



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



11 Goldenrod Lane, Sidney, ME 04330

MISSION

Nurturing the next generation of leaders to become invaluable citizens at the heart of Maine's cultural, economic, and social well-being.

VISION

Providing a rigorous career and college preparatory curriculum and well-rounded arts education to enrich the lives of our students.

GOVERNING BOARD

Sherry Gilbert, President
Dick Durost, Vice President
Andrew Landry, Treasurer
Linda Warner, Secretary

Janna Townsend
Timothy Rector

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Heather King, Head of School
Rachel Roberge, Assistant Head of School

Tina Spencer, Special Education Administrator

SCHOOL PROFILE

School Year Opened	Years in Operation	Grades served
2016-17	7	9 – 12
Number of Sending Districts*	Current Enrollment*	Students on Waiting List*
31 (as of October 2022, Certified Student Enrollment Date)	225 (as of October 2022, Certified Student Enrollment Date)	0 (as of October 2022, Certified Student Enrollment Date)

School Year 2021 – 2022 Demographic Table			
Grade Level Enrollment			
	9	60	28.2%
	10	61	28.6%
	11	50	23.5%
	12	42	19.7%
Gender			
	Female	47	22.1%
	Male	166	77.9%
Race/Ethnicity			
	White	189	88.8%
	AI/Alaska Native	5	2.3%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	1	0.5%
	Black or African American	5	2.3%
	Latino/Hispanic	7	3.3%
	Two or more races	6	2.8%
Special Education			
	Students with IEPs	22	10.3%
	General education students	191	89.7%
Economically Disadvantaged			
	Yes	47	22.1%
	No	166	77.9%

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.

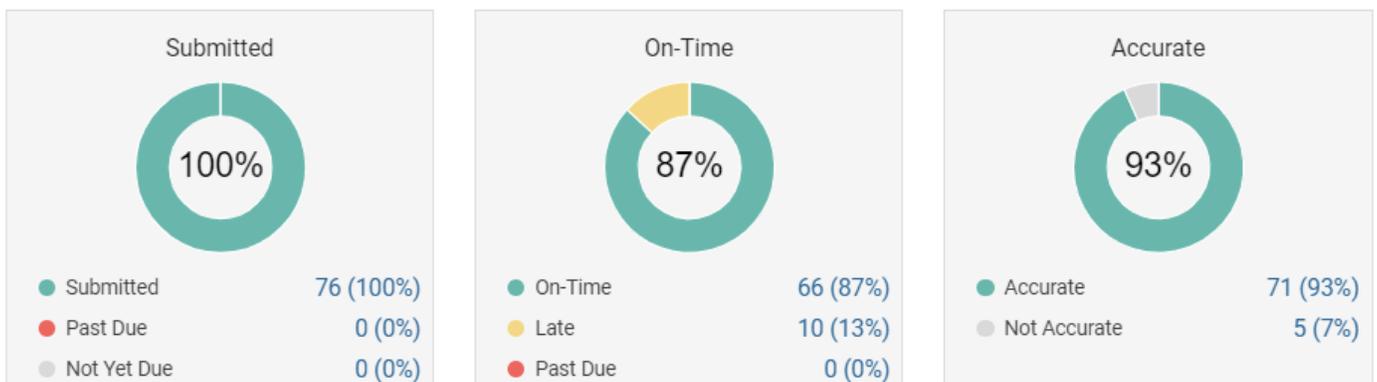
The Maine Charter School Commission has established a monitoring visit table for visit frequency and intensity. A copy of the Site Visit Manual can be found [here](#). Maine Arts Academy was on cycle to have a Site Visit at the end of the 2021-22 school year and the Site Visit Report can be found on page 6.

Key documents and other information reviewed to determine progress on the school'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 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 2021-2022, Maine Arts Academy had success with student re-enrollment from one year to the next and facilities management, board governance

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 2021-2022 school year.



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

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND GROWTH

- Given the impact of the pandemic on academic growth, Maine Arts Academy should develop clear and specific strategies for closing learning gaps to ensure students are prepared for rigorous academic work.

GOVERNING PRACTICES

- The governing board is encouraged to develop a process for operationalizing and monitoring progress toward meeting the goals set forth in its strategic plan.

SCHOOL CULTURE AND CLIMATE

- The school should continue to prioritize attracting and retaining quality instructors, as staff turnover can negatively impact student achievement.

