



Maine Charter School Commission

Monthly Commission Meeting

Date and Time

Tuesday March 12, 2024 at 1:00 PM EDT

Location

Baxter Academy for Technology and Science, 185 Lancaster Street, Portland OR [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.

Any person seeking special accommodation for the public meeting should contact Amy Allen at (207)592-6364 or amy.l.allen@maine.gov.

Agenda

	Purpose	Presenter
I. Opening Items		
A. Record Attendance		Amy Allen
B. Call the Meeting to Order		Norm Higgins
C. To Consider the Approval of the 2/13/24 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 Spending Dashboard</i>
C. Executive Committee	FYI	Norm Higgins
V. Public Comment*		
A. Public Comment	Discuss	Norm Higgins
VI. Presentations		
		• <i>CountMEIn - Jess Anderson</i>
		• <i>Baxter Academy for Technology and Science - Anna Klein Christie</i>
VII. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report		
A. School Updates	Discuss	Lana Ewing

	Purpose	Presenter
B. Organizational Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Through-Year Assessment Data Results</i> • <i>Strategic Plan</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Current Plan</i> ◦ <i>Progress Tracker</i> 	Discuss	Lana Ewing
C. Media Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Western Maine school district sees absenteeism drop, but not enough</i> 	FYI	Lana Ewing
D. New Charter School	FYI	Lana Ewing
VIII. Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report		
IX. Unfinished Business		
A. Unfinished Business <i>None</i>	Discuss	Norm Higgins
X. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance		
A. To Consider the Approval of Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences' Request for Funds for Revisioning Project	Vote	Norm Higgins
XI. New Business Requiring Notification to the Commission (No formal action to be taken by Commission)		
A. New Governing Board Members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Baxter Academy for Technology and Science (Kathleen DeSilva)</i> • <i>Baxter Academy for Technology and Science (April Theberge)</i> 	FYI	Norm Higgins
B. Board Member Resignations <i>None</i>	FYI	Norm Higgins
C. Board Member Term Outs <i>None</i>	FYI	Norm Higgins

Purpose Presenter

XII. Next Month's Topics

- | | | |
|---|-----|--------------|
| A. Next Month's Topics | FYI | Norm Higgins |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ED279 "101" Presentation by Joe Drago</i> • <i>Mid-Year Meeting Reports</i> | | |

XIII. Announcements

- | | | |
|--|-----|--------------|
| A. Important Dates | FYI | Norm Higgins |
| Graduation Ceremonies: | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sunday, June 2nd (Maine Arts Academy, Augusta Civic Center)</i> • <i>Friday, June 7th (2:00pm-Maine Virtual Academy, ZOOM)</i> | | |

- | | | |
|--|-----|--------------|
| B. Next Regular Business Meeting | FYI | Norm Higgins |
| <p><i>April 9, 2024 (Room #103, Cross Office Building, 111 Sewall Street, Augusta)
or Zoom</i></p> | | |

XIV. Closing Items

- | | | |
|---------------------------|------|--------------|
| A. Adjourn Meeting | Vote | Norm Higgins |
|---------------------------|------|--------------|

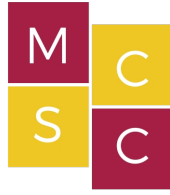
* The Charter School Commission does not allow airing of complaints in public meetings regarding Commission and charter school employees or school employment matters, in order to protect employee privacy, to comply with Maine law and pursuant to our contractual relation with the schools. To the extent 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 2/13/24 Commission Meeting

Section: I. Opening Items
Item: C. To Consider the Approval of the 2/13/24 Commission Meeting
Purpose: Approve Minutes
Submitted by:
Related Material: Minutes for Monthly Commission Meeting on February 13, 2024

APPROVED



Maine Charter School Commission

Minutes

Monthly Commission Meeting

Date and Time

Tuesday February 13, 2024 at 1:00 PM

Location

Room #103, Cross Office Building, 111 Sewall Street, Augusta or via *Zoom*

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://mainestate.zoom.us/j/86500283769>

Meeting ID: 865 0028 3769

Passcode: 39679481

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.***"

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Any person seeking special accommodation for the public meeting should contact Rachel Spell at (207)816-2187 or rachel.spell@maine.gov

Directors Present

Brian Langley (remote), James Ford (remote), Jim Handy, Leigh Albert, Norm Higgins, Tom Keller, Tori Kornfield

Directors Absent

None

Guests Present

Amy Allen (remote), Lana Ewing (remote), 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 Feb 13, 2024 at 1:07 PM.

C. To Consider the Approval of the 1/9/24 Commission Meeting

Jim Handy made a motion to approve the minutes from Monthly Commission Meeting on 01-09-24.

Leigh Albert seconded the motion.

* Meeting with committee on January 24th, will be addressed in comments.

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

Roll Call

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

II. Comments from Commission Chair

A. Comments

- No date with education committee just yet per Norm and that they will let him know.

- 02/14 Charter School Commission will be meeting at State Board to talk about School Performance. Lana will be Zooming in, Tom and Tori will be present over Zoom and Norm will be available in person. Opportunity to elevate conversation and recognize charter schools and their importance in Maine.
- Norm introduced Missy O'Neal (Department of Education's Director of Special Projects as part of Senior Leadership Team) as a guest in the meeting today.

III. Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda

A. Additions/Adjustments

None.

IV. Committee Reports

A. School Performance Committee

- Anna Klein-Christie attended in person to report a significant oversight after first year at Baxter and shared that the students didn't take the Through Year Assessment at Baxter last year.
- It has been addressed for this year and a discussion has happened with the state and it will be recorded as 0% participation.
- An action plan will be submitted and is straight forward (plans to take test in future set in stone and prioritized).
- Focus last year was on improving learning environment and chronic absenteeism going down. Showing improvement since last year with a lot of assets, recognizing there was challenges for credibility from the mistake.
- Tori stated it was a red flag to performance committee and that taking the test was not a choice. Math scores also dropped last year and no way to test or judge that the scores have gone up. Contract is in violation with commission and a formal letter will be sent out.
- Tori went over summarization of school committee and mentioned Lana's school performance report at the state board for 02/14, revisions on performance framework, and amendments Ecology Learning Center wants to make.
- Jim stated it was shocking to see Baxter not be able to take a required and important test.
- Tom said he recognizes test scores aren't all there is but it's all they have to analyze and compare and gave reminder to all charter schools to not skip the required tests.
- Norm and Jim thanked Anna for coming and showing accountability and ownership of the mistake and Tori stated she was happy Baxter self-reported to MDOE.

