

Maine Learning Innovations

Minutes for a Meeting of the Board of Directors held July 18, 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, July 18th, 2023. Board members attending were Donna Pelletier, Stacey Blanchard, Nicholas “Nick” Gannon, and Tina Meserve. Amy Carlisle and Peter Mills were excused. A quorum was present.

Attending from MEVA were Melinda Browne, Donald Fournier, Mehry Mohammadi, Jillian Dearborn, Stephanie Emery, Lena Vitagliano, and Jennifer Hight.

Attending from Stride were Todd McIntire, and Tom Travia.

Opening Items.

Approval of Minutes. Nick motioned to approve the minutes of the Maine Virtual Academy (MEVA) Governing Board Business Meetings of June 20th, 2023. Tina seconded. All in favor, so moved.

Finance Report. Jennifer Hight reported that the board workshop took place last week (July 12th) to discuss the three-year plan. The plan was due by August 31st to the Maine Charter School Commission (MCSC). Jennifer was working on filling out all the workbook tabs and committed to sending out the draft form soon. Her goal was to have it completed by Friday (21st), and then send to Joe Drago for review/feedback. After receiving his response, the next step was to schedule another board workshop to review, before submitting the document to the MCSC.

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

Annual Monitoring and State Reporting:

- MEVA has submitted the annual monitoring data for SY-2022/2023, in advance of our meeting with the Maine Charter School Commission (MCSC) administration on August 2nd. (The complete data workbook is attached to the enrollment expansion application.)
- MEVA is on time with Maine Department of Education (MDOE) reporting, including special education requirements. The MDOE letter dated June 29th, 2023, confirms our IDEA compliant status.
- MEVA completed the MDOE Special Education SY-2021/2022 monitoring process and corrective action plan on May 16th, 2023. The next accountability cycle begins in FY26 (SY-2025/2026).

Dr. Browne noted that the board could login to Epicenter (the MCSC’s reporting portal) and view items due and submitted in at any time.

Dr. Browne reported that MEVA’s expected charter contract renewal would be signed and finalized by June 30th, 2025, for the following five (5) years, once approved by the commission. MEVA was exceeding its academic performance measures. MEVA was working hard to personalize communications, convening with students and families, which resulted in excellent continuity of enrollment and retention. Dr. Browne stated that we were serving our students and their families well. Graduation rates had improved drastically over the years as shown in the multi-year data slide.

Multi Year Growth and Achievement Data for Math, Reading, and Language Usage:

- Fall to Spring NWEA Math and Language Usage Growth results are stronger than Reading.
- Students in grades 7-11, combined, are meeting MEVA’s fall to spring growth expectations in all three areas, based on the NWEA.
- Spring NWEA Reading and Language Usage Achievement results are stronger than Math.
- Students in grades 7-11, combined, are meeting MEVA’s spring achievement expectations in all three areas, based on the NWEA.

MEVA’s Criteria for Analyzing NWEA Student Median Growth and Achievement:

- Exceeds = 66th %ile or higher.
- Meets = 50th % to 65th %ile.
- Approaches = 35th to 49th %ile.
- Does Not Meet = Lower than 35th %ile.

Multi Year Data – Math:

NWEA Fall To Spring GROWTH

Growth: Data Source #1 NWEA MAP Math

Year	Student Median Growth Percentile	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11
2020-21	44 th %ile	42 nd %ile	48 th %ile	67 th %ile	42 nd %ile	44 th %ile
2021-22	56 th %ile	71 st %ile	62 nd %ile	53 rd %ile	48 th %ile	59 th %ile
2022-23	57 th %ile	71 st %ile	72 nd %ile	52 nd %ile	42 nd %ile	70 th %ile

NWEA Spring Achievement

Achievement: Data Source #1 NWEA MAP Math

Year	Student Median Achievement Percentile	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11
2020-21	58 th %ile	47 th %ile	58 th %ile	59 th %ile	58 th %ile	56 th %ile
2021-22	58 th %ile	61 st %ile	47 th %ile	57 th %ile	62 nd %ile	58 th %ile
2022-23	54 th %ile	45 th %ile	38 th %ile	55 th %ile	65 th %ile	58 th %ile

