

# 2022-23 Annual Monitoring Report

*Prepared for  
Ecology Learning Center*

November 2023



# the Ecology Learning Center

## Mission

The mission of the Ecology Learning Center is to deeply root students in Maine's ecological & cultural landscapes, foster authentic real-world learning through mentorship & craft, and cultivate compassionate and resilient leaders prepared to engage in the challenges of today & tomorrow.

## Vision

Our vision is to inspire high school students from Waldo County and beyond to roll up their sleeves and engage in their local communities through service learning and apprenticeships. Guided by the unifying theme of "ecology" (the student of the relations between organisms and their environment), students will enact and embody ecological principles by making meaningful connections between school and community. We will help students develop the knowledge, skills, and commitment to work collaboratively to address important local challenges. Students will take active roles in every aspect of their education, always with the support and guidance of teachers and local experts.

## Governing Board

Laura Graham, Chair	Beth Alma, Vice Chair
Chris Lewis, Treasurer	Carol McGovern, Secretary
Michael Shell	Randall Fox

## Leadership Team

Leza Packard, Head of School	Kayla Higgins, Dean of Students
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## School Profile

Year Opened	2020-21
Years in Operation	3
Grades Served	9-12
Number of Sending Districts	15
Enrollment*	102
Students on Waiting List*	0

\*On 10-1-22 (State Student Count Day)

## School Year 2022-23 Demographic Table

Grade Level Enrollment		
9th Grade	22	22%
10th Grade	25	25%
11th Grade	30	28%
12th Grade	25	25%
Gender		
Female	49	48%
Male	52	51%
Unspecified	1	<1%
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0
Asian	1	<1%
Black or African American	1	<1%
Hispanic/Latino	1	<1%
Pacific Islander	1	<1%
White	98	99%
Special Education		
Students with IEPs	22	22%
General Education Students	80	78%
Economically Disadvantaged		
Yes	38	37%
No	64	63%

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

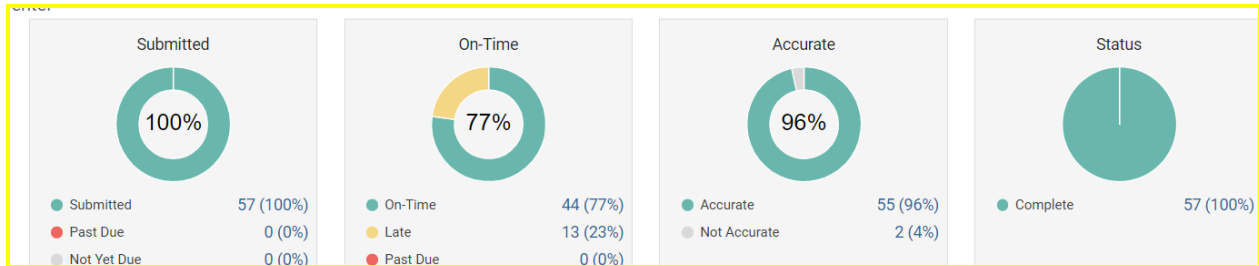
The Maine Charter School Commission is the authorizer of nine charter districts. Each charter district holds a contract with the Commission containing a Performance Framework of indicators and targets the district shall meet to continue operating in Maine. The charter districts are evaluated annually as required by state statute. Data are gathered through the Maine Department of Education, Charter Districts, and Site Visits, as applicable.

The Maine Charter School Commission has established a monitoring visit table for visit frequency and intensity. A copy of the Site Visit Manual can be found [HERE](#). Ecology Learning Center was not on cycle to have a Site Visit at the end of the 2022-23 school year. Charter districts that are scheduled for “Document Review Only” are required to submit the same documentation as schools that receive an in-person visit.

Key documents and other information reviewed to determine progress on the charter district’s performance framework and alignment with its mission are as follows:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School Calendar</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School Leader Evaluation Tool</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Current enrollment and demographics</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff Roster</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Current organizational chart</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Panorama school climate survey results</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Board Meeting Minutes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School’s self-assessment</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Board member meeting attendance</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Previous year’s monitoring report [as applicable]</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School’s strategic plan [as applicable]</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School’s reported performance framework results</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ESP Contract and/or other important MOUs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Copies of current recruitment materials</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Professional Development Calendar</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student enrollment application</li></ul>

Document is a major component of the Maine Charter School Commission's monitoring process, which happens throughout the year. Charter districts are required to submit reports and data for review. The table below summarizes the charter districts' report and data submission completion throughout the 2022-23 school year:



## 2022-23 NARRATIVE

As a result of the 2022-2023 monitoring process, the charter district is encouraged to consider the following:

**ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT:** In SY2023-24, Accuplacer results will be rated on the Performance Framework. Given that the current percentage of students meeting the goal is low, we recommend that the school develop specific strategies for increasing the academic achievement required of graduates.

**CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM:** Given the increase in chronic absenteeism from SY2021-22, we recommend that the school develop clear and specific goals and strategies to increase attendance.

