

Maine Charter School Commission

Renewal Application for a Public Charter School



Executive Director:

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Application approved by the school's governing board:

August 30, 2021

Application submission date:

August 30, 2021



Community Regional Charter School
Creative Children's Academy - Dimensions Academy - Overman Academy

"Community-Centered, Uncompromisingly Learner Focused"

Community Regional Charter School
48 South Factory Street
Skowhegan, ME 04976

Maine Charter School Commission
182 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0182

August 30, 2021

Dear Maine Charter School Commission,

Please accept Community Regional Charter School's Application for Renewal of a Public Charter School. CRCS would like to continue to serve the greater Central Maine Area for an additional 15 year term. In the following application you will find that we have demonstrated academic and social emotional learning success over the past nine years, despite numerous challenges. In 2012 when we were first granted our original charter, we had an uphill journey and ever since then, we have always persevered and even to this day continue to grow our learners socially, emotionally and academically.

While we fully recognize that we have areas to continually improve and grow, we have always demonstrated our willingness and our success in doing so. We have yet to fail or not make progress in any areas that we are given feedback on.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate in contacting me.

In the Service of Learners,


Travis Works
Executive Director

II. Renewal Application Form

Name of public charter school: Community Regional Charter School
Name of entity that holds the charter: Community Regional Charter School
Name of primary contact person: Travis Works
Mailing address: 48 S Factory Street, Skowhegan, ME 04976
Telephone: (207) 399-6502
Email address: tworks@crsme.org
Physical address(es) of school: 1192 W Ridge Rd, Cornville, ME 04976
48 S Factory St, Skowhegan, ME 04976
55 Commercial St, Skowhegan, ME 04976
School's initial opening date: 10/1/2012
Current grades enrolled: Pre-K - Grade 12
Grade levels to be served per current charter: Pre-K to Grade 12
Maximum projected enrollment per current charter: 455 + 10% = 500
Proposed grade levels to be served at full enrollment for charter term: PreK-12
Proposed maximum projected enrollment at full growth for charter term: 455 + 10% = 500

Renewal Application Certification

Signature of School Leader:
Printed Name: Travis Works



Date: 8/30/21

Signature of Board Chair:
Printed Name: Danielle Denis



Date: 8/30/21

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IV. Introduction to CRCS

Community Regional Charter School			
Year Opened	2012	Maximum Enrollment	455 + 10% = 500
Current Enrollment	375	Current Grade Span	Pre-K through 12
Chartered Grade Span	Pre-K through 12	Students on Waitlist	20 (as of 8/30/21)

Community Regional Charter School (CRCS), the first elementary charter school approved by the State of Maine in 2012, opened with only 60 learners. Today CRCS serves over 300 learners in Grades Pre-K to 12 from over 20 surrounding communities. Over the last several years we have become a vibrant and active school through the spirit of community and volunteerism. We have an amazing staff, three academies, and employ approximately 50 full-time employees.

V. Executive Summary

School Year 2020-2021

Number of Students Enrolled	303
Number of Students on Waiting List	27
Number of Male Students	182
Number of Female Students	120
Number White Students	290
Number of Black Students	1
Number of Hispanic Students	4
Number of Asian Students	1
Number of Other Students	6
Number of Students with Disabilities	67
Number of English Language Learners	0
Number of Homeless Students	0
Number Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	164

**This data is reflected as of: June 11, 2021 (not October 1, 2019)*

Educational Program

At Community Regional Charter School, children receive a unique educational experience... in some ways similar to and in some ways different from other public schools. We believe in putting learners where they need to be, when they need to be, which means we create classes of learners that are not just age or grade specific, but rather learning target specific.

Our classrooms are blended to help all learners learn and thrive in the classroom environment. Learners are allowed to progress through the curriculum at their own pace regardless of their chronological age level or grade level placement, but rather based on their successful progression through the standards. Learners are able to develop and to be challenged within a multi-age classroom approach due to differentiated instruction. This allows the child to be introduced to many different levels of instructional material and not be confined to a single grade level set of expectations. There is an ebb and flow to the day as learners move within the classes based on their interests and proficiency levels.

Additionally, learners at CRCS benefit from an emphasis on community. The sense of community is supported through all-school gatherings, electives, recess, mixed age children learning and growing together, and other opportunities where nurturing friendships are encouraged. The school subscribes to best practices detailed in Responsive Classroom and Restorative Justice models. These practices help learners to develop social awareness skills through Morning Meetings, co-creating classroom rules, interactive modeling, positive teacher language, logical consequences, guided discovery, and academic choice. Through restorative practices, learners engage in a process to better understand their choices and how their choices impact others in the learning community. These practices help learners develop life-long problem solving skills and social emotional learning that is mandatory for happiness and success in the future.

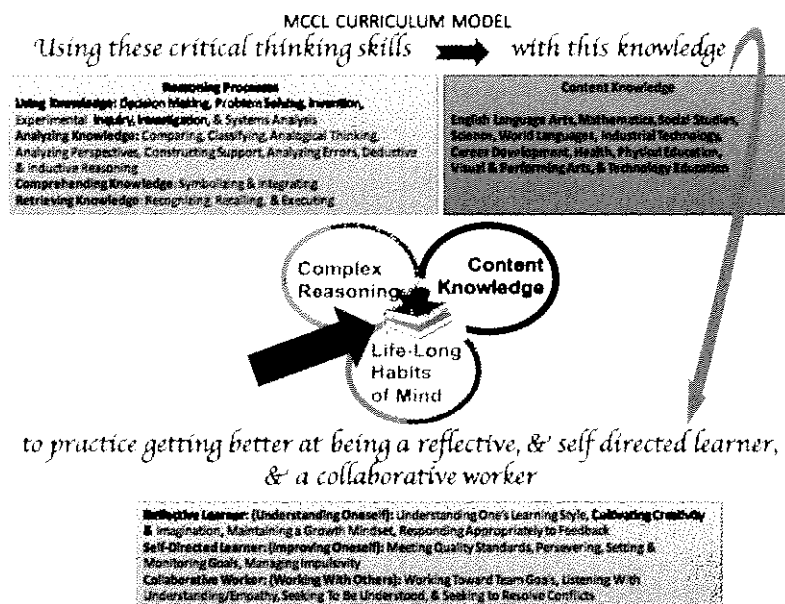
CRCS's academic program is based on the Maine Learning Results. These standards provide a consistent,

clear understanding of Maine’s educational goals and what learners are expected to learn. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that are needed for college and career success. Each learning target includes a proficiency scale that is centered around a taxonomy level that ensures a high level of rigor. The targets are clearly identified as procedural or declarative knowledge, making it possible for facilitators to use strategies that are most successful with specific types of learning. We do not believe that learning happens in silos. Most schools teach content areas in isolation, but our instructional design is based on designing learning opportunities that allow learners to meet proficiency on a wide array of targets through integrated projects in a variety of subject areas.

