



Maine Charter School Commission

Monthly Commission Meeting

Published on December 6, 2024 at 11:03 AM EST

Date and Time

Tuesday December 10, 2024 at 1:00 PM EST

Location

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

The **Vision** of the Maine Charter School Commission is that ***"Innovative public charter schools will provide Maine students with an equitable opportunity for an excellent education where students are valued, supported and challenged."***

The **Mission** of the Maine Charter School Commission is ***"To authorize, monitor and support innovative public charter schools that provide a dynamic, high-quality 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 Sue Whipkey at (207)816-2187 or susan.whipkey@maine.gov.

Agenda

	Purpose	Presenter
I. Opening Items		
A. Record Attendance		Susan Whipkey
B. Call the Meeting to Order		Norm Higgins
C. To Consider the Approval of the 11/12/24 Commission Meeting Minutes	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	Brian Langley
		• <i>FY25 Budget vs Actual Spending Report</i>
C. Executive Committee	FYI	Norm Higgins
V. Public Comment*		
A. Public Comment	Discuss	Norm Higgins
VI. Presentation(s)		
A. Maine Virtual Academy's Independent Third Party Evaluation	Discuss	Dr. Mary Madden
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

• *None*

VIII. Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report

A. Student Enrollments and Demographic Data Breakdowns Discuss Lana Ewing

- SY2024-25 School Enrollment Statistics
- SY2024-25 Demographic Data Breakdowns

IX. Unfinished Business

None

X. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance

A. To Consider Ecology Learning Center's Request to Amend Bylaws Vote Norm Higgins

B. To Consider Amending 20-A MRSA, §2405 Sub-§8 To Establish the Commission as a Body Corporate and Politic and a Public Instrumentality of the State Vote Norm Higgins

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 (April Hughes)*

B. Board Member Resignations FYI Norm Higgins

- *Ellen McBride (Maine Connections Academy)*

C. Board Member Term Outs FYI Norm Higgins

Purpose Presenter

- None

XII. Future Topics

A. Future Topics FYI Norm Higgins

January

- Review the Annual Report with Commissioner Makin
- Launch Strategic Plan
- 2024 Annual Boards and Commissions Report
- Appointment of New School Application Review Team

February

- Performance Framework Minor Clarifications
- Preview Enrollment Map Update

XIII. Announcements

A. Important Dates FYI Norm Higgins

- 2/13/25 - Deadline for Submission of New School Applications

B. Upcoming Business Meetings FYI Norm Higgins

- **January 14, 2025** (*Cross Office Building, Room #103, Augusta*) or Zoom
- **February 11, 2025** (*Cross Office Building, Room #103, Augusta*) or Zoom

XIV. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting Vote Norm Higgins

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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 11/12/24 Commission Meeting Minutes

Section: I. Opening Items
Item: C. To Consider the Approval of the 11/12/24 Commission Meeting Minutes
Purpose: Approve Minutes
Submitted by:
Related Material: Minutes for Monthly Commission Meeting on November 12, 2024

APPROVED



Maine Charter School Commission

Minutes

Monthly Commission Meeting

Date and Time

Tuesday November 12, 2024 at 1:00 PM

Location

Fiddlehead School of Arts and Sciences, 25 Shaker Road, Gray, Maine or via Zoom

The **Vision** of the Maine Charter School Commission is that ***"Innovative public charter schools will provide Maine students with an equitable opportunity for an excellent education where students are valued, supported and challenged."***

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Directors Present

James Ford, Jim Handy, Leigh Albert, Norm Higgins, Tom Keller, Tori Kornfield

Directors Absent

Brian Langley

Guests Present

Amy Allen (remote), Susan Whipkey

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 12, 2024 at 1:09 PM.

Jim Handy read the Commission's Mission and Vision statements.

C. To Consider the Approval of the 10/08/24 Commission Meeting Minutes

Jim Handy made a motion to approve the minutes from the Monthly Commission Meeting on 10-08-24.

James Ford seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

Tom Keller Aye

Brian Langley Absent

James Ford Aye

Jim Handy Aye

Norm Higgins Aye

Leigh Albert Aye

Tori Kornfield Aye

II. Comments from Commission Chair

A. Comments

Norm discussed the recent Maine elections. He and Amy will be monitoring the upcoming legislative agenda.

III. Additions or Adjustments to the Agenda

A. Additions/Adjustments

None

IV. Committee Reports

A. School Performance Committee

- Tori reported that the Committee reviewed the Annual Monitoring Reports for all schools.
- Tom asked if the Commission could fund Math support across all schools.
- Norm emphasized the value of the report review by the School Performance Committee which provides important feedback to school leadership.
- Jim urged all schools to fully participate in the Panorama survey to spotlight areas of concern.

B. Finance Committee

Leigh reported that the Committee discussed the following:

- CRCS's Feasibility Study - Nothing is finalized but a Raymond James representative provided a progress report. Norm informed that the Commission will be asked to recommend moving forward with the project at some point. Joe Drago pointed out that in addition to finances, it will be important to have a clear educational model. How will the new facility improve the students' experience?
- The financial portion of the Annual Monitoring Report - Near term measures are generally healthy while long term measures reflect more risk.
- Commission Charged Oversight Fee - The Committee voted to keep the FY26 fee at the FY25 level.

C. Executive Committee - No meeting held

No meeting was held in November.

V. Public Comment*

A. Public Comment

None

VI. Presentation

A. Fiddlehead

- Jacinda Cotton-Castro provided an overview of the history and recent operations of the Fiddlehead School. Since the negative effects of the pandemic, they are working to improve Panorama results.
- Principal Jason Manjourides and consultant Ann presented a teacher resource document they have developed that outlines the educational vision at Fiddlehead. Jason also discussed their work to address chronic absenteeism.
- Bill Doughty, Board Chair discussed the school's investment in an integrated Teacher Assistant (TA) Model that has been reintroduced this year after a pause. He also relayed that there will be a drop in enrollment next year due to closing enrollment in grades 6,7, and 8.

VII. Executive Director/Commission Staff Report

A. School Updates

Amy reported the following:

- The MDOE Newsroom published an article about the Fiddlehead Yurt.
- ACADIA Board changes - Founding members Chris Brann, Treasurer and Sean Siebert have termed out. Amy Dieterich has termed out as President but will remain on the board for one more year.
- Matt Newberg, Head of School at Maine Academy of Natural Sciences has resigned.

B. Organizational Updates

Amy reported that Mid-Year Meetings with all schools have been scheduled for January. The focus will be on areas where schools are not approaching or meeting metrics. with focus on areas not meeting on metrics.

A school that submitted a letter of intent to file a New School Application has withdrawn. There are 6 remaining schools who may submit the full application.

C. Media Updates

VIII. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance

A. To Receive and Place on File SY2023-24 Annual Monitoring Reports

Tori Kornfield made a motion to receive and place on file all SY2023-24 Annual Monitoring Reports.

Jim Handy seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

Leigh Albert Aye

James Ford Aye

Tori Kornfield Aye

Norm Higgins Aye

Jim Handy Aye

Brian Langley Absent

Tom Keller Aye

B. To Receive and Place on File SY2023-24 Annual Report to the Commissioner

Jim Handy made a motion to receive and place on file SY2023-24 Annual Report to the Commissioner.

Tori Kornfield seconded the motion.

Tom provided one edit and Amy will make the update.

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

Roll Call

Tori Kornfield Aye

Jim Handy Aye

Leigh Albert Aye

Tom Keller Aye

Brian Langley Absent

James Ford Aye

Norm Higgins Aye

IX. Future Topics

A. Future Topics

- Enrollment Data
- Strategic Plan
- Professional Development will be held on December 10th at 10:00

X. 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 2:37 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Norm Higgins

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Coversheet

Finance Committee

Section: IV. Committee Reports
Item: B. Finance Committee
Purpose: FYI
Submitted by:
Related Material: Dashboard for FY25 11_27_24.pdf



MCSC FY25 Budget vs. Actual (As of November 27, 2024)

Revenue	Projection FY25	Actual FY25	Difference FY25	Actual FY24
Allotment - Legislatively Mandated	\$694,809	607,726.00	(\$87,083)	\$694,809
Additional State Subsidy Available	\$110,603		(\$110,603)	\$29,395
Total Allotment - ED279	\$805,412	\$607,726	(\$197,686)	\$724,204
Carryover Funds	\$38,285	\$0	(\$38,285)	\$82,096
Grants	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,163
TOTAL Annual Revenue	\$843,697	\$607,726	(\$235,971)	\$808,463

Costs (1)	Projection FY25	Actual FY25	Difference FY25	Actual FY24
Total Cost Summary	\$849,472	\$317,896	\$531,577	\$714,491

(1) Detail of Costs

Personnel	Projection FY25	Actual FY25	Difference FY25	Actual FY24
Staff Salaries	\$302,779	\$131,176	↑ \$171,603	\$275,491
Manpower Service Fee	\$67,669	\$28,468	↑ \$39,201	\$101,932
Benefits	\$63,000	\$26,250	↑ \$36,750	\$60,000
TOTAL Personnel	\$433,448	\$185,893	\$247,555	\$437,423

Contracted Services	Projection FY25	Actual FY25	Difference FY25	Actual FY24
Financial Consultant	\$51,739	\$4,725	↑ \$47,014	\$38,408
Public Relations/ Engagement	\$25,000	\$0	↑ \$25,000	\$20,843
Project-Based Support	\$45,000	\$5,494	↑ \$39,506	\$51,563
Operational/Financial Support	\$0	\$0	→ \$0	\$0
TOTAL Contracted Services	\$121,739	\$10,219	\$111,520	\$110,814

Personal Services - Per Diem / Commission Members	Projection FY25	Actual FY25	Difference FY25	Actual FY24
Per Diem	\$15,400	\$3,575	↑ \$11,825	\$12,729
NACSA	\$0	\$0	→ \$0	\$0
TOTAL Personal Services	\$15,400	\$3,575	\$11,825	\$12,729

Travel	Projection FY25	Actual FY25	Difference FY25	Actual FY24
Commission Members	\$8,400	\$1,082	↑ \$7,318	\$3,958
Staff	\$13,000	\$5,798	↑ \$7,202	\$7,772
TOTAL Travel	\$21,400	\$6,880	\$14,520	\$11,730

General Operations	Projection FY25	Actual FY25	Difference FY25	Actual FY24
Insurance/Risk Management	\$893	\$27	↑ \$866	\$822
Printing/Photocopying Services	\$1,000	\$0	↑ \$1,000	\$516
Dues and Subscriptions	\$7,203	\$2,328	↑ \$4,875	\$6,926
Meeting Room Rental	\$1,050	\$0	↑ \$1,050	\$0
Postage	\$315	\$0	↑ \$315	\$272
Advertising	\$525	\$200	↑ \$325	\$200
Food	\$420	\$234	↑ \$186	\$234
General Government Service Center	\$11,825	\$10,427	↑ \$1,398	\$9,395
Legal and Professional Services	\$11,401	\$500	↑ \$10,901	\$10,858
Office and Other Supplies	\$525	\$0	↑ \$525	\$413
TOTAL General Operations	\$35,157	\$13,716	\$21,441	\$29,636

Technology for Schools	Projection FY25	Actual FY25	Difference FY25	Actual FY24
NWEA MAP Test	\$14,400	\$0	↑ \$14,400	\$13,351
Panorama Education	\$11,500	\$0	↑ \$11,500	\$10,625
Infinite Campus	\$21,789	\$22,024	↓ (\$235)	\$19,615
Lotterease	\$2,625	\$1,701	↑ \$924	\$6,669
Epicenter	\$40,646	\$34,210	↑ \$6,436	\$33,710
College-Readiness Diagnostics	\$4,725	\$2,040	↑ \$2,685	\$4,500
Board on Track	\$35,000	\$27,495	↑ \$7,505	\$0
TOTAL Technology for Schools	\$130,684	\$87,470	\$43,215	\$88,470

Technology for MCSC	Projection FY25	Actual FY25	Difference FY25	Actual FY24
Office of Information Technology	\$3,675	\$2,302	↑ \$1,373	\$8,636
Cell Phone Services	\$2,730	\$598	↑ \$2,132	\$2,664
Website	\$5,000	\$0	↑ \$5,000	\$0
Remote CART Captioning Service	\$0	\$0	→ \$0	\$2,350
BoardOnTrack	\$5,775	\$5,495	↑ \$280	\$5,495
TOTAL Technology for MCSC	\$17,180	\$8,395	\$8,785	\$19,145

Charter School Innovation/Collaboration	Projection FY25	Actual FY25	Difference FY25	Actual FY24
Innovation Fund/Professional Development	\$40,000	\$0	↑ \$40,000	\$0
Board Chair Collaboration	\$1,700	\$0	↑ \$1,700	\$1,511
CountMe In	\$1,500	\$0	↑ \$1,500	\$0
TOTAL Charter School Innovation/C	\$43,200	\$0	\$43,200	\$1,511

Sta-Cap	Projection FY25	Actual FY25	Difference FY25	Actual FY24
Sta-Cap	\$10,264	\$1,748	↑ \$8,516	\$3,033
TOTAL Contingency	\$10,264	\$1,748	\$8,516	\$3,033

Contingency	Projection FY25	Actual FY25	Difference FY25	Actual FY24
Contingency	\$21,000	\$0	↑ \$21,000	\$0
TOTAL Contingency	\$21,000	\$0	\$21,000	\$0

Coversheet

Maine Virtual Academy's Independent Third Party Evaluation

Section: VI. Presentation(s)
Item: A. Maine Virtual Academy's Independent Third Party Evaluation
Purpose: Discuss
Submitted by:
Related Material: MeVA - Independent Third Party Evaluation September 2024.pdf

Experiences of New Enrollees

Prepared for

Maine Virtual Academy

by

Mary Madden, Ph.D.

Dr. Madden and Associates, LLC

September 2024

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Introduction

The Maine Educational 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 grades 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 primary difference between enrollment at public brick-and-mortar schools and MEVA is the student capacity. Public brick-and-mortar schools have no limit on capacity and accept all eligible students, while the Maine Charter School Commission determines the maximum student capacity at MEVA. All eligible applicants may enroll in the school if there is adequate capacity. If the number of applicants exceeds the capacity limit, a lottery system selects which applicants can enroll. A requirement of virtual public charter schools is an annual third-party evaluation, the focus of which is determined by each school's administration. This report documents the purpose, methodology, analysis, and recommendations of the 2023–2024 academic year evaluation for MEVA. Dr. Mary Madden, Ph.D., of Dr. Madden and Associates designed and administered the evaluation. Dr. Madden also conducted the 2021–2022 and 2022–2023 academic year evaluations.

Evaluation Purpose, Methodology, and Analysis

Purpose

This study follows up on the 2022–2023 academic year evaluation in which a small number (N=4) of newly enrolled families participated in a case study of their MEVA experience. The findings were interesting, but the number of participants was a limitation of the study.

Consequently, for the 2023–2024 evaluation, Dr. Madden expanded the number of participants in the study to identify themes, patterns, similarities, and differences in the experiences of MEVA students and their caregivers.

The evaluation questions were as follows:

- Why do students and their caregivers choose MEVA?
- How do students and their caregivers acclimate to MEVA, including the culture and expectations?
- What do students find most challenging about acclimating to MEVA, and what supports do they seek to address those challenges?
- How does the experience at MEVA meet or not meet students' and caregivers' expectations?

Methodology

The methodology for this study was a case study approach. Case studies are a qualitative approach that deeply explores a program, event, activity, or process. The case(s) are bound by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information. In this study, a student and a caregiver are a case, and there are multiple cases. Replicating this method with multiple cases enables the evaluator to identify trends, differences, and similarities. This study aimed to recruit 15 caregivers and students new to MEVA to take part in an interview approximately four to six weeks after beginning MEVA and again at the end of the academic year. The Program Manager of Operations at MEVA recruited participants in coordination with the School/Technology Secretary. They contacted the caregivers of students who enrolled at the beginning of the fall semester and mid-year at the start of the spring semester to explain the study and request

participation. With few enrollees expected mid-year, they emphasized recruiting students who enrolled in the fall semester.