In SY2022-23, the Ecology Learning Center was successful in the following areas of the Performance Framework:

- High School Graduation: The school held its first graduation and **100% of seniors graduated**, in addition to two juniors who graduated early;
- Postsecondary activities: The school reported that **100% of seniors** are involved in at least one postsecondary opportunity;
- Student Experience: On the Panorama survey, the school ranked in the 99% nationally when compared with like-school on students' satisfaction rate with school climate;
- Governing Board Meetings: The Governing Board meets regularly and surpassed the minimum required board meetings;
- A facility that supports learning;
- Student Persistence, **exceeding expectations** in the number of students that remain at the school throughout the school year and year-to-year; and

- **Passion Projects:** The school **exceeded expectations** on the customized sections of the Performance Framework, surpassing the goal of 95% participation with at least 75% of students earning an overall score of 80%-100% on their week-long winter Passion Project.

Additionally, the school identified several other areas of demonstrated strength in the SY2022-23 Self-Assessment Report, including:

- **Academics:** The school reported that “We further developed and refined our academic program this year, adding two dual enrollment college courses through which students received credit from UMaine Farmington (Environmental Studies and English). Every teacher met one-on-one with curriculum coordinator Korah Soll of Rural Aspirations, to review and revise their standards-based Scope & Sequences. We implemented Infinite Campus for the first time to track attendance and grades, and allow students and parents to view their progress throughout the year.” Additionally, “The school’s fall to fall NWEA MAP growth projection was strong, with 64% of students meeting projected RIT growth in Math and 63% of student meeting projected RIT growth in ELA. We exceeded our Custom Target goal, centered on a week-long winter Passion Project. 80% of our students earned an overall score of 80%-100% on the projects. The intended outcome was for students to explore and develop an independent interest that will prepare them for future education and employment opportunities. This was our third annual and largest Passion Project Expo, held at MOFGA with community members present including Representative Benjamin Hymes.”
- **Enrollment:** The school noted that “We grew from 77 students to 102, once again exceeding the original goal in our application which was 96 students at full capacity. Of the 102 students enrolled during the 2023 academic year, 23 had IEPs and 7 had 504 plans.”
- **First Graduating Class:** “We graduated our first ever senior class, with 24 out of 24 seniors and 2 juniors graduating early - a 100%+ graduation rate. This is an especially noteworthy accomplishment given that one third of this unique graduating class had been at risk of dropping out of school when they first entered the Ecology Learning Center, and half of the graduates had IEPs. The commencement ceremony took place at MOFGA's beautiful timber-framed Exhibition Hall, and included every student speaking before the audience of nearly 200 people as a collective student-centered keynote address. Four students received Honors recognition, and four High Honors. Additionally, the faculty nominated five students for unique mission-aligned awards: Environmental Leader, Community Leader, Hands-On Leader, Compassionate Leader, and Resilient Leader. Our

own string quartet of underclassmen played the processional and recessional.”

- Student, Family and Staff Experience: Although ELC did not meet the participation rates for families and staff, those that completed the survey were positive, placing the school in the exceeding expectations range, if they had met participation requirements.
- Staff Retention: “We have a high staff return rate, with 22 employees returning of the 24 who were offered positions. Our strategy of hiring elective course teachers in a full-time capacity, teaching their content area (Spanish language, Art, Music) part time and working as Ed Techs part time has helped greatly with staff retention and team cohesion.”

The Ecology Learning Center has demonstrated areas that require growth on the Performance Framework in the following areas:

- Teacher/Staff and Family Panorama Survey Participation Rates: Both stakeholder groups are in the “does not meet expectations” range because the school did not meet the participation requirements. However, the results are strong for the stakeholders that took the survey.
- Board Trainings: All school board members did not complete the required online training modules.
- Attendance: The school reported a chronic absenteeism rate of 49.48%.

Though not rated this year on the Performance Framework, the school noted that they want to see growth in the Accuplacer results. Specifically, “This was our first year conducting Accuplacer testing. The results were low, and we hope to improve these numbers in the future. 17 students took the test: 35% met the College Readiness indicator of 239 or above in reading and 53% met the College Readiness indicator of 226 or above in math.”

## PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK OUTCOMES

Exceeded Expectation	Met Expectation	Approached Expectation	Did Not Meet Expectation
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In the spring of 2023, the Maine Department of Education changed its state-wide assessment **from** the NWEA MAP Assessment **to** the Through-Year Assessment. As the assessment was new, the Commission asked schools to report the percentage of students assessed at each grade level, the percentage of students “at state expectation” and “above state expectation” on proficiency in both ELA and Math. Ratings would be developed once baselines were established.

Due to the Maine Department of Education’s delay in releasing data from the Spring administration of the Through-Year Assessment, there are no proficiency outcomes that can be reported at this time.

