

# **Cornville Regional Charter School**

## **Renewal Recommendation Report 2016**

Review Team: Shelley Reed, Chair, Jana Lapoint and Mike Wilhelm

November 6, 2016

### Background:

On June 30, 2016 the Maine Charter School Commission, acting in accord with Chapter 3: Procedures for Charter School Renewal, issued to Cornville Regional Charter School a performance report of the school's performance during its first four years of its initial charter, and gave the school the opportunity to respond regarding factual inaccuracies within the report. Also issued to the school was the Renewal Guidance to begin the renewal process.

On July 14, 2016 the Maine Charter School Commission issued to Cornville Regional Charter School the Charter Renewal Application. The application described the application process and the rubrics which were to be applied. Cornville Regional Charter School submitted its renewal application prior to the September 30, 2016 due date and was reviewed by the Review Team, and relevant members of Maine Dept. of Education for special education and budgetary reviews. On October 14, 2016 the Maine Charter School Commission's Review Team for Cornville Regional Charter School completed a site visit with administration and governing board members. On October 18, 2016 a public hearing was held at Cornville Regional Charter School with community members, parents and students addressing the Review Team regarding the school's performance over the past four years.

According to Section 5: Criteria, the review included "academic performance, fiscal performance, governance, effective leadership, instructional quality, compliance with terms of the charter contract and applicable laws and regulations, mission fulfillment with consideration also of parent and community support and significant positive or negative trends in performance, operation, and/or governance."

The Commission must rule on the renewal no later than 45 days after receiving the application.

Recommendation:

Today on November 8, 2016 the Review Team is bringing forth a recommendation to renew the Cornville Regional Charter School K-8 program for a period of 5 years. In making this decision the Review Team has answered the essential question, *“Do you believe that the applicant has achieved the standards and targets stated in the charter contract, is organizationally and fiscally viable, and has been faithful to the terms of the contract and applicable laws?”*

Over the four year period CRCS has demonstrated competent and energized school leadership, Governing Board members and staff who have collected and analyzed data, made adjustments and solved emerging issues while maintaining faithfulness to the terms of the contract with Maine Charter School Commission and to all applicable laws.

As noted earlier, the Board, administration and staff have been committed and adaptive. They have shown the ability to solve problems as they emerge and move the school forward.

The results of four years on the Performance Measures shows a charter school that meets the targets, or in the case of growth and proficiency, comes within percentage points of its aggressive targets.

CRCS teachers have participated in many conferences and professional development activities over the past 4 years, either presenting, coaching, or hosting other schools to learn from their proficiency-based and mass customized learning approach.

During the course of 4 years, CRCS has maintained stable financials and fiscal sustainability. Financials are reviewed regularly by the board and an annual audit has been conducted for each fiscal year.

CRCS is organizationally and fiscally viable as evidenced by their submission of monthly budget reports and end of the year monitoring reports.

The school has impacted children in positive ways such as allowing them to feel accepted and supported, excited about learning, and able to have ownership in their learning.

With independent self directed respectful learners throughout the school, CRCS has proven that a rural school with 96% per pupil funds can achieve the goals required for a public charter school and more.

**Maine Charter School Commission**  
**Reviewer's Evaluation for a Public Charter School**  
**Renewal Application**

**Applicant: Cornville Regional Charter School**

This rubric is intended to assist review team members in analyzing applications for charter school renewal.

- This analysis occurs after the application has been verified to be complete.
- This rubric will be used by team members to aid in his/her recommendation to the full Commission.
- This rubric is organized similarly to the renewal application and its topical sections.
- Members will review each subsection against various criteria provided in the rubric.
- Based on those criteria, the member will rate the subsection as being inadequate, minimally developed, fully developed, or excellent.
- Each member shall document his/her respective determinations with respect to his/her rating of the subsection.

Inadequate. The reviewer has found that this section of the application lacks detail or raises serious concerns about the applicant's ability to maintain that aspect of a successful, sustainable, high-quality charter school.

Minimally Developed. This section lacks meaningful detail or provides only superficial information. It does not create confidence in the success of the applicant to maintain that aspect of a successful, sustainable, high-quality charter school.

