



Harpswell Coastal Academy

Division 1, 9 Ash Point Road, Harpswell, ME 04079

Divisions 2 and 3, Brunswick Landing, 8 Leavitt Drive, Brunswick, ME 04011



ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2020-21 October 2021



Mission

Our mission is to create an engaged community of creative thinkers, compassionate leaders, and effective problem solvers. Learning at HCA is project-based and place-based, grounding students in a purposeful exploration of the natural and human worlds. Our curriculum cultivates curiosity, integrity, and civic-mindedness and prepares students for post-secondary success, whether in college, technical training, or the workforce.

Vision

We envision HCA students and alumni as lifelong learners and champions of positive social change, economic opportunity, and sustainability in our towns, state, country, and world.

Governing Board

Cynthia Shelmerdine, Board Chair
Ed Harris, Board Vice Chair
David Jean, Board Treasurer
Sally Mackenzie, Board Secretary

Nancy Andersen, Board Member
Barbara Merson, Board Member
Peggy Muir, Board Member
Kathy Wilson, Board Member

Leadership Team

Scott Barksdale, Head of School
Susan Prince, Special Education Director

Amy Bundt, Business & Finance Director

School Profile

Year Opened	Years in Operation	Grades served
2013	9	5 – 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 2020, Certified Student Enrollment Date)

School Year 2020 – 2021 Demographic Table

Grade Level Enrollment			
5	17	10%	
6	13	7%	
7	19	11%	
8	21	12%	
9	19	11%	
10	22	13%	
11	36	21%	
12	28	16%	
Gender			
Female	76	43%	
Male	99	57%	
Race/Ethnicity			
White	160	91%	
Asian/PI	1	>1%	
BAA	1	>1%	
Latino/Hispanic	4	2%	
Two or more races	9	5%	
Special Education			
Students with IEPs	49	28%	
General education students	126	72%	
Economically Disadvantaged			
Yes	96	55%	
No	79	45%	

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](#). Harpswell Coastal Academy 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

Harpswell Coastal Academy had success with student enrollment throughout the school year, student re-enrollment from one year to the next, board governance, and facilities management.

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:

GOVERNING PRACTICES

- The Governing Board would benefit from a facilities committee dedicating time to the development of a capital improvement plan.

FINANCIAL PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY

- 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.
- Both the school and the MCSC would benefit from improved timeliness of financial reporting.
- Consider providing training to the administrative staff to ensure best practices and improve efficiency.
- 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.

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.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND ENROLLMENT

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

SPECIAL EDUCATION

- The school must close the open Corrective Action Plan with the Maine Department of Education Special Services Department and develop a plan to maintain compliance.

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 INDICATORS 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.	School collected baseline data on the NWEA MAP test for ELA and provided school-wide results at each grade level

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.	School collected baseline data on the NWEA MAP test for math and provided school-wide results as well as results at each grade level
Academic Growth		
Growth in English Language Arts, reading and communication skills	Growth in their MAP RIT ¹ scores from fall to spring of each school year	58%
Growth in mathematics and reasoning skills	Growth in their NWEA RIT scores from fall to spring of each school year	65%
ELA MAP Growth	60% of eligible ² students meeting their projected growth on NWEA ELA reading and language by the end of school year 2020-2021	51%
Math MAP Growth	60% of eligible students meeting their projected growth on NWEA math by the end of school year 2020-2021	47%
Achievement Gaps		
Achievement gaps in proficiency between major subgroups on the Maine State Assessments.	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
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).	Partially Meets Expectation: Subgroups are performing below comparison groups, some gaps have closed since the previous year
Student Attendance		
Chronic absenteeism rate	10% or fewer students classified as chronically absent on the last day of school ³ .	Elementary 40.3% Secondary 40.9% Does not Meet Expectation
Average Daily Attendance Rate	Average daily attendance rate in grades K-8 of 93% or higher.	Pending MDOE
Average Daily Attendance Rate	Average daily attendance rate in grades 9-12 of 91% or higher.	Pending MDOE
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 ⁴ .	93% 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.	100% Exceeds Expectation: 90% or more
Post-Secondary Readiness		
4 year high school graduation rate (current cohort)	Schools will meet Maine DOE annual goals: 2020-21=87.74%	64.5% Does Not Meet Expectation

¹ The RIT score represents a student's achievement level at any given moment and helps 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 Eligible is defined as having both a fall and spring score for students in grades K-11.

³ Chronically absent is defined as missing 10% or more of school days.

⁴ State Student Count Day is October 1.

5 and 6 year average high school graduation rate (previous 2 years' cohorts averaged)	Schools will meet Maine DOE annual goals: 2020-21=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 ⁵ 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	56% Does Not Meet Expectation: Fewer than 60%
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, certificate program, or internship will complete it successfully ⁶	100% Exceeds Expectation: 80% or more
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 on 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 ⁷	9 meetings held Meets Expectation: 6-10 meetings
	Timely ⁸ 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.	No. High school building is currently undergoing facility work. Does Not Meet Expectation: Not certified as required
Capital Improvement Plan	The school has a current Capital Improvement Plan approved by its governing board	Does Not Meet Expectation: Capital Improvement Plan not current or not 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	54% Exceeds Expectation:

⁵ Students not excluded via IEP or other individual plan

⁶ Successfully is defined as a passing grade, meeting appropriate standards, or other clearly defined measure of success.

⁷ A school year is July 1 – June 30

⁸ Timely is defined as posting agenda a minimum of 5 days before the meeting and for minutes, posting within 5 days of approval.

