



Application for the Renewal of a Public Charter School: **Harpowell Coastal Academy**

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Approved by Cynthia Schelmerdine, Chair of the Board, on 9/1/22
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Maine Public Charter School
Renewal Application Form

Name of Public Charter School: Harpswell Coastal Academy

Name of Entity that Holds the Charter: Harpswell Coastal Academy

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Physical Address of School: 9 Ash Point Road, Harpswell, ME 04079

School's Initial Opening Date: 9/2013

Current Grades Enrolled: 5-12

Grade Levels to be Served Per *Current* Charter Contract: 5-12

Maximum Projected Enrollment Per *Current* Charter Contract: $210 + 10\% = 231$

***Proposed* Grade Levels to be Served at Full Enrollment for *Third Charter Term*:** 5-12

***Proposed* Maximum Projected Enrollment at Full Growth for *Third Charter Term*:** $200 + 10\% = 220$

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Introduction to the School

Harpowell Coastal Academy (HCA) is a public charter school serving students in grades 5-12. In the 2021-22 school year, we served 184 students coming from 30 different towns in our catchment area, with the largest cohorts coming from Brunswick, Harpswell, Lisbon, Bath, and Topsham.

The school follows the EL (Expeditionary Learning) Education model, which engages students in their own learning, and links academic success to character qualities like collaboration, perseverance and compassion. We provide a strong project- and place-based education for all of our students that combines traditional and experiential learning. Using the natural resources and the community partners we have cultivated in Harpswell, we engage students in projects that address local and global challenges. In line with our mission and vision, these community-based experiences are directly tied to class learning objectives, preparing graduates for both post-secondary education and job opportunities. Also important to our culture are our focus on Restorative Practices and our utilization of EL Education's Crew model, both of which support the development of social-emotional skills. Students also benefit from our small class size and individualized attention; those who struggled in other settings have greatly improved outcomes in HCA's supportive community.

Students and families choose HCA because of the community support for the whole student. Our special education population has varied from 20-40% from year to year, often double the state average. We also support a disproportionately large population of students who live with mental health challenges, trauma, or difficult situations at home. Due to confidentiality, it is difficult to quantify the proportion of our students that experience these additional barriers to their education. We are proud of our success in transforming the educational experience of these students, and graduating 93% of our students in 3-6 years of high school. Improving postsecondary outcomes for students who were not being served by their local schools and creating a learning environment that works for all students was central to our original charter application and remains central to our mission.

The data presented in this application show that HCA has been making steady progress academically over the last five years. We look forward to continuing this growth at an accelerated pace with our new administration, faculty, and staff. We see our record of improvement over the last five years as evidence that we are carrying out our mission, vision, and terms of the charter contract in our work with a complex student population.

Table A - Introductory Information

Name of School: Harpswell Coastal Academy	
Year Opened: 2013	Maximum Enrollment: 231
Current Enrollment: 171*	Current Grade Span: 5-12
Chartered Grade Span: 5-12	Students on Waitlist: 0

* As of 9/1/22

Executive Summary

Table B - Current Year Enrollment and Demographic Information*

Number of Students Enrolled	171
Number of Students on Waiting List	0
Number of Male Students	90
Number of Female Students	81
Number White Students	164
Number of Black Students	3
Number of Hispanic Students	2
Number of Asian Students	2
Number of Other Students	0
Number of Students with Disabilities	42
Number of English Language Learners	0
Number of Homeless Students*	
Number Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch*	

* As of 9/1/22 this information is still being collected for the current year (2022-2023). We will provide updated information when all paperwork from this year's families has been submitted.

Description of School

Harpswell Coastal Academy HCA students are grouped into mixed-age cohorts called Divisions to allow for flexible grouping, opportunities for students to learn from peers of different ages, and time to build relationships with teaching staff. Division 1 consists of grades 5-8, and is split into Curtis House (grades 5-6) and Stover's House (grades 7-8). Division 2, for 9th and 10th graders, is the foundation of the high school experience, while Division 3 is focused on supporting juniors and seniors in exploring learning opportunities outside of the school as they prepare for life after graduation. Students at Harpswell Coastal Academy measure their academic progress by mastery of standards adapted from the Great Schools Partnership, which includes Common Core, Next Generation Science, and other content-specific sets of academic standards. Mastery of enough grade-level standards is the core requirement for passage to the next Division.

Since many of the students who come to HCA have had challenges engaging in school previously, we are always working with our students to make sure they understand, live, and promote our community agreements, Habits of Work and Learning, and other academic expectations. Practices such as circles to establish norms, community meetings, and restorative interventions are all integral to how we engage students in the work of building a safe and productive learning community. Students learn the skills to engage in this work in crew, where we practice active listening, participation in group discussions, academic routines, collaborative problem solving, and goal setting. Identity exploration is central to the social and emotional learning that happens in crew. Teachers model discussions about identity and guide students through the process of understanding what's important to their own identities. This work supports students in centering themselves in their education and builds empathy and understanding for other members of the community. All students participate in Community Meetings at least once a month to celebrate the successes of their peers and identify areas for improvement in our learning community. Students also have opportunities to join groups like the Civil Rights Team, Student Council, and Student Advisory Board, which take on larger initiatives related to improving school climate and culture. Starting in our crews and divisions, we practice civic-mindedness and how to be "an engaged community of creative thinkers, compassionate leaders, and effective problem solvers" on a regular basis.

Mission and Vision

HCA's Mission: *Our mission is to create an engaged community of creative thinkers, compassionate leaders, and effective problem solvers. Learning at HCA is project-based and place-based, grounding students in a purposeful exploration of the natural and human worlds. Our curriculum cultivates curiosity, integrity, and civic-mindedness and prepares students for post-secondary success, whether in college, technical training, or the workforce.*

HCA's Vision: *We envision HCA students and alumni as lifelong learners and champions of positive social change, economic opportunity, and sustainability in our towns, state, country, and world.*

HCA's mission of empowering students to be engaged citizens who are creators, leaders, and problem solvers working towards positive and sustainable change starts in our crews and extends to opportunities for students to learn outside of the walls of our school. The crew experience involves collaborative problem-solving and compassionate interaction. Place-based investigations are also collaborative, and foster curiosity about the natural and human world around them. Students play a role in guiding the course of the investigation and, as they get older, have more agency in determining the format and focus of their final product.

In 2020 HCA's Leadership Team and Board collaborated on revising the school's mission and vision statements, not because our mission changed, but to ensure that the statements fully captured it. This renewed focus has put our mission and vision at the center of both our curricular decisions and our marketing efforts.

In the spring of 2021, faculty completed a curriculum review that assessed how our workshops, investigations, and electives are linked to key skill sets and themes in our mission and vision. In this process, we found that about 75% of our investigations included opportunities for students to be "creative thinkers, compassionate leaders, and effective problem solvers" across grade levels. Crew was also highlighted as a structure that provided opportunities for students to build these skills.

This year, we will engage our whole school community in an exploration of a central theme of our vision: sustainability. Faculty will highlight the concept of sustainability in new and established curricula to build students' understanding of how social and economic opportunity is interconnected with environmental sustainability. By bringing this concept to the forefront, our faculty will provide students a nuanced understanding they can take with them into other studies and other areas of their life. We will continue to draw on our mission and vision for annual themes in coming years.

Educational Program

Harpwell Coastal Academy was founded on the EL Education (Expeditionary Learning) model, with the specific goal of raising the graduation rate and post-secondary success of students who struggled to succeed in traditional public schools. Over the course of our charter, we have found that all our students achieve more within the EL framework, and we formally affiliated with EL Education in 2020-21. Formalizing this partnership has revitalized our professional development and our implementation of core structures such as crew; authentic, project-based learning; and student-engaged assessment practices like passage portfolios, student-led conferences, and celebrations of learning.

HCA's academic program for all three divisions follows the EL model in incorporating both traditional learning (workshops) and experiential learning (investigations). This program is designed to prepare students for academic achievement and post-secondary success.

Workshops provide instruction in the development of core academic skills in math and ELA for students in grades 5-12. In the 2021-22 school year, HCA adopted Illustrative Mathematics as our math curriculum for grades 5-12. Division 1 students follow EL Education's Language Arts curriculum, which engages students in literacy and supports the development of content knowledge in literature, social studies, and science topics. Division 2-3 students have workshops in science, social studies, and other subjects that provide the foundation for project-based work in investigations. Division 2 students participate in an intensive year-long writing workshop that spends a trimester each on narrative, informative, and persuasive writing, supported by a selection of texts that guide students' process of finding their own voice as writers. Division 3 students have the ability to explore a range of topic-based ELA workshops before beginning their senior capstone project, which begins with a workshop dedicated to writing their capstone research paper. Division 3 students also have the option to take a year-long financial literacy workshop.

Investigations are learning experiences grounded in the application of knowledge and skills to authentic, community-based projects. Following the EL model, these learning experiences prioritize depth over breadth, are often based on an interdisciplinary set of standards, and rely on fieldwork experiences and community connections to establish authentic context for learning. The work produced through these investigations is regularly included in passage portfolios and presented in student-led conferences and celebrations of learning.

Students track their daily progress towards mastering standards in workshops and investigations in Infinite Campus. Students, teachers, and guardians can all view the work a student has submitted for a standard and the feedback that was provided by teachers. At the conclusion of each trimester, crew leaders review this progress with students and update "Passage Plans," which track a student's progress meeting state and national standards. These monitoring systems enable students to evaluate their progress, set goals, and make decisions regarding their path to passages and eventually graduation. In the process of reflecting on their learning and progress at the end of a trimester, students add work samples that demonstrate growth and proficiency to their passage portfolios. Digital portfolios contain work samples, written reflection on the work and learning experiences, and documentation of the student's growth or process in mastering a skill or concept. Portfolios are used to guide student-led conferences, reflect on work to be presented at celebrations of learning, and are presented as evidence for readiness to pass to the next division.

Community Connections

In the execution of our mission and vision we have developed and maintained relationships with a broad network of supportive community partners (Appendix E). These partners provide real-life opportunities for our investigations, so that students connect their education to the

resources, organizations, and businesses in our local communities. Starting in 5th grade, structured class fieldwork experiences that inform investigations orient students to thinking about the authenticity of what they're learning in class. Engaging in projects that address local or global challenges position students in relevant community work. The resulting work is presented to community audiences at celebrations of learning. As students move into Divisions 2 and 3, they have further opportunities for service and individual internships with these community partners.

In addition to course-based fieldwork, 57% of our juniors and seniors participated in at least one Community-Based Learning (CBL) seminar course this year, to connect their fieldwork, service, or internship experience to their academic experience and develop their post-secondary plans. To support this aspect of our mission, we obtained a RREV (Reimagining Remote Education Ventures) grant for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years, to fund a Community-Based Learning (CBL) Coordinator. This coordinator taught the seminar last year and facilitated over 100 course-based fieldwork experiences across grade levels and content areas. 82% of teachers at Division 1 and 90% of teachers at Divisions 2 & 3 were enabled to lead fieldwork activities. Many of these experiences were supported by our eleven key community partners (Appendix E), who share our mission of supporting our students in becoming "lifelong learners and champions of positive social change, economic opportunity, and sustainability in our towns, state, country, and world."