Learning is monitored with manageable and measurable expectations. The development of individualized Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) at the elementary level and the implementation of Future Action Plans at the middle and high school level help learners generate long and short term goals for themselves at all stages of development. Learners envision and help plan their educational path, partner in their own progress, and learn by observation and application as they develop both individual and group skills. From the very beginning, learners know what proficiencies demonstrate desired attainment of knowledge and skills, and they work to achieve those proficiencies.

CRCS believes that knowledge does not fall neatly into separate categories or disciplines. Whenever possible, teaching and learning are experienced within a context that is relevant to the learners’ lives. When appropriate, learning opportunities being taught are integrated within multiple or cross-curricular disciplines.

As a school, we belong to the Collaborative for Customized Learning (formerly known as the Maine Cohort For Customized Learning) and use similar curriculum targets and language as other schools around the State of Maine. We have a proficiency based diploma that does not negatively impact our learner’s opportunities for receiving scholarships and/or college acceptance. As Maine’s first public PreK-12 Charter School we believe in customizing learning opportunities while at the same time ensuring our learners have a rigorous education that will prepare them for future success.



We believe that it is not enough to just excel at academics, emphasis must also include the holistic development of learners. In order to do this, we provide a wide range of learning opportunities with choice and voice embedded as often as possible. We offer electives which are taught by local community members, parents, learners and staff. These activities promote healthy learning and self-awareness, develop talents and allow the children to explore new interests. All learners have the opportunity to choose from a multitude of activities that vary based on interest and needs.

At CRCS we believe in creating a ***Community-Centered, Uncompromisingly Learner Focused*** environment where success is the only option. We believe in creating the ideal learning experience for all of our learners, which means customizing around their needs. This goes beyond our educational programming through the development of an atmosphere centered around community and belonging. All of this comes together with communication and transparency at the center.

We believe and live up to our belief that learners learn at their own pace and in their own ways. Traditional educators have tried to customize learning within their classrooms and those examples exist in every school across the country. CRCS customizes learning for each of our learners system wide, therefore eliminating the “walls” that typically separate learners from being instructed where they need to be. For example, a learner who needs to work on adding fractions with unlike denominators can receive instruction from a teacher who is offering that content while their peer goes to another teacher who is focusing on the measurement and volume. Our talented facilitators are not just confined to working within their classroom walls but rather are able to work outside the walls of the entire school. Our schedule and resources are designed to allow our teachers to focus on what is most important, which requires individualizing for our learners. We use the phrase “Mass Customized Learning” because we are truly customizing for a large group of learners. You will not find a “cookie cutter” approach when it comes to providing learning opportunities! *“Mass Customized Learning is about the implementation of a school structure that makes it possible to meet the individual and personal needs of learners simultaneously every hour of every day. Every learner, every day, comes to school and is met at his/her specific learning level, is challenged, is successful, and looks forward to returning to school tomorrow.”* (Bea McGarvey and Chuck Schwan)

Commendations from the Maine Charter Commission: “Evidence of the school’s mission and vision can be seen in its instructional practices, community involvement and hands-on real-life learning.”

Vision for the Future

Short Term Focus

As a school district, we know we have developed and have matured, but we also recognize that we have opportunities to grow as well. In this report, we outline short term and long term goals, as well as specific action steps that we are planning or have already initiated to meet and surpass these goals.

Our immediate focuses involve:

1. Board Development
2. Strategic Design Update
3. Increased research based curricula & practices to improve learner achievement
4. Decreased chronic absenteeism rates

Community & Local Connections

It has been said many times that Maine’s greatest export is its children. At CRCS, we are striving to change that by creating opportunities for learners to develop connections and talents that will keep

them in Maine. Through meaningful community partnerships, our learners observe the relevancy of their learning through application with community professionals.

Our learners have worked with lawyers to develop business plans, graphic designers to develop logo packages, restaurant owners to develop a small business model, volunteer organizations helping animals and people, and a plethora of trades people willing to share their skills. Additionally, our learners are actively engaged in community organizations such as Main Street Skowhegan and the Lions Club. All of these opportunities are designed to help learners establish connections that help them see the vital role they play in their community.

Through extensive knowledge of our learners, we network and connect learners to opportunities that are in line with their Future Action Plans. One recent graduate was quoted saying, "At Overman I had an opportunity to explore nursing. I found out that I do not like nursing. Learning this at Overman saved me 2 years and thousands of dollars after high school." Sometimes learners figure out what they do not like through our community connections, and this is just as important.

Learners at the middle/high school level work to bring community projects to the younger learners. For instance, our learners worked with Main Street Skowhegan on the Skowhegan birdhouse project this past spring. Learners at Overman designed and manufactured kits that the younger learners assembled. After the bird houses were built, everyone in the community was able to paint and decorate a birdhouse. Now these birdhouses are hanging all over Skowhegan. When learners of all ages look up to the light posts in Skowhegan they are immediately reminded of their connection and purpose in this community.

Leadership & Governance

We have a dedicated and increasingly seasoned and skilled team of administrators, as well as board members who are committed to the CRCS mission and vision. For the past two years, we have employed the use of a tool known as the "Customized Learning Strength Finder". This is a screening tool we use when hiring new staff to identify areas of strength regarding the alignment of the mission and vision between the candidate and our school district.

One goal we are continuing to work on for our school board members and our staff is continual onboarding and support. In the 2020-2021 school year, school leaders worked diligently on developing onboarding materials and processes for new teaching staff; these materials were improved on and expanded for the 2021-2022 school year. Principals also serve as instructional coaches at CRCS, and as new staff join our system they are given logistical support for the nuts and bolts of CRCS, instructional support, and mentoring resources. Our system of onboarding new staff has gone from an informal process to one that is formal and organized that equips our staff with the tools they need to feel confident in starting their careers at CRCS. Our school leaders take great pride in the progress we have shown in regards to setting our staff up for success.

Long Term Focus, Visioning, & Planning

CRCS is in the refinement and tweaking phase as a system. In 2017, we went through our first Strategic Design process with visioning for our learners over 10 years beyond graduation. The CRCS Board is conducting a Strategic Design update in the Spring of 2022. Originally this was being planned for the summer of 2020, which was 3 years after the original Strategic Design process. Due to COVID-19 it was cancelled, but for 2022, we are prepared to host the event in person or online if needed. The Board and administration will be meeting with the Strategic Design facilitator to discuss the process, outcomes, and goals for the process.

