

Maine Learning Innovations

Minutes for a Meeting of the Board of Directors held February 28, 2017

Pursuant to email and public website notices, a regular meeting of the Board of Maine Learning Innovations was convened by Secretary Peter Mills in the MEVA Conference room in Augusta at 2:00 PM. Attending were Directors Amy Carlisle by phone, Peter Mills, Donna Madore, and Ed LeBlanc. Kevin Pomerleau was absent.

Also present were: Melinda Browne, Fadia Afaneh, Jennifer Hight, and Kim Whitman from local staff; Sarah Berger from K12 by phone; Pattie Ashleigh from K12 accounting by phone; and Bill Nave, our evaluation consultant.

Upon Motion by Ed, seconded by Donna, minutes for January 17, 2017, were unanimously approved.

Finance Report

Jennifer distributed the January balance sheet, the income statement, and a recent record of our check disbursements. We write about 20 to 25 checks per month. Our cash position is strong but we still have costs to encounter for the second semester. We have \$400K in liabilities. February invoices include most of the second semester start up fees from K12.

The original budget from K12 created last year was not based on the same budget lines recognized by the State. Mary and Patti from K12 are currently aligning the K12 budget from Intacct with the functions and codes required by the state. This needs to be completed by the end of the school year.

In preparing next year's budget, Jennifer has noted that the state's proposed subsidy for FY17/18 is based on an enrollment of 429 students. Because the charter commission has only approved us for 390 for our third year, we need to adjust our planned revenue accordingly. The Commission gave Connections authority to increase their enrollment to 429 for their fourth year. We should discuss with the Commission what they have in mind for us.

Jennifer described the ICS (Insured Cash Sweep) through Bangor Savings Bank. This product would provide our accounts access to FDIC insurance even for cash on hand exceeding the \$250,000 maximum insured amount. Jennifer will get 3 recommendations from Bangor Savings and present them to the board at the next meeting.

Upon motion by Peter, seconded by Donna, the finance report was unanimously accepted.

Teacher compensation for next year

Donna says that Augusta teachers received an increase of 2.5% last year. The current wage in Augusta for a starting teacher with a BS degree is \$34,000 to work a 7 hour day for 180 days. There is a step system for further advancement. Our school has a 40 hour week.

Melinda noted that our allowance for professional development is only \$1000. Courses from Phoenix are \$600 apiece. Donna says that Augusta allows up to 3 classes per year at the rate being charged by UMO. Reimbursement may only be made for classes pertaining to teacher certification or to an advanced degree.

After substantial discussion, there was general agreement that we should offer a percentage increase combined with a bonus to be awarded in September based on how the school as a whole performed for the preceding school year.

Independent Evaluation

Bill Nave presented for approval a memo to guide the process for his third party evaluation. He also provided his list of proposed questions to be asked of teachers and administrators. The cost of his evaluation will be about \$7000 for 14 days of work at \$500 per day. He is just completing his evaluation of Connections Academy.

Upon motion by Donna, seconded by Ed, Bill's process memo and his suggested questions were unanimously approved.

Head of School Report

The school's student passing rate has increased from 66% to 79% during January. It was 50% last year at this time. Our passing rate is now number one for the northern region of K12. We are methodically pulling students across the finish line. We have colleagues in a strong K12 network who enable us to see the bigger picture.

Our winter NWEA participation rate in math increased from 69% to 92% since last year and in reading from 73% to 88%. Donna says that the state expectation is for 95%.

For upcoming state testing for the MEA and SAT, we have lined up seven sites. The Nirvana program is used to distribute students to the different locations.

John Gilliland's classes have shown tremendous growth. We will be offering Title I programming again this summer, using only two teachers instead of four, John Gilliland for math and Kristen Tripp for reading. Last year, we saw a 5% growth in the fall NWEA's as a result of the summer's Title I work. The math program will include tutoring and instruction. Reading will include a summer book club with group discussion and engagement.

Program Manager's Report

Fadia reviewed our detailed academic scores for Instruction, Assessment, Observations, Data Driven Instruction (DDI), Culture, and Professional Development. We are improving across the board with overall improvement from C- to B+.

MTSS stands for Multi-Tiered System Support. RTI is Response to Intervention. The purpose of these strategies is to rescue students from incipient failure by emphasizing that each teacher is required to take ownership of their students without passing the problems on to someone else.

We have 349 students presently enrolled. 50 of them will be new for the second semester. The largest increase is in the 9th grade class. Our lottery date is March 29 but we probably will not need it.

Our open enrollment period is from February 6 to March 9. We have 39 Intents to Enroll. We cannot ask them to take the next step until after 5:00 PM on March 23. At that point, we may request their Commitments to Enroll.

Truancy

Attorney Bill Ferdinand joined us to report on truancy discussions with Bob Kautz and Connections. It is a prevalent problem with Connections. They have one student still enrolled who has not logged on for a year. They have issued the summons and a \$250 fine. We wonder whether the DOE or the Court has authority to transfer the student to the home district. The question is should we raise this now or let it go. Connections is bumping up against it. The default position is to retain the truant as a student and stand accused of being paid for a student who is not receiving instruction.

Melinda pointed out that through Katy Wormwood's FAST program we have a specific remedy. We are not sure whether Connections does. The FAST program is afforded without regard to the student's abilities. It deals purely with engagement and it works. MEVA has students who log into the school but do not log into classes.

Bill said that in a brick & mortar school, if you don't show up for ten days, it triggers a truancy policy. When families tire of being contacted about truancy and paying fines, they sometimes enroll their students in a virtual school and we wind up with them.

Amy pointed out that MEVA has a limited number of seats. Our sending schools do not. If there is no mechanism to get a student off our roster, we should raise this with the Commission and DOE and work with Connections toward a common solution.

Melinda pointed out that Bob and Gina do not make it easy for us to disenroll students. Amy said we need to document our efforts thoroughly to justify expulsion or transfer.

Bill said that with board approval, he will continue to work with Maine Connections on this issue. We need to determine what authority on such matters is vested in the DOE or the courts. Peter suggested that this be taken to the Charter Commission.

Ergonomics

Kim said she has a list of ergonomic aids, trays, monitors and the like to buy for teachers for an amount that totals \$2044.46. She has had three evaluators come in to review the work environments. Donna said that Augusta's WC provider through MMA has grants available for such purposes. Kim said our provider, MEMIC, has sent over an ergonomic expert free of charge. Many teachers have requested help. Upon motion by Donna, seconded by Peter, it was unanimously authorized to spend up to \$2500 for ergonomic aids.

At 4:00 pm, the meeting was duly adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Mills, Secretary