

Monitoring Report

Maine Academy of Natural Sciences

August, 2013

1. Introduction

The Maine Academy of Natural Sciences (MeANS) was the first public charter school authorized, and the second one to open in the State of Maine, beginning its first year as a charter school in September 2012. MeANS operates with a year-round academic culture, and its first school year ended on August 16, 2013.

MeANS is located in Hinckley, Maine, on the campus of Good Will-Hinckley School, situated near the town lines of Fairfield and Skowhegan, on Route 201. Its initial enrollment of 52 students in grades 9-12 is gathered from several different communities from across the state. While many of the students live within the school's catchment area (approximately a 30 mile radius from the academy) others are housed five nights a week in a residential program operated by the parent organization, Good Will-Hinckley Home Association.

The school operates on a standards-based program, where students are expected to achieve proficiency levels required to meet the graduation requirements that will be in Maine law by 2016. Part of the school's challenge has been created by the fact that significant numbers of the existing students have transferred from other high schools and are expecting to graduate under the traditional credit-based system. Another challenge for the school has been the effort to develop new standards and rubrics for measuring them that are both aligned with the Common Core and can be managed under the school's Personal Learning Plan system, whereby each student advances through the standards at an individualized pace. The curriculum and the instructional program are both imbedded in a hands-on learning approach, utilizing agriculture and natural science oriented environment. Along with the hands-on, individualized instruction, the school emphasizes its Restorative Justice program, designed to help students develop into self-directed learners responsible for their actions.

2. Process for Monitoring the Public Charter School

The Maine Charter School Commission established a visiting review team of three members accompanied by the MCSC Executive Director and a two-person team from the Division of Special Education at the Maine Dept. of Education. The Commission team conducted two scheduled on-site visits in January, 2013 and August 14, 2013. Along with the visits the review team received several paper documents as part of the review. These documents were delivered prior to the visit, on the day of the visit, and subsequent to the visit, but prior to the development of this report. A list of documents provided by the school as part of this report is attached as an addendum and is available from the MCSC office. A list of the review team members and a list of all persons interviewed in the August review are included at the end of this report.

Section 3: Charter Commission Annual Report on MeANS Performance Indicators August, 2013

Indicator and Measure	Target negotiated in the Contract	Results reported, August 2013	Notes and Comments from Monitoring visit	Meets Contract Agreement	Partially Meets	Does not meet
Student Academic Proficiency: State Assessments	Percentage of students scoring at proficiency or above – 20% below the state average	We will not have these results until later this summer as the state has not released them yet. 14 Juniors took the Maine Science Test on April 3 rd , 12 Juniors took the SAT's on May 5 th .	Complete data available in Fall, 2013; SAT data included in 8/14/13 report to Commission	X		
Student Academic Proficiency: School developed assessments	40% of student body will meet at least 25% of standards each year, 30% will meet 20%, 30% will meet 10%	The school has baseline data and is prepared for 8/14	Baseline data included in 8/14/13 report to Commission	X		
Student Academic Proficiency: School developed assessments	Student achievement will progress relative to length of time the student is with the organization.	First year in operation; need to quantify this for our next year's report	MeANS is still developing the required standards; 17 students on standards based system; 26 on credit system. Because 4 th quarter results were incomplete, the % of students completing 25% of standards req. for graduation is unknown. 46% of students on credit system earned 4 or more credits.		X	

