

Maine Learning Innovations

Minutes for a Meeting of the Board of Directors held July 17, 2018

Pursuant to email and public website notices, a meeting of the Board of Maine Learning Innovations was convened on July 17, 2018, in the Maine Virtual Academy offices in Augusta at 2:30 PM. Members attending in person were Donna Madore, Ed Leblanc, and Peter Mills. Amy Carlisle attended by phone.

Also attending the meeting in person were Jennifer Hight, Melinda Browne, Fadia Afaneh, and Jillian Dearborn. Attending by phone were Sarah Berger, Patti Ashley, and Erica Seybert from K12.

Minutes. Upon motion by Donna, seconded by Ed, revised minutes for the meeting of May 15 were unanimously approved. Upon motion by Donna, seconded by Peter, revised minutes for the meeting of July 2, were unanimously approved.

Finance

Jennifer presented the financial package and reported that the financial team is working hard to prepare for the audit that begins August 7. Melinda reported that Maine DOE has approved the projects supported by Title funds. Upon motion by Donna, seconded by Ed, the unaudited financial package as presented by Patti Ashley and Jennifer Hight was unanimously approved.

Head of School

Melinda reports that student retention for FY 2018 greatly improved over prior years. We have also seen better attendance, particularly in middle school. The passing rate remains low at the beginning of each semester but improves as the semester proceeds.

NWEA is our primary method for measuring growth. All of the charter schools are now using it since Connections has switched from Scantron to NWEA. NWEA does not measure growth for 11th graders but we do use it as one of three markers for Gifted and Talented (GT) eligibility.

Our record of growth for 7th graders was terrible last year. We plan to use Title programs to bring them up. It is the function of Title teachers to diagnose issues and identify discrepancies rather than to help with homework or act as a co-teacher. Ideally, they should take a group into a breakout room to focus on a single area or problem of common difficulty. Title instruction should work in parallel to the classroom effort.

At present, Kylie Tudela is our only Title teacher. She does just middle school. Heather Larcher and John Gilliland have transferred to regular class room work. We need two or three more teachers who are exclusively for Title instruction.

Our academic program for next year should be stronger because we have prepared maps to set the pace for what needs to be accomplished. For special ed, all of our designated kids are in the same classes. We need to take some out for extra help. Some teachers, particularly in middle school math, are reluctant to move on if kids are not getting it. Erica said it ought to be required for teachers to cover at least 80% of the material in the curriculum. There is so much material in the K12 courses that nothing further is really needed for GT students. On the other hand, one of our students was permitted to jump from 5th to 7th grade because he went through the material so fast.

CogAT (Cognitive Abilities Test) is used for GT eligibility. We have at least three seventh graders coming in with GT eligibility. GT services include giving them pre-tests to see what they know and then providing them with richer supplemental material. Amy said that some kids hate enrichment material and are better off just moving ahead to more advanced work.

Fadia reported that some of the larger classes have now been broken into two smaller sections. However, it is important that teachers firmly assign each student to one section or the other for attendance and accountability purposes.

Melinda reported that she has completed her structured observations of the teachers that were based on material the teachers submitted. Next year, she will conduct them by observing random recordings of classes. Amy said she is working with K12 to come up with a rubric to measure classroom performance. Donna said that Chapter 180 of the DOE rules deals with teacher evaluation.

Program Management

Fadia and Melinda reported that enrollment for next year is up to 367 which puts us easily within range of enrolling 390 for the fall. 19% are in middle school, 72 students versus nearly 300 in high school. We have many students wanting to enter at the 10th or 11th grade level; but we do best with those who have been with us since the earlier grades. The biggest problems are those who enter in the 12th grade.

Governance

Upon motion by Ed, seconded by Donna, the proposed Attendance Policy was unanimously approved as amended by further discussion. Melinda said that Paul Hamilton from DOE has vetted the draft policy and approved. The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires actual attendance. Student participation cannot be based on progress alone. Some seniors are allowed to take only three courses instead of five usually required for a full day.

Office Space

Jillian will consult with the office supply vendor about whether it is possible to reconfigure the interior cubicles to conform to George Parker's architectural plan. She will also confirm plans for use of additional space for next year's new teachers.

Special Education

The plan is to make Dee Pouzol the Assistant Manager of Special Ed to assume most of the management and reporting responsibilities. This will require transferring most of her caseload to the two teachers. MEVA has about 60 students identified for Special Ed services. Donna observed that this is quite a high number for our assigned staff. During the past year, Dee has been doing much of the admin work in addition to carrying a full case load, but with the two teachers picking up most of that load, Dee should be able to manage administration while retaining a few students for direct help. Melinda says our administrative challenges have been aggravated by having a lot of turnover among Special Ed students.

Health Insurance Renewal

The renewal of Health Insurance with Community Health Options in August will cost us a 17% increase in premium. We will keep the coverage in place until the turn of the year and then convert to a new annual policy. We can determine in November whether a change in the plan is appropriate. In the meantime, the teachers who participate in the health plan will have \$20 per pay period deducted as their contribution. This was the policy adopted last year but not implemented during school year 2017-18.

Executive Session. At 5:20 PM upon motion by Donna, seconded by Ed, the Board voted unanimously to go into executive session pursuant to 1MRSA §405 for the purpose of discussing the duties and evaluation of appointees and employees of Maine Virtual Academy.

At 6:35 PM, the board came out of executive session and adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Mills, Secretary