Most students who did not take a CBL seminar course last year were enrolled in a year-long vocational course through Region 10, or plan to participate in a CBL seminar and internship this year.

Leadership & Governance

School - HCA has a collaborative administrative structure, with a leadership team composed of administrators and teacher leaders. Distributing leadership across administrative and teaching positions in this way, as we have done since 2019-2020, gives the leadership team a stronger understanding of what is needed in classrooms to move the organization closer to meeting its goals. There have been three Heads of School during the last Charter period, and some shifts in administrative structure to respond to the needs of two campuses. Now, however, HCA will move forward on a single campus under strong new leadership, with an effective Head of School focussed on the long-term development of the school, and a Principal responsible for the daily operations of students and teachers in the classroom.

Board - HCA is governed by a loyal and active Board of Directors that currently has six members. Over this charter period the norm has been 8 members (Appendix A), and we plan to increase the size of the Board again over the next few years. Most members have served on the Board for more than one term, and this continuity has been valuable for historical perspective and for good working relationships among Board members.

We hold Board meetings every month except December during the school year, and a Board retreat in July. Attendance at meetings has been consistently high, and we also intend to bring Directors into the school itself more regularly, now that COVID threats have become manageable. Our Bylaws and Handbook of Procedures give us a good framework for our governance process. Most of the current members were involved in revising the school's mission and vision statements two years ago, and all have a full understanding of them and commitment to them.

Looking Back: The Record of Performance

Academic Performance

Harpwell Coastal Academy values academic growth and the development of high quality student work. We are always evaluating the effectiveness of our academic program, and have made adjustments to our curriculum and practices over the last five years to support all students in their learning. A close look at our data shows that the adjustments we've made to support our student population in their academic growth and achievement in both the mastery of state and national standards and standardized tests have resulted in steady improvement in student performance and engagement. Typical measures of academic performance have not highlighted the growth of our students, many of whom have not been successful in previous school settings. We stand behind our academic record, which reflects that we have been responsive to the needs of our students, many of whom had disengaged from school. We can demonstrate measurable success in the following areas:

Academic Culture

- Implementation of EL Education structures that enhance the learning environment
- Improvements on the Panorama survey in the categories of School Climate, School Engagement, GRIT, and Rigorous School Expectations

Curricular Development

- Improved rate of standards mastery early in high school
- Implementation of curriculum that has raised NWEA scores in math and reading

NWEA Testing

- Sustained improvements in NWEA participation
- Sustained improvements in the percentage of students meeting their NWEA growth goals
- Net positive increases in grade level percentile achievement from fall to spring on NWEA tests
- Closing the achievement gap for students with disabilities

Postsecondary Readiness

- Nearly universal participation in postsecondary readiness opportunities (early college, vocational programs, or internships)
- Higher graduation rates for students who take more than 4 years to complete high school than the state average

- Higher graduation rates for students with disabilities than the state average
- Lower drop-out rates than the state average

Academic Culture

We stand strongly in the belief that building a compassionate school community creates an atmosphere where students belong and can build their academic skills in pursuit of a range of post-secondary goals. Letters from our school community highlighting how HCA has transformed the educational experience of many of our students are included in Appendix F.

The relationships between staff and students that set the school climate are central to building a community where students feel they belong and can succeed academically. Students have reported a steady increase in the quality of student teacher relationships on the Panorama survey: from 63% in 2019 to 73% in 2022. This corresponds to the work we've done with EL Education to strengthen our crew practices over the last two years. On our winter crew survey, 90% of Division 1 students reported that they felt included by their crew leader; 80% reported that their crew leader knew them well or very well; and 74% felt they belonged in their crew. At Divisions 2 and 3, the pattern was similar with 79% feeling included by their crew leader and 55% reporting that their crew leader knew them well or very well.

The basis provided by these strong relationships provides the context for other improvements reported by students on the Panorama survey from 2019-2022, including:

- School Climate - 15% improvement (45-60%)
- School Engagement - 12% improvement (30-42%)
- GRIT - 6% improvement (46-52%)
- Rigorous School Expectations - 6% improvement (67-73%)

Teachers and staff results from Panorama mirrored these improvements in the same window of time:

- School Climate - 3% improvement (57-60%)
- GRIT - 32% improvement (7-39%)
- Staff-Family Relationships - 19% improvement (37-56%)

Students at HCA measure their academic progress towards larger benchmarks like passage (at the ends of 8th and 10th grades) and graduation by tracking the number and distribution of state and national standards they've mastered across subject areas. Teachers engage in regular professional development and collaborative assessment practices to ensure that the consistent levels of rigor are upheld across classrooms and grade levels. Through monthly Collaborative Learning Groups, teachers have the opportunity to discuss student work deeply and calibrate their understanding of what proficiency and excellence look like in student work, in alignment with standards, and in scaffolded learning experiences to help all students reach proficiency and excellence. Students reflect on their work as part of the learning community through EL student-engaged assessment structures like passage portfolios, student-led conferences, and presentations at Celebrations of Learning. In the last six weeks of 2022, 89% of Division 2/3

students had engaged in at least one element of student engaged assessment or played an active role in the development of our school community. This high rate of student engagement, despite attendance barriers, indicates that our students respond to the EL Education model and the school culture it has helped foster.

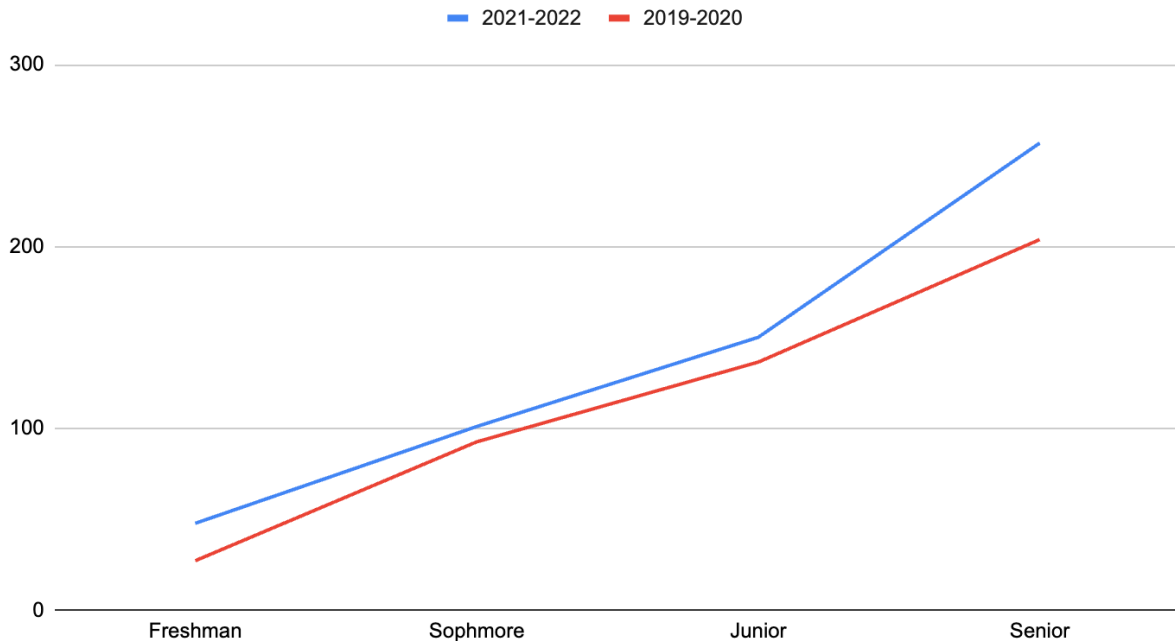
Curricular Development

Improvements in our curriculum in alignment with EL practices over the last three years have produced noticeable positive outcomes for student growth and achievement. Three years ago, we restructured our Division 2 curriculum, with special attention on the experience of freshman and sophomores transferring to HCA. The establishment of a core set of academic experiences in students' first year at HCA helped to jumpstart students' rate of standards mastery on the path to passage to Division 3 and graduation. Students in the first two cohorts had the highest rates of meeting their reading growth goals on the NWEA in the high school in 2019-20 and 2020-21. One explanation for this is the exposure to a rigorous humanities curriculum based around the Harvard case method for Civics and U.S. History.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Div 2 Students Meeting Projected RIT in Reading	37%	44%	53%	59%	51%

At the same time, Division 3 specific courses such as Financial Literacy, Current World Affairs, and Senior Seminar were added to support the rigor of our coursework for older students and guide the postsecondary planning process. These improvements to our high school curriculum have resulted in students' meeting standards at a higher rate (top blue line) compared to before these curriculum changes (bottom red line). Another notable difference was the inclusion of an additional set of English Language Arts standards for Division 3 students. The sharper increase in the blue line reflects students meeting these additional standards at a higher level of rigor than they demonstrated as Division 2 students.

Standards Master Rate Before and After Curriculum Revision



The implementation of the Illustrative Mathematics curriculum for grades 5-12 in the 2021-22 school year produced a significant jump in the number of students meeting or exceeding their growth goals on the math NWEA. As students and teachers gain more experience with the learning structures in this curriculum, we anticipate that we will continue to see strong growth in mathematics achievement.

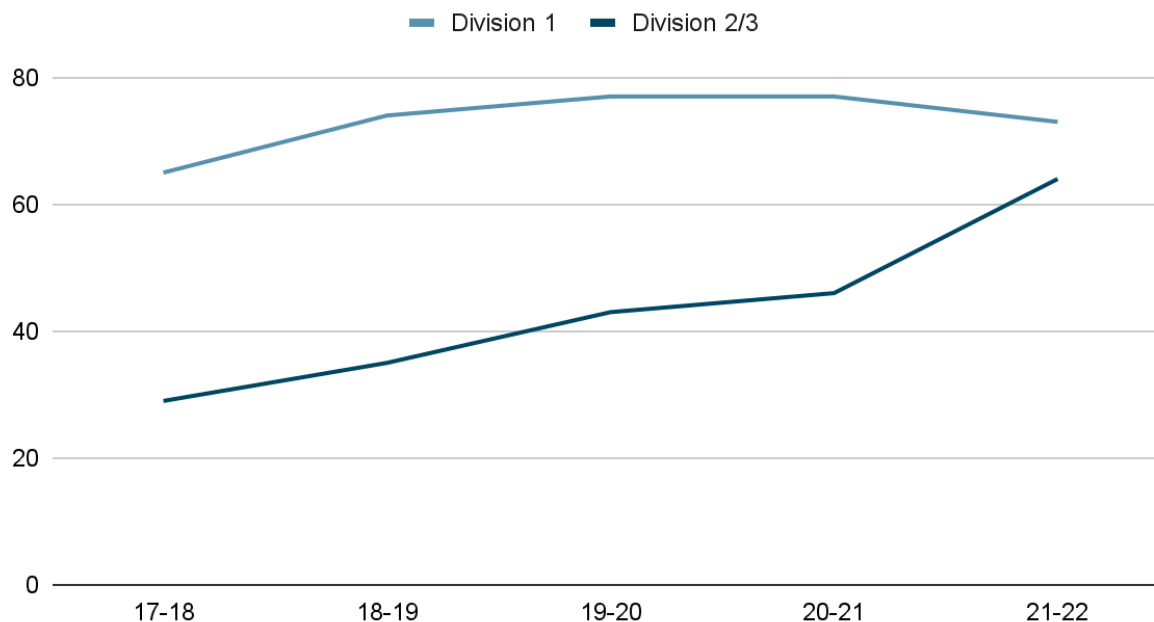
	2017-18	2018-19	2020-21	2021-22
Students Meeting Projected RIT in Math	47%	42%	47%	59%

As we refine our implementation of the EL Education Language Arts curriculum for grades 5-8, we expect to see gains in reading where the percentage of students meeting their growth goals has varied between 42-63% over the last five years.