In terms of focus, our model and growth in learner achievement over time has highlighted the positive impact on academic performance. Putting *“learners where they need to be, socially, emotionally and academically”* has resulted in improved academic performance. This will continue being our focus and could serve as a model for other schools.

VI. Looking Back: The Record of Performance

Academic Performance

Our academic data gives us insights to how our programming is working or not working. Our learners, staff, and administration are constantly looking to the data to help us make decisions. While our recent annual data did not meet our performance measure goals, we are encouraged when looking at our longitudinal data and trends over time. Our data shows us that learners who are with us longest are the most successful, and without the longitudinal approach to data, this important fact may otherwise be overlooked.

Results Over Time:

Annually our performance indicators give the impression that our learners are not making adequate progress. When delving deeper into the data we noted that our annual addition of larger cohorts of new learners has to a degree “watered down” or negatively impact our fall to spring performance data from year to year. On average we have enrolled 80-100 new learners in our system annually since our expansion in 2017-2018. When dissecting data of learners who have been with us over time versus learners new to our district, we see a distinction in not only proficiency but also in percentile growth.

When looking at cohorts of learners over time, the longitudinal data provides insight to the success our learners are finding when they are in our system for multiple years.

Learners Enrolled in 2012-2013 and continuously enrolled in 2020-2021

	Spring 2013	Spring 2021
NWEA Literacy	Avg. percentile 20th %ile	Avg. percentile 41st %ile
NWEA Math	Avg. percentile 28th %ile	Avg. percentile 38th %ile

**Same 14 learners tested in both test windows*

Learners Enrolled in 2014-2015 and continuously enrolled in 2020-2021

	Fall 2014	Spring 2021
NWEA Literacy	Avg. percentile 34.7th %ile 44% at Proficiency (11/25)	Avg. percentile 49.5th %ile 68% at Proficiency (17/25)
NWEA Math	Avg. percentile 29.52th %ile 28% at Proficiency (7/25)	Avg. percentile 39.64th %ile 52% Proficiency (13/25)

**Same 25 learners tested in both test windows*

Learners Enrolled in 2019-2020 and continuously enrolled in 2020-2021 (COVID Learners)

	Fall 2019	Spring 2021
NWEA Literacy	Avg. percentile 37.7th %ile	Avg. percentile 40.1th %ile

	44% at Proficiency (26/58)	44% at Proficiency (26/58)
NWEA Math	Avg. percentile 30.8th %ile 33% at Proficiency (19/58)	Avg. percentile 29.8th %ile 28% Proficiency (16/58)

**Same 58 learners tested in both test windows. These learners joined our system in Fall of 2019*

In light of the above data, we would like to look at additional performance measures that focus on longitudinal data, opposed to just annual data.

Looking forward, we need a more efficient and effective way to track each learner longitudinally. Pearson Inform discontinued a platform that was extremely good at this and we are looking at building our own using FileMaker to build the data warehouse. This is data we intend to spend more time reviewing and analyzing on a regular basis.

Closing the Achievement Gaps:

The Mass Customized Learning philosophy used at CRCS places learners “where they need to be, when they need to be.” This grants our learners the opportunity to work at their level and find success on a daily basis. Our subgroups are performing and growing on par with our general population and in some cases, out performing our general population.

MATH ACHIEVEMENT (PROFICIENCY) *	Spring 2017	Spring 2018	Spring 2019	Winter 2020	Spring 2021
All learners	15/39 (38%)	16/39 (41%)	13/39 (33%)	21/39 (54%)	18/39 (46%)
Regular Education	14/29 (48%)	15/29 (52%)	13/29 (45%)	21/29 (72%)	18/29 (62%)
Special Education	1/10 (10%)	1/10 (10%)	0/10 (0%)	2/10 (20%)	0/10 (0%)
Free/Reduced	9/23 (39%)	10/23 (43%)	7/23 (30%)	10/23 (43%)	10/23 (43%)
Full Pay	6/16 (38%)	6/16 (38%)	6/16 (38%)	11/16 (69%)	8/16 (50%)

** Learners with 5-7 years at CRCS*

LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT (PROFICIENCY) *	Spring 2017	Spring 2018	Spring 2019	Winter 2020	Spring 2021
All learners	20/39 (51%)	19/39 (49%)	23/39 (59%)	23/39 (59%)	28/39 (72%)
Regular Education	17/28 (61%)	17/28 (61%)	19/28 (68%)	17/28 (61%)	23/28 (82%)

Special Education	3/11 (27%)	2/11 (18%)	4/11 (36%)	6/11 (55%)	5/11 (45%)
Free/Reduced	10/23 (43%)	11/23 (48%)	12/23 (52%)	13/23 (57%)	19/23 (83%)
Full Pay	10/16 (63%)	8/16 (50%)	10/16 (63%)	10/16 (63%)	9/16 (56%)
Special Ed & Free/Reduced	1/6 (17%)	1/6 (17%)	1/6 (17%)	3/6 (50%)	3/6 (50%)

* Learners with 5-7 years at CRCS

Despite the disruption that COVID-19 has caused for our youngest learners, our Pre-K program has demonstrated success since its inception in 2017-2018. Our Pre-K learners have consistently met or exceeded all of their growth and achievement targets as indicated in our performance measures. However, our data does reflect an exception to this success last year when there was an administrative oversight and a particular assessment (Elementary Mathematics Diagnostic Interview) was not administered. During a transition of administrative roles, a miscommunication resulted in missing this math spring data point. To remedy this error, any pre-K learners still in district this coming fall will be administered the spring Pre-K assessment. Additionally, our Pre-K benchmarks and assessment times have been lined up with assessment timelines with Dimensions Academy to further assure the timeliness and fidelity of assessments.

Stakeholder Feedback

We have administered, reviewed, and valued the Panorama Survey for the past several years. We put a lot of stock in this survey and use the data from this survey to continually refine and improve our school community.