Multi Year Data – Reading

NWEA Fall To Spring GROWTH

Growth: Data Source #1 NWEA MAP Reading

Year	Student Median Growth Percentile	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11
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2020-21	40th %ile	40 th %ile	39 th %ile	40 th %ile	44 th %ile	34 th %ile
2021-22	47th %ile	58 th %ile	44 th %ile	56 th %ile	41 st %ile	37 th %ile
2022-23	50th %ile	48 th %ile	42 nd %ile	37 th %ile	55 th %ile	53 rd %ile

NWEA Spring Achievement

Achievement: Data Source #1 NWEA MAP Reading

Year	Student Median Achievement Percentile	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11
2020-21	57th %ile	62 nd %ile	57 th %ile	57 th %ile	56 th %ile	66 th %ile
2021-22	59th %ile	57 th %ile	59 th %ile	63 rd %ile	58 th %ile	58 th %ile
2022-23	60th %ile	61 st %ile	47 th %ile	54 th %ile	69 th %ile	63 rd %ile

Multi Year Data – Language Usage

NWEA Fall To Spring GROWTH

Growth: Data Source #1 NWEA MAP Language Usage

Year	Student Median Growth Percentile	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11
2020-21	43rd %ile	24 th %ile	50 th %ile	55 th %ile	43 rd %ile	43 rd %ile
2021-22	53rd %ile	57 th %ile	46 th %ile	58 th %ile	55 th %ile	47 th %ile
2022-23	62nd %ile	64 th %ile	57 th %ile	60 th %ile	72 nd %ile	55 th %ile

NWEA Spring Achievement

Achievement: Data Source #1 NWEA MAP Language Usage

Year	Student Median Achievement Percentile	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11
2020-21	60th %ile	58 th %ile	60 th %ile	64 th %ile	56 th %ile	67 th %ile
2021-22	64th %ile	62 nd %ile	73 rd %ile	64 th %ile	66 th %ile	55 th %ile
2022-23	57th %ile	60 th %ile	44 th %ile	51 st %ile	69 th %ile	57 th %ile

Multi-Year Enrollment, Retention, Re-enrollment and Graduation Summary:

- MEVA is filling all the seats each enrollment cycle.
- We are retaining students during the school year and re-enrolling them, exceeding our performance measures.
- MEVA is exceeding performance expectations for our 4-year and 5-year graduation rates. We are approaching expectations for our 6-year graduation rate.

Student Counts

School Year	Oct. 1 st	ED	SE
2020-2021	430	241 (56%)	75 (17%)
2021-2022	437	238 (54%)	75 (17%)
2022-2023	438	231 (53%)	86 (20%)

Student Retention

School Year	% of students enrolled on Oct. 1 st still enrolled on the last day of school
2020-2021	90%
2021-2022	90%
2022-2023	96% (YOY +6%)

Student Re-Enrollment

School Year	% of students enrolled on the last day of school indicating an intent to return the following school year
2020-2021	94%
2021-2022	90%
2022-2023	97% (YOY +7%)

HS Graduation Rate

School Year	Four (4) Year Cohort	YOY Delta
2020-2021	69.74%	
2021-2022	95.70%	+25.96
2022-2023	100%	+4.3%
School Year	Five (5) Year Cohort	
2020-2021	71.05%	
2021-2022	82.19%	+11.14
2022-2023	96.94%	+14.75
School Year	Six (6) Year Cohort	
2020-2021	74.74%	
2021-2022	71.05%	-3.69%
2022-2023	82.43%	+11.38

Chronic Absenteeism

School Year	% of students who missed 10% or more school days (excused or unexcused)
2020-2021	10.60%
2021-2022	3.50%
2022-2023	3.42% (YOY -0.08%)

SY-2023/2024 New Enrollment Update 7/18:

- Seat Offers Made: 5 open seat offers, 18 new applications in June.
- Families Actively working their application: 40.
- School Approvals: 94 have been approved- 5 of which are returning to MEVA after withdrawing to brick and mortar. 2 additional students are pending acceptance- waiting for a parent/guardian call back.
- We are trending approximately 8% ahead of last year, in terms of interest and applications.
- We are on track to have a full school by October 1st, 2023.