		50% or more
Panorama Survey-Student Participation	65% of eligible students will participate in the Panorama survey ⁹	74% Meets Expectation: 65% - 74.9%
Panorama Survey-Teacher/Staff Participation	70% of teachers/staff will participate in the Panorama survey	65% Partially Meets Expectation: 60% - 69.9%
Panorama Survey		*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.

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
- Leora Byras, Maine Department of Education, Special Services

The monitoring site visit was conducted on August 17, 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.

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: Cynthia Shelmerdine, Board Chair and Ed Harris, Board Member
- School leaders/administrators: Scott Barksdale, Head of School and Susan Prince, Special Education Director

Mission Alignment

Overall, Harpswell Coastal Academy demonstrated through its site visit that the school is upholding the mission outlined in its charter. Efforts to reconnect with the mission appear to have inspired enthusiasm and optimism among both the board and administration.

Administrators

In February 2021, HCA sharpened its mission and vision statements. The administration now describes that student experiences are aligned with the school's mission, vision, and guiding principles. The campus has engendered a culture of activism and social change. Despite service being a founding value of the school, it has been difficult to promote. The team reported it will be a major focus in the 2021-22 school year

Student Achievement

Harpswell Coastal Academy has continued to strive for a cultural shift related to assessments. MCSC encourages HCA to continue to leverage data from NWEA MAP and other assessments to support academic instruction.

Governing Board

⁹ Students in grades 3 and up are eligible to participate in the Panorama Education surveys.

The Governing Board hopes to see higher participation on school-wide assessments. The board (and administration) reported resistance from students and families.

The board is encouraged that professional development for staff will lead to clear definitions of student success and proficiency in all courses. School leaders have set out to improve professional learning for teachers to deepen curriculum rigor and alignment.

The Governing Board's Academic Oversight Committee meets regularly with the school's Leadership to assess student performance.

Administrators

The administrative team provided details on the increases in MAP testing participation in the middle school. School leaders report that previously reluctant staff members are now invested in MAP testing which led to the increase in participation. Students participate in goal setting for MAP skills with Crew Leaders.

Participation in testing remains low. In 2020-2021, 55% of students participated in math testing and 63% participated in ELA testing. Commission staff reminded HCA's administrative team that MAP growth and participation will be an important factor in the school's charter contract renewal process next year.

Harpswell Coastal Academy has a Response to Intervention (RtI) process that includes a daily skill building period, an intervention block, and a guidance block. Small group interventions are led by classroom teachers. RtI progress are tracked in an intervention log for each student.

According to leaders, staff required coaching for Behavioral RtI. The school used Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to promote a culture shift.

Chronic Absenteeism continued to be high in 2020-2021. The school's Truancy Crew visited families to provide support. It was reported that the pandemic has had a particularly challenging impact on the social emotional health of some students, and that there were some families who indicated the student "is in bed and just can't deal with it."

During the meeting, we discussed Harpswell Coastal Academy's open Corrective Action Plan (CAP) issued in September of 2020 and due to be closed by September 1, 2021, with the Maine Department of Education Special Services team. DOE special services staff have met with the school's special education director on multiple occasions. The latest meeting was August 10, 2021 in which the team discussed all 16 findings in detail. The campus leaders were notified that a failure in compliance could lead to the loss of local entitlement funds. The school leader had not previously been involved in the process and was informed to the current state. The CAP remained open by the deadline and the school was issued a Notice of Concern and an intervention from the Maine Charter School Commission.

School Climate and Family Engagement

The site visit showed evidence that Harpswell Coastal Academy is prioritizing a healthy school climate. Concerns were shared regarding teacher attrition.

Administrators

The administration teacher retention and expressed beliefs that attracting and retaining high-quality staff will translate to increased and sustainable student enrollment and retention.

There had been a significant rate of staff attrition in the past two years. School leaders examined the salary scale and found that teachers with three to five years of experience were making salaries lower than the local market. The school reports that salary scales are now competitive with surrounding districts.

The leadership team sets professional development agendas and topics for supporting teachers. Teachers are evaluated by the Head of School or the Special Education Director for special education staff. The observations and evaluations are completed on a three-year rotating schedule, with the exception of first- and second-year teachers who are observed annually.

Governing Board

The Governing Board also spoke of the difficulty with staff attrition. The representatives at the meeting believe changing the salary scale to a step system will attract and retain teachers.

Governance

Governing Board

The Governing Board recently had some resignations. The board representatives said having 10-12 members would be ideal and the board is looking for new members with skills or experience in the following areas: HCA parent, lawyer, and businessperson. The board is using community members on board committees. The board has allocated time on every agenda for skill development.

The board completed a self-evaluation using the same document used last year. The board talked through the evaluation together as a group rather than filling it out individually. Communication and financial management were identified as strengths for the board. The board indicated that fundraising and academic performance were weaknesses.

Board representatives described the recent retreat as productive. At the Board retreat, the board spent time imagining outcomes for 2026, identifying challenges, and setting year-1 goals for achieving those outcomes.

Finance & Facilities

Harpswell Coastal Academy continues to have strong financial practices that support the sustainability of the school.

Governing Board and Head of School

The board reported the Division 2 and 3 facility at Brunswick Landing was having work done with the support of an architect and the State Fire Marshal's office.

The boiler will likely need to be replaced soon at the Harpswell location which houses Division 1. A generator was installed at the school last year.

A newly hired business manager will be prioritizing the evaluation of both facilities.

School leaders reported having two facilities allows for the type of programming HCA provides; middle school students have ample access to the outdoors and high school students have easy access to college courses and internships.

The school's FY 22 budget was built based on 205 students. Enrollment increased steadily in the spring and summer and there was optimism that the school would be fully enrolled upon opening.