- *Student Category:* Our learners have strong relationships with their facilitators. With our learners in grades 3-5, CRCS scores in the 80% ile for teacher-student relationships as reported by learners. With our learners in grade 6-12 CRCS scores in the 70% ile with learners feeling safe at school. At CRCS, learners are comfortable and supported to be who they are freely with caring adult support.
- *Family Category:* Our family participation has consistently been strong in regards to the Panorama survey. However, parent participation in the Panorama survey was significantly lower this year. This has been due in part to the fact that we typically invited families into our buildings in person for events at the same time we were trying to collect family input on the Panorama survey. The lack of face to face interaction with our families for the past 18 months of the pandemic also impacted family involvement in the Panorama Survey. Our families are most likely to participate in surveys and other school events once families have developed relationships with the school. Due to COVID-19 and remote learning, we had many families last year that we only communicated with online and not in person. This year we are looking forward to strengthening our family relationships and garnering more feedback through formal and informal processes with our families.

Commendation from Maine Charter Commission: *“With onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the school was proactive in serving the learning and personal needs of students, and increased contact with families to be supportive.”*

- **Teacher and Staff Category:** As a means to improve learner achievement and growth, we have placed high emphasis on providing our staff with feedback, mentoring, supervision, and professional development. On the Panorama Survey, we have watched our scores in regards to teacher satisfaction climb year after year.
 - **Professional Learning:** CRCS falls in the 70th percentile in professional learning, with 84th percentile of our facilitators responding favorably to peer feedback opportunities. The addition of peer walk throughs and an increased culture of collaborative learning has propelled our staff development and growth.
 - **Feedback & Coaching:** CRCS falls in the 60th percentile in feedback and coaching, with 63% of our facilitators responding favorably to usefulness of feedback in improving their teaching.

Financial Performance

CRCS has had strong financial performance. During the 2017-2019 school year we had internal and staffing issues that prevented us from having accurate financials. We recognized the need for a strong and robust financial office with timely reporting. Over our history of 9 years we have always had a positive balance and since the first two years have not relied on fundraising, capital campaigns, and/or private donations to balance the budget.

Organization Performance

Since opening in 2012 CRCS has grown exponentially and so has its organizational performance. Starting out as a very small school with every staff member wearing multiple hats was a challenge. The expansion in 2017 highlighted our faults around organizational performance and the need for a substantial change. After hiring an outside consultant, the organization performance of CRCS went under a transformational change. The Executive Director and Administrative Leadership Team developed and defined roles, responsibilities, policies, procedures, and a road map. These things were critical in the process and helped catapult CRCS from dysfunction to the level of a fully and well functioning organization.

Instructional leadership was an area that unfortunately was overshadowed by the day to day operations and management of the organization. As roles, responsibilities, policies, and procedures were clearly defined we are able to shift a building administrator’s time to 50% or more of the time being spent explicitly on instructional leadership.

VII. Looking to the Future

Adjustments to the Performance Framework

CRCS would like to work with MCSC to develop additional indicators that set benchmarks and tracking performance of learners over time and not just over one year. The Charter Commission had started similar indicators in the past and we would like to revisit the concept and track the same cohorts of learners over time.

Education Plan

Mission & Vision:

We first developed our CRCS Strategic Design in 2017 when we were beginning the expansion into our two other buildings and adding Pre-K and grades 9-12. Since then, our district has evolved through the stage of initial growing pains and to the place where we are establishing our identity as a Pre-K through grade 12 school system. With the yearly introduction and inclusion of new staff and new families, it is time once again to bring our stakeholders together to have another collaborative opportunity to examine our mission and vision and the next steps with this mission and vision. CRCS is “**Community Centered, Uncompromisingly Learner Focused**”. We are looking forward to convening our stakeholders in the spring 2022 to continue to unpack what this mission and vision looks like in our schools.

Academic Program:

- **Math & Literacy:** Improving learner growth and achievement in math & literacy is of utmost importance to our administration, staff, families, and learners. We have a number of goals and action steps for improving our learner growth and achievement. These academic goals are high priority and our decisions for professional development, initiatives, etc.. reflect the priority we are putting on academic proficiency and growth.

Our goals are:

1. Engage staff in curriculum revisions and development through the Collaborative for Customized Learning
2. Acquire research based programs that we can use to supplement our existing proficiency based learning progressions
3. Provide NWEA Reports Training to 100% of instructional staff, with follow up professional development around Applying Reports
4. Use additional assessment measures to track learner progress (Fountas & Pinnell, Early Mathematics Diagnostic Interview, etc.)

Commendation from the Maine Charter Commission: While normal testing has been interrupted by the pandemic, CRCS is seeking additional student learning information that will assist in making informed decisions in personalizing instruction for each student.

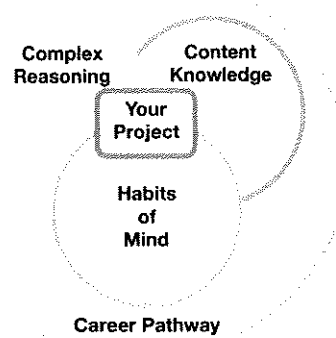
- **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS/Formerly Response to Intervention RTI):** In the recent history of CRCS, a robust MTSS process has been developed and refined starting with our youngest learners. Starting with the staff at Dimensions Academy, our elementary facilitators received extensive training on tracking data, data-based decision-making, and using data to inform instruction. These processes led to an increase in learners receiving additional supports,

which led to learners either being appropriately referred for special education services or learners receiving the tiered support necessary to advance their progress and no longer need the additional support. Our next steps include a more cohesive system for tracking formative data, including academic and behavioral data. For the coming school year, facilitators have time set aside to meet weekly with a special education facilitator, Title I facilitator, regular education facilitators, and the building administrator.

Our middle/high school level program is starting its fifth year of operation. During this time we have been working diligently to build strong Tier 1 and Tier 3 programming. Now that we have a firmer grasp on these pieces, over the course of the next three months we will be establishing a clear Tier 2 program. We have established a MTSS professional learning community that includes a special education facilitator, a regular education facilitator and the building administrator. These professionals have started working toward developing assessments for the Tier 1 population that will allow us to identify learner needs.

Facilitators will develop and establish a protocol for putting researched based supports in place for learners with identified needs based on assessments such as the NWEA, the IXL Diagnostic, and the district writing assessment to identify learners in our Tier 1 programming that might need more support. Additionally we will use the Fountas and Pinnell Assessment System and the Burns and Roe Reading Inventory for additional information when necessary. Facilitators will also be trained to refer learners to the MTSS team to be considered for Tier 2 supports based on social-emotional needs, Habits of Mind needs, or behavioral needs.

- **Habits of Mind & Complex Reasoning:** Our curriculum model places equal emphasis on content knowledge, Habits of Mind, and Complex Reasoning. (See fig. 1). Similar to the work habits in the Maine Learning Results, Habits of Mind include perseverance, growth mindset, monitoring goals, seeking clarity, and seven other habits (Costa & Kallie). Our complex reasoning skills involve comparing and classifying, deductive reasoning, systems thinking, and 15 other thinking skills (Marzano & Pickering; Marzano & Kendall).



