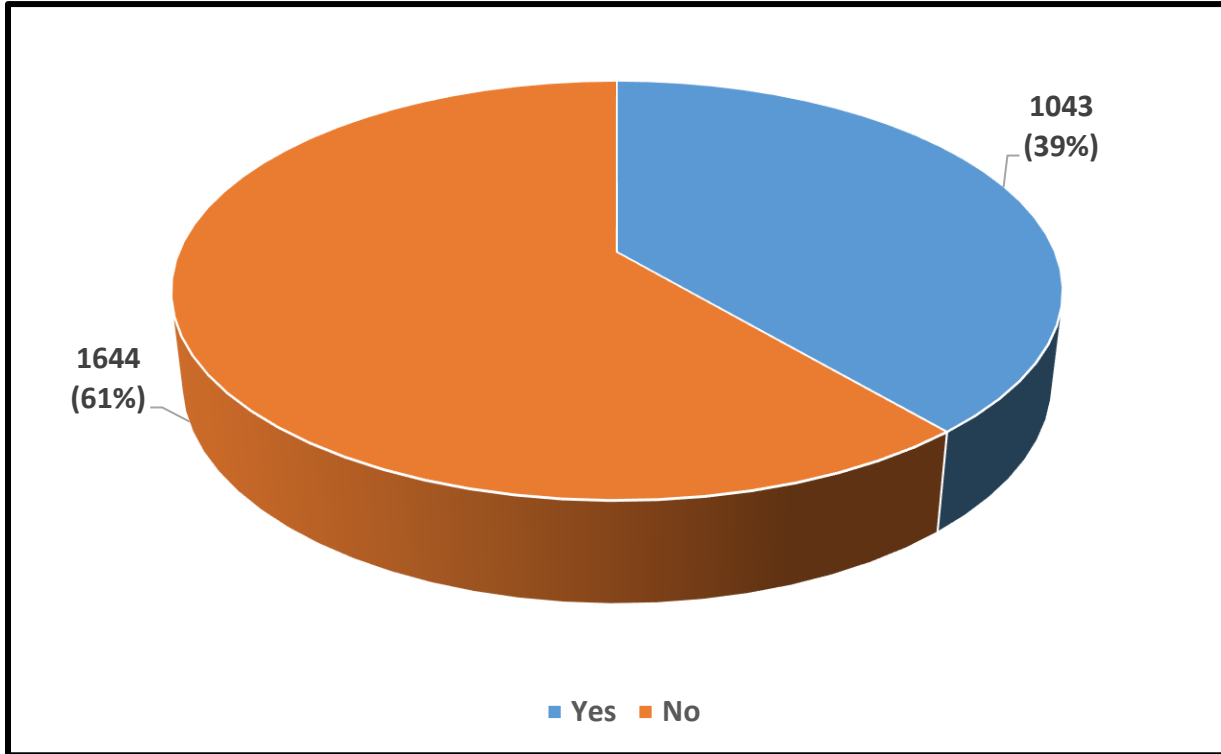
504 Plan



	Yes		No	
ACADIA	20	8%	226	92%
Baxter	47	13%	326	87%
CRCS	6	2%	375	98%
ELC	0	0%	107	100%
FSAS	0	0%	197	100%
MCA	89	17%	421	83%
MeAA	29	12%	208	88%
MeANS	17	9%	177	91%
MeVA	108	24%	334	76%

