

Maine Learning Innovations

Minutes for a Meeting of the Board of Directors held March 19, 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, Tina Meserve, and Susan Walters. Nicholas “Nick” Gannon was excused. A quorum was present.

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

Opening Items.

Approval of Minutes. Tina motioned to approve the minutes of the Maine Virtual Academy (MEVA) Governing Board Business Meetings of February 27th, 2024. Stacey seconded. All in favor, so moved.

Finance Report. Jennifer Hight presented the Finance Report.

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

- MEVA is awaiting federal grant award information.
- We plan to host a third finance workshop once we have those details, so that we may complete the draft FY25 two-year budget and three-year plan.

Jennifer and Dr. Browne were currently working on the federal relief funds performance report due on April 12th.

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

SY23/24 Progress:

- MEVA’s post 10/1 retention rate is 97%, which exceeds expectations, and presents an improvement over the prior year. MEVA has made incremental gains in this area by providing high-level support to our students and their families.
- We are focusing on understanding students’ proficiency development by analyzing data and curriculum maps.
- Our ongoing-working plan concisely is facilitating/analyzing both criterion and norm referenced assessments, reviewing/updating course-instructional maps, optimizing students’ course placements, and bolstering instructional strategies/interventions (e.g., MTSS).

Donna and Dr. Browne discussed the eighth (8th) grade students’ exposure to algebra. MEVA is improving this area and plans to assess students for algebra proficiency, using iReady as a tool.

SY23/24 Progress: Mid-Year Check In Report:

- The Maine Charter School Commission (MCSC) sent a draft mid-year check in report that will receive final approval at their April business meeting.
- “The biggest area of concern is the proficiency results from the state assessments.”
- “Based on FY24 QTR2 numbers, the school’s finances are **low risk** in all financial categories on the Performance Framework and the school reports no unexpected expenses to date.”
- “Recommendation(s): Look into the possibility of investing excess funds.”

Dr. Browne reported that MEVA was working hard on the students’ proficiency (area of concern), as measured by the Maine Through Year, criterion-referenced, assessment.

Donna asked Tina for feedback regarding if public schools can invest excess funds, in accordance with the MCSC recommendation. Tina asserted that investments cannot be outside of a local bank. Dr. Browne suggested a high interest savings account as a possibility. Tina conjectured that the MCSC was referring to investment vehicles like certificates of deposit (CDs), which were not connected to the stock market. Dr. Browne suggested investment vehicles that offered fixed rates of return and were minimal risk, but we will have to review this with Jennifer Hight. Dr. Browne said investment earnings may generate enough income to fund summer programming over the long term.

Charter Contract Renewal Timeline:

May 24, 2024,	Preliminary Performance Framework Outcomes and School Self-Assessment via Epicenter.
Week of June 3, 2024,	End of Year Visit with Board and Admin.
June 30, 2024,	MCSC issues Year 4 Performance Report and Renewal Guidance to school.
July 12, 2024,	End-of-Year Data due to MCSC via Epicenter.
July 15, 2024,	MCSC issues Renewal Application to the school via Epicenter.
August 30, 2024,	Renewal Application and Amendment Requests for substantial changes due to MCSC via Epicenter.
Week of September 2, 2024,	Renewal Site Visit with Focus Groups (Students, Families, Staff, Board and Admin) and Classroom Observations.
Week of September 16, 2024,	Review Team submits Renewal Site Visit Report to Commission.
September 26, 2024, 1:00 – 2:30 pm	Public Hearing at MEVA Suite.
October 8, 2024,	Renewal Vote and, if necessary, separate amendment vote(s) at MCSC Business Meeting (39 days from 8/30).
No later than June 30, 2025,	Contract review and signing.

Dr. Browne reported that MEVA’s renewal decision was to be made by the MCSC on October 8th,2024, though the school performance and other committees would decide their recommendations beforehand. Dr. Browne encouraged the board to add the September 26th, 1:00 pm, public hearing to their calendars, The MCSC also plans to conduct focus groups, in early September, via Zoom with selected administration, teachers, parents and students.

