



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

Division 1, 9 Ash Point Road, Harpswell, ME 04079

Division 2 & 3, 8 Leavitt Drive, Brunswick, ME 04011

Carrie Branson, Executive Director
(207) 833-3229, ext 602
cbranson@harpowellcoastalacademy.org

Approved by Sarah Mackenzie, Chair of the Board, on September 29, 2017

Submitted September 29, 2017

Maine Public Charter School Renewal Application Form

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| Name of public charter school: | Harpswell Coastal Academy |
| Name of entity that holds the charter: | Harpswell Coastal Academy |
| Name / Title of primary contact person: | Carrie Branson, Executive Director |
| Mailing address: | 9 Ash Point Road, Harpswell, ME 04079 |
| Telephone: | 207-833-3229, ext. 602 |
| Email address: | cbranson@harpswellcoastalacademy.org |
| Physical address of school: | 9 Ash Point Road, Harpswell, ME 04079 8 Leavitt Drive, Brunswick, ME 04011 |
| School's Initial opening date: | 9/2013 |
| Current grades enrolled: | 6th-12th |
| Grade levels to be served per current Charter Contract: | 6th-12th |
| Maximum projected enrollment per current Charter Contract: | 280 |
| Proposed grade levels to be served at full enrollment for second charter term: | 6th-12th |
| Proposed maximum projected enrollment at full growth for second charter term: | 210 |

Renewal Application Certification:

Signature of School Leader:



Date: 9/29/17

Printed name: Carrie Branson

Signature of Board Chair:



Date: 9/29/17

Printed name: Sally Mackenzie

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I. Introduction to the School

Table A – Introductory Information

| | | | |
|---|------|----------------------|------|
| Name of School: Harpswell Coastal Academy | | | |
| Year Opened | 2013 | Current Enrollment | 195 |
| Maximum Enrollment | 280 | Current Grade Span | 6-12 |
| Chartered Grade Span | 6-12 | Students on Waitlist | 0 |

Harpswell Coastal Academy (HCA) is a public charter school serving just under 200 students from the mid-coast Maine area in grades 6-12. Our middle school campus (Division 1) is located at 9 Ash Point Road in Harpswell. Our high school campus (Divisions 2 & 3) is located on Brunswick Landing at 8 Leavitt Drive in Brunswick. Our students come from more than 20 communities throughout the mid-coast, with the majority residing in Harpswell, Brunswick, Bath, and Topsham.

Over our first four years, we have seen a trend in enrollment of students who seek a welcoming, safe, small school environment that encourages individuality and supports students working at their own pace. This environment is created by our dedicated team of faculty who build authentic relationships with students and bring innovation to their work daily, creating learning opportunities grounded in real-life issues that are connected to our midcoast community.

II. Executive Summary

At HCA, our **mission** is to educate and develop critical thinkers, leaders, and lifelong learners who are actively engaged in their communities and the broader world. The mission is accomplished through our **vision** of cultivating a place-based and project-based educational environment tailored to meet the needs of our students. The core curriculum is reinforced with problem solving, task prioritization, and accountability of expectations while students become immersed in a culture of social and intellectual integrity, creativity, and civic engagement.

At HCA we are re-imagining what school looks like and feels like. Our philosophy of teaching and learning is inspired by The Coalition of Essential Schools Common Principles (Appendix E) and the Expeditionary Learning Design Principles (Appendix F). Educational research supports that the translation of these principles into practice increases student engagement, elevates student achievement, and fosters an inclusive learning community. Evidence from our first four

years echoes these results, with demonstrated strength in student engagement, positive academic growth, and the creation of an inclusive learning community.

Our curriculum and pedagogy adopt specific practices from the following educational models:

Project-based Education. Project-based education supports the acquisition of new knowledge and skills by engaging students in the exploration of an authentic question, problem, or challenge. Project-based education is supported by decades of education research. It increases learner engagement in school by making curriculum relevant to student experiences and supports career and college readiness through clear articulation of student learning goals based on standards. Learning experiences at HCA engage students in multidisciplinary investigations to create products for a public audience.

Place-based Education. Place-based education means that learning experiences for students are grounded in the local community and environment. HCA focuses on preserving the Midcoast's heritage while preparing students to live, work, and thrive in its rapidly changing economy. The academic coursework at HCA involves students in projects centered around complex real-world problems that are relevant locally and that matter globally.

Entrepreneurial Education. This interdisciplinary approach to problem solving seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. At HCA, students are guided through a carefully crafted, yet flexible, entrepreneurial curriculum based on the following key entrepreneurial traits: creative problem solving, opportunity identification, resourcefulness, and resiliency.

Integrated through our curriculum are opportunities for students to work with and learn from community partners. Meaningful relationships with community partners have continued to deepen throughout our first four years. A few notable partnerships include: an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle piloting program with UMA; ACSM, an area business where students intern to build a composite boat; Harpswell Heritage Land Trust; The Holbrook Community Foundation; the Telling Room; SMCC; and the Landing YMCA. We anticipate continued development of our partner relationships as we strengthen our Division 3 internship programs and continue to build out the Innovation Center projects at our Brunswick campus.

Sustained relationships with faculty are integral to student success and a pillar of student experience at HCA. Our grade 6-12 model provides faculty members with extended time to work with students and creates greater accountability for student progress over that time. Additionally, at HCA it is expected that all faculty "wear many hats." In wearing many hats, faculty hold multiple responsibilities that match their individual passions. Students at HCA benefit from seeing faculty in a variety of different roles. They learn that people are multifaceted

and that there is value to pursuing a wide array of interests. The “many hats” roles also support better relationship-building between students and teachers.

HCA has a demonstrated commitment to faculty professional development, having identified the need for continued support of teachers in the area of project-based curriculum development and assessment of student work. This year, one of our founding faculty members, Micah Depper, is stepping into a Director of Teaching and Learning role, bringing attention to our structures for faculty support and training as well as evaluation. Already we see this resulting in purposefully designed, carefully organized professional development for our faculty, focused on bringing consistency to our practice. In collaboration with our Digital Learning Leader, Micah is refining our blended learning approaches and working to ensure that all faculty are equipped to support students in the use of technology.

Our Digital Learning Leader and Director of Teaching and Learning are members of our Leadership Team. As has long been the plan, our founding Head of School has stepped away from a full time position at the school and moved into a consulting role, and our Assistant Head of School has moved into a new Executive Director position. Finishing out the team, we have strong principals leading our two campuses; each are focused on improving the use of restorative practices with students in addition to their instructional leadership roles.

This year, we have also brought our fundraising efforts in house, with Andrew Smaha, the Director of Finance, taking over advancement responsibilities. In addition to accessing federal funding sources we have not accessed in the past, Andrew is working with the governing board and the Parent Partnership to establish a series of fundraising events throughout the year. It is our plan that these events will engage new partners in our community, raise funds for our programs, and deepen a feeling of community for our families.

Our governing board is currently working on building membership. In particular, they are in the process of inviting an HCA alum to join the board this year to bring attention to student voice within the team. Other target areas for board development include legal, lobbying, and marketing expertise. In addition to this focus on building the board, they are well poised to continue to provide fiscal oversight of the school, to provide guidance on academic programming, and to support the school’s annual fundraising and “friendraising” goals.

At the close of our fourth year, the Leadership Team and governing board worked together to establish a set of five-year strategic goals, informed by HCA’s four year renewal report, Panorama survey results, and work with faculty (Appendix G). These goals include: professional development of faculty to improve school climate and student outcomes; improvement of academic outcomes; full implementation of consistent, research-informed, project-based learning practices; and focus on improving school culture and external relations.

Table B – Current Year Enrollment and Demographic Information

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Enrollment | |
| # of Students Enrolled | 195 |
| # of Students on Waiting List | 0 |
| Sex | |
| # Male | 116 |
| # Female | 79 |
| Ethnicity/Race | |
| # White | 184 |
| # Black | 10 |
| # Hispanic | 1 |
| # Asian | 0 |
| # Other | 0 |
| Special Populations | |
| # Students with Disabilities | 60 |
| # English Language Learners | 1 |
| # Homeless Students | 1 |
| # Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch | 54 ¹ |

¹ We are still missing a significant number of applications for the current school year; we anticipate 40-50% of our students will qualify

III. Looking Back: The Record of Performance

1. Academic Performance

Engaging Students

HCA is engaging students who have struggled to engage in school for a variety of reasons.