For the Fall 2023 semester, 150 new students enrolled in MEVA, and 21 of their caregivers agreed to participate in the study with their students. Fifteen caregivers completed the initial interview, including one responsible for two students. Two students did not participate in the interview for various reasons. The remaining six of those who had agreed to participate did not attend the initial interview as scheduled, though one attempted to attend at the wrong time due to a scheduling mix-up. Repeat attempts by school personnel to reschedule with these caregivers were unsuccessful so they did not ultimately participate.

Forty-three students enrolled mid-year for the Spring 2024 semester, and five of their caregivers participated in the study with their students. One caregiver and student completed the initial interview, and the remaining four who had agreed to participate did not. In total, 16 caregivers and students participated in the first interview, and 13 participated in a follow-up interview at the end of the academic year.

Dr. Madden conducted all interviews virtually via video using Zoom. Based on experiences in the 2022–2023 interviews, caregivers and students were interviewed together for the current study. Before asking the first question, Dr. Madden explained the purpose and confidentiality of the interview to the caregiver and student(s), along with other relevant rights of the participants. Dr. Madden also requested permission to record the video interview. Most caregivers chose to appear face-to-face on Zoom, but several students decided to be out of view of the camera. Interviews ranged from 15 to 35 minutes. Caregivers and students who participated in both interviews received an incentive of a \$20 gift card to Amazon.

Analysis

Dr. Madden recorded all interviews and had them transcribed. There were 13 pairs of transcripts consisting of the initial interview and follow-up interview, and three transcripts of initial interviews only that were included in the analysis. Dr. Madden used the transcriptions to construct a brief case study for each caregiver and their student. One case study included two students. Dr. Madden developed case studies for three families using the initial interview only. Dr. Madden analyzed all 16 case studies to identify themes and patterns in the participants' experiences with and perceptions of MEVA. As a qualitative study to investigate the experience of students and their caregivers who are new to MEVA, the total number of cases is adequate to fulfill the objective. A qualitative study such as this aims to provide in-depth information, which may or may not represent the experiences and perceptions of all newly enrolled MEVA students and caregivers.

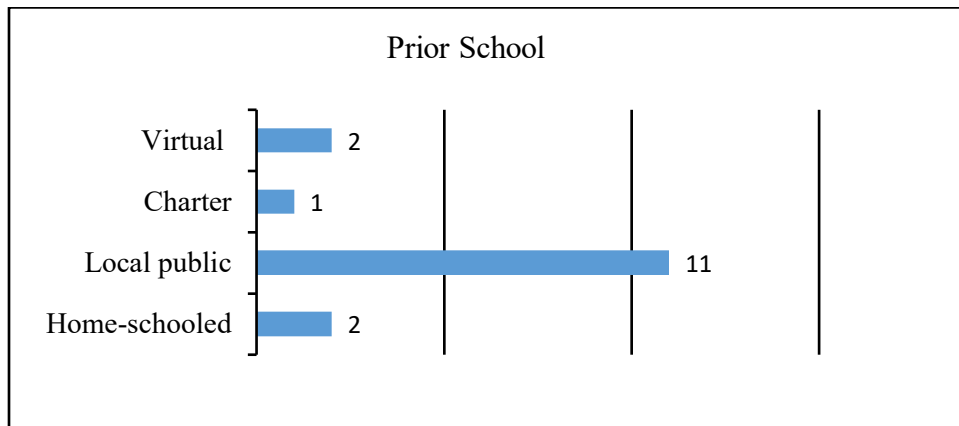
Findings

This section of the report begins with case studies followed by a cross-case analysis of all case studies.

Participants

In all, 15 caregivers with their 16 students participated in the study. As shown in Figure 1, 11 students were enrolled in their local public school, two very briefly, before enrolling in MEVA

Figure 1: School Prior to Enrolling in MEVA



The goal in recruiting participants was to have a relatively equal representation of middle and high school students. Figure 2 shows that the representation came close to the goal.

Figure 2: Educational Level of Students

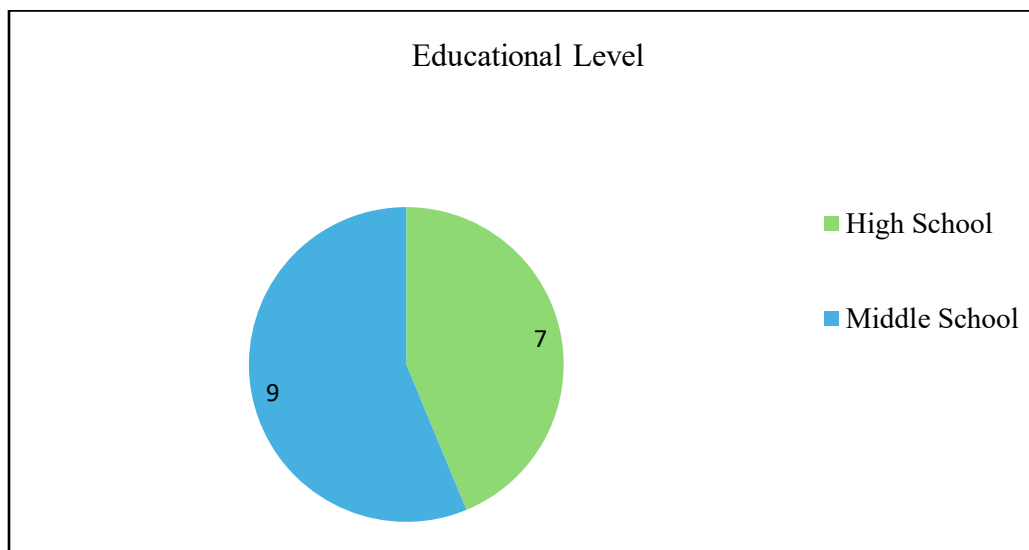
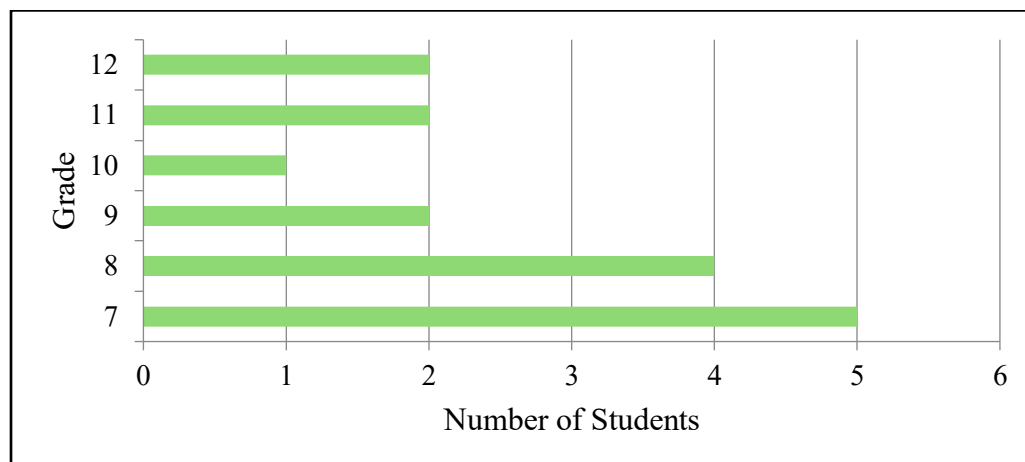


Figure 3 provides information on the number of students entering MEVA at each grade level. Seventh grade was the most common grade at which students in this study enrolled in MEVA.

Figure 3: Grade Level of Students



Case Studies

Student and Caregiver A

Student A, a male, and his mother were interviewed after enrollment and at the end of the school year. Student A enrolled in MEVA for ninth grade. Prior to MEVA, he attended the local public school. The mother explained that it was not a good situation for him. His academic performance was poor, and school personnel expressed that he was not likely to succeed. The mother felt that the school personnel based their perspective on a history of challenging experiences with a generation of students from her family, including herself. She searched online for K12, a digital portal for alternative learning solutions, which referred her to MEVA. She found enrollment to be relatively easy and the staff to be very responsive to questions. The mother and student attended orientation. In her opinion, the session provided a lot of information to process, but it was helpful.

Initially, the mother found it difficult to navigate Brightspace, the digital learning platform at MEVA, but had become comfortable with it by the time of the interview. The student learned the platform quickly and found the virtual environment more conducive to his learning style. He

described it as "not as loud. It's easier to focus." Throughout the year, both mother and student found MEVA teachers very responsive to questions and issues that arose. For example, the school advanced the student to a higher-level math class, which was too difficult for him. The mother and student worked with the teacher to develop a plan that enabled him to stay in the class and succeed. The one challenging aspect was the time it took for the formal withdrawal from the original, lower-level math class to be complete, resulting in a long list of missing assignments. While this was stressful for the mother and student, the MEVA eventually resolved the issue.

The mother shared that, as her student's learning coach, she watched many of the class recordings and reviewed assignments. She explained that, as a result, she understood concepts and lessons for the first time that she had struggled with in her own education. She commented, "He's not the only one learning." The student reported doing much better academically at MEVA than at his prior school. He stated, "There's a really big difference. I mean, I'm doing really good in this school, and I was doing really bad in my other one."

When asked if he had any suggestions for improvements, the student responded that students should not be bumped up to higher classes too quickly. Except for his new math class, the student said he liked MEVA. The mother suggested that a list of URLs used in each class be made available. The mother and student said they would recommend MEVA to others. In fact, the mother had already encouraged a relative to enroll her two children, which she did. The student plans to return to MEVA in the fall.

Student and Caregiver B

Student B, a female, and her mother were interviewed after enrollment and at the end of the school year. Student B enrolled in MEVA for 12th grade. The mother explained that her student has social anxiety. The student mainly participated in the interview through her mother, who relayed Dr. Madden's questions to the student and then shared the student's often inaudible replies with Dr. Madden. Prior to enrollment in MEVA, the student had been in her local public high school. However, due to her anxiety, she found being around other people too difficult some

days. She felt there was too much stimulation and was struggling as a result. The student's physical health issues often made class attendance too challenging. In addition, the mother shared that the student's medical "issues make it very difficult for her to pass the gym requirement." The mother found K12 through an online search and started the enrollment process through the portal, which then directed her to MEVA. She found the enrollment process "pretty simple."

The mother and student attended the orientation and found it helpful. The student finds Brightspace easy to navigate and helps the mother with the platform when needed. The mother shared that the teachers and staff have responded quickly to emails or phone calls with answers to questions or solutions to issues. She described her student as "pretty independent with school," so serving as her learning coach is easy.

The student has a 504, but the mother said they did not need to rely on it because the set-up of MEVA accommodated her student's needs. The best thing about MEVA for this family was that the student was "able to do things on her terms." When she was not feeling well, she could easily catch up by watching the recordings of the classes and completing the work. The mother reported that teacher feedback was always "positive" and "supportive."

Upon enrolling in MEVA, the school informed the mother that the student only needed one semester of classes to meet the requirements for graduation and could graduate in January. The news was welcome by the student and caregiver. The biggest challenge was concerning graduation. The mother found the provided information about ordering a graduation gown inaccurate and felt the ceremony did not recognize students' achievements. Despite this, the mother and student would recommend MEVA to other families. The mother had already spoken to another caregiver about MEVA and suggested they explore it.

Student and Caregiver C

Student C, a female, and her mother were interviewed after enrollment and at the end of the school year. The student enrolled in MEVA for 11th grade. Prior to MEVA, she was in her local public school, where she was struggling. Students had bullied her, and she had bullied others. The mother described that her student has behavioral and emotional problems that got in the way of success at school. Mom found MEVA through an online search. She found completing the enrollment paperwork easy. However, a glitch on the school's end delayed enrollment for about six weeks. Once MEVA fixed the issue, the enrollment process was completed quickly.

The mother and student did not attend the orientation but did watch the recording. They found it to be beneficial. The student was adept at using Brightspace and found it helpful in organizing herself. She helped her mother learn to navigate the platform. Mother and student have found the staff and teachers remarkably accessible and always willing to help.

The student explained how the school had changed her in the fewer than two months since she started at MEVA. She had been failing at her prior school and was now earning straight As. She was at the top of her classes and even served as a learning coach to other students. She has had no behavioral problems at school and described finding a new side of herself and developing much confidence. Prior to enrollment in MEVA, she had not considered her future but found herself interested in teaching. She said she wants to "teach at MEVA so (she) can help students like herself." She had made more friends in the online environment than in her local public school.

The student described that what she likes best about the school is that it values not only academic success but also students' opinions and health, including mental health. She stated, "My academics haven't only improved. My mental health has improved, my physical confidence and appearance. I'm losing weight. I'm in a good mindset that I'm losing weight. Because of how confident this school has made me, I'm trying to eat better. I'm doing a bunch of these things."

In addition to the school support of the family, the student had been seeing a clinical therapist from outside the school. The student shared that she "raves about her (the therapist) to everyone that will listen." She credited the therapist for helping her understand herself and teen psychology better. This understanding has fueled her interest in pursuing a career in therapy focused on adolescents. With the help of the Career Planning teacher, she was crafting her resume and college applications in pursuit of her interest.

Neither the mother nor the student had any suggestions for improvements at MEVA. They highly recommend it to others. The mother described herself as a "big advocate" who tells everyone about MEVA. She wished she had known of its existence when her older student was in high school.

Student and Caregiver D

Student D, a male, and his father were interviewed after enrollment and at the end of the school year. The student enrolled in MEVA in seventh grade. Prior to MEVA, he was homeschooled. The father wanted a more structured option for his student and did not want to send him to the local public school due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The father reached out to K12, which directed him to MEVA. He found the enrollment process straightforward. The father and student attended the orientation but found it repetitive since they had read all the materials beforehand.

The student shared that he has ADHD. The student and father had requested a school computer, even though the student had his own. The student explained that using the school computer helped him focus better since there were fewer distractions than he experienced on his personal computer. He found Brightspace "slightly hard to navigate at times because whenever I open certain things, it brings me back to the beginning of the page, and I have to scroll back down."

The father and student especially liked the flexibility of MEVA. The lesson videos enabled them both to watch the classes and the student to do the assignments. They have found the teachers and staff very accessible and responsive. The student mentioned that he liked the regular

schedule (compared to homeschooling) as it helped him stay organized. The father appreciated both the curriculum and the available resources at MEVA.

Compared to homeschooling, the father was more confident that his student was learning what he should be at his grade level. Both father and student found the days to be "very packed." The father believed there were not enough breaks for students like his who have trouble sitting still for long periods. He suggested that MEVA shorten the lunch break to accommodate some additional short breaks. While comparing academic success in homeschooling and MEVA is challenging, the student was "doing fine" according to the father. He referred to MEVA as an "excellent school." The student participated in another educational opportunity that met once a week.

One concern the father had was his student's lack of social connections (except the gaming club). When asked, the student said he would recommend to a friend that they change to MEVA. His reason was so that he would know someone at school beside the one friend he made through the gaming club. The father would recommend MEVA as an excellent alternative to homeschooling.

When asked if they wanted to add anything to the conversation, the student suggested that after-school clubs for like things not be on the same day. One of his examples was that gaming and Prodigy are on the same day. He commented that most people who game are also interested in Prodigy. The father's additional issue was the use of artificial intelligence (AI). While MEVA prohibits the use of AI in school, the father believes that AI is here to stay, and MEVA should be teaching students how to use it not to do the assignments for them but for things such as outlining or researching. The family's plans for future schooling were uncertain. If they do not move out of state, the student will return to MEVA.

Student and Caregiver E

Student E, a female, and her mother were interviewed after enrollment and at the end of the school year. The student enrolled in MEVA for eighth grade. The family had moved from Oregon, where the student was in Connections, a virtual school. They moved during the COVID-19 pandemic because the student was not doing well with the multiple changes from in-person to virtual education. An online search for a virtual public school option before the move to Maine led them to MEVA. The mother found the enrollment process straightforward, with the most challenging part being getting vaccine documentation.

