



Baxter Academy for Technology and Science

185 Lancaster Street, Portland, ME 04101



ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2020-21
October 2021



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.

Vision

Upon graduation, Baxter students will be passionate, self-directed learners who have 21st 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.

Governing Board

Patti Oldmixon, Board Chair
Christian Sparling, Board Vice Chair
Peter Montano, Board Treasurer
Nik Charov, Board Secretary

Thorn Dickinson, Board Member
Simon McGurk, Board Member
Jana Lapoint, Board Member

Leadership Team

Kelli Pryor, Executive Director
Cicy Po, Principal

Mary King, Assistant Principal
Laura Parks, Special Education Director

School Profile

Year Opened	Years in Operation	Grades served
2013	9	9 - 12
Number of Sending Districts*	Current Enrollment*	Students on Waiting List*
38 (as of October 2021, Certified Student Enrollment Date)	372 (as of October 2021, Certified Student Enrollment Date)	1 (as of October 2020, Certified Student Enrollment Date)

School Year 2020 – 2021 Demographic Table		
Grade Level Enrollment		
9	97	25%
10	97	25%
11	95	24%
12	101	26%
Gender		
Female	154	39%
Male	236	61%
Race/Ethnicity		
White	359	92%
AI/Alaska Native	1	<1%
BAA	8	2%
Latino/Hispanic	6	2%
Two or more races	8	2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	8	2%
Special Education		
Students with IEPs	65	17%
General education students	325	83%
Economically Disadvantaged		
Yes	70	18%
No	320	82%

Executive Summary

The Maine Charter School Commission is the authorizer of ten charter districts. Each charter district holds a contract with the Commission containing a Performance Framework of indicators and targets the district shall meet to continue operating in Maine. The charter districts are evaluated annually as required by state statute. Data are gathered through the Maine Department of Education, Charter Districts, and Site Visits, as applicable.

District data are gathered through the Maine Department of Education, Charter Districts, and Site Visits, as applicable.

The Maine Charter School Commission has established a monitoring visit table for visit frequency and intensity. A copy of the Site Visit Manual can be found [here](#). Baxter Academy for Technology and Science was on cycle to have a Site Visit at the end of the 2020-21 school year and the Site Visit Report can be found on page 14.

Key documents and other information reviewed to determine progress on the charter district's performance framework and alignment with its mission are as follows:

- 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

Baxter Academy continues to see success with student enrollment throughout the school year, student re-enrollment from one year to the next, board governance, and closing academic achievement gaps among major student subgroups.

Document review is a major component of the Maine Charter School Commission's monitoring process, which happens throughout the year. Charter districts are required to submit reports and data for review. The table below summarizes the charter district's report and data submission completion throughout the 2020-2021 school year.



As a result of the 2020-2021 monitoring process, the charter district is encouraged to consider the following:

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND GROWTH

- Given the impact of the pandemic and lower academic growth than in previous years, the charter organization should develop clear and specific strategies for closing learning gaps to ensure students are prepared for rigorous academic work.

GOVERNING FOR EXCELLENCE

- The governing board needs to develop a process for long-term strategic and financial planning so that it is a consistent agenda item at board meetings and focuses the board's attention to long-term sustainability and excellence.
- A facilities and operations subcommittee on the governing board can support the development of a capital improvement plan, better positioning the organization for long-term sustainability.

FINANCIAL HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE

- Both the school and the MCSC would benefit from improved timeliness of financial reporting.
- School and Board should review how FY21 COVID relief funding was spent and be sure that FY22 budgets do not rely on a repeat of this funding.

School performance should be considered in the context of a global health crisis, which schools were battling throughout the 2020 - 2021 school year. Students and families grappled with job loss, health concerns and insecurities, and anxiety related to the pandemic. Schools continued to serve students and families despite the COVID-19 crisis. That service often meant that schools focused on the basic needs of students like social-emotional well-being and psychological health while also managing a rigorous academic program. Because of the operational challenges that the pandemic caused, the school likely saw less growth in student achievement than they otherwise might in a pandemic-free environment. All schools faced similar challenges which is why there is a broad focus on learning loss in the educational ecosystem and media. The Charter Commission is closely monitoring academic progress throughout the school year. The Charter Commission applauds the effort of the school to ensure a safe environment for students in which their basic needs were met during the 2020 - 2021 school year.