We were disappointed to have only partially met engagement and social/academic climate goals for SYs 15-16 and 16-17 in the Four Year Commission Report. Of particular concern on the 2017 Panorama Spring and SEL surveys were the areas of Student Engagement, Grit, and Self-Efficacy. We are responding to these concerns seriously and putting considerable energy into programs to develop these capacities in our students; however, we suspected the story would be incomplete without considering students' experiences prior to joining HCA. To better understand our true efficacy in these areas, we administered a survey at the beginning of SY17-18 to all students with questions that mirrored the wording of the Panorama indicators we scored least favorably on.

| | Prior School | HCA |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|
| Engagement: At your last school, how interested were you in your classes? | 18% Favorable | 60% Favorable |
| Perseverance: If you had a problem while working towards an important goal at your previous school, how well could you keep working? | 16% Favorable | 45% Favorable |
| Grit: Overall, how much effort did you put forth in classes at your previous school? | 48% Favorable | 63% Favorable |
| School Rigorous Expectations: Overall, how high were your teachers' expectations of you at your previous school? | 46% Favorable | 52% Favorable |
| Self-Efficacy: How confident were you that you could do the hardest work assigned in your previous classes? | 24% Favorable | 38% Favorable |
| School Safety: How often were people disrespectful to each other at your previous school? | 61% Unfavorable | 37% Unfavorable |
| Student-Teacher Relationship: How many of the teachers at your previous school were respectful to you? | 59% Favorable | 92% Favorable |
| Student-Teacher Relationship: If you came back to visit your old school 3 years from now, how many of your teachers would be excited to see you? | 33% Favorable | 71% Favorable |

These data significantly reframe the conclusions of the 2017 Panorama Report; rather than interpreting Grit and Engagement as weaknesses of our program, contextualizing data suggest instead that these are strengths of our program. HCA produces growth in Grit and Engagement in students who have historically struggled in these areas. Similarly, it could be viewed as a mark against our program that four students are currently enrolled in their 5th years at Division 2. However, these students, all of whom came to us at significant risk of dropping out of school completely, have chosen to come back to complete the work they began with us. Producing engagement in students at risk of dropping out is a benefit to our midcoast Maine Community, and to the larger public school system in the state.

A key element of our program has always been the teaching and assessment of Habits of Work and Learning (HOWLs). For all of the value it has brought, our current standards-based assessment program, Project Foundry, has made assessment and analysis of HOWLs on a schoolwide basis challenging. Assessment of HOWLs in 2016-17 was inconsistent. As teachers learned to navigate the new platform, they had to continue tracking HOWLs in a separate spreadsheet for our Tiers of Independence program. This redundancy was in part because it was difficult to tell from Foundry how students were doing on HOWLs from one time period to the next. We have since worked with the developers to improve the functionality of their HOWLs feature and streamlined our Tiers of Independence process. New school-wide reporting features are in development at Foundry, but data are unavailable at the time of this report; that said, we believe the information in the Table above is a strong proxy for our progress on HOWLs, and we look forward to sharing data from the coming year as a baseline for future growth.

We take our role as an innovative public school seriously, and working with companies like Foundry to design and implement effective systems is indicative of that. In cases where assessment and other resources are largely geared for more traditional schools, we feel that part of what a public charter does is work to create systems that are effective and that reflect the goals and methods of HCA.

We have robust plans in place for the coming year to improve student engagement, retention, and grit. We reviewed our curriculum from the last four years and distilled our best work into a comprehensive multi-year curriculum map for both divisions. The curriculum map should improve student engagement by ensuring students have access to varied, high-quality, revised investigations and by eliminating redundancy in content from our program. Our student as worker program is expanding this year with the full launch of the Division 2 Makerspace, which includes student opportunities to build a science lab, work in a bike maintenance shop, and repair instruments and electronics. We also believe that our investment into Literature Circles and Writers' Workshop will increase engagement because they are more active alternatives to our previous reading and writing structures and because they have a high degree of student voice and choice.

We plan to improve retention from multiple angles, starting from before students walk through the door. After four years, we have a strong sense of who we are and we are working to market ourselves with more clarity and focus to attract the students who will benefit most from our program. In essence, we will lose fewer students if a greater proportion of our incoming students understand what our school involves. These are students who prize outdoor education, design challenges, and field work; who wish to have more individual options in their learning; who seek a smaller, more relational climate; who are looking for a rigorous, accountable environment, not an easier diploma. As demonstrated by our Panorama data, we have had substantial improvements in student and family perceptions of safety, respect, and connectedness of students in the school.

We are targeting student grit by increasing communication with students' homes, improving HOWL assessment practices, expanding our RTI program across divisions, and increasing oversight of faculty in our PEPG program. Praxischool, our new database, allows improved tracking of student behaviors so we have better records to communicate home, and we are introducing Google Classroom's new guardian feature, which sends home a weekly digest of work in progress, including what is missing and what is complete. We are improving the rigor and accountability of HOWLs through the new "Anytime Assessment" feature in Foundry, which will allow us to assess students more often and show more accurate progressions of skills. We are also in our second year of our Tiers of Independence program at Division 1, which will include off-campus elective options as a powerful motivator for students.

We piloted a limited RTI program last year, which we have now expanded to serve all students, 6-12. Students receive small-group, highly differentiated instruction in math or literacy four days a week in addition to their regular project-based classes. These groups shift monthly to prevent a tracking culture from taking root and to ensure students not only get support in their weakest academic areas but also get pushed further in their strongest areas. RTI groupings are directly created from our Fall NWEA administration and shift based on teacher observations and growth demonstrated in the winter NWEA.

Finally, our PEPG program has been formalized across divisions, including observations three times a year around professional goals and student learning objectives. Greater rigor and grit in our teaching program should translate into increased grit in our students.

Post-secondary Outcomes

HCA is improving postsecondary outcomes for students.

In June 2017 we conferred 16 diplomas to our first full graduating class. Out of this class, nine students (56%) are now enrolled as full time students in community or four-year colleges and an additional two who have been accepted and deferred enrollment for a year. This college participation rate is consistent with statewide averages, and exceeds the average for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.² We have operated all along on the theory that

² <https://mitchellinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/2014MaineCollegeGoing.pdf>

our approach to education, especially our integration of vocational and dual-enrollment programs, would improve our students' aspirations and readiness for career and college; we are pleased to have evidence to support this. At least three of the full-time college students from this graduating class have explicitly stated that they had no interest or aspiration for post-secondary education when they came to HCA and changed their minds after being encouraged to participate in dual-enrollment at SMCC. One of those students has now been offered a position on the HCA Board of Directors, has attended an initial meeting, and is likely to accept. We consider this strong evidence that our approach is changing how our students think about their futures and giving them the tools they need to be successful in pursuing their goals.

We plan to build on this success, and after two years of trial programs, we now have a robust and normed protocol for enrolling students at SMCC. In April, eligible Division 3 students will prepare for and take the Accuplacer. During May, students will either retake the Accuplacer or gather registration materials. In June, students will select classes for the Fall. HCA students may only take 1 college class their first semester to help them learn to accommodate the workload, but may take 2 classes each subsequent semester until they graduate.

Standardized Assessment Successes

HCA is producing NWEA growth across content areas similar to national norms³ in incoming middle school students despite tremendous variation in incoming skills.

From 2013-2016, HCA struggled to produce high achievement or consistent growth on the NWEA. It took several years of data collection and analysis to figure out which factors of this complex challenge were within our control to change. A critical move was to explicitly change our culture from the root: We introduced the Curtis House, a smaller learning program within the Division 1 school intended to help incoming 6th graders and transferring seventh graders transition into our unique learning model. With three teachers and ~30 students, this cohort represents our most unbiased window into the efficacy of our program--a first year cohort newly exposed to our learning model in a contained environment, not mixed into classes with students from previous years. From their intake scores on the Fall 2016 NWEA, these students demonstrated an average growth in RIT scores over the year of +4.6 in math, +6.2 in reading, and +7.1 in language; this growth is slightly below 2015 national norms for sixth grade growth in math (+7.7), and slightly above norms for both reading (+4.8) and language (+4.6). This consistent growth was especially notable in light of the incredible diversity of student need in this cohort: within one standard deviation of our intake scores are math skills ranging from third to eighth grade, and language and reading skills from third to eleventh grade. In essence, we have hard data demonstrating growth in students in the first percentile as well as the 93rd.

Despite those gains, these scores confirm our observation that our math programming needs continued development; in response, our Director of Teaching and Learning has developed a multi-year problem-based math curriculum arcs reflecting four years of observations of our

³ <https://www.nwea.org/content/uploads/2017/05/MAP-Growth-Normative-Data-201706-1.pdf>

incoming students' skills and needs, and he is devoting weekly time towards direct support and coaching of STEM faculty in differentiated math instruction. Finally, last year's success of the small cohort-within-a-school model led us to divide our Division 1 program this year into three teams of roughly 30 students to increase teacher-to-student and teacher-to-teacher accountability throughout the school.

Literacy Across the Curriculum

HCA is building on a foundation of success in literacy instruction.

Our NWEA data demonstrate that language instruction is a strength of HCA. We have several programs in place this year to help us build on this success. First, Literacy Across Curriculum is one of our three "Big Rocks" of professional development this year. We will be conducting monthly 90 minute workshops on specific pedagogical techniques in reading comprehension, literature circles, and writing instruction across content areas. We are using our Collaborative Learning Group professional development structure to provide peer feedback on literacy lessons and resulting student work. We are implementing a faculty-wide initiative to implement Literature Circles for reading instruction, a technique proven to increase reading engagement. We are supporting this initiative financially by investing substantially in our school library, through professional development for humanities teachers, and through greater oversight by the Director of Teaching and Learning and our new Division 1 Principal, Scott Barksdale. Mr. Barksdale comes with extensive experience in elementary and middle level literacy instruction and has already proven to be a valuable presence in classrooms. Additional efforts in improving literacy instruction include our partnership with the Telling Room⁴ and the development of student journalist opportunities.

