

Summary Report of Review Team for Maine Virtual Academy (MeVA)

January 30, 2014

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Executive Summary

The Team reviewed the MeVA application and conducted an interview with MeVa on January 13, 2014. Based upon these and other materials submitted to the Team, MeVA is unanimously recommended to proceed to public hearing and further consideration by the Commission. As noted below, however, sub-committee members still have significant concerns that warrant further probing in this next stage of the application process and beyond. What follows is a summary of findings to support this recommendation and frame the concerns. The Team's observations take into consideration the comments of outside consultants who were asked to read the application.

Summary of Rating Scores – Mean Score = 26

	Ed Plan	Man/Ops	Gov	Biz/Fin	ESP	Total
Dick	4	4	3	4	4	19
John	7	5	5	5	5	27
Jana	5	6	7	7	7	32
Ande	7	2	6	6	5	26

Education Plan (scores ranged from 4-7)

In Support (representative comments)

- *Clearly stated mission and vision*
- *Overall the program appears to be able to accomplish its requirements*
- *There is a clear demand for a virtual school option*
- *The curriculum seems well developed.*
- *Metrics and assessment driven*
- *The special education plan seems straightforward*
- *The plan meets requirements for regular synchronous contact between teachers and students*
- *Maine-based core teaching staff is a plus*

Concerns (representative comments)

- *Considerable national data on a 'churning' enrollment from the chosen contractor, sometimes stemming from a complaint of an insufficient support system from teachers*
- *Importance of learning coaches and concern about quality control*
- *Proficiency-based diploma (e.g., compatibility of grading system with this model, implementation put off until 2018)*
- *Special education plan relies on out-of-state manager*
- *ELL challenging and not well addressed*

- *High student-teacher ratios*

Management & Operations Plan (scores ranged from 2-6)

In Support (representative comments)

- *Supervision and evaluation models for staff development in line with best practices in Maine and elsewhere*
- *A strong, nationally recognized professional development plan*
- *A metric-driven bonus system to incentivize teachers*
- *A national contractor with very strong management systems that will support the school in accordance with its model*

Concerns (representative comments)

- *Student recruitment plan weak related to target populations*
- *High student-teacher ratios and compensation levels may negatively impact teacher quality*
- *Learning coaches may not be as effective as needed to personalize the educational delivery system*
- *CEO single point of failure; relies on K12 to some extent for hiring, which calls independence into question*
- *Instructional staff will work from home; effective communication and supervision between teachers and managers may be problematic*
- *Important that staff know the Maine culture and unclear just how Maine-centric the staff will be*

Governance Plan (scores range from 3-7)

In Support (representative comments)

- *Board membership has diversity and strong experience in leadership and management, including business, human resources and online education*
- *Board members' reasons for serving also reflect understanding and passion for the mission*
- *The CEO and CFO positions look strong on paper (employed by board and responsible for overall compliance; also assist board in oversight and supervision of the ESP)*
- *Contract provision that can require termination of staff provides useful tool and lever on K12 execution*

Concerns (representative comments)

- *Board members' knowledge of proposed school operations seems uneven (only the three board officers seem highly involved)*
- *In its proposed educational programs and services contract with K12 it is clear that board has granted nearly full control to the contractor*
- *Director of Instruction is hired by and chiefly reports to the ESP*
- *There is other information in the application that presents a contradictory picture of the CEO's ability to oversee the ESP on behalf of the board*

Business & Financial Services Plan (scores range from 4-7)

In Support (representative comments)

- *The financial plan seems strong*
- *No-interest startup loan provides baseline funding to get on 'rails'.*
- *Assuming all goes as projected, there will be a substantial cash reserve at the end of the third year of operation.*
- *The contractor has strong internal management systems and controls.*
- *CFO and annual budget will give the board a tool to effectively manage the ESP*

Concerns (representative comments)

- *The board, its CEO and CFO, are almost totally reliant on the contractor's management systems for information on student success and financial health*
- *Concerned that more funds not being allocated to ensure that the school will be able to secure the best possible teachers in Maine*
- *Budget detail difficult to ascertain*

Education Service Provider (scores range from 4-7)

In Support (representative comments)

- *The proposed agreement with the ESP is well delineated and transparent.*
- *The nation's largest provider of online educational services for schools K thru 12*
- *The separation of the CEO and CFO reporting directly to the board is essential and the by-laws make this clear.*
- *The budget process will support oversight and the ability to drive performance*

Concerns (representative comments)

- *The governing board offered little insight into its decision to work with K12.*
- *The student achievement data offered as justified for choosing K12 almost devoid of comparisons with other public schools or non-K12 operated charter schools*
- *Some information in the application calls into question the de facto independence of the board from the ESP in controlling all aspects of the operation (e.g., teachers and staff employed by the ESP)*
- *The current budget backup provides some limitation on the comfort from how decisions are made, especially with respect to staffing.*
- *K12 has not demonstrated uniformly standout success as evidenced in the metrics provided in the package*