Fully Developed. This section evidences detailed preparation of the application and addresses key issues fully. It provides strong indication that the applicant can successfully maintain that aspect of a successful, sustainable, high-quality charter school.

Excellent. This section evidences a comprehensive understanding and readiness to address the key issues and provides superior detail supporting that aspect of a successful, sustainable, high-quality charter school.

- After all sections are reviewed by each member, the review team will convene to discuss the application and formulate its recommendation to the full Commission.
- The rubric documents may be subsequently referred to by members of the Commission in considering subsequent actions on the application.
- All notes taken on or in conjunction with the rubric, including those on this worksheet constitute a working paper of the Commission and must be preserved in the application file as required by law.
- Members should preserve notes and the rubric during consideration of an application and provide them to commission staff for the application file when no longer needed.

## Looking Back

### A. Academic Performance

Criteria	Notes
1. Using the results contained in the Performance Framework, the school has or has not met its performance expectations.	CRCS has consistently met performance indicators in student attendance, financial performance/sustainability, Governance Board Performance and Stewardship, Adequacy of facilities, parent and community engagement. In the areas of academic proficiency and growth CRCS has met or partially met (within 5 points) its substantially aggressive targets. School social and academic climate was met 3 out of 4 years and partially met one year due to a student survey not being administered. Recurrent enrollment has been strong in the last 2 years.
2. Details of academic performance – related evidence, supplemental data or contextual information that may not be captured in authorizer records. <i>Submissions may include supplements related to the Renewal Performance Report.</i>	<p>The CRCS Renewal application sites the academic performance as coming within the standard deviation. To better meet the needs they intend to focus on direct instruction and instructional strategies.</p> <p>CRCS has submitted with its application positive reports and testimonials from parents on the school climate, student performance, and their children’s interest in school.</p>
3. Evidence of outcomes related to any mission-specific academic goals and measures established in the charter contract not already captured in Renewal Performance report.	<p>See family testimonials in the application as an evidence of outcomes.</p> <p>Every year there has been a long wait list, indicating the success of the school.</p>

### Looking Back - Academic Performance

#### *Strengths*

It is evident from the data provided that students have met performance targets and have a vested interest in their learning. The academic mission and vision of the school has been most recently met through a mass customized learning approach that allows students to learn at their own pace.

CRCS has created a culture of independent, self-directed, respectful learners throughout the school.

CRCS is becoming a leader for mass-customized, proficiency-based education in Maine and its staff have made multiple presentations out of state.

CRCS has built its program in 4 years which will allow them in the years to come to tweak instructional strategies.

*Questions, Concerns*

CRCS has noted that there is a need to look for the instructional strategies that are most effective and that now that it has a curricular platform and approach, needs to provide staff development for teachers to ensure the most effective instructional approaches.

Address the overall section. These notes may be used at the public hearing to address concerns.

Rate: ( ) Inadequate ( ) Minimally Developed ( ) Fully Developed ( **X** ) **Excellent**

**Looking Back B. Financial Performance**

Criteria	Notes
1. The school has provided assurance that it is current in meeting its liabilities, including but not limited to payroll taxes, debt service payments, and employee benefits.  See Appendix D for Budget years 4-7.	CRCS has provided a budget that is adequate to meet its needs and projects a future budget to continue to do so.
2. The Applicant has provided financial performance-related evidence, supplemental data or contextual information that may not be captured in authorizer records. Submissions may include, but are not limited to, updated financial records and other updates regarding the Renewal Performance Report. Please reference the specific Performance Framework measures to which the information applies, as appropriate.	CRCS has provided evidence of anticipated financial performance for years 4-7.

**Looking Back - Financial Performance**

*Strengths*

CRCS has provided evidence of frugal and responsible budgeting over the last 4 years. It has benefitted from a \$480,000 federal grant as well as other local grants.

*Questions, Concerns*

None at this time.

Address the overall section. These notes may be used at the public hearing to address concerns.

