

# Maine Charter School Commission

September, 2015

On July 22, 2015, an announced on-site visit was made to the Maine Academy of Natural Sciences 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	John Bird
Commission	Jana Lapoint
Commission	Nichi Farnham
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	Maine Academy of Natural Sciences
Address	16 Prescott Drive PO Box 159 Hinckley, Maine

Interim President/CEO	Rich Abramson
Principal	Troy Frost
Director of Curriculum and Assessment	Emanuel Pariser
Board Chair	Bill Brown

Year Opened	2012-2013 school year
Years in Operation	3
Number of Sending Districts	23
Grades Served	9-12
Number of Students	76
Number of Students on Waiting List	2-18
Average Class Size	9.5
Teacher – Student Ratio	1:10

Mission	MeANS offers the public a student centered, staff guided high school whose purpose is to inspire and engage students. We welcome a diverse range of students including those whose previous learning environment has not inspired them to fulfill their potential as learners, those who have become profoundly disconnected from their education as well as those who have a passion for the school's themes of agriculture, forestry and sustainability.
Vision	To encourage students to re-engage with their education. They will grow as critical thinkers and problem solvers by developing habits of heart and mind that lead them to take responsibility for their own actions, as well as for the welfare of their community.

## Section 2: Indicator Summary Table

Indicator	Meets Contract agreement	Partially meets	Does not meet
Student Academic Proficiency	X		
Student Academic Growth		X <sup>1</sup>	
Achievement Gaps in proficiency and growth between major student subgroups		X <sup>2</sup>	
Student Attendance	X		
Recurrent Enrollment from Year to Year	X		
Post-Secondary Readiness	X		
Financial Performance and Sustainability	X		
Governance Board Performance and Stewardship	X		
Adequacy of Facilities Maintenance in Support of Program	X		
Transportation	X		
School Social and Academic Climate	X		
Parent and Community Engagement		X <sup>3</sup>	

<sup>1</sup> See Section 3: Academics for specific growth percentages.

<sup>2</sup> See Section 3: Academics for subgroup data.

<sup>3</sup> Parent participation in student-led conferences was 85%, 5% lower than the 5% target. See section 8.

### Section 3: Academics

MeANS partially met its academic goals for the 2014-15 school year. The NWEA goal was met in Language, but not in Math and Reading. Some achievement gaps were narrowed.

Smarter Balanced testing was completed, but due to low enrollment and participation, scores are unable to be publicly reported.

#### Targets:

Student Academic Proficiency and Growth:

- State assessments: 2015- Get baseline on Smarter Balanced
- School-developed assessments: Based on goals set annually in individual learning plans; 85% of students will meet or exceed the number of standards they set as goals to complete each year beginning is 2015-16 school year.
- Student academic growth: value added nationally normed individual and group assessment or equivalent for English and Math.
  - 50% of students will show a year's growth or more on NWEA math measures;
  - 50% of students will show a year's growth or more on NWEA reading measures;
  - 70% of students will show a year's growth or more on NWEA language measures;
- Achievement gaps in proficiency and growth between major student subgroups using ESEA-based system: Students in subgroups – special education and socioeconomically disadvantaged will whenever they are behind the average student growth at MeANS, close that gap on an annual basis by 10% in at least two of the three subject areas.

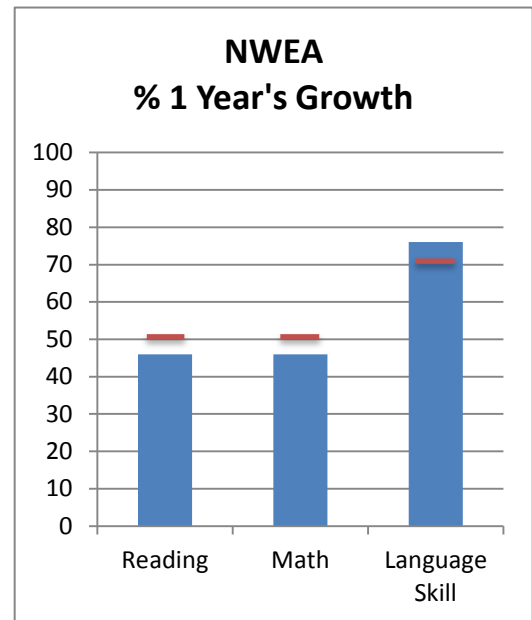
#### Performance:

MeANS will start setting student goals in the fall 2015, based on a combination of information from the NWEA results and the targets that students need to close in that year. 46% showed a year's growth on the NWEA Math, 46% showed a year's growth in Reading, 76% showed a year's growth in Language. These percents reveal that MeANS met its goal in Language, and missed its goals for math and reading by 4% each.

#### Achievement Gaps:

Special Education: 7% down in Language skills, remained even in Math, and 14 % over school average in reading growth.

Free and Reduced: Up by 1% in language, down by 8 % in math, and up by 2% in reading.



Post-Secondary Readiness:

MeANS met its Post-Secondary Readiness targets.

**Targets:**

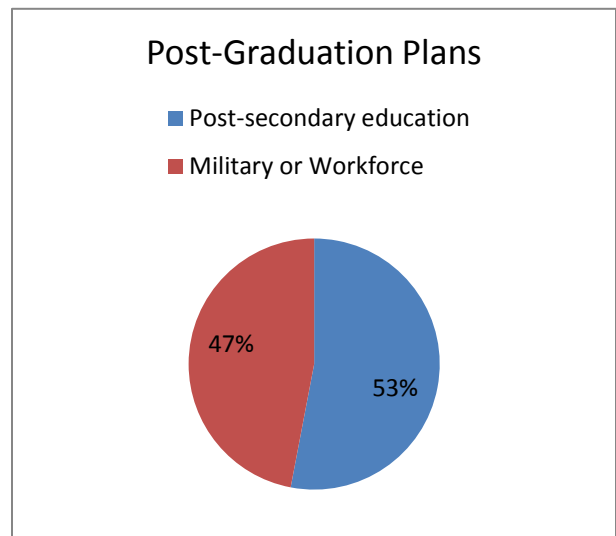
- Senior graduation rate of 70%
- Dual enrollment completion rate 75%
- 15% of students scoring at or above state average on ACT or SAT
- 75% of graduates enrolled in a post-secondary institution, college, trade, and apprenticeship by April of year 1 after graduation.
- 15% of graduates not enrolled in post-secondary institutions but employed full time or enlisted in the military by February of year 1 after graduation.

At the end of the 2014-15 school year eighteen (18) of 20 seniors graduated in 2014-2015; a 90% graduation rate. The 2 seniors who did not graduate have re-enrolled for 2015-16.

Of 39 KVCC classes taken in 2015 1 student failed one class for a dual-enrollment success rate of 97%.

SAT and ACT data are unavailable at this time.

Within 8 months of graduation 10 of 19 students (53%) were enrolled in Post –Secondary education, and 9 of 19 were working full time (47%).



**Section 4: Attendance & Enrollment**

MeANS met its Attendance and Enrollment goals for the 2014-15 school year.

**Targets:**

- Average daily attendance rate of 80%
- Individual student attendance rate
- 8% of students will exceed 4 unexcused absences
- 85% re-enrollment annually
- 80% continuous enrollment of students for multiple years

**Performance:**

Average daily attendance rate at MeANS for the 2014-15 school year was 86%, and improved during the course of the year from 83% in the first trimester to 92% in the third trimester. 86% of students had an attendance rate at or above 80%; 9% had an attendance rate over 95%. 97% of students had 3 or fewer unexcused absences in the third trimester, up 14% from 83% in the first trimester.

The re-enrollment rate from 2014-15 to 2015-16 is 100%, and 100% of previously enrolled students have enrolled for more than two years.