NWEA Testing

Over the last five years, we have worked with faculty, students, and families to increase engagement with NWEA testing. Going into the 2017-18 school year, a significant number of families were opting students out of NWEA testing, resulting in low testing participation rates. Since the 2017-18 school year, Division 1 increased testing participation rates by up to 12% and Div 2/3 increased participation rates by 35%. The graph below shows the percentage of students with valid test scores in fall and spring.

Percentage of students with fall and spring scores



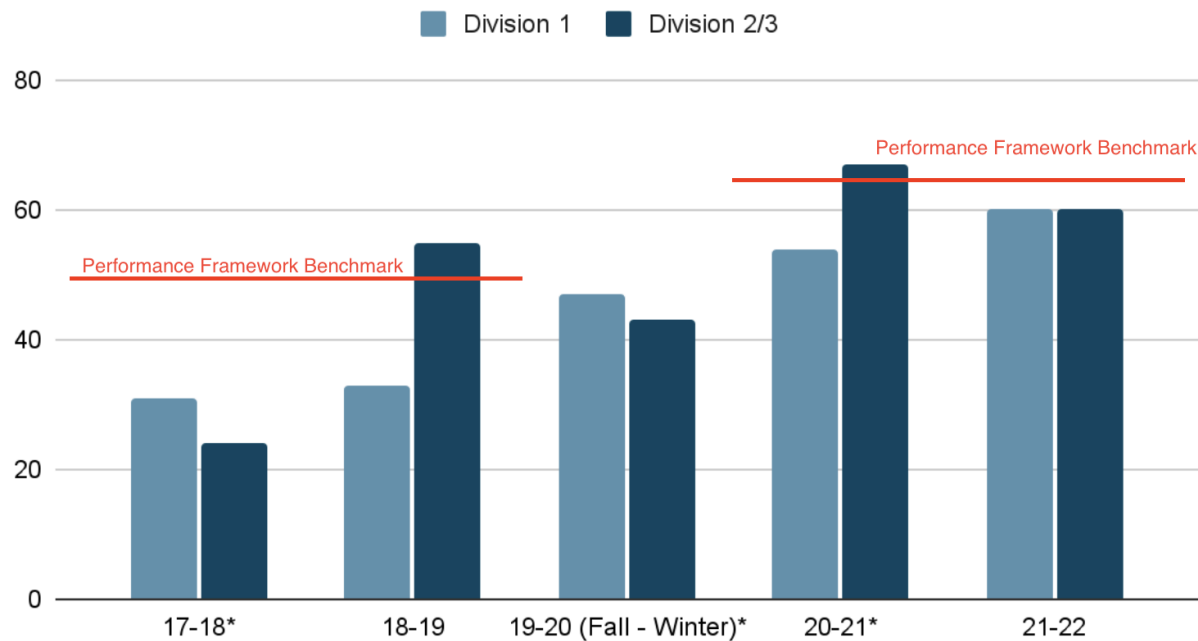
The sense that participation was optional made it difficult to use the test as a tool for gathering accurate data at the individual student, class, or school level. After several years of working with students and families to explain the importance of using the test as a tool to monitor a student's growth and shifts in messaging about testing expectations, student engagement with testing has increased, as shown in the increased participation rates. Teachers have developed routines around goal setting and test preparation in crew, regularly discuss results with students and families soon after testing is completed, and celebrate student growth and achievement. As our testing practices improve, we are able to make better use of testing data throughout the year since our data presents a more accurate and complete picture than it did several years ago.

NWEA growth norms are based on a bell curve that assumes an "average" U.S. school demographic and predicts that in that population 50% of students will meet or exceed their growth goal and 50% of students will not ([Dahlin, 2013](#)). HCA, however, does not have an "average" population. We have scored a "partially meets" or "did not meet" for several years on the performance framework for academic growth, when 42-59% of our students were meeting their growth goals. Indeed, HCA students have improved in meeting their growth goals and achievement percentiles by grade over the last five years. The shift in the performance framework metric from 50% to 65% of students meeting their growth goals overtook HCA's rate of progress. In addition, HCA serves a population of students that often contains nearly twice as many students with IEPs than the national average, which was 15% in 2020-21. Beyond the roughly 30% of students with IEPs, we also educate many students with anxiety, depression, trauma, or adverse school experiences who may or may not come to us with established 504

plans. Given that we do not serve the “average” student demographic, it is notable that over the last five years there are clear upward trends in our students’ performance on the NWEA.

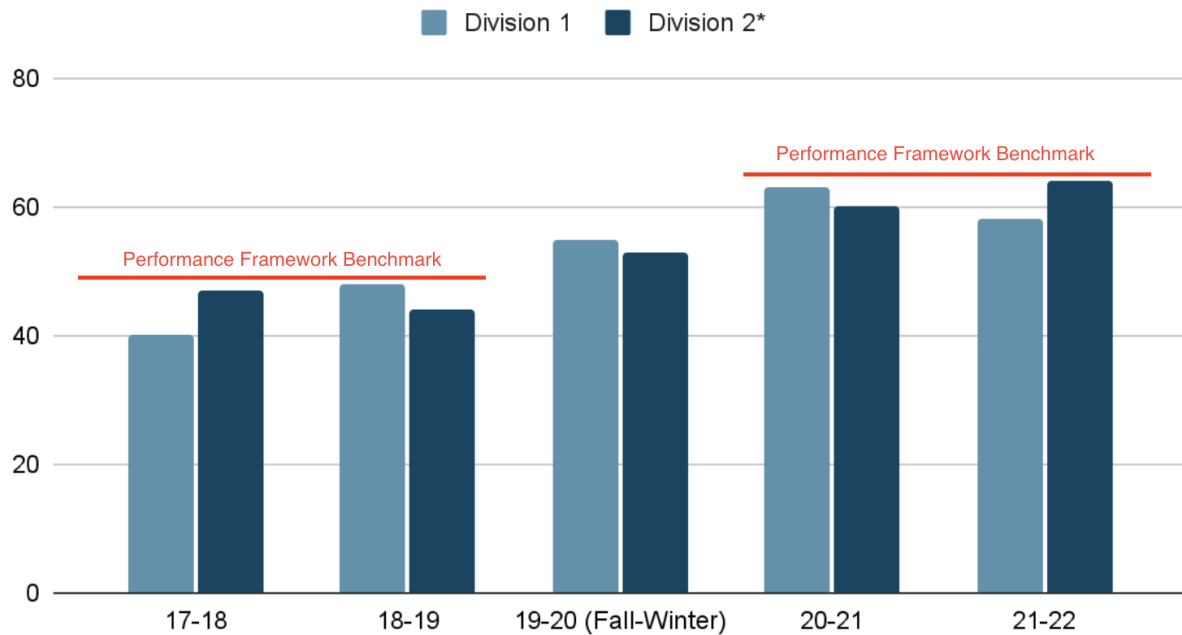
Here are some examples of improvements in students achievement and growth on the NWEAs since the 2017-18 school year:

Percentage of Students Meeting Growth Goals in Math



The percentage of Division 1 students meeting their growth goals increased consistently from 31% in 17-18 to 60% in 21-22. Division 2/3 showed progress from 24% in 17-18 to 60% in 21-22. Years marked with an asterisk had some grade levels with insufficient data; the data shown is the average of the grade levels with available data.

Percentage of Students Meeting Growth Goals in Language



* In the 20-21 and 21-22 school years, there was insufficient data for 9th and 10th grades respectively, the data shown represents the grade levels with sufficient data.

HCA students have also made gains in their proficiency by grade level on the NWEA, despite the pandemic and the challenges of remote and hybrid learning. There were dramatic improvements from 2017-18 to 2021-22 in the percentile results at each grade level. In 2017-18, across all grade levels and tests, student performance tended to be worse in the spring than the fall, resulting in a negative net change of -158 points. In 21-22, the net change in percentile from fall to spring across grade levels and tests was +57 points. This shows an increase in achievement for our students, even if some students are still working towards the average achievement for their grade level. We do not serve an “average” population, and our methods of instruction and preparation for testing needed to evolve to meet the needs of our students and push them to higher levels of academic achievement. Testing was seen as antithetical to our project-based mission by some members of our community early in this charter cycle, but we have built the understanding that a variety of assessments are important to learning at HCA. We developed our toolkit for helping students build self-efficacy and have seen resulting increases in our students’ intrinsic motivation to participate in NWEA testing and monitor their growth.

One area we have been consistently strong is in closing achievement gaps. Our students with IEPs regularly perform on the NWEA as well as or better than their HCA peers. We have continued to pay special attention to the growth and achievement of students with 504 plans and economically disadvantaged students. We have found that over the last four years students in these categories are often performing comparably to their peers as well. These groups have been particularly susceptible to the disruptions the pandemic caused to their educational

experience. Addressing anxiety and other barriers to learning that might exist in school or at home for students in these subgroups is a regular point of inquiry in our student support team process.

Postsecondary Readiness

The academic and social-emotional supports we provide enable our students to leave HCA with the tools and experiences they will need to succeed in the future, whether that is in college, technical training, or the workforce. With the exception of one year, HCA has consistently met or exceeded the expectation on the performance framework for student engagement in post-secondary readiness opportunities. The table below shows the percentage of graduates from HCA's last four graduating classes that participated in each type of postsecondary readiness opportunity.

