

# Maine Charter School Commission

September, 2015

On June 4, 2015, an announced on-site visit was made to Harpswell Coastal Academy public charter school. The Maine Charter School Commission (MCSC) review team of 3 members was accompanied by the MCSC Executive Director, MCSC Director of Program Management, and Department of Education Special Education representative. The visiting team held interviews with school leadership, staff, students, parents, community partners, and the school's Governing Board. They also reviewed data provided by the school. Documents provided by the school are available from the MCSC office. Information gathered from documents, interviews, and on-site observation was used to determine the extent to which the school has met its contracted performance targets.

Commission Member, Review Team Chair	Laurie Pendleton
Commission	John Bird
Commission	Shelley Reed
MCSC Executive Director	Bob Kautz
MCSC Director of Program Management	Gina Post
DOE Special Education Representative	Peg Armstrong

*The Maine State Charter School Commission will provide thoughtful stewardship in authorizing and monitoring public charter schools consistent with State statutes to create unique, high-quality learning options for Maine students.*

# Maine Charter School Commission

## ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

September 2015

### Section 1: School Overview

School Name	Harpswell Coastal Academy (HCA)
Address	9 Ash Point Rd. Harpswell, Maine 04079

Head of School	John D’Anieri
Board Chair	Joe Grady

Assistant Head of School	Carrie Branson
Special Education Coordinator	Trevor Slater

Year Opened	2013-2014 school year
Years in Operation	2
Number of Sending Districts	12
Grades Served	6, 7, 9, 10, 11
Number of Students	123
Number of Students on Waiting List	15
Average Class Size	15
Teacher – Student Ratio	1:10

Mission	To offer a rigorous, personalized, project-based education to mid-coast Maine students in grades 6-12.
Vision	To use Maine’s shorelines, working waterfronts, forests, and farms as classrooms. To partner with local organizations and businesses, entrepreneurs, and community members who are committed to our goal of preparing caring, creative, resilient citizen-scholars who will flourish in a rapidly changing economy.

## Section 2: Indicator Summary Table

Indicator	Meets Contract agreement	Partially meets Contract agreement	Does not meet Contract agreement
Student Academic Proficiency	Met- established baseline		
Student Academic Growth	Met- established baseline		
Achievement Gaps in proficiency and growth between major student subgroups	Met- established baseline		
Student Attendance		X <sup>1</sup>	
Maintaining Enrollment from Year to Year		X <sup>2</sup>	
Recurrent Enrollment from Year to Year	X		
Post-Secondary Readiness			
Financial Performance and Sustainability	X		
Governance Board Performance and Stewardship	X		
Adequacy of Facilities Maintenance in Support of Program	X		
Food Service	X		
Transportation	X		
School Social and Academic Climate	X		
Parent and Community Engagement	X		

<sup>1</sup> Neither Division 1, nor Division 2 met its ADA target, but HCA's unexcused absent rate decreased during the school year. See section 4.

<sup>2</sup> HCA did not meet its goal for maintaining enrollment during the school year, but did meet its target for re-enrollment for year-to-year. See Section 4.

### Section 3: Academics

Harpwell Coastal Academy met its targets in the area of Academics.

#### Targets:

##### Student Academic Proficiency:

- Establish baseline for proficiency on State Assessments in Reading & Math
- Establish baseline for proficiency on school-selected standardized tests in Reading
- Establish baseline for proficiency on school-selected standardized tests in Math
- Proficiency on school-designed assessment program measuring Maine Learning Results
- Student Portfolio

##### Student Academic Growth

- Establish baseline for growth on State Assessment

##### Achievement Gaps

- Establish baseline for gaps in proficiency and growth between major student subgroups on Maine State Assessment

#### Performance:

Students in grades 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11 were assessed using the state Smarter Balanced assessments. Students in grade 11 were given the science assessment as well. HCA did not have 8<sup>th</sup> grade students during the 2014-15 school year. 24 students were opted out by their parents. About half of those students were opted out after they began the test, which resulted in approximately 77% of eligible students completing the tests. Results are reported in the table below. Due to small class sizes and participation, some results are not available for public reporting in order to maintain student privacy.