Rate: ( ) Inadequate ( ) Minimally Developed ( ) Fully Developed ( **X** ) **Excellent**

## Looking Back C. Organizational Performance

Criteria	Notes
<p>1. The Applicant has provided organizational performance-related evidence, supplemental data or contextual information that may not be captured in authorizer records. Submissions may include evidence of current compliance in areas for which the school was found previously to be non-compliant or other updates relevant to the Renewal Performance Report. Please reference the specific Performance Framework measures to which the information applies, as appropriate.</p> <p>See Appendices            A – Governing Board Turnover            B - Staff Turnover            C – Student Turnover</p>	<p>CRCS has addressed transportation needs by adding routes and buses. The application indicated increasing transportation to areas of increased interest and potential growth.</p> <p>CRCS hired a teacher vs. an ed. tech to have a highly skilled instructor in place.</p> <p>The CRCS Board has changed from an elected board to one where the Board selects new members, which enables diversifying skill sets to meet the needs of the school.</p> <p>Staff turnover is limited and the teachers appear to be committed to the school.</p> <p>Student turnover has been a result of families moving, a difference in educational philosophy, choosing another school with larger peer group, and the desire for sports programming, and not a negative experience at the school.</p>
<p>2. The Applicant has provided evidence of outcomes related to any school-established organizational goals, as appropriate.</p>	<p>Under Governance Board Performance and Stewardship the process of becoming a board member changed.</p> <p>In 2015-16 School Leadership structure changed to move towards more distributive leadership through learning facilitators taking on responsibilities, phasing out the Principal.</p>

## Looking Back - Organizational Performance

### *Strengths*

CRCS has proactively addressed organizational issues when they have arisen and has shown that it is adept at self-examination, and flexible and adroit with regard to addressing its organizational needs, structure and the skills of its staff and moved towards distributive leadership, and with a selected vs. an elected board.

### *Questions, Concerns*

It is important that CRCS leadership continue to listen to staff members' concerns with regard to their added responsibility under the shared leadership plan so as to mitigate the possibility of staff being over extended or not as able to meet their instructional responsibilities.

Address the overall section. These notes may be used at the public hearing to address concerns.

Rate: ( ) Inadequate ( ) Minimally Developed ( **X** ) Fully Developed ( ) Excellent

## Looking to the Future

### A. Adjustments to the Performance Framework, if any

#### Performance Framework

Proposed change in application	Evaluator notes regarding proposed change
Changes NWEA Reading and Math growth measure from Fall to Spring to Spring to Spring assessment	<p>New students will still need baseline of Fall to Spring as the narrative states.</p> <p>Further scrutiny has revealed that there will also be a mid-year NWEA for RTI purposes and that the noted change should not adversely affect the ability to use NWEA scores for proscriptive purposes.</p>
Change from 80% will meet PLP(common core) to 100% of students will have a plan and know progress towards their goals	<p>The application states a previous difficulty in calculating those who have met or not met. Need to clarify the difficulty in calculating this.</p> <p>Why this change? Where is the assurance that the PLP will be reviewed with the students on a regular basis and be purposeful?</p>
In-house measure Fountas and Pinnell adjust to Spring to Spring to show 1 years growth. Keeps the same 80% of students making 1 years growth but adds once this has been maxed out-no more testing would be done on that part	Allows for more than 1 year of growth to be reflected as students move beyond that element.
Transportation and Food-breakfast added to the already established lunch program	Revised to reflect the school now provides both breakfast and lunch.

### Looking to the Future - Adjustments to the Performance Framework

#### *Strengths*

Change of date on showing 1 year's growth based on principles of learning and organization of learning times i.e. summer loss vs. hitting on what should be heights of learning in Spring. The applicant sites Fountas and Pinnell and NWEA as finding this a preferred measure of growth.

*Questions, Concerns*

At the visit CRCS spoke to the Spring to Spring NWEA saying the school uses Empower to look at what the learner did. The Review Team wondered if the school could do Fall to Spring and a Spring to Spring measure.

In speaking about the performance measure they seek to change regarding the 80% of students meeting the PLP to 100% having a PLP and understanding learning targets it was suggested that they look at maybe the goal shouldn't be about the PLPs but about getting everything into Empower. That seemed to be considered.

CRCS will need to look at how it has compiled its data over the last four years and adapt that data to its new testing time frame in order to provide a clear picture of performance over time.

PLP data will not be analyzed relative to students meeting their plans, but rather only that they have a plan.

What will happen to the data from the former?

