



VISION

MAINE CHARTER SCHOOL
COMMISSION

All of Maine's children will have access to a vibrant ecosystem of diverse schools so that all of them can become happy, healthy and thriving citizens

ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2021-22 December 2022



13 Easler Road, P.O. Box 159, Hinckley, ME 04944

MISSION

The Maine Academy of Natural Sciences (MeANS) is a public charter high school that inspires and engages students through project-based, student-centered instruction immersed in the natural sciences of Maine with a focus on agriculture, forestry, and the environment. MeANS challenges all students to connect with their education to grow as individuals, interact with their communities, and lead fulfilling lives.

VALUES

Respect: With an emphasis on honoring differences, MeANS encourages students to be compassionate and empathetic. Faculty, staff, and students employ restorative practices for community building and conflict resolution.

Responsibility: Our individualized instruction builds confidence and empowers students to take ownership of their education. Skills such as self-advocacy and goal setting are developed alongside a commitment to helping others.

Community: MeANS connects with students and families through close relationships with advisors, teachers, and administrators. Students are expected to contribute positively to the school and are encouraged to take advantage of the larger learning context through volunteerism, internships, and college courses.

GOVERNING BOARD

Michael Muir, Chair	Erin Brown	Mary Callan	Robert Dodge
Sally Beaulieu, Vice Chair	Kimberly Patnode	Shannon Webber	Jesse Wechsler
Whitney King	Dianna Gram	Dana Doran	Anna Perkins
Martha Harris			

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Matthew Newberg, Head of School	Becky Dennison, Dean of Students, Threshold
Danni Best, Dean of Students, MeANS	Christine Sullivan, Assistant Head of School and Special Education Director
Evan Coleman, Director of Curriculum and Instruction	Elizabeth Christopher, Business Manager

SCHOOL PROFILE

School Year Opened	Years in Operation	Grades served
2012-13	11	9-12
Number of Sending Districts*	Current Enrollment*	Students on Waiting List*
30 (as of October 2022, Certified Student Enrollment Date)	173 (as of October 2022, Certified Student Enrollment Date)	4 (as of October 2022, Certified Student Enrollment Date)

School Year 2021 – 2022 Demographic Table

Grade Level Enrollment			
	9	35	18.7%
	10	47	25.1%
	11	45	24.1%
	12	60	32.1%
Gender			
	Female	93	49.7%
	Male	94	50.3%
Race/Ethnicity			
	White	173	92.5%
	American Indian/Alaska Native	1	0.5%
	Black or African American	2	1.1%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	2	1.1%
	Latino/Hispanic	7	3.7%
	Two or more races	2	1.1%
Special Education			
	Students with IEPs	68	36.4%
	General education students	119	63.6%
Economically Disadvantaged			
	Yes	127	67.9%
	No	60	32.1%

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.

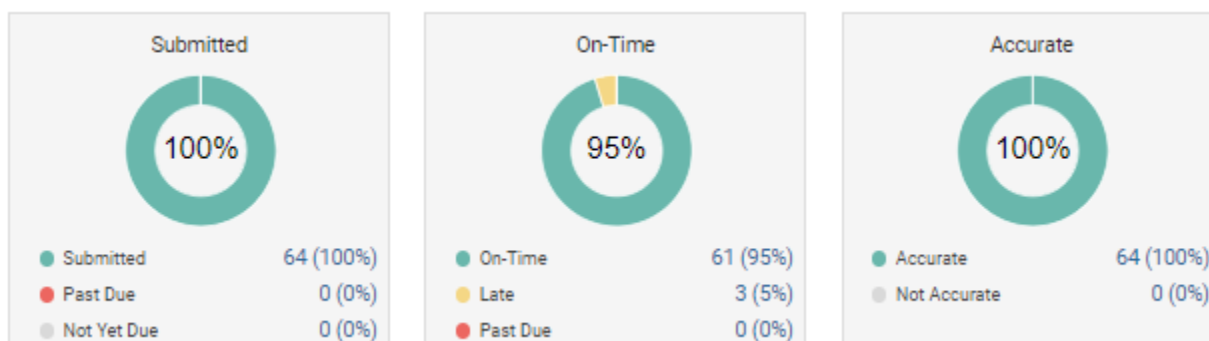
The Maine Charter School Commission has established a monitoring visit table for visit frequency and intensity. A copy of the Site Visit Manual can be found [here](#). Maine Academy of Natural Sciences was on cycle to have a Site Visit at the end of the 2021-22 school year and the Site Visit Report can be found on page 5.

