



**ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2018-2019**

***The Maine State Charter School Commission will provide thoughtful stewardship in authorizing and monitoring public charter schools consistent with State statutes to create unique, high-quality learning options for Maine students.***

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| School Information |

**February 2020**

On August 5, 2019 an announced on-site visit was made to the Baxter Academy for Technology and Science. The Maine Charter School Commission (MCSC) Review Team, MCSC school liaison, and MDOE Special Services team members team held interviews with school leadership, and the school’s Governing Board. They also reviewed data provided by the school. Information gathered from documents, interviews and on-site observation was used to determine the extent to which the school has met its contracted performance targets. The following report addresses the school’s performance on the performance framework. Attachment A is the site visit report, which include observation and discussion notes from the site visit.

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| Commission Liaison | Jana Lapoint |
| MCSC Executive Director | Bob Kautz |
| MCSC Director of Program Management | Gina Post |
| Commission Consultant | Joe Drago, CPA |
| Commission Consultant | Dr. Joe Mattos |
| MDOE Special Services | Dr. Roberta Lucas |
| MDOE Special Services | Collette Sullivan |

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| School’s Mission | To be a rigorous, college preparatory high school promoting student ownership of learning through curriculum focused specifically on science, technology, engineering, and math. |
| School’s Vision | To use a technology-rich, project-based learning approach to education at the secondary level. |

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| Section 1: School Information |

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| School Name | Baxter Academy for Technology and Science |
| Address | 185 Lancaster Street, Portland, ME 04101 |

Governing Board

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| Board Chair | Patti Oldmixon |
| Board Vice Chair | Christian Sparling |
| Board Treasurer | Peter Montano |
| Board Secretary | Ruth Dean |
| Board Member | Thorn Dickinson |
| Board Member | Peter Morrison |

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| Executive Director | Kelli Pryor |
| Principal | Chad Strout |
| Dean of Students | Lauren Arnold |
| Special Education Director | Laura Parks |

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| Year Opened | 2013 |
| Years in Operation | 6 |
| Number of Sending Districts | 37 |
| Grades Served | 9 - 12 |
| Current Enrollment | 408\* |
| Students on Waiting List | 64\* |

\*As of October 1, 2019 certified enrollment count

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| Section 2: Indicator Summary Table |

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| **Indicator** | **Exceeds** | **Meets**  | **Partially Meets** | **Does Not Meet** | **Other** |
| **Student Academic Proficiency** |
| Target 1 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| Target 2 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| **Student Academic Growth** |
| Target 1 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| Target 2 |  |  | **X** |  |  |
| **Achievement Gaps** |
| Target 1 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| Target 2 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| **Student Attendance** |
| Target 1 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| Target 2 | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Student Enrollment**  |
| Target 1 | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Post-Secondary Readiness** |
| Target 1 | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| Target 2 | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| Target 3 | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Financial Performance and Stability** |
| Target 1 |  | **Healthy** |  |  |  |
| Target 2 |  | **Healthy** |  |  |  |
| Target 3 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| **Governance Board Performance and Stewardship** |
| Target 1 | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| Target 2 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| **Adequacy of Facilities** |
| Target 1 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| **Parent & Community Engagement and School Climate** |
| Target 1 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| Target 2 |  |  | **X** |  |  |
| Target 3 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| Target 4 |  | **X** |  |  |  |

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| Section 3: Demographics |

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| Section 4: Academic Proficiency |

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| **Measure** | **Target** | **Results** |  |
| State Assessment: Evidence Based Reading & Writing (EBRW) | Report percentage of students at each grade level scoring proficient on the ​reading​ portion of the State assessment. | 81% met proficiency target | Met |
| State Assessment: Mathematics | Report percentage of students at each grade level scoring proficient on the ​mathematics portion of the State assessment. | 42% met proficiency target | Met |

**Discussion**

Baxter Academy met the targets of reporting the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the stat expectations on the MEA/SAT in ELA and math.

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| Section 5: Academic Growth |

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| **Measure** | **Target** | **Results** |  |
| NWEA: Reading | 57 percent of students will meet their growth targets in reading on the NWEA. | Class of:2020: 59% met ELA growth target2021: 69% met ELA growth target2022: 82% met ELA growth target | Met |
| NWEA: Math | 48 percent of students will meet their growth target in math on the NWEA. | Class of:2020: 39% met math growth target2021: 50% met math growth target2022: 49% met math growth target | Partially met |

**Discussion**

On NWEA ELA every class met the 57% target of students meeting individual growth targets.

