

Maine Charter School Commission
MAINE ACADEMY OF NATURAL SCIENCES
Monitoring Site Visit Report
Spring 2021

REPORT DATE:	June 2021
SCHOOL NAME:	Maine Academy of Natural Sciences
MAILING ADDRESS:	P.O. Box 159 Hinckley, Maine 04944
GRADES SERVED:	9-12
ENROLLMENT:	184 (certified count 2020-2021)
YEAR OPENED:	2013

Monitoring Site Visit Purpose

The primary purpose of site visits is to inform authorizer decisions, both imminent, such as assessing a school’s readiness to open, and longitudinal, when a visit is undertaken mid-term as part of routine monitoring.

The purpose of monitoring visits is to gauge the overall progress a school is making toward the goals outlined in its charter. In most cases, the authorizer will already possess some quantitative data about that progress – test scores, attendance rates, and other annual outcomes, so a monitoring visit can help explain the context behind that data and explore the school’s fidelity to its approved program.

Site visits are a mechanism for collecting additional evidence regarding a school’s performance against the expectations memorialized in its contract and contribute to the body of data authorizers utilize to ultimately make renewal recommendations. They also provide staff with the opportunity to review and analyze documentation that may be better understood on-site, such as factors impacting attendance, or rates of academic growth across subgroups. Site visits can also provide a basis for authorizer judgment or intervention where there is limited state assessment data yet available.

Monitoring Site Visit Process

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 conducted the monitoring site visit:

- Jeremy Jones, Executive Director, Maine Charter School Commission
- Gina Post, Chief Program Officer, Maine Charter School Commission
- Amy Allen, Operations Director, Maine Charter School Commission
- Joe Drago, CPA Consultant, Maine Charter School Commission
- Dr. Joe Mattos, Program Consultant, Maine Charter School Commission
- Colette Sullivan, Federal Programs Director, Maine Department of Education

The monitoring site visit was conducted on May 24, 2021 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.

Key documents and other information reviewed by the team prior to and at the time of visiting included:

- 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 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

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:
 - Cheryl Bulmer, Chair
 - Scott Byrd, Board Member
 - Dr. Mike Muir, Board Member
- School leaders/administrators:
 - Matthew Newberg, Head of School
 - Dani Best, Dean of Students, On Campus Program
 - Rebecca Dennison, Dean of Students, Threshold Program
 - Christine Sullivan, Director of Special Education

Monitoring Site Visit Findings

A. Mission Alignment

School leaders recently adopted a new expanded version of their mission. The mission statement revision was an effort to promote MEANS for more students. Leaders described an effort to broaden the diversity of students, not just those "profoundly disconnected from their education," as the previous mission statement read.

B. Student Achievement

The MEANS administrative team identified the student portfolio as a key indicator of student growth and engagement. An important piece of the portfolio is the Personal Learning Plan, which shows a student's work toward completion of standards as well as any college coursework or volunteer work they are doing. This plan is reviewed often and used regularly during student-led conferences.

Student learning is captured through project-based work and traditional assessments. The school's Curriculum Coordinator is developing rubrics to measure student learning.

According to leaders, work is being done to improve curriculum and the scope and sequence. Leaders are outlining required standards for graduation. Leaders expect to implement this plan in SY2122. Teachers will be trained in July on the curriculum redesign. MEANS has been using EmPower to track student progress and will be switching to Infinite Campus.

MEANS administration has been working to strengthen student NWEA MAP participation. Teachers are using MAP scores more seriously than in the past.

The Governing Board Representatives reflected on the school's performance on assessments. They indicated that academic performance on assessments is something that the school has struggled with. They are aware of standardized test scores and feel academic rigor at MEANS needs more focus. They also reported that much of the data surrounding student academic growth at MEANS is anecdotal.

C. School Climate and Family Engagement

Leaders reported students may not have read the mission, or they may not understand it when they arrive at MeANS, but they certainly know the mission once they are a part of the school community. A lot of work has been done to remind students and staff about respect, responsibility, and community. These are incorporated often into conversations.

In SY2021, nine staff members were trained in Restorative Justice and an emphasis has been put on implementing these practices.

Leaders had not yet reviewed the results from the Panorama Education School Climate Survey at the drafting of this report. The Head of School reported being discouraged with the participation rates from all groups (Students-47%, Teachers/staff- 85%, Family- 14%).

Commission staff have reviewed the results and found moderate to high satisfaction across all scales for students and families, as compared to similar schools nationally. Teachers and staff had moderate to high satisfaction across all scales, except for Feedback and Coaching, which was low as compared to similar schools nationally.

D. Governance

The governing board representatives reported a new process was recently adopted for performing a written evaluation of the school leader and will be implemented in fall 2021.

In spring 2020, the board completed the Maine Association of Nonprofits board survey and used the results to guide strategic planning. The board plans to complete the survey every couple of years.

The board reported having a positive relationship with Good Will - Hinckley. There are new Memorandums of Understanding that will go into effect with the new budget.

E. Finance

The board's Finance Committee is looking at how to best to invest a recent \$600,000 donation received for the Threshold program. The committee will be making a recommendation to the board at an upcoming meeting.

Maine Charter School Commission staff questioned the ability to have separate financial audits (not having the financials of Good Will - Hinckley and MEANS done together). The board said separate audits cannot be done because Good Will - Hinckley is the sole member of the Articles of Incorporation.

MeANS will be applying for its own vendor code. There has been confusion with the numbers and payments from the state are made to Good Will - Hinckley because it has the vendor code.