School Year 2023-24 Demographic Data Breakdowns

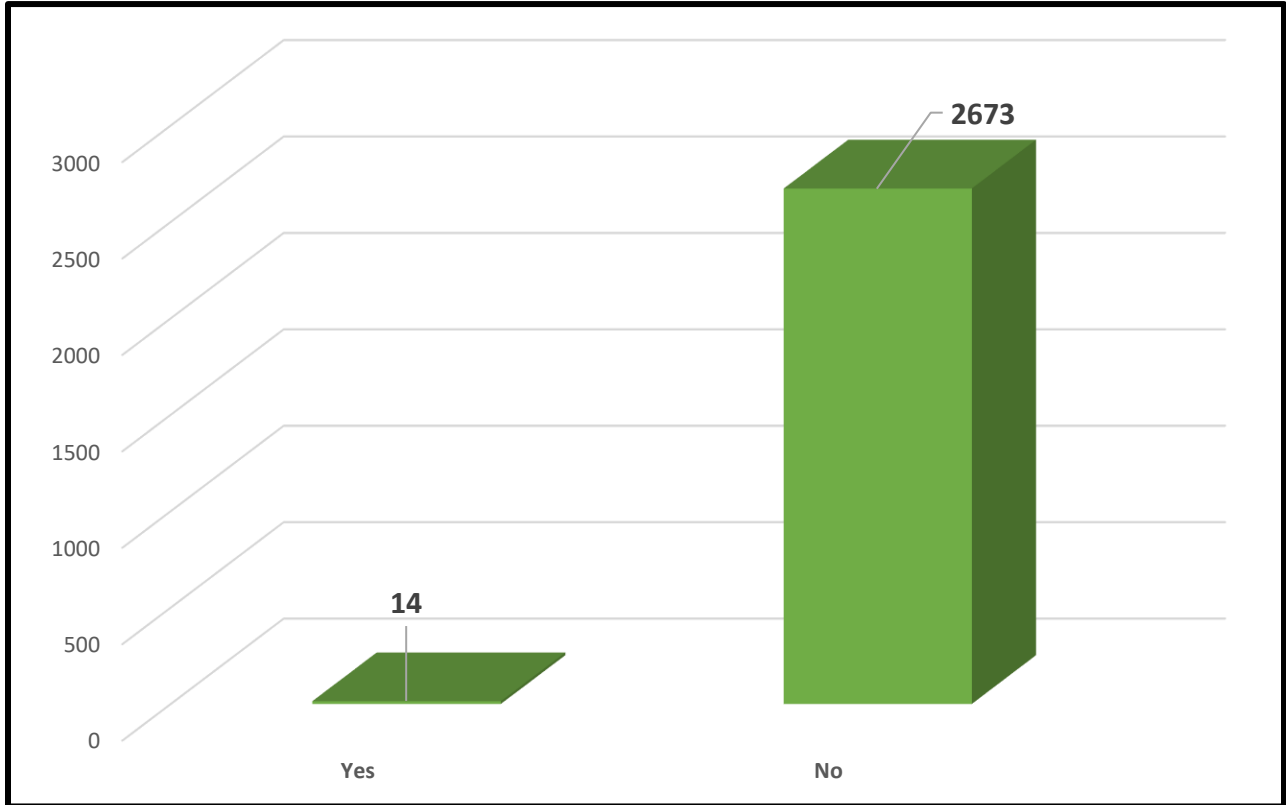
Economically Disadvantaged



	Yes		No	
ACADIA	62	25%	184	75%
Baxter	41	11%	332	89%
CRCS	226	59%	155	41%
ELC	34	32%	73	68%
FSAS	18	9%	179	91%
MCA	206	40%	304	60%
MeAA	90	38%	147	62%
MeANS	127	65%	67	35%
MeVA	239	54%	203	46%

School Year 2023-24 Demographic Data Breakdowns

English Learner



	Yes	No
ACADIA	1	245
Baxter	5	368
CRCS	0	381
ELC	1	106
FSAS	0	197
MCA	3	507
MeAA	1	236
MeANS	1	193
MeVA	2	440

203-24 Resident District Breakdown	ACADIA Academy	Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	Community Regional Charter School	Ecology Learning Center	Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences	Maine Academy of Natural Sciences	Maine Arts Academy	Maine Connections Academy	Maine Virtual Academy	Totals
Acton Public Schools								3		3
Airline CSD								1		1
Andover Public Schools								1		1
Athens Public Schools			10			4		1		15
Auburn Public Schools	40	8			15	1	1	7	11	83
Augusta Public Schools		1	2			14	19	4	16	56
Baileyville Public Schools								1		1
Bangor Public Schools			1	2			1	19	15	38
Biddeford Public Schools		5						3	5	13
Boothbay-Boothbay Harbor CSD		1						1	1	3
Bowerbank Public Schools									1	1
Brewer Public Schools				1					1	2
Bristol Public Schools						1		1		2
Brunswick Public Schools		5			3		7	6	5	26
Burlington Public Schools								1		1
Calais Public Schools								1		1
Cape Elizabeth Public Schools		10						3	1	14
Chebeague Island Public Schools		1								1
Cherryfield Public Schools									1	1
Deer Isle-Stonington CSD									1	1
Dennysville Public Schools								1	1	2
Eagle Lake Public Schools									1	1
Easton Public Schools									1	1
Education in Unorganized Territory	1							5	6	12
Ellsworth Public Schools								5	4	9
Falmouth Public Schools		6			1		2	2	1	12
Fayette Public Schools						2	1		2	5
Five Town CSD				3				3		6
Gilead Public Schools									1	1
Glenburn Public Schools								3	2	5
Gorham Public Schools		26		1	8			9	3	47
Grand Isle Public Schools									1	1