On NWEA math Baxter’s class of 2021 and class of 2022 (freshmen and sophomores) met the target of 49% of students meeting individual growth target. Third year students (class of 2020) did not meet the target of 49% of students meeting individual growth target. This cohort also had the lowest NWEA participation rate.

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| Section 6: Achievement Gaps |

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| **Measure** | **Target** | **Results** |  |
| Achievement gaps in proficiency between major subgroups on the Maine state assessment | The school will provide evidence of closing achievement gaps between major subgroups (EL, special education, gender, ED, 504, ethnic and racial minorities). | No evidence of achievement gaps | Met |
| Achievement gaps in growth between major subgroups on the NWEA | The school will provide evidence of closing achievement gaps between major subgroups (EL, special education, gender, ED, 504, ethnic and racial minorities). | No evidence of achievement gaps | Met |

**Discussion**

Baxter Academy reported state assessment and NWEA scores for the following subgroups: male, female, IEP, and 504. The school did not have any identified gaps in subgroup performance.

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| Section 7: Attendance  |

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| **Measure** | **Target** | **Results** |  |
| Average Daily Attendance | Schools will have an average daily attendance rate in grades 9–12 of 91% or higher. | 91% Average Daily Attendance Rate | Met |
| Chronic absenteeism | Schools will have 10% or fewer students classified as chronically absent on the last day of school. | 7% Chronic Absenteeism | Exceeded |

**Discussion**

Baxter Academy met its target for average daily attendance rate. The school exceeded the chronic absenteeism expectation with only 7% of student chronically absent; less than half of the state average.

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| Section 8: Re-enrollment  |

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| **Measure** | **Target** | **Results** |  |
| Recurrent enrollment from one year to the next | 85% or more of eligible students enrolled on the last day of school will have completed an Intent to reenroll form for the next school year. | 93.9% of the total school population will return for the 2019 - 2020 school year. | Exceeded |

**Discussion**

Baxter Academy continues to have a strong reenrollment rate from year to year, with students continuing from one grade to the next.

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| Section 9: Post-Secondary Readiness |

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| **Measure** | **Target** | **Results** |  |
| 4 year high school graduation rate (current cohort) | 4-year graduation rate  | 97.83% | Exceeded |
| 5 year high school graduation rate | 5-year graduation rate | 100% | Exceeded |
| School Developed Measure | 90% of graduates will take courses in at least two of three areas and 80% will have taken courses in all three areas: Design, Engineering and Fabrication (DEF). | 100% of the graduating class of 2019 (90 students) took courses in at least 2 areas of DEF. | Exceeded |

**Discussion**

Baxter Academy’s 4 and 5-year graduation rates exceeded the expectations. The 4-year graduation rate is well above the state average of approximately 89%.

Not only did 100% of the graduating class meet the expectation of taking classes in two areas of DEF meeting the expectation, 100% took classes in all three areas, exceeding the target.

The 90 students in the graduating class of 2019 took the following number DEF courses:

● 17 students (19%) enrolled in 2 to 5 DEF courses.

● 51 students (57%) enrolled in 6 to 10 DEF courses.

● 22 students (24%) enrolled in more than 10 DEF courses.

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| Section 10: Financial Performance and Stability |

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| **Measure** | **Target** | **Results** |  |
| Near Term Measuresa) Current Ratiob) Unrestricted Days Cash on Hand | School evaluates its Near Term Financial Health using the Financial Performance and Stability outline provided by the Commission. | Evaluation complete | Near term measures are healthy |
| Sustainability Measures a) Total Marginb) Debt to asset ratio | School evaluates its Financial Sustainability using the Financial Performance and Stability outline provided by the Commission.  | Evaluation complete | Sustainability measures are healthy |
| The school has an annual financial audit conducted. Audit and management letter are submitted to the commission. Audit has no material findings or misstatements. | Unmodified opinion on [consolidated] financial statements: no material weaknesses, significant deficiencies or reportable instances of noncompliance and other matters identified in the other information accompanying the auditor’s report on financial statements or in the auditor’s report on internal control over financial reporting and on compliance and other matters. | Audit Completed | Clean audit submitted |

**Discussion**

Baxter Academy completed the financial information reports to the Maine Charter School Commission and was determined, after analysis, to have healthy near term and sustainability measures.