ELA/ Literacy	Grades	Number of students took test	Number enrolled	HCA % level 3 and above	State % level 3 and above	HCA +/- % from state
	6, 7 & 11	45	55	35%	47%	-12%
Math	Grades	Number of students took test	Number enrolled	HCA % level 3 and above	State % level 3 and above	HCA +/- % from state
	6, 7 & 11	40	55	cannot report	32%	-12%
Science	Grades	Number of students took test	Number enrolled	HCA % level 3 and above	State % level 3 and above	HCA +/- % from state
	6, 7 & 11	cannot report	2	cannot report	cannot report	cannot report

Students were tested using NWEA Map tests three times this year. In addition to those who opted out 4 students did not complete the test due to poor attendance.

6th Grade Language		7th Grade Language		9th Grade Language		10th Grade Language	
% exceeds + % average		% exceeds + % average		% exceeds + % average		% exceeds + % average	
Fall	82.05%	Fall	58.06%	Fall	52.63%	Fall	64.52%
Winter	54.05%	Winter	54.17%	Winter	64.71%	Winter	72.41%
Spring	46.67%	Spring	44.83%	Spring	44.44%	Spring	62.96%
6th Grade Reading		7th Grade Reading		9th Grade Reading		10th Grade Reading	
% exceeds + % average		% exceeds + % average		% exceeds + % average		% exceeds + % average	
Fall	82.05%	Fall	64.52%	Fall	66.67%	Fall	83.87%
Winter	66.67%	Winter	65.38%	Winter	50.00%	Winter	60.71%
Spring	50.00%	Spring	58.62%	Spring	44.44%	Spring	70.37%
6th Grade Math		7th Grade Math		9th Grade Math		10th Grade Math	
% exceeds + % average		% exceeds + % average		% exceeds + % average		% exceeds + % average	
Fall	66.67%	Fall	51.61%	Fall	33.33%	Fall	61.29%
Winter	62.16%	Winter	50.00%	Winter	31.25%	Winter	50.00%
Spring	48.39%	Spring	50.00%	Spring	27.78%	Spring	53.57%

92% of HCA students collected their best work and submitted three satisfactory portfolio pieces for presentation to parents at Student Led Conferences. This was 3% shy of the goal of 95% of students submitting three satisfactory portfolio pieces. These pieces were saved on Google Drive. The school is currently in the process of implementing an online platform to create official digital portfolios for each student.

#### Section 4: Attendance and Enrollment

HCA partially met its attendance target, with both Division 1 and Division 2 average daily attendance being less than 2% from the target. The unexcused absence rate did decrease throughout the school year. HCA did not meet its goal of maintaining student enrollment, but did meet its target of re-enrollment.

#### Targets:

- 95% Average Daily Attendance for Div. 1, 92% Average Daily Attendance for Div. 2
- Reduce unexcused absences
- Maintaining student enrollment
- Student reenrollment from one year to the next

#### Performance:

Average Daily Attendance during the 2014-15 school year was 92%.

Division 1 average daily attendance - 93.8%, 1.2% below the target of 95%.

Division 2 average daily attendance - 90.2%, 1.8% below the target of 92%.

During the 2014-15 school year the average number of unexcused absences dropped from 2.7 per day, during the first trimester, to 1.5 during the third trimester, meeting the goal of the number of unexcused absences decreasing from the fall to the spring trimester.

HCA enrolled 123 students on “student count day”, October 1, 2014. 87% of students enrolled on student count day were still enrolled at the end of the year, 3% shy of the 90% target. When HCA administration interviewed exiting families, reasons behind their decisions to leave included the desire for a more traditional school environment and unsustainable travel time.