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 agenda [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

In school year 2021-2022, Maine Academy of Natural Sciences had success in the areas of participation in post-secondary readiness activities and school climate.

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 2021-2022 school year.



As a result of the 2021-2022 monitoring process, the charter district is encouraged to consider the following:

STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE

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

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND GROWTH

- MEANS' graduation rate continues to be low in the on-campus program and the Threshold program. MEANS is encouraged to develop individual plans for keeping students on track and to explore options for credit recovery when students fall behind.
- Given the impact of the pandemic on academic growth, MEANS should develop clear and specific strategies for closing learning gaps to ensure students are prepared for rigorous academic work.

GOVERNING PRACTICES

- The board should continue to closely monitor the conditions that were put into place for renewal, as well as the additional Intervention targets.
- In addition to finances, facilities, organization, and governance, the board should be regularly informed on academic strengths, challenges, and weaknesses of the school.

FINANCIAL PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY

- With limited enrollment growth and increasing costs, we recommend a focus on positive net results and philanthropy.
- In light of the fact that MEANS is assessing options in its arrangement with Good Will Hinckley, and in enrollment and programming, we recommend the plan be developed in a timely fashion given the negative cash flow expected in FY22 and FY23.

Exceeded Expectation	Met Expectation	Partially Met Expectation	Did Not Meet Expectation
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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.	Met Expectation <i>Reported as required</i>
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.	Met Expectation <i>Reported as required</i>
Academic Growth		
Growth in English Language Arts, reading and communication skills	Growth in MAP RIT scores from fall to spring of each year	Did Not Meet Expectation 49%
Growth in mathematics and reasoning skills	Growth in MAP RIT ¹ scores from fall to spring of each year	Did Not Meet Expectation 65%
ELA MAP Growth	64% of eligible ² students meet projected growth on MAP ELA reading.	Partially Met Expectation 46%
Math MAP Growth	70% of eligible ³ students meet projected growth on MAP math.	Partially Met Expectation 54%
ELA MAP Growth	64% of eligible ⁴ students meet projected growth on MAP ELA language.	Partially Met Expectation 45%

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

³ Eligible is defined as having both a fall and spring score for students in grades K-10.

⁴ Eligible is defined as having both a fall and spring score for students in Grades K-11.

Achievement Gaps		
Achievement gaps in proficiency between major subgroups on the Maine State Assessments	Evidence of closing identified achievement gaps on major subgroups (English learner, special education, gender, economically disadvantaged, 504, ethnic and racial minorities)	Did Not Meet Expectation <i>Subgroups are performing below comparison groups. Students with an IEP performed below the comparison group in both ELA and math. Students with a 504 performed below the comparison group in both ELA and math. Students with FRL performed below the comparison group in reading and math.</i>
Achievement gaps in growth between major subgroups on MAP	Evidence of closing identified achievement gaps of major subgroups (English learner, special education, gender, economically disadvantaged, 504, ethnic and racial minorities)	Did Not Meet Expectation <i>Subgroups are performing below comparison groups. Students with an IEP performed below the comparison group in both ELA and math. Students with a 504 performed below the comparison group in both ELA and math. Students with FRL performed below the comparison group in reading and math.</i>
Student Attendance		
Chronic absenteeism rate	10% or fewer students classified as chronically absent on the last day of school ⁵	Pending MDOE
Average Daily Attendance rate	Average daily attendance rate in grades 9-12 of 91% or higher	Did Not Meet Expectation 84%
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	Partially Met Expectation 83%
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	Partially Met Expectation 81%
Post-Secondary Readiness		
4-year high school graduation rate (current cohort)	Schools will meet Maine DOE annual goals: 2020 – 87.74%	Pending MDOE
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	Exceeded Expectation 80%
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	Exceeded Expectation 93%
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

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.