***An addendum to this report will be provided once the data are released and analyzed by school personnel and Commission staff.***

SECTION 1: STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT			
Criterion	Indicator	Target	Rating
1.1a	Student Academic Proficiency - MDOE Through-Year Assessment, <b>ELA</b>	Schools will report the percentage of students assessed at each grade level, and at the campus and district levels.  Schools will report the percentage of students “at state expectation” and “above state expectation” on proficiency.	This indicator will not be rated in SY22-23.  Ratings will be developed after the baseline is established.  <b>Percentage of Students Assessed:</b>  <b>Percentage of Students “As State Expectation”:</b>  <b>Percentage of Students “Above State Expectation”:</b>
1.1b	Student Academic Proficiency - MDOE Through-Year Assessment, <b>Math</b>	Schools will report the percentage of students assessed at each grade level, and at the campus and district levels.  Schools will report the percentage of students “at state expectation” and “above state expectation” on proficiency.	This indicator will not be rated in SY22-23.  Ratings will be developed after the baseline is established  <b>Percentage of Students Assessed:</b>  <b>Percentage of Students “As State Expectation”:</b>  <b>Percentage of Students “Above State Expectation”:</b>
1.5	High School Completion	4-year high school graduation rate (current cohort) Schools will meet annual goals*: <b>2023-86%</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectation</b> Exceeds 90%



		<p>2024-87% 2025-87% 2026-88% 2027-88% 2028-89% 2029-89% 2030-90%</p> <p><i>*The <a href="#">state of Maine goal is 90% graduation rate</a> by the end of 2030.</i></p> <p><a href="#">Maine Department of Education Graduation Rates by Year</a></p>	<p><b>School reported a 100% 4-Year Graduation Rate</b></p> <p><b>Meets Expectation</b> Meets annual target</p> <p><b>Approaching Expectation</b> Less than 5% below target</p> <p><b>Does Not Meet Expectation</b> 5% or more below target</p>
1.6a	Post-Secondary Readiness	<p><b>Beginning in SY 2023-2024</b>, school will meet goal of 75%-85% students meeting one of the following by the end of 12th grade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Accuplacer</a>: The College Readiness indicator with scores of 239 or above in reading and a 226 or above in math or;</li> <li>• <a href="#">SAT scores</a> of ERBW 530 or higher and 520 or higher in math or;</li> <li>• <a href="#">ASVAB</a> score of 31 or higher.</li> </ul> <p><i>Participation under 95% may result in an investigation from MCSC to determine potential interventions.</i></p> <p><b>Accuplacer:</b> <b>Reading: 35% of students met the goal</b> <b>Math: 53% of students met the bar</b> <b>SAT:</b> <b>EBRW: 25% of students met the goal</b> <b>Math: 12.5% of students met the bar</b> <b>ASVAB: 0% (1 student) met the bar</b></p>	In SY 2022-23, schools will report the data, but will not be rated.
1.6b	Post-Secondary Readiness/ Achievement Gaps	<p>Achievement gaps in proficiency between major subgroups* on the Accuplacer, SAT or ASVAB.</p> <p>The school will provide achievement data of major subgroups (English learner, special education, sex, economically disadvantaged, 504, ethnic and racial minorities).</p> <p><i>*To be reported, subgroups must have at least 5 students or 5% of the student population.</i></p> <p><b>Subgroups are all under 10 students, so will not be reported; except for male students, who are meeting expectations in all categories except Accuplacer reading.</b></p>	In SY 2022-23, schools will report the data, but will not be rated.
1.6c	Post-Secondary Readiness: Post-Secondary Activity	<p>At the end of their graduating year, 70%-80% of each schools' students will have successfully<sup>1</sup> participated in at least one post-secondary activity such as (and not limited to) college course, Advanced Placement course, certificate program, career technical coursework or internship.</p> <p><b>School reported that 100% of students are engaged in at least one post-secondary activity.</b></p>	<p><b>Exceeds Expectation</b> Exceeds 80%</p> <p><b>Meets Expectation</b> 70%-79.9%</p> <p><b>Approaching Expectation</b> 60%-69.9%</p> <p><b>Does Not Meet Expectation</b></p>

<sup>1</sup> Successfully is defined as passing, meeting appropriate standards, or other clearly defined measure of success.