	ACADIA Academy	Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	Community Regional Charter School	Ecology Learning Center	Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences	Maine Academy of Natural Sciences	Maine Arts Academy	Maine Connections Academy	Maine Virtual Academy	Totals
Greenbush Public Schools								1	1	2
Harmony Public Schools			7					1		8
Hermon Public Schools								1	4	5
Hope Public Schools									1	1
Jefferson Public Schools				2				2	1	5
Lamoine Public Schools									1	1
Lewiston Public Schools	139	22			22	1	3	25	14	226
Limestone Public Schools								3	1	4
Lisbon Public Schools	7	4			3	2	2	7	6	31
Machias Public Schools								2		2
Madawaska Public Schools								9	4	13
Milford Public Schools									2	2
Millinocket Public Schools									1	1
MSAD 27								1	2	3
MSAD 46			6					3	2	11
Mt Desert CSD								1		1
New Sweden Public Schools									2	2
Nobleboro Public Schools									1	1
Northport Public Schools				1						1
Orrington Public Schools								1	1	2
Portland Public Schools		46			8			11		65
Richmond Public Schools							8	1	5	14
Robbinston Public Schools								1		1
RSU 01 - LKRSU		6				4	2	6	5	23
RSU 02						1	13	3	1	18
RSU 03/MSAD 03				43		2	4	7	1	57
RSU 04	25	3					11	2	3	44
RSU 05		14			3			4	2	23
RSU 06/MSAD 06		21			2			14	7	44
RSU 08/MSAD 08								1		1
RSU 09			7			4	3	8	9	31
RSU 10	2	1			1		2	6	11	23

	ACADIA Academy	Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	Community Regional Charter School	Ecology Learning Center	Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences	Maine Academy of Natural Sciences	Maine Arts Academy	Maine Connections Academy	Maine Virtual Academy	Totals
RSU 11/MSAD 11	1	1		1		6	15	6	4	34
RSU 12		1		2	1	9	24	2	4	43
RSU 13								4	6	10
RSU 14		31			19			12	6	68
RSU 15/MSAD 15		28			51	1		11	2	93
RSU 16	13	5			20		1	4	3	46
RSU 17/MSAD 17	3	2			7			6	5	23
RSU 18			1	2		25	21	5	6	60
RSU 19			59	6		3		8	5	81
RSU 20								3	2	5
RSU 21		6						8	2	16
RSU 22				3				10	5	18
RSU 23		4						2	2	8
RSU 24								3	2	5
RSU 25								4	3	7
RSU 26								3	3	6
RSU 29/MSAD 29								5	10	15
RSU 30/MSAD 30								3	1	4
RSU 32/MSAD 32								2	1	3
RSU 33/MSAD 33									1	1
RSU 34								9	2	11
RSU 35/MSAD 35								15		15
RSU 37/MSAD 37								3	1	4
RSU 38						1	7	3	3	14
RSU 39								3	7	10
RSU 40/MSAD 40				3			2	5	7	17
RSU 41/MSAD 41								1	8	9
RSU 42/MSAD 42									1	1
RSU 44								3	2	5
RSU 45/MSAD 45								2	1	3
RSU 49/MSAD 49			22	19		32	13	5	12	103
RSU 50	1							1	1	3

