

## Maine Learning Innovations

Minutes for a Meeting of the Board of Directors held September 20, 2022

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, September 20th, 2022. Board members attending were Donna Pelletier, Nicholas “Nick” Gannon, Stacey Blanchard, Amy Carlisle, and Peter Mills. A quorum was present.

Attending from MEVA were Melinda Browne, Donald Fournier, Christina O’Grady, Stephanie Emery, Lena Vitagliano, and Jillian Dearborn.

Attending from Stride were Todd McIntire and Tom Travia.

Attending from other organizations were Dr. Mary Madden and Tina Meserve (board member candidate).

### Opening Items.

**Approval of Minutes.** Nick motioned to approve the minutes of the Maine Virtual Academy (MEVA) Governing Board Business Meeting of July 19<sup>th</sup>, and August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Stacey seconded. All in favor, so moved.

**Election of Maine Learning Innovations Directors.** Nick motioned to approve the slate of Maine Learning Innovations Directors: Donna Pelletier, Nicholas “Nick” Gannon, Stacey Blanchard, Amy Carlisle, and Peter Mills, with new candidate Tina Meserve. Amy seconded. All in favor, so moved.

Amy motioned to approve the slate of Maine Learning Innovations Officers: Donna Pelletier, President; Nicholas “Nick” Gannon, Treasurer; and Peter Mills, Secretary. Nick seconded. All in favor, so moved.

**Independent Third-Party Evaluation.** Dr. Mary Madden presented her Independent Third-Party Evaluation Report.

Highlights of the report:

- Enrollment staff regarded as highly supportive and responsive.
- Top methods of how people discovered MEVA, included advertisements, online searches, and other parent referrals.
- Why MEVA? Parents stated that the public option, strong success rate, strong academics, innovation, inclusion, and supportive staff, were factors in their decision to enroll their child.
- Why Re-enroll? Parents stated that the child’s desire, strong curriculum, supportive staff, and student’s improved mental/emotional health, were drivers in their decision to re-enroll.

New Enrollment Positives:

Ease of New Enrollment – parents rated 4.6 out of 5 indicating very satisfied.

- Majority said next steps are “very clear.”
- Strong staff support and assistance.
- Tech issues rare.

Ease of Re-Enrollment - 75% of parents found enrollment processes “very easy.”

- 56% of parents found next steps “very clear.”
- Strong support staff.

New Enrollment Challenges:

- Parents mentioned that obtaining enrollment-required documents, such as birth certificates, and proof of residency documents, was challenging.
- Uploading documents and knowing if they had completed the process were cited as hurdles in the process. (However, in response to the challenges, parents stated that when faced with these issues, enrollment staff immediately were able to support them and resolve the problems.)

Re-Enrollment Challenges:

- 42% of parents stated the process was “fairly clear” or “unclear.”
- Emailed instructions and actual processes were confusing and inconsistent.
- Some technical challenges. (Dr. Madden did state that after reviewing the school’s re-enrollment communications that the information was clear and consistent with the process. She stated that it was hard to determine if the challenges were due to the users’ technology, or the users’ lack of referring to the school’s information and communications, which were already provided.)

Recommendations from Dr. Madden:

- Communicate/reinforce the availability of staff, to parents, in being able to help resolve technical or user challenges.
- Provide parents with a mailed (via post) checklist of steps for both enrollment and re-enrollment, in accordance with parent feedback.
- Encourage parents to reach out to enrollment support staff if document uploading is challenging.
- Ensure a match between instructions and online process.
- Provide a survey link to parents upon completion of their enrollment process to check that modifications have been resolved.
- For a future third-party evaluation gather new student input regarding the onboarding experience and settling in.

Donna noted that MEVA and Stride would work together to implement Dr. Madden’s recommendations.

Stacey motioned to approve the Independent Third-Party Evaluation Report. Nick seconded. All in favor, so moved.

**Finance Report.**

**Quarter Four (Q4) Report and FY23 Budget** –Jennifer Hight was unable to attend the meeting, but did not have any updates, other than audit preparation.

**Check Signatory.** Nick motioned to approve the recommended check signatory policy: 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 Board Chair or 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 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

an email approval by the Board Chair or Treasurer, unless payments are for routine payments listed above. Amy seconded. All in favor, so moved.