Rate: ( ) Inadequate ( ) Minimally Developed ( **X** ) Fully Developed ( ) Excellent

**Looking to the Future**

**B. As applicable, review proposed improvements to the charter school as it relates to:**

Education Plan – Proposed changes	Evaluator notes regarding proposed change
A Mission, vision, identification of targeted student population and the community the school hopes to serve	Change from a K-8 charter school to serve early childhood age 4, to serve ages 12-20 on the Skowhegan campus and to serve ages 5-18 on the Cornville campus which now serves 5-14 will be handled under separate applications.
B Academic Program	
C Special Student Populations	
D Assessment	
E School Climate and Discipline	

**Looking to the Future - review proposed improvements to the charter school**

*Strengths*

Providing a Pre K and a high school program should not be considered relative to this application for renewal. However, a review of such efforts should reflect back on this performance report to determine capacity for such changes.

*Questions, Concerns*

At the site visit questions were raised about replicating the program into St. Albans, Newport, and Farmington with growth of demand. It was expressed by CRCS that this is not an immediate plan but noted a number of students now are coming from these areas.

Rate: ( ) Inadequate ( ) Minimally Developed ( **X** ) **Fully Developed** ( ) Excellent

**Looking to the Future - Education Plan Analysis Summary**

*Is the Education Plan adequate and appropriate? Are we convinced that the applicant makes a strong case for the quality of the program? Describe why or why not?*

CRCS regularly uses data to inform decisions and adjust to meeting learners’ needs accordingly. Having the program in place it articulates a desire to focus on greater academic growth and proficiency in the coming years.

CRCS comes from a place of intensive time investment in implementing its original mission and vision and wishes to carry out the same customized learning and proficiency based education in the future. The application states their intent to develop more instructional strategies to aid growth in learners.

CRCS’s education plan is both adequate and appropriate. The use of mass customized learning, the attention to the individual student’s needs and interests and the move toward a non-graded system appear to have been effective. Performance results substantiate this.

*Does the education Plan support the vision and mission of the school? Describe why or why not?*

It is apparent from the data that CRCS is an effective and well-functioning school with a strong and adaptive governing board and administration. All appear to be committed to the vision and mission of the school and the changes in instructional and assessment approaches, as well as adaptations to administration and governance support this conclusion. Most promising are the student performance results as evidence of a school that motivates students and meets their needs.

**Looking to the Future**

**As applicable, review proposed improvements to the charter school as it relates to:**

Organizational Plan – proposed changes	Evaluator notes regarding proposed change
A School Calendar and Daily Schedule	
B Student Recruitment and Enrollment	
C Staffing and Human Resources	This reflects the trajectory CRCS is on currently regarding organizational development
Adding distributive leadership responsibilities	This organizational approach both reflects and creates greater ownership of the schools mission among staff.

D Management and Operation	
E Parent and Community Development	

**Looking to the Future - Organizational Plan**

*Strengths*

Distributive leadership organizational structure recognizes and utilizes skills and abilities of staff rather than a structure that is authoritatively centralized in one person.

The Governing Board is flexible and adaptive board.

*Questions, Concerns*

Much discussion time was spent at the site visit to discuss the steps that have been taken to evolve into distributive leadership. Leaders had emerged working with data and instruction. Staff applied for leadership positions and were interviewed by the board. Positions are stipend and teaching workloads are adjusted.

The teacher-leaders expressed that they were very comfortable speaking with the Executive Director if their loads got out of balance or something was not working.

Rate: ( ) Inadequate ( ) Minimally Developed ( **X** ) **Fully Developed** ( ) Excellent

**Looking to the Future - Organizational Plan Analysis Summary**

*Is the Organizational Plan adequate and appropriate? Are we convinced that the applicant makes a strong case for the quality of the program? Describe why or why not?*

The Board and administration have provided sufficient evidence that the plan is both adequate and appropriate. The idea of leadership shared among the school's professionals appears to be part of the school's identity, accepted by all. Also, if it fails to work, it could easily revert to leadership by a head administrator.

*Does the Organizational Plan support the vision and mission of the school? Describe why or why not?*

Yes, it gives all staff an opportunity and voice to take part in the process of running the school which mirrors the mission and vision of the school where all learners are responsible for their learning and growth.

