

Maine Learning Innovations

Minutes for a Meeting of the Board of Directors held February 27, 2024

Pursuant to email and public website notices, a virtual meeting of the Board of Maine Learning Innovations was convened on Zoom at 3:00 PM, February 27th, 2024. Board members attending were Donna Pelletier, Stacey Blanchard, Nicholas “Nick” Gannon, Tina Meserve, and Susan Walters. A quorum was present.

Attending from MEVA were Melinda Browne, Donald Fournier, Christina O’Grady, Jillian Dearborn, Jennifer Hight, Stephanie Emery, and Chelsea Osgood.

Opening Items.

Approval of Minutes. Nick motioned to approve the minutes of the Maine Virtual Academy (MEVA) Governing Board Business Meetings of January 23rd, 2023. Tina seconded. All in favor, so moved.

Finance Report

FY25 ED279 Review:

EPS Funding Comparison

	FY24	FY25	YOY
MS Count	87	93	
HS Count	351	349	
School Count	438	442	
Adjusted State Contribution	\$4,903,230.90	\$5,061,615.56	+3.23%

Dr. Browne reported that the Maine Department of Education issued a revised FY25 ED 279 document to account for a minor funding adjustment.

Jennifer Hight shared a year over year comparison via screenshare on what the funding breakdown looked like. Gifted & Talented (GT) figures are based on actual expenditures, the economically disadvantaged population decreased slightly, which also dropped funding a little bit.

Dr. Browne suggested that we consider the +3% year over year EPS funding for projection purposes, as we had previously used a 4% inflator. The proposed 7th & 8th grade level seat caps (65 students per middle school grade level) would help make figures more predictable and manageable for enrollment. Staffing was more limited at the middle school grade levels, compared to the robust support and staffing in grades 9-12.

Donna was concerned about the grade level cap due to MEVA being a public school, open to all students. Donna suggested that we discuss this further and think about evaluating staff needs to support middle school better.

Dr. Browne reported that it was still early in our re-registration process right now, but we will have a better evaluation later for grade level enrollment numbers.

FY25 (Two-Year) Annual Budget/Three-Year Financial Plan Discussion:

- Workshop #1: Feb. 7th, 2:00 pm.
- Workshop #2: March 7th, 2:00 pm.
- Workshop #3: TBA.
- The goal is to have the FY25 (two-Year) Annual Budget/ Three-Year Financial Plan prepared for governing board approval by the May 21st meeting.

Jennifer said the focus of the meeting was surrounding staffing needs. During the March 7th meeting, we will have a preliminary budget for discussion. Then another planning meeting prior to final approval.

Dr. Browne said that the FY 24 Q3 financials were due to the Commission by May 15th, and the board would approve the financials at their April meeting.

Administration. Dr. Melinda Browne presented the Head of School Report.

SY-2023/2024 Progress:

- MEVA is making plans for the Spring 2024 state assessment window, which applies to grades 7, 8 & 10 for reading and math, and grades 8 & 11 for science. We plan to begin in-person testing, at eight group locations, the week of May 13th when all platforms are available, allowing us to consolidate operations as much as possible.
- We are planning our six-week Summer 2024 session for middle and high school.
- MEVA was recently awarded a Literacy Grant of \$24,662.79, with dates Feb. 16th – Sept. 30th, 2024.

New Literacy Grant Approved:

- Action steps: (1) Teachers disaggregate their students' literacy data to determine what instructional areas are needed. (2) Teachers work on their virtual course design and evidence-based instructional practices to develop lessons/units that are aligned to literacy standards and encourage students to understand their own progress and goals. (3) Teachers can share their experiences and data at regular team meetings.
- Evidence: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/dddm_pg_092909.pdf Evidence-based instructional practices: https://www.nwea.org/resource-center/white-paper/69846/The-transformative-ten-instructional-strategies-learned-from-high-growth-schools_NWEA_white-paper.pdf/
- MEVA's literacy grant builds our data-driven instructional culture, which is sustained by regular student assessments, evidence-based instructional strategies, and teacher-team meetings. We expect to make the grant activity part of the long-term academic plan for our school. Funding from other sources will be used to sustain the momentum, providing professional learning as needed.
- We will share our implementation plan with all our departments.