			Fewer than 60%
1.6d	Post-Secondary Readiness: <a href="#">FAFSA</a>	Schools will report annual rates and school-supported opportunities for FAFSA support.	The Commission will monitor a charter school's ability to support students with FAFSA completion.  <b>School reports 16 students completed the FAFSA form</b>
<b>SECTION 2: SCHOOL CLIMATE AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT</b>			
2.1	State Compliance	The school operates in compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable federal and state laws and regulations regarding public Charter District Leaderships, including exclusionary practices.  <a href="#">MRSA 20-A Title 20-A, Chapter 112: Public Charter District Leaderships Individuals with Disabilities Education Act</a> (IDEA)	No rating is provided for <i>Criterion 2.1: State Compliance</i> . Site visit reports that include a section for this criterion identify specific concerns the school must address.
2.2	Family Engagement: <a href="#">Panorama School Climate Survey</a> -Family Results	Results from 3/3 required scales* on the Family Panorama School Climate Survey will be within the average range (50% or higher) when compared to like schools (%FRL, grade band, urban/rural). Participation must be a minimum of 35% in order to qualify. Participation under 35% will automatically result in a “does not meet standard.”  <i>*Required Scales: School Climate, Safety, and School Fit</i>  <b>ELC’s family participation was 30%. Results on the required scales are as follows:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>School Climate - In the 99th percentile nationally compared to like schools</b></li> <li>• <b>School Safety - In the 99th percentile nationally compared to like schools</b></li> <li>• <b>School Fit - In the 70th percentile nationally compared to like schools</b></li> </ul> <b>Results in 3 of 3 required scales are in the “Exceeds Expectation” range, but school “Does Not Meet” the target due to low family participation.</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectation</b> All 3 of the 3 required scales in the above average range for like schools
			<b>Meets Expectation</b> All 3 of the 3 required scales in the average range for like schools
			<b>Approaching Expectation</b> 2 of the 3 required scales in the average range for like schools
			<b>Does Not Meet Expectation</b> 0 or 1 of the 3 required scales in the average range for like schools or <b>participation rate is less than 35%</b>
2.3	School Climate: <a href="#">Panorama School Climate Survey</a> -Student Results	Results from 4/4 of the required scales* on the Student Panorama School Climate Survey will be within the average range (50% or higher) when compared to like schools (%RFL, grade band, urban/rural). Participation among eligible students must be a minimum of 75% in order to qualify. Participation under 75% will automatically result in a “does not meet standard.”  <i>*Required Scales: School Climate, Safety, Rigorous Expectations and Teacher-Student Relationships</i>  <b>ELC’s student participation rate was 77%. Results on the required scales are as follows:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>School Climate - In the 99th percentile nationally compared to like schools</b></li> </ul> <b>NOTE - Due to an issue with the setup of the spring 2023 Panorama survey, only results from the School Climate were available.</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectation</b> All 4 of the 4 required scales in the above average range for like schools
			<b>Meets Expectation</b> All 4 of the 4 required scales in the average range for like schools
			<b>Approaching Expectation</b> At least 3 of the 4 required scales in the average range for like schools
			<b>Does Not Meet Expectation</b> Fewer than 3 of the 4 required scales in the average range for like schools or participation rate is less than 75%

2.4	School Climate: <a href="#">Panorama School Climate Survey-Teacher/Staff Results</a>	Results from at least 4/4 of the required scales* on the Teacher/Staff Panorama School Climate Surveys will be within the average range (50% or higher) when compared to like schools (%RFL, grade band, urban/rural). Participation must be a minimum of 75% in order to qualify. Participation under 75% will automatically results in a “does not meet standard.”	<b>Exceeds Expectation</b> All 4 of the 4 required scales in the above average range for like schools
		<i>*Required Scales: School Climate, Leadership, Professional Learning and Feedback and Coaching</i>	<b>Meets Expectation</b> All 4 of the 4 required scales in the average range for like schools
		<b>ELC’s teacher/staff participation rate was 63%. Results on the required scales are as follows:</b>	<b>Approaching Expectation</b> At least 3 of the 4 required scales in the average range for like schools
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>School Climate - In the 93rd percentile nationally compared to like schools</b></li> <li>• <b>School Leadership - In the 80th percentile nationally compared to like schools</b></li> <li>• <b>Professional Learning - In the 67th percentile nationally compared to like schools</b></li> <li>• <b>Feedback and Coaching - In the 67th percentile nationally compared to like schools</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Results in 4 of 4 required scales are in the “Exceeds Expectation” range, but school “Does Not Meet” the target due to low family participation.</b></p>	<b>Does Not Meet Expectation</b> Fewer than 3 of the 4 required scales in the average range for like schools or <b>participation rate is less than 75%</b>
2.5	School Climate: Panorama Survey	Annually, the school will review its Panorama Education School Climate survey results and develop an action plan to address areas for continued improvement. Plan and outcome will be submitted to the Commission.	<b>Meets Expectation</b> School develops and implements plan
			<b>Approaching Expectation</b> School develops and partially implements the plan
			<b>Does Not Meet Expectation</b> School does not develop or does not implement plan

**SECTION 3: ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY**

3.1	Governing Board effectiveness	Legal and Fiduciary Responsibilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board of trustee members are active and engaged, fulfill their legal responsibilities and obligations, comply with the board’s bylaws, and always act in the best interests of the school community.</li> </ul> Talent strategy and accountability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Governing Board demonstrates appropriate oversight of the Charter District Leadership administration, financial health, progress towards meeting academic and other school goals, and alignment with the mission and other terms of the charter, without managing the day-to-day operations of the school. The board conducts appropriate oversight of the officers and leaders of the organization, including an annual evaluation of the leader and considers succession planning.</li> </ul> Culture of Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Governing Board has clear and well-understood systems for decision-making and communication processes; board of trustee’s meetings are designed to foster open, deliberate, and thorough discussions to facilitate and ensure public accountability.</li> </ul> Focus on Improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Governing Board engages in continuous and strategic improvement planning by setting, and</li> </ul>	<b>Low Risk:</b> Board has fulfilled contract obligations as charter contract holder in the State of Maine
			<b>Moderate Risk:</b> Board has demonstrated a lack of capacity to be a strong contracting partner and may have failed to fulfill some contract obligations as charter contract holder in the State of Maine. MCSC may develop a monitoring plan to ensure the solvency of the school