HCA plans to continue to improve opportunities for prospective families to learn about HCA before enrolling their children, in an effort to keep enrollment steady throughout the year and minimize attrition. During the 2014-15 school year HCA offered a series of information sessions, tours, and visit days for prospective families to get a sense of HCA. Next year departing families will be surveyed to further understand their decisions.

On the last day of school 89.4 % of students currently enrolled indicated their intent to re-enroll for the 2015-16 school year, meeting the target of 80%.

## Section 5: Governance

### Governance Board Performance & Stewardship

HCA met its targets in the area of Governance.

#### Targets:

- Governance Board operates in a transparent, responsible, and legally compliant manner.
- Governance Board provides oversight of school leadership team.

#### Performance:

The HCA Board holds monthly meetings. Both meeting agendas and meeting minutes are posted on the school website. Reminders of the meetings are included in family newsletters. The HCA Board entered a contract with *Board On Track* midway through the 2014-15 school year. *Board On Track* provides an online platform to coordinate all the work of a Charter School board including: compliance, meeting scheduling, document storage, governance training, evaluation support, and more. HCA Board members believe that over time it will greatly enhance the work of the Board.

Chair of the Board	Joe Grady
Board Member	Sally MacKenzie
Board Member	Eileen Horner
Board Member	Sharon Whitney
Board Member	Cynthia Shelmerdine
Board Member	Ed Harris
Board Member	Dave Eldridge

The Board conducted an evaluation of the Head of School at the end of the 2014-15 school year the Board completed its annual evaluation of the Head of School using the Board on Track program to assist them. As a result of the evaluation, the Board set targets for the coming school year with the Head of School.

The Board secured a second location for HCA’s Division 2 at Brunswick Landing, in addition to purchasing the Ash Point Road location, which will continue to house Division 1 students. The plan and process to secure the Brunswick Landing facility did not follow the Charter Contract Material Amendment requirements, and the Governing Board is asked by the Maine Charter School Commission to spend meeting time dedicated to becoming more familiar with the Contract between the Commission and HCA.

## Section 6: Administration

At the End-of-year visit with the Maine Charter School Commission, the Head and Assistant Head of School reported being pleased with the devoted teachers and staff at HCA. They believe the relationships being built with the students is essential and are working to build a true standards-based model of education.

Head of School	John D'Anieri
Assistant Head of School	Carrie Branson
Special Education Director	Trevor Slater

HCA's Head of School and Assistant Head, in collaboration with the teachers, worked to develop a teacher evaluation rubric that plan has been finalized and approved by the Governing board. It is informed by National Board standards, but based on HCA's standards.

Challenges reported by them include the difficulty in explaining the school's approach to education and the relationship between the school and parents, families, and community members. Although the school took steps to increase parent communication and engagement, they have noted this as a continued challenge.

## Section 7: School Climate

HCA met its targets in the area of School Climate

### School Social and Academic Climate

#### Targets:

- Instances of bullying, harassment, or other abusive practices
- Family & Student Satisfaction
- Student Habits of Work and Learning
- Participation in Community Meeting & Restorative Justice program.

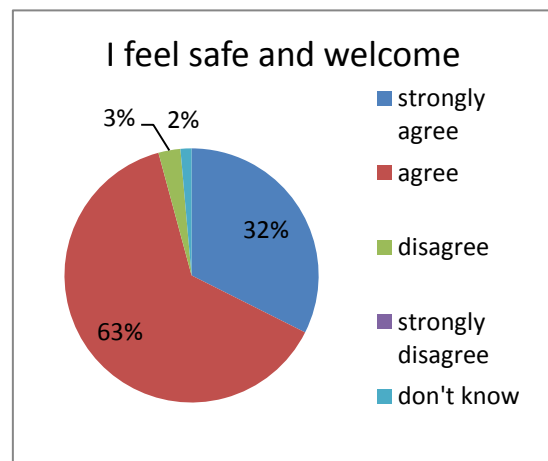
#### Performance:

During the 2014-15 school year there were 35 reported incidents of bullying or harassment representing 28% of the student body. During the 2013-2014 school year, a total of 18 (or 22%) incidents were reported. This indicates a 6% increase in the percent of reported incidents between years one and two. Since the goal was to decrease the number of incidents from the year one baseline, the school did not meet this target.