The mother and student attended the orientation and found it helpful, especially in learning the platform. The student explained that in all her classes, teachers spent time during the first week teaching students how to navigate the class on Brightspace. The mother and student found the availability and willingness of teachers to respond to questions or help with lessons a highlight of MEVA. The student said, "They don't huff and gruff when you ask for help." They found video recordings a useful aspect of classes at MEVA, allowing the student to catch up and review lessons. The mother and father share responsibility for being their student's learning coach, which the mother described as "pretty easy." She believes that while the student's grades were similar at MEVA to grades at her last school, the student's learning at MEVA was deeper. According to the mother, the student memorized things to get by at the previous school but truly understood the material at MEVA.

During the first interview, the mother shared that the student has social anxiety that makes connection with other students difficult. During the final interview, the student shared she had been participating in an after-school club and had enjoyed meeting other students through the online club.

When asked for suggestions for improvements at MEVA, the mother said she found the re-registration process for next year "tedious and frustrating" and suggested it could be streamlined. There was nothing additional she would change. The student had no suggestions. Both

recommend MEVA to others. The mother has already recommended the school to a family member, but they do not live in Maine. The student would "absolutely" recommend MEVA and offered the following advice to anyone who enrolls: "Be proactive with your teachers. So, if you get caught on something, communicate to your teachers." When asked about plans for next year, the student said, "Honestly, I just really love MEVA, and I cannot wait to continue."

Student and Caregiver F

Student F, a female, and her mother were interviewed after enrollment and at the end of the school year. The student enrolled in MEVA in eighth grade. She was previously enrolled in her local public school but moved to MEVA due to the behavioral challenges of other students that disrupted learning. The mother said her student felt that "the teachers were really being disrespected, and the class time was being used up with discipline on those kids. So, she wasn't getting what she needed out of the school." Mom found the enrollment process for MEVA "super easy."

The mother and student attended the orientation and found it very helpful. The only additional information they would have liked was on grading. The mother said, "Some of the teachers grade one way, and some grade a different way. We were confused at first about the grading system." They got the information they needed through email communication. The student initially found it challenging to navigate Brightspace, but once she figured it out, she found it easy to get around. The mother is a teacher, so her role as her student's learning coach was natural for her. She commented that her student "actually comes to me less this year for help but maintains the same grades, as opposed to last year when she was not understanding assignments and needing a lot more help at home."

The student's academic year had progressed smoothly. The mother and student described good communication with the staff and teachers. A few times, the mother received a call saying her student was not in attendance, but the mother verified that the student was in session the entire time. The student really liked being able to watch the recordings after class. She mentioned that she struggled to take notes in class in the past, but the recordings allowed her to take notes as she

watched. The mother also mentioned that the recordings were helpful when the student struggled with an assignment because they could review the lesson together. She also appreciated the weekly newsletter, which kept her current on what was happening. Both found the technical support to be very prompt and helpful. The student was an A/B student in her prior school and continues to be so. The mother shared, "I didn't see any huge transition in grades from that school to this school, but I definitely saw her confidence in getting things done and handing them in and knowing what she was supposed to do improved."

When asked if they had suggestions for improvement at MEVA, the mother commented that she thinks "the school does a really good job." However, the student planned to return to her local public school district high school because she missed the social aspect of being in-person. The mother suggested that the school could explore ways to get kids together a few times a year. The mother and student said they would definitely recommend the school to others. The mother has already recommended it to another educator whose child suffers from social anxiety, is a slow processor, and struggles in her local school.

Students and Caregivers G

There are two Student Gs, a female, and a nonbinary person. The father and the two students participated in the first interview after enrollment, and the mother joined for the interview at the end of the school year. The female student enrolled in MEVA for eighth grade, and the nonbinary person enrolled in ninth grade. The family moved from Connecticut, where the students were in a charter school for gifted and talented students. When they moved to Maine, the students attended the local public schools. However, the father and mother quickly realized that the education they were receiving was three to four years behind the Connecticut school. An online search for an alternative brought them to K12, which connected them with MEVA. The enrollment process was frustrating for the father. He stated there was no communication to inform him that MEVA would handle the process after a certain point. There were a few glitches in their communication with MEVA around computer eligibility and several changes in "guidance counselors."

The family did not attend the orientation but watched the recording. They did not find it helpful. The father stated, "The new student orientation seemed like they had taken all of the emails and all of the information of which I went through and read in registration, and then put them into slide form, and then read them again." The students found Brightspace easy to navigate. However, the middle school student found it "annoying" that most teachers do not use the submission feature of assignments, which is much easier than having students use a different platform to create written work. Unlike in a previous situation in which multiple platforms existed, the father and mother enjoyed having one platform.

Overall, the father was happy with MEVA. His one issue was that he did not like the set-up of the honors math class. He observed that honors students were in the same class as non-honors students, but the honors students had more work assigned that the teacher did not teach in class. The middle school student stated that what she liked best about MEVA was doing school from home. Both students believed their mental health was better at MEVA than in their previous school. The father appreciated the flexibility of MEVA and the fact that if his students miss a day of school, they can make it up by watching the video recordings of the classes. The mother liked that MEVA encourages the students to develop adult habits, such as taking care of their personal needs during the day while remaining productive.

The caregivers and students agreed it was challenging to determine if assignments were missing and interpret what one needs to do. The father and mother wanted a simple list of overdue assignments to support their student's work better. A challenge identified by students was the time requirement for class study or assignments. As one explained, she can finish assignments reasonably quickly and then needs to sit and do busy work or respond more slowly to questions to meet the time requirement. That father shared that he would rather see an assignment quota versus a time quota.

As this interview ran long, there was no discussion of whether the family would recommend MEVA.

Student and Caregiver H

Student H, a female, and her mother were interviewed after enrollment and at the end of the school year. The student enrolled in MEVA for the second semester of ninth grade. She previously attended her local public school. The mother said her student was struggling with anxiety and did not want to attend school. She also indicated that returning to an in-person environment after the COVID-19 pandemic was difficult for her student. They learned about MEVA through the school guidance counselor, who could not provide much information about the virtual school. A staff person at MEVA told mom about the enrollment process, after which she found it "easy" to navigate.

The mother and student attended the orientation. The mother was a little overwhelmed by all the information, but the student found the orientation helpful. If the mother needed to email someone, she started with the guidance counselor, who always directed her to the right person. At first, the student found Brightspace to be a little confusing, but she quickly adapted to it. She reached out to teachers with her questions, which the mother said was a new skill for her. The student reported that she got timely responses from teachers. She joined the French club but still found getting to know other students challenging.

The student deemed the spring semester "good." She said that at her "last school, they didn't really teach the way I needed to be taught." She shared that at MEVA, she "finds it's easier to keep up with everything and not fall behind." Both the mother and student found the support from teachers and staff excellent. The student emphasized that "she knew several of her teachers, and they knew her." What she liked best was not having to sit for class all day but having the freedom to vary her day. She used the recordings to catch up with classes she missed and reported that her grades were about the same as in the first half of her school year in the public school.

When the student was asked what suggestions she had for improvements at MEVA, she replied that she would have liked more variety of classes to choose from when building her schedule. If a friend were considering MEVA, the student would tell them to "do it because you don't have to

sit all day for school." The mother's response to the question about advice for other caregivers was not audible due to a technical glitch.

Student and Caregiver I

Student I, a male, and his mother were interviewed after enrollment and at the end of the school year. The student enrolled at MEVA for seventh grade. The student had trouble with bullying and fitting in at his local public middle school. After an incident during the previous spring semester, the mother pulled him out of school and homeschooled him for the rest of the academic year. K12 referred the mother to MEVA. During the enrollment process, there was confusion when working with K12, as different staff members gave different information about the transition from homeschooling to MEVA. Once the mother connected with MEVA, the enrollment process proceeded smoothly.

The question about school orientation was not included in the initial interview. The start-up was rough for the student. The mother said he was "treating it like vacation." She asked if he had done all his work, and "he lied" to her by telling her he had. Then, at an Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting, she learned he had not been submitting work and was far behind in all his classes. Mom viewed this as a lack of communication from teachers. "I feel like there's been a little bit, a lack of support with the teachers in that part as far as reaching out to me to say, 'Hey, just so you're aware, your child is behind in all these classes.' I had no idea." Mom learned at the meeting that she could use Brightspace to check if her student was current with his assignments. She explained that now she checked his work daily.

Given that the IEP meeting was the first time the mother heard about monitoring progress on Brightspace, they likely did not attend orientation. The mother expressed that she was still unsure if she was doing everything expected to keep up with her son's schoolwork. She shared in the initial interview that she was overwhelmed with family issues and her own unexpected medical issues. She also shared that she is grateful to MEVA for conducting an evaluation of her student, which resulted in finally getting a diagnosis. She stated that, despite repeated requests throughout

his years in public school, her student was never evaluated. She also shared that MEVA does a great job following his IEP.

As the year progressed, the student was doing "much better" academically. The mother stated that she was at home now and could better monitor his work. Math was the most challenging subject for the student. He went to study sessions for help, but the mother believed he did not understand the math and was instead provided with answers at study sessions.

According to the mother, the more significant challenge was that her student had no friends. He had not made friends online. The mother reported asking about in-person opportunities during the enrollment process and was told there would be some during the academic year, but that has not occurred. When the mother asked her student how he felt about not having friends, he replied, "Sad." For this reason, the mother considered transferring her student back to the local public school, but her student resisted the idea. The improvement mom suggested was a few field trips during the year or other ways to promote social connections.

She would recommend MEVA to another caregiver whose child was struggling in their local public school. She would tell them that MEVA is especially good at working with students with special needs.

Student and Caregiver J

Student J, a male, and his mother were interviewed after enrollment and at the end of the school year. The student enrolled in MEVA for 11th grade because he was not doing well in his local public high school and was struggling to keep up. The mother found MEVA through an online search for alternatives. She spoke with an administrator at MEVA who instructed her on enrolling her student and found the process "easy peasy."

The mother and student attended the orientation and found it helpful, although the mother would have liked more instruction on accessing the Brightspace components that she needed to use. The school ultimately helped her to learn. At the start of the academic year, the student had an

evaluation, and a 504 was implemented. The mother shared, "He was in public school up until high school, and I've been struggling to get a 504 for him and IEPs since kindergarten with no luck. Two seconds into the school (at MEVA), we've got a 504. We've got plans. We've got meetings set up. We've got everything." When asked about teachers' responsiveness, the student said, "It is usually pretty quick, and it's very informative and helpful. And usually, they offer to join a meeting if I need anything further." When asked about his grades, the student said, "I would say they are exponentially better" than in his last school. He shared, "I do think that being able to focus on class and being able to get help when I need it immediately is a lot more beneficial than having to wait." Socially, he stated he is fine since he worked in the grocery store five days a week and had plenty of contact with people.

The mother found the role of learning coach to be easy. Her student asked her for help when needed, but he has stayed on top of his work independently. Neither the mother nor the student had any suggestions for improvements. When asked if he would recommend MEVA to a friend, the student replied, "I would say that it's not for everybody because some people are better in class having the social aspect... But I do feel like not everyone would be able to benefit from it, which is understandable. But for the ones who do be better online, I would recommend it." The mother also would recommend MEVA to another caregiver She said, "If your child would do better with less drama, then this is the place."

The student had enough credits to graduate early in June. He planned to go to the community college to begin with some business courses.

Student and Caregiver K

Student K, a male, and his mother were interviewed after enrollment and at the end of the school year. In the first interview, the student spoke very little. The student enrolled in MEVA for seventh grade. The family had moved to Maine from another state, where the student had been in the local public school. When the school went virtual due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the mother noticed that her student was doing much better. She then searched for MEVA because her student has an IEP, and she heard that MEVA does very well with students with an IEP. The mother found the enrollment process easy, but there were some issues transferring medical records from another state.

Both the mother and student attended the orientation and found it helpful. The student had no problem navigating Brightspace, and the mother had figured out how to log attendance and check on assignments. When he asked teachers for help, the student said, "It took them a little bit, but they still helped me out." The mother said she liked being the learning coach, but "sometimes it is stressful." Thus far, the student believed he was doing better academically at MEVA than at his previous school. He thought being in person while using a computer was problematic for him. He has found it easy just to use the computer as he focused more without people around him. Socially, he was doing fine as he had developed friendships with neighborhood youth.

The student had some medical issues as the academic year progressed and was out of school for a week. The mother appreciated how understanding, caring, and supportive teachers were in helping her student catch up with his work. She liked that he could make up work when he missed classes because of not feeling well. The student said, "There's so much I like about MEVA that it's hard to choose." The mother saw a big difference in her student's interest in his lessons. Academically, he was doing better than in his last school setting. She enjoyed being his learning coach and found that as the year progressed, he became more independent in his work.

The mother and student stated that they would recommend MEVA to others. The student would tell a friend, "It's a really great school." The mother admits that, at first, she was nervous that her student would not do the work, but that was not the case. They planned for the student to continue to eighth grade at MEVA and possibly change to the local public high school.

Student and Caregiver L

Student L, a female, did not participate in the interviews due to high anxiety. Her mother was interviewed after enrollment and at the end of the school year. The student enrolled in MEVA for seventh grade and has anxiety, autism, and an intellectual disability. The student was attending a charter school prior to MEVA, where the focus was on students with special needs. The mother could not find a charter school for middle school for her student and was concerned about bullying in a public school. A family member recommended another virtual school, but the mother researched and found that MEVA had more special education teachers, which made it the right choice for them. The mother found the enrollment process to be reasonably straightforward. "There was a lot of help from the school and checking to see if we needed anything.

The mother and student attended the orientation and then watched the recording. MEVA began doing assessments and communicating with her special education teachers from the prior charter school before the new academic year began. The day before school started, staff had a Zoom call with the student to teach her how to navigate Brightspace. The mother was surprised at how quickly her student excelled at MEVA, earning high honors the first semester. The second semester started a little rough due to Art class. During school break, the mother sat down with her student, and using the lesson videos, she helped her get back on track with assignments. The mother appreciated the staff at MEVA. The student "bonded" with one teacher, Mrs. Clark, who is reportedly "exceptional" with her. In addition to academic growth, the mother has seen her student grow socially. She shared that before MEVA, her student "was always in a shell and didn't talk to anybody, even when her teacher introduced her to other students." At MEVA, "she talks with students, even those who are older than her." The mother thought, "It honestly helps that every student in MEVA has to attend a video call for 15 minutes before classes. And after

the principal is done with morning announcements, all of the students can talk amongst themselves."

The mother was delighted with the school and had no suggestions for improvements. She had already recommended the school to two other caregivers. She told them, "Do it. Do it. I said, don't hold on. Do it." The family plans to send their younger child, who does not have special needs, to MEVA.

Student and Caregiver M

Student M, a male, and his mother were interviewed after enrollment only. The student enrolled in MEVA in 12th grade. The family moved from another state to Maine. The mother explained that her student had experienced some bullying in a prior educational setting, so they changed to a K12 virtual school, which the student attended prior to MEVA. The mother explained that her student did not wish to return to in-person schooling, and they felt virtual schooling was the safest environment "because of all the crimes and shootings in schools." The mother found enrollment easy and attributed that to already being in a K12 School.

Once enrolled, the family learned the student had enough credits to graduate early. The student had always been an above-average student. The student did not need to reach out to the teachers for assistance. He enjoyed his classes at MEVA, stayed current with his assignments, and made friends. Both the mother and student were happy with MEVA. The mother would recommend the school to other caregivers. She said MEVA is an excellent school with many subjects that meet the requirements for graduation.

Student and Caregiver N

Student N, a female, did not participate in the interviews. No reason was given. Her mother was interviewed after enrollment. The student enrolled in MEVA for seventh grade. She had previously been homeschooled, but as with her other children, the mother wanted a more formal educational process to prepare her student for college. A sibling had attended MEVA and done

very well. The mother found the enrollment process easy. She said it was easier than in the past when she enrolled her older student. She reached out to staff a few times and found them very responsive.