	ACADIA Academy	Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	Community Regional Charter School	Ecology Learning Center	Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences	Maine Academy of Natural Sciences	Maine Arts Academy	Maine Connections Academy	Maine Virtual Academy	Totals
RSU 51/MSAD 51		14			7			2		23
RSU 52/MSAD 52	8	3			1		4		9	25
RSU 53/MSAD 53			10			8	6	5	4	33
RSU 54/MSAD 54			180			19	4	5	7	215
RSU 55/MSAD 55		4			2			6	3	15
RSU 56									2	2
RSU 57/MSAD 57		5						15	10	30
RSU 58/MSAD 58								1	5	6
RSU 59/MSAD 59			31			3	1	5	1	41
RSU 60/MSAD 60								9	5	14
RSU 61/MSAD 61		12			11			4	3	30
RSU 63/MSAD 63								2	2	4
RSU 64/MSAD 64			1					5	4	10
RSU 67								2	2	4
RSU 68/MSAD 68						1		2	6	9
RSU 70/MSAD 70									4	4
RSU 71				17		1	4	4	1	27
RSU 72/MSAD 72								4	4	8
RSU 73	2					2	1	4	5	14
RSU 74/MSAD 74			21			18	3		2	44
RSU 75/MSAD 75	4	11				3	3	7	4	32
RSU 78									1	1
RSU 79/MSAD 01								7	4	11
RSU 80/MSAD 04			5					2	8	15
RSU 83/MSAD13			3			2				5
RSU85/MSAD19								1		1
RSU 86/MSAD 20							1	5	6	12
RSU 87/MSAD 23								4	6	10
RSU 88/MSAD 24								3	4	7
RSU 89									8	8
Saco Public Schools		1						1	3	5
Sanford Public Schools								10	9	19

	ACADIA Academy	Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	Community Regional Charter School	Ecology Learning Center	Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences	Maine Academy of Natural Sciences	Maine Arts Academy	Maine Connections Academy	Maine Virtual Academy	Totals
Scarborough Public Schools		22						6	1	29
Sebago Public Schools					1					1
South Portland Public Schools		18			4			9	2	33
Vassalboro Public Schools						5	5	4	2	16
Veazie Public Schools								1	1	2
Waterville Public Schools			12	1		11	14	5	5	48
Wells-Ogunquit CSD		4						4	2	10
West Bath Public Schools									2	2
Westbrook Public Schools		12			7		2	7		28
Winslow Schools			3			5	7	2	3	20
Winthrop Public Schools						2	19	1	3	25
Wiscasset Public Schools		1					1		1	3
Woodland Public Schools								2		2
Yarmouth Schools		7				1			1	9
York Public Schools		1						1		2
Totals	246	373	381	107	197	194	237	510	442	2,687

2023-24 Resident Town Breakdown	ACADIA Academy	Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	Community Regional Charter School	Ecology Learning Center	Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences	Maine Academy of Natural Sciences	Maine Arts Academy	Maine Connections Academy	Maine Virtual Academy	Totals
Abbot								2		2
Acton								3		3
Albany Twp								1	1	2
Albion				17		2	2	1	2	24
Alfred		1						1		2
Alna							1			1
Alton									1	1
Amherst								1		1
Amity									1	1
Andover								1		1
Anson			9			8	1		1	19
Argyle Twp								1		1
Arundel		1						2		3
Ashland									1	1
Athens			10			4		1		15
Auburn	40	8			15	1	1	7	11	83
Augusta		1	2			14	19	4	16	56
Baileyville								1		1
Baldwin		3			2			2		7
Bangor			1	2			1	19	15	38
Bath		6				4	1	5	3	19
Belfast				10		1	2	2		15
Belgrade						3	5		1	9
Belmont				2						2
Benedicta Twp									1	1
Benton			3			5	3	1	2	14
Berwick								5	1	6
Bethel								2		2
Biddeford		5						3	5	13
Bingham			2			1				3
Boothbay		1								1

	ACADIA Academy	Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	Community Regional Charter School	Ecology Learning Center	Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences	Maine Academy of Natural Sciences	Maine Arts Academy	Maine Connections Academy	Maine Virtual Academy	Totals
Boothbay Harbor								1	1	2
Bowdoin	2	2				1		3		8
Bowdoinham		3								3
Bowerbank									1	1
Bradford								2	1	3
Brewer				1					1	2
Bridgton		2						3	2	7
Bristol						1		1		2
Brooks				3				1		4
Brownville								1	3	4
Brunswick		5			3		7	6	5	26
Buckfield		1					1			2
Bucksport								4	2	6
Burlington								1		1
Burnham							2		1	3
Buxton		7			1			2	3	13
Calais								1		1
Camden								1		1
Canaan			14			5			2	21
Cape Elizabeth		10						3	1	14
Caribou								3	7	10
Carmel								4	4	8
Casco		7			11			1		19
Chapman								1		1
Charleston									2	2
Chebeague Island		1								1
Chelsea		1			1	3	12	1	1	19
Cherryfield									1	1
Chester								1		1
Chesterville						1				1
China				2		5	1	2	1	11

