

Maine Learning Innovations

Minutes for a Meeting of the Board of Directors held October 17, 2023

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, October 17th, 2023. 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, Mehry Mohammadi, Stephanie Emery, Chelsea Osgood, and Jennifer Hight.

Attending from Stride were Todd McIntire and Tom Travia.

Opening Items.

Approval of Minutes. Tina motioned to approve the minutes of the Maine Virtual Academy (MEVA) Governing Board Business Meetings of September 19th, 2023. Nick seconded. All in favor, so moved.

Finance Report.

Jennifer Hight sent the financial documents to the board ahead of the board meeting for review. Financials were based on information prior to the audit. Since the audit concluded yesterday, it was identified that slight adjustments were needed to the prior figures. Donna confirmed that the balance sheet and profit & loss documents were sent to the board. She inquired for clarity, if the \$415K fund balance was correct? Jennifer answered that this amount was correct and was what they projected earlier this year. Jennifer reported that the audit was conducted virtually over the course of the last two weeks. Jillian submitted the last of the auditor’s requests yesterday. Jennifer said that MEVA should have the full audit report soon. Donna asked if anyone had additional questions regarding the audit and/or FY23 Q4 financials? There were no additional responses from the board. Dr. Browne stated that the FY24 Q1 financial report was due to the commission by November 15th.

Dr. Browne shared proposed, updated verbiage to the check signatory procedure. Jillian and Jennifer had provided feedback, which was incorporated. There was discussion surrounding whether the treasurer was available to address bill pay/check approvals within a timely manner. Jennifer was concerned based off historical experience with prior members and timeliness of paying bills. Jennifer asked if there could be a contingency plan in place if Nick happened to be unavailable. Donna made the point that currently only one (1) email approval was needed, and Dr. Browne’s signature would consist of the second approval. Nick said he was quick to respond via email and was available to sign anything needed a couple times a week if needed. Donna asked for examples of invoices that go above \$10k, outside the approved list indicated by the procedure. Jennifer noted at times credit cards can exceed \$10k in charges during certain times of the year, such as when beginning of the school year supplies are ordered. Donna preferred to keep the plan in place to have the treasurer maintain the check approval role.

Proposed Check Signatory Procedure Update.

Accounting and payroll programs are only accessible to administration and are password protected.

Assets are inventoried, cash withdrawals require Head of School signature. Any check over \$10,000 requires both an email approval by the Treasurer attached to the invoice, and CEO (Head of School) signature on the check, unless it is a check for routine payments, including Stride, Inc., health benefits, insurance premiums, rent, and pension contributions to MainePERS. In these cases, the CEO (Head of School) signature is sufficient. All electronic fund transfers in excess of \$10,000 for payment of invoices require email approval by the Treasurer, unless payments are for routine payments listed above.

Nick motioned to approve the check signatory procedure update. Tina seconded. All in favor, so moved.

Administration. Dr. Browne presented the Heas of School Report.

SY-2022/2023 Annual Monitoring Report.

- A draft SY-2022/2023 Annual Monitoring Report was distributed to the board.
- The Maine Charter School Commission (MCSC) will review the report at their November 14th Business Meeting.
- MEVA is meeting or partially meeting nearly all our performance measures.
- Our area of growth is in board training completion.
- Schoolwide, we are focusing on continuing to improve during SY-2023/2024.

SY-2023/2024 Initiative – Advisory Groups.

- MEVA offers weekly grade-level advisory groups to build our virtual learning community, supporting a constructive school climate.

Christina O’Grady reported on advisory groups:

- Our focus this year is on relationship building and student engagement.
- SY-2023/2024 Advisory attendance to date is strongly encouraged.
- We want teachers to actively engage with students during advisory.
- If a student does not attend at least one advisory session over the course of four weeks, we ask teachers to please reach out.
- Individual Learning Plan (ILP) Completion as of October 13th.

Grade	N value	Total # ILPs completed	% ILPs Completed
7	26	20	77%
8	66	53	80%
9	77	53	69%
10	76	46	61%
11	109	88	81%
12	84	55	65%
Schoolwide	438	315	72%

Dr. Browne prioritized MEVA’s Individual Learning Plan (ILP) Initiative.

- We are working towards our goal of one-hundred percent (100%) ILP completion across all grade levels.
- We need this information to provide our students with a meaningful virtual education experience that encourages their interests and aspirations.
- Thank you very much to the faculty for their efforts!

Donna asked if students earned credit for attending advisory sessions. Dr. Browne and Christina answered, yes, in for the high school grade levels. Students earned one-quarter (.25) credit for the year, and this was tied to assignment-completion requirements. As a result, students in total earned up to one (1) full elective credit over four (4) years.

