

# Maine Charter School Commission

**DRAFT – PENDING COMMISSION VOTE 11-13-14.**

## **Maine Charter School Commission – October 15, 2014**

### **I. Call to Order**

Chair, Shelley Reed, called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m.

### **II. Roll Call**

The following members were present: John Bird, Nichi Farnham, Jana Lapoint, Ande Smith, Michael Wilhelm and Shelley Reed.

Laurie Pendleton participated in discussions via phone from Louisiana.

Also in attendance were Bob Kautz, Executive Director, and Deanne Lavallee, Administrative Assistant.

### **III. Adjustments to the Agenda**

Maine Connections Academy – Hiring of teach in Fort Kent – placed under New Business

### **IV. Approval of Minutes**

A. Moved by John Bird; seconded by Mike Wilhelm and voted unanimously by those present to accept the September 2, 2014, Minutes as written.

### **V. Officers' Reports**

#### **A. Chair**

- Review Team work. Commissioners commended for their many, many hours of reviewing very carefully and thoroughly the three applicants. This is the first time that our recommendations have gone out before this Commission meeting for applicant consideration by the full commission. I want the applicants to understand I feel a great respect for those who put in the amount of hours, sweat and tears into these applications. We recognize that you had the courage to submit your work to us.
- OIT meeting – Regarding FOAA Requests and wanting the Commission to be as transparent as possible.
- MCSC Budget with Deanne and Bob.
- Presentation for Charter Schools at the MSMA Fall Conference – John Bird, Justin Belanger, Karl Francis, Bob Kautz and myself.

- Myth Busting – MSMA published a piece that said *Charters are exempt from proficiency-based diploma*. Although, Jim Rier might have said the law doesn't say it; Drafters of the first and of continuing RFPs felt very strongly that this is a public charter school and we want our students to have the same advantages.

Words that have been in place (in the RFP) since we started regarding high school graduation requirements:

*High Schools will be expected to meet the state graduation standards.*

*Describe how the school will meet these requirements. Explain how students will earn credit hours, how grade-point averages will be calculated, what information will be on transcripts, how the student would meet standards and/or the requirements for a proficiency-based diploma and what elective courses will be offered. If graduation requirements for the school will exceed state standards, explain the additional requirements.*

Four schools that will have to follow the RFP and their Contracts: Maine Academy of Natural Sciences, Baxter School for Technology and Sciences, Harpswell Coastal Academy and Maine Connections Academy.

#### B. Vice Chair

- Work with review team colleagues on the application.
- OIT Meeting – Regarding email.
- Yesterday, State Board of Ed meeting with Jana and Nichi.

Jim Rier shared:

- Governor's Office is looking towards putting in another funding mechanism bill. The approach is to make each charter school would be its own SAD – processed just like every other school district. One leap of faith would be the amount would be based on the average of the school's catchment area. Mechanism sounds fair and reasonable and administratively tight.
- Jim spoke with Jana and I; he is very appreciative of the school reviews he received – very well done. Thought the investigation rigor might be beneficial for all schools.

#### C. Executive Director

- Role of Authorizer to determine the percentage per-pupil allocation for transportation.  
9/9/14 Meeting with Suzan Beaudoin, Deb Friedman, Sarah Forster, Rick Bergeron, Deanne and Bob.  
Waiting for all charter schools to submit the 2013-2014 financial data to the MEDMS system; all schools should be in the system by the end of November. Once that information is in the system, there is a report that will calculate the transportation amounts for each charter school.
- Waiting for Early Audits/Financials from each of the operating public charter schools. (Initial report to the Commissioner – Due on or before November 1, 2014).
- Participated in the OIT meeting.
- Participation with each of the Review Teams.

## VI. Unfinished Business

A. Job Description for Director of Program Management review and Commission vote.

Up to 40 hours (per week) \$24.50/hour; plus \$4.02/hour benefit allowance; plus recruiting/payroll service fee = \$69,000/year.

Supportive position to Commission; aggressive approach with each charter school; reports, management, collect information from Commission for reports – common approach and manner to reports, analyzing – comparing national standards; etc.

Moved by John Bird; seconded by Mike Wilhelm and voted unanimously by all those present to approve the job description as written and information presented.

Process: **B**egin to identify people for position; **C**ontract much the same way as Bob and Deanne; **C**an do it for a period of time, test, adjust – and move forward.

RFP – is the responsibility of the Commission to write and to be approved by Shelley Reed and Ande Smith.

## VII. New Business

A. Review and Vote on the Public Virtual Charter School Application for School Year 2015.

Chair Reed described the procedure that the Commission will follow in determining the status of each application:

Each of review Chairs will have an opportunity to share strengths and some concerns in the summary statement; a recommendation/motion and second will be made; following will be any discussion by the Commission decision by a majority vote.

If the applicant moves on, the next process is the In-Person Interview and Public Hearing – that vote has to be at least 5 members of the Commission voting in the affirmative to move to the contract phase.

A vote by the full Commission is taken on the Contract. If approved, it then becomes a Public Charter School Contract.

### 1. Acadia Academy (name change from All of ME Academy)

Grades: Pre-K through 1<sup>st</sup> Grade, adding Grades 2-6

Lewiston-Auburn area

School Program Design: A Comprehensive Program providing Evidenced-based Curriculum in academics and social/emotional development with a safe and supportive community, addressing the individual learning needs of all children.

Relationship to Applicant Entity: Director of Charter School Development, Director of the Margaret Murphy Center for Children (program of John F. Murphy Homes, Inc.).

Review Team: Nichi Farnham, Chair; Shelley Reed, Laurie Pendleton.

Please find the full report included at the end of these Minutes

Recommendation: The Review Team’s recommendation is that the Acadia Academy applications not move forward for further consideration by the Commission.

Motion by Nichi Farnham; seconded by Shelley Reed and unanimously voted by those present to approve the recommendation as written.

2. **Inspire ME Academy**

Grades: 4,5,6  
Sanford area

School Program Design: At Inspire ME Academy, our mission is to *Inspire Greatness*. In order to achieve greatness we will develop curriculum that not only bridges gaps in students learning but also challenges them to go above and beyond, maximizing their potential. Our curriculum will be developed directly from the Common Core Standards using rigorous standards based unit design. During instruction, our classes will be ability group based on the results of progress monitoring with the idea that groups are ever changing depending on the needs of the students. A longer day will allow more time on academics and more opportunities for differentiation. Our GREAT values (Generosity, Respect, Enthusiasm, Achievement, and Tenacity) will be taught and practiced, providing a safe and caring environment where **all** students feel capable of success. Our leaders and teachers will educate with the belief that all students are capable of learning. This belief will drive curriculum development, instruction, and a classroom environment that will instill a high expectation for learning.