Class of:	Early College	Vocational Program	Internship	Total*
2019	47.4%	31.6%	21.1%	100.1%
2020	44.4%	48.1%	18.5%	115.%
2021	15.0%	40.0%	15.0%	70%
2022	12.1%	42.4%	45.5%	100%

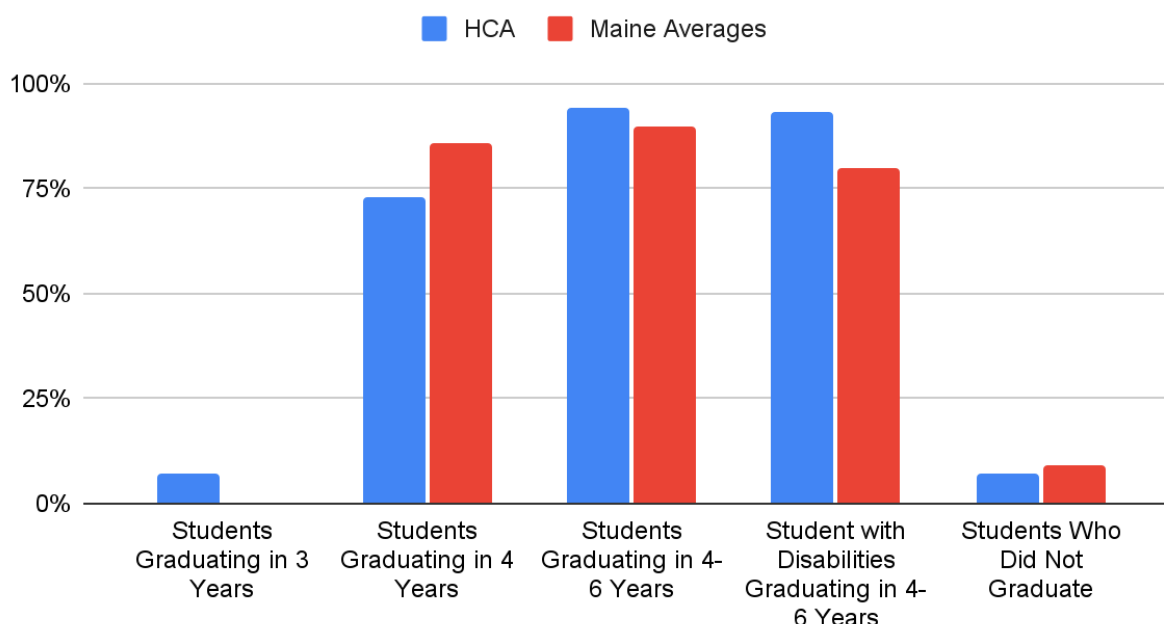
* Some students participated in more than one of these activities

During the 2020-21 school year, remote and hybrid scheduling as well as decreased access to community partners made engagement with community-based learning more difficult for many students. The class of 2022 had a 30% increase in internships due to the implementation of our Community-Based Learning program and seminar courses to support student internship experiences. Although the percentage of students who took early college courses in the classes of 2021 and 2022 was lower due to decreased access to in-person classes through Southern Maine Community College, overall participation in early college options for 9th-12th grade students increased in the spring of 2022. We expect to see the number of overall students and graduating seniors enrolling in early college courses grow again in coming years.

Flexible graduation schedules are an important part of our academic program for many students. We've had seven students graduate in three years since 2019, and we've also had about 20 students take an additional one or two years to graduate. Due to this flexible graduation schedule, our four year graduation rate is 13% below the state average. This flexibility has been critical to the success of students with disabilities, barriers to attendance, and challenging circumstances at home. Nearly half of our graduates in the school's early years were students with IEPs or 504 plans. Most of our students with disabilities graduated in four years with their peers, but the ability for some students and their families to plan on a fifth or sixth year of school without stigma before the transition to life after graduation was critical. During this charter contract, 93% of our students with disabilities graduated in 4-6 years, compared to the state average of 80%. Our drop-out rate is 2% lower than the state average ([New England Secondary School Consortium, 2020](#)). Of these students who did not graduate,

71% returned to try to graduate in their fifth year; 43% stopped attending school during the pandemic; and at least 29% left with the intention of enrolling in adult education. We continue to work with students and their families to remove barriers to completing high school and have had success in enabling around 20 students to take the extra time needed beyond their senior year to earn their diploma. The lessons we've learned from those students about what works in helping older students finish high school will continue to be applied in the future to reduce the number of students that drop out before graduation.

2019-2022 HCA Graduation Data Compared to Maine Averages



Beyond the academic data highlighted above, HCA has produced steady improvement resulting in some of our highest scores across categories on the Panorama survey. Since 2016, Families have consistently rated school climate, safety, and fit highly. Families that choose HCA for their students make the choice to enroll with us because they are looking for a small, supportive school community that will recognize their child as a whole person and engage them in meaningful learning on the path to high school and graduation.

Conclusion

Based on results from the Panorama survey, NWEA data, and student participation in student-engaged assessment and community-based learning, it is clear that HCA has made measurable improvements in its academic performance over the last five years. Students, families, and teachers have communicated their increasing approval of these improvements. HCA's record of performance on year end reports has not fully captured the impact of the school on students' belonging, self-efficacy, and academic growth. Students graduate from HCA having experienced a transformation in their education. Not every student graduates with the intention of going to college or with high standardized test scores, but our students do leave with

an improved sense of their self-worth and their role in the broader community. HCA students learn that they have a variety of opportunities ahead of them as adults, and develop the skills they'll need to work towards their next personal, career, or educational goals.

Financial Performance

Throughout all four years of HCA's current charter, we have received "meeting" assessments on all Financial Performance and Sustainability measures on the Performance Framework. However, in 2021-2022 the school faced two unexpected financial setbacks. First, a substantial amount of work had to be done in our Div. 2/3 building, to bring it up to code. Second, a state allocation from the previous year was incorrectly included in the 21-22 budget, an error that was caught and corrected when a new Director of Finance came on board in the Fall. The unplanned added expense and the overbudgeting error, combined with the difficulty of maintaining enrollment that all schools faced during the pandemic, led us to undertake a major reconfiguration of the budget, and of our facilities.

We have explained to the Commission that the budgeting error was a one-time incident, based on a misunderstanding by the previous Director of Finance of the funds available for the new grade added in 2020. The Board and the Administration investigated how and why the error occurred and also reviewed the fiscal policies and procedures that we formalized in 2020, to ensure that such an oversight could not slip by us in the future. The Board has also appointed a new Treasurer with deep experience in the realm of non-profit financial management.

Covid relief funds and a forgiven PPP loan provided additional financial support during the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years. These funds were used as mandated, to improve the safety and capacity of our facilities, upgrade our technology resources, and fund additional staff positions to support students who were remote or had struggled to stay engaged in school while remote. Much of the physical infrastructure in which we invested some of these funds will continue to serve our students in years to come. Consolidation has led to important savings in our operations and staffing budgets, and will help us transition away from reliance on these funds.

In preparation for consolidation, the HCA community raised over \$140,000 in the spring of 2022 to fund improvements to the infrastructure of the Harpswell campus. Moving forward, we plan to increase our annual fundraising goal from \$20,000 (FY20) to \$50,000 (FY23). We recognize that there is more we can do on an annual basis to engage our community in fundraising efforts, from student and family driven fundraising efforts to major gifts campaigns.

Our budget projections for the next three years (Appendix D) are based on the FY23 and projected FY24 budgets developed last spring. Factoring in five percent increases across most expenses, fifteen percent increases in health insurance costs, and salary increases based on our pay scale, we will be able to end each year with a positive balance with enrollments ranging

from 175 - 200 students. We plan to increase our enrollment to at least 190 students for FY25 and 200 students for FY26. These increases will be sufficient to cover the expected increase in expenses and for some money to be saved for maintenance and upgrades to our campus as needed.

Organizational Performance

A huge testament to HCA's organizational performance was the series of agile shifts the school was able to make throughout the pandemic. HCA's leadership took the health and safety of the school community very seriously and was able to establish systems and routines for continuing school flexibly for two years. HCA faculty was able to pivot to remote learning in under a week in March of 2020. They balanced a variety of fully remote, alternating hybrid, and fully in-person schedules the following school year. Although we are all still unpacking the full ramifications of the pandemic on the learning and mental health of students, families were grateful for HCA's persistence in finding ways to engage students in their education. The flexibility offered was a necessary support for many students and families (see Appendix F).

Panorama Survey results from Spring of 2022 indicate that faculty overwhelmingly felt trusted and empowered to make decisions in their classrooms (100% favorable), and perceived their colleagues as positive (75% favorable) and supportive. This staff culture has been cited by employees as a major reason for working at HCA and has enabled our staff to navigate challenging situations, like the pandemic, collaboratively and flexibly.

Looking to the Future

HCA's Future - Harpswell Coastal Academy has experienced a major transition over the last six months. The impact of the pandemic on many of our organizational challenges including attendance, enrollment, academic achievement, staff turnover, and financial management are all significant. We also recognize that there are places we needed to be doing more and pushing harder for sustainable change. Since last spring, we have engaged different members of our community in leadership roles on the board and within the school. We have also hired a full staff for the upcoming school year, despite the high rate of teacher turnover and school staffing shortages around the state. Many of them have previous experience with the Expeditionary Learning model. Our new administrators and staff bring the proven experience, passion, and dedication needed to continue to make positive change in the lives and academic outcomes of our students.

Even though there have been areas of weakness in academics, attendance, and enrollment during the past Charter period, many of these correlate to national and state trends through the pandemic. The growth we have shown indicates that we are poised to rise to the metrics in the new performance framework in the coming years. Some of the adjustments in the new

performance framework will reflect the academic success of our student population more effectively, and we anticipate continued improvement in areas we're not yet meeting as we continue to build on the work we've done to improve student outcomes in the last five years. A renewal of HCA's charter contract for the next five years will enable us to further improve the educational experience we offer to students, especially those who are desperately seeking a different kind of school. We occupy a special niche in our community, and the stability of our renewal will allow us to build our enrollment and programming to support more students in need of a different public school option.

Adjustments to the Performance Framework

Our leadership team and the board's academic oversight committee have discussed additional measures to demonstrate the impact HCA has on students' academic and social-emotional development. We are eager to continue to work with MCSC to develop these indicators for incorporation into the Performance Framework for HCA. As part of the leadership team's second year of strategic plan goals, we identified the practice of gathering, analyzing, and using data as a key focus for staff professional development in the 2022-23 school year. Central to this work will be establishing regular routines for analyzing student assessment and performance data using protocols in team meetings. We plan to work with teachers to develop several common tools for data collection and analysis that will be used repeatedly throughout the school year.

We also plan to develop more efficient systems for tracking consistent, longitudinal data over time to assess the growth, achievements, and learning gaps for students who are with us for multiple years.

Some of the internal measures that we have used or are looking at implementing are:

- Student Learning Target Reflection Surveys (new 2022-23)
- Walkthrough Tools (EL Education - used in 2020-21 & 2021-22 for crew and classroom instruction)
- Habits of Work and Learning (HOWLs) assessment data (Tracked in Infinite Campus since 2020-21)
- Standards completion rates by passage cohorts
- Internal math and ELA assessment data
- Participation in student engaged assessment (portfolios, SLCs, Celebration of Learning)

Changes to the School's Model

Education Plan

Mission, Vision, Identification of Targeted Student Population and the community we want to serve - Our mission and vision are central to how we articulate our purpose, make curricular decisions, and attract and retain students and faculty. To better reflect them, we revised our mission and vision statements in 2020, and we do not plan any further adjustments to those guiding statements in the near future. We will continue to articulate our values, as aligned with the mission and vision. During the beginning of our strategic planning process in 2021, staff identified belonging, compassion, collaboration, and making a difference as the four core values that fueled their work at HCA. We will reflect on these values with our staff and students this fall, and will develop a visual representation of how these values inform our academic expectations and the manifestation of our mission and vision. Our mission and vision have played a larger role in our marketing and recruitment efforts over the last several years, and we will continue to use them to attract students who are interested in joining a learning community focused on project- and place-based learning, and one that encourages active civic engagement on issues related to positive social change, economic opportunity, and sustainability.