SY-2023/2024 Accepted Students by Grade Level – 7/18:

Grade	Accepted
7	14
8	23
9	17
10	20
11	9
12	11
Total	94

Enrollment Expansion Application:

- MEVA’s mission and vision focus on helping students’ academic achievement, proficiency, and growth, postsecondary readiness, and twenty-first century skills. MEVA develops excellent virtual teachers and faculty who work tirelessly to improve students’ outcomes. Given our differentiated educational alternatives and strong stakeholder satisfaction, MEVA wishes to serve more students and families.
- MEVA benefits from expanding enrollment for funding an added science teacher and sustaining our summer programming. We decided MEVA’s needs through the multi-year financial planning process.
- MEVA is requesting to increase our enrollment cap from 390 students to 450 students, keeping the plus/minus ten percent margin.
- MEVA is requesting to implement the enrollment expansion beginning in spring 2024, with a view towards enrolling 450 students by 10/1/2024.
- MEVA’s strong financial position allows us the flexibility to implement the proposed enrollment expansion using our existing revenues and reserves.

Supporting documents in the attached Appendix illustrate that:

- MEVA students outperformed the state during the spring 2022 Maine Educational Assessment (MEA) math and English Language Arts.
- MEVA students met fall to spring growth targets and increased their achievement percentiles in combined grades 7-11, math, reading, and language usage, for School Year 2022/2023.
- Longitudinal NWEA data (2018-2023) indicates that students who stay enrolled at MEVA make consistent academic gains year after year.

- MEVA School Year 2022/2023 Maine Charter School (MCSC) Annual Monitoring data shows that MEVA is meeting/exceeding its academic performance measures.
- MEVA is addressing students' learning losses due to the pandemic and other disruptions by applying aggressive interventions, including offering customized courses and high-quality tutoring during the academic year and summer.

The attached appendix supplies supporting data, as follows:

- Spring 2022 Math/ELA State Testing Results from the ESSA Dashboard.
- Spring 2023 NWEA Math Growth and Achievement.
- Spring 2023 NWEA Reading Growth and Achievement.
- Spring 2023 NWEA Language Usage Growth and Achievement.
- Longitudinal NWEA Data 2018-2023.
- SY-2022/2023 Annual Monitoring Performance Data.

Dr. Browne summarized that MEVA's request was to increase our enrollment cap from 390 to 450 students, keeping the plus/minus ten percent (10%) margin. Implementation timing of this plan, if approved by the commission, was to begin at the October 1st, 2024, count date, with associated revenues available during SY-2025/2026, aligning with our anticipated first year of the new charter contract. MEVA planned to add about twelve (12) students in the first enrollment cycle, working up from there incrementally, while maintain our strong performance results.

Donna commented that the application and plan were thorough. Stacey asked if the plan included a technology expansion.

Dr. Browne said that the proposed enrollment increase would not impact MEVA's technology expenses that much in the beginning. Dr. Browne committed to submitting the application to the MCSC, via Epicenter, after the board meeting on July 18th.

Governance.

Science Courses – Discussion:

Strategies for improving student-teacher ratios:

- Split popular courses into multiple sections (e.g., Earth Science, Biology, and Chemistry).
- Incorporate educational technicians/support teachers.
- Consider adding one science teacher position to increase students' course selection.
- Spotlight students in Grades 8 & 11 who are required to complete the Maine Educational Assessment (MEA).

MEA Science Data Analysis Overview:

- We have looked at the science data. Because of the switch from the previous test to the new test (and the Covid disruption) the only data that we were able to look at was from the school year 2021-2022, which may not be representative of the student body because of the low participation rate.
- For 8th grade our biggest areas of opportunity are Earth Science and Scientific Reasoning. For 8th grade our biggest area of strength is Life Science and Physical Science. For HS the biggest areas of opportunity are Life Science and Scientific Investigation. For high school, our biggest area of strength is Earth Science and Physical Science.

In the enrollment expansion application, we stated that the increased revenues can be used to fund a science teacher. Donna reviewed the science teacher breakdown sheet, which detailed student/teacher counts. MEVA had four (4) teachers for science, one for 7th and 8th grades, and three for high school level grades. Donna asked about the self-paced courses to get a better understanding of what they were. Dr. Browne reported that self-paced (asynchronous) science courses were more project based than the regular live courses.