Improving Mathematics Outcomes

HCA is focused on improving Math instruction with demonstrable student outcomes.

HCA has seen a trend of students enrolling with a wide range of mathematics skills, ranging from second to tenth grade levels. This vast disparity, coupled with a national trend of students' having math anxiety, has proved a particular challenge to address within our project-based learning model. Over our first four years, we have been innovating a synthesis of math instruction, blended learning, and PBL in response to this student need.

Each year we have reviewed our math instruction and reset plans in response to concerns identified. We have learned that direct instruction math has not produced significant growth nor has pure use of flipped learning. Our new approach involves a best practice-informed station-rotation model. This model incorporates smaller class sizes for conferencing, encourages improved note-taking from lessons, and teaches kids how to find resources to help if they get stuck.

⁴ <https://www.tellingroom.org/>

We are now entering our second year utilizing the MathSpace platform. This platform provides students with a digital workbook, help on demand and an adaptive curriculum.⁵ Our implementation of this platform has caught the developer's attention, and this year we have been identified as one of their Lighthouse Schools. As such, one of our high school faculty members will travel several times during the year to present on our implementation of Mathspace in a PBL school and will also have unique professional development opportunities from Mathspace to further his learning about the platform. Through these opportunities, Mathspace is working to connect us with other similar schools in New England, including MC2, a public charter school in Keene, NH.

2. Financial Performance

HCA is current in meeting all liabilities. The accounting procedures used by HCA conform to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) to ensure accuracy of information and compliance with external standards:

- HCA uses the accrual basis of accounting.
- All financial records (including but not limited to bank statements, canceled checks, receipts, invoices, and statements) are opened by the Director of Finance upon receipt and recorded within 3 business days of opening.
- All revenues and expenditures are recorded and reconciled upon receipt so that they are accrued into the month in which they are incurred. Accounts Payable are processed two times weekly.
- Bank reconciliation and approval occur within ten calendar days after bank statement is opened.
- Year-end books are closed and sent to external audit no later than 90 days after the end of the fiscal year.
- The Director of Finance keeps a complete set of records (bank statements, canceled checks, journal entries, auditor notes/comments, purchase orders, invoices, deposit slips) in locked files and in secure electronic format backed by the school's primary banking institution.
- HCA prepares financial reports (profit/loss statement, balance sheet, performance measure of actual expenditures to budgeted expenditures) on a monthly basis. All reports are finalized no later than 30 days after the close of the prior month and presented to the Finance Committee for discussion and ratification.
- HCA maintains a revolving line of credit with a FDIC-insured bank to buffer against any potential default in meeting liabilities.

Sound Budget and Financial Management Systems

HCA has made great strides in strengthening already stable financial control systems. The school's leadership team and the board's finance committee have collaborated on regular

⁵ <https://mathspace.co/>

self-audits of systems in order to further research and implement accepted financial best practices. HCA has worked internally with the Board of Directors and Finance Committee to:

- Hire a Finance Director;
- Revise and implement a comprehensive Fiscal Policies and Procedures plan;
- Research and propose for ratification an anti-Fraud Policy;
- Audit and implement comprehensive enhancements to the school's insurance policies;
- Document financial regulations, particularly state and federal requirements, to ensure future compliance on the appropriate timetable;
- Require the Finance Director to implement all new and existing policies, strengthen daily financial operations, and document all fiscal procedures;
- Research and implement new programs and databases in an effort to modernize and streamline the interface of financial reporting with operational data.

The result of implementing these best practices has been a marked improvement in operations and state reporting. HCA has instituted several safeguards to ensure that financial transactions are properly authorized, appropriated, executed and recorded. HCA's financial duties are distributed among multiple people to reduce the risk from fraud and error. The distribution of duties aims for maximum protection of HCA's assets while also considering efficiency of operations. HCA maintains physical security of its assets to ensure that only people who are authorized have physical or indirect access to money, securities, real estate and other valuable property. In short, HCA has invested in building and maintaining operations and financial controls that are above reproach and exceed all local, state and federal reporting mandates.

A More Informed and Comprehensive Advancement Effort

HCA has an active and engaged Advancement Committee, comprised of the Chair of the Board, three additional Board officers, the Executive Director, Finance Director, a Faculty position at-large, and members of the community. The Advancement Committee meets monthly. In September of 2016, the group conducted a self-audit of efforts, and identified 2016-2017 as an opportunity to establish a comprehensive annual schedule of fundraising:

Fall – Focus on Annual Fund and Community Appreciation

Winter – Cultivate Major Gift relationships

Spring – Design and launch a Corporate Giving initiative

Summer – Continue with a robust student and community events program

Fundraising for HCA continues to be of critical importance as we grow, with a 2017-2018 goal of raising \$80,000. We rely on these efforts to not only supplement the budget, but to enhance awareness of the student experience, our unique programs, and most importantly our student success stories. The unique needs of our student population, facilities, and transportation continue to strain our budget significantly, and fundraising plays a critical role in bridging the gap.

We feel we have gained wisdom over the years on the unique challenges Maine public charter schools face in raising money, and have adjusted our efforts in 2017-2018 accordingly. HCA had contracted with an outside advancement consultant for several years who had a primary goal of applying for and managing local grants. This role was brought in house in 2017-2018 due to budget constraints and the lack of success in securing outside grant funding. More attention and effort is being placed on maximizing state and federal education-based grant opportunities and entitlements as opposed to foundation grants. A priority is forging deeper and more meaningful connections with the community, parents and individual donors.

Proper Identification and Management of Grant Entitlement Programs

HCA first applied for and received funding for IDEA Local Entitlement funding during the 2015-2016 school year. We've grown in our understanding of entitlement programs, and in 2017-2018 have a more comprehensive approved budget that includes close to \$68,000 in IDEA funding, \$60,000 in Title IA, \$20,000 in Title IIA, and \$27,000 in Title VI SRSA. We did not have the administrative bandwidth to properly identify, apply, and implement these funding mechanisms in the past but have nominated the Finance Director to act as ESEA Coordinator and oversee grant management so that we have greater opportunity to diversify our sources of revenue. The next five years will see continued growth in educational entitlement funding, with 2017-2018 serving as a year of learning. We continue to evaluate how these programs can best be leveraged and aligned with the school mission and annual system-wide goals and how to best diversify our revenue opportunities.

Shared Services and Partnership Opportunities

We have focused the first 4 years on establishing strong internal system for finance, and are operating soundly in all areas. It is time now to apply what we have learned in a group setting and reach out to community partners, local institutions, and sister schools to research and identify cost savings through shared services.

Our idea is simple--to free HCA as much as possible from duplicative and expensive services that can drain the budget and cause our educators to focus on things other than their students. We will work with educational colleagues, state and national foundations, and nonprofit organizations to help us design and build a business model that will address:

- Bundled business services for schools and education-based organizations, to potentially include payroll, budgeting, accounting and auditing, marketing, purchasing, HR, benefits management and other services offered in an integrated manner --with a focus not just on the bottom line, but on quality.
- Shared educational and student services, especially those focused on managing the increasingly expense needs in special education, transportation and extracurricular activities.
- Professional development for teachers, collaborative advocacy services, and fundraising.

3. Organizational Performance

The Charter Commission has requested additional information about our leadership structure and the few performance indicators that have not been met, or not been met consistently, over our first four years that require continued attention by the school. These include: building the governing board, improving student attendance, increasing fundraising efforts, formalizing the implementation of the PEPG system, improving school climate, and better engaging parents and community partners.

New Leadership Structure

HCA has developed a leadership structure that we believe matches the needs of our students and faculty and positions us to meet appropriately the needs of the DOE and the Charter Commission. Our Leadership Team is the primary decision making body of the school, it includes: an executive director, two building principals, a director of teaching and learning, and a digital learning leader. This team is responsible for reviewing and revising school policy, which is then approved by the Board of Directors, for planning and implementing professional development for faculty, and for addressing concerns as they arise. Ultimate authority and responsibility for decision making, reporting to the board, and all compliance issues rests with the Executive Director.

With the newly created Director of Teaching and Learning position, HCA is dedicating resources to: bringing consistency to the implementation of Project-Based Learning throughout the school, bringing clarity to the long-term curriculum map of the school, efficiently using Professional Development time with faculty, and fully implementing our PEPG process. Particular goals with regard to professional development include building ability among faculty to analyze data to inform grouping and skill building goals, instruction of literacy skills across the curriculum, and best practices for digital learning. The Digital Learning Leader is also actively involved in meeting these goals.

The two building principals are focused on strengthening school culture, building our restorative practices, managing their faculty and facilities, and addressing student and parent concerns. They work closely with our student support team, made up of guidance counselors and our school social worker, to promote student academic and personal success at school. They do this through individual and group counseling, Restorative Justice practices and teaching social/emotional topics at school. They work closely with crew leaders to address individual student needs and concerns.

Our administrative structure also includes a Director of Finance who has primary responsibility for managing the fiscal and human resources responsibilities of the school.