HCA Administration believes that next year, with the high school students at another facility, increased capacity amongst the staff to facilitate Resolution Circles, and increased social work capacity, the percentage of incidents will decline.

### Family and Student Satisfaction

Parents and students were surveyed in the spring 2015. 31 parents completed the survey, approximately 25%. 71 students responded, approximately 58%.



Over 95% of students reported on the survey that they feel safe and welcome at HCA. 87% of students reported enjoying school and view school as a positive experience.

All parents who completed the survey reported that the HCA faculty maintains a positive school climate for learning. Over 96% of parents responded that their child enjoys school and views it as a positive experience.

Overall survey results reveal that parents expressed satisfaction with communication from school with regards to school events and activities. Parents continued to express their confusion and concern about the timeliness and amount of communication about assignments and assessment of student work.

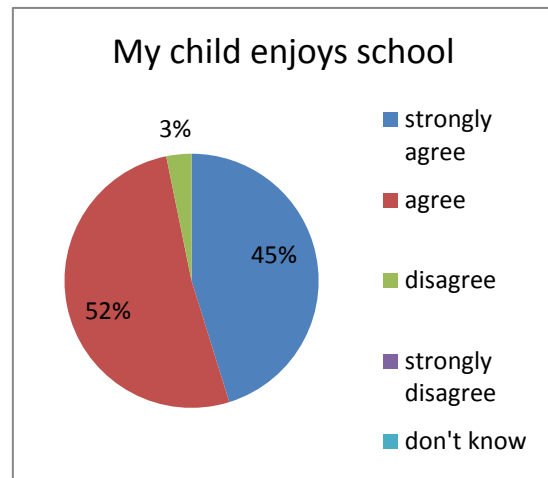
The student group interviewed by the Maine Charter School Commission at the end-of-year visit reported feeling supported at HCA. Students report that they appreciate the relationships they have with their teachers, they understand the standards they are working on, and they feel prepared for college.

Parents interviewed at the end-of-year visit with the Maine Charter School Commission expressed that their children are happy when they come home and want to go to school. Parents shared concerns around the communication that comes from school; the format it comes in, the timeliness, and the accuracy.

There were also parent concerns regarding special education timelines, procedures, and decisions. These concerns were discussed with parents and documentation was provided from parents to the Commission. After reviewing the documents, the Commission's Executive Director, Director of Program Management, and Special Services representative from the Maine Department of Education (DOE) had a follow-up visit with HCA's Head of School, Assistant Head of School, and Special Education teacher. The Commission staff and DOE representative felt that HCA was adequately addressing the concerns of parents, and had responded appropriately to the communication from parents.

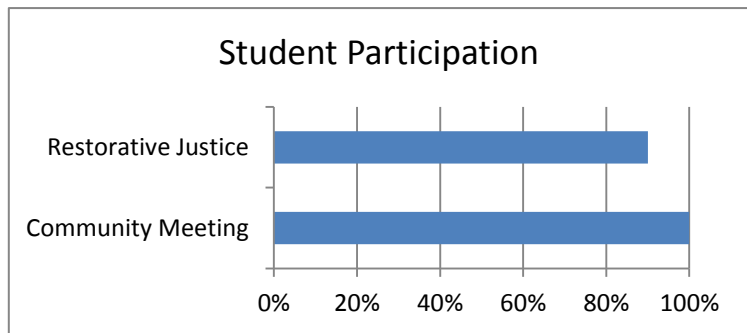
Students and families received reports on Habits of Work and Learning (HOWL) at Student Led Conferences in October and March and with the end of year reports in June. Overall, HOWL grades increased from 2.4 in the fall to 2.6 in the spring for Division 1, and increased from 1.8 in the fall to 2.0 in the spring for division 2.

