

**Maine Charter School Commission**  
**COMMUNITY REGIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL**  
**Monitoring Site Visit Report**  
**Spring 2021**

REPORT DATE	June 2021
SCHOOL NAME:	Community Regional Charter School District
MAILING ADDRESS:	48 South Factory Street, Skowhegan, Maine
GRADES SERVED:	PreK - 12
ENROLLMENT:	349 (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

The monitoring site visit was conducted on May 26, 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:
  - Danielle Denis, Board Chair
  - Kelly LaCasse, Board Member
- School leaders/administrators:
  - Travis Works, Executive Director
  - Ashlee Savage, Administrative Assistant and Data Manager
  - Elizabeth Firnkes, Principal, Overman Academy
  - Susan Martin, Principal, Creative Children's Academy and Dimensions Academy
  - Crystal Priest, Technology Director/Director of Innovation and Special Projects

## Monitoring Site Visit Findings

### A. Mission Alignment

CRCS maintains a focus on [Habits of Mind](#) and Students Leaders.

Some students created a small soap business and are learning entrepreneurial skills. In late 2020 a 26-foot greenhouse was erected for student use and learning activities.

CRCS governing board members described the challenges of maintaining the optimal learning environment in SY 20-21 because of the disruptions due to the global health crisis.

## **B. Student Achievement**

CRCS uses student achievement data to inform instruction. The organization administers the [NWEA MAP](#) test and NWEA MAP skills for students who need additional support. MAP RIT scores are aligned with [IXL](#) targets. Student Profile goal setting is used for individual students.

Professional development has focused on using data to inform instruction and data tracking along with regular staff Data Discussions.

CRCS has disassembled traditional courses into learning targets for which learners must demonstrate mastery in order to earn credit toward graduation. Learners achieving at least a Level 3 on 80% of the learning targets in a course earn credit. Learner progress is tracked in the EmPower program.

Board members described slow progress. Board members said that a recent data review showed learners who have been in the CRCS district for three years or more are outperforming students that recently joined the district. Another observation was that with additional resources math achievement increased. The board would like to see increased achievement in other areas through strengthening curricula.

## **C. School Climate and Family Engagement**

Scores were lower around teacher input. School Leadership is attributing lower scores for teacher input to COVID-19 restrictions and stress on facilitators. Facilitators and Staff indicated Professional Learning as a strength at CRCS on the Panorama Education School Survey (85th percentile as compared to like schools nationally). Facilitators reported Feedback and Coaching as another strength (75th percentile as compared to like schools nationally).

## **D. Governance**

There are five Governing board members. The representatives in the focus group meeting described that the new members bring various experiences and skill sets to the board.

The board plans to engage in strategic planning once they can meet in person. Meetings have been remote due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. They hope to have this completed by April of 2022. They will be back into the planning process this fall and engage with community in the spring.

The Governing Board has a process for evaluating the school's executive director. A scoring rubric is used, and the board meets with the Executive Director to review and create goals. The evaluation was done later during the 2020-2021 school year and the board would like to get it back on schedule for fall.

The Board has a rubric for evaluation of its work but has not used it. The board has had vacant seats for a large portion of school year 2020-2021 and was waiting to have its minimum requirement of five members before evaluating its work.

## **E. Finance**

The school's business manager presents the Governing Board with information on the school's financials on a regular basis. The Governing Board is working to identify what it wants for information and how often it should be presented.

A Cost Tracker document has been used in the past and will be used again. It shows all major expenses and where money is being spent from month to month. The Board's Finance Committee meets before the Board meeting and reviews documents provided to the Board ahead of the meeting.

The Maine Charter School Commission team pointed out that the CRCS financial audit has historically been late and was particularly late this year. The Board is having discussions about this. The CRCS representatives explained there were items that contributed to the delay, and it was a "messy process" including programming issues and Quickbooks not talking to the other programs. The MCSC team emphasized that the board needs to set firm expectations the completion and delivery of the financial audit is the auditor.