Student Academic Growth: Value added nationally normed individual and group assessment or equivalent for English and Math	Target not set yet (percentage of students who make one years growth.)	Percentage of students who made one year's growth (TABE) in at least one area –see attached report.	TABE results for School Year 2012-13 presented on 8/14/13.	X		
Established Benchmarks for each student	85% of students will show growth in at least one of the identified areas, and growth determined by TABE/NWEA, other evidence identified – portfolio – exhibition etc.	See attached report, 8/14/13	TABE aggregate achievement levels of more than 1 year in 6 of 7 areas. Gaps in ach. growth noted for three subgroups (females, Spec Ed, and Econ. Disadv)	X		
Rubric specific to charter school	85% of students will show growth in at least one of the identified areas.	8/14/13		X		
Achievement Gaps in proficiency and growth between major student subgroups using ESEA-based system	Assuming a gap of 25% or greater, we will shrink that gap by 50% on an individual student basis.	Attached TABE results report, 8/14/13		X		
Student Attendance:						
Average Daily Attendance Rate	Daily attendance rate of 80%	Average Daily attendance rate is 93% through 3 quarters		X		

Individual Student Attendance Rate	Daily rate of 80%	35 students were in the 90 to 99% attendance range. 10 students were in the 80 to 89% range, 1 student was in the 70 to 79 % range		X		
Unexcused Absences	8%	4.8 %		X		
Recurrent enrollment from Year to Year		Lisa-separate letter attached		X		
Student re-enrollment from one year to next	85% re-enrollment annually		Re-enrollment rate as of 8/14/13: 91%	X		
Continuous enrollment of students for multiple years	80%continuously enrolled for multiple (more than two) years			N/A		
Post-Secondary Readiness						
Graduation Rate	Using Fed Graduation Rate – 70% (of four year cohort)	100% of starting seniors graduated; 90% graduation rate with one senior being a fifth year senior (Dropout according to Fed rate)	Data received	X		
Success in Dual Enrollment Courses	75% successfully complete	92% (12 of 13) students successfully completed at least one KVCC course	Data received	X		

SAT or ACT scores	15% of students will score at or above state average on SAT and ACT	41% scored at or above Maine's Average scores on nine of the test areas (how many took it?)	Data received	X		
Enrollment in post-secondary institutions	75% of graduates have enrolled in post-secondary institution/training/apprenticeship by April following year 1 – 8 months after August graduation	Currently 40% have enrolled in post-secondary education	Data provided	X		
	75% of student taking Accuplacer test will pass at least 3 elements	100% of (8) students who took three or more aspects of the exam passed at least three elements of the Accuplacer; Of 49 scores, 4 or 8% required remedial classes.	Data received	X		
Students employed full time or enlisted	15% of Graduates employed fulltime or enlisted by April following Year 1.	Currently 60% have full time employment		X		
School Social and Academic Climate						
Instances of bullying, harassment or other abusive behavior	15 or fewer incidents/reports of actual/suspected bullying harassment.	Three incidents	Our site visit found that there is an excellent climate during the school day. However, resident students described after-school problems in the house setting that affected their overall sense of well-being at the school.		X	

Confidential surveys of parents staff and students regarding social and academic climate	90% of parents, students, staff express satisfaction with school climate; School will participate in the state student climate surveys; data compared with comparison schools	<p><u>Staff Survey:</u> On the ten question staff school climate survey 92% of the staff ratings were for the two most positive choices</p> <p><u>Student Survey:</u> On an eight item school climate survey, students opted for the two most positive choices 78% of the time with the most negative choice being picked 1% of the time.</p> <p><u>Parent Survey:</u> On the eight item school climate survey, parents opted for the two most positive choices 85.5% of the time.</p> <p>State student climate data via Maine Integrated Health Survey – data is not available yet. <i>(Will be available in fall)</i></p>	<p>Data received</p> <p>The detailed comments offered by the parent and staff surveys, both positive and less positive, offer helpful information to the MeANS Board, administrators and staff as the school works to fine-tune practices to improve both its academic and social climate.</p> <p>With the addition of the Maine Integrated Health Survey, this indicator will be more than fully met.</p>	X		
Emotional social growth of students	80% will report growth as reported by pre and post Gallup Poll Hope survey	No post survey as Gallup Poll did not offer a spring survey		X		
	15 school-based reports of student substance use/abuse	14 incidents of suspected substance use/ 4 instances of paraphernalia		X		
	School Records of Restorative Justice Involvement	14 students participated in 27 restorative meetings leading to 27 agreements	Survey data indicates that staff and parents feel that the program is working well.	X		