Donna asked Dr. Browne if this was a similar process to the last renewal. Dr. Browne confirmed that it was a similar process. Donna asked Dr. Browne if we had a good showing last time at the hearing? Dr. Browne said yes, it was a good turnout with staff, parents, and students.

SY24/25 Re-Registration and New Enrollment:

- MEVA’s SY24/25 re-registration is a success, with a 95% response rate, and 91% return rate, to date.

- We have enrolled eleven (13) new students for SY24/25 to date, distributed as follows: grade 7 (1), grade 8 (1), grade 9 (4), grade 10 (4), grade 11 (2), grade 12 (1). There are fifty-one (51) additional students who have committed to completing their application. We have twenty-eight (28) new applications in March. We are slightly ahead of last year (approx. +7%).
- According to our registrar, we are getting more referrals from schools and current/past MEVA families.
- MEVA is on track to attain our 450-460 student target by October 1st, 2024.

Governance.

Telework Policy and Procedure, and Employee Handbook:

MEVA is formalizing our remote work methodology by adding the telework policy to our Employee Handbook.

Maine Virtual Academy (MEVA) is a leader in workplace innovation and environmental stewardship. To that end, MEVA has developed a Telework Policy and Procedure to provide the framework and expectations for the following:

- Supporting employee wellbeing and work/life balance,
- Recruitment and retention of a skilled workforce,
- Supporting the needs of students and their families,
- Protecting our climate through lower greenhouse gas emissions and a reduced carbon footprint,
- Protecting MEVA's operational and fiscal interests.

Donna asked Dr. Browne, if this policy/procedure was modeled after the UMaine system and State of Maine? Dr. Browne replied with, yes. Tina observed the policy required an ergonomic workspace. Tina asked if the staff were not set up ergonomically, as outlined, will they be covered under the insurance? Donna said that workman's compensation does their own assessments regardless. Stacey asked if faculty can anyone request an ergonomic evaluation? Dr. Browne said yes, and we have had staff request it.

Jillian reported that once she received the new guidelines from MEMIC (insurance company), MEVA will have to follow their guidelines. Tina asked if the board should have the insurance company review first before we vote? Stacey asked for clarity about the base location verbiage. Tina and Stacey discussed, and the intention was that MEVA considered the Ballard Center the base of operations, and employees' homes were still be considered as the alternative. This was the common policy among businesses. Tina said her personal company home base was the office, even though she worked virtually; she was not covered if injury happened at her residence.

Donna asked Dr. Browne to share the information provided by the insurance company once it was received. If changes were needed, we could revise.

Telework Policy and Procedure.

Tina motioned to approve the Telework Policy and Procedure. *(With the understanding that when the insurance company reviews this and if they come back with different information, revisions to the policy or procedure will be required.)* Susan seconded, all in favor, so moved.

Updated Employee Handbook. *Purpose is to add the telework policy, and a short blurb about state testing expectations.* Tina motioned to approve the updated Employee Handbook. Susan seconded, all in favor, so moved.

Public Discussion.

Donna shared that she was traveling out of state during April and May. The board discussed potentially not having a meeting in April. If members wanted a meeting, then we will need to find another date/time. Donna said that Tina will be out of the area as well. Susan stated that she is fine with not having an April meeting. Dr Browne said that the only item needing addressing was the FY24 Quarter-three financials, as these were due to the MCSC by May 15th, the upcoming deadline. Dr. Browne committed to asking for an extension. All agree that the next board meeting was scheduled for May 21st.

Donna shared updates with members: the board self-assessment was planned for the beginning of April. These were due mid-April to Donna, and she will process them over her vacation. She also mentioned that Dr. Browne's evaluation needed to be completed thereafter, during May.

Adjournment. Donna motioned, and moved, to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 3:46 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephanie Emery and Dr. Melinda Browne
Secretary pro tempore