We will continue to serve students coming from a range of educational backgrounds and surrounding communities. The diversity in experience that students bring to HCA creates opportunities for students to broaden their social network beyond their hometown and build connections with peers who may have had similar reasons for seeking a different kind of school experience. We continually develop systems of support to meet the academic and social emotional needs of students who choose to come to HCA, and intend to continue to be a strong option for students that have struggled to get the support they needed in another school setting.

Academic Program - We will continue to work with EL Education to strengthen our implementation of their model. The EL model includes curriculum design, instructional strategies, assessment practices, routines for setting school culture, systems for student support, and leadership practices. Establishing a formal affiliation with EL Education has provided our staff with invaluable training and support that we are eager to continue to explore in our pursuit of developing a reputation as a strong EL school.

The establishment of a curriculum committee in the 2022-23 school year is a step we have been planning since we began our strategic planning process two years ago. The role of the curriculum committee will be to lead the implementation of the EL model in our curriculum, share recommendations for professional development with the leadership team, and present the resulting documents and plans for their use to the board. The work of this committee will be to review and finalize several guiding documents that were developed before COVID and revisited briefly in content area "vertical teams" in the last two years. Data collected over the last several years through passage plans as well as NWEA data will help the committee to identify areas of strength and gaps in our curriculum. This committee will use this data to codify and refine what has been successful and work with faculty and administration to make sure that any gaps are filled in alignment to our mission and vision and EL model. Finalizing our scope and sequence documents and cognitive complexity rubrics for each standard will enable us to more effectively onboard new teachers and ensure greater consistency across classrooms and grade levels. Professional development time will be used to analyze student work using protocols from the School Reform Initiative for tight alignment to the standards aligned to a course and for pushing rigorous expectations for meeting and exceeding standards.

Special Student Populations - Students with individualized education plans (IEPs) have made up 20-40% of our population over the years. We are committed to supporting the needs of our students with IEPs and 504s in the least restrictive environment. Our special education team works closely with our general education teachers to provide inclusive, supportive learning environments where all students can achieve academically. We will continue to invest in training and professional development for all special education staff, student support team members, and general education teachers to ensure that all staff have the tools to support a wide range of learning needs.

Assessment - In line with the new Performance Framework, HCA will continue to use the NWEA as a standardized assessment three times a year with grades 5-10. When students enter 11th grade, students will take the Accuplacer to determine if they are college-ready and jumpstart the process of exploring dual enrollment in an early college course through SMCC or UMaine online. Depending on a student's academic goals and areas of need, we will continue to use the NWEA as an additional data point for students in 11th grade that are not meeting college readiness on the Accuplacer and who will need to prepare to take the Accuplacer again in their senior year.

Students will continue to be assessed on their proficiency in the skills and content of individual standards through classroom assessments and project-based learning, rooted in the EL Education model. The curriculum committee will also explore common assessments that could be implemented in workshops beyond the assessments included in Illustrative Mathematics and EL Education's Language Arts curriculum.

School Climate and Discipline - HCA will continue to use Restorative Practices to develop a safe and productive learning environment. We have a framework for assessing the severity and impact of negative student behaviors that serves as a guide for our administrators and student support team to determine appropriate restorative and disciplinary actions that need to be taken. This framework relies on the application of logical consequences that engage the student in understanding the impact of and making amends for their actions. All staff participate in ongoing training in Tier I and II restorative interventions and receive coaching on these practices from our Restorative Practices coordinator and principal.

Organizational Plan

School Calendar and Daily Schedule - As part of the consolidation process, our school hours for all Divisions in the coming year will be 8:15-2:45. This is the same length of school day that all divisions have had for the last several years, but the start and end times have split the difference between the staggered times needed the last two years to accommodate separate bus runs for the Brunswick and Harpswell campuses during COVID. Daily schedules for middle school and high school will only experience small adjustments as a result of consolidation. We do not have any substantial changes to the school calendar.

Student Recruitment and Enrollment - Improving our pathways for recruitment and enrollment has been a major focus over the last six months. See the "Addressing Special Concerns" section for a detailed description of our plans moving forward.

Staffing and Human Resources - This year's transition to having distinct Head of School and Principal roles operating out of one building will enable both staff members to focus more deeply on their respective tasks. Based on the last two years of Panorama survey data, staff-leadership relationships and perception of school leaders as effective were strong, but professional learning and feedback and

coaching were areas for growth. HCA's leadership team will pay particular attention to these two areas this year. The team will solicit feedback from staff on the quality of the professional learning and coaching they experience throughout the year. With all of our staff and students in one building and no remote learning it will be much easier logistically to carry out the full year's PEPG plan with fidelity as well as provide teachers with the feedback and support they need to grow as professionals. In addition to the formal PEPG plan, we are developing structures for regular performance feedback for members of our operations team and establishing "pedagogy partners" of teachers to provide peer coaching and support throughout the year.

Management and Operations - Management and operations will be simplified moving forward on one campus. With a dedicated Transportation and Facilities Manager on site, our Director of Business, Finance, and Operations will have more time to devote to financial management and planning, as well as fundraising and marketing efforts.

Parent and Community Development - Strengthening the connection of our parents and community members to the work and learning happening in our school building is a major goal for the upcoming school year. In the wake of the pandemic, many families are eager to have opportunities to volunteer and be involved in the school community. The consolidation process led to a renewed engagement with families and community members. We will use the HCA Family Partnership as a driver for organizing volunteers, participating in events like student-led conferences and Celebrations of Learning, and fostering consistent two-way communication between the school and families.

Through a Reimaging Remote Education Ventures (RREV) grant, we have been able to fund a Community-Based Learning coordinator position on staff for the 21/22 and 22/23 school years (see the section on Community Connections). The coordinator fosters connections with established and new community partners and builds internal capacity to utilize these resources. The resulting increase in fieldwork experiences and internship opportunities last year energized students, faculty, and community partners. Continuing to foster these mutually beneficial partnerships enables us to carry out key elements of the EL Education model and engages our students as ambassadors for our school in the communities we serve.

Governance Plan

Governing Body - The Governing Board is proud of our quick response to the challenges raised in the last several months by the need to consolidate our facilities, at the same time we were preparing for Charter renewal. This need was the result of the school's failure to maintain enrollment during the two years of the pandemic, and two other financial setbacks in 2021-2022 (described in the section on Financial Performance). The process of securing permission to consolidate and then carrying out the process was difficult, but we have used it as a learning opportunity to reinforce our oversight and revise some of our operating procedures. We held several extra Board meetings during the spring and have continued to meet every two weeks during the summer, both to oversee progress on these efforts and to support the administrative team. As a result, everyone on the Board has a clear understanding of the school's needs and plans, and a commitment to ensuring that HCA can succeed in the long term, both academically and financially.

Our Board retreat in July is an annual occasion for self-evaluation, but this year we did a more in-depth re-evaluation both of how we work as a Board and how we work with school leadership to fulfill our oversight responsibilities. This was a productive discussion, informed both by our self-evaluation and by the 2022 Performance Report. It resulted in several positive decisions:

- For the coming year at least, we will de-emphasize Board committees. We are currently a small group, and everyone is committed and hard-working. We think we will be more effective working in concert on all aspects of our work—as we have been doing all spring and summer.
- To resolve some previous difficulties in obtaining adequate contextualized information, for example on academic standards or student test performance, we have crafted with the new Interim Head of School a plan for more systematic reporting at each monthly Board meeting. Consistent items will be those of most concern to us and to the Commission, including enrollment, attendance, and student assessment. The full Board will also review a summary financial report monthly, and will use a protocol for structured board discussion and feedback on it.
- We agree with the Commission’s suggestions in the Performance Report about strategic planning. We have in place a plan to engage in that process after the Commission makes its decision on our Charter renewal in October. An out-of-state expert on charter schools, who has previously been helpful with advice, has recommended two strategic planning facilitators based in Maine. He has also agreed to serve in this capacity himself, if we wish; he might be available in late October while on a trip to Maine.

Another focus of the coming year will be to support the Interim Head of School. Previous Heads have contributed to the school in important ways, but for various reasons there have been some gaps in their effectiveness in responding to Board concerns and priorities - building enrollment is a good case in point. We recognize a need for continued trust but also more systematic verification. We have good reason for optimism as we head into next year. Mel Christensen-Fletcher took over officially as Interim Head on July 1, 2022, but we have been working with her since April. It is notable how quickly she has developed a strong relationship of trust and transparency with the Board, and how responsive she and her new administrative team are as we navigate consolidation and charter renewal.

To support Mel in her new position, we will ensure that she has professional development time during the year, including both coaching and some course work that she has identified as important. She is also connected with a coach who is an assistant superintendent in a neighboring town. We will also follow a full-year plan for monitoring and evaluation, based on a good model developed by Education Board Partners, and on a list of personal goals that we have asked her to develop.

Governing Board Composition - The Governing Board currently has six members, but 8 has been our norm. In June 2022 two members just retired at the end of their terms, and we fulfilled a recruitment goal by adding a parent to the Board. The expertise of current members includes

financial management, accounting, academics, governance, and small business ownership. We would like to increase the size of the Board to nine members over the next three years. We have a plan in place to move ahead aggressively with further recruitment after the decision on our Charter renewal in October. We will be looking in particular for people with legal expertise, school administrative experience, and leadership skills, and also for community members and school alumni.

Business and Financial Services

Budget - In our budget projections moving forward, we recognize the imperative of continuing to build enrollment. Moreover, the savings that result from consolidating to one facility will enable us to work towards future improvements to our campus and investment in the human resources that make such a profound impact on our students. We anticipate that costs associated with transportation, utilities, and food service will continue to rise, and are planning accordingly to cover those increases. We have also increased our fundraising goals for the coming year based on the success of our fundraising campaign in the spring of 2022. Our long-term goal, though, is not to rely on donations as part of our operating budget.

Financial Management - As discussed in the section on Financial Performance, in Spring 2022 we conducted a review of our financial oversight procedures, to ensure that budgeting errors cannot be overlooked in the future. We also have a new Treasurer, who has long experience with non-profit budgets and financial management.

Facilities - HCA's campus is uniquely suited to support the learning experiences that are central to our mission and vision. The importance of this space to our work with students is central to our identity as a school, and is a resource we are committed to investing in moving forward. The school and board plan to develop a Capital Improvements Plan that will outline future improvements to our campus. As our school community grows into a building that was originally an elementary school, we recognize the need for adaptations that will enhance the experience of our students and staff.

Transportation - This year we will return to transporting grades 5-12 on the same bus runs, as we did prior to COVID. This will streamline transportation for families with students in different grades at HCA, simplify the school schedule, and provide teachers with more access to transportation for fieldwork. In the spring, students were engaged in the process of revising our student bus norms and designated seating plan to ensure a calm and safe bus experience for all students.