HCA believes that HOWLs are an extremely important part of their program. This year they began to use a certain level for HOWL as a condition to participate in some workshops, and as a faculty, they are looking at other ways to incentivize these very important habits for their students. Increasing the overall HOWL rate is a major goal for HCA.



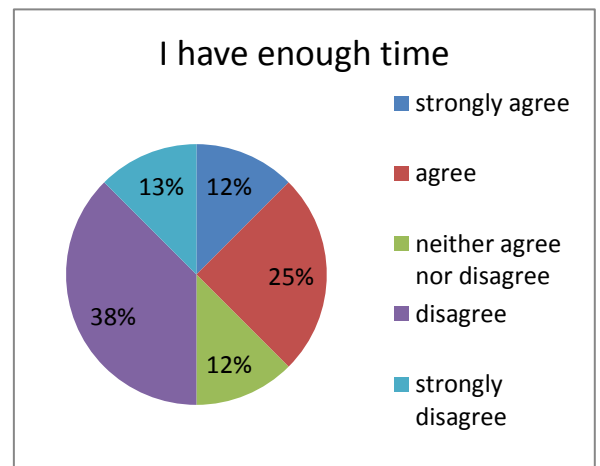


90% of students participated in the Restorative Justice model this year, and all students participated in Community Meeting, exceeding the target of 80% participation. In their second year, HCA Administration and Faculty found it hard at times to meet the demands for Resolution Circles. In staffing for 2015-16 the school has attempted to identify point people on the faculty to facilitate circles and coordinate its Restorative Justice approach. HCA Administration believes this will help to strengthen the community. HCA reports that students, parents and faculty have commented on the efficacy of Restorative Justice at HCA, and students have said that Community Meeting participation increases their feeling of empowerment and ownership of the school.



HCA teachers were also surveyed during the spring 2015.

Over 85% of teachers surveyed agreed with the statement “I feel supported by the administration.” However, teachers do not feel that they have enough time to perform their duties at HCA as indicated by 50% of them stating on the survey that they disagree or strongly with the statement, “I have the time I need to perform my duties at HCA.”



Teachers interviewed at the End-of-year visit with the Maine Charter School Commission expressed the same feelings concerning adequate time to perform their duties. Teachers also indicated that they feel HCA could use more teachers and Ed. Techs. in order to fully realize the school’s Vision.

## Section 8: Parent and Community Engagement

HCA met its targets in the area of Parent and Community Engagement

### Parent and Community Engagement

#### Targets:

- Student participation in activities provided by Community Partnerships.
- Parent Communication
- Parent participation in their children’s education and operation of school
- Celebration of Learning & Passages

#### Performance:

All HCA students participated in an activity with a community partner at least once, and the vast majority participated 3-5 times. These experiences included workshops, Field Work, and club activities.

HCA continues to develop meaningful relationships with community partners including the Telling Room writing project, the

Voices of the Sea collaboration with the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust, the Boats of Maine Project, and the Community Garden work.

HCA Administration reports that parent usage of JumpRope, the school's student data tracking program, continues to be inconsistent. Individual parent logins to JumpRope since the beginning of the year range from 0 times to 110 times, with an average of 20-30 total logins per week. Usage peaks around Student Led Conferences, and drops off towards the end of the year.

HCA held meetings explaining how to use JumpRope, and included information in the weekly newsletter and at Student Led Conferences. Despite this, however, they do not see the level of engagement they hoped to see from parents. They are actively pursuing an alternative platform for proficiency based assessment for the 2015-16 school year, but have yet to find one that satisfies their needs. Based on survey data and conversation with parents, it seems that most families are accessing the weekly newsletter to stay up to date with events and information from HCA. They also send documents home with students and mail certain things to parents using the USPS when they want to ensure receipt.