B. Finance Committee

- Leza Packard (head of school at Ecology Learning Center) reporting about hoping to accept a gift offered, a facility from Unity College.
- Music, theater, performing arts, art gallery - hoping to be re-opened on March 10, 2024 is commission votes to approve this facility they would be receiving. Foster real world learning through mentorship and craft facilitated by this building and what comes with it.
- Place where students can run the box office, find performers, and find personal ways to run community theater, teaching students about business-running. Inter-disciplinary learning focus.
- Two new grand pianos, twelve pottery wheels, two kilns also included with the facility.
- Leigh summarized finance committee - gift from Unity for ELC discussed during it. Lots of positive around great opportunity especially in a small or rural community.
- She shared Joe Drago helped discuss some of the finance aspects of the building and he worked with ELC to understand feasibility of this.
- School is in solid financial situation right now, operating budgets accounted over time/plan, increased enrollment, and fundraising plans.
- Fundraising gives commission a little bit of pause but plan is hopeful, optimistic about it based on pledges as well as knowing the enrollment is promising with long waitlist. (14 more students expected)
- Still some risk but as the finance committee, everyone is in support as opportunity doesn't happen like that often.
- Brian shared it provides for both students and community and a big factor into idea of supporting.
- Joe shared finance review of ELC - 106 students currently, three year plans show them breaking even after showing thousands of donations each year, no cash overhead in this model shared, strictly looking at new cash costs that need to be covered, with more programming the new building will run at a cash deficit, cash flow impact model shown with level of community programming planned, building expense on average \$60k a year, and capital repairs and improvements \$52k. Goal to figure out how to fill financial hole.
- Five performances already scheduled, three in March, some artists are willing to come for free or minimal pay and show making more income and not so dependent on ticket sales that way.
- \$50k in pledges since announced building, waiting to release fundraising campaign publicly if commission approves.
- FY25 budget is underway for commission, Amy had shared at meeting that by March a strong draft will be shared. Looking at employees of commission, at changing temp employment, etc. Amy shared dashboard in packet. No surprises. Financial order request was signed this week by Governor Mills; 30 day wait period until funds available.
- Transportation of charter schools being analyzed; compared to general public schools.

- Schools prepared for covid funding to stop per school, thinking about philanthropy, and how that is impacting budgets.
- Revision to finance portion of performance framework particularly within cash on hand, proposed revisions done.
- Audit season - some audits still coming in. There should be audits completed by end of March.

C. Executive Committee

- Norm summarized committee meeting. Budget being finalized, Tom researching employment and how that might be structured, and about more developments with 10th charter school process.

V. Public Comment*

A. Public Comment

None.

VI. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report

A. School Updates

- Lana attended Baxter for the 'Shark Tank' where students presented projects and there were cash prizes and faculty judges. Lana stated the projects were impressive.
- Scholastic Awards for Baxter last week won 20 awards accumulatively.
- Baxter is holding Winter Chess tournaments for Baxter students and locals.
- MeVA partnered with Cook Center for Human Connection and ParentGuidance.Org providing coaching services for students and families and a free mental health workshop monthly for MeVA students.
- MeAA events coming up (included date documentation in packet) and they went to Colby this past weekend.
- Kennebec Valley Music Festival had some MeAA kids perform a couple of weeks ago as well.

B. Organizational Updates

- Rachel Spell leaving the commission staff this week.
- Lana mentioned meeting with most of the schools in person for the Mid-Year meetings and the reports will be shared next month.
- State decided not to share growth data this year, may be difficult to track student growth using NWEA Growth alone due to challenges with NWEA platform. Not confident in making public but schools can still see the growth; errors made it seem like not reliable measure.

- Lana will be sharing with state board about performance framework tomorrow (2/14).
- ((James Ford left the meeting early at 2:15pm))
- Lana invited Count Me In executive to brief presentation next month for commission meeting to share work around improving chronic absenteeism.

C. Media Updates

- Articles included about Baxter, a winner of a women in science award and of students helping clean up in community.
- Article about chronic absenteeism and how Stanford is addressing problem that there is a way via a 'walking' bus system. Lana wishes to continue highlighting innovative practices in helping attendance.
- Tori mentioned benefit of walking bus system since they use it in Bangor and how parents do not have to be up to get students up in morning with this system. Jim mentioned that it was also done in Lewiston some years ago.

D. New Charter School

- Draft application launched publicly (on website!)
- Norm facilitated meetings with a lot of local colleges to discuss charter schools in Maine, expectations, and if they have interest in being involved in a charter school or if they know any places who would be.
- Rural areas - do not want to take away students from rural areas completely with introduction of new school. Geography big aspect of looking at 10th charter school.

VII. Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report

A. Enrollment Map

- Rachel Spell shared a demonstration of how the enrollment map works and explained the data used to create it and the link was shared with the commission.

VIII. Unfinished Business

A. Unfinished Business

- Fiddlehead Request for Funds.

IX. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance

A. To Consider the Approval of Ecology Learning Center's Request for New Facility

Leigh Albert made a motion to accept approval of Ecology Learning Center's Request for New Facility.

Tori Kornfield seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

B. To Consider the Approval of Ecology Learning Center's Request to Increase Enrollment

Leigh Albert made a motion to approve Ecology Learning Center's request to increase enrollment.

Jim Handy seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

C. To Consider the Approval of Revisions to the Performance Framework for SY2023-24

Jim Handy made a motion to approve revision to Performance Framework for SY2023-24.

Tori Kornfield seconded the motion.

- Changes would go into effect this year (adding through year proficiency target, post-secondary readiness, and growth. Subgroups if 10 or most students in any subgroup, want to see complete numbers for the data, and five/six year graduation rates.)
- Some targets moved to different sections (chronic absenteeism and panorama survey targets).
- Chronic Absenteeism metric possibly be added, discussed more, but not being included in revisions today.
- Science as inclusion in future with ELA and Math, not currently included due to also needing more discussion and would want schools to know this is going to be implemented well ahead of time.

- Possibly moving section 5; not proposed in revision but could be included in future.

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

Roll Call

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

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

A. New Governing Board Members

- Jamie Dickson for Fiddlehead School.

B. Board Member Resignations

None.

C. Board Member Term Outs

None.

XI. Next Month's Topics

A. Next Month's Topics

- Fiddlehead's Fund Request.
- Mid-Year Meetings.

XII. Announcements

A. Important Dates

- March 10th opening of new building for ELC.

B. Next Regular Business Meeting

March 12, 2024 from 1pm-3pm *at Baxter Academy*

XIII. 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 2:58 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Norm Higgins

Documents used during the meeting

- FY24_MCSC_Budget_vs_Actual_Report_as_of_2.5.24.pdf
- Maine schools say path to fixing chronic absenteeism starts with building relationships.pdf
- Portland students collect trash after storm.pdf
- Celebrating Excellence - Society of Women Engineers honors outstanding Maine high school juniors and seniors.pdf
- Pearson's Connections Academy Partners with HOSA–Future Health Professionals to Engage and Connect Middle and High Schoolers Early to Healthcare Careers.pdf
- Brunswick non-profit is helping all Mainers gear up for outdoors.pdf
- ELC Facility Amendment.pdf
- ELC Enrollment Increase Application.pdf
- Performance Framework February 2024.docx.pdf
- FSAS New Governing Board Member (Jamie Dickson).pdf
- MeAA Public Events.docx

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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 3.4.24.pdf



MCSC FY24 Budget vs. Actual *(As of 3-4-24)*

Summary	Total FY23 Budget	Total Actual Cost	Total Difference
	\$839,374	\$507,076	\$332,298

Personnel

	Projected Cost	Actual Cost	Difference
Staff Salaries	\$285,000	\$202,774	↑ \$82,226
Manpower Service Fee	\$104,880	\$73,620	↑ \$31,260
Benefits	\$60,000	\$40,000	↑ \$20,000
Total	\$449,880	\$316,395	\$133,485

Contracted Services

	Projected Cost	Actual Cost	Difference
Finance Consultant	\$49,275	\$24,545	↑ \$24,730
Public Relations/Engagement	\$35,000	\$10,951	↑ \$24,049
Project-Based Support	\$65,000	\$28,888	↑ \$36,113
Total	\$149,275	\$64,384	\$84,891

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	\$3,451	↑ \$9,331
Staff	\$7,641	\$5,538	↑ \$2,103
Total	\$20,423	\$8,989	\$11,434

Personal Services (Per Diem/Commission Members)