Financial Performance and Sustainability	<p>The school will produce monthly and quarterly financial reports and provide evidence that the reports are reviewed by the Governing Board. Quarterly reports to be sent to the Commission for its files and review</p>	<p>The Commission received quarterly reports dated Jan. 31, April 30, and June 30, 2013. The June 30 report was for the first ten months of the school year.</p>	<p>The school has operated with a small balance at all three reported quarters. The 6/30/13 financial report shows an operating balance of just under \$1500. Actual expenses were \$18,000 over budget, but increases in actual support from GWH over budgeted amount prevented a deficit.</p>	<p>X</p>		
	<p>An annual financial audit is conducted and a report sent to the Commission, along with the School's response to all management findings and recommendations.</p>	<p>The school fiscal year ends 8/31/13. An audit and audit report will follow.</p>	<p>TBD</p>			
Governance Board Performance and Stewardship			<p>The Review Team has met with several Governance Board members, and interviewed the Chairperson on the telephone. The Board meets monthly and maintains strong working relationships with senior administrative staff and the parent organization's (GWH) board.</p> <p>Parents participate as members of Board subcommittees. However, parent communication with the Board can be improved.</p>	<p>X</p>		

Adequacy of Facilities Maintenance in Support of Program	The School will provide reports on facility cleanliness, cleaning logs, maintenance request and task completion logs, and an annual review of the maintenance and housekeeping program.	See Monitoring report provided by MeANS, 8/14/13	The Commission noted that students appreciate the move to the Swasey Building, and the comments on an improvement in housekeeping at this site.	X		
	The School will provide an annual update on the capital improvement plan for providing facility upgrades to support expanded enrollment.	Exec. Director Glenn Cummings provided a verbal outline of the Capital Campaign to completely renovate the Moody Building for use as a school facility	The campaign is still in the "quiet phase." A fundraising plan is in place by the Parent organization (Good Will-Hinckley), but completion and construction is 3-5 years away.	X		
Transportation and Food Service	School will provide transportation for day students within catchment area, either through contracts with other providers, or the school's vans	See Monitoring report provided by MeANS, 8/14/13	The school added routes during the school year; approximately 50% of students utilize the transportation system.	X		
	The School will participate in the National School Lunch program and provide appropriate breakfast and lunch program for eligible students through GWH. (See Contract, Exhibit A, D.6, page 76.)	See Monitoring report provided by MeANS, 8/14/13	34% of eligible students participated in the breakfast program; 100% in the lunch program. The Commission commends the high quality of the food service program, which the school maintained despite cost overruns in the budget.	X		

Educational Partnerships in the Community	No specific target for the number of partnerships was established in contract.	Partnerships have been established this year with the following agencies and businesses: <i>Kennebec Behavioral Health, Cornerstones Counseling, Skowhegan Career Center, Skowhegan CSA, Caverly's Farm, Maine Cooperative Extension.</i>	Community volunteers and organizational partners were well represented among the participants in the 8/14/13 meeting.	X		
Parent Communication Systems	Weekly communications advisor – family.	100% of parents contacted weekly by student-advisor. This is done by phone or email every Friday afternoon.	On parent surveys, a few indicated that communication was less than hoped for, but overall they expressed high satisfaction. The school offered strong individual student examples of communication with parents.	X		
Parent participation in their children's education and operation of school	90% parent/guardian participation in student led conferences	100% parental attendance at Student Led Conferences or on make-up dates (at least one parent/guardian from each student family.) Three sets of Student Led Conferences have been held on the following dates: 11/15-16 (2012), 3/14-15 (2013), 6/13-14;	Corroborating data received	X		
	60% parent and family participation in school sponsored activities (state wide geography creates travel/accessibility issues)	66% of parents – at least one parent or guardian from each student family have participated in a school sponsored activity.	Evidence of parent participation in school events is strong, both from documents and from interviews on 8/14/13.	X		