Review Team: Chair, John Bird; Jana Lapoint, Mike Wilhelm.  
Please find the full report included at the end of these Minutes.

Recommendation: We (Review Team) recommend that the Commission not move this application forward to the interview phase of the process; but encourage the applicant to address the issues raised in this report and resubmit another year.

Motion by Mike Wilhelm; seconded by John Bird and unanimously voted by those present to approve the recommendation as written.

3. **Maine Virtual Academy (MEVA)**

Grades: 7-12  
Statewide

School Program Design: Maine Virtual Academy’s (MEVA) mission is to develop each student’s full potential with learner-centered instruction, research-based curriculum and educational tools and resources to provide a high quality learning experience for grade 7-12 students who are in need of alternative educational options. MEVA will develop an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) with specific learning goals to meet each student’s needs. MEVA’s rigorous curriculum is aligned to the eight Maine content areas, the Maine Learning Results, the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards. MEVA will demand the highest level of accountability from our Maine-certified

teachers, our education management system and our nationally recognized provider of educational services. The MEVA Board will contract with K-12 Virtual Schools LLC for educational products and selected support services.

Review Team: Chair Mike Wilhelm; John Bird, Ande Smith.  
Please find the full report included at the end of these Minutes.

Recommendation: The Review Team's recommendation is that the Maine Virtual Academy's application move forward for further consideration by the Commission.

Motion by Mike Wilhelm; seconded by John Bird and voted unanimously by those present to approve the recommendation as written.

**B. Maine Academy of Natural Sciences – MeANS, Hinckley**

1. Change in leadership – Head of School and Board of Directors.

Rich Abramson new MeANS head of school.

Bill Brown will be Chair Board of Directors and Doug Carr as Vice Chair.

Motion by John Bird and seconded by Mike Wilhelm and unanimously voted by those present to accept the staff and board changes as non-material amendments.

2. Request to set enrollment caps by grade level for the 2015 school year.

Motion by Mike Wilhelm and John Bird and unanimously voted by those present to accept the enrollment caps by grade level for the 2015 school year.

**C. Discussion of October 1, 2014, Office of Information Technology Meeting – with Shelley Reed, Ande Smith, Bob Kautz, in regard to the pros and cons of the Commission's use of the Maine.gov email address for Commission business and the MCSC Budget impact.**

- FOAA – insulating us personally.
- Is there productivity benefit from having an OIT product?
- We want to do email and keep it separate.

**Offered by OIT:**

1. Standard State-issued laptop PC with State Email Account.
2. State-issued Apple iPad or Windows Tablet with State Email Account.
3. Personally-owned Apple iPad or Windows Tablet (other models are not supported).

**Three of these solutions:**

**Laptop** – can only use the separate device; not able to see it while you are doing any personal work. Another brick to carry around – especially traveling – not always accessible to review frequently. Full functionality for word processing – work products are FOAA documents.

**IPad** – functionality of it – doesn't do word processing well and would have to have a key board, etc. to make it happen.

**Own device** – BYOD – only limited devices are serviced by OIT.

**Discussion:**

- Forwarding of all emails to a MCSC email does not capture any meta-data, which does not conform to FOAA requirements. Meta-data is not typically imposed with FOAA requests.
- Commission has not been mandated to do any one thing; risk management. This is advice from Sarah Forster.
- Discipline has to be to always forward the emails to the MCSC email.
- Member has to certify that all emails are contained in the MCSC email account; so many may have to go through all other emails to be sure all related emails have been forwarded; which means there will be many duplicate emails to be sorted through by *requester*.
- Transaction cost of doing business is a FOAA request may have to be delivered.
- Emails cannot be deleted – permanently. Be clear about the protocol – document retention policy – cannot delete anything.
- Conducting state business and co-mingling with personal that is by nature sort of a problem.
- You do have an obligation under the records retention policy to keep certain types of records for a period of time.  
If you are conducting state business, it is not your personal email between the two of you and you do not have the discretion to delete that when you are done. Commissioners' correspondence or setting policy it is permanent. General correspondence is three years. Specific for your type of business – value varies depending on what it is.

**The difference between us and other commissions:**

**MCSC:** Documents generated by each of the members of the review team and then submitting them to the whole commission for review. There is a tight correlation between the results of the work and Commission involvement in the work with the requirements of approving a charter; akin to a state entity even though a commission. Sensitivity of the issues; can be challenges from applicants; requests from media or individuals.

**State Board of Education:** Documents are generally, not exclusively, but generally developed by the Department of Education, who is supporting the State Board of Education.

**Other commissions** have, generally, staff that is doing the work of the boards and then presenting it to the boards.

**Options:**

1. Workshop on FOAA and retention of state records on your own personal devices so they can be provided if there were to be a request – understanding personal responsibilities are in regard to retention of different products on your different personal devices.
2. Emails – Courtesy Copy (cc) to Maine Charter School Commission to MCSC or Bob.
3. One of the three options.
4. Or none of the above and just continue as we are now.

**Decision:**

Commission business on members' personal devices will be copied to an MCSC repository email account.

- Copying materials to repository account moving forward (work prior to the establishment of the repository account will be accessed if requested for a FOAA by each member).
- Create a policy on rules that we are going to follow.
- If you are doing Commission (State) business, the criteria is to require sending it to the repository account versus personal business.
- Any FOAA will require each member to search their own computers, as well as, the MCSC repository account.

D. Maine School Management Association Fall Conference – MCSC Presentation Friday, October 24, 2014, at 1:00 -2:10 p.m. Participants are Shelley Reed, John Bird, Justin Belanger, Cornville Executive Director; and Bob Kautz. Add to list Karl Francis, Principal of Maine Connections Academy.

E. Adjustment to Agenda – Maine Connections Academy hiring of Fort Kent Teacher.

Motion by Mike Wilhelm; seconded by Jana Lapoint and unanimously voted by those present to accept the hiring of the Fort Kent teacher. The Commission would encourage that going forward the common practice be teachers would be located in the MCA teacher/learning center.