Insurance - There are no changes in our insurance in the coming year. We will continue to evaluate cost-effective options for improving coverage annually.

Food Service - HCA is in the process of contracting with the Healthy School Food Collaborative. This partnership will enable us to continue to provide healthy and tasty lunches, cooked on site by our staff, to students while relieving some of the administrative burden.

Education Service Providers

HCA does not contract with an Education Service provider and does not plan to do so.

Addressing Special Issues

Enrollment - Harpswell Coastal Academy had student enrollments within our contracted range (189-231) for four years prior to the pandemic. The dip in enrollment during the pandemic reflected the need of some families to switch to a different model of education or enroll in a school closer to home. At the same time, many of our regular enrollment efforts were paused while school administration prepared for the return to school in a hybrid setting in 2020-21.

Harpswell Coastal Academy - Historic Enrollment					
2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
199	205	199	195	178	184

In the spring of 2022, the HCA community reviewed its approach to student recruitment and enrollment such that engaged students, families, and staff made commitments to play a more active role in enrollment moving forward. The pandemic and the uncertainty of our consolidation process last spring significantly impeded the ability of the school to recruit and enroll new students. With the renewal of our charter contract, we will be able to fully and confidently proceed with our plans for promoting Harpswell Coastal Academy in our catchment area and work towards returning to our pre-pandemic enrollment.

Throughout the spring and summer, we have shared enrollment information in our catchment area through social media, print posters and rack cards, newspaper ads, and word of mouth. Families have volunteered their time to make phone calls to the families of prospective students and engaged other HCA families in volunteer efforts. Many students and families have also volunteered to staff events such as open houses, Harpswell's Memorial Day parade, and Brunswick's Art Walk and Pride events.

Moving forward, there are more steps we can take to build stronger enrollment pipelines to HCA from our surrounding communities. Fundamental to this effort is using our students and families as ambassadors for our school by having them participate in enrollment events and public outreach. Featuring the voices and experience of students and families in our social media and press is another strategy for helping prospective students and families see themselves at HCA. During the upcoming school year, our 10th anniversary, we will be reflecting on our work and place in the community. Through this reflective process, we will develop clear and consistent messaging to the communities we serve about the valuable experience we offer students. Rebranding will involve focusing on the school's mission, vision, and values as well as going back to our roots in Harpswell and EL Education.

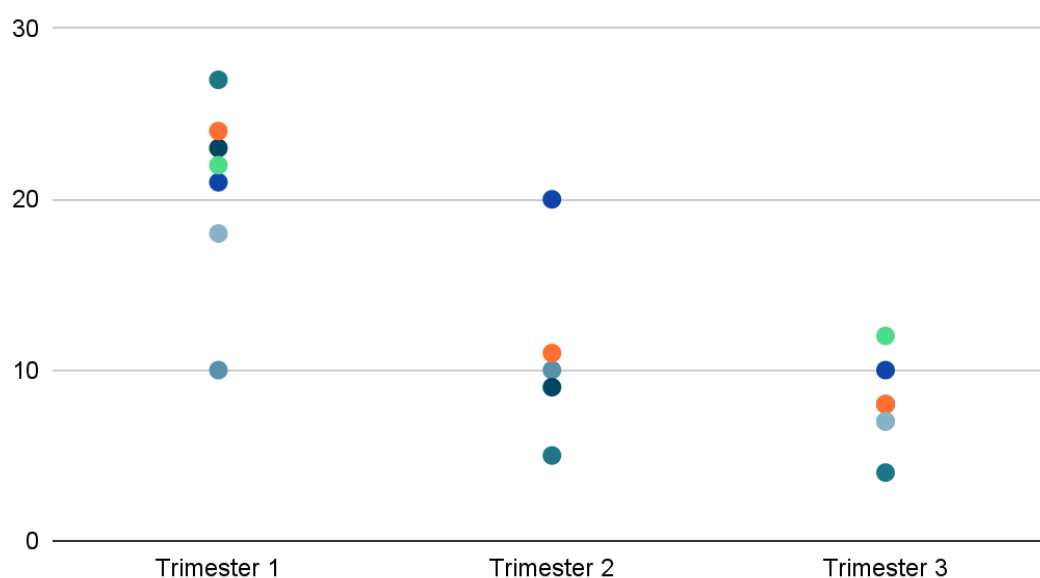
We also intend to make connections with key elementary schools in our catchment area based on geographic location, school model, and grade-levels served through direct outreach to

school administrators and guidance counselors, family networks, and student services when possible. Once relationships have been established, we plan to hold annual information sessions and school visit days as well as sharing enrollment information directly through school or family networks. These connections will develop a strong pathway to enrollment in our 5th and 6th grades.

Attendance - Attendance rates have been an area for concern at HCA, especially in the last three years during the pandemic. Our average daily attendance, which was meeting expectations in 2018-19, has dropped due to COVID, student mental health, and challenges readjusting to in-person learning. Even before the pandemic, HCA regularly enrolled students who had struggled with attendance in their previous school due to mental health, family circumstances, or adverse school experiences. Of our students who are chronically absent, 50-75% since 2019-20 have been classified as “severe” and have missed 20 or more days of school. This is often a pattern that began at another school before students enrolled at HCA.

In an examination of the records of seven chronically absent students who transferred to HCA between 2019 and 2022, all showed an increase in school attendance in their first year at HCA. All of these students were still chronically absent during the 2021-2022 school year, but were attending school 30-85% more by trimester 3 compared to the start of the school year, or compared to the previous year’s attendance for mid-year transfers. The graph below shows this decrease in absences over the course of the last school year.

2021-2022 Absences of Chronically Absent Students After Transfer to HCA



This pattern demonstrates that HCA offers an environment that can help students who are chronically absent work towards more consistent attendance. This is a long road for many

students, and involves addressing systemic issues impacting their home lives, mental health, and academic history.

Our response to absences over the last few years has included daily notifications when students are absent, monthly attendance report cards for students with patterns of absenteeism, and phone calls or Zoom check ins with families and students. Home visits from our student support team members had been employed as an intervention more frequently before the pandemic, but some visits were continued with the inclusion of care packages and notes from teachers and staff encouraging students to return to school. Staff faced discouraging results in response to some of these interventions for severely chronically absent students; for example, about 90% of families that scheduled Zoom check-ins to address attendance concerns did not log into the meeting. In circumstances where DHHS referrals needed to be made, our staff was told by DHHS that they did not have the capacity to intervene on attendance issues. This experience was corroborated by contacts in other public schools in the area, when we reached out for additional ideas for supports or interventions.

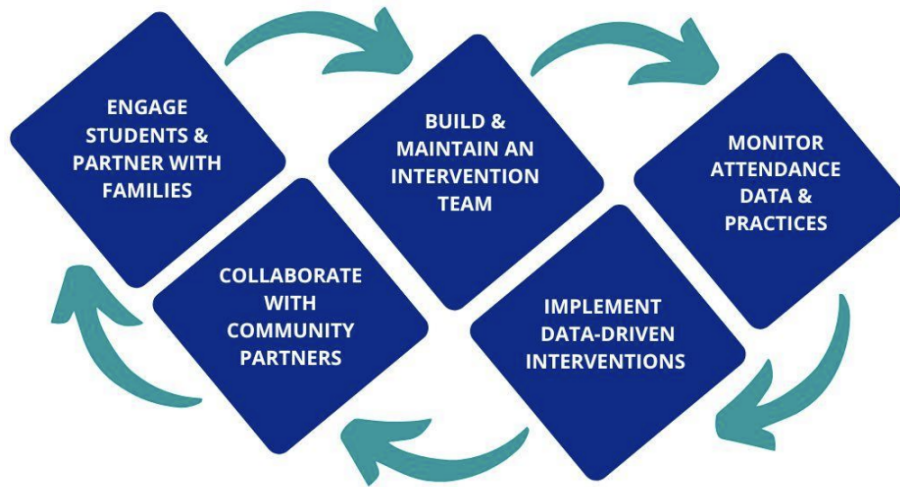
Many families and students viewed excused absences and absences related to COVID as something that was normal and not detrimental to the school community over the last two years. For six weeks at the end of the 2021-2022 school year, we increased our efforts to explain the criteria for defining chronic absenteeism, and its impact on the school experience of students and on the collective progress of our school community. We made a conscious effort to communicate with families of students who were at risk of becoming chronically absent. During that window, we improved average daily attendance at each division and either met or approached our goals.

Average Daily Attendance 4/25/22 - 6/3/22		
	Div 1	Div 2/3
Baseline	82%	73%
Goal	90%	80-85%
Final Average	86.50%	80.40%

Several areas for improvement that we've identified moving forward are establishing weekly two-way communication with families and students, clear messaging about the importance of regular attendance, improving access to health and mental health supports, and building support for attendance into crew and student support team routines. This year, we are partnering with [Count Me In](#) to implement these strategies and address barriers to student attendance. Count Me In will provide professional development for our staff throughout the year on how to strengthen crew practices around engaging students at school, developing strong communication with families, and tracking data. They will work with our administrative team to audit our policies, practices, and data systems related to attendance; they will also provide monthly coaching to our student support team around the best ways to implement interventions when a student is struggling with attendance. The model that Count Me In uses (below) overlaps closely with our existing crew and restorative practices, as well as the previous

experience of our new administrative team members who have had success implementing similar strategies in other schools.

Count ME In Model



Improving attendance is a major focus this year, and we are eager to partner with Count Me In to hone our practices and develop a more nuanced understanding of the barriers to attendance that exist in the communities we serve. In the future, we believe we can have a more significant impact on reducing chronic absenteeism in the “at risk” and “mild-moderate” groups, and will work with Count Me In to develop stronger approaches to supporting the significant population of severely chronically absent students. Schools that have fully implemented the practices of the Count Me In model have seen, on average, a 23% reduction in chronic absenteeism.

Appendixes

Appendix A: Governing Board Turnover

Appendix A: Governing Board Turnover

Governing Board Turnover

Please complete the Governing Board Turnover table below. List the number of board members joining and leaving the board in each school year of the current charter period.

School Year	Total Membership	Members Joining	Members Departing
2018-2019	8	2	
2019-2020	8		1
2020-2021	8	1	1
2021-2022	7		1
2022-2023 (August)	6	1	2

Appendix B: Staff Turnover

Appendix B: Staff Turnover

Staffing and Staff Turnover

Please complete the Staffing and Staff Turnover table below. List the following information for each year of the current charter period: the number of administrators, teachers, and other staff (actual member and FTE) and the number of departures of administrators, teachers, and other staff during and at the end of each school year. Provide a brief explanation of administrator and teacher departures.