The mother and student attended the orientation, which they found helpful. The mother is the learning coach and reported that it was going smoothly. She did not need to reach out to teachers or staff. Compared to being homeschooled, the mother believed her student was doing better. She shared, "I think it works better for her. She responds better to someone else beside me teaching her."

The mother expressed that she liked MEVA, especially because her student can do early college classes as she transitions to high school. The mother shared, "Both my son and my daughter did early college, and my son with MEVA was able to do it directly through the college instead of the hybrid courses." She said she has shared the advantages of changing to MEVA for middle and high school with other caregivers who homeschool

Student and Caregiver O

Student O, a female, and her mother were interviewed after enrollment only. The student first enrolled in MEVA for the eighth grade, as the family was moving from southern Maine to the MidCoast area and decided it would be less of a transition if the student attended MEVA. The following year, the student attended the local public high school in their new community. For the 10th grade, the student decided to return to MEVA. The family was familiar with MEVA because an older sibling had attended. There were a few minor issues in the enrollment process, but they were on the local public school's end. The mother found MEVA's enrollment process to be easy.

The mother and student attended the orientation and found it to be a "good refresher on what takes place, what to expect, the basics." The student found it easy to adapt to Brightspace. After returning to MEVA following a year at the local public high school, the student shared, "I really enjoy virtual learning. I appreciate that it's very comfortable. I like that you're not forced to have your camera on or microphone. You're in the moment, and you're still learning that way. I like

that all the teachers are really quick to help and give resources, which had been a struggle at the local high school. It's just been really nice and comfortable." The mother found it easy to be the learning coach. As she explained, her student is independent. She said, "I never have to worry if she is getting her work done. So, my job as the learning coach for us and our experience has been really easy in that sense." Both mother and student would recommend MEVA to others.

Cross-Case Findings

The following cross-case analysis used all the preceding cases to identify and summarize patterns. The analysis aims to provide a broader picture of the issues raised in the interviews than any single case can by itself.

Reasons for Selecting MEVA

The reasons caregivers selected MEVA were varied, and they often cited multiple motivations. For example, one mother shared, "My daughter has anxiety, autism, and an intellectual disability. She had been attending a charter school prior to MEVA, where the focus was on students with special needs. I was having a problem finding a charter school for middle school for her." The mother was also concerned that she would be subject to bullying in a public school setting.

The most cited reasons caregivers gave for selecting MEVA were that their student had special needs, they moved from another state to Maine or from one region of Maine to another, or they had previously attended a charter school or were homeschooled. In two cases, families who had moved to Maine were previously enrolled in a K12 school. In the two cases where the caregiver was homeschooling their child, a move to the seventh grade encouraged them to look for a more structured experience for their student without enrolling in the local public school.

Struggling academically in their local public school, bullying, and the COVID-19 pandemic were common reasons for seeking out a virtual school. In one case, a family living in a rural part of the state, where many generations of her family had lived and attended school, was told by the school that her student was "not likely to succeed." Four students cited bullying as the reason

they did not wish to continue in their local school. In several instances, the student was not only bullied but had bullied others.

As the evidence from myriad sources shows, the COVID-19 pandemic had a variety of impacts on students and schooling. In this study, some caregivers did not wish for their child to be in a public setting in which the virus spreads. Some caregivers realized that their students struggled with the changes between in-person and virtual education during the pandemic. One caregiver observed that as her child switched between in-person and virtual learning during the pandemic, he was doing much better when school was virtual.

Finding MEVA

Most caregivers identified MEVA when they did an online search for virtual schools or alternatives to public schools. One was directed to MEVA through the school guidance counselor when her student refused to attend school. The guidance counselor suggested the caregiver look into MEVA but could not provide additional information. In one case, a family member recommended another virtual school, but as the caregiver began researching the school, she found MEVA. She selected MEVA because it had more special education teachers than the originally suggested school, and her students had multiple disabilities. In two cases, the family was familiar with MEVA because one of their other children had attended the school and had a positive experience.

Enrolling in MEVA

For the last several years, MEVA has worked to simplify the enrollment process and encourage caregivers to call them with questions or problems. This evaluation was an opportunity to ask about the process. Most caregivers reported that the enrollment process was easy. When they needed assistance, they found the staff supportive and responsive to questions. A few caregivers reported "glitches" in the process. For some, there were issues with K12 staff. One caregiver was given different information from different K12 staff regarding how to move from homeschooling to MEVA. Another caregiver stated he was "frustrated" that he was not informed that the process moved from K12 to MEVA at a certain point. This caregiver also found communication regarding eligibility for student computers confusing. Finally, one caregiver who had moved to Maine from another state found MEVA's process to be easy but acquiring her child's vaccination records to be challenging.

Orientation

All but two caregiver and student pairs attended the orientation, and those pairs watched the recording. Most found it helpful to get them started. Two caregivers mentioned that they would have liked more information on navigating Brightspace. One caregiver noted that they would have liked more information on grading. She said, "Some of the teachers grade one way, and some grade a different way. We were confused at first about the grading system." They got the information they needed through email communication with staff. Two families noted that they had thoroughly read the written information. These families found the orientation to be repetitive of those materials.

Student Evaluation

When caregivers explained why they chose MEVA, a few shared that their student had or needed a 504 Education Plan or an IEP. Caregivers reported that MEVA quickly set up evaluations upon enrollment in the school. Several caregivers explained that they had been asking their local

public school to conduct an assessment for years but were unable to make progress on getting it done. A caregiver of an 11th grader shared, "He was in public school up until high school (through 10th grade), and I've been struggling to get 504s for him and IEPs since kindergarten with no luck. Two seconds into the school (MEVA), we've got a 504. We've got plans. We've got meetings set up. We've got everything." A caregiver of a student with known special needs chose MEVA because they had more special education teachers than the other option she was considering. Once the student was enrolled, MEVA did more evaluation, contacted her prior teachers, and set up an IEP plan. Staff reached out before the start of the school year and, using Zoom, taught the student how to navigate Brightspace. Other caregivers of children with disabilities who had an existing 504 found that MEVA made appropriate accommodations, and sometimes an appropriation was not needed as the practice used already covered the student's need.

Learning Platform

Caregivers use Brightspace, the learning management system at MEVA, to check their student's progress and log attendance. Students use Brightspace for their courses and assignments. A few students mentioned that they initially found Brightspace challenging but quickly added that once they got used to it, they found it easy to navigate. Caregivers were more likely to find Brightspace "confusing." It was common to hear that a student had taught their caregiver how to use Brightspace.

Learning Coach Role

Caregivers serve as their student's learning coach. Most found this to be an easy role. One caregiver who found it stressful at the start of the year said it got easier as the year progressed and as her student became more independent in his learning. Coaching became more manageable for a caregiver (who did not initially realize she could check her student's work and missing assignments) when she could monitor his progress and establish expectations for him. Several caregivers talked about reviewing lesson videos to support their students better. One caregiver who shared that school was difficult for her commented, "He's not the only one learning."

Highlights of MEVA

Caregivers and students were asked to name aspects of MEVA they liked best. Many caregivers mentioned flexibility as the most appreciated aspect of MEVA. Video recordings of lessons make it possible to access the lesson even when a student misses a class. Several caregivers mentioned watching the videos to help their child with a lesson or concept with which they were struggling. One caregiver who previously homeschooled his student through sixth grade liked the more structured curriculum and felt "more confident" that the student was learning what he should be learning at his grade level. One caregiver mentioned that she appreciated the weekly newsletter highlighting the week's "happenings." Finally, a caregiver of a middle school student was excited about the opportunity to pursue college-level classes during high school.

Like caregivers, many students mentioned the availability of videos on the lesson as the best part of MEVA. They used the videos when they missed a class or just to go back, review the material, and take notes. One high school student shared that what she likes best about the school is that it values the students, not only their academic success but their health, including mental health, and their opinions. Finally, a middle school student who barely spoke joined the final interview with his mother and said, "There is so much I like about MEVA it was hard to choose."

Teachers and staff were very accessible, quick to respond, and supportive of both caregivers and students. As one middle school student explained, "They don't huff and gruff when you ask for help." For her, this was a distinct experience from her local public high school. One caregiver shared that her high school student could reach out to teachers on her own. As the caregiver reported, taking this initiative was a new skill for her student. One high school student on the autism spectrum had bonded with a particular teacher. The mother commented this teacher was "exceptional" with her student. Two students emphasized that they knew their teachers and their teachers knew them. This familiarity made it easier to ask for help. One caregiver shared that they never knew who to go to when asking for help, so they always went to the guidance counselor, who connected them with the right person. Finally, another student described a special

relationship with a therapist, who helped her understand herself better and inspired a potential career pathway.

Peer Connections in a Virtual School Setting

The most often cited challenge of virtual school was developing social connections. In the nine interviews where this issue was raised, three students reported that they had developed connections with their peers online. A caregiver of a student on the autism spectrum commented that she had seen a lot of growth in her student during the year. She attributed the development to the requirement that all students attend the morning session during which the school director spoke, and students were given time to converse. Two other students developed social connections through after-school clubs.

The remaining students did not develop peer connections through school. Two of these students developed relationships through their neighborhood peers or their work. The other four students did not develop peer relationships. As a result, one student would be returning to her local public school. A caregiver of another student asked him directly during the interview how he felt not having friends. He replied, "Sad." The caregiver is considering transferring him back to the local public school. And, finally, a caregiver shared his concern that his student was not socially connecting with other students. Two caregivers shared that when registering their child, someone told them there would be opportunities to bring students together in person so they could get to know their peers. They reported being disappointed this did not happen.

Academic Progress

All caregivers and students reported that academic progress had improved or remained the same. For many, the improvement was significant. A high school student described her academic progress from failing her classes to earning straight As. She also served as a learning coach to other students. A caregiver of another high school student was surprised at how quickly her student excelled at MEVA, earning high honors the first semester. A middle school student who reported doing better at MEVA shared that being at home on the computer allows him to focus

better. The caregiver of this student reported that he is not only doing better with his grades, but he is also more interested in what he is learning.

Several caregivers who reported that their students had maintained A/B grades described other academic changes. One caregiver said that compared to last year, her student was coming to her less for help. Another reported that her child was developing into an independent learner. She said, "I didn't see any huge transition in grades from school to school, but I definitely saw her confidence in getting things done and handing them in and knowing what she was supposed to improve" on an assignment. A caregiver who had homeschooled her student believed her student had improved, as she seemed to respond better to someone other than her caregiver teaching her. A caregiver whose student maintained the same grades as in her previous school said that she was not memorizing things to get by but comprehending the material more thoroughly.

Improvements

Caregivers and students were asked to share suggestions on how to improve MEVA. Many conveyed that they were happy with MEVA. One caregiver who was an educator herself said, "I thought the school did a great job" and had no suggestions. The following are the suggestions that participants offered:

- Offer more of a variety of classes from which to choose as she builds her schedule. (high school student)
- Change time requirements for study or coursework, as they are not a good measure of engagement. The student explained she can finish assignments quickly and then needs to sit and do busy work or slow down her response time to questions to meet the time requirement. The caregiver shared that he would rather see an assignment quota versus a time quota. (high school student)
- Find a straightforward way to gather information on a child's overdue assignments. (caregiver)
- Have more short breaks during the day. Some students have a difficult time sitting for too long. Perhaps shorten the lunch period. (caregiver)

- Simplify re-registration. (caregiver)
- Teach students to use artificial intelligence to gather background information or research a subject rather than restrict its use since it is here to stay. (caregiver)
- Do more marketing of the program so that others know of its existence.
(caregiver)

Students and caregivers were asked if they would recommend MEVA to a friend or caregiver. All replied they would recommend it. One-third of the caregivers had already recommended it to a peer. One caregiver described herself as MEVA's "biggest advocate." Some were more specific in their recommendations, saying they would suggest it to a caregiver whose student was struggling in public school or as a suitable alternative to homeschooling. Students were also likely to recommend MEVA to a friend. One high school student would be more specific in his recommendation, sharing that "it's not for everyone. Some people are better in class having the social aspect."

When asked if they planned to return to MEVA, only one student was sure she would not be returning as she missed the social aspect of an in-person education. Another caregiver and student pair were still discussing their options. Other caregivers, where the student was not graduating, indicated they planned to continue their education at MEVA.

Recommendations

Caregivers and students who participated in this study found MEVA to be a beneficial alternative to the education offered by their local public school. All report that their students' academic progress improved or remained consistent with the A/B performance in their previous educational setting. The following modest recommendations are offered for consideration.

1. Continue to provide video recordings of all classes, which students and caregivers cited as one of the most valuable resources.

2. Continue to encourage staff and teachers to engage with students and families. Both valued the quick response to caregivers' and students' questions.
3. Provide public school guidance counselors with information on MEVA and virtual schooling to help them support caregivers of students who are having a difficult time in their local district.
4. Enhance communication during enrollment to ensure caregivers know that K12 administers the process up to a certain point and then moves to MEVA.
5. Consider if and how to introduce the responsible use of artificial intelligence to students to assist them in learning.
6. Consider ways to promote peer interaction within the virtual education model MEVA uses.
7. Identify where in the chain of communications caregivers are being told students will have in-person opportunities (other than testing) and correct this information.

Summary

This study explored the experiences of newly enrolled students and families at MEVA. Fifteen families with 16 students participated in the study. The design called for two interviews with each caregiver and student pair, one shortly after they enrolled and one at the end of the academic year. One family had two students and two caregivers participate. In two cases, only the caregivers participated in the interview. Three families participated in the first interview only. A case study was developed for each family. A cross-case analysis of the cases was conducted to identify patterns and themes.

The analysis explored student and family reasons for selecting MEVA, how they came to find MEVA, experiences enrolling in MEVA, experiences with orientation, caregivers' experiences as

the learning coach for their child, teacher and staff support, highlights of MEVA, peer connections, the student's academic progress, suggested improvements, the likelihood of recommending MEVA to other students and caregivers.

Overall, one can conclude that the students and caregivers had a positive experience with MEVA. All shared that academic progress either improved, in some cases dramatically, or that the student maintained an A/B performance as they had in their last academic setting. Grades aside, a few caregivers shared that their students had come to understand the content more deeply. All caregivers and students said they would recommend MEVA to family and friends.