**VIII. Other**

- A. October 27 at 10 a.m. for the Maine Virtual Academy In-person Interview and Public Hearing.
- B. Following MVA, Commission Workshop on the revision of the Performance Frameworks.

**IX. Announcements**

- A. Turn in Expense Account Vouchers at the end of the meeting.
- D. Next regularly scheduled meeting: **Thursday, November 13, 2014.** Time: 9:30 a.m.

**X. Public Comment**

**Roger Brainerd:** I asked Bob if the Commission would co-sponsor the Governance Workshop – November 14, 2014, with the Commission Members not paying to attend.

The ask is \$500.

Costs are: Staff time to develop and transportation. National presenter is donating her time; donated space. Food cost has not been determined.

**Bob Kautz:** Part of what we have wanted to see MACS do, in so far as, providing learning opportunities for each of the charter schools; using our resources to further improve the actions of the charter schools.

I believe if we give the \$500, it is not underwriting the whole thing. We are using the 3% to help the charters and every one of the charters has wanted improved board governance. Not something the Commission should be doing, but something that MACS should be doing. MACS being the deliverer and us supporting the mutual effort for the purpose of charter school improvement.

MACS will send MCSC an invoice for \$500.

## **XI. Adjourn**

Motion by Jana Lapoint; seconded by Shelley Reed and voted unanimously by those present to adjourn the meeting at 12:50 p.m.

**ACADIA Academy Review Team Report and Recommendation**  
**by**  
**Chair Nichi Farnham, Laurie Pendleton, and Shelley Reed.**

The Review Team was assisted by Maine Department of Education Peg Armstrong-Special Education, Susan Reed- Early Childhood Education, and Maine Charter School Commission Executive Director Bob Kautz.

**A. Education Plan – Mission, Vision, Targeted Student Population; Academic Program; Special Student Population; Assessment; School Climate; and Discipline**

**Strengths**

1. The application presented a desire to educate the whole child academically, behaviorally, socially, emotionally and physically.
2. The proposal recognized the needs of students from the Lewiston-Auburn area with a focus on low socio-economic, special education, English Language Learner (ELL), and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) involved children.
3. The academic program is based on a Response to Intervention (RTI) approach and the behavioral component is based on Positive Behavioral Supports and Interventions (PBSI). Both of these approaches are being implemented in many schools.

**Questions, Concerns**

1. The selected curricula relies heavily on direct instruction which may not meet the needs of all learning and teaching styles.
2. The design of the academic program appears to be specifically targeted to students with academic challenges, which raises questions about the program's ability to serve all students as described in the school mission statement.
3. Although the application referenced the use of Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) along with other progress monitoring systems, the description of student evaluation was solely based on the use of a Common Core checklist.
4. The application did not describe expected student performance and did not set benchmarks for student performance. When questioned, the development team suggested they would set a target of 80% of students or more making gains.
5. The Pre-K program is not based on an integrated curriculum.
6. The applicant did not articulate a clear vision for the charter school in 5-10 years.
7. The application did not discuss any elements of the curriculum design that were described as innovative.
8. According to the application, co-curricular and extra curricula activities are to be met by providing parents with area opportunities, which does not allow for charter school created options.
9. It is highly probable that the school's relationship with the Margaret Murphy Center for Children (MMCC) would lead to a much higher special education population than estimated. Because of this relationship, there is concern that the school would not be able to provide the least restrictive environment for special education students.

10. The proposed staffing ratios may not meet the needs of students. For example the narrative states that an aide will be in every classroom, yet the budget shows five classrooms and three aides in year one.
11. Although key components of the school's programming, the application lacks information regarding the development of Individualized Learning Plans for students who are not identified as requiring special education services.
12. The application lacked a complete description of the "Choice Study Units" which occupy 20% of the school week.
13. The application lacks a clear discipline policy and fails to outline procedures that will be taken when students' behavior is not handled through intrinsic motivation or PBSI. The procedures for the removal of students, if necessary, were not present.
14. The application does not discuss how the school will collect data, beyond student performance, that will help inform curriculum decisions, improve school culture, and track and increase parent involvement.
15. The emergency procedures and handbooks included in the application are not specific to ACADIA Academy.
16. The application failed to describe meaningful ways to engage parents beyond the traditional methods of student conferences and Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO).
17. The proposal does not fully describe the school's approach to Social Studies.

### **Education Plan Summary**

Is the Education Plan compelling?

- Although ACADIA Academy seems to be aiming its student population target as low income, challenging backgrounds, and second language learners, it states that it seeks a diverse group of learners which should also include students who are not at academic or social risk. The mission and vision seem to contradict the elements of the curricula and design of the charter school.
- The school design is not particularly innovative, as combining elements of existing programs does not seem innovative or compelling.

Am I convinced that the applicant makes a strong case for the quality of the program?

- The design of the academic program appears to be specifically targeted to students with academic challenges, which raises questions about the program's ability to serve all students as described in the school mission statement.
- The program is dependent on packaged curriculum and a structured approach to student learning which may impede some students from meeting their full potential.
- The school did not describe how it would use assessment information to modify the educational program and improve instruction, student learning and staff development.
- The application did not present a coherent vision of what the school would look like in 5-10 years if it is achieving its mission.
- The application did not present a viable plan for curriculum development of the core academic areas consistent with the school's mission, values and education program design.

Does the Education Plan support the vision and mission of the school?

- The program fails to describe how it will promote student collaboration while supporting students in developing their maximum potential.
- The program lacks connection to the expressed Guiding Principles of the Maine Learning Results/Common Core.
- The mission and vision of the school to meet the needs of diverse learners seems contradictory to the selected academic approach and selected curriculum.

**B. Organizational and Operational Plan – School Calendar and Daily Schedule; Student Recruitment and Enrollment; Staffing and Human Resources; Pre-Opening Plan; Management Operations; Parent and Community Involvement**

**Strengths**

1. The calendar included an offering of extended learning opportunities in the month of August on a student voluntary basis to reduce summer learning loss.