Adapted from the Cohort for Customized Learning

fig. 1

We explicitly teach these areas and have grown increasingly competent with our collective abilities to weave these three domains together to create learning experiences. While we have consistently measured learner growth and achievement with content knowledge in isolation, our next step is to use project rubrics that include the scoring scales for various knowledge areas

including the Habits of Mind and Complex Reasoning learning progressions. This will help learners, facilitators and the learner's families document learner growth and achievement not only in the academic content areas, but also with the Habits of Mind and Complex Reasoning learning targets. These three areas of focus help us prepare learners for life after high school whether their pathway leads them to college, a trade school, or the workforce.

When tracking academic progress on a learning target, learners frequently use Marzano rubrics that align with our content knowledge learning target rubrics. With the feedback provided from facilitators, learners are able to reflect on their progress towards a learning target and identify what they need to do next to continue towards their proficiency. Some of our facilitators have also started the practice of learners attaching a self-assessment score for Habits of Mind and/or Complex Reasoning. This means that when a learner finishes an academic assignment, they are also reflecting on the degree to which the Habits of Mind or Complex Reasoning are employed.

Special Population:

CRCS continues to serve a slightly higher population of special education learners compared to the region and state average. As a result, we have hired more case managers and special education staffing to allow qualified staff to spend more time with learners on academics.

Assessment:

CRCS does not have any substantive changes. However, in recent years we have developed an assessment calendar for facilitators to follow for both standardized assessments and classroom based assessments. We have added a formal writing prompt from Lucy Calkins, which is administered twice a year for pre-K to grade 12.

School Climate and Discipline:

Beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, CRCS began adding additional focus on Trauma Informed Teaching and Social Emotional Learning. After staff wide learning about Adverse Childhood Effects (ACES) in the spring of 2019, the staff shared a collective desire to strengthen our professional understanding of the impact of trauma, poverty, and adverse childhood experiences on education. Our staff is either in the process of or has completed book studies with books such as *Fostering Resilient Learners: Strategies for Creating a Trauma-Sensitive Classroom* (Souers), *The Behavior Code: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Teaching the Most Challenging Students* (Minahan), and *All Learning is Social and Emotional* (Smith, Frey, Fisher). Additionally, all staff have been enrolled in courses through Educational Impact, which consists of self paced online courses around trauma and social emotional learning.

CRCS recently began work with George Conant, Restorative Practice Consultant, to bring Restorative Practices to our school. This is a structure that strengthens our already existing practices of Responsive Classroom and Positive Behaviors Interventions and Supports. Restorative Practices are intended to build trust and strengthen relationships, and we look forward to seeing how these Restorative Practices positively impact our organization at the adult level and learner level.

Organizational Plan

School Calendar and Daily Schedule:

CRCS does not have any substantive changes.

Student Recruitment and Enrollment:

Branding and getting our message out to families is an ongoing priority for CRCS. Our district leadership team began developing a public relations plan at the start of the 2020-2021 school year. This plan involved strategic timing of public Facebook posts, as well as reaching out to local news stations to share what CRCS learners are busy achieving. In the past two years, COVID-19 has certainly impacted our enrollment as families made decisions about whether they wanted their child in person, remote learning, or a hybrid.

Staffing and Human Resources:

We continue to expand staff benefit options to improve our overall compensation package and contribute to employees' satisfaction and retention. We are currently refining our onboarding process for staff, with a mix of in person and virtual learning opportunities, as well as building a library of CRCS documents for a successful start and continued tenure with our organization. Our commitment to building staff efficacy and workplace satisfaction involves explicit social-emotional learning opportunities for our adults, and an increased, personalized, and intentional focus on employee self care.

In the past few years, we had adopted and followed a systematic approach to teacher evaluation using Marzano's iObservation tool. Our goals moving forward involve using a similarly systematic approach to evaluating our school leaders in a timely fashion with measurable outcomes. Providing feedback for our leaders and growing our leaders is an important element of our culture and one of the reasons we have seen little turnover in our administrative roles.

Management and Operation:

While there are no significant changes in this area, we are honing our management and operations. Shared and distributive leadership were cornerstones to the original application and we are strengthening our District Leadership Team, which is comprised of a variety of staff members. Looking forward, we are eliminating the need for instructional staff to have multiple roles and responsibilities, other than for our administration and support staff. For sustainability and/or replication purposes, it is important that we continue working towards building a system around the work and not around a specific person. For example, a key and important element of our programming, operation, and/or management should not be lost and/or incur a major disruption because a staff member no longer works at CRCS. This has been something we have focused on in the past and looking forward we will continue with this as a major goal for sustainability.

In addition, the role of a building administrator is more of an instructional leader versus a manager. This is a shift we have been working on for the last several years. Looking forward, we intend for 60% of a building administrator's time to be spent on explicit instructional leadership and feedback. The upper management team's responsibilities have grown to afford us the opportunity to take some of the administrative management. As we look forward, we want to continue striving towards this goal as we know it will directly correlate with student growth and achievement.

Family and Community Development:

We place strong emphasis and value on family and community involvement. Our expansion into Skowhegan has further allowed us to build connections with the community, and our increased enrollment has allowed us to build connections with even more families. COVID-19 interrupted our in person family engagement for a period, but at the same time, we learned more ways to interact with families in less conventional manners. Prior to COVID-19, we were proud to have our families in and out of our buildings volunteering, assisting with elective classes, and visiting classrooms. When COVID-19

first hit and we moved to remote learning, we began weekly phone calls home to communicate not only about how a child was doing academically, but also to check on the well being of the families. Now as the pandemic continues but we return to in person learning, we are committed to making a strong push to get our families back into the buildings to again volunteer and facilitate learning opportunities with their children. We also are committed to revitalizing our Parent-Teachers-Friends organization (PTF) after the past 18 months of virtual-only meetings and events.

It has been a practice of CRCS to solicit family input through surveys and interviews to capture the quality of learning at CRCS. With the recent first graduating class of Community Regional Charter School, we are now surveying our alumni to gather data about what CRCS did to prepare our graduates for their futures and what CRCS could have done better. Feedback from our families, our learners, and now our alumni is important for our growth and development as a district. Moving forward, we are creating ways to store the data we collect from families in a comprehensive manner, and looking for ways to quantify the data as we make plans to check, adjust, and grow our program to best suit our learners and families.