Coversheet

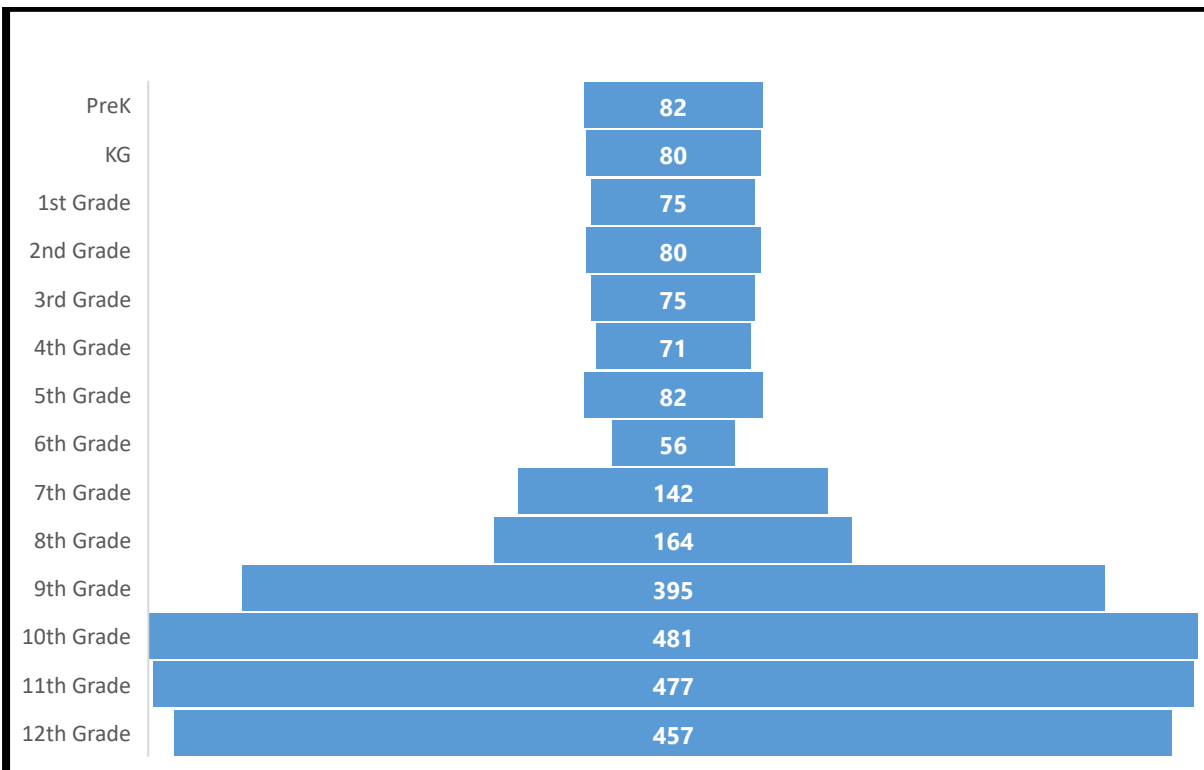
Student Enrollments and Demographic Data Breakdowns

Section: VIII. Monthly School Portfolio/Data Report
Item: A. Student Enrollments and Demographic Data Breakdowns
Purpose: Discuss
Submitted by:
Related Material: 2024-25 School Enrollment Statistics.pdf
School Year 2024-25 Demographic Data Breakdowns.pdf

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	PreK-6	272 (245-299)	250	0	46	18.40%	80	32.00%
Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	9-12	400 (360-441)	384	0	84	21.88%	77	20.05%
Community Regional Charter School	PreK-12	352 (317-387)	385	7	91	23.64%	271	70.39%
Ecology Learning Center	9-12	120 (108-132)	120	0	32	26.67%	43	35.83%
Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences	PreK-8	208 (187-229)	177	60	51	28.81%	50	28.25%
Maine Academy of Natural Sciences	9-12	190 (171-209)	177	39	41	23.16%	126	71.19%
Maine Arts Academy	9-12	220 (198-242)	245	0	42	17.14%	100	40.82%
Maine Connections Academy	7-12	500 (Maximum Enrollment)	504	263	110	21.83%	260	51.59%
Maine Virtual Academy	7-12	450 (405-495)	475	127	116	24.42%	231	48.63%
Totals			2717	496	613		1238	
					2022-23 State Average	19.50%	2022-23 State Average	36.10%

School Year 2024-25 Demographic Data Breakdowns

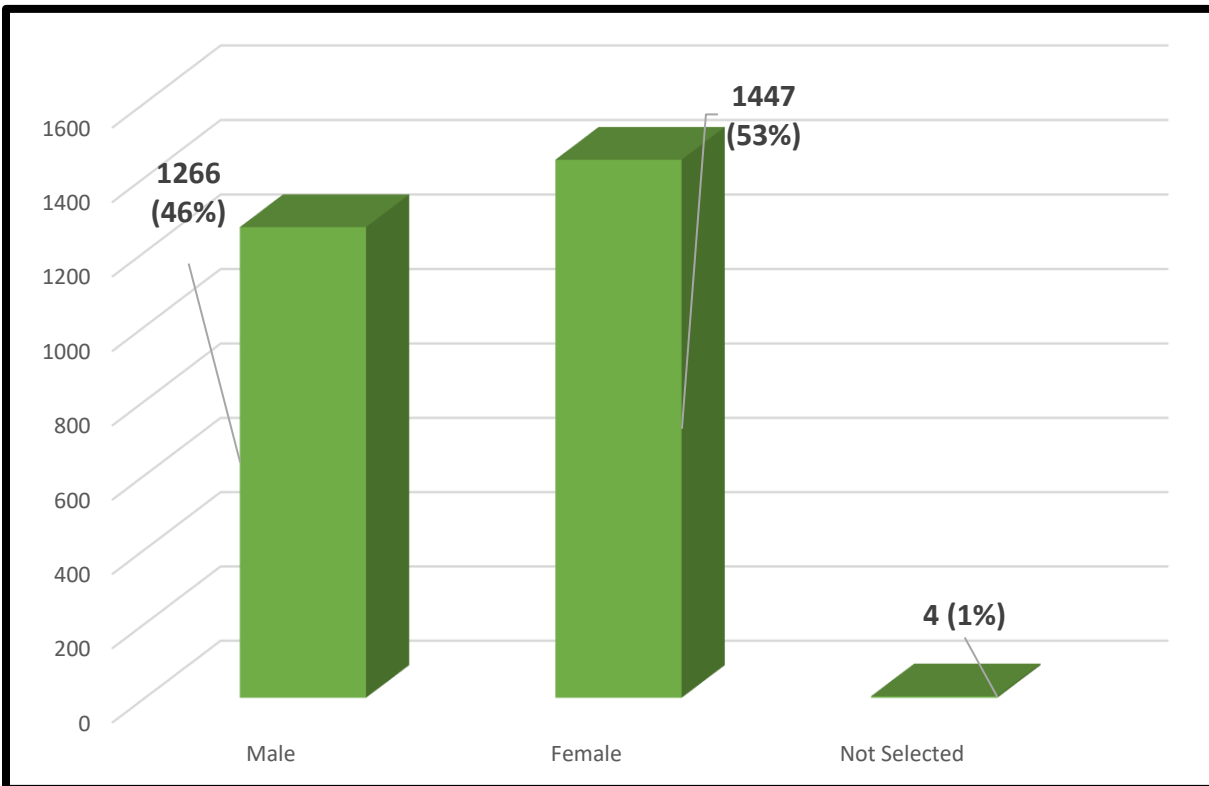
Grade



	ACADIA	Baxter	CRCS	ELC	FSAS	MCA	MeAA	MeANS	MeVA
PreK	32		30		20				
KG	32		28		20				
1st	33		21		21				
2nd	32		27		21				
3rd	33		24		18				
4th	32		22		17				
5th	34		29		19				
6th	22		23		11				
7th			20		14	70			38
8th			20		16	97			31
9th		94	28	36		69	63	28	77
10th		105	33	28		84	60	49	122
11th		96	38	27		92	59	49	116
12th		89	42	29		92	63	51	91

School Year 2024-25 Demographic Data Breakdowns

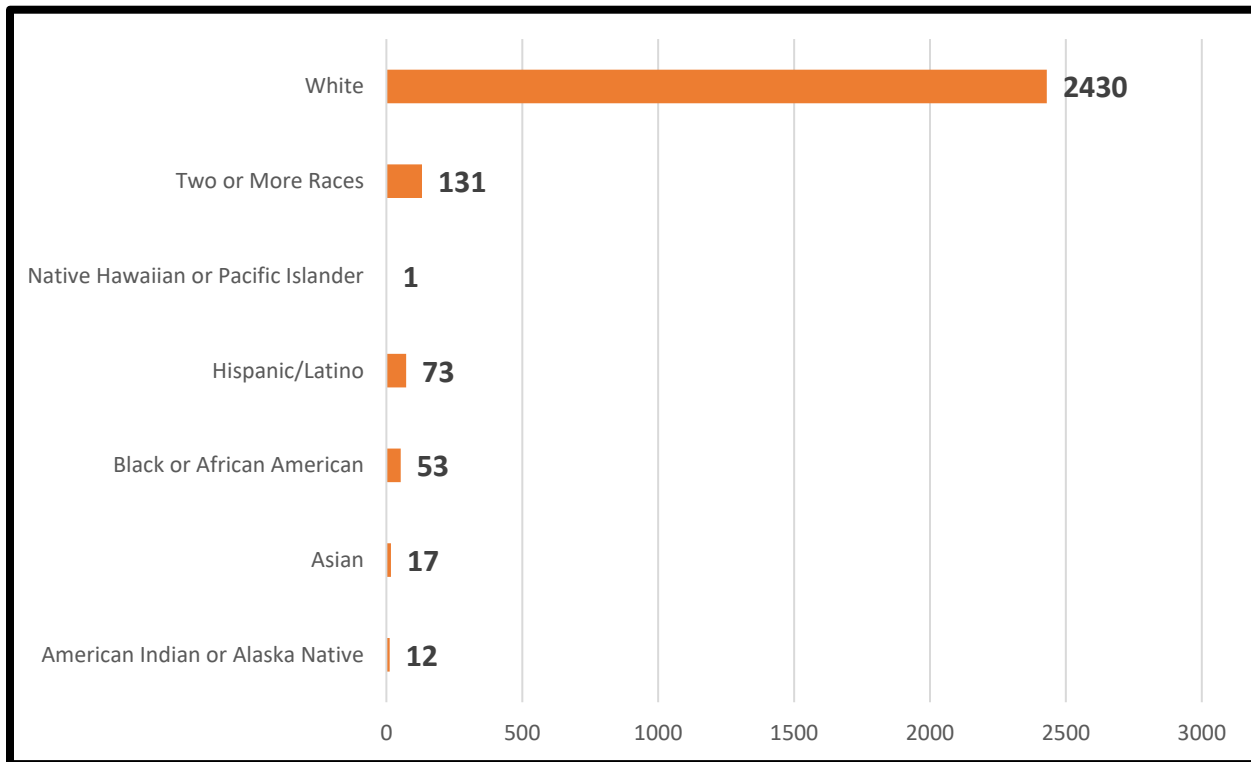
Gender



	Male		Female		Not Selected	
ACADIA	119	48%	131	52%		
Baxter	226	59%	158	41%		
CRCS	207	54%	178	46%		
ELC	57	48%	61	51%	2	1%
FSAS	98	55%	79	45%		
MCA	212	42%	292	58%		
MeAA	42	17%	202	82%	1	1%
MeANS	95	54%	82	46%		
MeVA	210	44%	264	55%	1	1%

School Year 2024-25 Demographic Data Breakdowns

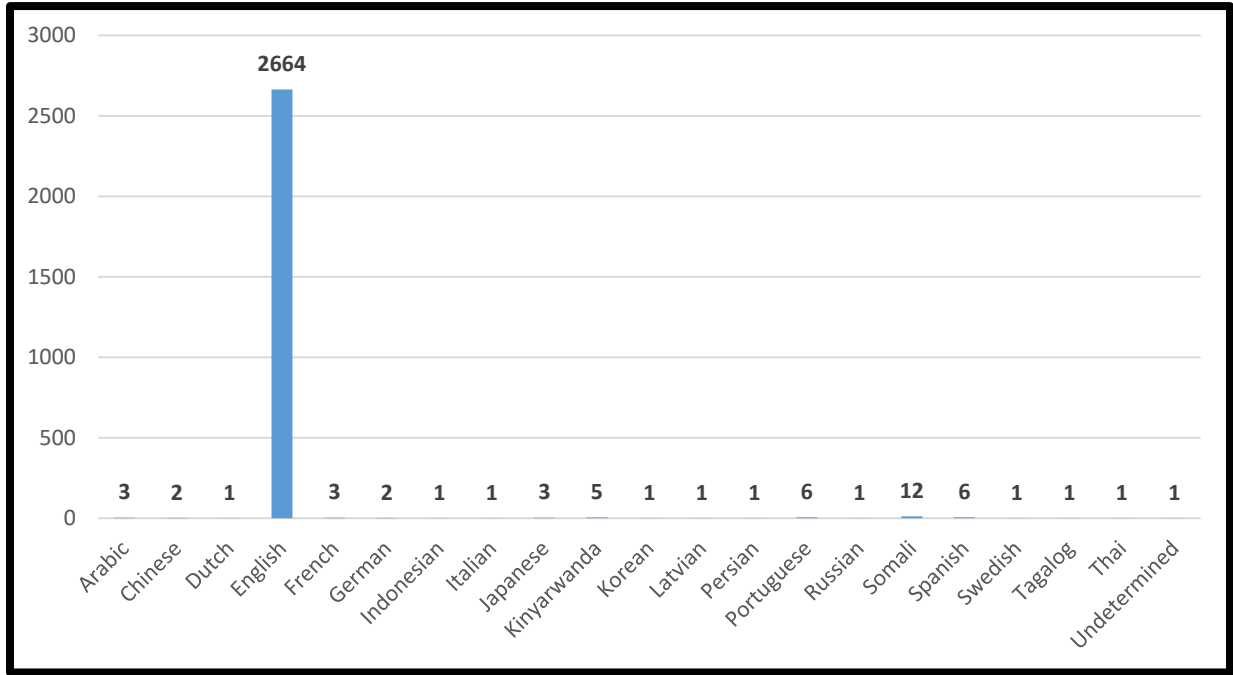
Race/Ethnicity



	ACADIA	Baxter	CRCs	ELC	FSAS	MCA	MeAA	MeANS	MeVA
White	218	335	355	111	163	446	220	166	416
Two or More Races	13	18	18	5	7	26	13	3	28
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander						1			
Hispanic/Latino	4	6	11	2	5	10	10	4	21
Black or African American	14	16		2	1	15		1	4
Asian	1	9				2	2		3
American Indian or Alaska Native			1		1	4		3	3

School Year 2024-25 Demographic Data Breakdowns

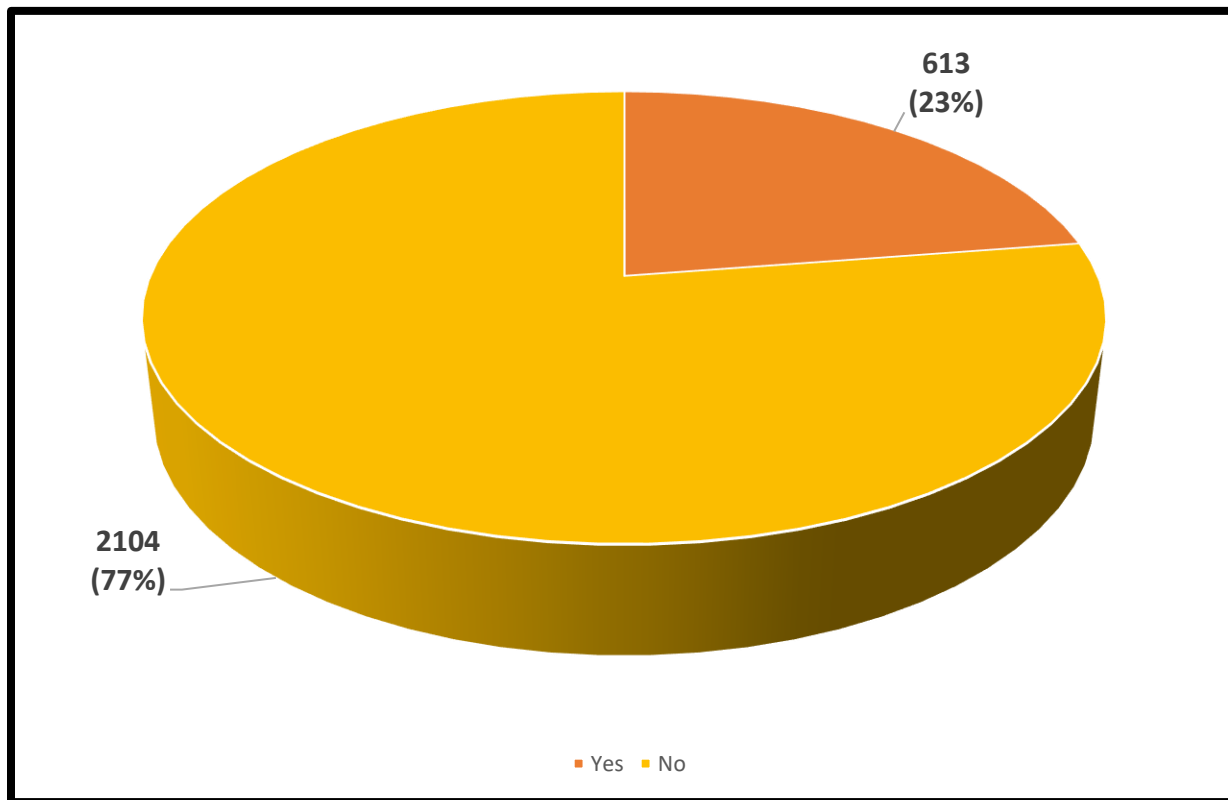
Language



	ACADIA	Baxter	CRCS	ELC	FSAS	MCA	MeAA	MeANS	MeVA
Arabic							1	2	
Chinese		1							1
Dutch							1		
English	247	362	384	119	175	492	238	175	472
French		2				1			
German		2							
Indonesian							1		
Italian		1							
Japanese		2					1		
Kinyarwanda	3	2							
Korean		1							
Latvian							1		
Persian						1			
Portuguese		6							
Russian							1		
Somali		3				9			
Spanish			1	1	2				2
Swedish		1							
Tagalog						1			
Thai							1		
Undetermined		1							