	Projected Cost	Actual Cost	Difference
Per Diem	\$15,400	\$8,195	↑ \$7,205
Total	\$15,400	\$8,195	\$7,205

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	\$6,386	↑ \$474
Meeting Room Rental	\$1,000	\$0	↑ \$1,000
Postage	\$500	\$272	↑ \$228
Advertising	\$500	\$200	↑ \$300
Food	\$500	\$234	↑ \$266
General Government Service Center	\$7,529	\$14,093	↓ (\$6,564)
Legal and Professional Services	\$12,546	\$5,429	↑ \$7,117
Office and Other Supplies	\$1,000	\$413	↑ \$587
Total	\$32,711	\$28,340	\$4,371

Sta-Cap

	Projected Cost	Actual Cost	Difference
Sta-Cap	\$9,775	\$1,509	↑ \$8,266
Total	\$9,775	\$1,509	\$8,266

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	\$3,300	↑ \$700
Total	\$90,065	\$68,294	\$21,771

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	\$2,983	↑ \$5,862
Cell Phone Services	\$2,000	\$1,829	↑ \$171
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	\$12,657	\$14,188

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

Organizational Updates

Section: VII. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report
Item: B. Organizational Updates
Purpose: Discuss
Submitted by:
Related Material: State Assessment Results Comparison March Commission Meeting.pdf
MCSC Strategic Plan Draft FINAL.pdf
Strategic Plan Progress Tracker_March 2024 - Detail.pdf

Spring 2023 Through-Year Assessment**ELA**

Statewide - 64.6% At or Above State Expectations		
ACADIA Academy	72.2%	
Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	<i>Did Not Assess</i>	
*Community Regional Charter School		44.7%
Ecology Learning Center		55.0%
Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences	69.8%	
Maine Academy of Natural Sciences	73.5%	
Maine Arts Academy	79.4%	
Maine Connections Academy	78.0%	
*Maine Virtual Academy		57.6%

**Academic Growth Results*

CRCS - Exceeded Expectations in Reading (60%) and Met Expectations in Language (53%)

MeVA - Met Expectations in Reading (47%) and Exceeded Expectations in Language (57%)

Math

Statewide - 48.7% At or Above State Expectations		
ACADIA Academy	52.3%	
Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	<i>Did Not Assess</i>	
*Community Regional Charter School		28.4%
Ecology Learning Center		36.4%
Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences		40.6%
Maine Academy of Natural Sciences		35.3%
Maine Arts Academy		31.1%
Maine Connections Academy		33.3%
*Maine Virtual Academy		28.9%

**Academic Growth Results*

CRCS - Met Expectations in Math (55%)

MeVA - Exceeded Expectations in Math (65%)

Subgroup Analysis - Spring 2023

ELA

	State	AA	BA	CRCS	ELC	FSAS	MCA	MeAA	MeANS	MeVA
Female	68.9%	79%	Did Not Assess	63.8%	*	85.1%	83.5%	*	*	60.9%
Male	60.6%	63%		31.3%	*	57.6%	69.9%	*	*	54.1%
FRL	51.6%	73.1%		39.3%	*	*	67.1%	69.2%	*	53.5%
IEP	31%	71.4%		20%	*	55.3%	61.8%	*	*	27.5%

**Suppressed*

Subgroup Analysis - Spring 2023

Math

	State	AA	BA	CRCS	ELC	FSAS	MCA	MeAA	MeANS	MeVA
Female	46.9%	49.2%	Did Not Assess	28.1%	*	41.3%	35.5%	*	38.9%	28.4%
Male	50.4%	56.5%		28.6%	*	40.0%	30.1%	*	31.3%	29.4%
FRL	33.9%	34.6%		20.9%	*	35.7%	25.6%	24.0%	*	23.7%
IEP	18.8%	43.5%		17.1%	*	25.6%	*	*	38.5%	12.5%

**Suppressed*

Spring 2022 NWEA MAP Assessment

ELA

Statewide - 83.8% At or Above State Expectations		
ACADIA Academy	95.6%	
Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	Data Suppressed	
Community Regional Charter School		70.7%
Ecology Learning Center	Data Suppressed	
Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences	87.5%	
Maine Academy of Natural Sciences		81.8%
Maine Arts Academy	Data Suppressed	
Maine Connections Academy	90.4%	
Maine Virtual Academy	84.9%	

Math

Statewide - 81.3% At or Above State Expectations		
ACADIA Academy	89.5%	
Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	Data Suppressed	
Community Regional Charter School		64.7%
Ecology Learning Center		76.2%
Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences		79.6%
Maine Academy of Natural Sciences		73.5%
Maine Arts Academy	Data Suppressed	
Maine Connections Academy	92.3%	
Maine Virtual Academy	86.9%	

MAINE CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION STRATEGIC PLAN

2021 - 2024

BACKGROUND

In January 2021, the Maine Charter School Commission hired a new Executive Director. The state had recently instituted a cap on the number of charter schools that could be authorized by the Charter Commission. It was clear that the state of chartering new schools in Maine was in question, which created an opportunity to reflect on the last ten years of the Commission's existence and what the next ten years might have in store.

This strategic plan was developed over the course of several months, with feedback and input from myriad stakeholders. We incorporated the voices of local and national experts in authorizing, innovation, and educational leadership. We engaged our charter operators, the six* volunteer Commission members, and our partners in the work to explore the following questions:

- Why do we exist and what do we believe our role is to improve educational outcomes and enhance the quality of life in Maine?
- Where are we now, both as a Commission and as a state in terms of educational innovation and improvement?
- Where are we going both as a Commission and as a state?
- How will we get there and how will we know if we have arrived?
- What are we already good at and where do we need to improve?

THE CHALLENGE

It is clear that students are not being served at a level that improves freedom and quality of life

According to Educate Maine, 52% of 4th graders are proficient in reading and 41% of them are proficient in math.¹ In 8th grade, a pivotal year that determines a child's high school and post secondary trajectory, only 36% of students are proficient in mathematics. Children growing up in poverty are 90% more likely to leave formal education prior to high school graduation. At the same time, the "on-time" graduation rate for students in Maine is 87%, while reading proficiency among high school students is at 56% and math proficiency is just 33%, indicating that Maine's high schools are lowering the bar for achievement to allow students to graduate, setting them up for failure in post-secondary credentialing opportunities and decreased well-being throughout their lifetimes.

We must act boldly and courageously to create thriving and diverse ecosystems of schools that support the achievement of ALL students in Maine. Maine's charter schools can be leaders in the effort to innovate and drastically improve student achievement, quality of life, and self-actualization.