**Questions, Concerns**

1. The proposal does not present a comprehensive student recruitment and marketing plan that will ensure a diverse population that goes beyond families who already have a strong connection to MMCC.
2. The current teacher evaluation plan is undeveloped and would not necessarily help to correct negative or mediocre practice. The proposed teacher evaluation plan does not meet the required state teacher evaluation measures.
3. ACADIA Academy expects that several, if not all staff, will be selected from internal candidates from MMCC. This practice may limit the skill set of the staff and reduce the opportunity to build a well-rounded teaching staff.
4. The pre-opening plan lacks details that should have identified responsible individuals.
5. The startup plan lacks the necessary details to ensure the work would get done.
6. The proposed designated leader of the school is also responsible for additional programs and would not be focused primarily on the charter school. This brings up concerns about the availability of the school leader to work with the parents, the community, the teachers, and the other staff.
7. The staff employee policy identifies teachers as hourly, not salaried, employees with a 30-hour a week regarded as a full time employee, noting emergency call back hourly time.
8. The staff employee policy also referenced merit based pay with no narrative about how this pay would be determined.
9. The plan did not present a vision and strategy for community involvement that is reasonably likely to further the school's mission and program.
10. The parent involvement described in pre-and post-opening section is limited to participation in a Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and volunteering.
11. The parent on the Governing Board is a non-voting member.
12. The applicant did not provide evidence of community resources independent from MMCC.
13. The applicant did not clearly describe the mutual benefits of having access to the MMCC resources.

## **Organizational and Operational Plan Summary**

Does the school have an effective plan to recruit, retain and grow an outstanding staff?

- The proposal does not include a plan to recruit a teaching staff with experience to meet the diverse needs of students
- The plan contains no evidence of a teacher evaluation plan that meets the state evaluation plan to promote growth.

Does the Management and Operation Plan support the vision and mission of the school?

- The leadership of the proposed charter school does not present an understanding of the roles and responsibilities; focus, and priorities needed to independently manage a public school, including the federal/state compliance and financial management concerns as it applies to a public charter school.
- The proposal represents a lack of an understanding of the alignment of staffing and budget to mission and vision, and a plan for successful implementation.

## **C. Governance – Governing Body, Governing Board Composition**

### **Strengths**

1. The ACADIA Academy has filed for Maine nonprofit status.
2. The Governing Board makeup shows clinicians and teachers with experience to oversee the chosen curriculum.

### **Questions, Concerns**

1. The proposal did not contain a clear plan for the Board to review and evaluate the success of the school and the school leaders or identify the data to be used in making evaluative determinations.
2. The plan did not provide evidence of a Governing Board that functions independently of the John F. Murphy Homes, Inc. as stipulated in the applicant instructions.
3. The parent member of the Governing Board would not have voting rights.
4. No community person has yet been identified for the Governing Board.
5. Given the current lack of expertise in the area of management of public and private funds, we question whether the Board has the capacity to oversee the financial management of the school.
6. The Board currently lacks a diverse skill set to independently govern all aspects of the charter school.
7. The proposed director for the ACADIA Academy currently is the director of the Margaret Murphy Center for Children (MMCC). With this role and a leadership role in other facilities, limited time and focus would be available to be spent on the new charter school.

## **Governance Summary**

Are we convinced that the Board members and the Executive Leadership have the skills, background and understanding of their roles necessary to make this a viable and sustainable charter school?

- The job descriptions of the Director and Assistant Director are not clearly defined leaving little guidance or specificity of the roles and responsibilities for these key school leadership positions.
- The current Board makeup of clinicians and teachers does not provide skills in finances and legal knowledge. ACADIA Academy becomes dependent on John F. Murphy Homes Inc. for these skill sets making for a Board that does not look like an independent entity.

Does the Governance Plan support the vision and the mission of the school?

- ACADIA Academy is entwined with MMCC and John F. Murphy Homes Inc. they are dependent on them for leadership, staff, professional development, legal, and financial expertise. Thus there is not an independent support system in place for their vision and mission.

## **D. Business and Financial Services – Budget, Financial Management, Facilities, Transportation, Insurance, Food Service, Closure Protocol**

### **Strengths**

1. John F. Murphy Homes, Inc. has agreed to provide \$60,000 in startup funds. There was no mention of arrangements for pay back in the narrative, but in the interview session a representative from John F. Murphy Homes, Inc. replied it would not expect to be paid back.
2. The school will be contracting with John F. Murphy Homes, Inc. for financial services.
3. ACADIA Academy expects to have a two-month cash reserve by year three of operation.
4. The applicant presented their desired facility requirements which include: classrooms, multi-purpose, library, teacher workspace, offices, and outdoor space.
5. Regarding transportation, the applicant plans to use multiple pick up spots in the Lewiston-Auburn area and plans to share costs with MMCC.

### **Questions, Concerns**

1. The school is reliant on John F. Murphy Homes, Inc. to provide fiscal knowledge, thereby the application did not present evidence that the school's leadership has a strong understanding of the appropriate delineation of roles and responsibilities among the governing board and administration regarding school finance.
2. The proposal did not clearly define how the school would ensure financial transparency.
3. The budget does not allow for the implementation of an innovative curriculum beyond the programs already determined.
4. Regarding a location for the school, the Governing Board has not yet decided on whether to lease, buy, or build a site.
5. The charter school will be relying on John F. Murphy Homes, Inc. for sound financial policies and processes for accounting, purchasing, payroll, internal controls, and insurance.

6. The proposal provided no evidence that the school, independent of John F. Murphy Homes, Inc. has adequate policies and processes for tracking enrollment and attendance eligibility; eligibility for free and reduced priced lunch; and students eligible for participation in other federal and state programs.
7. Although the applicant is relying on John F. Murphy Homes, Inc. for software and accounting systems there is no contract in the application to provide evidence that it is appropriate for use in public charter schools and users are fully trained.
8. The application lacked evidence to support facilities-related budget assumptions.
9. The application did not provide specific details regarding third party relationships.
10. The school does not plan to provide lunch in year one for students not eligible for free/reduced lunch.
11. The application was unclear about how their plans to use the Good Shepherd Food Bank to provide lunch resources for students eligible for free /reduced lunch would meet the requirements for the Federal School Lunch Program.
12. Plans for transportation for students with disabilities were not present in the application.
13. The application did not describe transportation options for students outside the catchment area.
14. Evidence of insurance, surety bond for CFO, or equipment specific to ACADIA Academy as a separate entity was not provided in the application.
15. The placement plan in case of closure was inadequate; as it just included providing parents with a list of private and public schools, and enrollment information.
16. The closure protocol that would allow an orderly transition was inadequate; it spoke only to staff creating a system of student, financial, and asset records.