## Section 5: Governance

MeANS met its Governance goals for the 2014-15 school year. (i.e. Agendas and minutes posted on website, bi-monthly meetings)

### Targets:

- Governance Board Performance and Stewardship, see above

Chair of the Board	Bill Brown
Board Member	Cheryl Gwadosky
Board Member	Douglass Carr
Board Member	Gordon Donaldson
Board Member	Mara Casey Tieken
Board Member	Tom Edwards
Board Member	Scott Cyrway
Board Member	Richard Meserve

### Performance:

Meeting agendas and minutes are posted on the MeANS website. The board meets bi-monthly. Governing Board subcommittees include finance, academic, nominating, human resources. The Principal and Director of Curriculum and Assessment also attend the board meetings.

The Governing board reports visiting students, classes, and faculty about 3 times per year to get a feel for the daily work that the MeANS community is doing. Board members are impressed with teacher leadership, and the level of student engagement. The Governing board is down to eight members, and is currently looking to fill its ninth seat.

The Board is aware that MeANS teachers are working for low pay, as compared to the geographical area. They want to pay teachers more, and the new budget will begin to increase pay. The Board believes that the benefits are consistent with other peer organizations.

In an interview with the Maine Charter School Commission the Board Chair indicated that the Board is familiar with the Charter Contract and how to proceed toward its renewal at the end of the current contract.

The Governing board reports that Good-Will Hinckley (GWH) has a Strategic Plan that includes MeANS and was developed through a collaborative process with the MeANS board and staff.

The Board is very excited about the new school building, still on the GWH campus, and built specifically to suit MeANS' needs. The new facility is anticipated to be open by the end of August, 2015 for the 2015-16 school year. It has 16 rooms, is "green," and is net positive, so the building will not generate energy bills.

## Section 6: Administration 2014-2015

Director of Curriculum and Assessment	Emanuel Pariser
Principal	Troy Frost

MeANS is currently going through a leadership transition as the Principal leaves and the Director of Curriculum and Assessment reduces hours. In addition, GWH is searching for a President, who also functions as CEO for MeANS.

The Director of Curriculum and Assessment reported at the interview with the MCSC that he has done a lot of work fine-tuning each standard and the targets. The school is moving towards parents and students using the Empower software for monitoring purposes. As a result, students can take charge and propose a plan to meet standards. The administration expects the biggest challenge in switching to standards-based learning will be parent understanding.

The administration has received coaching on standards and targets from the Great Schools Partnership. MeANS will be on completely standards-based report cards. The school anticipates having to recalculate these report cards into GPA for student admission into certain post-secondary institutions, though it does not expect a problem with KVCC.

MeANS administrators reported that, as a result of the MCSC's feedback regarding Performance Indicators and targets, they are working on making their targets more useful. They plan to give the NWEA in the fall and use the scores to plan academics based on standards. They are also considering administering the NWEA mid-year to determine if the current model is working.

The Director of Admissions invites prospective students and families to visit MeANS. Many come in feeling deflated and leave with hope. She reports loving to do outreach at events, where she talks about project-based, hands-on learning, and using the land. She is pleased that re-enrollment is 100% and each year anyone who can re-enroll does.

## Section 7: School Climate

MeANS met its School Climate goals for the 2014-15 school year.

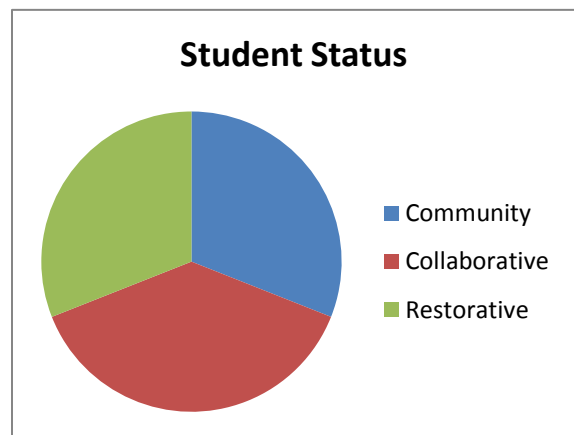
### Targets:

- 30 or fewer instances of bullying
- 90% of parents, students, and staff express satisfaction with school climate
- Emotional, social growth of students: What percentage of students has maintained Community status, Collaborative status, Restorative Status, for the majority of their weeks in school?