**Looking to the Future**

**As applicable, review proposed improvements to the charter school as it relates to:**

Governance Plan – proposed changes	Evaluator notes regarding proposed change
A Governing Body	No change
B Governing Board Composition	No change

<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <p>No change</p>
<p><i>Questions, Concerns</i></p> <p>At the site visit the Board Chair expressed excitement about the K-8 renewal and for the possibility of the PreK-12 expansion. She felt the current board was up to the task.</p> <p>Rate: ( ) Inadequate ( ) Minimally Developed ( <b>X</b> ) <b>Fully Developed</b> ( ) Excellent</p>

**Looking to the Future - Governance Plan Analysis Summary**

<p><i>Is the Governance Plan adequate and appropriate? Are we convinced that the applicant makes a strong case for the quality of the program? Describe why or why not?</i></p> <p>The governance plan is both adequate and appropriate. This is a small school with a small governing Board. Communication among all appears welcome and is a constant. It appears to be all about the programming, the culture and the performance of the students as reflected in the individualized approach to student learning.</p>
<p><i>Does the Governance Plan support the vision and mission of the school? Describe why or why not?</i></p> <p>The current model supports the vision and mission of the school and no change is in the renewal application</p>

**Looking to the Future**

**As applicable, review proposed improvements to the charter school as it relates to:**

Business and Financial Services – proposed changes	Evaluator notes regarding proposed change
A Budget	
B Financial Management	
C Facilities	
D Transportation	
E Insurance	

F Food Service	
Adds breakfast service along with the existing lunch program	Reflects current practice
G Closure Protocol	

**Looking to the Future - Business and Financial Services**

*Strengths*

Only change is adding breakfast that meets state and federal guidelines for food service that will not exceed their budgeted amount. The application states that this reflects what is already in existence.

*Questions, Concerns*

None at this time

Rate: ( ) Inadequate ( ) Minimally Developed ( ) Fully Developed ( **X** ) **Excellent**

**Looking to the Future - Business and Financial Services Analysis Summary**

*Are the Business and Financial Services adequate and appropriate? Are we convinced that the applicant makes a strong case for the quality of the program? Describe why or why not?*

Yes. CRCS financial services have been served by the same provider over its 4 years. This provider is also serving other charter schools and is well versed in their financial requirements. Budget is overseen by the Board on a regular basis.

*Do the Business and Financial Services support the vision and mission of the school? Describe why or why not?*

Yes. Supplying learners with good nutrition supports learners capacity to engage in their learning.

**Looking to the Future**

**As applicable, review proposed improvements to the charter school as it relates to:**

Education Service Providers – proposed changes	Evaluator notes regarding proposed change
Does not apply	

## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

*Do you believe that the applicant has achieved the standards and targets stated in the charter contract, is organizationally and fiscally viable, and has been faithful to the terms of the contract and applicable laws? Describe why or why not.*

Yes, over the four year period CRCS has demonstrated competent and energized school leadership, Governing Board members and staff who have collected and analyzed data, made adjustments and solved emerging issues while maintaining faithfulness to the terms of the contract with Maine Charter School Commission and to all applicable laws.

As noted earlier, the Board, administration and staff have been committed and adaptive. They have shown the ability to solve problems as they emerge and move the school forward.

The results of four years on the Performance Measures shows a charter school that meets the targets or in the case of growth and proficiency comes within percentage points of its aggressive targets.

CRCS teachers have participated in many conferences and professional development activities over the past 4 years, either presenting, coaching, or hosting other schools to learn from their proficiency-based and mass customized learning approach.

During the course of 4 years, CRCS has maintained stable financials and fiscal sustainability. Financials are reviewed regularly by the board and an annual audit has been conducted for each fiscal year.

CRCS is organizationally and fiscally viable as evidenced by their submission of monthly budget reports and end of the year monitoring reports.

The school has impacted children in positive ways such as allowing them to feel accepted and supported, excited about learning, and able to have ownership in their learning.

With independent self directed respectful learners throughout the school, CRCS has proven that a rural school with 96% per pupil funds can achieve the goals required for a public charter school and more.

*Overall Assessment: After a thorough analysis of a comprehensive body of objective evidence defined by the Performance Framework in the charter contract the recommendation for renewal of the charter is:*

**To renew**                    ( **X** )  
To not renew                (     )