The weekly newsletter is sent to a list of approximately 230 people, including parents, faculty, Charter Commission members, Board members, and Heads of other Charter Schools.

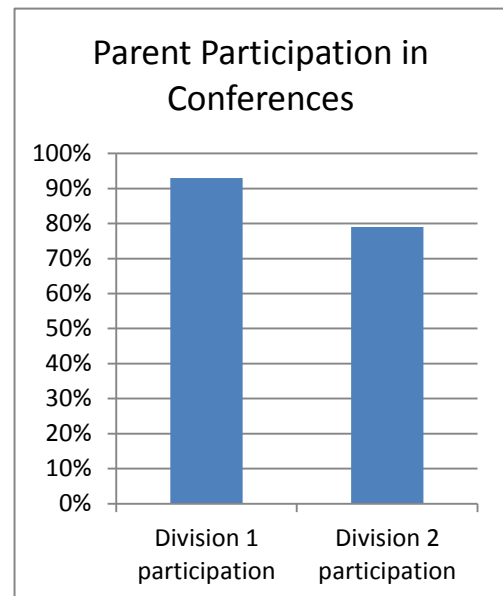
93% of Division 1 parents attended at least one Student Led Conference this year, exceeding the 90% target. 79% of Division 2 parents attended at least one Student Led Conference this year, exceeding the 60% target.

In addition to Student Led Conferences HCA is aware that there is a significant need for information about student progress, and are adding a mid-trimester report home to the parents of any students who are not meeting a HOWL score of 2.5 or above.

In the 2014-15 school year, 96% of HCA students met the target of presenting to the larger school community twice each year. Students presented as a culmination to a number of different investigations including the Children's Book project, Voices of the Sea, Odyssey, Boats of Maine, and Green Building.

HCA is working to establish practices for student presentations.

During the 2014-15 school year presentations were multi-media and often involved demonstrations. Next year, their goal is to have students present to a wider audience, making sure parents and community members have more opportunities to participate.



## **Section 9: Finances**

HCA met its targets in the area of Finances.

### **Financial Performance and Sustainability**

#### **Targets:**

- Governance Board reviews budget and makes appropriate adjustments to ensure school remains financially healthy.
- School conducts an external audit.

The Board Finance Committee met monthly, with additional meetings as necessary, to review reports and provide oversight to bookkeeper and Head of School. The school completed an audit in September for FY14. A copy was submitted to the Charter Commission. An audit is planned for FY 2015. The Finance Committee grew this year, with the addition of an experienced accountant. The accountant's regular meetings with the part-time bookkeeper and the Head of School improved financial practices and has led to revised fiscal policies and practices, following the recommendations made in the FY14 audit. HCA has also hired a Finance Director for the 2015-16 school.

During the 2014-15 school HCA hired consultants to work on advancement and expanding funding sources, including grants and partnerships. The Director of Advancement and the Grant-writer have been working with HCA since November 2014 to develop a strategic plan for advancement. After working through a transition from the previous fundraising consultant, the new Director of Advancement and Grant-writer have focused on implementing consistent donor management practices (database, tracking follow-up, communication, etc.), developing corporate partnership program, increasing HCA's effectiveness with foundation funding, and helping HCA's Board increase its capacity with fundraising.

## **Section 10: Facilities & Maintenance, Food Service, and Transportation**

HCA met its targets in the area of Facilities, Food Service and Transportation

### **Adequacy of Facilities Maintenance in Support of Program**

#### **Targets:**

- School facilities meet educational and health and safety standards.
- Site Development

#### **Performance:**

HCA has the appropriate certifications for health and safety including a health inspection of the kitchen; monthly water testing as required for a public water supply; boiler and air ventilation system serviced and inspected; and an inspection of fire equipment. Additionally, HCA has contracted with a nurse, who is providing oversight to our School Health Aid, ensuring that we are following guidelines for school health. With the addition of a half-time facilities coordinator, the on-site support of a supervising school nurse, and a part-time custodian, HCA has taken steps in improving the health and safety of students in our facility.