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| Section 11: Governance Board Performance and Stewardship |

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| **Measure** | **Target** | **Results** |  |
| Public Accountability: Transparent, responsive, and legally compliant Board operation. | The Governing Board will hold a minimum of 6 meetings per school year. | 12 meetings held | Exceeded |
| Public Accountability: Transparent, responsive, and legally compliant Board operation. | Timely publication of Board meeting agendas and minutes upon approval. | Meetings and minutes posted | Met |

**Discussion**

The Baxter Academy governing board met regularly. Meeting notices were posted to the school’s website and minutes were posted after approval.

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| Section 12: Facilities |

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| **Measure** | **Target** | **Results** |  |
| Facility | The facilities shall meet all applicable health, safety and fire code requirements and meet ADA/state requirements.  | Facility recently renovated and evaluated. | Met |

**Discussion**

Baxter Academy is located in a newly renovated facility. The facility was inspected in January 2018 as part of the school’s preparations for opening at the new location.

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| Section 13: Parent & Community Engagement and School Climate |

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| **Measure** | **Target** | **Results** |  |
| Reporting of behavior incidents | The school will follow the Maine DOE required reporting for incidents of behavior. | Reported as required | Met |
| Participation in student led conferences | 90% of parents will participate in student led conferences. | 85% of parents participated in student led conferences. | Partially met |
| Confidential surveys of parents, staff and students regarding social and academic climate  | School climate surveys administered to all required respondent groups | Administered as required | Met |
| Educational Partnerships in the Community | 90% of Baxter students will experience real-world engagement during the year as reflected in a portfolio of corporate, community and/or academic partners. | 90% of students participated in real-world learning | Met |

**Discussion**

One instance of bullying was reported and was addressed using restorative practices.

School climate surveys were administered to all required respondent groups. Participation rates were:

Students = 66.8%

Families = 28.7%

Teachers = 50.0%

Staff = 81.8%

Baxter Academy reported 85% of parent participation in student-led conferences. The school reported inclement weather contributed to lower than expected parent participation in conferences.

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| Section 14: Mission and Vision Implementation and Results |

*(See Page 2 for School’s Mission and Vision)*

On Fridays, all students participate in Baxter’s unique Flex Friday program, which devotes 20 percent of the school week to student-designed and implemented projects that are diverse, meaningful and impactful. ​This year, computer science students explored cyber security: One group worked through modules to build skills as a team; skills that were tested throughout the year in national competitions. They capped their project with a day-long job shadow at IDEXX labs in Westbrook, meeting with several IT and cyber security professionals. In the life sciences, students built a curriculum for anatomy and physiology and spent the year dissecting fish, fetal pigs, and frogs. A team of students built a Cosmic Ray muon detector and will be coding a website for the public to engage with their detector’s findings. Another student has worked to build a small watercraft designed for search and rescue and outfitted with GPS and a GoPro camera. Two students worked with the town of Harpswell and engineering professionals to redesign a frequently flooding road. In his role overseeing the 3D printing lab at Baxter, a 10th grade student has sought mentorship from USM students in their ci2 lab. A 9th grade group will have completed production on a film they wrote, shot, and edited. Students are utilizing the Fork Food Labs to gain culinary and entrepreneurial skills. Baxter’s FIRST Robotics team of 26 students representing 14 towns, won every district event this season, continuing a winning streak from last year that now stretches to six district events in a row. The team competed in Worlds competition in Detroit, climbing from 60t​h place to 10t​h in one day. Only five years old, the team has amassed all six possible engineering awards given by FIRST Robotics (and did so in the shortest span of time of any team ever).

To support its real-world learning, Baxter pursues community partnerships​. In the 2018-19 school year, Baxter ​continued to ​provide STEM support in Portland’s district schools: ​Two​ Baxter students spent their Fridays at the East End Community School. They designed activities that explored topics such as physics, composites, and chemistry and worked with every 3rd, 4th, and 5th grader in the school. Another group of Baxter students teamed up with partners from USM to provide a “morning of coding” at King, Lyman Moore, and Lincoln Middle Schools. A pair of students continued their work with the Island Institute and UNE to offer a year-long “Kelp4Kids” after-school aquaculture program to students on Peaks Island. A team of students taught CAD and programming to students from the Portland Girls and Boys club at the Baxter campus during after school sessions. Another group of students led coding workshops in Westbrook schools. This year, a Baxter teacher taught a college-level game design course to Baxter and USM students at the USM Portland campus. Students were also connected to USM’s ci2 lab this spring and utilized the space to edit films and work in the 3D printing lab. A partnership with Thomas College utilizes Baxter teachers in support of students in dual enrollment computer science courses that accelerate progress toward a college degree while significantly cutting costs. Seniors in Baxter’s advanced engineering course work with Southworth Engineering to solve design problems. ​Students are interning at Maine Medical Center Research Institute, Arundel Machine, Energy Circle, Maine Medical Center’s IT department, Cultivating Community, and Animal Refuge League of Greater Portland. ​ ​Across the continuum of real-world work, Baxter students generate and implement ideas, as well as master new skills and concepts. Faculty members bolster connections, guide learning goals, and monitor progress. Flex Friday projects spur innovation and build critical entrepreneurial skills: Students are nurturing connections, identifying what they need to get their work done, and drawing upon and appreciating the skills of their peers.

