

Maine Charter School Commission



ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2019-2020

January 2021

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.

January 2021

On August 25, 2020, the Maine Charter School Commission Review Team completed Zoom meetings with Baxter Academy’s administration and Governing Board. The Review Team also reviewed data provided by the school. Information gathered from documents and interviews were used to determine the extent to which the school has met its contracted performance targets. This report addresses the school’s performance relative to the performance framework.

In March of 2020, due to the COVID-19 virus, the school year was abruptly interrupted by the need for schools to close their facilities and continue the remainder of the school year via remote instruction. The Maine Charter School Commission realizes that these months were stressful and difficult for students, teachers, and families, and that the learning and assessments completed during this time were likely affected by the situation. The Maine Charter School Commission will take circumstances into consideration when reviewing data and making high-stakes decisions.

Commission Liaison to the School	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	Collette Sullivan

School’s Mission	Baxter Academy for Technology and Science is a rigorous, college-preparatory high school promoting student ownership of learning through a core curriculum focused specifically on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), which is paired with a robust humanities program that draws connections across disciplines and fosters strong communication skills.
School’s Vision	Upon graduation, Baxter students will be passionate, self-directed learners who have 21 st century skills and will be able to continue their education and careers prepared for a new age, serving as ethical, innovative, and creative leaders in the emerging global economy.

Section 1: School Information

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

Governing Board

Board Chair	Patti Oldmixon
Board Vice Chair	Christian Sparling
Board Treasurer	Peter Montano
Board Secretary	Nik Charov
Board Member	Thorn Dickinson

Administrative Team

Executive Director	Kelli Pryor
Interim Principal	Cicy Po
Assistant Principal	Mary King
Special Education Director	Laura Parks

Year Opened	2013
Years in Operation	8
Number of Sending Districts*	<i>Pending</i>
Grades Served	9 - 12
Current Enrollment*	<i>Pending</i>
Students on Waiting List*	<i>Pending</i>

**As of October 1, 2020 certified enrollment count*

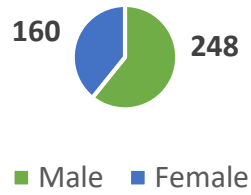
Section 2: Indicator Summary Table

Indicator	Exceeded	Met	Partially Met	Did Not Meet	Other
Student Academic Proficiency (See Page 6)					
Target 1					*
Target 2					*
Student Academic Growth (See Page 6)					
Target 1					*
Target 2					*
Target 3					*
Target 4					*
Achievement Gaps (See Page 7)					
Target 1					*
Target 2					*
Student Attendance (See Page 7)					
Target 1				X	
Target 2			X		
Student Enrollment (See Page 7)					
Target 1	X				
Target 2	X				
Post-Secondary Readiness (See Page 8)					
Target 1		Waiting on DOE			
Target 2		Waiting on DOE			
Target 3		X			
Target 4	X				
Financial Performance and Stability (See Page 9)					
Target 1		pending			
Target 2		financial			
Target 3		audit			
Governance Board Performance and Stewardship (See Page 9)					
Target 1		X			
Target 2		X			
Adequacy of Facilities Management (See Page 10)					
Target 1		X			
Target 2		X			
School Social and Academic Climate (See Page 10)					
Target 1		X			
Target 2					*
Target 3					*
Target 4					*
Target 5		X			

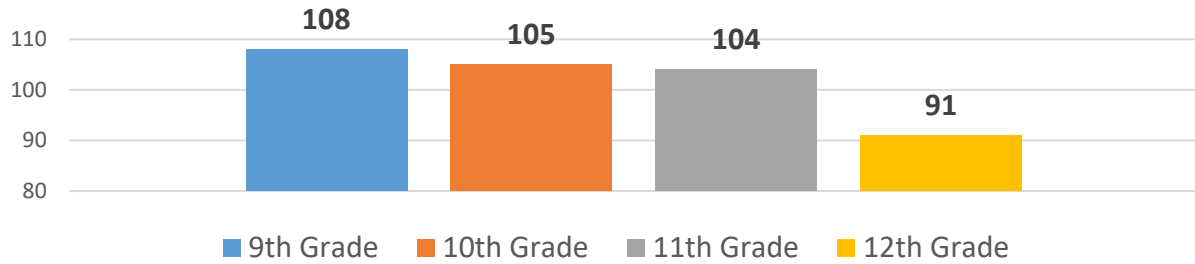
**Due to COVID-19 and school facility closures, many assessments and evaluations were not given.*

