

MCSC

MAINE CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

Community Regional Charter School

Creative Children's Academy, 48 South Factory Street, Skowhegan, ME 04976

Dimensions Academy, 1192 West Ridge Road, Cornville, ME 04976

Overman Academy, 78 Water Street, Suite 2, Skowhegan, ME 04976



ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2020-21 October 2021



Mission

We are Community-Centered and Uncompromisingly Learner Focused. Community Regional Charter School creates a safe, respectful, and nurturing learning environment where everyone is accepted and celebrated. The CRCS provides a customized learning environment designed to allow every child to thrive socially, emotionally and academically through the integration of STEAM projects and community connections aimed at unlocking a passion for life-long learning.

Vision

To create a school where learning is built around each student so that they become engaged learners with relevant and challenging work.

Governing Board

Danielle Denis, Board Chair
 Kelly LaCasse, Board Member
 Linda Belanger, Board Member

Nicki Reinholt, Board Member
 Seth Noonkester, Board Member

Administrative Team

Travis Works, Executive Director
 Susan Walters, Special Education Director
 Crystal Priest, Director of Special Projects

Susan Martin, Principal
 Elizabeth Firnkes, Principal

School Profile

Year Opened	Years in Operation	Grades served
2012	10	PK-12
Number of Sending Districts*	Current Enrollment*	Students on Waiting List*
*(as of October 2021, Certified Student Enrollment Date)	*(as of October 2021, Certified Student Enrollment Date)	*(as of October 2021, Certified Student Enrollment Date)

School Year 2020 – 2021 Demographic Table		
Grade Level Enrollment		
PK	32	9%
K	25	7%
1	21	6%
2	28	8%
3	18	5%
4	13	4%
5	21	6%
6	31	9%
7	24	7%
8	32	9%
9	33	10%
10	29	9%
11	25	7%
12	17	5%
Gender		
Female	148	42%
Male	201	58%
Race/Ethnicity		
White	331	95%
Asian	1	>1%
BAA	1	>1%
Latino/Hispanic	6	2%
Two or more races	10	3%
Special Education		

Students with IEPs	72	21%
General education students	277	79%
Economically Disadvantaged		
Yes	223	66%
No	126	34%

Executive Summary

The Maine Charter School Commission is the Authorizer of 10 charter districts. Each charter district holds a contract with the Commission containing a Performance Framework of indicators and targets the district shall meet. The charter districts are evaluated and reported on annually as required by law.

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](#). Community Regional Charter School 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 15.

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

Community Regional Charter School continues to see success with student enrollment throughout the school year, student re-enrollment from one year to the next, facilities management, 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 2020-21 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.
- The development of an “assessment guide” can ensure that the school adheres to its assessment calendar and administration, given the number of assessments that are given throughout the school year.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND ENROLLMENT

- Student attendance continues to be low at CRCS. The school is encouraged to develop a plan for increasing family and student awareness of the importance of attendance.

SCHOOL CULTURE AND CLIMATE

- Students in the focus group interview mentioned the CRCS environment can be a disruptive place to learn because the building has an echo that students find distracting. The school is encouraged to investigate which facility has noise disruption and take actions to remedy it.

GOVERNING PRACTICES

- The governing board is encouraged to engage in professional development both as a full board and individual board members to ensure that the board can take actions that position the organization for long-term success and mitigate risk and liability.
- 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.

FINANCIAL PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Complete a Long-Term Plan, including assessment of facility needs, before adding more debt. The board might consider designating a portion of the fund balance for major repairs.
- 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.

At the end of the 2020-2021 school year, the Elementary Mathematics Diagnostic Interview was not administered due to a school-based oversight.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS SUMMARY TABLE		
Indicator	Details	Performance
Academic Proficiency		
Proficiency on State Assessments in reading	Collect baseline data on the 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	Collect baseline data on the 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 on school selected test in reading: Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening	85% of PreK learners will show progress in identifying uppercase letters from fall to spring	100%
	85% of PreK learners will show progress in identifying lowercase letters from fall to spring	100%
	85% of PreK learners will show progress in identifying letter-sound identification from fall to spring	89%
Growth on school selected test in math (Elementary Mathematics Diagnostic Interview)	85% of learners will show progress on the EMDI PreK math assessment	Test not administered
Growth on school selected assessment for math (TSG-PreK)	85% of PreK learners will show progress in their learning through growth in their math TSG scores from fall to spring.	100%
Growth on school selected assessment for ELA reading and language arts (TSG-PreK)	85% of PreK learners will show progress in their learning through growth in their ELA reading and language TSG scores from fall to spring.	100%
Growth in English Language Arts, reading and communication skills.	Growth in their MAP RIT scores from fall to spring of each year.	63%
Growth in mathematics and reasoning skills	Growth in their MAP RIT ¹ scores from fall to spring of each year.	82%
Growth on MAP ² assessment	65% of eligible ³ students in grades k-7 meeting their projected growth on MAP ELA reading and language by the end of school year 2020-21.	38%
Growth on MAP assessment	50% of eligible students in grades 8-12 meeting their projected growth on MAP ELA reading and language by the end of school year 2020-21.	41%
Growth on MAP assessment	58% of eligible ⁴ students in grades k-7 meeting their projected growth on MAP math by the end of school year 2020-21.	54%
Growth on MAP assessment	65% of eligible ⁵ students in grades 8-12 meeting their projected growth on MAP math by the end of school year 2020-21.	51%
Achievement Gaps		

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.