FINANCIAL PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY

- An amendment request will be required if students will be learning in a new facility.
- It is suggested that budgets not be prepared to show a zero net result. Some level of surplus is required for financial health and to meet Financial Performance Measures.
- With limited enrollment growth and increasing costs, we recommend a focus on positive net results and philanthropy.

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 assessment 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 Reported as required
Proficiency on state assessment 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 Reported as required
Academic Growth		
Growth in English Language Arts, reading and communication skills	Students will show progress in their learning through growth in their MAP RIT scores from fall to spring of each year.	Did Not Meet Expectation 62%
Growth in mathematics and reasoning skills	Students will show progress in their learning through growth in their MAP RIT ¹ scores from fall to spring of each year.	Partially Met Expectation 76%
Growth on MAP ² assessment	70% of eligible ³ students meeting their projected growth on NWEA ELA reading by the end of school year 2021-2022.	Did Not Meet Expectation 48%

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.

Growth on MAP assessment	70% of eligible ⁴ students meeting their projected growth on NWEA math by the end of school year 2021-2022.	Did Not Meet Expectation 58%
Growth on MAP ⁵ assessment	70% of eligible ⁶ students meeting their projected growth on NWEA ELA language by the end of school year 2021-2022.	Met Expectation 79%
Achievement Gaps		
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).	Partially Met Expectation <i>Subgroups are performing below comparison groups, some gaps have closed since the previous year.</i>
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 Met Expectation <i>Subgroups are performing below comparison groups, some gaps have closed since the previous year.</i>
Student Attendance		
Chronic absenteeism rate	10% or fewer students classified as chronically absent on the last day of school ⁷ .	Pending MDOE
Average Daily Attendance Rate	Schools will have an average daily attendance rate in grades 9-12 of 91% or higher	Met Expectation 92%
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 ⁸ .	Met Expectation 89.7%
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.	Exceeded Expectation 99%
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 ⁹ 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 100%
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 ¹⁰ .	Exceeded Expectation 82%
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

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

⁵ 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.

⁶ Eligible is defined as having both a fall and spring score for students in Grades K-11.

⁷ Chronically absent is defined as missing 10% or more of school days.

⁸ State Student Count Day is October 1.

⁹ Students not excluded via IEP or other individual plan

¹⁰ 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 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 ¹¹ .	Exceeded Expectation <i>13 Meetings Held</i>
	Timely ¹² publication of Board meeting agenda and minutes upon approval.	Partially Met Expectation <i>1-2 items not 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.	Met Expectation: <i>Current Capital Improvement Plan approved by board</i>
School culture and climate		
Reporting of behavior incidents	The school will follow the Maine DOE required reporting for incidents of behavior.	Met Expectation <i>Reported as required</i>
Panorama Survey-Family Participation	40% of families will participate in the Panorama survey.	Did Not Meet Expectation 24%
Panorama Survey-Student Participation	65% of eligible students will participate in the Panorama survey ¹³ .	Did Not Meet Expectation 40%
Panorama Survey-Teacher/Staff Participation	70% of teachers/staff will participate in the Panorama survey.	Partially Met Expectation 61%
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.

Reports will be updated once 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
- Amy Allen, Operations Director, Maine Charter School Commission

¹¹ A school year is July 1 – June 30

¹² Timely is defined as posting agenda a minimum of 5 days before the meeting and for minutes, posting within 5 days of approval.

¹³ Students in grades 3 and up are eligible to participate in the Panorama Education surveys.

- Lana Ewing, Interim Chief Program Officer, 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 4, 2022 in hybrid format of both in person at Maine Arts Academy (MEAA) 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: Sherry Gilbert, Board Chair and Dick Durost, Board member
- School Leadership: Heather King, Head of School, Rachel Merrill, Principal, Jasen Richardsdon, Academic Dean

BOARD

Mission

The governing board representatives were asked to reflect on the school's mission and reported that they feel the school is meeting its mission. They identified space as a challenge to the mission, explaining that there is not enough space particularly for the visual arts program. The governing board is actively pursuing alternative space for the next academic year.

The team reflected on the unique mission of the school and the challenges that they have faced while pursuing both excellent academic and arts education for the students. The team noted that a structural decision was made to make the arts and academic departments more cohesive. When the arts department chair retired the administration team shifted staff responsibilities to streamline arts and academics, which the board believes will enhance the arts program.