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Administrators				
Number and FTEs	6 (5 FTE)	4 (2 FTE)	5 (4 FTE)	5 (4 FTE)
Departures during school year	1	0	1	0
Departures at end of school year	3	1	1	5
Teachers				

Number and FTEs	16 FTE	18 (16 FTE)	18 (16 FTE)	18 (16 FTE)
Departures during school year	2	1	0	0
Departures at end of school year	2	9	6	15
Other Staff				
Number and FTEs		7 (6 FTE)	11 (9 FTE)	8 FTE
Departures during school year	2	0	1	0
Departures at end of school year	0	1	0	3

Explanation of Staff Turnover: HCA has experienced two major staff turnover events during this charter cycle. Both can be attributed to high levels of teacher and administrator burnout. In 2018-19, we had significant administrator and teacher turnover. This corresponded to a point where HCA staff was struggling to meet the academic and social emotional needs of our students. As shown in the data in the “looking back” section, student outcomes and perceptions of school climate were not where they needed to be. Many dedicated and caring staff made the choice to leave for other career opportunities that would provide less stress and better balance in their personal lives. Significant improvements in academic and school culture were made since then, and although there was teacher turnover through the pandemic, non teaching staff (including school counselors and social work) and administration stayed steady. Turnover at the end of the 2021-22 school year was driven by the uncertainty about the future of the school at a time when our staff had already been pushed by the pandemic and loss within our school community. The vast majority of staff who have left HCA have not done so easily; many have said the staff culture was one of the most positive and supportive work environments they’ve been a part of. We have taken steps to provide more competitive compensation and retirement benefits that are inline with the surrounding districts with the hope of retaining more staff. We are also aware of the stress that teachers and staff have been under through the pandemic and are making adjustments this year to provide more job sustainability for employees.

Appendix C: Student Turnover

Appendix C: Student Turnover

Student Turnover

Please complete the Student Turnover table below. List the following information for each year of the current charter period: the number of students and the number of departures of students during and at the end of each school year. Provide a brief explanation of student departures.

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Number of Students	195	195	177	184

Departures during school year	20	17	11	22
Departures at end of school year	36	36	8	9

Explanation of Student Turnover: From 2018-19 to 2020-21, HCA had a decreasing number of departures during and at the end of the school year. Mid-year departures were sometimes the result of students and families deciding that HCA wasn't the right fit or encountering transportation barriers. The higher rate of departures during the 2021-22 school year were the result of families and students making different decisions about school in the beginning of the year after a year of remote or hybrid learning and the uncertainty surrounding the consolidation process. In three out of the last four years, HCA has met or exceeded the expectation for persistent enrollment, and has success in retaining students that do find a good fit with HCA's educational model.

Appendix D: Projected Budget

PDF Attached

Appendix E: Community Partnerships

Partner Organization	Types of Student Engagement	Description
7 Rivers Habitat for Humanity	Internship & Service	Individual students and class groups have supported work in the Restore, on build sites, and in the development office.
Canopy Farms	Class Fieldwork and Internship	Class groups have visited Canopy Farms' aquaponics greenhouse to inform food systems and agriculture investigations. We are hoping to place a student intern with them this year.
Growing to Give	Class Fieldwork, Service, & Internship	Many class groups have visited this farm to harvest food to be donated to food assistance programs. Staff at the farm have taught students about growing practices, traditional work songs, and business management practices. They hosted one of our first formal internships in the spring of 2021.
Midcoast Hunger Prevention Program	Service & Internship	Many HCA student groups have volunteered with MCHPP over the years. In the spring of 2022 they worked with a student intern for the first time.
Teens to Trails	Internship	Teens to Trails supports outdoor clubs around

		<p>Maine. Last year, we received a grant from them to support the high school outdoor club. One of our students interned during their Winter Explorers program for middle school students.</p>
The Theater Project	Internship and Theater Program Support	<p>The Theater Project supported the development of our theater program during the 2021-22 school year. We are hoping to place a student intern with them this year.</p>
Harpswell Aging at Home	Service	<p>Students supported several initiatives to improve quality of life for older residents of Harpswell. In the winter and spring, Division 2/3 students took on the "100 Cards Project" and sent over 200 cards to clients of HAH. In the spring, students worked with the land trust to plant and deliver potted tomatoes and herbs to Harpswell residents.</p>
Harpswell Heritage Land Trust	Service, Class Fieldwork, and Internship	<p>HCA students regularly visit HHLT properties for fieldwork and exercise. Students help with trailwork and invasive species removal several times a year. Last spring, one of our seniors paired his senior project on invasive insects in the Maine woods with an internship focused on invasives management.</p>
Harpswell Historical Society	Class Fieldwork	<p>HCA students take part in electives and class fieldwork with the Harpswell Historical Society, exploring local landmarks and immersing themselves in projects using historic tools.</p>
Harpswell Invasive Species Partnership	Class Fieldwork & Service	<p>Members of the Invasive Species Partnership often partner with the land trust when supporting volunteer groups. HISP will be supporting an upcoming Division 1 investigation.</p>
Kennebec Instrument and Amplifier	Internship	<p>Hosted a student internship in the winter of 2021-22.</p>
Midcoast Humane Society	Internship	<p>Hosted two students for internships or extended volunteer work in the 2021-22 school year.</p>

Appendix F: Letters of Community Support

The following comments were submitted to the Board of Directors in March, 2022, to advocate for keeping the school open.

Student and parent brief comments touched on the following points:

I am able to make friends at HCA

HCA is better academically and emotionally than old school

I was bullied / not accepted / didn't fit in at old school; I feel seen, heard and cared about at HCA; it is a safe caring place

HCA offers hands-on / outdoor / meaningful education

HCA helped me find myself, go outside comfort zone, be comfortable around others

HCA is the only place I've been able to learn

Teacher---on how damaging it would be to close the school this year

We all bring our own personal concerns about closure based on circumstances and the nature of our connections to HCA. This is a living, breathing learning community, and its closure, particularly decided this close to the end of the year, would disrupt the actual lives of all of its members. Some students have attended HCA for years, while others have just found us. Some will have to face a move for their final year of high school-- a very difficult transition for anyone, but compounded by the challenge of transferring from a standards-based school to a traditional credit-based system. Some families have finally been able to sigh in relief after years of struggling to find a school community in which their children can be themselves. All students and families will have little time to investigate options and make thoughtful choices. This is particularly critical for students with Special Educational needs, who make up over a third of our high school. Effective transition for such students is a process that takes time and effort. The potential impact of closing, especially with such short time to make appropriate plans, would be devastating.

As educators and staff members, we all face losing our jobs. Some have been building HCA for years, others have only recently been hired. I moved to Maine for this position, and certainly did not anticipate that the school would close with such short notice. I could write at length about the impact that such a closure would have on us as professionals-- in terms of our commitment to the students and mission of HCA, but I believe it is more important at this point for me to focus on our students, and I am sure that several colleagues will or have articulated the impact of closure on staff. But it should not be taken lightly that our livelihoods are at stake. And while we may be able to find other positions in education, we value this community. Many of us have been working in schools for a long time. We are here at HCA for a reason.

There are two facts that, in my opinion, stand in opposition to the financial pressures to close. First, we have not exhausted our enrollment efforts. There are a multitude of strategies that can and will be employed to publicize our school in the surrounding communities. It is shocking that we would close as a school before making a concerted and communal effort to use such strategies. Second, after two years of a pandemic, and the resulting impact on our students' academic and socio-emotional stability, closing a school is not a morally sound move, if there is any other possible path to take. This is the time to double-down on providing stability. Schools are facing enrollment challenges in many places, especially small alternative programs which serve student populations similar to ours. The personal circumstances that have drawn many students to HCA, have also been compounded by the pandemic. As conditions begin to normalize, many students will need our community more than ever. 2

Parent of 5th grader

It's our first year at HCA, our son is in the 5th grade and we immediately felt heartbroken at the possibility of HCA closing and sending Barrett back to Brunswick public school. We suspected that our son was really bored at the public school even if he couldn't name it himself and we took a chance on HCA this year and we couldn't be more satisfied. Our son gets up excited to go to school, he's excited to share about what he's learning, he's challenged in a healthy way; and he feels seen and part of a learning community.

Student, 10th grade

HCA is extremely important to me and my future. I am able to graduate early going to HCA. The teachers and staff make me feel wanted and important.

HCA provides a great variety of extracurricular activities that can help students like myself graduate early and with some college credits. I am currently taking a UMaine college course. This will help me graduate early and start working sooner.

At most schools, students feel extremely unimportant and insignificant to the school environment. At HCA teachers are always making sure students are heard and feel like a part of the community. I will use Lisbon schools as an example. I would go to the school counselor to talk about how I had a bad day, something like that that seems very off topic for school but can really affect my school day. The counselor never cared. She would tell me how that had nothing to do with my school so I needed to go back to class. This would never happen at HCA. I wouldn't even need to talk to someone like Ms Pulju or Terrence, I could talk to any staff member and they would make sure I felt heard. When I talk to Pulju, she always gives me time after our meetings to cool down before going back to class. The teachers care about us here.

Student

HCA brings me happiness and that's really hard for me to say because happiness doesn't come easy for me. My first day at HCA started off with me being really nervous and it ended with me making new friends and joining two clubs, which is way out of my comfort zone.

I always had to fit into a certain group at other schools and at hca i can just be myself and no one makes fun of me for it. After going through a lot I needed a place where I could just let go of all my problems and enjoy what was in front of me and I got HCA.

I have a hard time focusing in big classes and at hca the classrooms are smaller and i can get my work done so much better. The most important thing about HCA in my opinion is the teacher-student relationship, it allows us to be more open and honest with teachers and they are amazing at what they do. I could not have survived 8th grade without mr. entwistle because he kept pushing me to be my best and he was always there for me and that goes for ever teacher at HCA.

Student, 11th grade

HCA is like a second home for me, I have dedicated so much of my time and energy to this school and have developed so many new relationships and interests because of it. Without this school, I have no idea where I would be at today. This school has taught me how a community made up of people who are completely different can come together and work together to create an amazing atmosphere. Although there are some issues in the school since my 9th-grade year I have participated in electives like Student Council and Student Advisory Board to try and make this school an even better space for not only me but others as well. When I started coming to HCA for my high school experience I was very nervous and scared. I didn't know anybody and 3

was very anxious about what it would be like here compared to my horrible experiences at other schools with other kids. HCA quickly became a fun place for me to be, not only was I developing new friends but I was also achieving goals that I never thought I could thanks to the teachers and staff here. The teachers here pushed and encouraged me to try new things and never gave up on me unlike other schools have. Hearing this sudden news about the school possibly closing down has left me sick to my stomach and extremely anxious for my future. I personally will have no other options open to me if the school closes this year, I know that there are other charter schools and public schools I could attend but with so many bad experiences there I would really prefer to stay here where I know I can thrive, learn well, and feel safe.

Student, 11th grade

For the past six years I have been going to HCA and have grown close to the community and its the only school in which I feel comfortable at. Having been to public schools in the past like HBS I know how crowded and loud it can get and I also don't do well in large crowds and cannot work with so much noise going on. It is because of HCA that I have been able to get past the sixth, seventh, 8th, 9th, 10th grades. If you shut this school down then a lot of kids including myself will have a very bad time.