	ACADIA Academy	Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	Community Regional Charter School	Ecology Learning Center	Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences	Maine Academy of Natural Sciences	Maine Arts Academy	Maine Connections Academy	Maine Virtual Academy	Totals
Clifton								1		1
Clinton			7			7	3		3	20
Columbia Falls								1		1
Concord Twp								1		1
Corinna			4					2	1	7
Corinth			1					3	3	7
Cornville			24							24
Cumberland		12			4			1		17
Cushing									2	2
Deer Isle									1	1
Denmark									1	1
Dennysville								1	1	2
Detroit			2			4	1	1	1	9
Dexter			4					1	2	7
Dixfield									2	2
Dixmont				3					1	4
Dover-Foxcroft						1		1	4	6
Dresden							1			1
Durham		6			3			3		12
Eagle Lake									1	1
Eastbrook								1	1	2
Easton									1	1
Eddington								1		1
Eliot								9		9
Ellsworth								5	4	9
Embden			2			2	1		1	6
Etna								1	1	2
Exeter			2					1		3
Fairfield			12	2		18	5	3	5	45
Falmouth		6			1		2	2	1	12
Farmingdale						1	4	1		6

	ACADIA Academy	Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	Community Regional Charter School	Ecology Learning Center	Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences	Maine Academy of Natural Sciences	Maine Arts Academy	Maine Connections Academy	Maine Virtual Academy	Totals
Farmington			6				3	5	5	19
Fayette						2	1		2	5
Fort Fairfield							1	5	6	12
Fort Kent								1	1	2
Frankfort								2		2
Franklin								1		1
Freedom				7					1	8
Freeman									1	1
Freeport		8						1	2	11
Friendship									1	1
Fryeburg								2	3	5
Gardiner		1		1		5	9	2	2	20
Garfield Plt								1		1
Garland								1		1
Gilead									1	1
Glenburn								3	2	5
Gorham		26		1	8			9	3	47
Grand Isle									1	1
Gray		14			22			8		44
Greenbush								1	1	2
Greene	2	2			1		2		3	10
Greenfield Twp								1		1
Greenwood								1		1
Guilford			4						8	12
Hallowell							4	2		6
Hampden				2				7	5	14
Harmony			7					1		8
Harswell		1							3	4
Harrington								1		1
Harrison		1			1			3		5
Hartford	1				1				1	3

	ACADIA Academy	Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	Community Regional Charter School	Ecology Learning Center	Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences	Maine Academy of Natural Sciences	Maine Arts Academy	Maine Connections Academy	Maine Virtual Academy	Totals
Hartland			24			3		2		29
Hebron		1								1
Hermon								1	4	5
Hiram		1						1		2
Hodgdon									3	3
Holden									2	2
Hollis		5						2	1	8
Hope									1	1
Houlton								4	7	11
Industry			1							1
Island Falls	1									1
Jackson				2				1		3
Jay						1	1	1	5	8
Jefferson				2				2	1	5
Katahdin Iron Works	1									1
Kennebunk		3						4	2	9
Kennebunkport		2						2		4
Knox				4				1		5
Lamoine									1	1
Lebanon								1	3	4
Lee								3	1	4
Leeds	2						1		1	4
Levant									2	2
Lewiston	139	22			22	1	3	25	14	226
Liberty				4			3	2		9
Limerick								3	2	5
Limestone								3	1	4
Limington		3						4		7
Lincoln								1	2	3
Lincolnton				3				1		4
Lisbon	7	4			3	2	2	7	6	31

	ACADIA Academy	Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	Community Regional Charter School	Ecology Learning Center	Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences	Maine Academy of Natural Sciences	Maine Arts Academy	Maine Connections Academy	Maine Virtual Academy	Totals
Litchfield	5						7	1	2	15
Littleton								1	3	4
Livermore	2							1		3
Livermore Falls						1		2		3
Lubec								1		1
Lyman		1						2		3
Machias								2		2
Madawaska								9	4	13
Madison			31			3	1	5	1	41
Manchester							4		1	5
Mapleton								2		2
Mariaville									1	1
Mars Hill									1	1
Masardis								1		1
Mechanic Falls	5	3			6			2	1	17
Mercer			3				1			4
Mexico								2	2	4
Milbridge								1	1	2
Milford									2	2
Millinocket									1	1
Milo									5	5
Minot	4				1				1	6
Monmouth							4		1	5
Monroe				2						2
Montville				3			1			4
Morrill				1						1
Moscow			1			1				2
Mount Chase									1	1
Mount Desert								1		1
Mount Vernon							1	2		3
Naples		3							1	4