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

Achievement gaps in proficiency between major subgroups on the Maine State Assessments	The school will provide 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 MAP	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	10% or fewer students classified as chronically absent on the last day of school ⁶	Elementary 27.1% Secondary 28.0% Does not Meet Expectation
Average Daily Attendance Rate	Average daily attendance rate in grades K-8 of 93% or higher	Overman Academy 92.2% Dimensions Academy 91.8% Creative Children's Acad. 90.8% Partially Meets Expectation: 90%-92.9%
Average Daily Attendance Rate	Average daily attendance rate in grades 9-12 of 91% or higher	92% Meets Expectation: 91%-94.9%
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 ⁷	90% 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	96% 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%	Data suppressed to maintain student privacy
5 and 6-year average high school graduation rate (previous 2 years' cohorts averaged)	Schools will meet Maine DOE annual goals: 2020 – 89.74%	CRCS graduated its first class in 2021
Of students in their graduating year, percent participation in post-secondary readiness opportunities		Due to a small graduating class, the "n" size for this data is unreliable
	At the end of their graduating year, 70% of each schools' eligible ⁸ 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	Due to a small graduating class, the "n" size for this data is unreliable
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 ⁹	

⁶ Chronically absent is defined as missing 10% or more of school days.

⁷ State Student Count Day is October 1.

⁸ Students not excluded via IEP or other individual plan

⁹ Successfully is defined as a passing grade, meeting appropriate standards, or other clearly defined measure of success.

Financial Performance and Stability		
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 ¹⁰	11 meetings held Exceeds Expectation: 11 or more meetings
	Timely ¹¹ publication of Board meeting agenda and minutes upon approval	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: Current 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	26% Does Not Meet Expectation: Less than 30%
Panorama Survey-Student Participation	65% of eligible students will participate in the Panorama survey ¹²	74% Meets Expectation: 65% - 74.9%
Panorama Survey-Teacher/Staff Participation	70% of teachers/staff will participate in the Panorama survey	76% Meets Expectation: 70% - 79.9%
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.	Plan not developed. Survey was not conducted in 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Reports will be updated once pending data is received.

Site Visit Report

¹⁰ A school year is July 1 – June 30

¹¹ Timely is defined as posting agenda a minimum of 5 days before the meeting and for minutes, posting within 5 days of approval.

¹² Students in grades 3 and up are eligible to participate in the Panorama Education surveys.

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 monitoring site visit was conducted on September 9, 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 conducted the monitoring site visit:

- Jeremy Jones, Executive Director, 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
- Leora Byras, Maine Department of Education, Special Services

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:
 - Danielle Denis, Board Chair
 - Kelly LaCasse, Board Member
- School leaders/administrators: Travis Works, Executive Director, Elizabeth Firnkes, Principal, Susan Martin, Principal, Crystal Priest, Technology Director
- 13 students from various grade levels
- 10 parents representing 9 families
- 12 staff representing a variety of grade levels and subject areas

Mission Alignment

Administrative Team

According to school leaders, the organization is operating in the full expression of its mission. The team, given the evidence, seems to be responding to needs quickly, driving academic achievement through data driven decision making, building in social emotional practices into the curriculum and programming, and supporting the development of teachers. School leaders noted that this summer provided an opportunity to build chemistry and cooperation among the staff through a staff trip and book clubs. The book clubs have led to specific ideas that are currently being implemented. Systems have been established to support student emotional needs including an R&R (rest and reset) room, restorative justice practices and attention to student well-being. These activities, at the school-wide level, have allowed the organization to progress toward its mission.

Students

A number of students expressed interest in participating in the student focus groups. Because of such a large number of students, facilitators split the students into a younger and older group with the younger group participating in a hybrid format with the facilitator online and students in a classroom and the older group participating through a remote format on zoom. In both groups, students noted that teachers are caring, compassionate and work diligently to support student needs. Among the older students, they cited evidence that the school is working to achieve the mission of preparing them for life after school by supporting their career aspirations and connecting them to specific opportunities that will accelerate them along that path. There was conversation about the challenging assignments to create business plans and the academic rigor that students face in school. Despite the academic challenges, students noted that they feel supported by teachers and classmates.