Further Development of the Governing Board: Membership and Advancement

When the school opened in 2013, the HCA Board consisted of 7 members, only two of whom are still on the board. People left for a variety of reasons: end of term, change in job assignment, excessive travel to meetings, lack of understanding of the school's mission, or lack of understanding of the role of a policy making body in relation to the administration of the school. The addition of new members occurred largely in the first year of the school so that years two through four saw the board stable in membership. We begin year five with two new members to replace the members who left at the end of the school year. We are still seeking members, though, to ensure that we have people for the various committees and to provide the expertise we need to fulfill our responsibilities as a board.

In the fourth year, the board was more settled largely because of the consistency of membership. The board still struggled, though, with systematizing the committee work to meet the school's needs, at times being reactive, rather than proactive with its responsibility to rigorously monitor performance to policy to uphold accountability of the Head of School. This year the board has made some changes in how it works to ensure greater connection of board members with the school and to provide more consistent accountability.

At a retreat in summer 2017, the Board of Directors met with members of the school's leadership team. Not only did the two bodies forge some solid relationships but together they also developed plans for the year so that the board could be present and helpful for them and the faculty members. At the retreat, the board heard from the leadership team regarding the school's goals for the next five years. That exercise alone more fully fleshed out the picture of the school and its work for board members. Then the leadership team helped the board generate ideas for ways it could support the work. Specifically, under the heading of providing effective support and oversight at the school, board members will be more aware of school happenings to give voice to a consistent and accurate message of HCA. To that end, the board will work together with the leadership team. Specific strategies to implement include:

- The board will hold long board meetings for board business and its policy role and short board meetings for interacting with the Leadership Team (and other school community members);
- Board members will be invited to in-school activities at least twice annually;
- Teachers will invite board members to specific activities;
- Leadership Team members, in addition to the Executive Director, will be present at board meetings on a rotating basis;
- We will invite HCA students to be part of board committees and engage with us at board meetings with a specific focus or purpose.

Other HCA Board of Director's goals for this year include:

1. The board will continue to support the sustainability of the school. This means supporting the charter renewal application and, after approving the strategic goals, the board will define its role in supporting them and track their progress at each meeting.
2. The board will ensure financial viability for HCA. The board, of course, has oversight of the budget and hopes to be able to assist in the recruitment of students. The board also needs to be more involved in meeting the advancement goals. The board has been less focused on outreach to our constituent communities, so the directors will as a group, be mindful of the finances needed to support specific learning activities of the school and help find resources for such things as internships, equipment and materials for the innovation center, and faculty development needed to add programs. In addition, the board commits to working toward building a budget reserve in order to be prepared for contingencies that may occur.
3. The board will have enough committed and engaged directors to do the work of the board. The board is coming up against term limits for some members and, as indicated, the school needs a robust board to do governance and oversight work. The board must expand its membership. To that end, the board will revisit the expertise and interest matrix created in 2015 to find the gaps on the board. Having a careful process in place for growing the board should help. The board will also develop opportunities for current and past board members to interact for wisdom, insight, and support. The board has already added one member, and invited another, so the total will soon be eight members. One of them is a recent graduate of the school who is a student at SMCC and interested in education. The other is a special educator recently retired from SAD 75.

In addition to working with the Leadership Team, the Board of Directors generated these ways that will change how work their work is conducted:

1. In lieu of a Facilities Committee, a board liaison will meet with the Facilities Director twice a year.
2. The Finance Committee will include Capital Budget oversight for facilities work.
3. The Executive Committee will:
 - a. Oversee committee work and support committee chairs;
 - b. Develop goals and work plan for the Board;
 - c. Address personnel policy issues with Executive Director;
 - d. Address student issues as they arise;
 - e. Regularly provide feedback to the Executive Director on her progress toward annual goals.
4. The board will create an “Academic Oversight Committee” with active Leadership Team engagement. Formerly this committee had a larger focus and was called Program, Personnel, and Academic Oversight. The personnel responsibilities (both faculty and executive director) are now placed with the Executive Committee.
5. The Advancement Committee will invite a Leadership Team member, a teacher, and students, as appropriate, to help develop and implement plans. Part of the work of the Advancement Committee along with the finance and development director will be to create an outreach and marketing plan. Its goals will be to help maintain a full and

diverse student body by developing a consistent and dynamic message (using local TV media, social media, print media) that also involves HCA students in messaging.

Board members are thrilled that the transition to a new leadership structure with some new people in positions has been seamless. The school is in a position to more fully realize its vision. The board's job is to make sure that happens as all involved embark on the next chapter of HCA's story. Working closely with the Leadership Team, which is a solid example of distributed leadership, will ensure that the governance of the school is deeply connected to the work of the students and faculty and can represent it effectively to all constituents.

Student Attendance

HCA's Performance indicators set an aggregate daily attendance rate of 95% for Division 1 students and 92% for Division 2 students. This is a goal that has been met, partially met, and not met at various times over our first four years. Since our founding, we have seen a trend in enrollment of students who have significant history of absenteeism. Additionally, when we have a few instances of egregious truancy in a year, it has a major impact on our overall attendance percentage. This coupled with our large catchment area and barriers to transportation have resulted in attendance records not consistently meeting our goals.

HCA has put together a team to address this issue with our school social worker and principals taking the lead. We have taken a number of steps to address absenteeism, including: developing and implementing truancy protocols, building relationships with parents to provide assistance with transportation or other barriers, and providing counseling to students who suffer from school anxiety.

As HCA has begun to attract more students who had previously dropped out of school (we have three such students currently enrolled in our high school), it is important to look at our overall attendance record in a way that celebrates the success of bringing these students back into the public school system. We will propose a new performance indicator with this in mind in the "looking to the future" section of this report.

Formalizing the PEPG system

HCA has a clear plan in place to fully implement the PEPG program during the 2017-18 school year. The Director of Teaching and Learning is already working closely with principals and faculty to ensure that everyone has the required annual evaluation goals, observations, and evaluation meetings. This work is already underway, and by the time of our Commission visit on November 1, all faculty will have goals set and initial conversations complete. This is an area that demanded more resources to be effectively implemented, and we have dedicated these resources to ensure we meet this goal moving forward.

Parent and Community Engagement

HCA has made strides in building parent and community engagement over our first four years. The Panorama family survey results provide some valuable insight to this work:

- 83% of parents gave favorable responses to the question, “How well do the teaching styles of your child's teachers match your child's learning style?”
- 82% of parents responded positively on the perception of the overall social and learning climate of the school, putting us in the 90th percentile nationally for middle schools and in the 99th percentile nationally for high schools.
- 76% of families responded favorably when asked how well HCA matches their child's developmental needs. This percentage is up 12% from 2016 and puts us at the 80th percentile for middle schools nationally.

One area that declined from 2016 to 2017 was the “barriers to engagement” score. Among the key obstacles to getting involved at HCA identified by parents were busy schedules (72% of respondents) and transportation (37% of respondents). While we can't solve all obstacles for families, we can address some areas of need. These include: providing more opportunities for parent volunteers, providing more opportunities for parent fundraising, inviting parents to visit the school more frequently, and increasing the expectation for Crew Leader communication with parents.

In addition to parent engagement, HCA's model depends on strong community engagement. While we are proud of some relationships we have made during our first four years (and have reported on extensively in previous reports to the MCSC), we are now in a position to deepen those partnerships that have been successful, move on from those that have not developed as hoped, and focus attention on carefully selecting a small number of robust new partnerships for the future. This work is being shared by our Leadership Team and our Division 3 Coordinator, who is, in particular, looking at internship opportunities for our students.

IV. Looking to the Future

1. Adjustments to the Performance Framework

Standardized Assessment: SAT

HCA's academic achievement should not be measured by the SAT.

The SAT is not, and was never intended to be a comparative measure of school achievement. The College Board has explicitly warned against this particular misuse of their data.⁶ The SAT

⁶ <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2015/10/01/no-the-sky-is-not-falling-interpreting-the-latest-sat-scores/>

has historically been used as an individual measure of student aptitude for college, but there is significant reason to doubt its current efficacy in this regard as well.⁷ Systemic concerns aside, one-time high-stakes tests particularly mismeasure the achievement of our special education students, who are predisposed to fail in the conditions under which the SAT is administered.

We have a high percentage of students who have come to HCA specifically because of anxiety issues, attention deficits, and needs for different learning and assessment styles. Standardized tests exacerbate each of these non-cognitive factors and provide the least advantageous way for our students to show their achievement. In spite of this, in the 2016-17 school year we worked hard with students to improve performance on the NWEA by familiarizing and humanizing the test: practicing the format repeatedly, allowing food and movement breaks, giving choice on when during the day to take it, allowing choice in location, and reinforcing that this test is connected to the standards they need for graduation. Our students bought into the importance of the test.

In spite of the efforts described above, it's no surprise that the results are different for a one-time, 6.5 hour test, which doesn't allow for food or movement breaks and which students know is decreasing in credibility and importance for college admissions. We are not attempting to obfuscate or explain away bad test results; on the contrary, we think that test results provide a rich window into the complex academic stories of our students and ultimately reflect the success of our approach.