MISSION, VISION, VALUES



Vision

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



Mission

To authorize, monitor and develop unique public charter schools that provide a dynamic, superlative education for every student

Title 20-A Education § 2402 [\(LINK\)](#)

- Improve pupil learning by creating more high-quality schools with high standards for pupil performance
- Close achievement gaps between high-performing and low-performing groups of public school students
- Increase high-quality educational opportunities within the public education system
- Provide alternative learning environments for students who are not thriving in traditional school settings
- Create new professional opportunities for teachers and other school personnel
- Encourage the use of different, high-quality models of teaching and other aspects of schooling
- Provide students, parents, community members, and local entities with expanded opportunities for involvement in the public education system

Values



STUDENTS AT THE CENTER

Be aggressively urgent in pursuit of more effective schools



COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Compassionately coordinate, collaborate and build trust to multiply the impact in the ecosystem



DEVELOP THE PEOPLE

Design and implement tools, systems and cultures that grow the capacity of people doing the work so they are prepared for greatness



TRANSPARENCY FOR THE SAKE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Leverage available data and find new forms of measurement to cultivate truth in decision making and promote integrity in our processes and reporting

KEY LEVERS

Embarking on systemic and structural change requires an analysis of how an organization can create pressure on the system to manifest the change it seeks. This requires an understanding of the organization's role and the tools it has at its disposal to create a new reality. The Maine Charter School Commission has several "levers" that it can deploy to create change. These levers are like dials on a complex machine. Turning one up while simultaneously turning another down can create a dramatic change to the end product and for the end-user. Knowing how much to turn these dials to get just the right outcome is an obvious challenge and should be taken seriously. Nevertheless, we need to explore adjusting the inputs so that we achieve new and better outcomes for our students. The following are the tools that the Commission has at its disposal to enhance outcomes for students and families:



Contracts between charter boards and the Charter Commission allow us to set expectations for performance and leverage legal tools to enforce a shared covenant.



The Performance Framework provides details on how each charter operator is making progress toward a high bar for performance on multiple domains ranging from student achievement to financial health.



Reporting systems allow the Charter Commission to publicly share the overall health and performance of the charter school program in Maine, providing much needed transparency and context for school quality. .



Service and authorizing fees ensure that the Charter Commission has the necessary resources to support the monitoring of charter schools and provide services to each operator.



Access to MDOE and other state level actors positions the Charter Commission as a state-wide leader in the movement to increase achievement and well-being of students. Being a quasi-state agency, we have the ability to coordinate and communicate with other state leaders.



The power to convene and network provides the charter operators an organizing principle for collaboration and connects organizations with shared interests to solve complex problems.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The strategic priorities represent the focus of our daily work. From how we organize our time to how we build agendas for meetings, the strategic priorities allow us to boost the signal and reduce the noise. They provide us with an opportunity to make thoughtful decisions about what is important, what isn't, and the rationale that shaped our thinking.



Strategic Priority #1: Increase student achievement and social-emotional well-being

Develop compassionate, self-actualized, and engaged citizens who live with choice and purpose

We exist to authorize and monitor unique schools that support the achievement and social mobility of children in Maine. Our first priority focuses on student achievement and social-emotional well-being because we believe the purpose of school is to help students understand the world around them and the world within them.

This priority will be driven by the following actions:

- > **Cultivate a culture of data-driven decision making** at all 10 charter schools and at the Commission. In doing so, we shift our culture away from leaving learning to chance to one in which we deeply understand how our inputs alter the outcomes.
- > **Develop school leaders** through professional learning, networking, and collective problem solving to maximize efforts toward achieving missions. The Charter Commission has the ability to connect our school leaders in a meaningful way so that they can solve shared problems in collaborative ways. We can also use our national reach to connect school leaders to development opportunities that can support their schools' missions. This supports school leaders in taking healthy risks and creating innovations that are supported by their peers.

> **Refine expectations through thoughtful revision and implementation of the Performance Framework** that includes multiple measures of authentic achievement, revealing the superpowers of our students and orienting priorities around educational practices that matter most.

> **Clarify the roles and relationship between operators and the Charter Commission** so that we share expectations about how the Charter Commission holds charter schools accountable for performance.

Strategic Priority #2: Create the conditions for sustained excellence

Champion policies and practices that nurture the ecosystem of effective and diverse schools

In order to continue the important work already started, the Commission seeks to create and nurture the conditions for sustained growth and excellence over time. A positive consequence of paying attention to the conditions that generate success is that we create an environment where schools can be successful independent of the Commission.

This priority will be driven by the following actions:

> **Serve as a model, high-performing governing board** with procedures for evaluating its own performance and the ability to improve.

> **Work alongside policymakers to support policies and practices that increase school quality and choice** regardless of the type of school. Additionally, we will **issue an annual Legislative Impact Report** that assesses the consequences of policies on charter schools.

> **Seek opportunities to build coalitions** around shared goals.

> **Coordinate common efforts** to increase equity, innovation, and capacity building with our partners at the Maine Department of Education.

Strategic Priority #3: Develop effective governing boards

Develop self-sustaining, effective, autonomous governing boards

The strength and performance of governing boards will determine the long-term success of the organization. At the core, the governing board's role is to ensure that the organization is financially healthy and it is holding the officers of the school accountable for the safety and achievement of its students. Charter school governing boards protect the sanctity of the school's mission and vision. In developing the boards, we better position the organization to mitigate liability, generate strong practices and policies that ensure success, and plan for sustained excellence.

This priority will be driven by the following actions:

- > **Define expectations for interactions** between governing boards and the Charter Commission and initiate quarterly board president meetings with the Executive Director with an emphasis on financial planning, assessments of school leader performance and board performance reflection.
- > **Develop and deliver a robust board training curriculum** that includes annual board training, new board member orientation, and board president training in coordination with national experts and partners.
- > **Create and distribute exemplar, externally vetted documents** and policies, including agenda templates, calendars, etc.
- > **Develop resources and tools that support board member recruitment**, selection and retention.

Strategic Priority #4: Foster collaborative innovation

Model continuous improvement and innovative educational delivery

The Commission has an opportunity to provide a catalyst to changes in the field, ultimately affecting student achievement and well-being. Through networking experts, providing opportunities for knowledge-building and convening leaders to problem-solve on shared challenges, the Commission can multiply the positive impact on communities through collaboration.

This priority will be driven by the following actions:

- > **Build a list of state and national partners that can support innovative school practices** and connect charter schools with experts to facilitate implementation.
- > **Investigate funding sources that support educational innovation in rural settings** including rural schools grants through the USDOE and other rural schools programs and foundations.
- > **Deepen collaboration with organizations that share similar visions** to launch initiatives that support innovative teaching and learning practices.
- > **Design thoughtful ways to enhance the capacity of teachers to deliver effective instruction** to their students, improving student achievement and well-being.
- > **Spread best practices through monthly leader meetings** with charter school leaders and begin quarterly meetings with board chairs.

Strategic Priority #5: Engage and activate stakeholders

Poke the campfire to ensure the public is knowledgeable about how charter schools contribute to a vibrant, thriving ecosystem of schools

A significant opportunity for the charter school program in Maine is making sure that we are engaging our stakeholders and audience in a conversation about the value proposition that charter schools provide. When

we effectively communicate with and on behalf of our communities, we strengthen the culture of charter schools, reduce misconceptions and replace them with honest information, and create feedback loops to continue the progress and growth of the state's charter school program.

This priority will be driven by the following actions:

- > **Engage, inspire and activate our communities through vibrant storytelling** in multiple media and on myriad platforms that reveals the power and promise of charter schools.

- > **Execute thoughtful and truthful reporting of charter school performance** at a regular cadence so that our community can be aware of the progress charter schools are making.

- > **Set the table for parents to promote the value of a charter school education** and empower them to speak on behalf of their schools.

- > **Support full enrollment at charter schools** by better understanding the market conditions, demand, and available seats.

- > **Position charter schools as great places to work** by branding for high-achieving, creative educators.