School Year 2024-25 Demographic Data Breakdowns

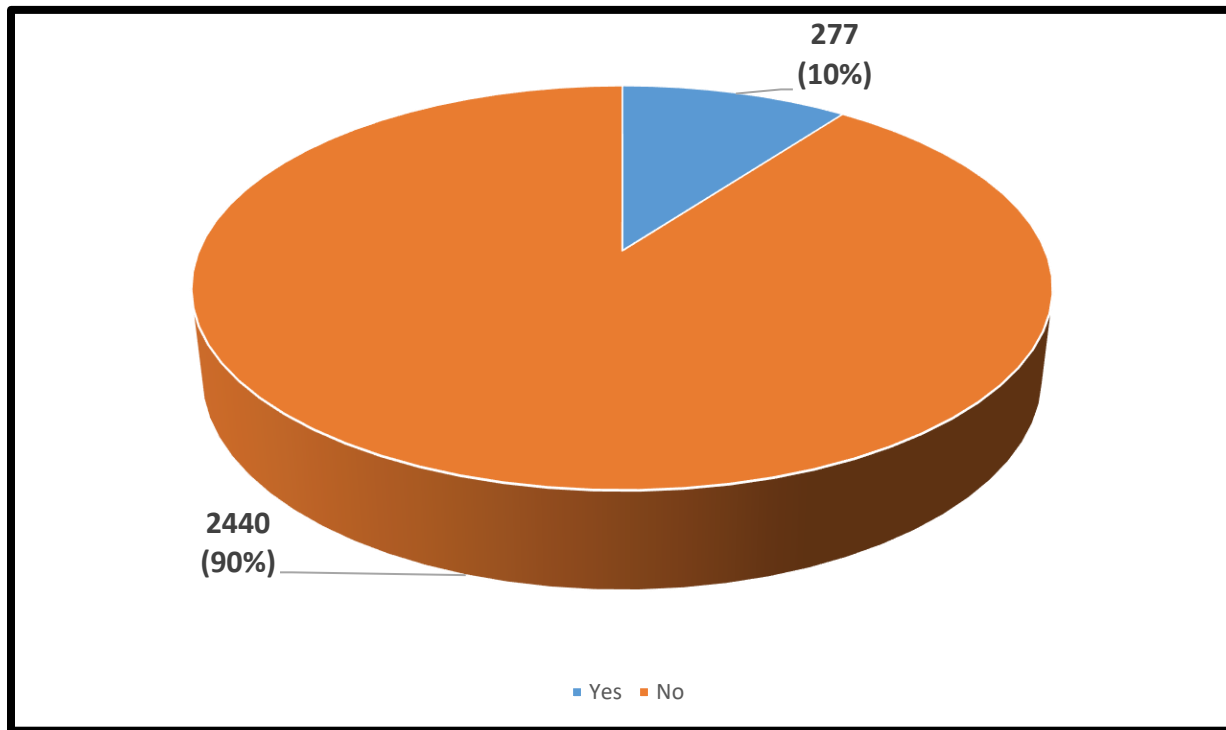
Special Education



	Yes		No	
ACADIA	46	18%	204	82%
Baxter	84	22%	300	78%
CRCS	91	24%	294	76%
ELC	32	27%	88	73%
FSAS	51	29%	126	71%
MCA	110	22%	394	78%
MeAA	42	17%	203	83%
MeANS	41	23%	136	77%
MeVA	116	24%	359	76%

School Year 2024-25 Demographic Data Breakdowns

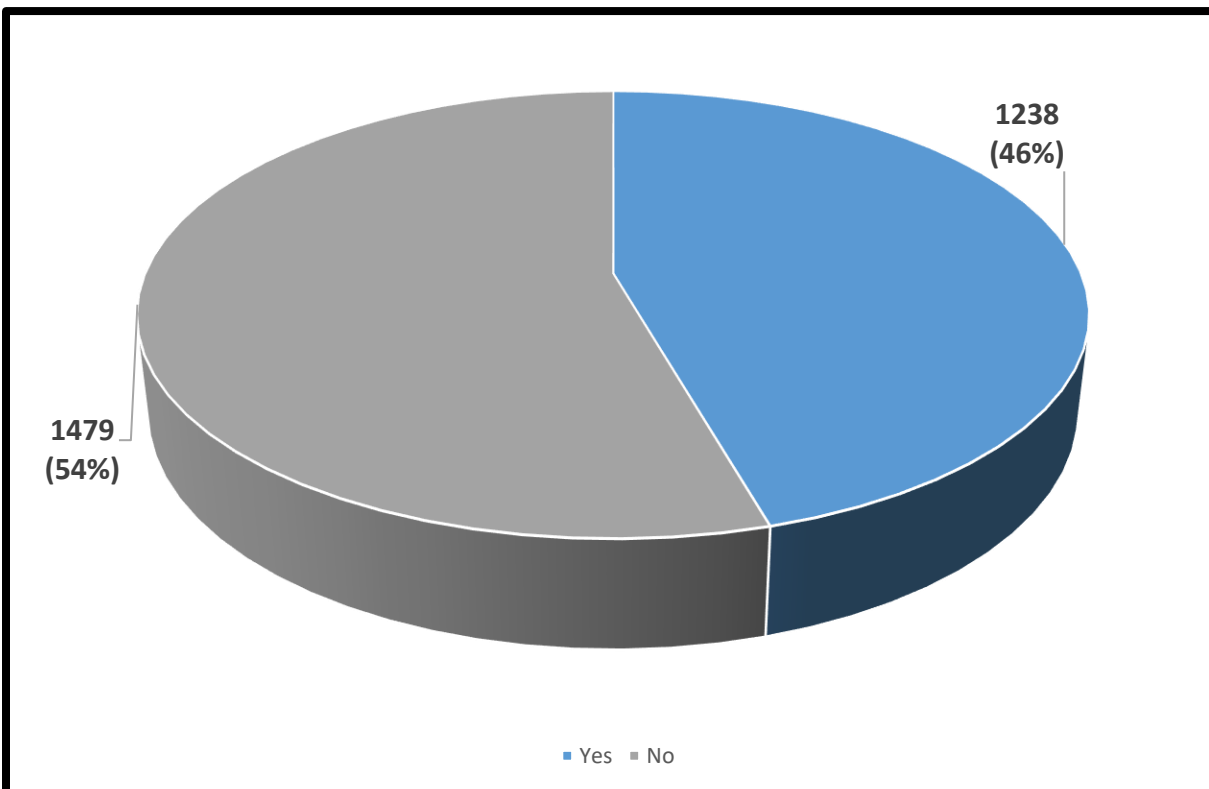
504 Plan



	Yes		No	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
ACADIA	17	7%	233	93%
Baxter	51	13%	333	87%
CRCS	10	3%	375	97%
ELC	1	1%	119	99%
FSAS	13	7%	164	93%
MCA	77	15%	427	85%
MeAA	49	20%	196	80%
MeANS	22	12%	155	88%
MeVA	37	8%	438	92%

School Year 2024-25 Demographic Data Breakdowns

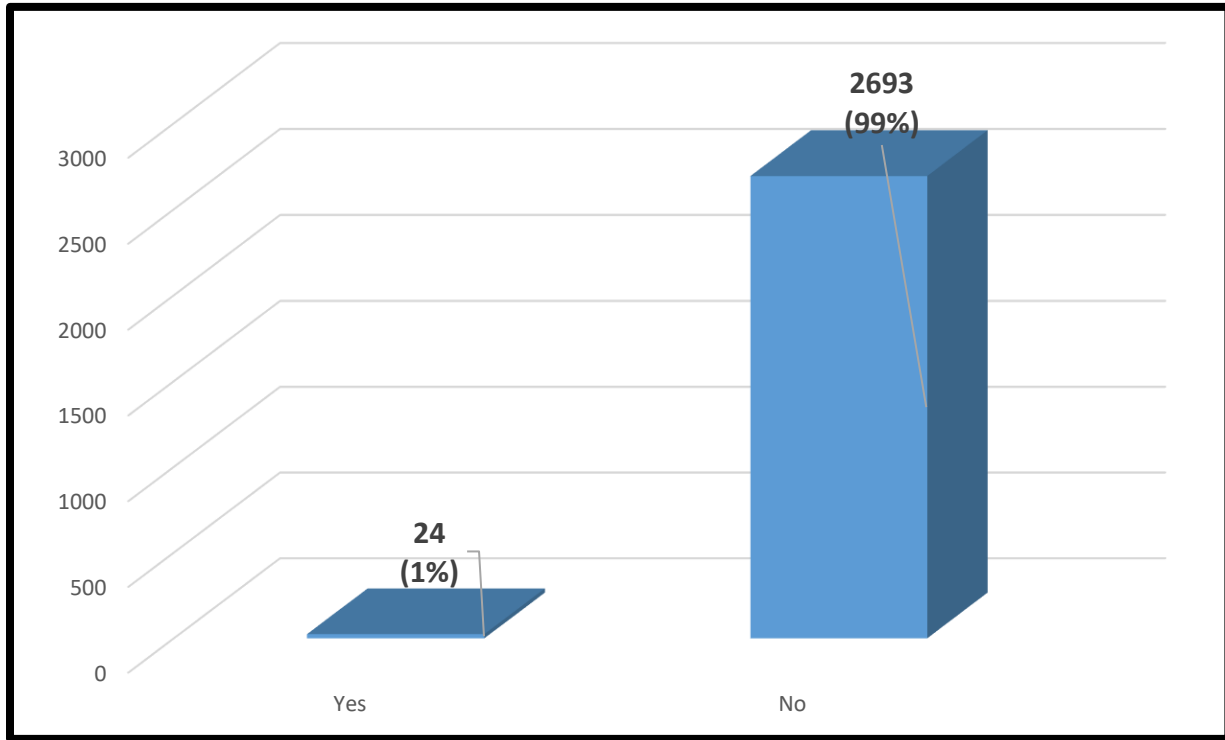
Economically Disadvantaged



	Yes		No	
ACADIA	80	32%	170	68%
Baxter	77	20%	307	80%
CRCS	271	70%	114	30%
ELC	43	36%	77	64%
FSAS	50	28%	127	72%
MCA	260	52%	244	48%
MeAA	100	41%	145	59%
MeANS	126	71%	51	29%
MeVA	231	49%	244	51%

School Year 2024-25 Demographic Data Breakdowns

English Learner



	Yes	No
ACADIA	2	248
Baxter	10	374
CRCs	0	385
ELC	1	119
FSAS	1	176
MCA	5	499
MeAA	1	244
MeANS	1	176
MeVA	3	472

Coversheet

To Consider Ecology Learning Center's Request to Amend Bylaws

Section: X. New Business Requiring Approval and/or Acceptance
Item: A. To Consider Ecology Learning Center's Request to Amend Bylaws
Purpose: Vote
Submitted by:
Related Material: ELC Amendment for Change in School ByLaws (Part 1).pdf
ELC Amendment for Change in School ByLaws (Part 2).pdf
ELC Amendment for Change in School ByLaws (Part 3).pdf



**MAINE CHARTER
SCHOOL COMMISSION**

**Charter Amendment Guide
for
Amending the School's Bylaws**

Please Note – The school's Amendment Request must be submitted at least 3 weeks prior to the next MCSC Business Meeting (held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month) in order to make it onto the agenda. In some cases, 3 weeks may not allow enough time for review and schools are encouraged to contact the office with questions.

Maine Charter School Commission
182 State House Station
Augusta, Maine
04333-0182
www.maine.gov/csc

Maine Charter School Commission Charter Amendment Cover Sheet Request to Amend Bylaws

School Information

Date of Request	10.31.24
School Name and Mailing Address	Ecology Learning Center 230 Main St Unity, ME 04988
Contact	Beth Alma
Contact telephone number	207-322-6332
Contact email address	beth.alma@ecologylearningcenter.org

Provide a brief narrative description of the request.

The Ecology Learning Center Board has approved four updates to the Bylaws **for clarity**. The changes are in Article III, Sections 2, 4 and 10, plus the suggested renumbering of Articles VIII-X.

The Board wants to specifically reference that there is a process for prospective board members to be considered. (Article III Section 4)

During bylaws review, it became apparent that two Bylaws changes approved in 2022 had not been sent to the Commission nor were the Bylaws updated then. The two changes refer to consecutive board term limits (Article III Section 2) and meetings/minutes for a public charter school (Article III Section 10). These changes have been reviewed and approved again.

During review, an error in the numbering of Article VII was noticed. The board has approved renumbering Articles VIII-X.

The completed Amendment Request must be uploaded and submitted to the Maine Charter School Commission through Epicenter.

On an additional page, please address the following criteria in your request, as applicable.

- o Provide a redlined copy of the proposed changes to the current bylaws.
- o Provide a finalized, clean version of the bylaws with the proposed changes included.
- o Describe why the school has proposed the changes to its bylaws.
- o Describe the desired improvements that will result from the change in the school's bylaws.

ECOLOGY LEARNING CENTER BY-LAWS

Version Date: 3-3-19

ARTICLE I Name and Incorporation

Section 1. Name. The name of the corporation is Ecology Learning Center. It is herein after referred to as “the Corporation.”

Section 2. Location. The principal location of the Ecology Learning Center facility shall be located in Waldo County Maine, selected by the board of directors.

Section 3. Purposes. The Corporation is a non-profit corporation organized under the laws of the State of Maine. The Corporation is organized exclusively for charitable and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The specific purposes to be promoted or carried out by the Corporation, are as follows:

to deeply root students in Maine’s ecological and cultural landscapes, foster authentic real-world learning through mentorship and craft, and cultivate compassionate and resilient leaders prepared to engage in the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Section 4. Statute and Code. In the event that the Corporation is an authorized public charter school, the Corporation shall operate in accordance with Title 20-A, Chapter 112 of the Maine Revised Statutes.

Section 5. Non-discrimination. The Corporation shall not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or age in either the hiring and other employment practices of the learning center or in its admission policies for students. Further, the Corporation shall be open to all students in its authorized geographic area on a space available basis and shall not discriminate in its admission policies or practices. The Corporation shall conduct all of its activities in accordance with all applicable local, state, and federal anti- discrimination laws.

ARTICLE II Members

Section 1. Non-membership Corporation. The Corporation shall have no members. The Board of Directors shall have all powers and duties for the conduct of the activities of the Corporation.

ARTICLE III Board of Directors

Section 1. Number. The Board of Directors shall consist of no fewer than five and no more than twenty-one persons.

Section 2. Term. Directors shall be elected for **two consecutive** three year terms. Terms shall be staggered so that no more than 1/3 of the Board shall be up for election in any year, unless a vacancy(ies) needs to be filled.

Section 3. Powers. The Board of Directors shall have all powers and authority for the management of the business, property, and affairs of the Corporation, to do such lawful acts as it deems proper and appropriate to promote the objectives and purposes of the Corporation. The Board of Directors may, by general resolution, delegate to committees of its own number or to officers of the Corporation such powers as it may see fit for specified periods of time.

Section 4. Election. The initial Directors shall be appointed by the Incorporator at the first meeting of the Board of Directors. All other Directors shall be elected by the Board **after meeting the requirements of the Board Approval Process, being nominated from nominations** by existing Directors and voted on by a majority of the Board of Directors. Each new Director shall assume their Board position immediately upon their appointment by the Board or at such time as specified by the

Board.