	ACADIA Academy	Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	Community Regional Charter School	Ecology Learning Center	Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences	Maine Academy of Natural Sciences	Maine Arts Academy	Maine Connections Academy	Maine Virtual Academy	Totals
New Gloucester		14			29	1		3	2	49
New Portland						2	1			3
New Sharon						1		1	3	5
New Sweden									2	2
Newfield								1		1
Newport			5	1					1	7
Nobleboro									1	1
Norridgewock			14			5	1		3	23
North Berwick								3	1	4
North Yarmouth		2			3			1		6
Northport				1						1
Norway					3			2	1	6
Oakfield								1	1	2
Oakland			1			7	6	1	3	18
Old Orchard Beach		4						2	2	8
Old Town								9	1	10
Orland									1	1
Orono								3	3	6
Orrington								1	1	2
Otisfield								1		1
Owls Head									1	1
Oxford	1				2				2	5
Palermo				1		3	3		1	8
Palmyra			12					1		13
Paris	2				1					3
Parsonsfield								2		2
Patten									3	3
Phillips									4	4
Phippsburg									1	1
Pittsfield			8			4	3	4	2	21
Pittston							3	4		7

	ACADIA Academy	Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	Community Regional Charter School	Ecology Learning Center	Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences	Maine Academy of Natural Sciences	Maine Arts Academy	Maine Connections Academy	Maine Virtual Academy	Totals
Plymouth				2					1	3
Poland	4	2			13		1	2	1	23
Porter								1	3	4
Portland		46			8			11		65
Prentiss Twp (T7R3 NBPP)								1		1
Presque Isle								4	4	8
Randolph						1	1			2
Rangeley									1	1
Raymond		8			1			3	2	14
Readfield						1	1	1	2	5
Redington Twp									3	3
Richmond							8	1	5	14
Robbinston								1		1
Rockland								1	3	4
Rockport								1		1
Rome						6				6
Roxbury								2		2
Rumford	1							2	8	11
Sabattus	17	3					2	1	1	24
Saco		1						1	3	5
Saint Agatha									1	1
Saint Albans			14					2		16
Sanford								10	9	19
Sangerville			1							1
Scarborough		22						6	1	29
Searsmont				3			2	2		7
Searsport									2	2
Sebago					1					1
Sebec								1		1
Shapleigh								2	1	3
Sidney						4	9	2	1	16

	ACADIA Academy	Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	Community Regional Charter School	Ecology Learning Center	Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences	Maine Academy of Natural Sciences	Maine Arts Academy	Maine Connections Academy	Maine Virtual Academy	Totals
Skowhegan			125			9	2	4	2	142
Smithfield								1		1
Solon			10			6				16
Sorrento								1		1
South Berwick								6		6
South Portland		18			4			9	2	33
Stacyville									4	4
Standish		6			1			6	3	16
Starks						1		1		2
Stockton Springs								3		3
Strong								1	1	2
Sumner							1			1
Swanville				1					1	2
Sweden								2		2
Thomaston								3		3
Thorndike				4						4
Topsham	2	5				2	3	4	1	17
Troy				5						5
Turner	4	1					1		5	11
Union				3			1	2		6
Unity				8		1				9
Van Buren								3	4	7
Vassalboro						5	5	4	2	16
Veazie								1	1	2
Vinalhaven								1		1
Wade								1		1
Waldo				1		1		2		4
Waldoboro							1		3	4
Wales	3						2			5
Wallagrass									1	1
Warren								3	2	5

	ACADIA Academy	Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	Community Regional Charter School	Ecology Learning Center	Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences	Maine Academy of Natural Sciences	Maine Arts Academy	Maine Connections Academy	Maine Virtual Academy	Totals
Washburn								1	1	2
Washington									1	1
Waterboro		3						6	7	16
Waterville			12	1		11	14	5	5	48
Wayne							1			1
Wells		4						4	2	10
West Bath									2	2
West Gardiner	1						2		2	5
West Paris									2	2
Westbrook		12			7		2	7		28
Whitefield				1		1	3			5
Wilton						1		1	1	3
Windham		23			18			9	4	54
Windsor						2	5	1	2	10
Winslow			3			5	7	2	3	20
Winterport				1				1		2
Winthrop						2	19	1	3	25
Wiscasset		1					1		1	3
Woodland								2		2
Woodstock									2	2
Woolwich							1	1	1	3
Yarmouth		7				1			1	9
York		1						1		2
Totals	246	373	381	107	197	194	237	510	442	2,687