PRIORITY	GOAL	ACTION	INDICATOR	Progress	July 2022	March 2023	March 2024	
1: Student Achievement & Social Emotional Well-Being	Data-driven decision making	Provide additional opportunities to measure student progress and rigor for post-secondary readiness	From the performance framework: 75-85% of eligible students will take at least one of the available post-secondary readiness assessments	- Incorporated into the performance framework - Launched Accuplacer pilot - Currently operational (March 2024)	Getting Started	On-Track	Achieved	
		Use data from NWEA MAP to drive student achievement	100% of schools administer MAP assessments in assigned grade levels and submit actions plans based on the results	- Required schools to submit MAP action plans based on their analysis of results - Currently operational (March 2024)	On-Track	On-Track	Achieved	
		Design and launch support structures, including professional learning opportunities to deepen awareness, analysis of data	MCSC will hold two PD sessions for SLs to deepen data practice and 85% attendees will report that the sessions build leadership team capacity to analysis and action plan from data	- We are in the process of developing a scope and sequence for leaders (S&S paused) - Members of the MDOE Data Team joined two SL Meetings to discuss assessmnet data, data alignment + reporting (March 2024)	Getting Started	Getting Started	Abandoned	
		Use Panorama data to improve teacher, student + staff experience	100% schools administer Panorama student, teacher and family surveys and analyze the data to improve teacher, student + staff experience	- Expanded monitoring of survey in performance framework - Currently operational (March 2024)	On-Track	On-Track	Achieved	
	School Leader Development	MCSC facilitates monthly school leader meetings to share best practices on topics that school leaders and MCSC generate	MCSC will hold monthly school leader meetings and 85% of attendees will report that meetings are, at minimum, a good use of time	- Facilitate meetings monthly - Host office hours monthly - Currently operational (March 2024)	On-Track	On-Track	Achieved	
		Monthly professional development meetings for SLs on topics that are adaptive to trends and needs surfaced from school leaders and portfolio success (Establish Lunch and Learn)	MCSC will hold a series of sessions for SLs to deepen practice and 85% attendees will report that the sessions build leadership team capacity	- Learning opportunities incorporated into monthly SL Meetings	Not Started	Not Started	Abandoned	
	Performance Framework	Revise a PF with criterion that align with the best practices of high performing charter schools	100% of charter schools meet 80% of the criterion outlined in the Performance Framework	Performance framework was adopted by the Commission in June 2022 and Revised in February 2024	On-Track	On-Track	Achieved	
	2: Sustained Excellence	Model Board	Commission develops systems and processes that provide for higher functioning and thoughtful decision making	MCSC implements model committee structure to improve governance practices and school oversight and self-reports that committee have increased Commission function and decision making	- Committees are operational (March 2024) - Commission self-assessment results noted the effectiveness of committee work	On-Track	On-Track	Achieved
				MCSC implements model governance policies and self-reports that committee have increased Commission function and decision making	- Polices are not yet fully analyzed and documented	Not Started	Getting Started	Partially Achieved
			Commission demonstrates trust and transparency as a state agency and remains in compliance with established open meetings laws and best practices	-90% of MCSC public meeting agendas and materials are posted within 5 days prior to each meeting. -90% of MCSC approved meeting minutes are posted within 5 days of approval -100% of MCSC's public meeting meet FOIA requirements	- All agendas are published prior to the Commission Meeting - Revised the board packet to streamline documents and evidence - Revised meeting cadence to facilitate decision making - Gap: Committee agendas published, meeting cadence in place	On-Track	On-Track	Achieved
Commission members participate in continuous improvement opportunities			- Commission Members participate in 80% of recommended board development opportunities. - Quarterly PD operational (March 2024)	- Launched NCSI led PD series	Not Started	On-Track	Achieved	
Policy Impact		Impact legislative decision making	Develop a legislative strategy, including staffing the Commission at 100% of members with current seat terms	- 100% of seats filled - Have not documented a legislative strategy	Not Started	Getting Started	Partially Achieved	

PRIORITY	GOAL	ACTION	INDICATOR	Progress	July 2022	March 2023	March 2024
	Build Coalitions	Build a productive and positive relationship with the Commissioner's office	Meet yearly with MDOE Commissioner's office to present and review the annual report	- Annual presentations with the Commissioner on the Annual Report - Enhanced the annual report to the Commissioner with more information - Worked with other state agencies to align systems (budget, SPED, etc)	On-Track	On-Track	Achieved
		Connect board chairs to ensure stronger relationships across the portfolio of schools and foster collaboration	Quarterly board chairs meetings are attended by 80% of the schools	- Successful pilot in SY2022 - Operational quarterly board chair PD (March 2024) - Have not reached indicator of 80% attendance	On-Track	On-Track	Partially Achieved
		Build strong relationships with national partners to advance the effectiveness of MCSC	MCSC reports that relationships with the following national partners have increased effectiveness: NACSA, Authorizing for All, Virtual Schools, A-GAME, National Charter Schools Institute, New Schools Venture Fund, Charter School Growth Fund, National Authorizers	- Partnerships established with NACSA, Authorizing for All, Virtual Schools, A-GAME, National Charter Schools Institute, National Authorizers	On-Track	On-Track	Partially Achieved
		Build strong relationships with local and regional partners to advance the effectiveness of MCSC	MCSC reports that relationships with the following local partners have increased effectiveness: Education Action Forum	- Education Action Forum has dissolved - Partnership with the newly launched Charter School Alliance	Not Started	Getting Started	Achieved
3: Boards	Interactions between boards and Commission	Board Chairs take place in Quarterly Board Chair meetings hosted by MCSC to focus on board development and collaboration	80% of Board Chairs take place in Quarterly Board Chair meetings hosted by MCSC and report that the collaboration has caused a directly positive impact on their school community	- Successful pilot in SY2022 - Operational quarterly board chair PD (March 2024) - Have not reached indicator of 80% attendance - Have not solicited formal feedback from the school boards	On-Track	On-Track	Partially Achieved
		MCSC ED establishes a routine to meet regularly with each board chair to build relationships and offer guidance	100% of Board Chairs meet regularly with ED	- Midyear meetings/End of Year Meetings	Not Started	On-Track	Achieved
	Board Training	All Board Members participating in annual MCSC development courses to improve board efficacy	80% of Board members participate in MCSC online board training modules (minimum requirements outlined in PF and HERE)	- Successful pilot in SY2022 - School Board Online modules are fully operational - Have not reached indicator of 80% attendance (March 2024)	Getting Started	On-Track	Partially Achieved
		Board Member Orientation	-MCSC will contact each new governing board member and share the MCSC resource for new governing board members - 80% of new board members will complete the required board training development provided by MCSC	- MCSC resources updated and ready to distribute - Have not consistently distributed documents to all new board members - Have not reached 80% participation goal (March 2024)	Not Started	Getting Started	Stalled
	Exemplar Documents	MCSC makes available model resources and documents to aid in strong board governance (exemplar agendas, annual plans, etc.)	-MCSC publishes board governance exemplar documents on website -MCSC trains all boards in exemplar document use	-2021 Policy Training Complete	Not Started	Getting Started	Abandoned
	Tools for Board Recruitment	MCSC makes available board recruitment resources, such as model job descriptions, job members posting, onboarding.	MCSC publishes board recruitment resources on website		Not Started	Not Started	Abandoned
		MCSC dedicates space on the website to publish board recruitment resources and direct link(s) for interested parties	MCSC trains all boards in board recruitment	- Started website development and have dedicated space planned for board recruitment resources - Have shared several board recruitment documents with schools	Getting Started	Getting Started	Abandoned