Stacey offered her experience as a MEVA parent. According to Stacey, the self-paced chemistry course was very well laid out. She highlighted Mrs. O'Grady's consistent communication and grading. The flexible self-paced courses provided an opportunity to accommodate students in various ways.

Donna asked if live classes were meeting every day? Dr. Browne said that seventh and eighth grade sessions met daily, though high school sessions had different schedules. Each live session was for fifty (50) minutes. Don Fournier (Academic Administrator) elaborated, most teachers were teaching two or three lessons per day, as well as supporting other areas, such as the daily help desk. Tina inquired, if classes were fifty (50) minutes a day, could there be two (2) sessions per day? Divide up the (7th and 8th grade) kids to do 20 kids in one session, and 20 in the other? Don stated, we were starting to move that way in the high school, breaking down to smaller class sizes. Middle school teachers were meeting with students more than just the fifty-minute sessions, including at the study hubs, and other support sessions. We were always working towards finding ways to get the student numbers down per teacher. Dr. Browne said middle school had four (4) core courses daily, in addition to some extras like physical education (PE) and art.

Donna observed that the classes were full (student numbers) in science. Her concern was the other departments were loaded with staff. Donna asserted that students completed state tests in science so adding another science teacher made sense. Nick agreed and stated that we needed equity across departments to have them effectively supported. Stacey added that back-up teachers were needed when course teachers were out sick. Tina pointed out the need for another middle school science teacher. Math looked overloaded with educational technician support. Tina asked, if an educational technician could be switched to assist with science? Tina was supportive of an additional science teacher or of splitting up the sessions to make them smaller and easier to manage.

Dr. Browne stated we were dedicated to adjusting based on needs. Donna asked if we were looking for someone this fall? Dr. Browne said, yes, the school had the ability to support ongoing employment for an additional science teacher. Don concurred that a new science teacher would be a terrific addition to the staff and open great things for the students.

Dr. Browne committed to sharing examples of teacher schedules for further insight and understanding at a future board meeting.

Board Policies:

Nick motioned to approve JJE Student Fundraising Activities. Tina seconded. All in favor, so moved.

Nick motioned to approve DFF Student Activities Funds. Tina seconded. All in favor, so moved.

Nick motioned to approve GCFB, ACAB-R, ACAB, ACAA-R, ACAA, and AC Revised due to the Crown Act. Tina seconded. All in favor, so moved.

Board Self Evaluation & FY23 Goals Progress:

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.
 - **From July 2022 - June 2023, we had twelve meetings, with ten having a quorum. We did not have a quorum at the August 2022, and March 2023 meetings. (Achieved 83%)**
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.
 - **In Progress and On Track.**
3. To provide an environment that maximizes learning for all staff and students, the board will evaluate the facility needs by May 2023.
 - **Achieved.**

Donna shared participation by the board over the past school year. Regarding required board trainings, the board was not meeting expectations. Donna suggested further discussions surrounding, how we could make changes to improve. The three-year fiscal plan was in progress, the MCSC made some adjustments to their expectations, and they provided training late, but the board was on track now. Donna thanked Melinda and Jillian for doing the leg work on accomplishing the facilities goal and meeting the deadline.

With respect to the board self-evaluation survey results, Stacey was surprised that the board scored as low as it did in communications. Donna reported that four out of six board members had completed the survey. Active board participation was an area of concern. Tina commented on the community section that Melinda did well promoting the school. Tina thought the board could support the school in this area, recognizing when things were going great in something and helping to promote it via media. Donna asked the board members to think about developing new board goals and discussing them further in August. In September, we planned to conduct the annual board meeting, which may include voting in any new members.

Public Discussion. Dr. Browne reminded everyone that the next board meeting was August 15th, and MEVA's end of the year meeting with the MCSC, school administration, and board, was on August 2nd. Stacey was interested in attending with Donna. Dr. Browne committed to sending Stacey the information.

Adjournment. Tina motioned to adjourn. Donna seconded. All in favor, so moved. The meeting was adjourned at 4:27 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephanie Emery and Melinda Browne
Secretary pro tempore