In the 2020-2021 school year, the Maine Department of Education adopted the NWEA MAP test as the “state assessment.” The MDOE did not assign targets or expectations related to assessment results. The Maine Charter School Commission amended the Performance Framework to require schools to submit results along with analysis. The MDOE has not released MAP data for traditional schools, which precludes the ability of the public to compare performance between charter schools and their traditional counterparts. Given the trajectory of the school’s performance over the last several years, the Charter Commission remains confident in the ability of the school to serve its students and families in accordance with the contract between the parties.

Performance Indicator Summary Table		
INDICATOR	DETAILS	PERFORMANCE
Academic Proficiency		
Proficiency on State Assessments in reading	The school will collect baseline data on the NWEA MAP test for ELA and will provide school wide results as well as results at each grade level assessed	Reported as required
Proficiency on State Assessments in math	The school will collect baseline data on the NWEA MAP test for math and will provide school wide results as well as results at each grade level assessed	Reported as required
Academic Growth		
Growth in English Language Arts, reading and communication skills	Students show progress on MAP ELA RIT scores from fall to spring of each year	35%
Growth in mathematics and reasoning skills	Students will show progress in their learning through growth in their NWEA RIT ¹ scores from fall to spring of each year.	52%

¹ The RIT score represents a student’s achievement level at any given moment and help measure their academic growth over time. The RIT scale is a stable scale, like feet and inches, that accurately measures student performance, regardless of age, grades, or grade level.

Growth on MAP ² ELA assessment	60% of eligible ³ students meeting their projected growth on MAP ELA reading and language by the end of school year 2020-2021.	45%
Growth on MAP Math assessment	55% of eligible ⁴ students meeting their projected growth on MAP math by the end of school year 2020-2021.	42%
Addressing Achievement Gaps		
Achievement gaps in proficiency between major subgroups on the Maine State Assessments.	School provides evidence of closing identified achievement gaps on major subgroups (English learner, special education, gender, economically disadvantaged, 504, ethnic and racial minorities).	Meets Expectation Subgroups are performing similarly to comparison groups
Achievement gaps in growth between major subgroups on the NWEA.	The school will provide evidence of closing identified achievement gaps of major subgroups (English learner, special education, gender, economically disadvantaged, 504, ethnic and racial minorities).	Meets Expectation Subgroups are performing similarly to comparison groups
Student Attendance		
Chronic absenteeism rate	Schools will have 10% or fewer students classified as chronically absent on the last day of school ⁵ .	10% Meets Expectation
Average Daily Attendance Rate	Schools will have an average daily attendance rate in grades 9-12 of 91% or higher	95.9% Exceeds Expectation: 95% or higher
Student Enrollment		
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 ⁶	99% Exceeds Expectation: 90% or more
Recurrent enrollment from one year to the next	85% or more of eligible students enrolled on the <u>last day</u> of school will have completed an Intent to Reenroll form for the next year	99% Exceeds Expectation: 90% or more
Post-Secondary Readiness		
4-year high school graduation rate (current cohort)	Schools will meet Maine DOE annual goals: 2020 – 87.74%	92.5% Exceeds Expectation: 90% or higher
5 and 6-year average high school graduation rate (previous 2 years' cohorts averaged)	Schools will meet Maine DOE annual goals: 2020 – 89.74%	Pending MDOE
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 ⁷ 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	72% Meets Expectation: 70% or more
Success rate of students participating in post-secondary readiness	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, certification program, or internship will complete it successfully ⁸	98% Exceeds Expectation: 80% or more
Financial Performance and Stability		

² MAP® Growth™ measures what students know and informs what they're ready to learn next. By dynamically adjusting to each student's responses, MAP (measures of academic progress) Growth creates a personalized assessment experience that accurately measures performance.

³ Eligible is defined as having both a fall and spring score for students in Grades K-11.