Consider our 2016-17 junior cohort as a case study: this group demonstrated 60% proficiency in mathematics on their winter NWEA, which would be considered a strong performance for any public school in Maine. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The grit of this group of students was not the concern; we had perfect attendance from the junior class that day, a half-day, which required them to arrange their own transportation home. Of the cohort of 23, four signed themselves up to retake the test this fall to achieve higher scores. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the SAT is a norm-referenced test, as opposed to the NWEA, which is criterion-referenced. Norm-referenced tests are specifically designed to differentiate and rank students against one another and, therefore, inherently do a poor job measuring whether students have learned a common set of skills. As a criterion-referenced test, the NWEA measures specific skills students can do and is a much better measure of the efficacy of our program.

All this aside, we don't anticipate the state of Maine lifting the SAT requirement any time soon. We understand that learning to perform under one-off conditions is a requirement in many professions and are committed to doing more to help students prepare for this assessment. The PSAT is both an important step in preparing students for success on the SAT, but it is also important for securing college scholarships. For this reason, we will administer the PSAT for all 10th graders but will also offer it in students' 11th grade year, so they can get the best possible

⁷ <http://www.compassprep.com/has-the-sat-lost-its-way/>

score for National Merit eligibility. Starting this Winter, SAT-takers in our Division 3 program will also integrate regular SAT preparation using Khan Academy's evidence-based curriculum. We will continue to balance this priority against our students' need for relevant project-and place-based curricula but anticipate that this investment will improve scores.

Given our small cohort size, regardless of the preparation measures we take, we anticipate dramatic swings in performance from year to year. For example, our math scores on the SAT shifted from 18% proficiency to 4% proficiency from 2016 to 2017, and literacy scores shifted 59% to 30%, respectively. One cannot conclude, though, that our math program has caused students to suffer a five-fold decrease in academic ability over the course of a year; it's simply a different cohort of students. There is no longitudinal data available to allow such conclusions for the SAT. We will continue to support students in preparing for the exam as best we can and exploring other avenues to demonstrate their proficiency to institutions of higher learning. We are concerned about this cohort performing so poorly on the SAT, but we also believe the conclusions that can be drawn about our academic program from this data are minimal compared to the robust, criterion-referenced, longitudinal data set we get from the NWEA.

Standardized Assessment: NWEA

NWEA assessments should be used twice a year, and Academic Growth should be evaluated by the highest NWEA score achieved.

Many factors contribute to a student's NWEA score on a given day, including student achievement, nutrition status, emotional state, intrinsic motivation, environmental conditions, test fatigue, and more. We believe that low scores can be produced by changes in any of these factors, but that a high score, in excess of the error margin of a previous administration, cannot be produced by anomaly or accident. Poor test results happen disproportionately in the spring when testing fatigue is highest. Within the sixth grade cohort described above, there were 13 "mistests," which have been defined as a drop of ten or more RIT points from the previous administration. Twelve of these 13 mistests took place in the spring.

We wish to be judged in both achievement and growth by the highest score attained by a student in a given year and compare year to year peaks, rather than being held to a strict fall-spring comparison. This is not grade inflation in disguise. There is significant evidence of test fatigue; thus we propose testing all students on the NWEA only twice, testing again if needed on a case-by-case basis, but when growth goals are met, making it clear to student and parent that substantial accomplishment is not going to be punished with another round of duplicative testing that could produce a very misleading score that obscures, rather than illuminates, student growth.

Accountability and Measurement Framework

We need an accountability and measurement framework that accurately represents the value we add and provides specific insight into how we can improve.

We wish to adopt an accountability and measurement system that is rigorous and that accurately represents the value HCA adds. HCA assists students in achieving high expectations, adjusting effectively to social and familial pressures, and ensuring they become solid community citizens. Our first set of performance indicators for the Charter Commission specified the percentage of standards that students should complete each year. We have seen this goal interfere with our stated mission of supporting students in learning at their own pace. In fact, the performance indicator put pressure on faculty and students to move more quickly through standards than some students were ready for. As our enrollment is always changing, moving at a set pace regardless of the students we are working with in any given grade level goes against a central tenet of our charter. We believe, as a standards-based assessment school, that passage and graduation are the benchmarks that demonstrate our students' completion of standards. Evidence of this is revealed in the percentage of students who pass from Division to Division, and who leave HCA with a diploma.

We have been committed from our founding to aligning ourselves with current research in best practice and believe we would be best served by adopting a modified version of David Osborne's framework recently published by the Progressive Policy Institute.⁸ We have broken our proposal down below into five equally-weighted and easily measured categories: Achievement on Standardized Assessments, Growth on Standardized Assessments, Internal Performance Measures, Student and Family Engagement, and Student Outcomes.

20% Achievement on Standardized Assessments

- HCA district scores will be within $\frac{1}{2}$ of a standard deviation of National Norm Grade Level Mean RIT scores for math, reading and language
- Students will achieve a 5% improvement in proficiency from 2016-17 baseline scores on the MEA per year for 2 years. HCA and MCSC will reevaluate this performance indicator after the 2018-19 school year.

20% Growth on Standardized Assessment and Closing the Achievement Gap

- 50% of students will show a year of growth or more on all content areas per year
- 65% of students will show a year of growth or more on two content areas per year.

20% HCA performance measures

- 90% of students will complete three portfolio quality projects annually.
- 90% of students will complete one public presentation or performance annually.
- 60% of Division 3 students will be dual-enrolled at SMCC annually.

20% Engagement

⁸ <http://www.progressivepolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/REPORT-OSborne-2016.pdf>

- HCA will maintain a minimum 65th percentile ranking in Engagement on the Panorama Student Survey when normed against national middle and high schools with medium FRPL.
- HCA will achieve and maintain a family engagement rating above the 65th percentile on the Panorama Family Survey when normed against national middle and high schools with medium FRPL.

20% Outcomes:

- Overall graduation rate (combined total of four, five and six year rates) of 90%
- 95% of our graduates will have one of the following outcomes:
 - Enrolled in college (including community college and four-year programs)
 - Employed, in vocational training, or in the military a year after graduation per cohort.

Graduation Rate

We believe it would be detrimental to our mission to be held accountable for the percentage of our graduates who complete high school in four years. We have explicitly stated in our charter that HCA students represent a diverse population and should take different amounts of time to accomplish their academic goals. We annually take in a significant number of upperclass transfer students with poor academic records and some number of students who have previously dropped out; we consider the conversion of dropouts into graduates something that should be seen as a measurable and quantifiable benefit to the community. We propose that our new performance indicator be that our overall combined graduation rate (for four year, five year, and six year cohorts) is 90%.

Attendance Rate

As previously stated, our attendance rate has been adversely affected by a small number of frequently truant students. We recognize the significance of this issue and have implemented steps to address truancy with our student support team.

In addition to working to bring up our average daily attendance percentages, we would like a performance indicator that looks at our results with students who previously dropped out of school or who were at high risk of doing so. Identifying a student as high risk for dropping out is not a straightforward practice.⁹ Indicators we would like to use to identify these students include: high risk social behavior, low achievement, poor attendance/ previous dropout, low educational expectations, and inability to follow community agreements.

Annually, we will report on the attendance rate of high school students identified as high-risk by our student support team using the above indicators. We have set an internal goal of 70% attendance for this group of students. Further, we have set a goal that 75% of these students

⁹ <https://dropoutprevention.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/newsletter-v19n4-2007.pdf>

will complete the school year and re-enroll (if not graduating). We would like to collaborate with the Charter Commission to discuss the specifics of this goal, and to work out details of a new performance indicator aimed at assessing our work with this high-risk population.

2. Describe plans to change the school's current model

Enrollment

HCA has only one proposed plan to substantively change the school's current organizational plan and that is in relation to the maximum size of our classes. Over the course of our first four years, we have found our enrollment evening out at approximately 30 students per grade level. This size works well in terms of our staffing model as well as our facility capacity. Additionally, we are seeing a particular challenge in filling 40 spots for the middle school grades, in part due to our remote location at the tip of Harpswell neck. With many children travelling an hour or more each way to get to school, we think a target of 30 students per grade is more realistic than 40. This also allows us to keep class sizes low and thus supports faculty in making meaningful connections with students.

Coupled with this change, HCA's Board of Directors and Leadership Team have identified marketing as a key area for attention and improvement in the coming years. We are seeing a trend in enrollment of students who have had significant issues in previous school settings. Anxiety, bullying, and feeling overlooked are frequently identified by students and parents as a reason to enroll at HCA. Many of these students see dramatic changes in their engagement in and feelings about school after enrolling at HCA, and we want to continue to be an alternative for these students. That said, we also want to ensure that we are also reaching out to students who are looking for more rigor, more individualized attention, entrepreneurial education and more academic engagement with a project-based curriculum model. Our marketing plan then involves telling both sides of the HCA story--that highly engaged students are given room to flourish at the same time that struggling students can find a safe school environment--will lead to more successful recruitment efforts for the school. This marketing plan will be applied across the whole school, but with greater emphasis on high school age students because of the location on our campus in Brunswick, the significant need for high school alternatives, and the kind of programming we are able to provide for high school students. Given time, we may see the opportunity to grow the high school class size back up to 40 students per grade.