		regularly monitoring progress relative to, priorities and goals that are aligned with the school's mission, vision, and educational philosophy and the accountability cycles of the authorizer.	<b>High Risk:</b> Board has not fulfilled contract obligations as a charter contract holder in the State of Maine. MCSC may intervene with mitigation measures or other intervention protocols
3.2	Public Accountability: Transparent, responsive, and legally compliant Board operations	The Governing Board will hold a minimum of 6 meetings per school year <sup>2</sup> in accordance with approved bylaws and in accordance with the Freedom of Access Act ( <a href="#">FOAA</a> ).	<b>Meets Expectation</b> 6 or more meetings
			<b>Does Not Meet Expectation</b> 5 or fewer meetings
3.3	Public Accountability: Transparent, responsive, and legally compliant Board operations	Timely <sup>3</sup> publication of Board meeting agenda and minutes upon approval and submission to the Charter Commission, that thoroughly captures the discussion and decisions of the board.	<b>Meets Expectation</b> All minutes and agendas posted timely
			<b>Approaching Expectation</b> 1-2 items not posted timely
			<b>Does Not Meet Expectation</b> 3 or more not posted timely
3.4	Reporting Accuracy and Timeliness	80%-90% of reports are submitted on time and are accurate and complete.  <b>77% of required documents/reports were submitted on time with 100% accuracy</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectation</b> More than 90% of reports are submitted on time and are accurate and complete
			<b>Meets Expectation</b> 80%-89.9% of reports are submitted on time and are accurate and complete
			<b>Approaching Expectation</b> 70%-79.9% of reports are submitted on time and are accurate and complete
			<b>Does Not Meet Expectation</b> Fewer than 70% of reports are submitted on time and are accurate and complete
3.5	Board Training	Board members will engage in a baseline of annual training and development using the following guidelines. ( <a href="#">LINK</a> )  <i>2 out of the 5 Board Members did not complete the online training modules.</i>	<b>Exceeds Expectations</b> Board provides evidence of development opportunities, such as: an annual board retreat, third-party consultation for board training on identified growth areas, an annual self-governance evaluation process, etc.
			<b>Meets Expectations</b> 100% of required courses have been taken and evidence is

<sup>2</sup> A school year is July 1 - June 30

<sup>3</sup> Timely is defined as posting agenda a minimum of 5 business days before the meeting and for minutes, posting within 5 business days of approval.

			provided
			<b>Approaching Expectations</b> 80%-99.9% of required courses are taken and evidence is provided
			<b>Does Not Meet Expectations</b> Less than 80% of required courses have been completed
3.6	Facility meets Local and State requirements	The school certifies that its facility (or facilities) meets all local and state requirements for public school facilities, including current Certificate of Occupancy and a Plan for maintenance and capital improvements of school facilities consistent with 20-A M.R.S. §1001(2), 4001, 4502(5)(C); Maine DOE Rule Chapter 125.5.03 and 20-A M.R.S §6302, 6501: Maine DOE Rule Chapter 125.5.10 <a href="#">Public School Approval Requirements and Citation Chart</a>	<b>Exceeds Expectations</b> Charter District Leadership has obtained an environmentally friendly certification such as LEED
			<b>Meets Expectations</b> Certified as required and approved by the Board
			<b>Does Not Meet Expectations</b> Not certified as required
3.7	Facility supports Programming	The facility provides a safe, clean, and aesthetically pleasing campus environment that optimizes learning, teaching, and working for all students, faculty, and staff.	<b>Meets Expectation</b> Facility provides a campus environment that optimizes learning, teaching, and working that supports mission and key design element implementation.
			<b>Approaching Expectation</b> Facility partly, but not fully, provides a campus environment that optimizes learning, teaching and working that supports mission and key design element implementation.
			<b>Does Not Meet Expectation</b> Facility does not provide a campus environment that optimizes learning, teaching and working that supports mission and key design element implementation.
<b>SECTION 4: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND VIABILITY (Results will be available once the FY23 Financial Audit is received and outcomes will be reported once Commission staff and consultants have reviewed the information submitted.)</b>			
4.1a	Current Ratio (Near-Term Measures)	Current ratio is greater than or equal to 1.1. <i>Current assets divided by current liabilities.</i>	<b>Lower Risk</b> Greater than 1.5
			<b>Moderate Risk</b> 1.0-1.5
			<b>High Risk</b> Less than 1
4.1b	Unrestricted Days Cash on Hand (Near-Term Measures)	Unrestricted days cash will be at least 30 days. <i>Unrestricted cash divided by ([total expenses minus depreciation expense]/365)</i>	<b>Lower Risk</b> 60 or more days
			<b>Moderate Risk</b> 30-60 days

