

Maine Learning Innovations

Minutes for a Meeting of the Board of Directors held December 21, 2021

Pursuant to email and public website notices, a virtual meeting of the Board of Maine Learning Innovations was convened on Zoom at 2:00 PM, December 21, 2021. Board members attending were Donna Pelletier, Nicholas “Nick” Gannon, Ed LeBlanc, Peter Mills, and Stacey Blanchard. Amy Carlisle was excused.

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

Attending from Stride were Todd McIntire, and Wei Wang.

Attending from Wipfli LLP were Pat Nicholas and Danielle Tibbetts.

Minutes. Nick motioned to approve minutes for the November 16th, 2021, governing board meeting. Peter seconded, all in favor, so moved.

Finance. Danielle Tibbetts (Wipfli) presented the FY21 Audit. Danielle said that MEVA had a ‘clean’ opinion, which was the best that you could get. Danielle noted that grants receivables increased significantly because of the billing. Overall, MEVA had funds available to cover three to six (3-6) months of expenses, a strong financial position if something arises. Danielle made the point that there was a footnote on the report that addressed risk/uncertainty due to the pandemic (COVID-19). For FY21, Wipfli also conducted a ‘Single Audit’ because federal grants were \$750K-plus. The Single Audit looked more in detail at internal controls and compliance. There were no findings as a result of the process. Danielle informed the board that the Form 990 was on extension. However, audit reports were planned to finalize in advance of the MDOE December 30th filing date. Danielle thanked the MEVA team for their extra work and patience during the audit.

Nick motioned to approve the FY21 Audit. Ed seconded, all in favor, so moved.

Jennifer Hight presented a review of FY22 monthly finances. Jennifer reported that the MEVA team was having weekly check-in meetings with Stride. Jennifer said that Stride was requesting detailed reports of all transaction accounts, including payroll and benefits. Jennifer questioned the rationale of providing this information to a third-party vendor. Peter asked, why do they need it? What was the purpose? The Stride request extended beyond revenue sources required for their billing. Todd said that he would obtain more details regarding the request from Stride Finance Dept. Donna asked Todd to submit a written request to MEVA, on what financial info they were looking for. MEVA planned to discuss Stride’s request with internal legal to determine what data to disclose to a third party.

Jennifer reported that MEVA was utilizing the new state grant management system (Grants4ME). The grant billings were completed through the first quarter of FY22. Jennifer said that ESSER I was used to pay summer school salaries. ESSER II was tapped to cover the overflow and out of the ordinary software purchases.

Donna noted that the Maine Charter School Commission (MCSC) was asking schools to explore three to five (3-5) year strategic financial projections. Donna asked the question to the board, does MEVA want to do the work ourselves or contract it out? Jennifer made the point that she could do a multi-year financial projection by applying an inflator to MEVA’s revenues and expenses. Peter suggested looking at a budget that eliminated federal relief funds to determine sustainability. Donna said that the MCSC was aware of the reduction in fees with Stride; MEVA was hiring staff and reviewing salaries comparable to Kennebec County. Peter suggested that recurring discussions about computer and staffing projections be

documented in the minutes. Stacey said that three to five (3-5) year computer replacements were typical in business, education world. Stacey suggested reevaluating the school's computer needs every year to make sure we were on track. Jennifer committed to preparing three-year projections in conjunction with developing the FY23 budget.

Administration. Melinda presented SY2021/2022 Progress:

- Classroom Teachers received Course Feedback targeted towards their Instructional Maps/Standards Alignments and Student Access.
- Teachers collaborated with their departments on two consecutive Monday afternoons (Dec. 13th & 20th) to process the feedback and collaborate on course formats, aiming for consistency and accessibility.
- Teachers shared practices such as embedding Brightspace-created instructional videos within their lessons and providing students with clarifying narratives on their course homepages.
- Teachers provided comment and critique of the course feedback process via survey, which requested their recommendations for needed professional development.
- We plan to present an overview to the faculty at the next Process Improvement meeting on Wednesday, December 22nd.

Melinda said that the MCSC's SY2020/2021 Annual Monitoring Report had two recommendations:

FINANCIAL PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY

- The governing board needs to develop a process for long-term strategic and financial planning so that it is a consistent agenda item at board meetings and focuses the board's attention to long-term sustainability and excellence.
- School and Board should review how FY21 COVID relief funding was spent and be sure that FY22 budgets do not rely on a repeat of this funding.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND GROWTH

- Given the impact of the pandemic and lower academic growth than in previous years, the charter organization should develop clear and specific strategies for closing learning gaps to ensure students are prepared for rigorous academic work.

Melinda outlined MEVA SY2021/2022 Strategies to address students' academic needs:

- Administer the NWEA Math, Reading, and Language Usage three times during the school year, fall, winter, and spring, to at least 95% of students in grades 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11.
- Provide teachers with Instructional Coaching on (1) utilizing NWEA data to inform targeted instruction, (2) aligning courses to the Maine Learning Results, (3) improving students' access to their courses by providing consistent formats, and (4) linking career readiness activities/objectives.
- Develop Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs) for all students, taking advantage of the new Infinite Campus module.
- Promote Career Readiness through courses and work-study aimed at increasing students' motivation and retention.
- Continue expanding the Summer Session by adding course offerings in every academic discipline.

Stacey Blanchard asked if we could include clubs into summer programming to continue virtual socialization.

Melinda gave a Mid-Year Enrollment Update:

- MEVA has retained 96% of students who were enrolled on October 1st, excluding students who graduated or moved out of state.
- MEVA post October 1st retention is slightly better than the prior year by approximately 1%.

- MEVA has added seventeen (17) new students who will begin in January, on schedule to complete their Winter NWEAs, which begin on the 11th.
- Grade 7 (4), 8 (1), 9 (3), 10 (7), and 11 (1).

Melinda introduced the new special education support staff, Lisa Bernardini, Ed Tech II, and Jason Iannone, Ed Tech III.

Governance. Melinda presented the ARP (ESSER III) Continuity of Education Plan Review, and ARP (ESSER III) Use of Funds Plan Review, for compliance purposes. Both plans were posted on the MEVA websites. There were no recommended changes to the Plans.

Melinda reported that Donna and the MEVA team had reviewed the required MDOE policies for completeness and adjusted the presentation document posted on the MEVA websites. Donna asked the board to review five (5) policies per meeting for the purposes of approving them again during the coming year (2022). Melinda committed to sending the policies and reminders in advance starting in January 2022.

The board acknowledged the MEVA Lau Plan posted on the school's websites. The LAU Plan addressed English Learner Identification, Language Use Survey and Parent Letter, and was named after the Lau v. Nichols U.S. Supreme Court Decision of 1974, the landmark case that confirmed the rights of English learners to equitable education in English, Lau Plans are a requirement established by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) (Title VI, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq.).

The board reviewed the proposed policy addition, Prohibited Use of Recording Devices. Stacey requested that MEVA clarify how students/parents can get recordings; perhaps embed instructions into Parent Student Handbook (PSHB). Stacey suggested clarifying recording locations such as field trip scenarios and informing parents not to post pictures of other students. Using students' full names in teachers' recordings needed addressing. Donna asked for adjustments to be made, bringing the draft policy back next month for discussion. As a result, the motion to approve the updated SY2021/2022 PSHB was postponed to next board meeting (January 18th).

Adjournment. Donna wished everyone, Happy Holidays. The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephanie Emery and Melinda Browne
Secretary pro tempore