### **Business and Financial Services Summary**

Are we convinced that the applicant has operating capital adequate to open the school and for the first years of operation and have a viable sustainable model for the next five years?

- The applicant is reliant on John F. Murphy Homes, Inc. for startup costs and deficit coverage through year three without a clearly defined contract in place outlining the obligations of either party.

Does the Financial Plan support the vision and mission of the school?

- The Financial plan lacks clear connections to the mission and vision of the proposed charter school.
- The budget did not indicate separate funds for the summer program.

### **E. Education Services Providers**

John F. Murphy Homes, Inc. is designated as the Education Service Provider (ESP), but no service contract was provided. Through questions asked during the interview, the development team stated that John F. Murphy Homes, Inc. will provide financial resources, Human Resources (HR), safety coordination, training, clinical and special education services along with \$60,000 in startup funds. Given that there was no ESP agreement or draft contract to review, the Review Team has no assurances that the agreement will be in the best interests of the charter school or its students.

Given the lack of a clear contract in the application, evaluation criteria in the ESP section could not be addressed. It is a requirement that the service agreement or final draft be included in the application. Although the application does contain a letter from John F. Murphy Homes, Inc., describing financial support, there is no further documentation of an ongoing relationship between ACADIA Academy and John F. Murphy Homes, Inc. after the initial startup year of operation. The Review Team found the descriptor inadequate to determine the appropriateness of the agreement for operating a successful public charter school.

### **ACADIA Academy Review Team Summary Statement**

The review Team of Nichi Farnham, Chair, Laurie Pendleton, and Shelley Reed conducted a thorough review of the ACADIA Academy application to open a public charter school in the State of Maine. Maine Department of Education Consultant for Students with Disabilities, Peg Armstrong and Early Childhood Consultant, Susan Reed, provided subject area expertise for the review of the application. The Interview with the Governing Board and Development Team of ACADIA Academy was held on September 26, 2014.

The Review Team's recommendation is that the ACADIA Academy application not move forward for further consideration by the Commission for the following reasons:

- The Review Team unanimously agrees that we do not have the confidence that the applicant has met the requirements of the RFP to create a successful, sustainable, high-quality public charter school.
- John F. Murphy Homes was designated as an Education Service Provider (ESP). However, a contract detailing this relationship was not included in the application. Therefore, the Review Team was not able to determine the effectiveness of this relationship.

#### **A. Education Plan**

- The selected curriculum and instructional delivery are not innovative.
- The Review team is concerned that the school's selected curriculum and connection with the MMCC may compromise their ability to educate students with special needs in the least restrictive environment.
- The school did not describe how it would use assessment information to modify the educational program and improve instruction, student learning and staff development.
- The program described for Pre-K students was not integrated and is not suitable to the needs of these students.
- Two key components of the program, "Individualized Learning Plans" and "Choice Study Units" were not fully described so it is difficult to determine their educational merit.
- The proposal did not describe a vision for what the school would look like in five to ten years.

#### **B. Organizational Plan**

- There is concern that the student recruitment and marketing plan may not result in a diverse student population.

- The plan lacks a comprehensive teacher recruitment and retention plan and the teacher evaluation plan is not aligned to Maine’s expectations for teacher evaluation.
- The start-up and pre-opening plans lack necessary details.
- The plans for parent and community involvement are limited.

**C. Governance**

- The role of the Board in evaluating the program and the school’s leadership was not presented.
- The plan did not provide evidence that the Board would be a functioning, independent entity.
- The current Board lacks the experience necessary to run an independent, public charter school.
- The job descriptions of the school’s leadership are not clearly defined.
- The proposed director’s current and ongoing employment with the MMCC brings into question their ability to independently manage ACADIA Academy.
- ACADIA Academy is entwined with MMCC and John F. Murphy Homes Inc. They are dependent on them for leadership, staff, professional development, legal, and financial expertise.

**D. Business and Financial Services**

- The applicant is reliant on John F. Murphy Homes, Inc. for startup costs and deficit coverage through year three without a clearly defined contract in place outlining the obligations of either party.
- The school relationship with John F. Murphy Homes, Inc. brings into question the delineation of roles and responsibilities regarding school finance.
- Transportation and school lunch plans do not describe how they would support the needs of all students.
- The plans in the event of a closure of the school are underdeveloped.

**F. Education Service Providers**

- John F. Murphy Homes, Inc. is designated as the Education Service Provider (ESP) but no service contract was provided. Given that there was no ESP agreement or draft contract to review, the Review Team has no assurances that the agreement will be in the best interests of the charter school or its students.

## Reviewers' Evaluation for Public Charter School Application

Applicant **INSPIRE ME ACADEMY (IMA)**

Date 10/10/14

Review Team: John Bird (Chair), Jana Lapoint and Michael Wilhelm

### An Education Plan

A.1. Mission, Vision, Identification of targeted student population and the community the school hopes to serve

#### Strengths

- **A mission and vision are clearly articulated and specific vision elements are noted.**
- **Target populations are identified.**

#### Questions, Concerns

- **The need for the school in the catchment area is not clearly supported with adequate evidence.**
- **Provided statistical information on the catchment area with the current student test results, but did not demonstrate how IMA would meet those students' needs.**
- **It is noted that few options exist for the populations IMA intends to serve, but the options that do exist are not provided.**

Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.

#### A.2. Academic Program

#### Strengths

- **The Understanding by Design model for unit design is noted as a model that will be employed and an example is provided that demonstrates its use.**
- **Understanding by Design is a sound planning structure.**
- **A full-time foreign language teacher is included in the proposal.**
- **Considerable time is devoted daily to physical education, math and writing instruction.**

#### Questions, Concerns

- **Proposal refers to IMA's intent to adopt some practices from Achievement First Schools, but does not specify what an Achievement First School is or provide any research-based literature that supports this type of school.**
- **No evidence presented to substantiate Achievement First's success or its decision-making process; also no adequate vetting of its credentials.**
- **No established curriculum, only a design model.**
- **No evidence of how IMA will apply Maine Learning Results and Common Core to the curriculum.**

- **No curriculum to begin the year and unrealistic expectations that teachers will teach and develop curriculum simultaneously.**
- **A list of 10 Fundamental Elements of Quality Instruction is provided, but no research base is noted to support the list. It is unclear what research says about the impact of each of these elements.**

Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.