Section 5. Resignation and Removal of a Director. A Director may resign by submitting their resignation in writing to the Chair of the Board of Directors. A Director or Officer may be removed if, in the sole discretion of the Board of Directors, such removal would be in the best interests of the Corporation. Said removal shall occur at any meeting of the Board of Directors, and upon a two-thirds (2/3) vote of those disinterested Directors present in person. The Director or Officer considered for removal shall be given at least five days written notice of the proposed removal, as well as an opportunity to be present and to be heard at said meeting. An Officer may be removed from only his or her Officer position, or from both the Officer position and the Board. Notwithstanding the foregoing, a Director and Officer shall be automatically removed if s/he is or has been adjudged mentally incompetent.

Section 6. Annual Meeting. An annual meeting of the Board of Directors for the election of Officers and such other business as may come before the meeting shall be held at a time and place set by the board of directors.

Section 7. Regular Meetings. In addition to the Annual Meeting, Regular meetings of the Board of Directors shall be held once a month at a date and time determined by the Board of Directors or at such other times as the Board may, from time to time, determine.

Section 8. Special Meetings. Special meetings of the Board of Directors for any purpose or purposes may be called at any time by the Chair or by a petition signed by a majority of the full Board of Directors.

Section 9. Notice. Notice of all meetings of the Board of Directors shall be sent at least ten (10) days previously thereto (except for Special Meetings, in which case at least two (2) days previously thereto) by written notice delivered by first class mail, fax, personal delivery, or electronic mail. It shall be the responsibility of each Director to provide a current electronic mail and regular mail address to the Corporation. Any Director may waive notice of any meeting. The attendance of a Director at any meeting shall constitute a waiver of notice of such meeting, except where a Director attends a meeting for the express purpose of objecting to the transaction of any business because the meeting is not lawfully called or convened. The business to be transacted at the meeting need not be specified in the notice or waiver of notice of such meeting, unless specifically required by law or these Bylaws In the event that the Corporation is an authorized public charter school, public notice shall be provided as specified in Title 1, Chapter 13, Subchapter 1 § 406 of Maine Revised Statutes, as amended.

Section 10. Meetings and Minutes. ~~Meetings of the Board of the Directors shall not be open to the public, although the Board may choose, in its sole discretion, to invite guests to all or portions of such meetings. Minutes of meetings shall not be available to the public, although the Board may choose, in its sole discretion, to share all or portions of minutes with specific third parties or with the public. Notwithstanding the foregoing, in~~ In the event that the Corporation is an authorized public charter school, all meetings and records of the Board of Directors shall be held in accordance with Maine's Freedom of Access statute Title 1 Chapter 13.-

Section 11. Quorum. A majority of the full number of Directors shall constitute a quorum of the Board for the transaction of business. When a quorum is present, a majority of the Directors present may take any action on behalf of the Board, except to the extent that a larger number is required by law or by these By-laws. Every act of a majority of the Directors present at a meeting duly held at which a

quorum is present shall be regarded as the act of the Board.

Section 12. Vacancies. Any vacancy on the Board of Directors may be filled by the Board for the unexpired portion of the term. If any Director is appointed to fill a vacancy for an unexpired term, the unexpired portion of the term they are filling shall not count toward the three year term imposed by Article III, Section 2.

Section 13. Meeting Attendance. Directors are expected to attend all Board meetings. It shall be the duty of the Secretary of the Board to communicate with any Director after such Director's three unexcused, consecutive absences or five total absences in one year to ascertain the Director's interest in retaining Board membership. Failure to provide an adequate response may qualify as sufficient cause for removal from the Board of Directors.

Section 14. Teleconference Meetings: Members of the Board of Directors or a committee of the Board may participate in a meeting by means of a conference telephone or similar communication equipment. Participation in a meeting by these means constitutes presence in person at the meeting. Members of the Board of Directors, participating by teleconference shall be "with vote".

Section 15. Meeting Rules. Meetings of the Board of Directors shall be conducted in accordance with the Rules for Meetings, attached hereto and incorporated herein as Exhibit A. Amendments to the Rules for Meetings shall not be deemed amendments to the Bylaws under Article X. Any procedural issue not resolved by the attached Rules for Meetings may be resolved by a majority vote of the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE IV Committees

Section 1. Establishment. The Board of Directors may appoint such standing committees and/or ad hoc committees as it thinks necessary for the effective governing of the Corporation.

Section 2. Standing Committees. Each standing committee shall have a charge specific to its permitted activities and such charges shall be incorporated into the Corporation's policy manual. The function of any committee so established shall be fact-finding, deliberative, and advisory to the Board of Directors. Committees shall not have authority to take legislative or administrative actions, nor to adopt policies for the learning center.

Section 3. Ad Hoc Committees. Each ad hoc committee shall have a charge specific to its permitted activities and that charge shall include the date on which the committee is to present its final report to the Board of Directors and be dissolved. Members of Ad Hoc committees shall be drawn from those parents, community members, and staff of the learning center who indicate interest in serving on the Ad Hoc committee and from such others as may be deemed appropriate by the Board of Directors. Ad Hoc committees shall be made up of no less than three.

ARTICLE V Officers

Section 1. Titles. The Officers of the Corporation are a Chair, a Vice Chair, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. The Board of Directors may create such other officer positions as it thinks necessary. Each officer position shall have its duties and responsibilities specified and included in these By-laws. No Officer may hold more than one position at the same time.

Bylaws of Ecology Learning Center

Section 2. Election. The Officers shall be elected from among the Board of Directors at the annual meeting of the Directors and shall serve for one year and until their successors are elected and qualified.

Section 3. Duties. Officers shall have the duties and responsibilities customarily belonging to their office, including those that follow.

(a) The Chair shall be responsible, along with their fellow Directors, for the oversight of its business and affairs. They shall preside at all meetings of the Board. The Chair shall have full and equal vote as accorded to all Directors. The Chair may enter into and execute in the name of the Corporation contracts or other instruments that are authorized by the Board of Directors. The Chair may delegate, as needed, to any other officer any or all of the duties of the Chair. They shall have such other powers and duties as may be prescribed by the Board of Directors or by these By-laws.

(b) The Vice Chair shall have such duties and responsibilities as may be delegated to them by the Chair. The Vice Chair shall have full and equal vote as accorded to all Directors. In the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chair shall perform all the duties of the Chair and, when so acting, shall have all the responsibilities of and be subject to all the restrictions as fall upon the Chair, including presiding at meetings of the Board of Directors. They shall have such other powers and duties as may be prescribed by the Board of Directors or by these By-laws.

(c) The Secretary shall cause notices of all meetings to be served to all members of the Board of Directors and the Director and shall keep or cause to be kept the minutes of all meetings of the Board, including the time and place, the names of those present, the actions taken, and the votes on such actions. The Secretary shall present the minutes of the previous meeting at the subsequent meeting to be voted on by the Board and duly noted in the minutes of the instant meeting. The Secretary shall keep the Seal of the Corporation. They shall have such other powers and duties as may be prescribed by the Board or by these By-laws.

(d) The Treasurer shall be the chief financial officer of the Corporation and shall have oversight of the Executive Director as that employee takes responsibility of the financial records, investments, and other evidences of school properties and assets. The Treasurer shall ensure that the Executive Director keeps regular books of account for the Corporation that set out business transactions of the Corporation, such books to be at all times open to inspection at their place of keeping to any Board of Director member. The Treasurer shall be the chair of the Financial Committee, and shall review the annual budget, which is prepared by the Executive Director, for the consideration and approval of the Board of Directors. The Treasurer shall ensure that the Executive Director deposits all moneys and other valuables in the name and to the credit of the Corporation with such depositaries as shall be designated by the Board of Directors. The Treasurer shall provide oversight to the Executive Director in the investment and reinvestment of funds of the Corporation and the disbursement of funds of the Corporation as may be ordered by the Board of Directors. The Executive Director shall render to the Board of Directors and the members of the school community, at the Annual Meeting, statements evidencing the current financial condition of the Corporation. The Treasurer shall ensure that the Executive Director establishes a system of adequate financial recording showing quarterly income, expenditures, and balance and shall, at the first meeting following the end of each quarter, submit to the Board of Directors a detailed written financial report in compliance with the Maine statutes and regulations relating to charter schools.

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ARTICLE ~~VII~~ VIII Amendments to By-laws

Section 1. Amendments. The Board of Directors shall have the power to make, amend, or repeal the By-laws of the Corporation, either in whole or in part. The By-laws may be amended at any regular meeting of the Board of Directors or any special meeting called for that purpose. Any change shall require the approval by a two-thirds (2/3rds) vote of the full membership of the board.

ARTICLE ~~VIII~~ IX Dissolution

Upon dissolution of the Corporation, the Board of Directors shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all of the liabilities of the Corporation, dispose of all of the assets of the Corporation exclusively for the purpose of the Corporation in such manner, or to such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for such purposes as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue law), as the Board of Directors shall determine, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose. In the event that the Corporation is an authorized public charter school at the time of dissolution, all assets shall be distributed to the State of Maine in accordance with the provisions of 20-A M.R.S. § 2411(8)(B).

ARTICLE ~~IX~~ X Additional Provisions

Section 1. Indemnification of Officers and Directors. The Corporation shall indemnify every corporate agent as defined in, and to the full extent permitted by, Sections 714 of the Maine Nonprofit Corporation Act (Title 13-B Chapter 7). A Director or officer shall not be personally liable to the Corporation for damages for breach of any duty owed to the Corporation, its beneficiaries, or its Board of Directors, except that nothing

Bylaws of Ecology Learning Center

contained herein shall relieve a Director or officer from liability for breach of a duty based on an act of omission: (a) in breach of such person's duty of loyalty to the Corporation; (b) not in good faith or involving a knowing violation of law; or (c) resulting in receipt of an improper personal benefit.

Section 2. Compensation. No Director or Officer shall receive any fee, salary, or remuneration of any kind for services rendered to the Corporation, except that Directors and Officers may be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred in the business of the Corporation.

Section 3. Insurance. The Board of Directors ensures that the Executive Director provides for the liability and other forms of insurance considered to be necessary and prudent as protection against possible claims.

CERTIFICATION

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify that the above and foregoing Bylaws were duly adopted on 3.3.19 by the Ecology Learning Center at a regular meeting of the Board of Directors held on due notice and in compliance with its Articles of Incorporation at which time a quorum was present.



Solomon Heifets, Secretary

Date: 3.3.19

Exhibit A to Bylaws

Rules for Meetings

Ecology Learning Center

Rule 1: Use of Rules

(a) These Rules for Meetings (the “Rules”) are to be used as the regular meeting method for the Board of Directors and committees, teams, or task forces and other decision-making groups of the Ecology Learning Center (the “Corporation”). The Rules are subordinate to (1) the Corporation’s bylaws, (2) the Articles of Incorporation and any applicable Restated Articles of Incorporation or Amended Articles of Incorporation, and (3) current state and federal laws for nonprofit public benefit corporations.

(b) These Rules may be further modified by a two-thirds majority of the Board of Directors. This voting threshold does not prevent striving for consensus.

(c) In the case of committees, teams, task forces, or other decision-making groups, the role of President will be assumed by the Chair of the group, and any reference to Directors shall be read as a reference to the members of the group.

Rule 2: Meeting Roles

(a) The President (or Chair, where applicable) of the Board or a Director that she or he appoints, will preside at the meeting. The President is responsible for conducting a focused and fair meeting, and may appoint a Facilitator to assist with this role. The President will make final decisions regarding the meeting content and Agenda after gathering input.

(b) The Secretary, or a person designated by the Secretary, shall be the Minutes Taker.

(c) The President will appoint a Timekeeper. The Timekeeper will keep the President and the group aware of time. If the group has agreed upon a specified time limit for any individual to speak, the Timekeeper will give the speaker a one-minute warning. At the end of the time, the speaker will be asked to stop. This person cannot speak again until all the other Directors have had an opportunity to speak.

(d) All participants in meetings are expected to conduct themselves courteously. Courtesy is demonstrated by, among other practices, active listening, waiting until others are finished before speaking, and being punctual. Whenever possible, Directors who cannot attend a meeting are expected to communicate their absence in advance to the President.

Rule 3: Agenda

(a) The President, with suggestions from the other Directors, will draft an Agenda. It will include the meeting purpose (if other than a regular meeting), and the meeting outcomes or

intended results. The Agenda will focus on accomplishing the current major strategies or goals of the Corporation.

(b) The Agenda will state expected start and end times, topics in order of priority, estimated time limits in minutes for each topic, and the name of the person leading the presentation and dialogue on each topic.

(c) Whenever possible the Agenda and other pertinent material will be distributed in advance.

Rule 4: Starting the Meeting

(a) The tone of the meeting will be informal and friendly.

(b) Anyone visiting a meeting at the discretion of the Board or committee will be introduced to everyone, and the group members to the visitor, with every attempt to include the visitor quickly.

(c) If desired there may be an invocation, spiritual practice, or moment of meditation or reflection to set a positive tone.

(d) Directors will be given a chance to read and modify the Agenda at the beginning of the meeting.

Rule 5: Routine Reports and Consent Agenda

(a) The minutes of the previous meeting and routine reports not requiring individual consideration will be placed on the Agenda at the beginning in a Consent Agenda section. This information will be provided to participants ahead of time or before the start of the meeting.

(b) The Consent Agenda items will not be discussed individually unless any member requests that an item be removed from this section and placed on the regular Agenda as a separate item for discussion. The President will check with the Board for agreement to file routine reports as part of the Corporation's records.

Rule 6: Discussion of Issues

(a) Any item may be discussed that is on or added to the Agenda prior to or at the beginning of the meeting. A motion or a second is not required.

(b) The Director(s) who presents an issue for decision should present it in the form of a Simple (verbal) or Structured (written) Proposal. Proposals are encouraged to address the problem and its causes before the solution.

(c) When possible, Structured Proposals will be available for Directors to read in advance.

(d) All Directors will be given an opportunity to speak or ask questions. No one member may speak a second time until all wanting to speak have spoken once.

(e) When considering a Proposal, the President or Facilitator will structure the process to move from opening (idea generation) to narrowing (evaluating ideas) to closing (making decisions).

(f) The President or Facilitator will ensure that the discussion is balanced between pros and cons and that all points of views are encouraged. Directors understand that respectful disagreement is a mark of a healthy Board.

(g) Any Director can suggest changes to a Proposal. The Proposal can be modified by Board agreement.

Rule 7: Decision Making

(a) All Directors will be given an opportunity to speak at least once and not more than twice on each Proposal.

(b) After a Proposal has been presented and thoroughly discussed, the President will ask if the Board is ready to vote on the Proposal. No one Director or a minority may block a decision.

(c) If the Board is not ready to vote, the President may call for a nonbinding simple straw poll (show of hands) and further discussion. As a result of the discussion, the President may suggest or request modifications and check again for agreement on whether to vote.

(d) Votes shall be by a show of hands, but if the Board agrees, votes can be by written ballot.

Rule 8: Ending the Meeting

(a) There will be time on the Agenda at the end of the meeting for the President to summarize the progress made at the meeting.

(b) The Minute Taker will summarize agreements made and the follow-up action steps agreed to by the Board, clarifying the tasks, the person(s) responsible, and the task time limits.

(c) The Directors will remark on their personal experience (meaning, learning, or impressions) during the meeting and make suggestions on what to continue doing and what to change to improve future meetings. The President and Facilitator will implement feasible ideas at the next meeting.

(d) When the Agenda is complete, or the time established for the end of the meeting is reached, the President will close the meeting. However, the meeting can continue after the established time limit if there is at least two-third majority agreement to extend the meeting for a specified time period.

ECOLOGY LEARNING CENTER BY-LAWS

Version Date: 10.21.24

ARTICLE I Name and Incorporation

Section 1. Name. The name of the corporation is Ecology Learning Center. It is herein after referred to as “the Corporation.”