Section 3: Demographics 2019-2020

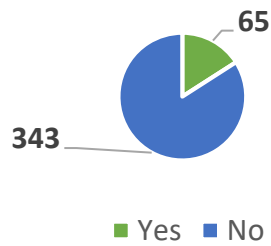
Gender Breakdown



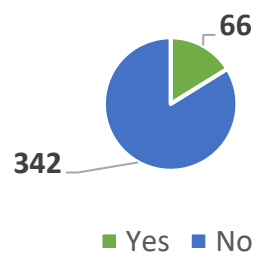
Grade Breakdown



Economically Disadvantaged



Special Education



Section 4: Student Academic Proficiency

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.	Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Maine Department of Education applied for, and received, waivers that eliminate state assessment requirements for this year.	NA
State Assessment: Mathematics	Report percentage of students at each grade level scoring proficient on the mathematics portion of the State assessment.		NA

Section 5: Student Academic Growth

Measure	Target	Results	
Students will show progress in their learning through growth in their NWEA scores in ELA reading and language from fall to spring of each school year.	Students will show progress in their learning through growth in their NWEA RIT scores from fall to spring of each school year.	Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, spring assessments were cancelled. Due to this cancellation, no growth data are available to report.	NA
Students will show progress in their learning through growth in their NWEA scores in math from fall to spring of each school year.	Students will show progress in their learning through growth in their NWEA RIT scores from fall to spring of each school year.		NA
Growth on NWEA as measured by projected growth on MAP assessment	School will meet goal of 70% of eligible ¹ students meeting their projected growth on NWEA ELA reading and language by the end of the school year 2021–2022.		NA
Growth on NWEA as measured by projected growth on MAP assessment	School will meet goal of 70% of eligible students will meet their projected growth on NWEA math by the end of the school year 2021-2022.		NA

¹ Eligible is defined as having both a fall and spring score for students in grades k-10

Section 6: Achievement Gaps

Subgroups must have at least ten students to be reportable. Subgroups may not be combined to create a super-subgroup.

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).	Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Maine Department of Education applied for, and received, waivers that eliminate state assessment requirements for this year.	NA
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).	Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the spring NWEA test window was cancelled. Due to this cancellation, no growth data are available to report.	NA

Section 7: Student Attendance

Measure	Target	Results	
Chronic absenteeism	Schools will have 10% or fewer students classified as chronically absent on the last day of school. (Through March 13, 2020)	37.01% of students were chronically absent as of March 13, 2020.	Did Not Meet
Average Daily Attendance	Schools will have an average daily attendance rate in grades 9–12 of 91% or higher. (Through March 13, 2020)	The average daily attendance rate through March 13, 2020 was 89.16%.	Partially Met

Section 8: Student Enrollment

Measure	Target	Results	
Enrollment throughout the school year	85% or more of eligible students enrolled on the last day of school will be the same students who were enrolled on state student count day ²	96% of eligible students enrolled on the last day of school were the same students who were enrolled on state student count day.	Exceeded

² State student count day of October 1 was extended to late November.

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.	98% of eligible students enrolled on the last day of school completed an Intent to reenroll form for the next school year	Exceeded
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Section 9: Post-Secondary Readiness

Measure	Target	Results	
4-year high school graduation rate (current cohort)	Schools will meet MDOE annual goal: 2020 –87.74%	XX% 4-year graduation rate	*Awaiting DOE Release of Data
5 and 6-year average high school graduation rate (previous 2 years’ cohorts averaged)	Schools will meet MDOE annual goal: 2020 – 89.74%	XX% 5 and 6-year graduation rate	*Awaiting DOE Release of Data
Of students in their graduating year, percent participation in post-secondary readiness opportunities	At the end of their graduating year, 70% of each schools’ eligible ³ students will have participated in at least one post-secondary activity such as <u>(and not limited to)</u> college course, Advanced Placement course, certificate program, or internship.	79% of students in their graduating year participated in post-secondary readiness opportunities.	Met
Success rate of students participating in post-secondary readiness opportunities	70% of the school’s students <u>who participated in at least one post-secondary activity</u> such as <u>(and not limited to)</u> college course, Advanced Placement course, certificate program, or internship will complete it successfully ⁴ .	97% of students participating in post-secondary readiness opportunities were successful.	Exceeded

**Once data are released by the DOE and received by the Maine Charter School Commission, an addendum updating Post-Secondary Readiness (Targets 1 and 2) will be issued.*

³ Students not excluded via IEP or other individual plan

⁴ Successfully is defined as a passing grade, meeting appropriate standards, or other clearly defined measure of success.