### Performance:

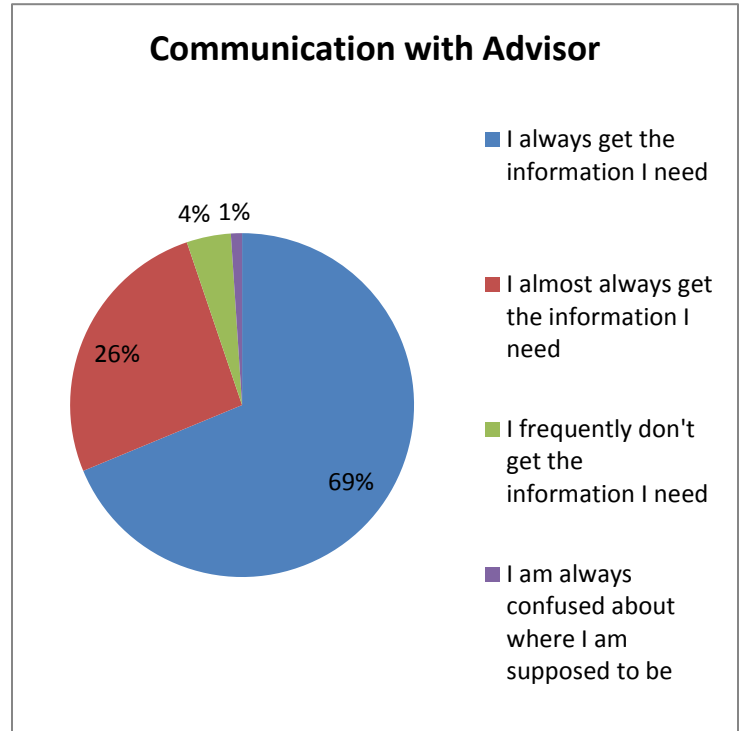
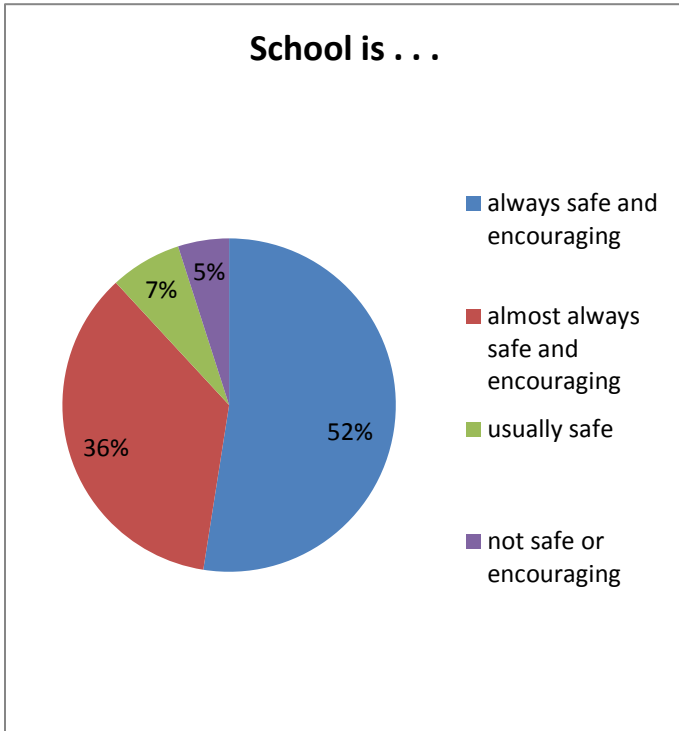
During the 2014-2015 school year there were 2 reported incidents of bullying, affecting 3 students. 2 Students were referred to substance abuse evaluation or counseling.