SY-2023/2024 Initiative – Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

- Comprehensive data analysis is a significant endeavor within MEVA’s MTSS process.
- As you know, the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) initiated a new Through Year Assessment (MTY) during the Spring ‘23. The MTY requires both fall and spring participation for MEVA grades 7, 8, & 10. The MTY spring assessment contains content-specific questions that measure students’ proficiency with respect to state expectations.
- MEVA continues to administer NWEA MAP to maintain our longitudinal growth and achievement data. We are currently examining correlations/correspondences between the NWEA MAP and MTY instruments.

Christina O’Grady presented findings from, Comparing NWEA to Maine Through Year: Is There a Correlation?

- Introduction: The purpose of my research was to determine if there is a correlation between the NWEA MAP growth RIT scores from Spring 2023 and the proficiency score a student received on the Spring 2023 Maine Through Year Assessment.
- Methods: There were 170 students who completed the MTY reading and math in grades 7, 8, and 10. Of the 170 students, 165 had a spring 2023 NWEA Math score and 163 had a spring 2023 NWEA reading score. I compared the MTY Proficiency with the NWEA MAP RIT Score. I converted the categorical (well below, below, at, and above) variables to a numerical (1, 2, 3, and 4) variable allowing me to run a statistical analysis.
- Data Analysis: *t*-Test, A two-sample assuming equal variance *t*-test to analyze the potential statistical significance. Pearson, A Pearson coefficient analysis to analyze the relationship between the data.
- ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS: 0.646 Pearson, Showing a strong correlation between the NWEA Reading RIT and MTY; 0.490 Pearson, Showing a moderate correlation between the NWEA Math RIT and MTY.
- Discussion, Trends Observed: Students with a NWEA Reading score of 226 or higher were at or above state expectations 88.75% of the time (71 out of 80). Students with a NWEA Math score of 236 or higher were at or above state expectations 56.25% of the time (36 out of 64). Students in the 61st percentile of higher in Reading were at or above state expectations 89% of the time (66 out of 74). Students in the 61st percentile of higher in Math were at or above state expectations 56.25% of the time (36 out of 64).
- Reading: If a student is in the 61st percentile or higher they are more likely to score as proficient on the MTY.
- Math: The data is less clear. This needs further exploration to determine the cause for the discrepancy.
- Case Studies. Student A was a 10th grade student with an IEP. Student B was a 7th grade student in the spring. Student C was an 8th grade student in the spring.

Dr. Browne shared preliminary projections on the Spring ‘23 Maine Through Year (MTY) results, since state data was not officially/fully released yet.

MEVA’s Projected Spring ‘23 MTY (MEA) Results

MTY (MEA) Percentage per Level - Mathematics Projected without Mid-Year Enrollment				
Below (Statewide)	At (MEVA)	At (Statewide)	Above (MEVA)	Above (Statewide)
36%	35%	35%	3%	8%
39%	17%	33%	4%	7%
32%	32%	35%	3%	7%
31%	28%	38%	3%	10%
MTY (MEA) Percentage per Level - Reading Projected without Mid-Year Enrollment				
Below (Statewide)	At (MEVA)	At (Statewide)	Above (MEVA)	Above (Statewide)
25%	39%	50%	18%	13%
24%	43%	53%	6%	12%
25%	51%	49%	16%	12%
24%	46%	50%	13%	14%

MEVA Spring 2023 MTY (MEA) Comparison to State and Spring 2019:

	MEVA	State	Gap
Spring 2023			
Math	31%	48%	-17%
Reading	59%	64%	-5%
Spring 2019			
Math	16%	36%	-10%
English	45%	56%	-11%
2023 vs. 2019	Improvement		
Math	+15%		
English	+14%		

MTY (MEA) Data – Strengths, Opportunities, and Next Steps:

- Students’ proficiency in math and reading is a huge priority. Our Spring 2023 projections are below the state average percentages for ‘at’ plus ‘above’ in both MEVA math 31% (versus ME 48%) and MEVA reading 59% (versus ME 64%).
- MEVA students have higher proficiency in reading than they do in math.
- However, MEVA made significant gains since Spring 2019: +15% math and +14% English.
- Our next steps are to review students’ course placements (in progress) and to execute the MTSS process, as planned.
- We will continue refining instructional maps with respect to the state’s expected standards and provide teacher-professional development to aid their understanding.

Donna noted that it would be interesting to see second year data on the MTY results (Spring '24). Stephanie Emery shared Fall '23 MTY participation percentages thus far. The fall assessment closed on October 27th. Test sites had closed/completed and individual testing was still being conducted by the travel team. So far participation has been strong.