Section 10: Financial Performance and Stability

Measure	Target	Results	
Near Term Measures a) Current Ratio b) Unrestricted Days Cash on Hand	School evaluates its Near-Term Financial Health using the Financial Performance and Stability outline provided by the Commission.	Near-Term Financial Health was reviewed by the Commission using the Financial Performance and Stability outline.	Pending financial audit
Sustainability Measures a) Total Margin b) Debt to asset ratio	School evaluates its Financial Sustainability using the Financial Performance and Stability outline provided by the Commission.	The Financial Sustainability was reviewed by the Commission using the Financial Performance and Stability outline.	Pending financial audit
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.	The Board has engaged a firm to conduct the FY20 financial audit of the school. The Audit Report and Management Letter will be reviewed.	Pending financial audit

**Once the FY20 financial audit is received and reviewed by the Maine Charter School Commission, an addendum updating Financial Performance and Sustainability will be issued.*

Section 11: Governance Board Performance and Stewardship

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.	The Governing Board held 10 meetings during the school year.	Met
Public Accountability: Transparent, responsive, and legally compliant Board operation.	Timely publication of Board meeting agendas and minutes upon approval.	Board meeting agendas and minutes were timely published.	Met

Section 12: Adequacy of Facilities Management

Measure	Target	Results	
Meet Local and State requirements	The school certifies that its facility (or facilities) meet all local and state requirements for public school facilities.	The school certified that its facility (or facilities) meet all local and state requirements for public school facilities.	Met
Capital Improvement Plan	The school has a current capital improvement plan approved by its governing board.	The school has a current capital improvement plan approved by its governing board.	Met

Section 13: School Social and Academic Climate

Measure	Target	Results	
Reporting of behavior incidents	The school will follow the Maine DOE required reporting for incidents of behavior.	The school reported incidents of behavior as required by Maine DOE.	Met
Panorama Survey- Family Participation	40% of families will participate in the Panorama survey.	Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Panorama Surveys were not administered during the 2019-20 school year.	NA
Panorama Survey- Student Participation	65% of eligible students will participate in the Panorama survey. ⁵		NA
Panorama Survey- Teacher/Staff Participation	70% of teachers/staff will participate in the Panorama survey.		NA
Panorama Survey	Annually, the school will review its spring Panorama Education results and develop an action plan for the following school year to address areas for continued improvement. Plan and outcome will be submitted to the Commission in September.	The school reviewed its Panorama Education survey results and developed an action plan to address areas for continued improvement and submitted the plan to the Commission in September 2019 as required.	Met

⁵ Students in grades 3 and up are eligible to participate in the Panorama Education surveys.

Section 14: Site Visit Report

Maine Charter School Commission Monitoring Site Visit Report

SITE VISIT DATE	August 25, 2020 (via Video Conference)
SCHOOL NAME:	Baxter Academy
ADDRESS:	182 Lancaster Street, Portland
GRADES SERVED:	Grades 9 - 12
ENROLLMENT:	400 (school reported as of 9-9-20)
YEAR OPENED:	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, academic and support programs, school climate and family engagement, school leadership, governance, and finance.

The following individuals participated in the August 2020, monitoring visit:

- Bob Kautz, Executive Director, Maine Charter School Commission
- Gina Post, Director of Program Management, Maine School Charter Commission
- Joe Drago, CPA, Consultant, Maine Charter School Commission
- Collette Sullivan, MDOE, Special Services
- Amy Allen, Support Coordinator, Maine Charter School Commission

- Dr. Joseph Mattos, Consultant, Maine Charter School Commission

The monitoring site visit was conducted via a video conference. Team members used the MCSC Monitoring Site Visit Manual to plan 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:

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

Meetings were held with school leadership and governance via video conferencing. A standard set of questions, as per MCSC manual, as well as school-specific questions were discussed during the visit.

Group interviews held by the team included:

- Baxter Academy Leadership Team
 - Kelli Pryor, Executive Director
 - Cicy Po, Head of School
 - Laura Parks, Special Education Director
 - Kerry Bush, CFO
 - Tyler Beaulieu, Operations and Transportation Manager
 - Anna Gervais, Director of Student Life
 - Mary King, Assistant Principal
- Baxter Academy Executive Director
 - Kelli Pryor
- Baxter Academy Governing Board:
 - Patti Oldmixon, Board Chairperson
 - Ruth Dean, Board Member
 - Peter Montano, Board Member
 - Nik Charov, Board Member
 - Dan Amory, Pro Bono Counsel

Monitoring Site Visit Findings

A. Mission Alignment

- School Leaders and Board members are in full alignment in respect to Baxter Academy's Mission and Vision. All agree Baxter Academy's Mission/Vision is to provide students with a project-based STEM curriculum, coupled with student directed learning activities, which allow students the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills in solving real world problems.
- Baxter Academy's Mission/Vision statement was slightly revised several years ago to highlight the importance of humanities, which "connects ideas across disciplines and cultivates strong communication skills."
- Part of Baxter Academy's '20-'21 Teacher Orientation centered on understanding and interacting with BA's mission language.

