

**Maine Connections Academy
Pre-opening Review
August 20, 2014**

September 2, 2014, Commission Meeting

Maine Connections Academy has substantively met all the pre-opening requirements. This was confirmed in the Review Team's on-site evaluation, conducted August 20, 2014 at their office on 75 Robert's Road, South Portland. A subsequent telephone conference was held on Friday, August 22, 2014 to address a handful of administrative items, at which time the Review Team was satisfied that all issues had been addressed.

Enrollment

On opening day of school, September 2, 2014, enrollment numbers met the minimum threshold, with 281 fully-enrolled students. The Review Team noted that due to late enrollments, there were 41 students that did not have their full complement of equipment on opening day, but the school indicated that shipments were in process and they would work with students on a case-by-case basis to mitigate the lack of physical text books, which were available on-line. Other student materials, such as lab gear, would not be needed in the first few weeks of school.

Teacher

The school had a full complement of teachers, who were in training on the day of the Review Team's visit. In the case of one science teacher, the school was unable to find a suitable candidate that lived in the greater Portland area, which was effectively a requirement in order that they perform their teaching from the school's office. The school hired a temporary science teacher who lived in Fort Kent for a two-month period while the search continued. That teacher trained at the school before opening and her presence in northern Maine had the salutary benefit of providing an on-the-ground resource for parents and students in the region. The Review Team was satisfied that the temporary accommodation did not violate the teaching model of the school and indeed might be of positive benefit overall.

Budget

The school budget was approved by the MCA Board on August 22nd. Those changes reflected a refinement of the budget numbers from its application. The budget appeared sustainable, though the school indicated that during its first year, it would work to maintain some cash reserve and did not budget to make progress on repayment of its debt to Connections Academy, which is required to be liquidated by the end of the third year of operation.

Grants

The approval process for a variety of grants remained in process, though the school reported receiving "substantial" approval pending several admin items. The Review Team deemed that status sufficient for satisfaction of its pre-opening requirements.

Review Team Members

Ande Smith, Chair
Laurie Pendleton
J. Michael Wilhelm