Coversheet

To Consider the Approval of the Southern Maine Administrative Collaborative's Contract to Conduct Maine Connections Academy's Independent Third Party Evaluation

Section: X. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance
Item: A. To Consider the Approval of the Southern Maine Administrative Collaborative's Contract to Conduct Maine Connections Academy's Independent Third Party Evaluation
Purpose: Vote
Submitted by:
Related Material:
MCA - Southern Maine Administrative Collaborative Third Party Evaluation Services Contract.pdf



18 Maplewood Avenue
Biddeford, ME 04005
207.282.8280
www.smacschools.me

Third Party Evaluation Services Contract

This contract is made on November 15, 2023 between the Southern Maine Administrative Collaborative (SMAC) and The Maine Connections Academy for the purposes of conducting a comprehensive third party evaluation of the charter school.

Scope of Work:

SMAC will perform a thorough qualitative evaluation of The Maine Connections Academy during the months of August and September 2024. The evaluation will be conducted by qualified consultant(s) employed by SMAC and will not exceed 75 hours of work.

The evaluation will include but is not limited to:

- Review of school documents
- Interviews with school leadership, teachers, students and parents
- Classroom observations
- Analysis of achievement data and other metrics
- Surveys of stakeholders
- Focus groups

The final deliverable will be a comprehensive report summarizing the qualitative findings and recommendations from the evaluation. Raw data from surveys, interviews, focus groups, etc. will be included in an appendix. Consultants will also provide testimony summarizing findings to the Maine Charter Commission.

Compensation:

The total fee for services shall not exceed \$5,500. SMAC shall invoice The Maine Connections Academy upon completion of the final report. Payment terms are net 30 days.

Term:

This contract will be in effect from the date of signature through September 30, 2024. The final report and raw data shall be delivered to The Maine Connections Academy no later than September 30, 2024.



SOUTHERN MAINE
ADMINISTRATIVE COLLABORATIVE

Acceptance:

18 Maplewood Avenue
Biddeford, ME 04005
207.282.8280
www.smacschools.me

By signing below, both parties agree to the terms and conditions outlined in this contract.

Southern Maine Administrative Collaborative

Signature: [Handwritten Signature] Date: 11/15/2023

The Maine Connections Academy

Signature: Walter Wallace Date: 11/21/2023 EST
Signer ID: 7BQBTEDV10...

Coversheet

New Governing Board Members

Section: XI. New Business Requiring Notification to the Commission (No formal action to be taken by Commission)
Item: A. New Governing Board Members
Purpose: FYI
Submitted by:
Related Material: MeAA New Governing Board Member (Mitchell Thomas).pdf

Public Charter School Governing Board Member Information Sheet

Name of Public Charter School Maine Arts Academy

Name of Board Member Mitchell Clyde Thomas

Email Address MitchellClydeThomas@gmail.com

Occupation Adjunct Professor, Humanitie Dept.
Central Maine Community College

Please respond to the following questions:

1. Why do you wish to serve on the governing board? *I was invited by a long-time friend who sees that I could contribute by my fundraising experience*
2. What is your understanding of the educational needs of students in the catchment area? *There is a tremendous need for Arts to be offered to students outside traditional school settings.*
3. Please list any previous or present educational involvement; such as board member, budget committee, citizens committees, etc. List school(s) or district(s). *I have served on several boards within communities in Maine (*).*
4. What special qualifications do you have that will help you to be a board member? *I am a performer (pianist/singer/actor) and composer. Decades of non-profit fundraising and admin experience.*
5. What is your understanding of the role you will play as a public charter school board member? *primarily offer fundraising and development and public relations advice and leadership.*

Sign *M Thomas* Date 11/7/2023

For your convenience this sheet is located on our website under Resources for Authorized Schools (<http://www.maine.gov/csc/>).

Please see the Maine Charter School Commission's Policy on Public Records. Updated 1.9.17

(*) Washburn-Norland's Living History Center, Livermore
L/A Community Little Theatre
L/A Arts
25 years teaching at CMCC
35+ years as Director/Dean - Mechuwana Music-Theatre Camp