B. Student Assessment and Achievement

- Since MEA and NWEA testing were suspended in the spring of 2020 due to Covid-19, BA was unable to provide any information on student achievement and performance.
- In discussion with school leaders, they stated that they "have not done as well of a job using NWEA tools." BA hopes to conduct full faculty NWEA training in respect to how it relates directly to classroom instruction.
- BA believes that standardized assessments have value in understanding levels of student achievement but the "real value" in understanding the quality of students' learning is in "looking at students' work." BA is looking into ways of measuring students' performance on student projects in respect to such indicators as applications of problem solving and creating thinking, as well as personal qualities such as perseverance and accountability. Student self-evaluation will be included in project assessments.

C. Student Support Programs

- IN '20-'21 BA will change from conducting student evaluations (academic and psychological) remotely, to administering them internally. A psychologist has been hired to conduct these assessments, as well as to consult with teachers to address students' needs.
- BA is currently exploring ways to provide support to students beyond extra time for help. A "counseling" program is being put into place to support students' social and emotional learning (SEL) needs, which are tightly connected to student success. BA sees SEL support as essential, especially in the current mode of remote learning.

D. School Climate and Family Engagement

- The Panorama Survey was not administered in the '19-'20 school year due to COVID-19 pandemic. However, BA plans to solicit feedback from students and teachers regarding educational programming and past learning experiences.
 - i. A Student Survey is being created to assess and identify a baseline for students and remote learning e.g. what's working well, what needs to be improved, etc.
 - ii. Several Teacher Surveys have been sent to BA teachers soliciting from them their personal views on "What they love to teach", "What are willing to teach", etc.
 - iii. The Head of School has conducted several "meet and greet" meetings with 10 or so BA staff at a time, with follow-up sign-ups for hour long individual

meetings. The Head of School stated that her strongest impressions about teacher perspectives at BA have been through individual “conversations where I have heard the hopes and the dreams and concerns of the faculty.”

- BA regularly solicits feedback from BA graduates regarding how BA gave them the experience to be successful in college. BA alumni recently attended the BA Teacher Orientation, during which they articulated how BA provided them with problem solving skills and the ability to deal with open ended problems, as well with comments about the importance of good communication skills.
- BA is looking to create a BA alumni association

E. School Leadership

- At the beginning of the discussion with school leaders, the Executive Director mentioned that since the leadership team is comprised of mostly new hires, the day’s discussion will focus primarily on BA’s future work to improve teaching and learning, with some comments of personal reflection intertwined based on the prior year’s experiences.
- BA believes its newly “restructured” leadership team is comprised of individuals who have the background and experiences to promote and help BA achieve its mission e.g., the Head of School who was a former science teacher at an art school, an Assistant Principal who has strong community connections and an understanding of community needs, and an Operations Manager who has a STEM educational background and understands what resources may be needed to promote student-driven STEM projects. The Executive Director believes the new Head of School will be able to address BA’s “social and emotional aspects”, while also maintaining a “commitment of rigor, a commitment to the STEM mission, and a commitment to realizing the full potential of BA.”
- The Executive Director explained that BA has never been able to implement a teacher supervision and evaluation model with fidelity. A priority for ‘20-‘21 is for the Head of School and Assistant Principal to conduct classroom visits to better understand teachers and their pedagogy, and for the leadership team to adjust its teacher supervision model to make it more meaningful and manageable. BA school leaders believe that frequent informal classroom observations can provide teachers with quality feedback about their teaching practices, as well as a means in building trusting teacher/administrator relationships. BA also plans to increase the capacity for instructional feedback to teachers.
- The BA Leadership Team has created a three-pronged approach for supporting BA faculty. These prongs include focusing on safety for climate and culture, clear communications, and celebrations. School leaders believe the process of coming together as a school will take time and that “Progress happens at the pace of trust. One person at a time.” School leaders are currently involved in professional discussions regarding the value of “trust” using the text, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*.
- The Head of School stated that professional development will be ongoing throughout the year at various levels. At the “institutional level” all will come together during Advisory meetings and Flex Fridays to share conversations about teaching and learning. At the department level, the focus will be to support them with the needed resources to make connections with other STEM programs and to create their “vision” for their work at BA. At the teacher level, funds will be made available to individual teachers for

professional development and training experiences to improve knowledge and skills as a teacher at BA.