Other Requested Information	Academic Disciplinary Reports	MeANS has had no suspensions or expulsions in this school year.		X		
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Summary

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

4. Commendations

1. The school was well prepared for the visit, providing some of the documentation ahead of the visit and arranging for the availability of parents, board members, partners, teachers and students for the focus group.
2. Parents showed strong support and appreciation for the charter school, stating that kids were “learning at their own levels”; “learning like never before;” that there is good communication between parents and staff; every Friday there is an advisor phone call, parents felt free to call anytime; and that parents are involved with governing board subcommittees. The parents did wish that some of the Board meetings might be held in the evenings to facilitate their participation and attendance.

3. Student Attendance at a rate of 93% is excellent and meets the contract agreement.
4. School social and academic climate, as expressed by focus groups, is wonderful and the one issue that emerged was with a residential situation involving resident student supervision, behavior and use of unscheduled time. The school has responded to this issue by hiring a new Director of Student Life and has begun to develop and implement a new after school activity program.
5. The school has been able to maintain a balanced operating budget through the first ten months of its fiscal year.
6. The Maine Academy of Natural Sciences (MeANS) has improved its capital equipment and resources through its acquisition and installation of its new greenhouses, including the aquaculture/hydroponic greenhouse that will bring state of the art technology into a hands-on learning environment.
7. Upon review, special education students show encouraging test results and accommodations are being developed for students.
8. Administration reported that there are huge success stories with some special education students. Students who had difficulties being able to function previously have made academic, behavioral and social gains.
9. MeANS maintains a progressive learning environment using Personal Learning Plans.
10. Utilization of Project Foundry software will provide teachers, parents and administrators a better picture of student academic performance and growth in 2013-2014.
11. The school's budget demonstrates a commitment to continuing staff professional development.
12. Recurrent enrollment is robust with enrollment figures of 66 students for 2013-2014, which is within the contract agreement. A waiting list exists if the school wishes to enroll more students up to its 90-student capacity under the contract.
13. Governing Board members stated the Board was working well together with open and honest dialogue and the conscious need to always to put students first.
14. The school has provided evidence that the recommendations from the January 24, 2013, visit have been acted upon: academic proficiency and growth data is being analyzed and plans made to address growth and professional development to make the adjustments and the charter school is making preparations for meeting more special education student's needs.

15. Student led conferences were valued by parents, students and staff.
16. Outreach to the regional substance abuse program, the Maine Department of Labor SCC Youth Programs and the University of Maine Cooperative Extension program and services is very good, as is the involvement of the Board in the local agriculture community.
17. MeANS is commended for its efforts to help students practice the habits of follow-through and completion of projects.

5. Recommendations

- A. We support the plan to allow the actual enrollment to drop below 90 in order to prevent overcrowding to the Swazey Building classroom facility, but urge the school to find ways to maintain an enrollment that will be financially sustainable.
- B. We encourage the school to seek additional avenues of funding beyond the major source of funds from the Good Will-Hinckley Foundation. The Commission desires that all Public Charter Schools develop a goal and strategy that will enable them to maintain a two-month operating balance at the end of their third fiscal year.
- C. We request that the school work with the Commission to develop a financial reporting system that both aligns with the School's academic year and also meets the contract requirements of a July-June fiscal year.
- D. MeANS is encouraged to increase the outreach to nearby higher education institutions and other community resources to address areas of curriculum, interests expressed by students and for internships.
- E. Continue to implement proficiency-based system with clear record keeping showing student attainment of standards.
- F. Fully implement Project Foundry software.
- G. We encourage the school to further its effort to appropriately integrate technology into the curriculum.
- H. Continue the capital improvement plan and prioritize the plan for actions to create an efficient and effective facility during the interim years before a new classroom building is fully completed.
- I. In response to student requests, MeANS is encouraged to consider an extension of the school day and expand school-related activities during after-school hours.
- J. In light of the wide range of students attending MeANS, consider the interpretation of "students at risk" description for your student body. Perhaps "students by choice" is a preferable depiction.
- K. Widen the scope and application of the school's restorative justice program with more staff training.
- L. To make the school's governance and management more fully transparent to parents and the public, we urge the Board to regularly update and publish its agenda and minutes to the school website in accordance with the Contract. In addition, we encourage the Board to find methods for parents to more readily attend and address the Board directly with issues and concerns.