The board cited several strengths of the school, including the following:

- Recent growth of interdisciplinary work between academics and arts
- Receipt of a grant for collaboration with an outside agency to improve the dance program
- Conducting three college tours last school year
- Student completion of dual and concurrent enrollment classes
- Some faculty members also teach college courses.

The board members and school team reflected on the student population noting that they believe that many students who join MeAA may have had trouble at other schools, but have grown and flourished while at MeAA. They attribute the student success to the strong relationships between staff and students. The school notes that the overall staff climate tends to be positive, and that the staff is unified in their approach to building relationships with students. The school team provided the example of a new teacher mentoring program that offers teachers a safe space to discuss challenges as one way in which the positive adult climate is created, which then translates to their approach with students.

Student Performance

The governing board representatives were asked to reflect on the school's performance on academic assessments. The board chairperson reported the board has received regular reports from the administration and can see improvements in student performance on the NWEA MAP test. The board members noted that the Head of School provides assessment results in the Head of School Report that goes to the board. Additionally, the members of the Academic Excellence Committee review the academic results of the assessments. The board representatives noted that the school is committed to continue to build a positive assessment culture and to continue to increase students participation on assessments.

The team noted that the board is particularly interested in reviewing growth, not solely achievement, on the assessments. One example they provided of school action focused on growth is a goal to improve the Response to Intervention (RTI) process. They plan to review with teachers the meaning of RTI and how to better fill learning gaps, especially those identified in the Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) student population.

The team identified math as an area where the school needs to improve and reflected that the drop in results may be because of the turnover in the math department throughout the school year. The school plans to establish a mentor program to identify barriers for students.

Governance

The board representatives discussed board membership. They are currently interested in recruiting people with artistic talent. They feel the board is a good size with 6 members. They noted that the next two people that will term out from the board are educators, who they would like to replace with people who have similar experience. In the future, the board will consider staggering terms so multiple board members do not term out at the same time.

The board has a strategic plan from which they plan, though they noted that it is primarily a list of goals with completion deadlines, as opposed to a more traditional strategic plan. The board decided to prioritize setting a process to complete several initiatives and they reported that they believe major growth toward these priorities has happened in the past few months.

The board reported that they evaluate the school leader annually in December. The school leader evaluation is distributed as a survey to all board members. Recently, the board recognized that the school leader was functioning more as a superintendent, and they restructured the leadership team to include a Head of School with superintendent responsibilities, as well as a principal to oversee the daily operations and success of the program.

The board reported that they have a "pretty good sense" of what they need from the school's administrative team.

The governing board evaluates itself annually. Last school year it was completed in the spring. The board chairperson is exploring ways to strengthen the process and shared that the survey results showed a diversity of opinions among board members about the board's areas of strength and growth.

Finances

The board noted that much of their work over the next year will be in supporting the school to relocate. Board members highlighted the work of the Ad-Hoc Facilities Committee, overseen by the Finance Committee, who

is taking on the important project of a school relocation. They noted that there is no decision yet on whether or not the Head of School will oversee the project. The board's initial actions include an understanding that the plan will have to go to the Commission for approval and a report from Kennebec Savings that the bank appears to be favorable to lending the school funds for a new facility.

Board members report that the Finance Committee meets monthly and that the Finance Committee and Ad-Hoc Facilities Committee are looking in the Greater Augusta area, and/or somewhere reasonably convenient to I-95, for a new facility. They note that they have outgrown their current space and are strategically allocating money toward program growth. The board members noted that their three-year lease with New England Music Camp ends in June 2023, and that the school must give a prior 6-month notice if leaving.

A board member shared that the Finance Committee receives regular budget vs. actual projections, and projections to year end. At the encouragement of Joe Drago, the school team noted that they will also begin producing month-to-month reports. The FY23 budget was approved in April.

Currently, the board noted that school finances are being managed by a part time bookkeeper and another staff assistant. The bookkeeper works remotely and in the office on occasion and the assistant works three days per week in the office with the Head of School.

The board members reflected on the financial audit and noted that the school was close to a clean audit last year. The board has signed a contract with the auditor for this academic year and a preliminary meeting will be held in August. The Head of School does not believe that the school will be subject to a federal audit this year.

ADMINISTRATION

Mission

The school team was asked to reflect on the implementation of the school's mission. The Head of School reported that the intent of an interdisciplinary program is easier than the application itself. She reported that the success of the mission implementation has been intermittent and that the "application is wonderful when it happens." She provided an example of strong implementation by noting a band performance that incorporated history classes.