Budget

Maintaining a positive operational budget is a primary area of focus in every fiscal year, and our projections in Appendix D illustrate modest growth in proportion to enrollment. We are committed to maintaining a one-month cash reserve for unforeseen operational expenses, and to mitigate any potential risk or delay in our state allocation. This cash reserve is evaluated annually and available for capital project proposals. We are committed to absorb any mid-year financial burdens into operations and not impact learning in any way.

Financial Management

HCA has completely revised its approach to budget and financial management, and we are quite pleased with the results. We see no immediate need to make major adjustments to the Financial Policies and Procedures ratified by the board in 2017. The board's Finance Committee will continue to make monthly recommendations to be incorporated into financial best practices, and we will continue to collaborate closely with Gibson LeClair to review new financial controls and procedures annually.

Facilities

The Facilities Manager has identified 6 potential projects for capitalization at the Division 1 Harpswell location. Two of these projects are viewed as high priority, and HCA seeks to secure the necessary funding/savings in order to address these two projects in the summer of 2018. No other major facilities-related projects and programs are anticipated in the next five years.

Transportation

HCA has invested in a nimble fleet of transportation vehicles, and we are pleased with the flexibility this provides. As recently as Summer 2017, we acquired two nine-passenger school activity vans that set us up long-term to enact the types of project-based learning initiatives outlined in our mission. We do, however, feel that shared transportation services will be a primary factor in unlocking enrollment growth. Parent surveys illustrate that transportation to/from our school remains one of the greatest barriers to enrollment, as a number of students as close as Topsham must endure 60-minute bus routes to Harpswell each way. We are aggressively seeking transportation alternatives to reduce commute time, allowing students from a broader base of localities to consider HCA an option.

Food Service

HCA is a model for school nutrition. Menus are planned by students, and ingredients are sourced from local farms. Middle school students engage in a comprehensive agricultural curriculum covering nutrition with hands-on programming. High school students learn the business of Maine agriculture and are prepared for roles in the local food economy. Partnerships with Two Coves Farm, TideLine Greens, and New Beet Café (among others) allow us to provide organic, locally-sourced food for lunch.

We are proud of our existing nutrition program at lunchtime, and desperately wish to expand this program so that the same high-quality, locally-sourced options are available to 100% of students throughout the school day. Of our returning student population, 42% are officially on free or reduced lunch. However, a full quarter of our population did not apply for assistance in 2016-2017, and we have strong inclinations that a majority would qualify.

We have the intention to source and purchase breakfast ingredients within our existing budget, but we need additional partnerships in order to cover salaries and costs so that we may execute our school nutrition programs more comprehensively. We are searching for partners in 2017-2018 and hope to benchmark a nutrition program for the start of the 2018 academic year.

V. Addressing Special Issues

Budget

The 2016-2017 fiscal year was the first time that we planned to dip into our accumulated cash reserves and run at an operational deficit for the year. The results of this planned spending has had a positive influence on learning and operations. To protect the integrity of the budget, and to ensure full compliance and transparency both within the organization and to external stakeholders, the budget is reviewed by numerous individuals and groups.

In March and April, the budget is prepared by the Executive Director in conjunction with the Leadership Team and the Finance Director, and she is guided closely by the recommendations of the Board Finance Committee. The budget is discussed and approved by the Board in May, prior to the start of each fiscal year.

The budget passed in 2016 presented a slight planned operational deficit, which was approved given our positive cash flow and desire to expand our teacher base. This planned deficit also absorbed extensive maintenance at the Division 1 Harpswell School location, including necessary long-term investments in air and water systems, flooring, and lighting.

Budget revisions are presented quarterly by the board's Finance Committee and approved by the board. In October of 2016 after Q2-Q4 were fully projected, the budget was revised with an even greater planned deficit to reflect new major projects anticipated at that time. These major projects included:

- Unforeseen changes in state transportation regulations, necessitating the retrofit of two multifunctional school buses from white to yellow with appropriate lighting and signage.
- An unforeseen move from one building to another at our Brunswick Landing location. Move-in expenses to bring the building into code for school use topped \$96,000.
- A rise in special needs student numbers, necessitating the hiring of additional teaching resources at both the middle school and high school level.

The result is that 2016-2017 ended in an operational deficit of \$40,300 for the year. Despite this, a \$139,400 cash reserve was still available at year's end. We will continue to work with our board to review our fiscal health frequently and make adjustments to our budget as necessary moving forward. Our approved budget in Year 5 and planned budgets for Years 6 and 7 are

conservative and balanced. We will utilize the cash reserve exclusively for unforeseen projects, risk mitigation against mid-year funding deficits, and approved capital projects when appropriated by the Finance Committee.

Out of District Placement

HCA is proud to serve a wide range of students, including many who have found traditional public school settings less successful. Over time, we have seen area districts direct students to us who have been placed in a variety of settings within their district already. We are aware that HCA is, at times, even seen as an option for placement at the same time districts and families are considering things such as day treatment facilities. This situation is extremely worrisome to us. As recently as this fall, we have evidence (in the form of a Written Notice for a student) that at the same time an IEP was being rewritten with an alternative day treatment program setting assignment, staff at the district assisted the parent in filling out enrollment forms for HCA. This has the effect of shifting fiscal responsibility for the out of district placement to HCA, and raises ethical, if not legal, questions.

We have dedicated significant resources to our special education team, and continue to be proud of the work we do with special education students. We believe we are a very important piece of the public education puzzle in our community- providing a safe, productive, small environment for students who need this type of setting to thrive. However, as a small school, HCA cannot provide the same variety of settings that larger districts can provide- a self contained classroom will not meet the LRE guidelines without a peer group to build that classroom around. When we can't provide the accommodations or supports required for certain students, we find ourselves looking at extremely costly day treatment centers as alternatives.

There are a few possible solutions to this problem. First, we are looking to meet with area districts to ensure that they have a good understanding of our programs. In the situation described above, we are faced with challenging conversations with a family who are seeing continued placement in a day treatment facility as another failure for their child. This could have been avoided if previous case managers didn't set an expectation for the family about our program that can't be met. Second, we are looking to the DOE, MCSC and the Maine Legislature to look into equity of cost for out of district placements. We recognize that this is an extremely sensitive situation. We believe we have demonstrated a sincere commitment to support all students at HCA, and in no way are we trying to inhibit a student's ability to enroll at HCA. We are however, raising a very real concern about our fiscal sustainability if area districts continue to direct students to us who need a different level of programming than we provide. The current financial model from the state simply will not allow us to continue placing students out of our program.

We are excited to continue to work with the MCSC to ensure that HCA in particular, and public charters in general, play that important role of incubating, risk-taking and honing the kind of best practices that can be very challenging for larger, more traditional schools.

VI. Appendixes

Appendix A: Governing Board Turnover

Governing Board Turnover

| School Year | Total Membership | Members Joining | Members Departing |
|-------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 2013-14 | 9 | 3 | 3 |
| 2014-15 | 6 | 2 | 0 |
| 2015-16 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| 2016-17 | 9 | 1 | 2 |

Appendix B: Staff Turnover

Staffing and Staff Turnover

| | 2013- 2014 | 2014 - 2015 | 2015 - 2016 | 2016 - 2017 |
|----------------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| Administrators | | | | |
| Number and FTEs | 2 (1 FTE) | 2 (2 FTE) | 5 (4 FTE) | 6 (5 FTE) |
| Departures during school year | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| Departures at end of school year | NA | NA | 1 (.5 FTE) | 2(2 FTE) |
| Teachers | | | | |
| Number and FTEs | 7 (6 FTE) | 13 (12 FTE) | 16 (15 FTE) | 19 (17.8 FTE) |
| Departures during school year | NA | 1 (1 FTE) | 1 (1 FTE) | 1 (.5 FTE) |
| Departures at end of school year | 1 (1 FTE) | 2 (2 FTE) | 4 (4 FTE) | 4 (3.5 FTE) |
| Other Staff | | | | |
| Number and FTEs | NA | 3 (2.5 FTE) | 9 (6 FTE) | 8 (6 FTE) |
| Departures during school year | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| Departures at end of school year | NA | 1 (1 FTE) | 2 (2 FTE) | 2 (1.5 FTE) |

Explanation of Staff Turnover

Administrative Turnover has been minimal over our first four years. Aside from the planned departure of our founding Head of School, John D’Anieri, we have had only two people in administrative positions leave the school. The first was a part time Special Education Director

who retired to Florida, the second was one of our Principals who returned to school counseling after two years as a building administrator with us.

Faculty turnover has largely been due to two factors. First, a number of faculty have cited personal circumstances such as wanting to work closer to home, wanting to continue their education, and wanting to embark on a personal trip. Second, faculty have identified challenges with maintaining a positive work-life balance. HCA's summer commitment for faculty has been identified as a particular concern for some of these faculty members.

Over the first several years, HCA has had only a small number of employees leave because the "fit" wasn't good. In these situations, managing the workload and practicing Appreciative Inquiry were often at the root of the issue.