			<b>High Risk</b> Fewer than 30 days
4.1c	Enrollment Variance (Near-Term Measures)	Actual enrollment is within 5% of the enrollment projected in the approved budget.  <i>Actual Enrollment divided by Enrollment Projection in Charter District Leadership Board Approved Budget</i>	<b>Lower Risk</b> Actual within 2% of the projected enrollment
			<b>Moderate Risk</b> Variance is between 2 and 5%
			<b>High Risk</b> Variance is greater than 5% of the projected enrollment
4.1d	Financial Obligations Default (Near-Term Measures)	The school meets all debt and real estate lease obligations.  <i>Failure to make required lease, principal and interest payments on-time or to meet covenant terms.</i>	<b>Lower Risk</b> Not in default and not delinquent
			<b>Moderate Risk</b> In default and/or delinquent and has obtained waivers from lenders and/or lessors
			<b>High Risk</b> In default and/or delinquent
4.2a	Total Margin (Sustainability Measures)	The School's Aggregated Three-Year Total Margin is positive, and the most recent year Total Margin is positive.  <i>Net Surplus divided by Total Revenue</i>	<b>Lower Risk</b> Aggregated Three-Year Total Margin is at least 1.5% and the most recent year Total Margin is positive
			<b>Moderate Risk</b> Aggregated Two-Year Total Margin is at least 1.5%
			<b>High Risk</b> Aggregated Three-Year Total Margin is negative and/or the most recent year Total Margin is negative. Or the margin for the latest year is -10% or lower.
4.2b	Debt to asset ratio (Sustainability Measure)	The debt to asset ratio will be less than 0.9.  <i>Total Liabilities divided by Total Assets</i>	<b>Lower Risk</b> Less than 90%
			<b>Moderate Risk</b> 90 to 100%
			<b>High Risk</b> Greater than 100%
4.2c	Cash Flow (Sustainability Measure)	Charter District Leadership maintains a positive cumulative 2-year cash flow.  <i>Cash Flow = Net Annual Change in Unrestricted Cash. Cumulative Cash Flow is the sum of current and prior year Cash Flow</i>	<b>Lower Risk</b> A positive cumulative 2-year cash flow and positive cash flow in the most recent year.
			<b>Moderate Risk</b> A positive cumulative 2-year cash flow
			<b>High Risk</b> Does not have a positive

			cumulative 2-year cash flow and had negative cash flow in the most recent year.
4.2d	Financial Obligations Coverage Ratio (Sustainability Measure)	Charter District Leadership is able to pay current debt principal and interest and lease payments from the current year surplus.  <i>(Net Surplus + Depreciation + Interest + Lease Expense)/(Annual Principal + Interest + Lease Payments)</i>	<b>Lower Risk</b> Exceeds 1.1
			<b>Moderate Risk</b> Is 1.0 to 1.1
			<b>High Risk</b> Is less than 1.0
4.3	Financial Planning and Budgeting	Charter District Leadership publishes a 3-year annual financial plan that includes a 2-year annual budget and a 1-year projection for year 3 that is board approved.  The 3-year annual financial plan is due on August 31st.	<b>Meets Expectation</b> Charter District Leadership annually publishes a 3-year financial plan that includes a budget for the next 2-years and a 1-year projection for year 3.
			<b>Does Not Meet Expectations</b> Charter District Leadership has not published a current 3-year financial plan that includes a budget for the next 2-years and a 1-year projection for year 3.

**SECTION 5: FAITHFULNESS TO THE CHARTER AND THE LAW**

5.1	Mission and Key Design Implementation	<p>1.The school demonstrates its approved mission.</p> <p>2.The school implements the key design elements* in the approved charter and any subsequently approved amendments in a manner that serves all of its students.</p> <p>3.The Board and Administration share a common and consistent understanding of the school's mission and key design elements outlined in the charter.</p> <p><i>*Key Design Elements are aspects of the school, originally articulated in the charter application or in subsequent amendments, which make the school unique and distinct from other district or Charter Schools.</i></p>	<b>Meets Expectation</b> School is implementing the mission and design elements as outlined in the charter and amendments
			<b>Approaching Expectation</b> School is partially implementing the mission and design elements as outlined in the charter and amendments
			<b>Does Not Meet Expectation</b> School is not implementing the majority of the mission and design elements as outlined in the charter and amendments
5.2	Student Attendance	<p><u>Chronic absenteeism</u> rate</p> <p>Schools will have 10%-18% or fewer students classified as chronically absent<sup>4</sup> on the last day of school.</p> <p>Chronic absenteeism rates will be reported at both the campus and district levels.</p>	<b>Exceeds Expectation</b> Fewer than 10%
			<b>Meets Expectation</b> 10%-18%
			<b>Approaching Expectation</b> 17.9%-25%
			<b>Does Not Meet Expectation</b> Greater than 25%

<sup>4</sup> Chronically absent is defined as missing 10% or more of school days.