Parents

Parents repeatedly expressed their excitement for the program and routinely stated throughout the conversation that they believe their children are on a different path in life, a more positive one, because of the school. It was expressed that parents really saw the extra effort from the school during the pandemic.

Teachers

Teachers provided enthusiastic examples of how they are bringing the mission of the school to life through their classroom lessons, interactions with students and parents, and their approach to providing input on school-wide decisions. Teachers discussed that great care is taken to support students' aspirations through spending a lot of time getting to know what is important to them and understanding their interests. There seems to be a student-centered approach embedded in the identity of the teacher workforce at the school and the evidence supports the idea that student well-being is equally weighted with student academic achievement. Teachers discussed the process of designing lessons and programming that are aligned to the school's mission.

Student Achievement

Administrative Team

The organization's leaders provided evidence that they are using student achievement data to enhance, adapt and modify student instructional plans to support the achievement of all students. Leaders discussed the implementation of the NWEA MAP test and the analysis of those results to determine skill gaps among students and plan for remediation and acceleration. Leaders also cited other forms of data such as rubrics to measure student progress toward mastery of learning targets. Leaders mentioned that the previous school year allowed them to plan for the collection of student data and that they were now ready to fully implement their data collection system. We did not hear about the effectiveness of the data collection system at the drafting of this report and want to note that school-wide data collection and analysis systems can generate additional consistency across the campus to ensure that all students have opportunities to learn at the highest level and that teachers can craft instruction that is tailored to student need.

Students

Multiple students mentioned the opportunity to show their learning through "hands-on" applications. There was discussion of wood shop and other vocational skills that students were practicing that seemed to engage and excite students about the other aspects of school that they would otherwise not be as excited about. Students provided information about the "cohort groups" that they were broken into during COVID protocols which ensured that they could continue learning in the safest possible ways without disruption. Some students noted that remote learning is particularly challenging because they prefer in-person and hands-on learning. Students consistently mentioned that the environment can be a disruptive place to learn because the building echos a lot and students can be distracted by the noise. Students advocated for quiet, independent study locations. The student group provided examples of how the school is connecting students to learning opportunities outside of the normal school constraints including connecting them to college and career resources.

Parents

A consistent theme throughout the parent discussion was the academic growth of students. Parents routinely noted that they are aware of and knowledgeable about NWEA MAP data and how their children have grown on these metrics. Parents provided examples of teachers keeping them informed of their child's academic growth and parents could explain the amount of growth their child made on the MAP test.

Teachers

The teacher group provided anecdotal evidence of how they use Empower to track student growth and progress. This group cited NWEA MAP data analysis as particularly helpful in isolating student skill gaps to design a plan for each learner. Teachers mentioned that they are assessing students informally and formally and that they are constantly aware of how students are doing to master learning targets.

School Climate and Family Engagement

Administrative Team

School leaders gave examples of school-wide systems that are intended to build a strong student culture. Positive behavior intervention and support (PBIS), a system frequently used at many schools across the country, is deployed at CRCS and is generating positive results for students. Social-emotional learning is embedded in the school curriculum and practices and the implementation of restorative justice practices helps students build their pro-social skills.

Students

Students had a well-adjusted perspective on culture in the school. While examples of disruptive behavior were cited, students seemed to shrug these incidents off as minor misbehavior of less mature students and overall they felt like the mixing of students by age was ultimately a good thing. Students spoke highly of their teachers and classmates and recognized that the staff of the school makes extra effort to provide a safe and welcoming environment for all children.

Parents

When we asked parents about school climate, they consistently remarked that the culture of the school seems to improve annually as systems strengthen and educators at the school get to know students and families more. From the evidence that parents provided, it appears to be consistent that parents have a direct line of communication with the teachers and school leaders and parents mentioned several times that they are in contact with school leaders on a weekly basis. Parents discussed how this level of engagement makes them feel like the school is interested in the individual student and that the needs of the student and family are considered in school programming. Parents shared examples of how the school took care of “the little things” during the pandemic to ensure that students could continue learning and that there was strong communication between the school and home.

Staff

School staff seem to have direct input on school culture systems to support the development of a safe and nurturing environment for children. Aside from school-wide systems, teachers are able to develop their own systems that support the self-actualization of students. Teachers compared their experiences at CRCS with previous experiences in other schools and indicated that CRCS is the kind of school that they would design because it considers the needs of the child first and that all efforts are made to ensure students have what they need to be successful.

Governance

Governance has been a noted weakness of CRCS. The failure to recruit, train and retain a strong governing board is a deficit of the organization and may limit its ability to fully achieve its mission in the future.

Finance

Governing Board

The governing board was unable to provide important information on financial health and projections of the organization.

Administrative Team

School leaders noted that they are particularly careful when it comes to spending because they want to devote resources to debt and ensuring that teacher salaries and benefits are competitive in their market.