⁴ Eligible is defined as having both a fall and spring score for students in grades K-10.

⁵ Chronically absent is defined as missing 10% or more of school days.

⁶ State Student Count Day is October 1.

⁷ Students not excluded via IEP or other individual plan

⁸ Successfully is defined as a passing grade, meeting appropriate standards, or other clearly defined measure of success.

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.	Pending 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.	Pending 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	Pending Audit
Board Governance and Stewardship		
Public Accountability: Transparent, responsive, and legally compliant Board operation.	The Governing Board will hold a minimum of 6 meetings per school year ⁹	9 meetings held Meets Expectation: 6-10 meetings
Timely ¹⁰ publication of Board meeting agenda and minutes upon approval.	Board meeting agenda and minutes were posted as required	Meets Expectation: All minutes and agendas posted timely
Facilities Management		
Meet Local and State requirements	The school certifies that its facility (or facilities) meet all local and state requirements for public school facilities	Meets Expectation: Certified as required
Capital Improvement Plan	The school has a current Capital Improvement Plan approved by its governing board	Meets Expectation: Capital Improvement Plan approved by board
School Culture and Climate		
Reporting of behavior incidents	The school will follow the Maine DOE required reporting for incidents of behavior	Meets Expectation: Reports as required
Panorama Survey-Family Participation	40% of families will participate in the Panorama survey	27% Does Not Meet Expectation: Less than 30%
Panorama Survey-Student Participation	65% of eligible students will participate in the Panorama survey ¹¹	74% Meets Expectation: 65% - 74.9%
Panorama Survey-Teacher/Staff Participation	70% of teachers/staff will participate in the Panorama survey	85% Exceeds Expectation: 80% or more
Panorama Survey	Annually, the school will review its Panorama Education results and develop an action plan to address areas for continued improvement. Plan and outcome will be submitted to the Commission	*Survey was not conducted in 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic. Plan not developed.

Reports will be updated once pending data is received.

Site Visit Report

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.

⁹ A school year is July 1 – June 30

¹⁰ Timely is defined as posting agenda a minimum of 5 days before the meeting and for minutes, posting within 5 days of approval.

¹¹ Students in grades 3 and up are eligible to participate in the Panorama Education surveys.

The monitoring site visit was conducted on August 3, 2021 via Zoom. 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.

The following participants from the Maine Charter School Commission conducted the monitoring site visit:

- Jeremy Jones, Executive Director, Maine Charter School Commission
- Gina Post, Chief Program Officer, Maine Charter School Commission
- Amy Allen, Operations Director, Maine Charter School Commission
- Mackenzie Wagner, Chief of Staff, Maine Charter School Commission
- Joe Drago, CPA Consultant, Maine Charter School Commission

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, Board Chair and Peter Montano, Board Treasurer
- School leaders/administrators: Kelli Pryor, Executive Director and Cicy Po, Head of School

Mission Alignment

Overall, Baxter Academy demonstrated through its site visit that the school is upholding the mission outlined in its charter. This was evidenced by interviews with Governing Board representatives and the Administrative team.

Governing Board

Governing Board representatives stated Baxter Academy is focusing on what matters to Maine. Research about what the state needs (i.e. STEM careers) has been done and has uncovered that there are a lot of open, unfilled jobs in Maine. Baxter aims to develop graduates with the skills and characteristics needed for today's workforce. In keeping with the school's STEM mission, Baxter Academy wants to solve real-world problems in the communities they serve (see the Ventilator Project).

They indicated COVID and the current political climate in Maine has presented challenges for all schools.

Administration

The school's administrators expressed the school's mission is what attracts students to Baxter Academy. They have anecdotal evidence that students are looking for an opportunity at Baxter Academy that doesn't exist elsewhere in southern Maine.

They believe the work of the student is to give back to the community through connected and relevant work.

Student Achievement

Baxter Academy is working toward improving student outcomes, particularly in mathematics, using MAP assessment data and school-based assessments to determine student needs.

Governing Board

Governing Board representatives described the formal presentation given by either the Executive Director or Head of School at each monthly board meeting, which covers academics as well as how teachers and students are being held accountable. The board representatives indicated feeling more educated over the past couple of years about academic programming than in previous years.