Governance Plan

Governing Board Composition:

Due to the uniqueness of CRCS'S programming and structure, it has been important to the board that they find like minded individuals that believe in the mission, vision, and core values of CRCS. The programming at CRCS is not necessarily the "buffing and shining" of education, but transforming on all levels the education system.

While our Bylaws are written for a minimum of 5 board members, our goal is to expand our board to 7 members, which will allow the board to better function with committee work around policies, finances, and strategic planning. The knowledge and expertise of the board is important and vital to CRCS because each board member provides an area of expertise that helps refine and add to the policies and procedures that impact learners. With a larger board we will be able to diversify the expertise and share the load in ways that we haven't been able to do previously.

Current Board members include:

- Danielle Denis, Board Chair: Somerset Public Health (advises the school on social emotional learning and well being. Areas of expertise around poverty, equity, and customized approach)
- Kelly LaCasse, Board Member: The Maine Meal (advises the school on nutrition and social emotional learning, which are important pieces of our school's mission/vision and philosophy)
- Nicki Reinholt, Board Member: Retired Educator (advises the school on best practices for social emotional learning, academic interventions, and brings legal expertise around Special Education and School Law)
- Linda Belanger, Treasurer: Maine Arts Academy Business Manager (advises the school on financial matters related to the school)
- Seth Noonkester, Board Member: Franklin Savings Bank Assistant Manager (advises the school on lending and other financial matters)

Governing Board Professional Development for 2021-22

During the 2020-2021 school year the board contracted with the school attorney on board training and each board member was given a copy of the *Drummond and Woodsum Board Member Handbook*. With the addition of new board members and increasing demands on boards, it is critical that CRCS provide in-depth professional development to both new and existing board members in an ongoing fashion.

Our goal for 2021-22 is to increase the knowledge and skills of board members with regular, ongoing professional development. Board members will participate in a yearlong professional development program with the expected outcome that board members will have increased knowledge and decision making skills in the areas of school system policies, budgets, finances, goal setting and strategic planning, and conducting performance evaluations (Board self evaluation and evaluation of Executive Director), which are based on improving student learning and the effective operation of CRCS. Board professional development activities will be conducted at each board meeting and will be guided by a facilitator and the texts, *Becoming a Better Board Member: A Guide to Effective School Board Service* 3rd Edition and the Drummond Woodsum Board Member Handbook.

Business and Financial Services

Budget:

We currently do not foresee any major changes in our budgeting. We budget conservatively each year and end with a positive balance.

Financial Management:

In 2018-2019 we had a major disruption in our Business Office Staffing and we have since developed a plan that allows for a smooth transition in the event we have a sudden resignation. Our Business Manager is currently training our Bookkeeper as her replacement in the next 5 years. We are looking at hiring a third position that will also be cross trained in handling the duties and functions of the Business Manager. That will give us three individuals with the qualification and experience to lead the office if needed.

For sustainability purposes, these three individuals will also be contracted to conduct financial services for other schools and local businesses. This was part of the grant we were awarded in 2017-2019 through the State of Maine.

This plan of success and cross training is pivotal to providing continuity and sustainability for the organization.

Facilities:

As the school has grown in both facilities and grade levels, a review of financial planning, practices and reporting, as well as the creation of a facilities subcommittee, is something that we have been working on and will expand upon during the upcoming year.

At the board level, we have been discussing facilities and the need to have facilities subcommittee meet to identify needs and space. Up to this point those discussions have taken place at the board level with everyone. The board charges the administration with collecting data and information and the administration reports back and seeks guidance.

As discussed at the board level over the last several months, we currently have the buildings needed for our programming and population for the next 5-10 years and don't foresee the need for additional buildings at this time. We do see a need for renovations and additions of our buildings for the future.

The facilities of CRCS need to be expanded in order to accommodate the population beginning in Pre-K.

Our Pre-K program enrolls 30-32 learners each year and we believe that approximately 30 learners at each age group provides more social emotional opportunities for learners.

Facilities Needs Looking Forward:

- Creative Children’s Academy:
 - Other than cosmetic and upgrading heating/cooling and mechanical systems, the major facilities need is more parking and potentially acquiring abutting property.

- Dimensions Academy:
 - In Cornville we need enough space to accommodate 30-35 learners at each age level grades K-6 and 15-20 learners at the 7th grade level, which is approximately 225 learners. The board has discussed putting an addition onto Dimensions Academy and we are currently evaluating that proposal.

- Overman Academy:
 - In Skowhegan we need enough space to accommodate 30-35 learners at each grade 8-12 level, 15-20 at 7th grade level, and 5-10 learners needing more than 4 years of high school. Only 50% of the building has been renovated and the remaining amount needs to be completed.

The board has requested that as CRCS looks at renovations, land purchases, and/or facilities upgrades that these should be done without incurring any more debt than necessary. The Board understands that Dimensions Academy is a facility that will need future additions and facility upgrades. While those projects are a few years out, we are currently using ESSER monies to make upgrades for health and safety reasons. Current upgrades should not interfere or become redundant in future facility work. The board has asked the administration to look at potential funding/loans for both the Dimensions and Overman Academy facilities projects.

Transportation:

There are no foreseen transportation changes at this time. We have a robust system that reaches over 20 towns and keeps travel time for learners at 1 hour or less on the bus.

Insurance:

There are no foreseen changes in our insurance. We have comprehensive coverage on our buildings and programming. Our health insurance coverage rivals and is more beneficial for employees than the MEA Benefits Trust. We are able to cover 100% monthly premiums and employees only pay 10% of any medical expense (capped out of pocket total is \$850) and CRCS pays 90%. We budget approximately \$7,000 annually for each employee and that same plan would cost other local school districts over \$14,000. To add dependents the cost is \$250/month. The only changes we are looking at are how to lower costs to employees who are looking at adding children and/or spouses.

Food Service:

There are no foreseen changes to the Food Service program. We provide a locally sourced meal to our learners for lunch every single day. We are committed to high quality food.

Education Service Providers

CRCS has never had an Educational Service Provider or major underwriter/donor. We don't foresee this changing in the future.

VIII. Addressing Special Issues

Since the previous renewal of our charter, we have had two challenges: expansion to Pre-K and high school level learners, and reacting and operating in a worldwide pandemic.