Section 2. Location. The principal location of the Ecology Learning Center facility shall be located in Waldo County Maine, selected by the board of directors.

Section 3. Purposes. The Corporation is a non-profit corporation organized under the laws of the State of Maine. The Corporation is organized exclusively for charitable and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The specific purposes to be promoted or carried out by the Corporation, are as follows:

to deeply root students in Maine’s ecological and cultural landscapes, foster authentic real-world learning through mentorship and craft, and cultivate compassionate and resilient leaders prepared to engage in the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Section 4. Statute and Code. In the event that the Corporation is an authorized public charter school, the Corporation shall operate in accordance with Title 20-A, Chapter 112 of the Maine Revised Statutes.

Section 5. Non-discrimination. The Corporation shall not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or age in either the hiring and other employment practices of the learning center or in its admission policies for students. Further, the Corporation shall be open to all students in its authorized geographic area on a space available basis and shall not discriminate in its admission policies or practices. The Corporation shall conduct all of its activities in accordance with all applicable local, state, and federal anti- discrimination laws.

ARTICLE II Members

Section 1. Non-membership Corporation. The Corporation shall have no members. The Board of Directors shall have all powers and duties for the conduct of the activities of the Corporation.

ARTICLE III Board of Directors

Section 1. Number. The Board of Directors shall consist of no fewer than five and no more than twenty-one persons.

Section 2. Term. Directors shall be elected for two consecutive three year terms. Terms shall be staggered so that no more than 1/3 of the Board shall be up for election in any year, unless a vacancy(ies) needs to be filled.

Section 3. Powers. The Board of Directors shall have all powers and authority for the management of the business, property, and affairs of the Corporation, to do such lawful acts as it deems proper and appropriate to promote the objectives and purposes of the Corporation. The Board of Directors may, by general resolution, delegate to committees of its own number or to officers of the Corporation such powers as it may see fit for specified periods of time.

Section 4. Election. The initial Directors shall be appointed by the Incorporator at the first meeting of the Board of Directors. All other Directors shall be elected by the Board after meeting the requirements of the Board Approval Process, being nominated by existing Directors and voted on by a majority of the Board of Directors. Each new Director shall assume their Board position immediately upon their appointment by the Board or at such time as specified by the

Board.

Section 5. Resignation and Removal of a Director. A Director may resign by submitting their resignation in writing to the Chair of the Board of Directors. A Director or Officer may be removed if, in the sole discretion of the Board of Directors, such removal would be in the best interests of the Corporation. Said removal shall occur at any meeting of the Board of Directors, and upon a two-thirds (2/3) vote of those disinterested Directors present in person. The Director or Officer considered for removal shall be given at least five days written notice of the proposed removal, as well as an opportunity to be present and to be heard at said meeting. An Officer may be removed from only his or her Officer position, or from both the Officer position and the Board. Notwithstanding the foregoing, a Director and Officer shall be automatically removed if s/he is or has been adjudged mentally incompetent.

Section 6. Annual Meeting. An annual meeting of the Board of Directors for the election of Officers and such other business as may come before the meeting shall be held at a time and place set by the board of directors.

Section 7. Regular Meetings. In addition to the Annual Meeting, Regular meetings of the Board of Directors shall be held once a month at a date and time determined by the Board of Directors or at such other times as the Board may, from time to time, determine.

Section 8. Special Meetings. Special meetings of the Board of Directors for any purpose or purposes may be called at any time by the Chair or by a petition signed by a majority of the full Board of Directors.

Section 9. Notice. Notice of all meetings of the Board of Directors shall be sent at least ten (10) days previously thereto (except for Special Meetings, in which case at least two (2) days previously thereto) by written notice delivered by first class mail, fax, personal delivery, or electronic mail. It shall be the responsibility of each Director to provide a current electronic mail and regular mail address to the Corporation. Any Director may waive notice of any meeting. The attendance of a Director at any meeting shall constitute a waiver of notice of such meeting, except where a Director attends a meeting for the express purpose of objecting to the transaction of any business because the meeting is not lawfully called or convened. The business to be transacted at the meeting need not be specified in the notice or waiver of notice of such meeting, unless specifically required by law or these Bylaws In the event that the Corporation is an authorized public charter school, public notice shall be provided as specified in Title 1, Chapter 13, Subchapter 1 § 406 of Maine Revised Statutes, as amended.

Section 10. Meetings and Minutes. In the event that the Corporation is an authorized public charter school, all meetings and records of the Board of Directors shall be held in accordance with Maine's Freedom of Access statute Title 1 Chapter 13.

Section 11. Quorum. A majority of the full number of Directors shall constitute a quorum of the Board for the transaction of business. When a quorum is present, a majority of the Directors present may take any action on behalf of the Board, except to the extent that a larger number is required by law or by these By-laws. Every act of a majority of the Directors present at a meeting duly held at which a

quorum is present shall be regarded as the act of the Board.

Section 12. Vacancies. Any vacancy on the Board of Directors may be filled by the Board for the unexpired portion of the term. If any Director is appointed to fill a vacancy for an unexpired term, the unexpired portion of the term they are filling shall not count toward the three year term imposed by Article III, Section 2.

Section 13. Meeting Attendance. Directors are expected to attend all Board meetings. It shall be the duty of the Secretary of the Board to communicate with any Director after such Director's three unexcused, consecutive absences or five total absences in one year to ascertain the Director's interest in retaining Board membership. Failure to provide an adequate response may qualify as sufficient cause for removal from the Board of Directors.

Section 14. Teleconference Meetings: Members of the Board of Directors or a committee of the Board may participate in a meeting by means of a conference telephone or similar communication equipment. Participation in a meeting by these means constitutes presence in person at the meeting. Members of the Board of Directors, participating by teleconference shall be "with vote".

Section 15. Meeting Rules. Meetings of the Board of Directors shall be conducted in accordance with the Rules for Meetings, attached hereto and incorporated herein as Exhibit A. Amendments to the Rules for Meetings shall not be deemed amendments to the Bylaws under Article X. Any procedural issue not resolved by the attached Rules for Meetings may be resolved by a majority vote of the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE IV Committees

Section 1. Establishment. The Board of Directors may appoint such standing committees and/or ad hoc committees as it thinks necessary for the effective governing of the Corporation.

Section 2. Standing Committees. Each standing committee shall have a charge specific to its permitted activities and such charges shall be incorporated into the Corporation's policy manual. The function of any committee so established shall be fact-finding, deliberative, and advisory to the Board of Directors. Committees shall not have authority to take legislative or administrative actions, nor to adopt policies for the learning center.

Section 3. Ad Hoc Committees. Each ad hoc committee shall have a charge specific to its permitted activities and that charge shall include the date on which the committee is to present its final report to the Board of Directors and be dissolved. Members of Ad Hoc committees shall be drawn from those parents, community members, and staff of the learning center who indicate interest in serving on the Ad Hoc committee and from such others as may be deemed appropriate by the Board of Directors. Ad Hoc committees shall be made up of no less than three.

ARTICLE V Officers

Section 1. Titles. The Officers of the Corporation are a Chair, a Vice Chair, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. The Board of Directors may create such other officer positions as it thinks necessary. Each officer position shall have its duties and responsibilities specified and included in these By-laws. No Officer may hold more than one position at the same time.

Bylaws of Ecology Learning Center

Section 2. Election. The Officers shall be elected from among the Board of Directors at the annual meeting of the Directors and shall serve for one year and until their successors are elected and qualified.

Section 3. Duties. Officers shall have the duties and responsibilities customarily belonging to their office, including those that follow.

(a) The Chair shall be responsible, along with their fellow Directors, for the oversight of its business and affairs. They shall preside at all meetings of the Board. The Chair shall have full and equal vote as accorded to all Directors. The Chair may enter into and execute in the name of the Corporation contracts or other instruments that are authorized by the Board of Directors. The Chair may delegate, as needed, to any other officer any or all of the duties of the Chair. They shall have such other powers and duties as may be prescribed by the Board of Directors or by these By-laws.

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CERTIFICATION

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify that the above and foregoing Bylaws were duly adopted on 10.21.24 by the Ecology Learning Center at a regular meeting of the Board of Directors held on due notice and in compliance with its Articles of Incorporation at which time a quorum was present.

Tia Poulin, Secretary

Date: _____

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Rules for Meetings

Ecology Learning Center

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(a) The tone of the meeting will be informal and friendly.

(b) Anyone visiting a meeting at the discretion of the Board or committee will be introduced to everyone, and the group members to the visitor, with every attempt to include the visitor quickly.

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Rule 7: Decision Making

(a) All Directors will be given an opportunity to speak at least once and not more than twice on each Proposal.

(b) After a Proposal has been presented and thoroughly discussed, the President will ask if the Board is ready to vote on the Proposal. No one Director or a minority may block a decision.

(c) If the Board is not ready to vote, the President may call for a nonbinding simple straw poll (show of hands) and further discussion. As a result of the discussion, the President may suggest or request modifications and check again for agreement on whether to vote.

(d) Votes shall be by a show of hands, but if the Board agrees, votes can be by written ballot.

Rule 8: Ending the Meeting

(a) There will be time on the Agenda at the end of the meeting for the President to summarize the progress made at the meeting.

(b) The Minute Taker will summarize agreements made and the follow-up action steps agreed to by the Board, clarifying the tasks, the person(s) responsible, and the task time limits.

(c) The Directors will remark on their personal experience (meaning, learning, or impressions) during the meeting and make suggestions on what to continue doing and what to change to improve future meetings. The President and Facilitator will implement feasible ideas at the next meeting.

(d) When the Agenda is complete, or the time established for the end of the meeting is reached, the President will close the meeting. However, the meeting can continue after the established time limit if there is at least two-third majority agreement to extend the meeting for a specified time period.

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 (April Hughes).pdf

Public Charter School Governing Board
Member Information Sheet

Name of Public Charter School __Maine Arts Academy____

Name of Board Member _____

Email Address __a.hughes@hccame.org_____

Occupation _Public Health Non-Profit Program Manager_____

Please respond to the following questions

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

I am interested to serve on the governing board of Maine Arts Academy because I believe that public health and education are deeply intertwined. As a representative of Healthy Communities of the Capital Area (HCCA), I see an opportunity to bring a holistic health perspective to the board, focusing on fostering a supportive, health-promoting environment for students. The work HCCA does—tobacco and substance use prevention, encouraging healthy eating, active living, and improving food systems—aligns with the school's mission of nurturing students' artistic and academic potential. By promoting wellness, I hope to help students fully engage in their education, knowing that a healthy mind and body are fundamental to achieving academic and artistic excellence.

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

Students in Central Maine, often face unique challenges that require a comprehensive educational approach. Many are navigating a landscape where arts education may not always be prioritized or fully funded in traditional public schools, yet it remains crucial for their personal growth and future careers. In addition to fostering their artistic talents, these students also need strong support systems that promote physical, mental, and emotional well-being. As part of HCCA, I am acutely aware that students in this area may also encounter challenges such as food insecurity, substance use risks, and a lack of access to physical activity. Addressing these needs requires integrating health education into the curriculum and school culture, ensuring that students can thrive both academically and personally. By combining arts education with a focus on healthy living, we can empower students to succeed in all aspects of their lives.

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

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While I have not been an active member of a school board or committee, I have experience partnering with schools and policy committees around school policies and procedures focused on tobacco prevention and treatment, substance use prevention and treatment, and alternatives to suspensions. School districts I have supported in these initiatives in the past include The Augusta School Department, Maine Arts Academy, RSU 38, RSU 12, RSU 2, and MSAD 11.

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

As a professional deeply involved with Healthy Communities of the Capital Area (HCCA), I bring a wealth of experience in public health, community engagement, and youth-focused prevention initiatives. My expertise includes promoting tobacco and substance use prevention, advocating for healthy eating and active living, and improving local food systems—all of which are critical to creating a supportive environment for students. I also have experience collaborating with schools, municipalities, and other community organizations to implement health-related policies and programs, which will allow me to contribute meaningfully to the board's discussions on student wellness, school culture, and strategic planning. My ability to integrate public health into education can help Maine Arts Academy enhance student outcomes by fostering both academic and personal well-being.

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

As a public charter school board member, I understand that my primary responsibility will be to provide governance and oversight to ensure Maine Arts Academy fulfills its mission and maintains its financial and operational health. This includes helping to set strategic goals, ensuring compliance with state regulations, approving the budget, and monitoring academic performance. Additionally, I see my role as advocating for policies and practices that promote the well-being of students and staff. I will collaborate with fellow board members and the school administration to support an environment where students can thrive academically, artistically, and personally. Given my background in public health, I will also focus on promoting a healthy school environment, integrating wellness policies into the broader mission of the academy.

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Sign April Hughes
Date 9/24/2024

Please submit this form once complete to the MeAA Head of School or Board Chair.



Home Address 61 Winding Hill Rd.
City South China State Maine Zip 04358
Home Phone _____ Cell Phone 207-512-6932
Employer Healthy Communities of the Capital Area Title Program Manager

Education (Degrees):

- B.S. Health Science
- Master of Public Health (MPH)
- Doctor of Public Health (DrPH)- anticipated graduation date: March 2025
- Certified Prevention Specialist (PS-C)

Current Volunteer/Civic Involvement: Augusta Kiwanis

Awards, Honors, Notable Accomplishments:
Golden Key International Honor Society

References (from other Boards on which you have participated, if possible):

Name Heather King Phone: 207-620-0155
Name Patricia Welton Phone: 207-592-8762

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do you have any particular experience or interest in the arts or arts education? Explain.

Yes, I have both experience and a strong interest in the arts, particularly in how they can be used as tools for community engagement and youth development. Through my work with Healthy Communities of the Capital Area (HCCA), I have implemented several arts-based

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prevention strategies that creatively integrate health promotion with artistic expression. For example, I have organized Community Mattering StoryWalks and ArtWalks that incorporate messages around the physical and mental wellness of youth. These initiatives use the power of storytelling and visual arts to foster a sense of community, belonging, and well-being. Additionally, I have helped organize music-focused events such as Open Mics, which offer a platform for personal expression and connection, particularly for young people. These events not only nurture artistic talents but also serve as important outlets for mental health and self-expression.

This experience aligns well with Maine Arts Academy's focus on cultivating students' artistic potential while fostering their holistic well-being. I believe that by integrating arts-based prevention strategies into the school environment, we can create a more supportive, inclusive space for students to grow both personally and creatively.

2) Have you participated in any kind of formal board training? Explain
No, I have not participated in any formal board training.

3) What skills or expertise can you offer to enhance our mission and vision?
I can offer a unique blend of public health expertise and community-focused experience to help enhance Maine Arts Academy's mission of nurturing the next generation of leaders. Through my work with Healthy Communities of the Capital Area (HCCA), I have developed skills in creating supportive, health-promoting environments that foster both academic and personal growth. I can bring expertise in implementing initiatives focused on tobacco and substance use prevention, healthy eating, and active living—all critical components of a student's well-being and success.

By integrating health-focused policies and programs into the school's culture, I can help ensure that students have the physical and mental resources they need to excel academically and creatively. This holistic approach to education aligns with the academy's mission to develop leaders who contribute to Maine's cultural, economic, and social well-being. By promoting wellness, I hope to enhance students' capacity to not only thrive in their artistic endeavors but also become resilient, healthy, and engaged citizens who are well-equipped to shape the future of Maine.

4) What time and commitment are you willing to make to the board's work ?
I am fully committed to dedicating the time and energy needed to serve effectively on the board of Maine Arts Academy. I am prepared to attend all board meetings, actively participate in committee work, and contribute to discussions and decision-making processes that advance the school's mission. Beyond the formal meetings, I am also willing to engage with school staff, students, and the broader community to ensure that the board's goals align with the needs of the students and the school. Whether it's attending events, volunteering for school initiatives, or providing expertise for health and wellness programs, I am ready to contribute wherever needed.

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I understand that board service requires a consistent and long-term commitment, and I am eager to contribute my time to help shape the future of Maine Arts Academy.