			<b>School reported 49.48% chronic absenteeism.</b>
5.3	Student Persistence - School Year	Persistence throughout the school year  85% or more of eligible <sup>5</sup> students enrolled on the last day of school will be the same students who were enrolled on State Student Count Day <sup>6</sup>	<b>Exceeds Expectation</b> More than 90%  <b>School reported 94.12% persistence throughout the school year.</b>
			<b>Meets Expectation</b> 85%-89.9%
			<b>Approaching Expectation</b> 75%-84.9%
			<b>Does Not Meet Expectation</b> Fewer than 75%
5.4	Student Persistence - Year-to-Year	Recurrent enrollment from one year to the next 85%-89.9% or more of eligible students enrolled on the last day of school will have completed an Intent to Reenroll form for the following SY by March 31 of current SY.	<b>Exceeds Expectation</b> Exceeds 90%  <b>School reported 98.57% recurrent enrollment from one year to the next.</b>
			<b>Meets Expectation</b> 85%-89.9%
			<b>Approaching Expectation</b> 75%-84.9%
			<b>Does Not Meet Expectation</b> Fewer than 75%
<b>SECTION 6: SCHOOL CUSTOMIZATION</b>			
6.1	Passion Projects	<p>The intended outcome of week-long winter Passion Projects is to guide students to explore and develop an independent interest that will prepare them for future education and employment opportunities. Students will gain skills in project planning, completion, and presentation. They will strengthen skills in organization, public speaking, and self-reflection.</p> <p>The goal meets the school's mission by immersing students in an "authentic real-world learning" project of their choice, seeking "mentorship," and identifying a need or challenge in their community.</p> <p>We will measure our goal using a rubric and narrative reflection. The rubric will provide quantitative data by measuring four categories (planning, process, product, presentation). The narrative reflection will provide qualitative data by asking students to write about the quality of their work, how they would re-do or revise their project, and what they learned about themselves throughout the Passion Project.</p>	<b>Exceeds Expectation</b> With a goal of 95%, at least 75% of students will earn an overall score of 80%-100% on their week-long winter Passion Project.
			<b>Meets Expectation</b> With a goal of 95%, at least 65% of students will earn an overall score of 80%-100% on their week-long winter Passion Project.
			<b>Approaching Expectation</b> With a goal of 95%, at least 55% of students will earn an overall score of 80%-100% on their week-long winter Passion Project.
			<b>Does Not Meet Expectation</b> With a goal of 95%, lower than 45% of students earn an overall score of 80%-100% on their week-long

<sup>5</sup> Student resident in the state of Maine

<sup>6</sup> Student Count Day is October 1



**MID-YEAR MEETING REPORT****2022-23 Mid-Year Meeting  
Ecology Learning Center**

March 28, 2023

On March 7, 2023, the Maine Charter School Commission staff completed a mid-year meeting in-person and via Zoom with Laura Graham, the Ecology Learning Center Governing Board Chairperson; Carol McGovern, Board Member/Secretary and Chair of the Governance Committee; Kayla Higgins, Dean of Students and Guidance Counselor; and Leza Packard, Head of School. Topics covered included academic proficiency and growth, student attendance, projected graduation rates, finances, student enrollment and recruitment, facilities, and the governing board.

**Recommendations****Finance**

- Please provide the details of loan compliance covenants and other restrictions including audit delivery deadlines and minimum free cash flow for debt service.

**Academic**

Ecology Learning Center's (ELC) SY 2021-22 end-of-year English Language Arts (ELA) NWEA Map Growth data was suppressed at the state level. We do not currently have information about how the school is performing relative to the state average in ELA. The school has 76.2% of students at or above state expectations in Math, which is slightly below the state average (81.3%).

The school's fall to fall NWEA MAP growth projection is strong, with 64% of students meeting projected RIT growth in Math and 63% of student meeting

projected RIT growth in ELA. The school is currently meeting expectations for NWEA Projected Growth on the Performance Framework.

MCSC staff noted that subgroup populations are making strong growth, with the exception of students whose families are low income. The school is interested in exploring this trend further.

The school attributes their strong student growth to the relationships formed between the teachers and students, which is possible due to the small size of the school. The staff prioritizes listening to the student perspective and taking time to meet their needs. The school is focused on each student having a portfolio which demonstrates their success throughout their time at ELC. Teachers at ELC make their own curriculum in alignment with a standards progression.

The school team praised the efforts of their teachers and their excitement about using lab-based instructional methods in math, science, and humanities. In addition to academics, the school places an emphasis on non-cognitive skill-building and supporting students to develop skills for postsecondary success.

This year will be ELC's first graduating class of seniors. The school leadership team is focused on post-secondary outcomes. Currently, they expect more than 50% of seniors to enroll in Community College. Nine seniors were accepted into a welding program at EMCC. 35% of students are enrolled in dual enrollment.

This year the school raised the expectation for graduation, moving the grade to pass a course from 60% to 70%.

## **Attendance**

In SY 2021-22, 22.4% of students were chronically absent, which is lower than the state average and approaching expectations on the Performance Framework. The school is currently reporting a chronic absenteeism rate of 33.67%, which is an increase from last year. The school attributes the increase in chronic absenteeism to a flexible mindset about attendance with some of their families, particularly those whose children were homeschooled before attending ELC. Approximately  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the student population at ELC has a background of homeschooling and parents who support "flexible learning". The school is reaching out to families to explain the importance of attendance and the legal ramifications of not sending students to school. Additionally, the school reports high levels of anxiety among students, especially post-COVID, that has increased chronic absenteeism.