Expansion: Its Impact and The Road Ahead

We have been transparent that the expansion to three buildings was a challenge that was both a blessing and curse. Through the process we found value in having policies, procedures, and a road map of where we were headed organizationally. Over the last 4 years we have developed and continue to refine structures, policies, and procedures so that we can be efficient and effective as an organization. We are now in a position where our core programming and system can be replicated or expanded in the future. As a system we have matured and can maneuver most challenges easily and still function as an organization. While this is a reflection piece, it is important that as we move forward we are able to successfully address situations, crises, and/or unforeseen disruptions to the organization with efficiency and effectiveness. Looking ahead, we will continue refining our organization work flow, but we were able to rebound and grow substantially since our first year of expansion. While we are not looking at expanding beyond our current structure, we are now in a position where we could.

COVID-19 and The Road Ahead

COVID-19 and the pandemic are clear examples of how we as a system matured to the point where we could function efficiently and effectively as a unit during a time of crisis and uncertainty. The pandemic did interrupt learning and our programming by not having 100% of our learners in person. We are entering the 3rd year that COVID will impact our school, which is 33% of the organization's history and 60% of Overman Academy and Creative Children's Academy's existence.

COVID-19 illustrated the importance of Social Emotional Learning, which is a cornerstone of CRCS. The learners who have been with us the longest increased substantially in growth and proficiency. They have had the most experience with our social emotional curriculum. Those same learners did very well to maintain and grow academically during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Looking forward, we will continue building upon and expanding our social emotional opportunities and structures. When there are major disruptions to the school and programming, we will continue to be able to respond and adapt. We are prepared with strategies to catch up those learners that have lost ground and/or did not grow during COVID.

Economically Disadvantaged Shift

CRCS is noticing a trend in the economic demographics of the population that we serve. This trend could impact the school financially and lead to philosophical and public relations challenges. This shifting in demographics could take 5 years to have a major impact on our system financially, but nonetheless, we will be monitoring and discussing.

Over time we are noticing that fewer of our PreK learners enrolling do not qualify as economically disadvantaged. Some potential consequences for that trend are:

Philosophical:

Charter schools have a reputation, whether true or not, of serving high income students. As our numbers of economically disadvantaged learners decline, does it further perpetuate that belief? Are we marginalizing learners in the area? If we are a “closed” system where PreK is the most likely age level of enrollment, what can we do to ensure that families have equal access regardless of age and financial status?

Funding:

If our economically disadvantaged funding drops below 50%, this could have potential financial implications for Title funding, ERate funding, State Subsidy, etc.

Eaton Mountain Project

During our renewal application process in 2016, Executive Director, Travis Works, spoke to the Charter Commission about community centered projects.

“Learners will identify a problem in the community, then they will work on a solution that impacts 3-5 other community partners and it may take them multiple years to complete. The final product will include a 5, 10, and 15 year sustainable budget and identify sources or secure funding. Learners will present their projects to a wide variety of stakeholders at the local, state, and potentially national level.”

In 2005 Eaton Mountain suffered a fire that left the mountain dormant for 2 consecutive years before being sold in 2008 to the current owner. The same year it was purchased, the lift was rendered inoperable leaving only snow tubing as the primary activity and several years later the owner was run over by a snow groomer, another setback for the mountain. Operating inconsistently, this valuable asset to the community has a deep rooted history with almost everyone in the local community. The current out of state owner has turned down multiple offers to sell the mountain and/or for various groups to operate the mountain. When he was approached by CRCS as a community project, their visions and philosophies were congruent.

It was then that Eaton Mountain Foundation (EMF) was formed as a way to create a public/private partnership where CRCS could protect the school from liability but also expand the academic programming and its integrity. Immediately, there was a great deal of excitement about the partnership and community members from various backgrounds and generations rallied together to be part of the foundation.

The Eaton Mountain Project is a public/private partnership where learners are engaged in real life learning opportunities that meet their learning targets and prepare them for life. Learners are engaged in learning opportunities that are interdisciplinary in nature and work on real life relevance such as advertising, merchandising, construction, graphic design, marketing, etc. For example, one learner created a new logo for the Eaton Mountain Foundation and also produced a complete professional style and branding guide while meeting several learning targets in literacy. The logo and guides were presented and pitched by the learner to the EMF Board of Directors and approved.

Relevance and meaning are important aspects of our curriculum and when contractors (plumbers, electricians, etc) are hired by EMF or CRCS it is required that they work with learners to share their knowledge and passion for their own career and/or trade. They must take time from their work and address, explain, and/or engage the learners. This gives learners the opportunity to make a connection in

a meaningful way. 100% of our contractors have been supportive and in some cases, have led to more learner internships and for some will result in paid employment.

The Eaton Mountain Foundation is an independent Foundation with the one major tie, that CRCS is a single member, which means the CRCS board could dissolve the Eaton Mountain Foundation's board.

CRCS and EMF are planning to cost share the Eaton Mountain Manager Position. This position is needed part time at Eaton Mountain and CRCS is looking for someone who is qualified to teach learners Outdoor Recreation Business Management. This is more than learners just visiting a business but truly being mentored and involved in learning the industry. We had over 40 learners or over 25% of the learners at Overman Academy interested in working on this project during 2020-2021.

This is a community project that simultaneously benefits our learners and community. A similar smaller scaled project was conducted in the mid 1990's between Skowhegan Area High School (SAHS) and Lake George Regional Park. This project by SAHS and Lake George involved a group of students working together from different academic levels on marketing and development of the park trails through an interdisciplinary unit of study with a private/public partnership. The impact on the students and community were important; however, the project was short lived and only lasted a couple of years because it didn't resemble the traditional classroom model. Nevertheless, the impact on those learners and community were important. The Eaton Mountain project is based on longevity and to have a long lasting impact on our learners academic goals, while benefiting the community.

Key elements of the Eaton Mountain Project:

- There is no financial benefit or liability to CRCS.
- EMF holds a lease with the owner of Eaton Mountain (CRCS is not involved)
- CRCS leases space from Eaton Mountain for COVID spacing
- CRCS has overlapping board members (2 positions)
- CRCS has two learners that sit on the board of EMF
- CRCS will contract a position with EMF (cost share)
- CRCS will have first refusal on services that it can provide either by the learners and/or staff (merchandise, construction, financial services, etc).
- CRCS staff are not being paid or receiving compensation of any kind for working with EMF. Learners however, may end up on the payroll for EMF if they are hired to work with EMF like any other business.

Our programming is about authentic, meaningful, and relevant learning experiences and one in which learners can have a direct impact on the community in which they live. We believe that our learners are very capable and can be contributing members of the community through a real life project.