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 letters 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	Met Expectation <i>8 Meetings Held</i>
	Timely ¹⁰ publication of Board meeting agenda and minutes upon approval	Met Expectation <i>All minutes and agendas posted timely</i>
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	Met Expectation <i>Certified as required</i>
Capital Improvement Plan	The school has a current Capital Improvement Plan approved by its governing board	Did Not Meet Expectation <i>Capital Improvement Plan not current or not approved by board</i>
School culture and climate		
Reporting of behavior incidents	Follow the Maine DOE required reporting for incidents of behavior	Met Expectation <i>Reports as required</i>
Panorama Survey-Family Participation	40% of families will participate in the Panorama survey	Exceeded Expectation 59%
Panorama Survey-Student Participation	65% of eligible students will participate in the Panorama survey ¹¹	Partially Met Expectation 59%
Panorama Survey-Teacher/Staff Participation	70% of teachers/staff will participate in the Panorama survey	Exceeded Expectation 90%
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	Even though not required for the 2021-22 school year, the school developed an action plan.

Report 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:

- Gina Post, Interim Executive Director, Maine Charter School Commission
- Lana Ewing, Interim Chief Program Officer, Maine Charter School Commission

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.

- Amy Allen, Operations Director, Maine Charter School Commission
- Joe Drago, Financial Consultant, Maine Charter School Commission
- Leora Byras, Maine Department of Education Special Services

The monitoring site visit was conducted on August 8, 2022 in hybrid format of both in person at Maine Academy of Natural Sciences (MEANS) and 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: Mike Muir, Board Chair and Anna Perkins, Board member
- School Leadership: Matt Newberg, Head of School; Christine Sullivan, Special Education Director and Assistant Head of School; Danni Best, Dean of Students; Becky Dennison Dean of Threshold; Elizabeth Christopher, Business Manager; and Evan Coleman, Curriculum Coordinator

BOARD

Mission

The governing board representatives were asked to reflect on the school’s mission. The board chair explained the school’s mission is to reach students who learn well in a hands-on program grounded in the natural sciences and agriculture. Another board representative and members of the school’s administrative team emphasized the importance of project-based, multi-week programs supported through the fields, sugar house, outdoor classrooms, and greenhouse. Additionally, they pointed out the school’s “parallel mission” in the Threshold Program to reach students who can’t attend school on campus by providing them a highly customized learning experience.

MEANS representatives were able to identify successes:

- Number of students educated and graduated through the Threshold Program
- Evolving focus on Intensives Units

MEANS representatives also identified challenges:

- Reducing seat time for students
- Increasing enrollment in the on-campus program
- Community misunderstanding of the school’s mission

MEANS did not identify increasing student attendance or increasing the graduation rate as challenges to the mission. MCSC staff followed up by asking how the board is tackling low absenteeism and the low graduation rate. The board chair believes both rates will increase if students who are a “better match” for the MEANS program enroll in the coming school years. There is also consideration being given to COVID’s influence on attendance due to the changes in programming, such as remote and virtual education and less in person interaction.

They also commented that they feel “stuck with some criteria that don’t apply” to the MEANS population, stating MEANS students “don’t learn in a traditional school setting.” They indicated a better measure would be 4-, 5- and 6-year graduation rates, rather than just 4-year rates. They also pointed out that Maine charter schools are being held to more criteria and much stricter criteria than district schools. MCSC staff encouraged MEANS representatives to explore 5- and 6-year graduation rates as one of the custom targets for the Performance Framework.

MEANS administration also added that tracking attendance in the student information system during the COVID pandemic, with remote learning and many absences, was difficult.

Student Achievement

Board representatives reported receiving academic achievement information through the Academic Committee, though student achievement data aren't reviewed at the board level.

The board chair feels that student assessment, graduation rates and attendance rates "are largely the responsibility of the school." The board focuses on budget, policy, and other responsibilities.

MEANS staff give presentations to the board at its meetings to keep the board informed.

The board has a finance committee that works to develop the annual budget. Because a "huge slice of the budget is fixed costs," the committee doesn't have much flexibility. It looks at gifts and donations and ensures they are aligned accordingly. The board ensures the budget supports the mission.

Board representatives were asked how the board knows the school is doing well and what does success look like to the board. They said "individual student success, such as students being able to pursue their passions is a success."