Student, 12th grade

While I've only been enrolled here for four years, I have been a part of the community since 7th grade. When I first came to visit Division two I was very reserved and very insecure, but right away I noticed a different feeling when I compared it to the school I was enrolled in, Mt. Ararat. Teachers would sit down and ask to get to know me, students

came to sit with me and welcome me into their friend groups, there was such a warm kindness to everyone I interacted with. Flash forward to my freshman year, I was nervous to be entering a new environment, as any person would be, but before I knew it I had built relationships with just about every student and teacher there, and I gained a sense of confidence and an interest in so many things I never had before. I've always had a strong passion for music, but never felt comfortable enough to pursue music with other people, after 4 years at HCA I have learned to play piano, bass, guitar, and I play drums for the House Band at school. I can confidently say that the teachers and students here are mostly responsible for all of the personal progress I have made. Here we strive to create an open and encouraging learning environment, where the teachers are truly passionate about what they teach, they're always willing to help, challenging us to think, and encouraging us to try new things with no judgment. This year alone I have had a lot of really interesting opportunities, recently I participated in an internship program the Habitat for Humanity Restore, where I collaborated with the Director of Development and Community Engagement to plan fundraising events for the Restore. I was awarded Youth Volunteer of the Year at the Restore after my engagement there, again, all thanks to the support from my amazing teachers. We also have a new theatre program that I decided to join, I'm now Assistant Director of the upcoming production, and discovered a new interest in something I was too afraid to do at a big school like Mt. Ararat.

This is just a fraction of what I have been able to do here, I could write about how this school has helped me all day, but the main idea I want to get across here is that this school provides a safe place to blossom into well-rounded adults, and it has taught me lessons, academic and non-academic, that I will take through my whole life. The teachers love what they do, and care about the well-being of their students, the students care for each other, no matter the differences we have. Above all, we value treating each other as human beings, and we work with what we have. HCA has always adapted to new challenges, it is our biggest strength as a school. I may be graduating this year, but this school gave me my life, it gave me a real chance to thrive and be the person I wanted to be, so I want other kids, and my kids, to get these opportunities too. If you give us the chance, we will come together and prove that we can get our enrollment up, and continue our mission as a school.

Parent of 3 students

My eldest child, started at HCA when she was in the 7 th grade and she is now a senior. She had spent her first 5 years of school in our local public elementary. After 3 years of almost constant bullying and inaction from the school administration, I pulled her from that school and put her in the other public elementary school here. Unimaginably, that school was a much worse choice, with not only students but also teachers and other staff who treated my child poorly, made her feel unseen and like a "bad kid." Sixth grade at the middle school here wasn't much better. She was bored. She was rarely challenged and in a bigger school she became just a number. Frustrated, we looked into HCA for her 7 th grade year. I was immediately excited when I learned about HCA's hands-on approach to learning. As a former teacher, I often found an immersive experience to be more valuable for students than any other method of conveying information. Avery was excited about school at HCA. She spent her 7 th and 8 th grade years taking risks and testing boundaries and reveling in the freedom that came with being part of a community like HCA. She could explore – not only the trails and bogs and coastline, but also whatever subjects she felt compelled to learn about. She could meet standards in a way that felt meaningful and interesting to her rather than sit in a classroom pouring over a textbook or listening to a teacher drone on about a subject that didn't excite or intrigue her. She really started to find her place once she hit high school. Through HCA's pathways program, she began to think about and explore career options. While she was fairly certain what career she wanted, HCA's pathways program allowed her to take a closer look at what it would take to make that happen. The partnership with Region 10 also allowed her to explore another passion of hers. Because she was able to work at her own pace, she was able to meet many of her standards quickly or "early." For her last 2 years of high school, she has had the opportunity to not only take early college classes, but also to work a paid internship during some of her school hours. This job has allowed her to learn skills she wouldn't learn in the classroom – everything from time management to customer service to supply ordering and budgeting and everything in between. In August she joined the Maine Army National Guard as their youngest enlisted member. I am so proud of her growth, maturity and accomplishment – all of which can in some way be attributed to her enrollment at HCA and the amazing educators she has been lucky enough to have help guide her.

My two sons also attend HCA. One is a Freshman and the other is in the 8 th grade. While generally happy throughout school, the older son was feeling unchallenged and even in the 5th grade was tired of the "drama" at our public elementary school. He has thrived at HCA even in the face of a global pandemic and remote learning. I have no doubt he'll continue to do well at HCA in the future and he has absolutely no desire to return to a regular public school. In fact, I believe it would be detrimental to both his education and his mental health.

At the time he enrolled, my younger son was too young to attend HCA. He was so far behind in math that he felt hopeless and as if he'd never catch up. He was feeling unsupported in his education and unliked by his teachers. I pulled him from our public elementary and home schooled him for a year and a half until he was old enough to start at HCA. Like his sister, he has tested boundaries, taken risks and grown so much in these past three years. He's learned so much academically, but perhaps more importantly, he's learned about taking responsibility for his actions (and inactions), integrity, time management and what it means to be a member of a community. He still has so much more to learn and I'm not confident that he'll get what he needs if he's forced to return to regular public school and once again become just a number. 5

No school is perfect, but I truly believe in the work that the fine educators at HCA do. I'm proud to send my children to a school where they can learn at their own pace, feel empowered by their teachers, work in diverse and unique settings and have the autonomy to be the authors of their own educational plan. HCA is a community where learning isn't just expected – it's celebrated! I am proud that our teachers and staff are paid a fair wage and that they're part of a community where their strengths and contributions are recognized and honored. HCA isn't just a school. It's a community where my children feel supported, empowered, and loved for exactly who they are. There is always room for improvement, but I believe HCA is already doing so much that's right and the potential for further excellence is right at our fingertips.

Teacher

This is my first year at HCA, and to say I have been thoroughly impressed, would be a gross understatement. I started out assisting in teaching summer school. This provided me an opportunity to get to know a handful of students and learn their stories about why they chose HCA.

The stories of why they left regular public school are varied, however one thing that was repeated was the feeling that they could not succeed in public school. The children that attend HCA are unique and have unique needs. The beauty of HCA is that being a small charter school allows us to be able to meet those needs on an individual basis.

During crew this week, we had the opportunity to allow the students to talk about their feelings about the possibility of school closure. There were many tears and sadness but I was taken aback with the amount of fear that these students are feeling. Many of the students truly feel that they will have to drop out of school if they do not have HCA. Regular public school is not an option for many of them. The thought of this terrifies me and saddens me.

The staff that I work with is honestly the best group of people I have ever met. I feel blessed everyday to be able to go to work and be surrounded by educators who not only care about the kids' education, but care deeply about the kids themselves. The empathy, kindness and compassion of the staff is truly unmatched.

Student

HCA has been EXTREMELY impactful on my wellbeing as a student over the past 3 years, and I wish I'd come here so much sooner.

I came here my 8th grade year after practically dropping out of BMS and within the first month here I did a 180 academically and socially. This community is one of the kindest and most special communities I've ever had the opportunity to partake in. I wouldn't trade it for any other school as none of them even come close to what we've created here, nor would I ever wish to return to the hostile and standoffish environment.

I'm sure many students can relate when they say they wouldn't be able to handle being in an environment such as a public school system again.

The spirit and community that we've built here from the ground up isn't one that can easily be rebuilt or discarded, each day we come together in this community and work alongside one another despite all coming from various backgrounds! We try our best to make our teachers who we've come to know and love proud, both current and past. We work through our differences, seeing our similarities and lending a helping hand when needed.

With all due respect, I truly and thoroughly think you'd be making a huge mistake by shutting down this school. We're not the biggest in numbers, but we're worth supporting. By taking away this school I'm certain many students would drop out or be impacted mentally by a huge amount, as this school has partially served as a safe haven for students struggling and giving 6

them the support they need to progress through school in an environment that they feel comfortable and safe, one they feel seen and supported in.

Not to mention the teachers here at the school who would be losing their jobs and would be forced to either change their profession, or be forced back into the mayhem of public school. This school has provided a structure that caters to both teachers and students, giving them a space to work towards their futures in a way that is most beneficial to them.

Parent

My son was pegged as the trouble maker. He was ignored. He was told to draw while the teacher taught the rest of the class, leaving him behind. He was given low grades on his work. We needed a change. Then we found HCA. This has been the best decision for our son. He is heard, he is noticed, he is understood at HCA. This school was made for him. Within 3 months of him going to HCA, the teachers immediately noticed there was something a little different about him. They wanted to look into HIM a little further. We found out that he has slow processing and doesn't absorb verbal instruction. Now he has an IEP and receives the majority of the verbal instruction in writing. The classes are small enough that he feels comfortable asking questions and also small enough that the teacher has the time to check on him. His confidence and his love for school has flourished more than I could imagine and its all thanks to HCA and its wonderful caring teachers. Ms. Bachor and Ms. Prince are teachers that stand out for me. And Mr. D has helped him find his love for science and math.

Without HCA, I don't even want to imagine what his future would look like. Our local public school is not for him. Please give HCA another chance and let us consolidate. Let us as parents help.

I asked my son what he would miss most: He would miss how the teachers take the time to explain things to him and not just give him work. He loves the teachers. He loves that he gets the freedom to move more and that they give him fidget items when he has really tough days. And he loves the activities they do outside of the school. And the food of course. He loves the food.

Teacher

I am writing this letter simply because in all my years as an educator, mentor and coach to young people, I have only felt that I was a part of a community making a real difference in the lives of so many students here at HCA. People have often asked why I commute an hour each way to and from school. I answer that the long commute has been worth it to be a part of a school that helps so many people realize their telos, their full potential, not only as engaged twenty-first century citizens, but as whole persons. As I have told Scott, I am happy to drive the extra distance to Harpswell next year and into the future because I am wholeheartedly committed to this school.

The majority of our students chose HCA because they were not thriving in their local public schools. They chose this school because we offer alternative ways of educating, such as expeditionary, project-based pedagogy, that are highly effective for this population. As HCA teachers, we are skilled in nurturing the social, emotional and ethical sides of those in our community as well as helping them to reach academic standards.

I realize that as a new school, with a limited alumni base, having just gone through a pandemic we face enrollment and budgetary challenges. I am confident that as we come out of the worst of the pandemic that we can take advantage of the benefits of consolidation and bring in new members of our community to reach our enrollment goals. To realize this, I am willing to go beyond my role in the classroom to help market our school to the wider community. As more people become aware of the unique sort of education and community we offer the midcoast region, our enrollment is sure to increase. Currently, there are so many young people who, due to the pandemic, need extra academic support and motivation. They also need the social and emotional nurturance that we are uniquely capable of providing.

I have much at stake in this school, not only to provide an income for my family in these uncertain times, but also because I have invested so much in building this community. HCA has changed in so many positive ways since I first started working here a few years ago. Scott, Mae and the faculty and staff have dedicated themselves to making this school what we all have dreamed a school community could be. It would be a tragedy if we end our journey prematurely because of a temporary hardship. I hope you will consider whatever challenges we may face in the near future as worth going through to continue moving forward as a community.