On June 1, Baxter’s fourth class graduated in a ceremony at Merrill Auditorium in Portland. These graduates provide evidence that Baxter is making good on the promise of sending its students off to the best higher education opportunities. Baxter’s seniors are choosing among colleges such as Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Berklee College of Music, Wentworth Institute of Technology, Northeastern University, Savannah College of Art and Design, Maine Maritime Academy, Virginia Tech, University of Maine Orono, LeHigh University, and Mount Holyoke, among many others. To honor students’ post-graduation choices, Baxter holds a signing-day celebration when graduating seniors share their future plans with the entire student body.

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| Section 15: Site Visit Report |

**Maine Charter School Commission**

**Monitoring Site Visit Report October 30, 2019**

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| REPORT DATE: | October 30, 2019 |
| SCHOOL NAME: | Baxter Academy |
| ADDRESS: | 185 Lancaster Street, Portland, Maine 04101 |
| GRADES SERVED: | Grades 9 - 12 |
| ENROLLMENT: | 404 |
| YEAR OPENED: | September 2013 |

Monitoring Site Visit Purpose

The primary purpose of site visits is to inform authorizer decisions, both imminent, such as assessing a school’s readiness to open, and longitudinal, when a visit is undertaken mid-term as part of routine monitoring.

The purpose of monitoring visits is to gauge the overall progress a school is making toward the goals outlined in its charter. In most cases, the authorizer will already possess some quantitative data about that progress – test scores, attendance rates, and other annual outcomes, so a monitoring visit can help explain the context behind that data and explore the school’s fidelity to its approved program.

Site visits are a mechanism for collecting additional evidence regarding a school’s performance against the expectations memorialized in its contract and contribute to the body of data authorizers utilize to ultimately make renewal recommendations. They also provide staff with the opportunity to review and analyze documentation that may be better understood on-site, such as factors impacting attendance, or rates of academic growth across subgroups. Site visits can also provide a basis for authorizer judgment or intervention where there is limited state assessment data yet available.

Monitoring Site Visit Process

Monitoring Site Visits are based on both the criteria set forth in the school’s performance framework and the school’s alignment with its mission. The categories in the performance framework are student achievement, school climate and family engagement, governance, and finance.

The following participants conducted the monitoring site visit:

* Bob Kautz, Executive Director
* Gina Post, Director of Program Management
* Jana Lapoint, Maine Charter School Commission School Liaison
* Roberta Lucas, MDOE Special Services
* Collette Sullivan, MDOE Special Services
* Joe Drago, Consultant
* Joe Mattos, Consultant

The monitoring site visit was conducted on August 5, 2019 at Baxter Academy campus in Portland, Maine campus. Team members used the Site Visit Manual to plan for and conduct the visit. Prior to the site visit, team members reviewed documents and other information related to the school’s mission and performance framework.

Key documents and other information reviewed by the team prior to and at the time of visiting included (as applicable):

* School calendar
* Current enrollment and demographics
* Staff roster
* Current organizational chart
* Board meeting minutes
* Board member meeting attendance
* School’s strategic plan
* Current Education Service Provider contract
* Professional Development calendar and agendas
* Staff evaluation tool
* Administrator evaluation tool used by governing board
* Panorama school climate survey results
* School’s self-assessment
* Previous year’s monitoring report
* School’s performance framework
* Copies of current recruitment materials
* Student enrollment application

Focus group interviews were held with groups at the school. Groups were asked a standard set of questions as well as school specific questions created for this visit.