31% of MeANS students maintained the highest status, Community Status, for the majority of the school year; 38% maintained the second highest status, Collaborative Status,



for the majority of the school year, and 31% maintained the lowest status, Restorative Status, for the majority of the school year.

MeANS has a teacher who is extensively trained in the Restorative Justice approach to behaviors. She is on call with a space in the school to meet and remediate. She helps the students deescalate and get back into classroom. MeANS has a databased to record behaviors. The behaviors are tracked and communicated to parents. Detentions are also tracked. A behavior incentive, Golden Tickets, is given out as recognition. MeANS has a staff member who developed a system for tracking all behavior related incidents, which also tracks late assignments.

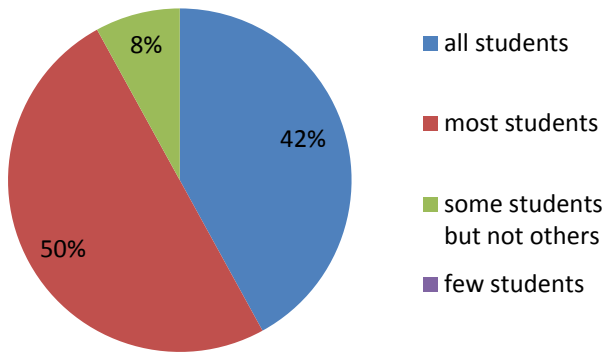


78% of MeANS students completed a student survey. Students reported the school climate as being either *always safe and encouraging* or *almost always safe and encouraging*. Students also reported that 91% of the time, when communicating with their advisor, they either always got the information they needed or usually got the information they needed.

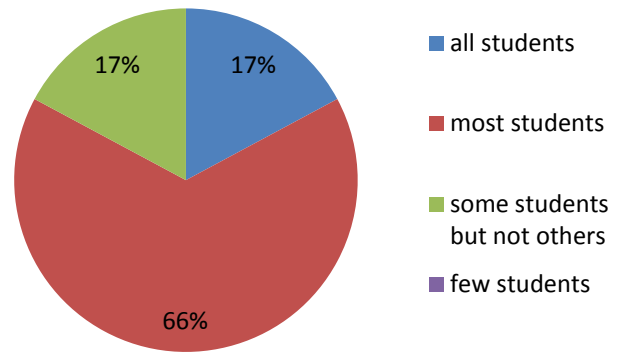
All teachers (12) participated in a satisfaction survey. Overall results were positive. More than 90% reported that the school climate at MeANS encourages social growth and development for all or most students. 83% responded that the school climate at MeANS encourages academic growth for all or most students.



### School climate encourages social growth and development



### School climate encourages academic growth



## Section 8: Parent and Community Engagement

MeANS partially met its Parent and Community Engagement goals for the 2014-15 school year. Community partnerships are in place, parents and advisors are in contact, parents and families participated in activities, and 85% of parents participated in student-led conferences, 5% shy of the 90% target.

### Targets:

- Educational partnerships in the community
- Parent communication systems: weekly communication between advisor and parent/guardian
- Parent participation in their children's education and operation of school: 90% participation in student-led conferences, 60% participation in school sponsored activities.

### Performance:

MeANS has numerous partners in the community including: KVCC, Cornerstones Counseling, Kennebec Behavioral Health, local farms offering internships, Maine Department of Labor, and Maine Department of Agriculture.

90% of student's parents/guardians heard from the school's advisor at least once a week during the quarter. Several students had special circumstances; one emancipated, one taking only KVCC courses, one taking only an external class.