- M. MeANS is encouraged to use Local Entitlement Funds for the purchase of instructional resources to support Special Education students.
- N. Support Special Education staff involvement with DOE training to assist in realizing improved special education program results.
- O. Provide staff development to support the differentiation of instruction to achieve increased student attainment of the learning standards.
- P. Consider ways to expand the availability of the special education teacher as a consultant to classroom teachers as a resource for instructional differentiation.
- Q. MeANS is encouraged to participate in live trainings and webinars offered by the MDOE Department of Special Services including aligning IEP goals with the Common Core state standards, LRE and transition planning.
- R. MeANS is encouraged to evaluate all IEPs and convene IEP team meetings for those students who are making limited progress on IEP goals.
- S. MeANS is encouraged to use evidence-based practices to improve reading and writing skills for students whose IEPs require direct instruction in those areas.
- T. MeANS is encouraged to view the monitoring tool, when it becomes available online, in preparation for special education monitoring during the 2014-15 school year.

6. Closing Summary

In our estimation the Maine Academy of Natural Sciences is demonstrating success and making progress in achieving its goal:

Our goal is for every MeANS student to become an engaged, reflective, and self-directed learner. We help students develop habits of heart and mind that lead them to take responsibility for their own actions, as well as for the welfare of other students, their community and their environment. Students will grow as critical thinkers and creative problem solvers. They will complete their education more hopeful and healthy than when they enrolled, and they will have a plan for their next steps as young adults including further education, training, adventure, civic engagement and work.

MeANS has had a strong first year overall, they have been able to justify their work and have created plans to address items that have been partially met.

MeANS Monitoring Visit Focus Group Participants

Debra Kantor	Partner- University of Maine Cooperative Extension
Tanika Hodges	Student
Robert Moody	GWH Vice President
Joel and Irene Austin	Parents

Hannah Austin	Student
Neil Lockwood	Student
Julie Lockwood	Parent
Bob McGorty	Partner-MDOL: SCC Youth Programs
Marian S.West	Parent
Glenn Cummings	GWH Executive Director
Joyce Tillson	Parent
Karen Corson	Parent
Joann Houghton	Parent
Roberta Lucas	MDOE- Special Education
Peg Armstrong	MDOE- Special Education
Cory King	MDOE- Special Education
Jeff Chase	Teacher
Mady Spiegel	Teacher
Brenda Poulin	Teacher
Bob Long	Partner- K.B.H.
Stephanie LaCroix	Teacher SPED/Math
Anna Perkins	GWH Special Education Director
Juliana Rothschild	Humanities Instructor
Emanuel Pariser	MeANS Co-Director
Troy Jackson	MeANS Co-Director
Richard Barnes	MCCS Member
Jana Lapoint	MCSC Member
Heidi Sampson	MCSC Member
Robert Kautz	MCSC Executive Director

List of documents supplied by MeANS:

Performance monitoring data (reproduced above)

Quarterly Financial report summaries for 1/31, 4/30 and 6/30/13

Student re-enrollment data

School Climate survey

Parent survey results

Student survey results

Teacher survey results

Bullying and substance abuse reports

Gallup poll of student attitudes

Documentation of parent and community involvement

Post-secondary readiness—Accuplacer and SAT scores