In the area of other staff, HCA has had some turnover for Educational Technicians and has lost two staff members who had to discontinue working due to health issues.

Appendix C: Student Turnover

Student Turnover

| | 2013- 2014 | 2014 - 2015 | 2015 - 2016 | 2016 - 2017 |
|----------------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Number | 57 | 124 | 176 | 201 |
| Departures during school year | 7 | 16 | 13 | 10 |
| Departures at end of school year | 5 | 11 | 13 | 19 |

Explanation of Student Turnover

Over the course of our first several years, attrition tends to peak at the very start of the school year, and then slows over the remainder of the year. The students who leave early tend to note 'school fit' and transportation as the key reasons for leaving. Students who leave later in the year, often have a change in family circumstances, or a specific concern about academic progress or social relationships. Students who leave at the conclusion of a year are often looking for a change in educational setting that will provide different opportunities. We sometimes see these students looking at programs like Baxter Academy, or traditional district schools that allow them to join athletic teams. We also have seen students leave, and then return to HCA. In exit conversations with students and families who left both during and after a school year, the following reasons are provided for a decision to leave HCA:

- Change in family circumstances (family move, new job that interferes w transportation, etc.)
- Desire for a more traditional educational setting
- Desire for a more structured educational setting
- Desire for a more rigorous setting
- Concern about finding a peer group for the student
- Transportation challenges (long bus rides, challenging bus rides)
- Desire to participate in athletics and extracurriculars

In the first two-three years of the school, families also reported concerns about the school culture- in particular, that student behavior interrupted the learning environment. This is something that the faculty and administration have worked extremely hard on improving, and it has not been voiced as a strong concern, or reason for attrition recently.

Appendix D: Projected Budget

Projected Balance Sheet

| Prepared by ATS | Year 4 (FY17) | Year 5 (FY18) | Year 6 (FY19) | Year 7 (FY20) |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | Audited | Current | Projected | Projected |
| Assets | | | | |
| Current Assets | | | | |
| Cash and cash equivalents | \$139,466.62 | \$150,090.62 | \$162,996.02 | \$189,808.92 |
| Internal balances | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Intergovernmental Receivables | \$24,580.90 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Inventories | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Depreciable capital assets, net of accumulated depreciation | \$644,801.95 | \$635,000.00 | \$625,000.00 | \$615,000.00 |
| Total Assets | \$808,849.47 | \$785,090.62 | \$787,996.02 | \$804,808.92 |
| Deferred Outflows of Resources | | | | |
| Liabilities | | | | |
| Accounts Payable | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Accrued Summer Salaries | \$57,098.13 | \$60,000.00 | \$60,000.00 | \$60,000.00 |
| Capital Projects (Planned) | \$50,000.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Accrued interest | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Accrued Expenses | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Unearned Revenue | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Long-term liabilities | | | | |
| Portion due or payable within one year: | | | | |
| Capital lease obligations | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Notes payable | \$210,039.46 | \$173,000.00 | \$135,000.00 | \$95,000.00 |
| Portion due or payable after one year | | | | |
| Compensated absences | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Capital lease obligations | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Bonds payable | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Net pension liability | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Total liabilities | \$317,137.59 | \$233,000.00 | \$195,000.00 | \$155,000.00 |
| Deferred Inflows of Resources | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Net Position | | | | |
| Net investment in capital assets | \$434,762.49 | \$462,000.00 | \$490,000.00 | \$520,000.00 |
| Restricted | | | | |
| Special revenue funds | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Capital project funds | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Unrestricted | \$56,949.39 | \$90,090.62 | \$102,996.02 | \$129,808.92 |
| Total Net Positions | \$491,711.88 | \$552,090.62 | \$592,996.02 | \$649,808.92 |

Appendix D: Projected Budget, cont.

Projected Cash Flow

| Prepared by ATS | Year 4 (FY17) | Year 5 (FY18) | Year 6 (FY19) | Year 7 (FY20) |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | Audited | Budgeted | Projected | Projected |
| Cash Flows from non-capital financing activities | | | | |
| State Funds | \$2,357,221.07 | \$2,225,710.00 | \$2,278,703.00 | \$2,331,696.10 |
| Federal Funds | \$66,279.79 | \$173,288.00 | \$181,952.40 | \$190,616.80 |
| Miscellaneous Revenue | \$15,279.27 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Transfers from other organizations | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Increase (decrease) in due to other funds | \$91.11 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Net cash flows from non-capital financing activities | \$2,438,871.24 | \$2,398,998.00 | \$2,460,655.40 | \$2,522,312.90 |
| Cash Flows from operating activities | | | | |
| Receipts from operating activities | \$73,273.09 | \$45,000.00 | \$47,250.00 | \$49,500.00 |
| Receipts from Miscellaneous Revenues (Advancement) | \$64,592.70 | \$80,000.00 | \$80,000.00 | \$80,000.00 |
| Payments to suppliers | \$1,110,902.05 | \$1,287,600.00 | \$1,300,000.00 | \$1,300,000.00 |
| Payments to employees | \$1,506,142.58 | \$1,225,774.00 | \$1,275,000.00 | \$1,325,000.00 |
| Net cash flows from operating activities | -\$2,479,178.84 | -\$2,388,374.00 | -\$2,447,750.00 | -\$2,495,500.00 |
| Net change in cash and cash equivalents | -\$40,307.60 | \$10,624.00 | \$12,905.40 | \$26,812.90 |
| Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year | \$179,774.22 | \$139,466.62 | \$150,090.62 | \$162,996.02 |
| Cash and cash equivalents at end of year | \$139,466.62 | \$150,090.62 | \$162,996.02 | \$189,808.92 |

Appendix E: Coalition of Essential Schools Common Principles

(<http://essentialschools.org/common-principles/>)

Learning to use one's mind well

The school should focus on helping young people learn to use their minds well. Schools should not be “comprehensive” if such a claim is made at the expense of the school’s central intellectual purpose.

Less is more: depth over coverage

The school’s goals should be simple: that each student master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. While these skills and areas will, to varying degrees, reflect the traditional academic disciplines, the program’s design should be shaped by the intellectual and imaginative powers and competencies that the students need, rather than by “subjects” as conventionally defined. The aphorism “less is more” should dominate: curricular decisions should be guided by the aim of thorough student mastery and achievement rather than by an effort to merely cover content.

Goals apply to all students

The school’s goals should apply to all students, while the means to these goals will vary as those students themselves vary. School practice should be tailor-made to meet the needs of every group or class of students.

Personalization

Teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum feasible extent. Efforts should be directed toward a goal that no teacher have direct responsibility for more than 80 students in the high school and middle school and no more than 20 in the elementary school. To capitalize on this personalization, decisions about the details of the course of study, the use of students’ and teachers’ time and the choice of teaching materials and specific pedagogies must be unreservedly placed in the hands of the principal and staff.

Student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach

The governing practical metaphor of the school should be “student-as-worker”, rather than the more familiar metaphor of “teacher as deliverer of instructional services.” Accordingly, a prominent pedagogy will be coaching students to learn how to learn and thus to teach themselves.

Demonstration of mastery

Teaching and learning should be documented and assessed with tools based on student performance of real tasks. Students not yet at appropriate levels of competence should be provided intensive support and resources to assist them quickly to meet standards. Multiple forms of evidence, ranging from ongoing observation of the learner to completion of specific

projects, should be used to better understand the learner's strengths and needs, and to plan for further assistance. Students should have opportunities to exhibit their expertise before family and community. The diploma should be awarded upon a successful final demonstration of mastery for graduation: an "Exhibition." As the diploma is awarded when earned, the school's program proceeds with no strict age grading and with no system of "credits earned" by "time spent" in class.

A tone of decency and trust

The tone of the school should explicitly and self-consciously stress values of unanxious expectation, of trust, and of decency (fairness, generosity, and tolerance). Incentives appropriate to the school's particular students and teachers should be emphasized. Families should be key collaborators and vital members of the school community.

Commitment to the entire school

The principal and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first (teachers and scholars in general education) and specialists second (experts in but one particular discipline). Staff should expect multiple obligations (teacher-counselor-manager) and demonstrate a sense of commitment to the entire school.

Resources dedicated to teaching and learning

Ultimate administrative and budget targets should include student loads that promote personalization, substantial time for collective planning by teachers, competitive salaries for staff, and an ultimate per-pupil cost not to exceed that at traditional schools by more than 10 percent. To accomplish this, administrative plans may have to show the phased reduction or elimination of some services now provided to students in many schools.

Democracy and equity

The school should demonstrate non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogies. It should model democratic practices that involve all who are directly affected by the school. The school should honor diversity and build on the strength of its communities, deliberately and explicitly challenging all forms of inequity

Appendix F: Expeditionary Learning Design Principles

(<https://eleducation.org/resources/design-principles>)

1. The Primacy of Self-Discovery

Learning happens best with emotion, challenge and the requisite support. People discover their abilities, values, passions, and responsibilities in situations that offer adventure and the unexpected. In EL Education schools, students undertake tasks that require perseverance, fitness, craftsmanship, imagination, self-discipline, and significant achievement. A teacher's primary task is to help students overcome their fears and discover they can do more than they think they can.