F. Governance

- Based on past feedback from parents and the public, BA's Board has worked diligently to provide meaningful ways to improve access to Board information in a transparent manner. Initiatives to do this have included "live" Board meetings, with options to attend via Zoom or a Google Hangout. Also, the Board has done a better job "explaining" in detail why things are done, how they will be done, etc. Different mechanisms and models were put in place for individuals to ask questions and to say what they wanted to say. The Baxter Parent Association has also played an important role in improving communications e.g., connecting teachers and students with the Board.
- The BA Board is currently comprised of seven members and has had only one turnover in the past year. BA Board members have diverse backgrounds and professional experiences in several areas: business, engineering, fundraising, finance (CPA), grant writing, communications, and legal expertise. The level of engagement, commitment and talent of BA Board members can best be described as extraordinary.
- Board members explained that although BA does not have a formal strategic planning process or plan, they have tried to embed into all Board discussions a "strategic mindset" when considering ways of doing things differently at BA, for example, how can we better partner with local businesses?, how do we best organize BA for students to excel in college?
- The BA Board conducts Board and Executive Director's performance evaluations every year. The Board's evaluation will be completed in the next few months. The Board Chair stated that the Board has "built into their DNA" time at the end of each Board meeting to reflect and evaluate their work e.g. What went well?, What didn't go well?, What can we do differently?. Similarly, the Board provides the Executive Director with formative, "real-time feedback," which the Board views as an invaluable component in evaluating the performance of the Executive Director over time.

G. Finance

- BA has hired a CFO who is replacing two part time finance positions. Internal controls were revised to ensure fiscal accountability.
- BA reported that its audits have had "clean opinions on their reports and also on their management letters."
- MDOE granted BA Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) that was used to enhance BA's technology services e.g., upgrading 200+ student and teacher computers.
- Recommend developing a formal Finance Committee agenda and template for report to the board.
- The Review team discussed topics related to finances that are generally recommended for further attention by BA. These included:
 - . Long term planning and debt retirement;
 - Potential cuts in school subsidy which may require re-budgeting; given the prospects of potential deficit spending next year, we encourage planning be conducted to address limits and alternatives.
 - i. Looking for new revenue sources e.g., using building at night for other purposes.
 - Analysis of the impacts of enrollment decreases on future budgeting.

Section 15: Mission and Vision Implementation Evidence and Results

(See Page 2 for School's Mission and Vision)

Baxter students are expected to lead their learning as they study complex, real-world problems both in classroom work and through the school'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. While working at home in 2020, both independently and in teams, they demonstrated their proficiency in the 21st century skills that are best built through project-based learning. They showed flexibility, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and strong communication skills. They demonstrated literacy in information/data, media, and technology. They took initiative, showed leadership, and were productive.

Baxter's seniors are choosing colleges such as Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Rochester Institute of Technology, Connecticut College, University of Vermont, Wentworth Institute of Technology, University of Maine Orono, Colby College, and Smith College, among many others.

Section 16: Commendations and Considerations

Commendations

- In the [Plimpton Graduate Study report](#), two-thirds of Baxter Academy graduates completed high school "career-and college-ready," as compared to 8% in the national sample. Only 2% of Baxter Academy graduates were neither college nor career ready, as compared to 47% in the national sample.
- Baxter Academy has a high recurrent enrollment rate (98%) from one year to the next.
- There was a high rate of seniors (79%) participating in a post-secondary activity and 97% of them were successful.
- There is full alignment and agreement between school leaders and governing board members in respect to the school's mission and vision.
- The school leadership recognize that it can utilize NWEA tools better in relation to classroom instruction and are planning more professional development for all staff to achieve that.
- In the Plimpton Graduate Study, Baxter Academy was noted for being a school whose graduates achieved mastery in a standards-based program; students need to meet the standards to earn the credits.

Considerations

- The school should identify the reasons contributing to the chronically absence rate of 37.01% and take steps that would reduce the rate and improve attendance.
- The Panorama survey of staff, students and families should be strongly promoted and encouraged in the 2021 spring administration in order to have additional information to inform the development of a plan of improvement for the school, especially since this is a year with a change in administration, the first year of implementation of a negotiated

bargaining agreement and an educational program responding to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The school has identified that an improved implementation of a teacher supervision and evaluation model with increased instructional feedback is necessary. This should be a priority for school leaders.
- Under new leadership, the special education department has been focusing on improvements in the delivery of its services to students. It is expected that these improvements will continue and persevere.