Focus group interviews held by the team:

* Governing Board
	+ Patti Oldmixon, Chair
	+ Ruth Dean
	+ Thorn Dickerson
	+ Christian Sparling
	+ Peter Montano
* Executive Director
	+ Kelli Pryor
* Leadership Team
	+ Tammy Holmes, Special Education Director
	+ Heather D’Ippolito, Partnership and Outreach Coordinator
	+ Kathy Finnell, CFO
	+ Rich Abramson, Consultant

Monitoring Site Visit Findings

1. **Mission Alignment**
* The Board and Executive Director have a firm understanding and commitment to Baxter’s mission (as a rigorous, college preparatory high school) and vision (student directed learning focused on STEM core curriculum with a supportive and “robust” humanities program). It was reported that there is a faction of staff who would like to see a stronger focus on humanities.
* Baxter’s vision is realized and supported via STEM courses, off site learning opportunities, and internships. Most important, Baxter’s Flex Friday program provides students with opportunities to promote ownership of their learning. Students design and implement STEM related projects which address real-life and meaningful areas of study and interest.
1. **Student Achievement**
	* Baxter Academy has little turnover in student enrollment. Student reenrollment was 94% for 18/19 school year. The chronic absenteeism rate was 6.9%, about half the state average.
* Baxter’s graduation rate in 18/19 was (97.8%) with many graduating students going on to attend colleges and universities.
	+ Baxter’s students met or exceeded most performance targets for proficiency in reading and math on state (MEA) and school selected assessments (NWEA).
	+ Achievement gaps between subgroups is less than 10%.
	+ 2019 SAT data show that Baxter students’ average scores outperform state and national averages in math, Evidence Based Reading and Writing, and Composite.
	+ Report that feedback and comments from Baxter graduates attending college are very complementary about the education they received at Baxter Academy e.g. quality of STEM courses, internships, Flex Fridays, open communications with teachers, etc.
1. **School Climate and Family Engagement**
* This cycle of site visits did not include meeting with focus groups of students or parents.
* The Panorama Survey conducted at the end of the 18/19 school year did reveal the following perceptions of students, parents, teachers and staff:
	+ School Climate: Student favorability 53% (approximately 60th percentile nationally), Family favorability 77% (approximately 99th percentile nationally) Teacher Favorability 66% (approximately 90th percentile nationally), and Staff favorability 79% (approximately 99th percentile nationally).
	+ Staff and Family Relationships: Teacher favorability 71%, Staff favorability 79%
	+ School Safety: Student favorability 73% and Parent favorability 79%.
1. **Governance**
* The Baxter Board of Directors is comprised of seven individuals who have expertise and experience in business and finance. There has been very little board member turnover over the past several years, although the Board Chair has recently resigned. The Board is cognizant of maintaining a balanced and diverse composition of Board members who have the requisite knowledge and skills for effectively guiding Baxter Academy to achieve its mission and vision.
* The Board is aware of its challenges which includes the hiring of teachers and supporting school leadership. A strategic plan will be created once these issues have been properly addressed.
1. **School Leadership**
* Baxter Academy is faced with significant challenges in the area of school leadership. Due to several leadership resignations, Baxter has recently hired two key leadership positions: Head of School and Dean of Students. The school is currently searching for a new Director of Special Education to fill a vacancy.
* Challenges facing school leadership include:
* Successfully uniting staff/teachers in support of Baxter’s mission and vision;
* Operationalizing Baxter’s Teacher Evaluation and Professional Growth Plan for improving teachers’ instructional practice and student learning (Panorama Survey results showed low teacher favorability (11%) in respect to instructional feedback and coaching);
* Addressing staff and teachers’ concerns as they proceed to unionize.
1. **Finance**
* To support resource allocation discussions, the school’s new leadership may benefit from being familiarized with the Baxter financials by the experienced financial staff.
* Given the amount of planned program growth and the recently added debt burden, a long range financial projection based on educational, operational and facilities plans, might be completed to inform resource allocation and any future projects or expansion.
* Consider having the summary financial statements and projections and a written report to the finance committee prepared and made available to the full board to increase their financial literacy.

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| Section 16: Commendations and Considerations |

**Commendations**

* Baxter Academy continues to have a high re-enrollment rate from year to year.
* The school continues to have a high 4 year graduation rate.
* The school’s governing board has had little turnover and its members have varied skills and backgrounds.

**Considerations**

* In the last year the school has had turnover in administration and now has a new Head of School, Special Education Director, and a new CFO. The board may consider ways to support and retain its new administrators.
* While the school’s academic achievement in the area of ELA continues to be strong, the school should create a plan to increase achievement in mathematics.