## **Graduation**

This school year is ELC's first graduating class of seniors. The school expects 100% of seniors to graduate. The Head of School praised the work of the Dean of Students in working with the cohort of seniors who will graduate this year. She noted that many of the senior class were marked as "dropped out" when they enrolled at ELC and now each one will graduate in the spring.

## **Financial performance**

The school reports that "as of February 28, 2023, the bank balance is \$128,697.88. Many of our near term measures are low risk, including the current asset to liability ratio, financial obligations, and debt to asset ratio. Our cash on hand and cash flow has been high risk, and is now trending to moderate and lower risk. The enrollment variance, since we are such a small school, has been high (7% last year, 3% this year). These percentages are high due to our small school size, while overall our enrollment has indicated positive growth."

The school recently hired a new bookkeeper, in conjunction with the Finance Committee, who is performing well. The school's audit went well and was an improvement from last year, though the school would like the turnaround time from the auditor to be faster.

## **Student Enrollment and Recruitment**

ELC has 103 students currently enrolled. The school reports that as of 2/14/23, 57 students have enrolled with 11 of these enrollments being new students. The school projects 106 total students for next year with an average of 26 students per grade, as almost all students are returning. The school aims for 26 new 9th graders to enroll, as well as 2-5 more 10th and 11th graders. Because the 11th grade class is currently at 30 students, they do not plan to enroll any new 12th graders. The recruitment and outreach plans include:

- 2/15, 3/2, 3/30, 4/5 Open Houses
- Troy Howard Middle School visit
- Newspaper public notices
- Student Government and Student Leadership Outreach.

## **Facilities**

The school is currently utilizing two facilities located across the street from each other, in addition to two greenhouse spaces. The school has no current plans to expand the facility or enrollment further, though continue to be considered that the space is small for their needs.

## Governing Board

The Board Chair reports strong board involvement. The board noted that “Seven engaged and committed board members serve on the ELC’s Board, including our newest board member who joined in January, 2023. In pursuit of the best and most diverse talent, the Board publishes ELC board service opportunities with VolunteerMatch and VolunteerMe and our application for board membership is on our website. Our long-term goal continues to be to grow to 13 members. With the commission’s help, the Board once again hired a facilitator for its annual retreat. The focus of the retreat was on building a shared understanding of Board work, behavior, and ethics with the goal of creating more alignment between the parts of our organization and developing a firmer foundation upon which to build the next stage of our Strategic Plan. At our Retreat, the Board adopted the following top priorities for the current year:

### Governance

- Improve communications across the Board (including Chair/ED practices)
- Roles and responsibilities review: Board, Chair, ED, Staff
- Add 3-5 board members
- Board professional development: Finance 101; Charter Commission requirements and resources
- Review HR policies and procedures/legal review

### Finance/Fundraising

- Review financial model and identify any misinformation concerning role of Public Charter Schools
- Fundraising tools and practices: identify what is needed today
- Develop three-year facilities plan with financial projections

### Strategy/Impact

- Evaluate org status on Performance Standards
- Initiate Strategic Planning project

The Board is diligently working through each of these priorities with some specifics identified below:

- Finance/Fundraising priorities – We now have an agreement for the purchase of the adjacent lot and we have the benefit of a good landlord/tenant relationship for the property across the street that houses the balance of our classrooms. Upon reaching our full capacity enrollment goal and adding the necessary facility requirements to accommodate this growth, the Board aims to adopt a formal three-year facilities plan and corresponding three-year financial forecast.

Furthermore, with the help of a capacity-building grant from the Unity Foundation, the Board is undergoing professional Development Training to improve its capacity for fundraising and financial support.

- Strategy/Impact. We continue to look for ways to evaluate and document the effectiveness (and the challenges) of our school's progress toward its mission. The Academic Excellence Committee has worked with our Director to document and present clear data to the board regarding specific mission goals. A mid-year presentation was delivered to the Board in January. Each month a faculty member is invited to the board meeting to present a "mission moment", describing individual impacts from our mission in action. With respect to our Strategic Plan, we are designing a process by which our community and other stakeholders are invited into our strategic planning process. Our educational philosophy is place-based, getting the points of view and learning from our neighbors is essential to our long-term success. As we follow this process, we will have an updated Strategic Plan that will guide us in the coming years – including a fresh look at our facilities needs at that time coupled with the likelihood of a capital campaign to fund facilities improvements and upgrades.

Our greatest challenges (on the Board) continue to be the successful recruitment of qualified board members and ensuring a solid financial foundation for the school."

The board commented that they recently completed the mid-year evaluation for the Head of School. The Board is interested in incorporating the educational philosophy of the school into the accountability framework. The board noted that they are confident in the performance of the school. They have a tight financial model due to the small size of the school, and are conscious of supporting the Head of School and teachers so as to minimize work overload within that small budget.

The board and school commented on the positive relationship with RSU 3, specifically the mutual benefit of their transportation partnership.

The board members noted that they are excited about the customized section of the Performance Framework and optimistic about the Panorama survey results.

The Board Chair is monitoring the board training requirement. Currently the board has a 50% participation rate.

Finally, the board and school team members noted that their first graduation is June 8th. The graduation will be student-led and faculty-guided.