85% of parent/guardians participated in student-led conferences. Seniors who only had one or two courses to complete generally did not have student-led conferences. Some students were estranged from their parents, or were at the age of majority and did not want parental involvement.

72% of parents and families participated and/or volunteered in school events.

## **Section 9: Finances**

MeANS met its goal for finances for the 2014-2015 school year.

### **Targets:**

- Financial performance and sustainability

### **Performance:**

The MeANS budget was balanced and “in the black” at the end of the 2014-15 school year.

The new facility for the 2015-16 school year was a 7 million dollar project. MeANS and GWH raised money for the facility and no public funds were used. The facility is “green,” and is net positive, so the building will not generate energy bills.

At the interview with the MCSC Review Team the MeANS Administration mentioned exploring increasing the student cap to accommodate higher numbers of students, and avoiding lower enrollment when students decided not to attend after initially enrolling.

MeANS has received several grants including: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Grant, \$25 thousand GEAR UP, AT&T for student projects, and Small Rural Schools Grant.

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

MeANS met its goals for Facilities & Maintenance, Transportation, and Food Service for the 2014-2015 school year.

### **Targets:**

- School facilities meet health, safety and fire code requirements and shall be sufficient size to safely house anticipated enrollment
- Record of costs and student utilization

### **Performance:**

**Facilities & Maintenance:** All rooms and space in the Swasey building first floor and basement are being used to their full capacity. Staff and students are looking forward to moving to the new Moody School building for the coming school year.

**Transportation:** Approximately 60% of students are utilizing transportation provided by MeANS’ vans, and approximately 15% are using transportation provided by a local school district, with which MeANS has a contract. Several new pick-up and drop off sites were added during the school year. Parents have complimented MeANS on communication and flexibility. In response to parent request, all MeANS’ vans were labeled with the school’s emblem for identification purposes.

**Food Service:** Approximately 15% of eligible students utilize breakfast service, and approximately 54% utilize the lunch service. MeANS reports that its food service ran over budget, but that it has improved since year one.

## Section 11: Evidence of Mission and Vision Implementation

### Mission

To provide an inspiring and inclusive learning environment primarily for students who are under-engaged and at risk of dropping out of high school.

### Vision

To encourage students to re-engage with their education. They will grow as critical thinkers and problem solvers by developing habits of heart and mind that lead them to take responsibility for their own actions, as well as for the welfare of their community.

MeANS' Mission and Vision are evident in that the school offers the public a student-centered, staff-guided secondary education whose purpose is to inspire and engage students. MeANS welcomes a diverse range of students including students whose previous learning environment has not inspired them to fulfill their potential as learners, students who have become profoundly disconnected from their education and students who have a passion for the school's themes of agriculture, forestry and sustainability. MeANS expects to graduate young adults who have developed positive habits of heart and mind, and greater self-direction.

## Section 12: Commendations and Recommendations

### Commendations

- 18 of 20 seniors graduated in 2015.
- Of 39 KVCC classes taken in 2015 the dual-enrollment success rate was 97%.
- Extensive work has been done to fully implement the philosophy of the school with the curriculum, and in the use of "Empower" for monitoring purposes.
- Students are provided multiple pathways to achieve success.
- For a second year in a row all students are returning.
- MeANS has strong teacher leadership most recently evidenced by their role in laying out the new school.
- Project-based learning is well evidenced.
- MeANS has developed a plan for operational self-sufficiency.
- The governing board has made an appropriate contribution in the educational improvement of the MeANS program.

### Recommendations

- Board minutes need to be kept current and should explain board actions in depth.
- Going forward financial reports should include the appropriate allocations of fees, supports and services provided between MeANS and GWH; for what and how much MEANS is paying directly to GWH.
- The board needs one or more members with development experience.
- As stated in the Monitoring Plan, the school shall develop an improvement plan to address academic weaknesses by further analyzing state and local assessment data, and other means of assessment that have been used by the school.