Appendices

Appendix A: CRCS Governing Board Turnover

School Year	Total Membership	Members Joining	Members Departing
2017-2018	5	1	2
2018-2019	5	2	3
2019-2020	6	4	3
2020-2021	5	2	0

Current Board Members:

Danielle Denis, Board Chair
Kelly LaCasse, Board Member
Nicki Reinholt, Board Member
Linda Belanger, Board Treasurer
Seth Noonkester, Board Member

The expansion of CRCS negatively impacted board recruitment and retention. During this period of time between 2017-2019 it was difficult for the board to bring new members on while struggling with internal turmoil. In 2019-2020 as the board was looking to expand, COVID-19 hindered the recruitment process. With the board Chair becoming more well versed in her role and CRCS as an organization maturing, the board is achieving more stability and retention in board membership.

Appendix B: CRCS Staff Turnover

	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Administrators				
Number and FTEs	4 - People 2.5 - FTE	4 - People 2.7 - FTE	4 - People 2.7 - FTE	3 - People 2.2 - FTE
Departures during school year	1 - Person 0.5 - FTE	0	0	0
Departures at end of school year	1 - Person 0.5 - FTE	0	0	0
Teachers				
Number and FTEs	16 - People 14.5 - FTE	22 - People 19.4 - FTE	24 - People 23 - FTE	24 - People 22.70 - FTE
Departures during school year	2 - People 1.5 - FTE	3 - People 3 - FTE	2 - People 1.5 - FTE	2 - People 2 - FTE
Departures at end of school year	5 - People 4.5 - FTE 5/16 = 31%	0 0%	4 - People 4 - FTE 4/24 = 17%	9 - People 9 - FTE 9/24 = 38%
Other Staff				
Number and FTEs	17 - people 14.1 - FTE	17 - People 14.6 - FTE	24 - People 22.3 - FTE	29 - People 26.6 - FTE
Departures during school year	1 - Person .5 - FTE	3 - People 3 - FTE	2 - People 2 - FTE	5 - People 5 - FTE
Departures at end of school year	4 - people 3.5 - FTE 4/17 = 23%	2 - People 2 - FTE 2/17 = 18%	3 - People 3 - FTE 3/24 = 13%	3 - People 3 - FTE 3/29 = 10%

Explanation of Staff Turnover:

Staff retention has been a focus for several years. Our turnover cannot be attributed to a single reason. We have had years when turnover was largely due to culture and climate of the school, and other years when turnover was significantly due to personal or family reasons, such as relocation or changing professions. As we expanded, we put intentional focus on building culture and climate, and this had a significant positive impact on staff retention. Throughout the pandemic, we did have a larger percentage of teaching staff who left their positions. Through exit interviews and personal conversations, we learned this was due to staff re-evaluating their personal and professional goals, and as a district we wholeheartedly supported these changes.

Appendix C: CRCS Student Turnover

	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Number of Students	236	297	341	367
Departures during school year	38	64	32	44
Departures at end of school year	0	21 21/297 = 7%	25 25/341 = 7%	18 18/367 = 5%

Explanation of Student Turnover:

Families have left our school for a variety of reasons, including philosophical differences, relocating, and most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent immunization law.

In regards to our student turnover, we would like to note that we have a number of families who choose to keep some of their children at CRCS, while they may enroll their other children at their neighborhood school. Families recognize that each of their own children may learn differently and in turn determine that CRCS may be a great fit for one sibling but not the other. Rather than pulling all of their children from CRCS, families choose to keep some of their own children enrolled.

We also have a number of learners that may un-enroll with us for a period of time but then fill out a new intent to enroll to rejoin our community.

As the data shows, we are now experiencing a smaller percentage of total departures as we continue to grow.

Appendix D: CRCS Projected Budget and Cash Flow

6/30/22 6/30/23 6/30/24 6/30/25

Assets

Current Assets				
Cash and cash equivalents	\$550,000.00	\$560,000.00	\$660,000.00	\$740,000.00
Internal balances				
Intergovernmental Receivables				
Inventories				
Depreciable capital assets, net of accumulated depreciation	\$4,950,000.00	\$5,040,000.00	\$5,030,000.00	\$5,120,000.00
Total Assets	\$5,500,000.00	\$5,600,000.00	\$5,690,000.00	\$5,860,000.00

Deferred Outflows of Resources				
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Liabilities				
Accounts Payable	\$60,000.00	\$60,700.00	\$61,400.00	\$62,100.00
Accrued Summer Salaries	\$200,000.00	\$210,000.00	\$215,000.00	\$220,000.00
Accrued vacation				
Accrued interest				
Accrued Expenses				
Unearned Revenue				
Long-term liabilities				
Portion due or payable within one year:				
	\$229,500.00	\$187,600.00	\$136,750.00	\$111,000.00
Bonds payable				
Portion due or payable after one year				
Compensated absences				
Capital lease obligations	\$2,900,000.00	\$2,712,400.00	\$2,575,650.00	\$2,464,650.00

Bonds payable				
Net pension liability				
Total liabilities	\$3,389,500.00	\$3,170,700.00	\$2,988,800.00	\$2,857,750.00

Deferred Inflows of Resources				
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Net Position				
Net investment in capital assets	\$1,820,500.00	\$2,140,000.00	\$2,317,600.00	\$2,544,350.00
Restricted				
Special revenue funds				
Capital project funds				
Unrestricted	\$290,000.00	\$289,300.00	\$383,600.00	\$457,900.00
Total Net Positions	\$2,110,500.00	\$2,429,300.00	\$2,701,200.00	\$3,002,250.00

CASH FLOW CHART

Cash Flows from noncapital financing activities				
State Funds				
Federal Funds				
Miscellaneous Revenue				
Transfers from other organizations				
Increase (decrease) in due to other funds				
Net cash flows from noncapital financing activities	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Cash Flows from operating activities				
Receipts from operating activities	\$4,380,000.00	\$4,765,700.00	\$4,893,700.00	\$5,026,000.00
Receipts from Miscellaneous Revenues				

Payments to suppliers	\$2,150,000.00	\$2,365,000.00	\$2,467,365.00	\$2,526,550.00
Payments to employees	\$2,000,000.00	\$2,150,000.00	\$2,175,000.00	\$2,240,250.00
Net cash flows from operating activities	\$230,000.00	\$250,700.00	\$251,335.00	\$259,200.00

Net change in cash and cash equivalents	\$230,000.00	\$250,700.00	\$251,335.00	\$259,200.00
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Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year	\$550,000.00	\$780,000.00	\$1,030,700.00	\$1,282,035.00
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Cash and cash equivalents at end of year	\$780,000.00	\$1,030,700.00	\$1,282,035.00	\$1,541,235.00
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