PRIORITY	GOAL	ACTION	INDICATOR	Progress	July 2022	March 2023	March 2024	
4: Innovation	State and National Partners	Develop close partnership with NACSA, including participating in professional development and contracting support services	MCSC staff report high level of engagement and satisfaction with national partner collaboration and development	- Formal contract with NACSA	Getting Started	On-Track	Achieved	
		Develop close partnership with NCSI, including participating in professional development and co-creating board training modules	Board members report high level of engagement and satisfaction with online board training developing with NCSI	- Formal contract with NCSI (board chair and Commission Member PD)	On-Track	On-Track	Achieved	
	Funding	MCSC establish relationships with charter school financial, development and facilities experts in order to increase MCSC expertise and improve charter school services offerings	3+ schools utilize the financial, development or facilities resources curated by MCSC	- Have shared curated resources with all school leaders and board chairs - Have shared grant opportunities with schools as they arise - Cultivating partnership with organizations that support fundraising for charters (March 2024)	Getting Started	Getting Started	Partially Achieved	
	Collaborate with similar organizations	MCSC diagnoses trends in Maine charter school challenges and establishes relationship with industry experts to increase services offerings and school efficacy	All schools utilize expertise collected by MCSC to improve school programming and efficacy	- Lotterease - Lincoln Barretta - Infinite Campus - NWEA - Panorama - Board on Track - Marshall Communications - FundED	On-Track	On-Track	Achieved	
	Enhance teacher capacity	Charter school teachers engage in quality MDOE professional development (Modern Classroom Project)	80% of charter school teachers who complete the MCP recommend MCP and utilize the tools in the MCP	- 8 teachers completed MCP - Other teachers will complete the summer program - 100% of participating teachers recommend the program to a colleague	On-Track	On-Track	Achieved	
	Best Practice Sharing	See SL Development Goal in Section #1:		- MCSC facilitates monthly school leader meetings to share best practices on topics that school leaders and MCSC generate - Monthly professional development meetings for SLs on topics that are adaptive to trends and needs surfaces from school leaders and portfolio success (Establish Lunch and Learn) - Abandoned the above Lunch and Learn idea	On-Track	On-Track	Partially Achieved	
5: Engage Stakeholders	Report Charter School Performance to spread positive word	Establish relationship with external communications firm to develop and execute a charter messaging campaign and share charter school performance to a broad audience	Charter school media traffic increases at least 25% with positive messaging	- Have initiated a relationship with Marshall Communications - Have completed some marketing work with Serra Communications - Ongoing contract with Marshall to raise awareness of charter school performance	Getting Started	Getting Started	Achieved	
		Leverage publication of annual performance report to spread information about charter school performance to a wide audience		- Annual Report to the Commissioner distributed widely within the state government - Report sent to PR firm to support raising charter awareness	Not Started	Not Started	Achieved	
	Parent Engagement	Implement a measure for collecting charter school family satisfaction (Panorama)	All charter schools use the Panorama family survey and report results to the MCSC			Getting Started	Getting Started	Achieved
		Report families satisfaction rates in Performance Report	Results from 3/3 required scales* on the Family Panorama School Climate Survey will be within the average range (50% or higher) when compared to like schools (% FRL, grade band, urban/rural).			Getting Started	Getting Started	Achieved

PRIORITY	GOAL	ACTION	INDICATOR	Progress	July 2022	March 2023	March 2024
	Full Enrollment	Conduct a market analysis for each charter school that examines enrollment potential	100% of charters are fully enrolled	- MCSC shared the available catchment area student numbers with each school and with the Commission - All charters are within the target enrollment range	Getting Started	Getting Started	Achieved
		Contract with an external expert to support schools to increase student enrollment (Lincoln Barretta)		- The majority of charter schools have increased enrollment - 3 charters were approved to increase target enrollment	Getting Started	Getting Started	Achieved
	Brand for strong educators: "Set the stage for school excellence in Maine"	Establish relationship with external communications firm to develop and execute a charter messaging campaign that will recruit top educators to Maine charters		- Have initiated a relationship with Marshall Communications - Completed limited marketing work with Serra Communications - No data to support if efforts have yielded greater educator recruitment	Not Started	Getting Started	Partially Achieved
		Establish a compelling runway/environment for high-performing charter schools to open and operate in Maine	Maine charter educator applications increase by at least 10%	- MCSC website redesign	Not Started	Getting Started	Stalled

Coversheet

Media Updates

Section: VII. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report
Item: C. Media Updates
Purpose: FYI
Submitted by:
Related Material: Western Maine school district sees absenteeism drop, but not enough.pdf

Western Maine school district sees absenteeism drop, but not enough

pressherald.com/2024/02/18/western-maine-school-district-sees-absenteeism-drop-but-not-enough

February 18, 2024



Like many districts across the country, Mt. Blue Regional School District in western Maine has seen student attendance take a sharp hit since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years, more than half of Mt. Blue High's students were chronically absent, meaning they missed at least 10% of the school year. That figure has dropped but remains high – as of December, more than a quarter of the school's 702 students were chronically absent.

“Our numbers started to improve,” said Christian Elkington, the school district superintendent, “but not significantly enough for us.”

His district is not alone. Last year, 27% of Maine's K-12 students were chronically absent. Among economically disadvantaged students, the number was much higher: 38%.

The worst year for absences was 2021-22, when many schools returned to in-person teaching.

In the Mt. Blue district, which serves students from Franklin, Kennebec and Somerset counties, the number of chronically absent students across its seven schools more than doubled from 2020-21. It remained high last year, with half of the district's approximately 2,000 students missing at least 10% of the academic year

This year, the district has seen the number of chronically absent students decline significantly at each school, but the figures remain fairly high, ranging from 13% to 27%.

Chronic absenteeism can stem from a variety of factors: lack of reliable transportation, for instance, in a district where some students live 30 miles from their school, or an extended illness. Or sometimes a family will choose to pull out a child for a family vacation. Bullying can also be an issue.

“Student attendance can sometimes be impacted by conflicts at school,” Elkington wrote in the district’s Feb. 2 newsletter. “Any conflict that occurs which might make a student hesitant to come to school is one too many and is something WE need to work together on.”

But experts say a pandemic-induced shift in attitudes has been the central problem, as families readjust to in-person instruction, and changing norms around sick days and quarantine protocols.

Students who are chronically absent are less likely to hit grade-level reading targets and more likely to drop out of high school, according to Count ME In Maine, an organization tracking the state’s school attendance rates.

In districts that serve high rates of children living in poverty, missing school means missing meals, guidance sessions and health care opportunities.

“Breaking the daily attendance routine can reduce a student’s connection and engagement in their learning and in our schools,” Elkington wrote in the district’s Jan. 19 newsletter.

Last summer, the district found similar issues at each of its schools.

“We discussed possible causes, brainstormed ideas on what we thought might help, and looked at our procedures,” Elkington said.

The district decided to focus on instituting measurable attendance targets, increasing its communication with families, and reviewing its policies to ensure expectations were consistent across the schools.

The district formed a 10-person committee that included principals, guidance counselors, representatives from the special education department and vocational center, and district resource officers.

“It allows us to take the burden off of just one person to find a solution for a student,” said Joel Smith, the Mt. Blue High interim principal. “When you have that many people on a team there are usually connections with the students that are missing school. It gives us a better understanding of that student so we can address the whole student and meet their needs where they are.”

The team meets weekly to evaluate its protocols and discuss individual cases.

“We started the year with the goal of improving average daily attendance by 3%, and that’s a pretty big push, but we’re already hitting that mark,” Smith said.

Daily attendance at the high school is up 5% over the previous year – an increase Smith credited to staff efforts.

“It’s been a schoolwide initiative. Staff, even though they might not be a part of the initial conversation, they’ve taken on really an active part in trying to engage with students and making sure contact is made to parents,” he said.