The Board Facilities Committee successfully facilitated the purchase of the HCA facility at 9 Ash Point Road in Harpswell this year. Additionally, they made plans for an interim home for the Division 2 and 3 students at Brunswick Landing for the 2015-16 school year. The Facilities Committee will continue efforts to establish a permanent home for the Division 2 and 3 students.

## Food Service & Transportation

### Targets:

- Food Service: Record of costs and student utilization of food service.
- Transportation: Record of costs and student utilization of transportation service.

### Performance:

Approximately 20% of eligible students utilize the breakfast service.

Approximately 95% of students who qualify for free lunch participate in the lunch program.

HCA continues to operate over budget in Food Service. HCA has hired a consultant to plan for their Food Service contract with The SchoolHouse Cafe, and their long term plans to supply a significant portion of their own food through their garden and farm.

Approximately 98% of eligible students utilize route 1 transportation service (morning and afternoon).

Approximately 96% of eligible students utilize route 2 transportation service (morning and afternoon).

HCA continues to contract with Luce Transportation, and operates 2 full size school buses that run through Topsham, Bowdoinham, Brunswick, Bath and Harpswell daily. Additionally, there is a 10 person handicapped accessible van. HCA will reevaluate the routes when enrollment is settled for next year, and will make adjustments as necessary.

HCA received occasional complaints from parents about late or early pick-ups, drivers being too lax or too severe with regard to discipline, and about inappropriate bus stop behavior. Throughout the year there were several complaints about inappropriate language and inappropriate behavior on the buses. Administration and Faculty addressed the issues with both students and bus drivers. They reviewed expectations and consequences with students, and improved the bus policy. Assigned seating has been used to address problems, and students have been suspended from riding the bus for periods of time.

## Section 11: Evidence of Mission and Vision Implementation

Mission	Vision
To offer a rigorous, personalized, project-based education to mid-coast Maine students in grades 6-12.	To use Maine's shorelines, working waterfronts, forests, and farms as classrooms. To partner with local organizations and businesses, entrepreneurs, and community members who are committed to our goal of preparing caring, creative, resilient citizen-scholars who will flourish in a rapidly changing economy.

HCA is achieving its mission and vision by providing place-based, project-based, proficiency-based learning for 190 students from 12 Maine school districts, many of whom struggled in their previous school.

During the 2014-15 school year, every student worked closely with community members who were often the subjects of, and/or the audience for authentic, relevant work, such as the "Voices of the Sea" collaboration with Harpswell Heritage Land Trust or "citizen science" studies of invasive species and ocean acidification.

HCA students also regularly practice "Voice and Choice," both in terms of customized approaches to certain standards and by creating and maintaining a school culture that emphasizes students' emotional and physical safety. HCA employs Community Meeting, Community Agreements, Restorative Justice, and regular reflection to ensure that each student is contributing positively to the overall school culture.

## **Section 12: Commendations and Recommendations**

### **Commendations**

- Harpswell Coastal Academy's vision is to use Maine's natural resources, local organizations, and businesses to prepare citizen-scholars who will flourish in a rapidly changing economy. With the school's approach to engaging students in field work, implementing a project-based learning, and building an inclusive community the school is well on its way to realizing this vision.
- Students are engaged in their work and exhibit a great deal of ownership of their completed projects.
- Teachers are working closely as a team and are invested in the success of the school's program.
- The Governing Board is well-organized and focused on growing their membership and improving their processes.

### **Recommendations**

- The Governing Board reviews the contract they hold with the Maine State Charter Commission to ensure they understand their responsibilities and accountability.
- The school should continue their efforts at improving communication with parents with a particular focus on helping parents and families better understand the learning that is taking place.
- As stated in the Monitoring Plan, the school shall develop an improvement plan to address academic weaknesses, particularly in the area of math, by further analyzing state and local assessment data, and other means of assessment that have been used by the school.