### A.3. Special Student Populations

#### Strengths

- **The idea of dual-certified teachers.**
- **Inclusion model (least restrictive environment).**

#### Questions, Concerns

- **There is no evidence to support adequate knowledge of current practices, policies and procedures for ensuring a sound special education program. Although the application “speaks” of specialized teachers and commitment to inclusion, there is no evidence of the required description of specialized policy and procedure.**

Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.

### A.4. Assessment

#### Strengths

- **Speaks to the need for assessments and instructional modifications every six weeks.**
- **Time set aside in the schedule for progress monitoring.**
- **Weekly opportunities for staff data meetings are built into the school schedule to allow for data analysis and application to instructional decision making.**

#### Questions, Concerns

- **No specific measures are noted for the six-week monitoring program and no additional details are provided regarding what will be monitored.**
- **No assessment process is outlined for content areas beyond reading and math.**
- **Proposal notes that NECAP assessment will be used, but Maine is no longer using this assessment for math or ELA.**
- **No description of how State Assessments will be used.**

Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.

### A.5. School Climate and Discipline

#### Strengths

- **Provided expectations of student conduct with emphasis on “GREAT” values (i.e., generosity, respect, enthusiasm, achievement and tenacity).**
- **Parents would sign a commitment to three meetings per year and would be encouraged to participate in an advisory group.**

#### Questions, Concerns

- **No policy for student discipline except a program titled “Character Development”, which is not detailed.**

Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.

## Education Plan Summary

Is the Education Plan compelling? Are we convinced that the applicant make a strong case for the quality of the program? Describe why or why not.

- **The education plan is not compelling. It is difficult to assess the quality of a program when the curriculum remains undefined, the use of assessment is unclear, and the expectations for teachers are potentially unrealistic.**

Does the Education Plan support the vision and mission of the school? Describe why or why not.

- **The vision and mission are largely adapted from Achievement First Schools, but the applicant’s vetting of the success of these schools and their components is incomplete at best.**

## B Organizational Plan

### B.1. School Calendar and Daily Schedule

#### Strengths

- **Increased both the number of school days per year and also the hours per day.**
- **Expects and articulates ways parents will be engaged with the school.**

#### Questions, Concerns

Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.

### B.2. Student Recruitment and Enrollment

#### Strengths

- **A new board member with marketing experience has been recruited.**
- **Other board members appear to be well connected to many of the communities in the catchment area.**

Questions, Concerns

- **Evidence of potential for student recruitment and enrollment projections is largely anecdotal and speculative.**
- **IMA has convened three meetings to introduce the program to the community. Attendance overall has been modest, which would indicate that greater outreach is needed.**
- **There were no enrollment projections that would indicate their ability to meet enrollment targets.**

Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.

B.3. Staffing and Human Resources

Strengths

- **Overall number of teaching staff appears adequate for the projected number of students.**
- **Projected funding for both professional development and health benefits for full-time staff.**

Questions, Concerns

- **No evidence that recruiting and retaining effective teachers will be effective, especially given the high expectations (e.g., dual certification in special education) and low salaries.**
- **There is no fully articulated teacher evaluation process, no reference to state requirements and no specifics about rewards for positive teacher performance.**

Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.

B.4. Pre-Opening Plan

Strengths

- **Application reflects the school is aware of what is needed for compliance.**

Questions, Concerns

Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.

### B.5. Management and Operation

Strengths
Questions, Concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Sample employee handbook appears to be generic and the rationale for its inclusion unclear.</b></li><li>• <b>Role of board advisory group as described suggests it would assume functions normally the prerogative of the board and staff.</b></li><li>• <b>While there is time set aside for professional development, there is no plan for it.</b></li><li>• <b>Lack of clarity on how to select the school leader and roles of board and staff in assessing the school's overall progress.</b></li></ul>
Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.

### B.6. Community Development

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Board President is very connected to the community, with demonstrated ability to reach out.</b></li></ul>
Questions, Concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>No evidence of a relationship with the local school district except for possible transportation arrangement.</b></li><li>• <b>While presenting a lot of evidence to suggest strong community involvement, the evidence indicates that a lot of it is tentative at this point.</b></li></ul>
Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.

## Management and Operations Summary

Are we convinced that the school has an effective plan to recruit, retrain and grow an outstanding staff? Describe why or why not. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>IMA does not have an adequate plan to recruit, retain and grow outstanding staff, attributed to unrealistic expectations of recruiting dual-certified teachers, teacher work load, limited salary budget, and inadequate professional development plan.</b></li></ul>
Do the Management and Operations Plan support the vision and mission of the school? Describe why or why not. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>While the management and operation's plan supports the School's mission and vision, the expectations placed on the head of school for curriculum, professional development, program management, supervision, and community interaction are potentially unrealistic.</b></li></ul>

## C Governance

### C. 1. Governing Body

#### Strengths

- **The small group of founders is passionately dedicated to the School’s mission and vision.**

#### Questions, Concerns

- **Governing Board is too small and lacks the skill-set diversity to meet IMA’s governance needs. Using an advisory group to fill this gap is inadequate.**
- **There is confusion about the role of the Board and head of school in operating the school. The review team is troubled by the proposed employment of an “executive director” who would be directly attached to the Board.**
- **By-laws are generic and need to be tailored to fit the needs of IMA.**
- **Board positions need defined terms of office.**

Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.

### C. 2. Governing Board Composition

#### Strengths

- **The Board has a passion for their proposal evidenced by the amount of work completed by a very few to submit a full application for review.**

#### Questions, Concerns

- **Governing Board is too small and lacks the skill-set diversity to meet IMA’s governance needs, despite the recent inclusion of a member with an impressive marketing background.**
- **Board is top-heavy with educators, which perhaps explains their comfort level playing a hands-on role in the development and execution of the academic program.**

Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.

## Governance Summary

Are we convinced that the Board members and Executive Leadership have the skills, background and understanding of their roles necessary to make this a viable and sustainable public charter school? Describe why or why not.

- **The review team concludes that the School’s Founders lack the skills, background and role understanding needed to turn their mission and vision into a viable school (e.g., evidence indicates that the founders do not understand the board’s role as policy makers vs. the role of the head and staff as hands-on managers).**

Does the Governance Plan support the vision and mission of the school? Describe why or why not.