The school team believes that the new leadership structure will lead to a strong interdisciplinary approach. Specifically, the team noted the success of having a chair of a department instead of "silos." The Academic Dean noted that he is focused on rigor development and classroom management and that he is eager to be the liaison between staff and administration. The school reflected that "rigor" has been a professional development theme at the school that received inconsistent investment from the staff. They noted that there are "pockets of rigor" throughout the school, but not across the whole school. In order to improve the academic rigor of the program the school is focused on several priorities:

- Elimination of study halls to develop a learning support period for each student that will be used mostly for small group RTI work
- Continuing professional development with Great Schools Partnership, focused on Formative Assessment

- Relationship building will be key as you cannot hold students to high expectations without strong teacher/student relationships.

The school team noted that they are planning to measure a change in rigor through:

- Panorama Survey - what are students reporting about the rigor of their experience?
- Engagement
- Growth on test scores (NWEA MAP)
- Teaching how to be a responsible member of society and have compassion for the human race.

Additionally, the school team is working with Great Schools Partnerships, a Maine-based school support organization, to help staff better understand graduation criteria, specifically how to better communicate standards acquisition, not simply credits, to students. A main goal of the school's work with Great Schools Partnership is to continue to work on Formative assessments.

Staff

The school team was asked to reflect on their process to recruit and retain strong staff. The team reported that they advertise for new staff members on Indeed and servingschools.com and have recruitment success through internal staff referrals. They require new staff members to attend new staff professional development. Additionally, new teachers have a mentor and are part of a mentor group, which has been so successful that some experienced teachers want to be a part of the mentor group.

The school has made adjustments year-to-year in an effort to retain staff. The school team noted that the school is an attractive option to teachers, because of the autonomy that teachers have in the classroom. The school offers 100% health insurance and retirement-matching to staff. The Head of School has introduced to the board a rewards system for personnel who have been with the school for a long time. The team noted that the payscale is \$10,000-\$15,000 less per year than that of other local schools.

The school team was asked to reflect on teacher support. They noted that there is a system in place for formal evaluations, which the principal, Rachel Merrill, will lead. Many informal evaluations take place throughout the year. Structurally, the Special Education Director and Food Service Staff report to the Head of School and all other staff report directly to the principal.

Additional support for staff includes:

- Staff reimbursement for classes
- Mentors conducting peer-to-peer evaluations
- School leadership as a daily presence in classrooms.

The school team reports that they gauge teacher satisfaction through:

- Team building and quarterly staff "pick me ups"
- Daily interactions
- Panorama survey results
- Prioritizing a personal relationship with staff members
- Chairs being a liaison between staff and administration.

The school team noted that they use student assessment data, particularly the NWEA, to inform Title I instruction. They noted that they have internal formative assessments that they are attaching to learning goals with support from Great Schools Partnerships.

Student Supports

The school team was asked to reflect on their overall approach to meeting the learning needs of all students. They reported that their special education department is attentive to each student and they will be overstaffed in special education teachers for SY 2022-2023, anticipating 26-27 students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and three staff who are special education certified.

The school team noted that all staff prioritize providing students emotional support and getting to know students in order to understand how they are best motivated. To promote the relationship-building approach across the whole school, each student has an arts advisor and there is a half-time social worker in the Guidance Department for working with students who do not have IEPs. For those students who receive counseling through IEP services, the school contracts with an outside agency from Pennsylvania.

The school team was asked to reflect on how they identify students suspected of having a disability and to describe the progress-monitoring that takes place to inform student interventions and supports. The school team reported that they usually have one or two referrals each year and they have a dedicated staff person who oversees the referral process. The staff member is a half-time special education coordinator and tutors students in the evening through Zoom. She oversees the learning goals of each student with an IEP or 504, and ensures that push-in and pull-out services are meeting the goals of each IEP. If students require out-of-classroom services, they leave study hall, not core classes. The team reported that the facility is ADA compliant.

Staff Communication

The team reflected on their communication with staff. They reported relying heavily on email because the staff work in different buildings. The staff meets during each early-release Friday. The principal sends a weekly communication focused on what to expect throughout the upcoming week.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Head of School reflected on lower than hoped for Panorama participation results and requested ideas for how other schools increase their participation rates for families. She noted that the internal calculation for staff participation is higher than what is reported on the Panorama website, and that for those who did participate the data was positive.



MISSION

The mission of the Maine Charter School Commission is to authorize, monitor and develop unique public charter schools that provide a dynamic, superlative education for every student