Board Membership

The board chairperson said "recruiting is hard" because of the time commitment involved in being a board member. He reported the board has a lot of members with education experience and not as many with natural sciences experience, and even fewer with experience in finances. Most recruiting is done through word-of-mouth.

The MEANS board is reviewing its relationship with Good Will-Hinckley (GWH). The school is not receiving as many services from GWH as in the past. Finances and enrollment are now handled directly by MEANS staff. The MEANS board is also looking at amending its bylaws so none of its members will be appointed by the GWH board. As the bylaws are currently written, the MEANS board can have up to 15 members; it has 14. Onboarding for new board members will include board training provided by the Commission in Epicenter.

A board self-evaluation was completed last school year. The board hasn't met again since the survey was done. The tool being used is a non-profit tool, not a school board tool. The board chair plans to evaluate the tool to identify what pieces are useful and what may need to be replaced with something else.

Evaluation of Leadership

The board has a framework for evaluating the school leader, which includes goal setting and the review of progress toward meeting the goals throughout the year.

Financial

As of the end of year meeting, 4th quarter financials hadn't been completed. The last budget forecast showed a budget surplus of approximately \$40,000.

The current strategic plan is from a few years ago. Some of the major undertakings at this time are creating a separation between MEANS and GWH, focusing on strengthening the curriculum, and increasing student enrollment. The board reported that it is a whole school effort to determine how staff interacts with the strategic plan. The board chairperson said the board "tries to" check in on progress of the strategic plan, but that "the expectations from the Commission are overwhelming." He posed a question, "How many meetings do you think we have? How long do you think they last?" adding, "our meetings never end on time." and that it "feels unfair."

Despite these difficulties, the board chair feels the board and staff do a "really good job" prioritizing and understanding what the school does well and that "a great board that knows what they're doing. Each agenda speaks to the strategic plan."

The board representatives were asked to discuss current enrollment and overall sustainability. They reported having regular conversations about how realistic the enrollment targets are and that the board feels the target is sustainable, despite having had lower enrollment in recent years. The board has a 4-5 year projection supporting this belief.

The board representatives explained the budget ran in the red for several years because it had support from GWH; the goal now is to be in the black. The Threshold program had increased enrollment (40 to 60 students) prior to COVID, and then increased to 72 students. The board and administrative team are not sure if the increase to 72 was due to true demand or due to it being an alternative during the pandemic.

ADMINISTRATION

Personnel

The administrative team was asked about recruitment and retention of teachers and staff. They reported there had been some turnover in teaching staff due to the new holistic approach to project-based learning being uncomfortable for some teachers. While the administration has found it difficult to find personnel due to a nationwide teacher shortage, members of the team reported feeling positive about the new hires, commenting on their enthusiasm for the work happening at MEANS.

They reported teachers had positive feedback on recent professional development, which has been a focus. One important PD for Threshold teachers is working with a specialist who deals with students experiencing trauma. The administrative team has also received positive comments from teachers about the support they are receiving from the curriculum coordinator, which was a new position in school year 21-22.

Student Achievement

It was reported that staff met after each NWEA MAP assessment administration to review and discuss the results. A dashboard was created and incorporated into student led conferences, which helped families better understand the assessment results. Reading has been identified as a weakness and is a focus area. The team has observed that RIT Growth by cohort is improving over time, with 40-60% having met growth in the most recent administration.

The team has been working to tighten what it means to meet a standard and be proficient, with a focus on being more transparent with students and families. Infinite Campus is being used to track the standards for the students on campus. The Threshold program has continued to use Empower, as it better meets that program's needs. Some steps being taken in SY 22-23 include shifting to a yearly model with a set of standards for each course, the use of rubrics for assessment, and making the details clear for faculty, families and students.

The administrative team was asked to explain the school's overall approach to meeting the learning needs of all students. There is a Child Find and referral process in place for special education. Students are also identified for 504 plans as needed. Students who are having difficulty are provided accommodations and support through one of the RTI teams (one for grades 9 and 10 and one for grades 11 and 12), though the administrative team would like to see a stronger RTI process in place. There is also an opportunity for students to receive additional support on Mondays, when the student body is not in session.