- **The Board appears to endorse fully the mission and vision as articulated in the application.**

## D Business and Financial Services

### D. 1. Budget

Strengths

- **Comprehensive budget presented.**

Questions, Concerns

- **The budget presented requires an ambitious fund-raising effort to balance. A grant and federal aid were included, neither of which has been formally requested. No evidence has been offered (e.g., tentative letters of funding support pending obtaining a charter) that the grants IMA' founders are pursuing will be forthcoming.**
- **There did not appear to be any contingency plan if the fund-raising effort was unsuccessful.**

Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.

### D.2. Financial Management

Strengths

- **Indicates that the School will meet all requirements for financial and systems reporting.**

Questions, Concerns

- **No evidence of understanding of the financial systems and controls needed to run the School.**

Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.

### D. 3. Facilities

Strengths

- **Have demonstrated a number of possibilities for school location.**
- **First choice for locating IMA needs a formal commitment from the owner. but is an excellent location.**

<p>Questions, Concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>While there have been discussions with possible facility owners/operators, nothing is firm at this point.</b></li> </ul>
<p>Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.</p>

D. 4. Transportation

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Plan to have parents bring students to school or car pool if outside the Sanford/Springdale catchment area.</b></li> <li>• <b>There is public transportation that goes right by the first choice of school building.</b></li> </ul>
<p>Questions, Concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Transportation funds in the budget are not supported by any documentation.</b></li> <li>• <b>Has made contact with the local superintendent about sharing transportation, but no letter in the application to that effect.</b></li> </ul>
<p>Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.</p>

D.5. Insurance

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Adequate funds have been included in the budget to cover all insurance needed to operate the School.</b></li> </ul>
<p>Questions, Concerns</p>
<p>Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.</p>

D. 6. Food Service

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>All students will be provided free breakfast, lunch and snacks.</b></li> </ul>
<p>Questions, Concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Food service funds are not supported by any documentation or known comparable program descriptions.</b></li> </ul>
<p>Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.</p>

#### D. 7. Closure Protocol

##### Strengths

- **Understands all the reports needed for closure.**

##### Questions, Concerns

Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.

### Business and Financial Services Summary

Are we convinced that the applicant has operating capital adequate to open the school and for the first years of operation and have a viable sustainable model for the next five years? Describe why or why not.

- **It is unclear at best that IMA will have adequate funding to open its doors, and the supporting documentation for cost projections is not provided.**

Does the Finance Plan support the vision and mission of the school? Describe why or why not.

- **It is not clear that the finance plan will support the mission and vision given that its expectations for staff are not supported with adequate salary funds, that some cost center lines are minimal and rely on donations and are estimations lacking supporting evidence to lend credibility to those estimations.**

### E Education Service Providers

##### Strengths

- **Not applicable.**

##### Questions, Concerns

Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.

Does the Education Service Providers Plan support the vision and mission of the school? Describe why or why not.

##### Strengths

- **Not applicable.**

##### Questions, Concerns

Address the overall section not each individual criteria. However if the Criteria is not adequate write your concern. These notes may be used at the in-person interview to address concerns.

## Application Summary

Are you convinced that this is a unique viable model that will meet the needs of the students it wishes to serve? Describe why or why not.

- **Though the IMA application presents a mission and vision that could meet a need in the catchment area, the application lacks the depth of knowledge, understanding and detail – reflected throughout Sections A through D – needed to succeed at this time. Regrettably, we recommend that the Commission not move this application forward to the interview phase of the process, but encourage the applicant to address the issues raised in this report and resubmit the application in another year.**

**Maine Virtual Academy Review Team Report and Recommendation**

by Chair Michael Wilhelm, Ande Smith and John Bird.

The team was assisted by Peg Armstrong, Abby Monahan, and Kristi Littlefield from the Department of Education, Will Diehl from UNE, and Bob Kautz MCSC Executive Director.

**A. Education Plan – Mission, Vision, Targeted Student Population; Academic Program; Special Student Population; Assessment; School Climate; and Discipline**

**Strengths:**

- The school offers a clearly stated mission and vision and provides for a research-driven program that aligns with state and federal laws and policies.
- The Educational Service Provider will provide a broad array of course offerings as well as other programs and resources. The curriculum will be aligned to the Maine Learning Results and Common Core by the education service provider.
- The choice of education service provider (K12) is supported by documentation of successful programs, most notably a recently established school in New Mexico with similar demographics.
- Requirements for graduation are proposed to exceed the State minimum.
- Student performance will be monitored with a data driven system of assessments.
- Individual student learning plans will be created to address the various needs of students.
- The application presents a special education service model that is comprehensive.
- School climate,, in a non-traditional sense, will be monitored by Learning Coaches, teachers and a counselor.
- School meets need for rural and some student segments( i.e.; bullying victim).

**Questions/Concerns:**

- The student teacher ratio appears high.
- It is not evident that there is sufficient quality control based on hiring, orientation and professional development practices?
- Graduation requirements are based on credit accumulation will little reference to future proficiency based graduation requirements.
- The application does not clearly demonstrate how the needs of all identified populations, including those needing alternative assessments, will be addressed.
- Culture and social interaction are a challenge in this model and will require strong execution.
- ELL will be challenging, but is adequately addressed.

## **Education Plan Summary**

**Is the Education Plan compelling? Does the applicant make a strong case for the quality of the program? Does the Education Plan support the vision and mission of the school?**

The Education Plan for MEVA is well articulated and dependent upon an experienced Education Service Provider. All components of the plan appear to support the mission and vision of the school.

### **B. Organizational and Operational Plan – School Calendar and Daily Schedule; Student Recruitment and Enrollment; Staffing and Human Resources; Pre-Opening Plan; Management Operations; Parent and Community Involvement**

#### **Strengths:**

- The school provides for a nationally recognized professional development program.
- The educational service provider will provide a plan and expertise for recruiting staff and students.
- There is a comprehensive evaluation plan in which the CEO will play a significant role.
- There is a data -driven bonus system to incentivize teachers.
- The core staff will be living and working in Maine.
- A specific “building” location for the school will provide for greater accessibility to staff for students and parents and for greater professional collaboration and development.
- CEO, CFO, and teachers employed by Board and all staff evaluated by CEO.
- Calendar will be advantageous for some students.
- Excellent pre-opening plan.
- The governing board is knowledgeable, diverse and invested.
- Potential the moderately increased teacher budget could attract quality teachers.