2. The Having of Wonderful Ideas

Teaching in EL Education schools fosters curiosity about the world by creating learning situations that provide something important to think about, time to experiment, and time to make sense of what is observed.

3. The Responsibility for Learning

Learning is both a personal process of discovery and a social activity. Everyone learns both individually and as part of a group. Every aspect of an EL Education school encourages both children and adults to become increasingly responsible for directing their own personal and collective learning.

4. Empathy and Caring

Learning is fostered best in communities where students' and teachers' ideas are respected and where there is mutual trust. Learning groups are small in EL Education schools, with a caring adult looking after the progress and acting as an advocate for each child. Older students mentor younger ones, and students feel physically and emotionally safe.

5. Success and Failure

All students need to be successful if they are to build the confidence and capacity to take risks and meet increasingly difficult challenges. But it is also important for students to learn from their failures, to persevere when things are hard, and to learn to turn disabilities into opportunities.

6. Collaboration and Competition

Individual development and group development are integrated so that the value of friendship, trust, and group action is clear. Students are encouraged to compete, not against each other, but with their own personal best and with rigorous standards of excellence.

7. Diversity and Inclusion

Both diversity and inclusion increase the richness of ideas, creative power, problem-solving ability, and respect for others. In EL Education schools, students investigate and value their

different histories and talents as well as those of other communities and cultures. Schools and learning groups are heterogeneous.

8. The Natural World

A direct and respectful relationship with the natural world refreshes the human spirit and teaches the important ideas of recurring cycles and cause and effect. Students learn to become stewards of the earth and of future generations.

9. Solitude and Reflection

Students and teachers need time alone to explore their own thoughts, make their own connections, and create their own ideas. They also need to exchange their reflections with other students and with adults.

10. Service and Compassion

We are crew, not passengers. Students and teachers are strengthened by acts of consequential service to others, and one of an EL Education school's primary functions is to prepare students with the attitudes and skills to learn from and be of service.

Appendix G: Strategic Goals for HCA

These goals are informed by Faculty discussions, Leadership Team discussions, Charter Commission Year 4 Performance Report, and the Panorama Survey results. Goals are written as if reflecting on where HCA 5 years from summer 2017.

Professional Development of Faculty to improve school climate & student outcomes

HCA has a fully operationalized implementation of our Performance Evaluation and Professional Growth (PEPG) system in which:

- Faculty receive regular feedback on their practice;
- Faculty have annual goals that are overseen by the Director of Teaching & Learning;
- Faculty are accountable for student academic outcomes and this is reflected in their annual goals;
- Faculty who are deemed effective are put on 3 year evaluation loops, faculty who are deemed partially effective are put on a 2 year evaluation loop, ineffective teachers who did not show promise with HCA model or our professional learning community were not renewed;
- The PEPG process is sustainably managed by building leaders.

HCA has explored and joined a network of reliable conversations with like-minded colleagues.

- Faculty regularly visit other programs to learn from other practitioners in the field;
- HCA regularly invites educators into our community to share expertise;
- Faculty are encouraged and supported in seeking out professional opportunities that improve their practice;
- Faculty are regularly counted on to contribute to the professional development of their colleagues following our “no hierarchy of expertise” norm.

HCA uses professional development time with teachers in a manner that:

- Brings attention to our “big rocks” each year;
- Reinforces our use of Restorative Practices to strengthen school culture;
- Continually focuses on student work;
- Increases faculty ability to use data to inform our RTI approach by providing opportunities to analyze data and its implications for student growth and proficiency.

Academic Outcomes/ Academic Performance

HCA uses a literacy across the curriculum design which:

- Explicitly develops reading comprehension and interpretation skills across content areas.
- Anchors interdisciplinary Investigations in texts and written media.

- Requires significant and high quality writing pieces assessed with universal rubrics across content areas.
- Engages students with active pedagogical structures, voice, and choice.

HCA implements an approach to numeracy instruction to improve student outcomes which:

- Identifies students' initial proficiency and meets them at an appropriate level of complexity and rigor.
- Produces engagement through real-world, differentiated, project-based math problems.
- Drives growth for students on a spectrum of skills through our unique RTI approach.
- Draws explicit explicit connections to Science and Humanities content.

HCA implements data informed instruction and has a robust whole school Response To Intervention¹⁰ program in which:

- Students grouped and regrouped every 3-4 weeks for specific skill building instruction in reading, language, and math;
- School-wide growth targets are established for NWEA and MEA, putting onus on teaching teams rather than individual faculty members to meet or exceed those targets.

HCA has clear assessment practices in which:

- Assessment is normed across the school;
- Students and parents are informed about proficiency assessment;
- Students and parents are informed about HCA's Habits of Work & Learning assessments;
- Project Foundry's real time assessment is fully implemented and faculty provide updates to students and families every three weeks;
- HCA explains Proficiency Based assessment by holding regular parent information sessions, providing information in the weekly newsletter, and holding student led conferences at least twice annually;
- Crew leaders regularly contact parents and informs them of student progress.

Project-based Learning

HCA embraces Project Based Learning by running multiple Investigations throughout each year. Additionally:

- HCA has a concise Curriculum Map, that details the timing of investigations and the standards each will cover, providing clarity about options for meetings standards for faculty and families alike;
- This map is a living document with a process for annual review, with new investigations integrated in a planful way;

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Response_to_intervention

- HCA has a faculty Investigation Toolkit that explains how to:
 - plan and design an investigation
 - link investigations to standards
 - identify and incorporate community partners
 - Plan FieldWork opportunities for students
 - Link an investigation to pathways or outside of school learning.
- HCA has sufficient PD time given to the planning and execution of investigations with peer review and oversight from the Director of Teaching & Learning.

School Culture: School Climate, Student & Family Engagement, Faculty-Leadership Relationships

HCA has practices in place that support student growth by developing a strong school climate:

- Student support teams at each division developed clear guidelines for crew;
- Rituals and traditions are fully established, and have built confidence and pride in HCA students;
- Ongoing PD in Restorative Justice (RJ) and Restorative Practices have increased frequency and effectiveness of restorative classroom interventions, produced fewer suspensions and punitive responses and built student relationships with each other and staff members;
- Clear procedures, protocols, schedules and staffing were developed to implement the RJ focus;
- The Student RJ team increased student participation in restorative circles;
- Teachers have an RJ goal as part of their PEPG plan.

HCA has practices in place that support Family engagement:

- Crew Leaders regularly communicate with families about successes as well as challenges at school;
- The student support team carefully tracks attendance and follows HCAs truancy protocol to increase student attendance rates;
- Parents are regularly given opportunities to learn about HCA's curriculum map and assessment processes;
- Parents regularly visit the school and volunteer on behalf of the school;
- The HCA Parent Partnership meets regularly to discuss important aspects of the school and plan community events to build family engagement;
- Student Led conferences are valued by parents, students and Crew Leaders as an important aspect of tracking academic progress, celebrating success, and planning for the future.

HCA has practices in place that encourage a feeling of confidence in school leadership:

- The Leader Evaluation and Professional Growth (LEPG) system is fully implemented, providing school leaders an opportunity to set annual goals for improvement, and feedback on practice;
- Faculty at HCA have regular opportunities to provide feedback to the Leadership Team;
- Faculty regularly review our norms to ensure that we are staying true to our intended way of working together;
- Faculty have regular opportunities to step into leadership roles to grow professionally.

External Relations: Governance, Outreach, Marketing, Development

HCA has a healthy governing Board that:

- Has an adequate number of people to meet the needs of the work (12?);
- Has a process in place to recruit members from the broader midcoast community;
- Has a matrix to follow to select members that bring relevant experience to all aspects of Board work;
- Meets regularly to advance the mission of the school;
- Has a consistent accurate message of who HCA is in the region on a regular basis;
- Is aware and engaged enough to provide appropriate oversight;
- Advocates for the school in the midcoast community;
- Works to build partnerships with area organizations and businesses, in accordance with the HCA mission;
- Attends at least two school functions and observes learning experiences for at least ½ day annually;
- Provides appropriate fiscal oversight;
- Regularly involve students in Board work and look to alumni for Board membership;
- Advocate for state policies that support the mission of HCA;
- Supports the school's fundraising efforts;
- Board and Leadership team are working together to convey to staff that the LT is accountable to the Board;
- Accessible to the school leadership;
- Regularly provides feedback to the Executive Director;
- Develop a "Director Emeritus" structure to keep Directors who have left the Board engaged in the school.

HCA has an thorough outreach and marketing plan that:

- Showcases student work and student, parent, and faculty testimonials;
- Actively recruits a diverse faculty & student body;
- Seeks new venues for student recruiting;
- Regularly exposes the broader midcoast community to HCAs programs;
- Utilizes social media, press releases, website, and e-newsletters;

- Supports advancement efforts;
- Prioritizes partnerships with area businesses & organizations.

HCA has an Advancement plan that contributes to the school's financial viability:

- Hosts a series of events over the course of the year to showcase the work of HCA students and faculty;
- Sets and meets annual fund goals yearly;
- Sets and meets corporate giving goals annually;
- Regularly identifies & cultivates potential major donors.