In the district’s Jan. 19 newsletter, the superintendent discussed the toll winter weather and illnesses can take on attendance, and encouraged parents to speak with medical providers or school nurses if they were concerned about COVID-19 or the flu.

“Please don’t forget ... that stomach pain and headaches can be signs of anxiety and may not be reasons for keeping your child home,” Elkington wrote.

Emily McClement, who has a second grader at W.G. Mallett School in Farmington, said she has been surprised by how the conversation around attendance has shifted.

“The changes in expectations from when my child started at Mallett School up to now has been wild,” she said. “Before we were told not to send him to school if he was feeling even slightly unwell, and now we’re getting judged anytime we keep him home. I feel like my child is just a number for funding, not a student.”

She said her son has nearly perfect attendance, aside from a one-week vacation her family takes every spring, and noted her family is very involved in school events.

Josh Billings, who has two children attending school in the district, said he appreciates the communication from administrators, even if it can seem like overkill at times.

“They have a very thin line to walk. It’s a sensitive subject,” he said. “They can’t please everybody. I guess, post-pandemic, I’ve been willing to cut the school board and system as much slack as they need. It’s not an easy job.”

*This story was originally published by **The Maine Monitor**, a nonprofit and nonpartisan news organization. To get regular coverage from the Monitor, sign up for a free Monitor newsletter [here](#).*

State urges Winthrop, other school districts to take electric buses off the road due to defects
2021 law required African American studies in Maine schools. A new bill would strengthen it.

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Coversheet

To Consider the Approval of Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences' Request for Funds for Revisioning Project

Section: X. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance
Item: A. To Consider the Approval of Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences'
Request for Funds for Revisioning Project
Purpose: Vote
Submitted by:
Related Material: FSAS - Fund Request Form - February 2024 (Part 1).pdf
FSAS - Fund Request Form - February 2024 (Part 2).pdf
FSAS - Fund Request Form - February 2024 (Part 3).pdf

Maine Charter School Commission Workshop Proposal Form

The Maine Charter School Commission has set aside funds to provide resources for the charter schools it authorizes to conduct workshops that will assist them to better meet their contractual responsibilities and achieve their performance framework.

<i>Applicant Information</i>	
Name	Board Revisioning – Strategic Planning
Organization	Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences
Phone	207-688-3727
Email	jacinda@fiddleheadschoo.org
Signature	
Date	December 23, 2023
How many charter schools could benefit from this workshop?	One

<i>Workshop Purpose</i>	
How will this workshop enhance the performance of charter schools?	<p>Our last Board Retreat was in February 2021, with Carol Wishcamper, who is a trained facilitator for Board Development. Unfortunately, Carol has since retired, however, she has recommended some colleagues we can work with. After interviewing such candidates and reviewing the qualifications of such candidates with the Board of Directors, they have selected a candidate, Joanne D'Arcangelo, and we have included the proposal in our request.</p> <p>In the aftermath of the Pandemic, the Board feels that it is imperative to re-vision our organization. What remains important to us, what do students need now, who are we and what key elements continue to define us? We would love to continue this revisioning work to crystalize our 2024 – 2026 planning goals.</p>

	As always and in Fiddlehead fashion, we will be sharing and working with our talented staff, as well as the families within our community.
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Workshop Provider	
Name/Organization	Joanne D’Arcangelo
Workshop fee	\$12,000 – We are requesting 50% of this fee. \$6,000
Materials fee	\$250
Venue fee	\$0
Total Cost	\$6,250.00
Web site	www.fiddleheadschoo.org
Phone	2076883727
Email	jacinda@fiddleheadschoo.org

Workshop Information	
Workshop Goal	Revisioning, Planning & Development
Workshop Audience	Board of Directors & Executive Director
Workshop Description	Revisioning Workshop/Retreat
Length	4 months
Proposed Date	End of January/early February to begin – completion in June, 2024

Please attach a proposal from the proposed provider. (See attached)

JD'A Consulting Proposal to Fiddlehead School – December 12, 2023

**Proposal to the Fiddlehead School for the Arts and Sciences
Strategic Planning Process
December 12, 2023
JD'A Consulting & Coaching**

Purpose

- To convene stakeholders of the Fiddlehead School of Arts and Sciences to ensure its continued impact and relevance to the communities it serves;
- To ensure an inclusive and reflective process to design a strategic framework to guide the school in its mission work for the next 2-3 years;
- To create space and opportunity for stakeholders, including the Board of Directors, faculty and staff, parents of students, and other community members to contribute to the planning process in a meaningful and collaborative manner;
- To create a strategic framework that will guide the school's work in alignment with student, community, and other stakeholder expectations and aspirations, while allowing the school to pivot and course-correct as opportunities or exigencies emerge in the coming years.

Results

The school and its stakeholders will agree the process:

- ✓ Invited and utilized the participation and contributions of those invested in Fiddlehead's relevance and success as a public charter school;
- ✓ Provided opportunity for stakeholders to engage in meaningful ways that strengthened relationship and collaboration;
- ✓ Created a strategic framework that lends clear and informed direction for the school, while allowing its leadership to respond effectively in the evolving environment and changing community, economy, and educational system.

The following broadly outlines a four-step process over the course of 12-14 weeks to develop a strategic framework that will guide the school for the next 2-3 years.

This outline emerged from our conversation on November 29, and is subject to revision. As we discussed, this will be an iterative process, whereby each step will inform the next – and may result in changes to the process as described, as well as the outcomes we're aiming for, at the conclusion of each step.

As written, the proposal assumes the consultant will be working with a small planning team chosen by the E.D. and Board Chair, who can lend time and judgment to help design a process that meets the leadership's expectations.

Step I

The Board and E.D. invite representatives of the staff/faculty to join in a conversation that will serve two purposes: 1) Provide opportunity for staff and faculty to be engaged and share with the Board insights based on their day-to-day experiences, guided by questions offered in advance of

JD'A Consulting Proposal to Fiddlehead School – December 12, 2023

the session; and 2) To ensure the Board is more fully informed about the lived experience of those directly serving students who have greater clarity of how mission translates to operations. The outcome of this session is greater alignment between Board and staff/faculty on what is happening on the ground – “Where we are now” -- and therefore increases the likelihood both can also reach agreement on “Where we need to go”. *Preparation:* Generating the precise questions to elicit both reporting of what’s happening on the ground, as well as generative conversation to begin “visioning” for the future. [Week 1. 2-hour session]

Step II

The Board convenes to assess the content and feedback (ideas, concerns, proposals, aspirations, etc.) offered by staff/faculty in Step I; and sets parameters for the next step of the process, which will include parents and other community stakeholders. In Step II, the Board and E.D. will 1) Decide what content offered by faculty/staff will be carried forward to next steps; and 2) Develop criteria for assessing the impact and sustainability of the content offered.

The outcome of this session will be agreement among the Board and E.D. on the criteria to be used to rank higher- and lower-priority objectives.

Preparation: Presenting in advance budget and other data re: organizational resources for the period of the strategic framework; Development of workshop agenda and advance support by consultant of key Board members and E.D. regarding workshop tools and process.

[Week 3: 3-4 hour session]

Step III

The purpose of this step is two-fold: 1) Report back in writing to staff/faculty that the Board has reviewed their content from Step I and has further defined criteria for evaluating the *sustainability* and *impact* of those proposals/actions going forward in the planning process. And, 2) using an online survey, invite their feedback on the Board’s draft criteria, and invite a preliminary “ranking” of their proposals/ideas (that will ultimately translate to goals and objectives), using that criteria.