#### **Questions, Concerns**

- Salaries appear to at the low –end and could impact size of teacher talent pool.
- Training of Learning Coaches could be more comprehensive, given what is expected of them.
- Greater clarity is needed with regard to the evaluative relationship of the Program Manager (an employee of K12) with the CEO.
- There is not much evidence provided of community partners.
- It may be that Special Education staffing levels are too low to meet student needs.
- There is little evidence of outreach to local school systems.
- No special education administrator is noted.

## **Organizational and Operational Plan Summary**

**Does the school have an effective plan to recruit, retain and grow an outstanding staff? Does the Management and Operation Plan support the vision and mission of the school?**

The school presents an aggressive plan to gather students from the entire state and various academic backgrounds. The school also articulates a comprehensive support plan for its students. MEVA proposes incentives for teachers as well as extensive professional development to enable recruitment but may be hampered by low salaries, high teacher student ratios, and the challenges of working virtually with learning coaches.

## **C. Governance – Governing Body, Governing Board Composition**

### **Strengths**

- The Board is highly qualified and represents diverse and appropriate skill sets. New board members bring school and business management expertise.
- Board members articulated an understanding of and passion for the mission of the school. Board chair has virtual experience with parents and community.
- Job descriptions of the CEO and CFO (employed by the Board and responsible for overall compliance) are described as assisting the Board in the oversight and supervision of the ESP.
- The Board has been meeting regularly to prepare the application.
- The Board will access a consultant other than K12 as a resource.

### **Questions, Concerns**

- The organizational chart does not reflect the need for the Board to invest full administrative authority in the CEO relative to evaluation and supervision of the Program Manager.
- Committees of the Board to interface with students, parents, and communities have not been fully defined or formed.
- The terms for governing committee members appear to be for one year with possible re-election annually with no other term limits in the by laws.
- Reliance on K12 to manage metrics, although reliance mitigated somewhat by teachers, CEO and staff.

### **Governance Summary**

**Are we convinced that the Board members and the Executive Leadership have the skills, background and understanding of their roles necessary to make this a viable and sustainable charter school? Does the Governance Plan support the vision and the mission of the school?**

As noted above the Board has the background and skills to be highly competent and the administrative leadership team appears on paper to lead the school and support the Board in its functions. The Board appears completely invested in the mission and vision of the school, but will

require a high functioning CEO to ensure that the Board is effective in its oversight. It is however, hard to extract the ESP for general program weakness or weak results.

**D. Business and Financial Services – Budget, Financial Management, Facilities, Transportation, Insurance, Food Service, Closure Protocol**

**Strengths**

- K12 can provide start up costs for first year.
- Interest from potential students/parents remains high to ensure enrollment projections, thereby providing sufficient funding.
- CFO and annual budget process will give the Board a tool to effectively manage the ESP.
- Budget appears strong.
- Mature policies and industry leading accounting package selected with K12 support.

**Questions, Concerns**

- No evidence of insurance for Board protection.
- The CFO position description should ensure the necessary knowledge for reporting and be familiar with state fund accounting.
- Dollars for salaries may be too few to secure the best possible teachers.
- The financial implications of the face to face expectations are not articulated.
- The application lacks much financial detail re: transportation, instructional equipment, contracts/agreements needed for special needs and related services.  
At times, budget detail as presented is difficult to understand.

**Business and Financial Services Summary**

**Are we convinced that the applicant has operating capital adequate to open the school and for the first years of operation and have a viable sustainable model for the next five years? Does the Financial Plan support the vision and mission of the school?**

While funding projections suggest solid operating revenues and reserves in the first three years, there remain questions as noted above about funding for experienced teachers, face to face teacher/student interactions, special education needs, and transportation.

**E. Education Service Provider**

**Strengths**

- K12 is the largest provider of online educational services kindergarten through high school in the nation. The application provides a list of the schools served in the U. S.
- The scope of services, resources, roles and responsibilities of the ESP are clearly described in the proposed contract between MEVA and K12.
- The school’s independence from the ESP is well delineated and the school’s role and responsibility for evaluating K12’s performance is clearly stated.
- The Board understands its role. By hiring most of the staff and retaining direct control through the CEO/CFO, the Board is well positioned to manage the vendor.

- Standard assurances like the right to terminate the contract for any reason will buttress the Board’s ability to manage the vendor.

**Questions/Concerns**

- K12 has received mixed reviews and has received some negative press. How will the school address these issues with parents and how will it insure that the issues raised by other authorizers will not occur?
- The contract must stipulate that MEVA can terminate its contract without cause.

**Does the Education Service Provider’s plan support the vision and mission of the school? Describe why or why not.**

Yes. As presented in the application, the Education Service Provider’s plan fully supports the mission and vision of the school. The mission of the school is to provide a robust virtual school for students in grades 7-12. The Education Service Provider will provide support in all aspects of this endeavor.

**Maine Virtual Academy Review Team Summary Statement**

The Maine Charter School Commission review team of Michael Wilhelm, Ande Smith, and John Bird conducted a thorough review of the Maine Virtual Academy application. The Interview with the Governing Board was held on October 3, 2014. The review team reached the following conclusions:

The applicant has made a good faith effort to address the concerns of the Commission from its previous application, namely:

- The Board will employ all staff except for the program manager and office manager,
- The school will have a physical location in Maine and all teachers , administrators and staff will live and work in Maine,
- Board members have changed, displaying the necessary skills and background to govern the enterprise,
- Organizationally, the Board and CEO will have supervisory and evaluation responsibilities for all staff,
- The Board will have its own evaluation tool to evaluate the ESP,
- The Career Pathways program has been enhanced,
- CEO recruitment has already begun with a possible CEO with Superintendent experience identified, and the position salary has been increased,
- Salaries for teachers have increased to encourage more applicants,
- A more complex system of formative assessments has been developed to include the NWEA,
- It will be expected that the CEO will assume the role of “superintendent” and connect with superintendents across the state.

The committee found each section of the current application to be fully compliant.

The changes in this application in terms of governance and operations in comparison to earlier applications by this school provide greater assurance that the Board will be successfully able to manage the ESP and is sufficiently independent. In addition, the school should be made subject to the risk mitigations generally incorporated into the MeCA contract, such as unilateral right to terminate and small school populations until operational success is determined. These expectations, particularly in conjunction with Board-hired teachers will provide the opportunity to demonstrate this ESP's issues in other states are not replicated in Maine.

The Review Team's recommendation is that the Maine Virtual Academy's application move forward for further consideration by the Commission.