Donna asked if the eight locations were statewide? Dr. Browne said, yes, we were reserving sites in Presque Isle, Houlton, Brewer/Bangor area, Machias, Farmington, Augusta, Lewiston/Auburn area, and Saco. Dr. Browne reported that we also ran a travel proctor team, which managed individualized testing at local libraries where needed.

Dr. Browne stated in conjunction with the literacy grant outline: The MDOE did a mass allocation to all school districts. The districts had to submit a grant application that detailed the proposed usage of funds. MEVA had completed this process. The timeline of the grant was very tight. MEVA's operational plan ensured that grant funds would be used within the period.

Donna expressed her congratulations for the literacy grant award.

Mid-Year Check In Meeting with the Maine Charter School Commission:

- Donna, Stacey, Don, and Dr. Browne attended the mid-year check-In meeting with the Maine Charter School Commission (MCSC) on February 12th.
- The purpose of the meeting was to gauge our school's overall progress towards meeting the criteria on the MCSC performance framework.
- During SY-2023/2024, MEVA presents robust performance across the framework. We are proactively addressing our needs with respect to the new state assessments in reading and math.
- The MCSC will create/distribute a report within the next few weeks.

Donna and Dr. Browne agreed it was a good and positive meeting.

Dr. Browne said that the Commission suggested adjusting the charter contract to align with what MEVA was doing regarding teleworking. The board will also review the telework policy/procedure at the March board meeting.

SY-2022/2023 ESSA Dashboard:

- MEVA announced the SY-2022/2023 ESSA Dashboard in our March newsletter, sent to stakeholders on February 26th, 2024.
- As an ESEA compliance, MEVA posted the ESSA Dashboard link on our websites, along with an explanation of our results.
- We shared the link with MEVA's stakeholders via our March 2024 newsletter that was sent yesterday.
- We factor in the Spring 2023 data, including state assessment results, to our annual ESEA Comprehensive Needs Assessment, which is underway.
- Our Monday afternoon process improvement meetings provide an excellent venue for sharing data and developing plans: <https://www.mainevirtualacademy.org/essaesserlau-elresources/meva-process-improvement-meeting-materials>

Dr. Browne reported that MEVA looked good overall on the ESSA Dashboard. Math needed work on the State Assessment results, but faculty are focusing on facilitating improved outcomes.

Governance.

Dr. Browne presented changes to the Restraint and Seclusion policy, which needed board approval.

Purpose of Re-approval:

- Required changes were made to the "Chapter 33 Rule Governing Restraint & Seclusion" to be in alignment with statute.
- Schools are asked to examine their current policies/practice in the 23-24 SY to ensure it is in alignment with both [20-A MRSA 4014 statute](#) and the [Chapter 33 rule](#)
- The MDOE will provide more resources to schools soon. Not all resources have been updated as of 2/21/24 via their website. We will keep an eye on updates as they come. *Reference; <https://www.maine.gov/doe/schoolsupports/climate/restraintandseclusion>*
- Preliminary adjustments have been made to ensure school policy is in alignment in the meantime.

Items added to current school policy.

- Staff training requirements – *Expanded*.
- Free movement of the diaphragm or chest to not restrict airways and interrupt normal breathing or speech – *Added*.

How Are Staff Trained?

- Vector Solutions Training (formerly known as “*Safe Schools*.” Is MEVA’s compliance training platform.
- Vector updates compliance training regularly to align with MDOE policy, state statutes and requirements. (*See snapshot to the left*)
- *Live in person* training is being considered for the upcoming school year. MEVA has conducted these types of training live every few years.

Nick motioned to approve the updated Restraint and Seclusion policy. Stacey seconded. All in favor, so moved.

Resignations and Retirements.

Meagan Coelho, Special Education Teacher, accepted another in-state position that focused on curriculum development.

Donna congratulated Meagan on her new position and thanked her for all the work she did at MEVA!

Nominations of Professional Staff.

MEVA hired Jennifer Knowles, Special Education Teacher (SY 2024/2025), who worked for MEVA during the 2015-2016 school year, including summer 2016. Jennifer had left MEVA to pursue administration.

Donna welcomed Jennifer back to MEVA.

Public Discussion.

The next governing board meeting is on Tuesday, March 19th, at 3:00 pm, via Zoom.

Adjournment. Donna motioned, and moved, to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 3:36 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephanie Emery and Dr. Melinda Browne
Secretary pro tempore