**FY22 Audit.** Dr. Browne mentioned that Danielle Tibbetts (with Wipfli, the auditing firm) had dates set for the first week of October to conduct the FY22 Audit. FY22 Financials were due to the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) and Maine Charter School Commission (MCSC) on December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The auditors typically presented their reports at the December board meeting.

**Administration.** Dr. Melinda Browne presented the Head of School Report, which focused on enrollment.

**New Enrollment Data:**

- MEVA had enrolled 198 new students since August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022.
- New Students are coming from the following sources:
  - Maine Public School – 73%;
  - Home Instruction – 16%.
  - Maine Public Charter School – 4%.
  - Maine Private School – 4%;
  - Out-of-State – 4%.
- The typical new MEVA student is coming from another public school.

New student enrollments since August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022, are evenly distributed across grade levels, including special education students (SE).

- Grade 7 – 32 students (3 SE);
- Grade 8 – 33 students (13 SE);
- Grade 9 – 28 students (9 SE);
- Grade 10 – 32 students (7 SE);
- Grade 11 – 36 students (2 SE);
- Grade 12 – 37 students (3 SE).
- Total – 198 students (37 SE).

**Current Student Count – 9/18:**

- Grade 7 – 32 (3 SE);
- Grade 8 – 58 (22 SE);
- Grade 9 – 55 (16 SE);
- Grade 10 – 87 (20 SE);
- Grade 11 – 113 (21 SE);
- Grade 12 – 98 (12 SE);
- Total – 443 (94 SE).
- The SE Identification Rate is 21%.

**Economic Status Forms:**

- The State of Maine uses the student's Free/Reduced Lunch status to determine if a student is "economically disadvantaged."
- MEVA has a process to tackle this annually. The MDOE expects 100% of the forms to be collected regardless of qualification.
- Through Stride Enrollment support, new Economic Status Forms are distributed to families at the beginning of the fiscal school year (July 1<sup>st</sup>). This collection effort happens throughout summer until we reach mid-August.

- Then in mid-August through September, Operations, the Registrar and School Office Supports, tackle direct outreach efforts at the school level for any outstanding forms needing to be collected. These are then reported by Operations in conjunction with the October 1<sup>st</sup> Count date.

Donna cited the importance of having accurate family economic data for the MDOE to calculate MEVA's state subsidy and grant allocations.

Pre-Oct. 1<sup>st</sup> Retention:

- 13 non-graduating students withdrew between August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022, and yesterday.
- Last year, during the same period, 43 non-graduating students withdrew.
- Retention efforts are working.
- Expanded office staff is a factor in our outreach efforts.
- We are obtaining critical information sooner.
- Teachers often hear about students' plans before anyone else.
- Winback efforts make a huge difference. We are reminding faculty at weekly Process Improvement meetings to report struggling students.

Student First Check-In Data – Survey 2 (administered by Stride in September 2022):

How satisfied are you currently with your overall MEVA experience?

- Schoolwide Satisfaction: 73.1%.
- Special Education Satisfaction: 73.7%.
- YOY Schoolwide Satisfaction Increase: +10.9%.
- YOY Special Education Satisfaction Increase: +12.8%.
- Response Rate: 24.2%.
- Areas of need: New HS students.
- Areas of strength: New MS students. Returning HS students.

Withdrawal Reasons since July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022:

Data obtained from withdrawal surveys:

1. Student not motivated to complete work in this environment (56%).
2. Spot opened at preferred school (14%).
3. Lack of socialization (12%).
4. Moving out of area served by the school (7%).
5. Too much time commitment for the Learning Coach (4%).
6. Other reasons, pace, health, attendance, courses, and staff (11%).

SY2022/2023 Clubs & Academic Support that addressed students' academic motivation and encouraged their socialization.

Clubs:

- Tuesday – Anime & Debate.
- Thursday – Gaming.
- Friday – Creative Writing & Prodigy.

Academic Support:

- Small Groups & Supported Study Hall for MS Students.
- Daily Help Desk & Supported Study Hall for HS students.

SY2022/2023 Revised Assessment Calendar, in accordance with MDOE updated plan:

NWEA – Grades 7, 8, 9, 10, & 11, *Growth*:

NWEA (Fall) - October 4, 5, & 6, 2022 (Makeup Day - October 7, 2022).