MTY (MEA) Fall Assessment Update – 10/16/2023:

- 7th – 21 Students Tested out of 24 = 87.5% Tested
- 8th – 56 Students Tested out of 68 = 82.35% Tested
- HS – 64 Students Tested out of 77 possible to test = 83% have Tested
- Total Overall – of 169 Students who need to test = 83.4% Students have tested so far.
- 1 HS Opt-Out
- Shout out to the Houlton test site: 100% of their students attended and tested as scheduled.
- Strong testing site attendance this fall overall at all sites.
- A total of 32 Students needed to be moved to the “Travel Proctor Task Force” to be scheduled to test individually.
- Of the 32, 4 students still need to be scheduled and 6 tested as of Friday.

Dr. Browne shared the results of the Thriving Pulse Survey which was distributed to all school staff by Stride.

Fall '23 Faculty Thriving Pulse Check Survey Results on a seven (7)-point scale, with forty-five (45) respondents:

- Collaboration – 6.1. Value being communicated between colleagues while promoting the development of new skills and intentionally measured outcomes.
- Leadership – 5.7. Healthy, two-way communication from key stakeholders that deepens a sense of personal trust and sense of personal value.
- Agency – 5.7. Capacity-building opportunities to develop new knowledge, create healthy workflows, and innovative solutions.
- Growth – 5.6. Being supported to grow personally and professionally.
- Overall – 5.8.

The two highest scored questions were:

- My work is valued by my co-workers – 6.2.
- My colleagues and I collaborate to work towards measured outcomes – 6.1.

The two lowest scored questions were:

- I am deeply satisfied with my job – 5.5.
- I can see clear opportunities for professional growth and greater impact across the organization – 5.2.

Dr. Browne observed survey results were consistent with the previous year, but faculty's perceptions of their work-life balance had slightly improved. Participation was greater than last fall.

SY-2023/2024 Faculty Survey Schedule:

- Thriving Pulse Check survey (Stride) – September 25th, February 12th, and May 13th.
- Panorama School Climate Survey (Maine Charter School Commission) – April.
- We email alerts/reminders.

Dr. Browne presented a graph that showed how MEVA’s in-school-year retention had improved over multiple years:

School Year	% of students enrolled on Oct.1 st still enrolled on the last day of school
2015-2016	66%
2016-2017	73%
2017-2018	80%
2018-2019	86%
2019-2020	87%
2020-2021	90%
2021-2022	90%
2022-2023	96%

MEVA’s SY-2023/2024 First Month Retention Data:

- Pre-October 1st, we had ten (10) first month withdrawals for SY-2023/2024, compared to seventeen (17) the previous school year, during the same period.
- MEVA’s Year Over Year (YOY) Improvement is **forty-one (+41%)**.
- One (1) student was continuing and nine (9) were brand new.
- Comprehensive onboarding and early outreach, especially with respect to technology and socialization, make a huge difference in our ability to retain students and families, as they transition to virtual education.

October 1st, 2023, Count:

Grade	Grand Total
7	26
8	67
9	76
10	76
11	109
12	88
Grand Total	442

Specia/General Education Breakdown:

Grade	General Education	Special Education	Total
7	17	9	26
8	51	16	67
9	51	25	76
10	59	17	76
11	84	25	109
12	67	21	88
Grand Total	329	113	442

Susan inquired about the high special education enrollment percentage, which was twenty-six percent (26%) for MEVA, compared to state average. Susan asked for more clarity surrounding how we evaluate students.

Lena Vitagliano noted that students coming in are already on active IEP's and some came in with expired IEP's.

Dr. Browne committed to presenting the breakdown of students' identifications at the next board meeting. The majority were coming in with Other Health Impairment (OHI), Specific Learning Disability (SLD), and Autism.

Governance.

Dr. Browne noted the focus of the next Independent Third-Party Evaluation study revolved around students' experience and retention within the first six weeks of school.

Nick motioned to approve the annual Independent Third-Party Evaluation proposal. Susan seconded. All in favor, so moved.

Dr. Browne said Clark Insurance will provide their proposal on the Employee Health Insurance Plan ahead of the November board meeting. Clark Insurance was likely making a presentation at the next board meeting as well. Donna asked about the renewal date. Dr. Browne stated that the renewal date was January 1st, 2024.

Public Discussion. Dr. Browne noted the next board meeting was on November 21st, which was close to the Thanksgiving holiday. An update to the MEVA Employee Handbook was planned.

Donna congratulated the MEVA faculty for a positive annual monitoring review this past year!

Adjournment. Nick motioned to adjourn. Tina seconded. All in favor, so moved. The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephanie Emery and Dr. Melinda Browne
Secretary pro tempore