The outcome of Step III is a refined list of proposals/actions that has the input of all internal stakeholders and is ready to bring to Step IV, when parents and other community members will be invited into the process.

Preparation: Drafting the online survey; review and revise if needed materials summarizing information from Steps I-III. Other logistics related to administering online survey.

Caveat: Considerable thought should be given to how the staff and faculty input and feedback should be obtained, and whether this is a process into which *all* staff/faculty or a representative sample are invited to participate. It’s understood that this step of the process could be more labor intensive than expected.

[Week 8: 1-2 hr. session of planning team]

Step IV

This is the “public” and all-inclusive step in the process, when Board members, faculty and staff, parents and others from the community will convene and engage in a process to further develop and refine goals articulated in earlier sessions and refine and rank objectives for each goal. This session will be an in-person sessionⁱ, with opportunity for remote observation. As stated earlier, this would be the final step in an iterative process informed by earlier outcomes; however, it is

JD'A Consulting Proposal to Fiddlehead School – December 12, 2023

envisioned as a process that could invite participants to take a “gallery walk” in pairs to assess draft goals and objectives that are posted on the wall; ask them to offer revisions or refinements; and in a final step, convene in small groups to rank or prioritize objectives, using the criteria identified earlier by the Board in Step II.

Preparation: Extensive planning to design a large in person/hybrid interactive session; logistics including but not limited to securing and setting up meeting space, development and distribution of materials, tech support for remote observation or participation, etc.

[Week 12: 2.5-3 hour session]

The consultant and planning team will decide what form the “strategic framework” takes, and how many versions are required: e.g., is an internal, more detailed document/dashboard expected to guide the work of internal stakeholders, in addition to an executive summary for external stakeholders?

These and many other questions can and should be asked and answered, and I look forward to the opportunity to do so with you in a future conversation, should I be selected to work with you.

For the services described and the estimated time I have projected with this outline, JD'A Consulting, Inc. proposes a contract fee of \$10,700 - \$12,000. The services provided will include guiding planning sessions; design of the agendas for and facilitation of the stakeholder sessions; and written summaries of the sessions. Required travel will be invoiced at the current government rate of \$.655/mi.

Thank you for this exciting opportunity to work with Fiddlehead School for the Arts and Sciences, as it embarks on this exciting second decade of serving Maine students!

ⁱ This could be a hybrid session with remote participants if FSAS has tech capacity to administer a participatory hybrid meeting

Joanne D’Arcangelo
Portland, Maine

Joanne is a non-profit consultant, facilitator, and leadership coach with over thirty-five years’ experience in Maine’s political and non-profit sectors. Through her current enterprise, [JD'A Consulting & Coaching](#), she provides coaching and mentoring to social justice entrepreneurs and non-profit leaders, as well as customized Board Governance Training to nonprofit 501(C)(3) and (C)(4) organizations.

Since 2006, D’Arcangelo has advised dozens of clients in public policy development and advocacy, as well as donor advising and philanthropic planning, leveraging over two decades in the State House as a staff leader and non-profit advocate. Recent clients have included Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Southern Maine Agency on Aging, Equality Maine, Waterman’s Community Center, Legal Services for the Elderly, Wyoming Civic Engagement Network, York County Shelter Program, Inc., Viles Arboretum, and the John T. Gorman Foundation.

Prior to her consulting business, she served as Chief of Staff for Maine’s House Majority Leaders and the Speaker of the House; V.P. for Public Affairs at Planned Parenthood of Northern New England; Director of Advocacy for Maine Family Planning; Executive Director of the Maine Justice Foundation; and as lobbyist for the Maine Women's Lobby.

D’Arcangelo is the recipient of a number of awards for her work in political action and on behalf of social justice, including induction to the Maine Women’s Hall of Fame in 2020; the Maine Women’s Lobby 40th Anniversary Honoree; Maine Family Planning’s Huber Award, the Maine Women’s Policy Center Leadership Award, Portland YWCA’s Woman of Achievement Award; the Maine Civil Liberties Union’s Roger Baldwin Award; and the Maine Women’s Fund Annual Recognition Award.

Joanne lives in Portland and has an M.A. in English from the University of Maine and B.A. from Fitchburg State University. Joanne is a certified Meyers-Briggs trainer, providing MBTI assessment to individuals, teams, and partnerships; has a certificate in Mediation and training in Executive Coaching from USM’s Professional Development Program; and is certified in Result-Based Facilitation.

She currently serves on the Board of Trustees of Planned Parenthood of Northern New England and on the Advisory Council of the Community Organizing Alliance.

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: Baxter - New Governing Board Member (Kathleen DeSilva).pdf
Baxter - New Governing Board Member (April Theberge).pdf

Public Charter School Governing Board Member Information Sheet

Name of Public Charter School: Baxter Academy of Science and Technology

Name of Board Member: Kathleen de Silva

Email Address: kathleenmdesilva@gmail.com / kathleen@rinckadvertising.com

Occupation: Advertising Executive

Please respond to the following questions:

1. Why do you wish to serve on the governing board?

Baxter has served an important role in the education of my eldest child, and I believe it could be helpful to other students in the area. I reached out to the executive director to see if there was a way that I could help support the school. The board was a great opportunity to do so.

2. What is your understanding of the educational needs of students in the catchment area?

I feel that some of students in our catchment area need a different experience than can be found at our local schools. The real-world learning atmosphere with smaller classes, outside of school opportunities such as internships and classes through local colleges, and an inclusive atmosphere can serve as an important educational experience for students.

3. Please list any previous or present educational involvement, such as board member, budget committee, citizens committees, etc. List school(s) or district(s).

Assistant Nordic Ski Coach, Falmouth High School (2008)
Odyssey if the Mind Coach, Windham Primary School (2017/2018) and Windham Middle School (2019/2020)

Updated 1.9.17

4. What special qualifications do you have that will help you to be a board member?

I am a marketing professional with 20+ years in the marketing / advertising industry in Maine. My in-depth knowledge of branding and marketing within our state can help develop strategic plans to drive overall awareness of the school.

5. What is your understanding of the role you will play as a public charter school board member?

I will work with my fellow board members to help guide Baxter Academy.



Sign_____ Date: February 28, 2024

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.

Public Charter School Governing Board Member Information Sheet

Name of Public Charter School ___Baxter Academy for Technology and Science _____

Name of Board Member ___April Theberge_____

Email Address _april.theberge@avangrid.com_____

Occupation ___Accountant_____

Please respond to the following questions:

1. Why do you wish to serve on the governing board? I work in the renewable energy industry the future of which depends on employees trained in technology and science. Additionally, I am a mother of two young children and want to make a positive contribution in the educational community while becoming better informed about the learning opportunities in the area available to them in the future.
2. What is your understanding of the educational needs of students in the catchment area? I believe students need options in education that meet their learning styles and prepare them for higher education or local opportunities.
3. Please list any previous or present educational involvement; such as board member, budget committee, citizens committees, etc. List school(s) or district(s).
N/A
4. What special qualifications do you have that will help you to be a board member? Financial acumen, local connections, experience in renewable energy and utility industry locally and globally.
5. What is your understanding of the role you will play as a public charter school board member? Provide input based on my expertise to solve challenges faced by the school. Make connections locally to support school programming and provide additional opportunities for the students.

Updated 1.9.17

Sign April Theberge _____ Date 2/28/2024 _____

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.