NWEA (Winter) - January 10, 11, & 12, 2023 (Makeup Day - January 13, 2023).

NWEA (Spring) - May 2, 3, & 4, 2023 (Makeup Day - May 5, 2023).

ACCUPLACER Testing (Grade 12) - On a rolling basis every Wednesday at 3:00pm starting August 31, 2022.

In-Person MEA Science (Grades 8 & 11) - May 22-26, 2023.

In-Person MEA Reading and Math (Grades 7, 8 & 10) – TBA (May).

Donna discussed the changes with respect to additional in-person testing; did MEVA have room in the FY23 Budget for the associated expenses? Dr. Browne projected expenses would increase, but there was already a line item to cover them.

## **Governance.**

### **MEVA MDOE Required Policies Review.**

Nick motioned to group MEVA MDOE Required Policies a-f.

- a. Motion to approve IKE Promotion, Retention and Acceleration of Students.
- b. Motion to approve IKF Graduation Requirements.
- c. Motion to approve ILA Student Assessment/Local Assessment System.
- d. Motion to approve ILD Student Submission to Surveys, Analyses, or Evaluations.
- e. Motion to approve IMBB Exemption from Required Instruction.
- f. Motion to approve JEA Compulsory Student Attendance.

Stacey seconded. All in favor, so moved.

Nick motioned to approve MEVA MDOE Required Policies a-f. Tina seconded. All in favor, so moved.

**Board Training Platform Update.** Donna reported that the board had access to the training on Epicenter, and they took less than an hour each to complete. Donna received an update from the Maine Charter School Commission (MCSC) on who had signed in and had not signed in. The MCSC kept track of the board training completions. Donna requested that board members please sign in to complete the trainings. Dr. Browne pointed out that the board trainings were included in MEVA's new MCSC Performance Framework as of June 2022. Dr. Browne committed to sending out the latest framework and highlighting the board-related items.

**FY23 Board Goals.** Donna pulled together a draft for the Board. Donna read through the goals to the board.

1<sup>st</sup> Goal: Donna said that she created the goal regarding board member active attendance and participation. Tina suggested adding a measure to be able to compare at the end of the year. Dr. Browne recommended focusing the measure on how many meetings had a quorum. Donna said that an expectation of ten (10) out of twelve (12) meetings having a quorum was reasonable goal. Dr. Browne informed the board that the MCSC only expected a minimum of six (6) meetings per year, so MEVA would still be well ahead at ten (10) out of twelve (12) meetings as a measurable goal. Amy said that rather than putting a number on the attendance, the goal is to have enough attendance to have a quorum to be able to do business. Dr. Browne committed to making the board requested adjustments on the goals document and redistributing them to board members. Donna stated that the purpose of this goal was to increase board

participation and attendance for meetings and evaluations or assessments. Stacey mentioned that it would be nice if board collaboration and communication about meeting attendance was improved.

2<sup>nd</sup> Goal: Board goal was a goal from the MCSC.

3<sup>rd</sup> Goal: May 2023- evaluation of facilities due to lease expiration in June. Covid changed the dynamic of the use of the space.

Recommended MEVA Board Goals for SY 2022-2023 (with suggested changes):

1. Individual Board members will support increased student achievement by improving commitment to perform proper responsibilities by June 2023, as measured by having a quorum at governing board meetings and participating in required evaluations.
2. The Board will maintain fiscal accountability and develop a three (3) year annual financial plan that includes a two (2) year annual budget and a one (1) year projection for year three (3) that is board approved by May 2023.
3. To provide an environment that maximizes learning for all staff and students, the board will evaluate the facility needs by May 2023.

Nick motioned to approve the FY 23 Board Goals. Stacey seconded. All in favor, so moved.

**Board Member Resignation.** Donna informed the board that Ed Leblanc had resigned, as he was unable to continue to give time. Donna thanked Ed for all the work he did from the beginning and recognized that Ed was very committed to MEVA. Amy noted that we were very grateful for his service.

**Public Discussion.** None.

**Adjournment.** Nick motioned to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 4:34 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephanie Emery and Melinda Browne  
Secretary pro tempore