

Maine Learning Innovations

Minutes for a Meeting of the Board of Directors held December 20, 2016

Pursuant to email and public website notices, a meeting of the Board of Maine Learning Innovations was convened by Head of School, Melinda Browne in the MEVA Conference room in Augusta at 2:00 PM. Attending were Directors Amy Carlisle by phone, Peter Mills (after 2:15), and Ed LeBlanc. Absent were Kevin Pomerleau and Donna Madore.

Also present were: Melinda Browne, Fadia Afaneh, Jennifer Hight and Kim Whitman from local staff; Patti Ashleigh, Sarah Berger and Mary Markert, from K-12 staff all by phone; and Bill Nave, evaluation consultant.

Upon Motion by Ed seconded by Peter, minutes for November 15th were unanimously approved (this occurred after Peter's late arrival).

Head of School

The Charter Commission during its visit on December 16 expressed concerns about early enrollment withdrawals. By our contract, Performance Measures on withdrawal should begin with the October 1 count.

Melinda has another meeting with the Commission on January 17 to discuss results of state testing for 2016. The discussion points on testing match up with our Academic Plan.

Melinda presented a handout called "MEVA Teacher Development at a Glance" that outlines the many opportunities for professional development available to MEVA teachers. Melinda has also been meeting individually with teachers to provide observations and feedback.

MEVA's data dashboard of performance measures includes ILP completion rates, participation rates in fall NWEA testing, average daily attendance, completion rates for welcome calls, and student proficiency on state assessments.

MEVA's recent open house in Bangor was a positive, uplifting event in which 13 students and their families attended. We are planning an open house in southern Maine in February and one in Aroostook County later in the school year. Our next open house will be at MEVA on January 4th.

Melinda holds Parent Connect Sessions on line with a guest speaker each month. December's speaker was Jennifer Clarke, our middle school science teacher.

Operations Manager

Fadia says that as of today our enrollment is 320 students, down 17 from November. No freshmen withdrew from November through December. We have 60 seniors on track to graduate. The current semester ends on January 27. On January 2, we will open enrollment for the second semester which begins January 30. We have 68 students on the waiting list for 40 openings. If an enrollment lottery is needed, it will be held March 29.

For the new students, we will schedule twice as many orientation sessions as we offered last fall and will vary the times of day to better accommodate parent schedules.

Winter NWEA exams will be held each day during the last week of January to test progress on math and reading.

Financial Matters

Jennifer presented a revised budget for 2016-17. She has reviewed the figures with the K12 finance team to make sure our budget is in line with their numbers. The K12 contract is our biggest expense.

Jennifer added money to the budget for ergonomic office equipment, for graduation expenses, and for psychological evaluation services. Jennifer, Melinda and Kim have all reviewed the budget.

Tyler Backus from DOE is uncertain whether we must vote on the budget categories by separate articles. Jenn will find out and report to the board.

Peter mentioned that our contract requires us to achieve a \$300,000 surplus by year three. Jennifer believes we are on track to meet that requirement.

Jennifer uploaded the budget to DOE to see what feedback it would generate. There are coding challenges arising from the difficulty in matching up conventional education categories to a virtual school. For example, in most other schools, internet is a small component of administrative expense; but for MEVA, internet expenses are a major cost at the core of instruction. This creates a challenge when uploading budgets. The K12 technology fee makes our administration expenses look high even though our total budget is in line.

Upon motion by Peter, seconded by Ed, the budget revisions presented by Jennifer were unanimously approved.

Jennifer reported that the audit deadline is December 31, but she expects to have it by December 22. The 990 return is on extension but the draft is nearly ready.

Upon Jennifer's recommendation, it was agreed that Kim should prepare for Amy's signature the draft of a letter outlining her job responsibilities as a full time (30-40 hour per week), year-round employee.

Jennifer expressed concern about teachers ordering complete sets of student materials at the rate of about \$500 to \$600 per bundle. Fadia responded that because K12 only sells middle school materials in bundles, each teacher who asked for them received materials for all classes from music to English regardless of which subject they teach. In future years we will only order one bundle and divide the materials by subject among individual teachers.

The Board approved Jennifer's request to purchase QuickBooks in January (at a cost of a few hundred dollars) so that we may prepare to move our accounts into QuickBooks starting July 1, 2017.

School Evaluation

Bill Nave received rave reviews for his proposed list of questions to guide the evaluation process as he continues interviewing individual teachers. Bill will also meet with some students and parents. His goal is to bring an intense focus to school improvement from the ground up. His work for MEVA will be significantly informed by his recently completed review for Connections Academy and by his own professional experience in managing alternative education programs.

One of MEVA's biggest challenges is how to get troubled students to engage. MEVA is often a last resort for students who are unsuccessful in conventional schools. As a public school, MEVA must accept all applicants, even those who are poorly prepared to study virtually. Because our students are located throughout our far-flung state, it is difficult to reach out to them physically if phone and internet contacts are unsuccessful. Peter suggested that we engage the CAP agencies to help. They are regionally diverse and are accustomed to making house calls.

Fadia pointed out that our teachers are still not doing enough to reach out to students using the tools available to us. When a student begins to fail or drop out from any class, the content teacher must try to make contact and record their results in Total View. Teachers should schedule their intervention time and make at least ten calls per week. We need to reach out early and frequently and not leave it all up to Mike Susi and Katy Wormwood.

Peter mentioned that in larger K12 schools, teachers often have only a few preparations per week because their classes are so large. At MEVA, multiple preparations are necessary because of variations in ability within the same class. He questioned whether we are using the full K12 curriculum effectively and whether can we tap deeper into it.

Other Matters

Kim will circulate a list of her recommended changes to the employee handbook for board review.

Melinda announced that the Mitchell Institute has qualified MEVA for one of their scholarships. We need to submit five applicants from our 60 seniors.

At 3:40 pm, the meeting was duly adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Mills, Secretary