Annually, the board is given a year-end report on student performance, including academic data.

Administration

The administrative team spoke about personnel and teacher satisfaction. Baxter Academy partnered with University of New England for summer professional development about biotechnology and engaged with the Maine Environmental Education Association for a faculty retreat.

Baxter Academy has a new teacher formation group for new teachers as well as teachers who are new to Baxter. The group meets once a month. It is expected that participants will spend a few years involved in this group.

Teachers observe each other's classrooms multiple times a year.

When the Head of School completes an observation, there is a conversation held between the Head of School and the teacher, which is followed by written communication.

In the 2020-2021 school year, Baxter Academy began a transition to PowerSchool as its student information system, which is used to pull multiple data on a regular basis.

The Student Care Team meets regularly to discuss students about whom there is a concern. The team discusses what type of support the student needs. Some examples of support include extra help from teachers, advisory groups providing support, and Student Peer Tutors (modeled after college programs).

Work was done during the 2020-2021 school year to improve student math outcomes. NWEA MAP data were analyzed and used for guiding these efforts.

Another project during the 2020-2021 school year was to sequence English and social studies classes. This work on the course of studies was done to give students a richer academic high school experience.

When it comes to special education, the administrative team explained that students are usually already identified for special education services prior to joining Baxter Academy in the 9th grade. The school's Special Education Director reviews student records and meets with families as needed. There is a referral process for a student who may not have been identified upon enrollment.

In the 2021-22 school year, Baxter Academy is changing its Response to Intervention program to include 3 times during the week when RTI could happen. This plan includes all faculty being available to assist. Students will be on a 5-6-week program and will then be re-evaluated. There will be data points to document student progress. At the end of the school year, the team will review individual student progress to identify ongoing needs and create new student plans.

During the 2020-2021 school year, Baxter Academy closed a corrective action plan in special education with the Maine Department of Education. The school has a plan in place to prevent future special education issues. Part of this plan includes the Special Education Director working closely with the school leadership team to track important details.

During a discussion about chronic absenteeism at Baxter Academy, the administration indicated a belief that there is an issue with the coding system and the way the data are entered at the state level. While the school's leadership has been working on sorting out the discrepancy with MDOE for nearly two years, they are sure the accurate chronic absenteeism rate is far lower than 35%.

School Climate and Family Engagement

The site visit showed evidence that Baxter Academy is prioritizing a healthy school climate where students feel represented.

Administration

The school's administrative team indicated the Panorama Survey is administered annually, and that findings are triangulated with information gathered from other sources. It was reported that due to the pandemic and Baxter Academy providing full remote learning, many surveys were used throughout the school year.

In terms of inclusivity in the classroom and in the curricula, there is work being done to orient staff in critical thinking. Additionally, primary documents are being reviewed to determine what they mean for multiple perspectives.

Baxter Academy is working to be a place where "kids don't have to hide who they are."

Governance

Governing Board

Baxter Academy's Governing Board has been effective in its governing duties overall and is encouraged to determine a strategic planning process and timeline for executing the process.

Baxter Academy's Governing Board continues to support the idea that there are four areas of "expertise" that will always be needed in terms of board membership, these include: Financial acumen (CPA), STEM experience, organizational design experience, parent perspective. The board is currently considering three additions to the Board.

Strategic Planning has not recently been done, as the board struggles with strategic planning in a public forum. There have been discussions among board members as to how to best accomplish strategic planning in a meaningful way.

Evaluation of the school's Executive Director is completed annually. The Executive Director completes a self-evaluation and a formal written review is given. Ongoing feedback is given on a regular basis. Board representatives indicated the process has evolved over time.

Finance

Baxter Academy appears to have sound financial practices in place and is encouraged to explore philanthropic funding sources.

Governing Board and Administration

Baxter Academy is putting together a debt-sinking fund with a goal to pay down as much debt as possible before refinancing.

COVID Relief Funds (CRF) were used to enhance the school's IT infrastructure.

In terms of staffing, the school could use another special education teacher and another math teacher.