

# Maine Charter School Commission

## Information Booklet 2018



*The Maine State Charter School Commission will provide thoughtful stewardship in authorizing and monitoring public charter schools consistent with State statutes to create unique, high-quality learning options for Maine students.*

# Maine Charter School Commission

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*(Also State Board of Education)*

**Seat #2**  
**Jana Lapoint**  
*(Also State Board of Education)*

**Seat #3**  
**John Bird, Vice Chair**  
*(Also State Board of Education)*

**Seat #4**  
**Dr. J. Michael Wilhelm, Chair**

**Seat #5**  
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**ACADIA Academy**  
**12 Westminster Street, Lewiston**  
[www.acadiaacademy.org](http://www.acadiaacademy.org)

**Baxter Academy for Technology and Science**  
**185 Lancaster Street, Portland**  
[www.baxter-academy.org](http://www.baxter-academy.org)

**Cornville Regional Charter School**  
**1192 West Ridge Road, Cornville**  
[www.cornvilleregionalcharterschool.org](http://www.cornvilleregionalcharterschool.org)

**Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences**  
**25 Shaker Road, Gray**  
[www.fiddleheadschool.org](http://www.fiddleheadschool.org)

**Harpwell Coastal Academy**  
**9 Ash Point Road, Harpswell**  
[www.harpwellcoastalacademy.org](http://www.harpwellcoastalacademy.org)

**Maine Academy of Natural Sciences**  
**16 Prescott Lane, Hinckley**  
[www.gwh.org/means](http://www.gwh.org/means)

**Maine Arts Academy**  
**8 Goldenrod Lane, Sidney**  
[www.snowpondartsacademy.org](http://www.snowpondartsacademy.org)

**Maine Connections Academy**  
**75 John Robert's Road, South Portland**  
[www.maineconnectionsacademy.org](http://www.maineconnectionsacademy.org)

**Maine Virtual Academy**  
**6 East Chestnut Street, Augusta**  
[www.mainevirtual.org](http://www.mainevirtual.org)

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## What is a Public Charter School?

Charter schools are public schools of choice. Students can decide to attend a charter school as an alternative to the district public school to which they have been assigned. The first enactment of charter school enabling legislation was in Minnesota in 1991. According to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 43 states and the District of Columbia have charter schools; 3.2 million students are enrolled in 7,000 charter schools nationwide; and there are 219,000 teachers teaching in charter schools.

Charter schools are publicly funded schools, created and governed by volunteers in a non-profit organization, and operated independently of the traditional public school system. Charter schools have some flexibility that traditional public schools may not have over decisions concerning curriculum and instruction, scheduling, staffing and finance.

In return for this flexibility, charter schools are held accountable to the terms of contracts (their charters) that authorize their existence. In addition, they must adhere to all applicable federal laws, health and safety laws, and the same academic standards to which all public schools are accountable.

Each charter school must be authorized by a charter school “authorizer”. Maine’s law designates as authorizers: (1) the Maine Charter School Commission; (2) a local school board; or (3) a collaborative of school boards working together.

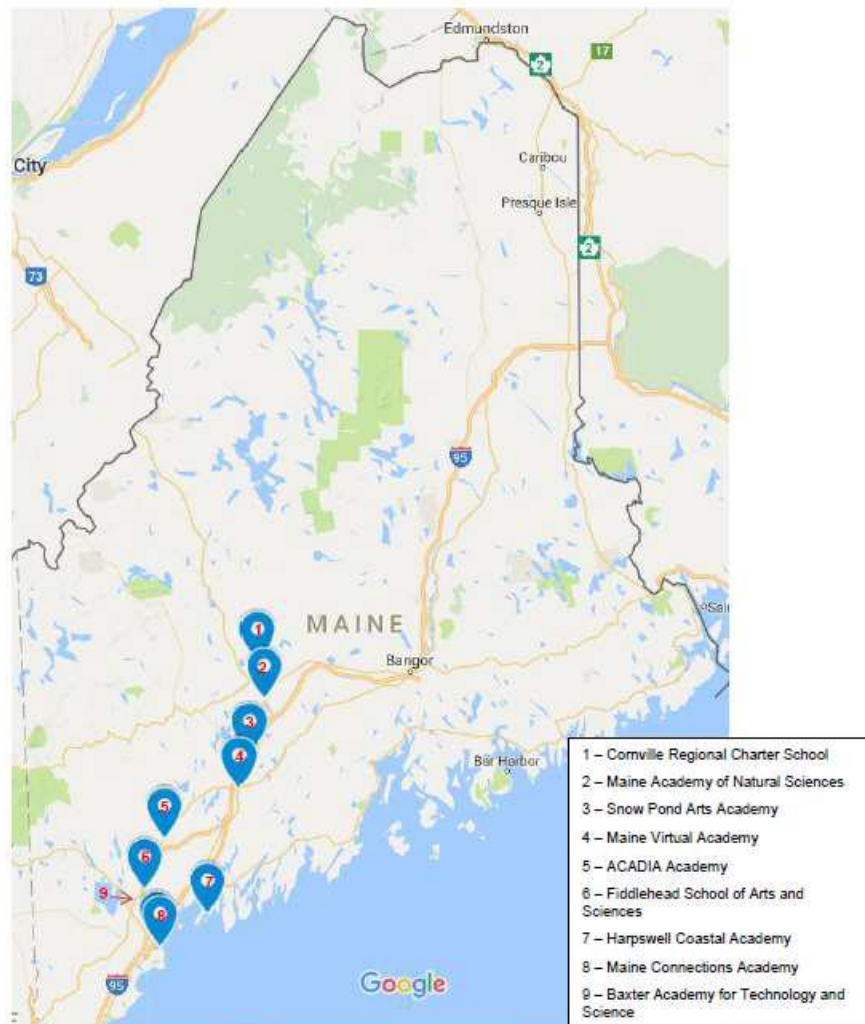
A charter school is awarded a charter if its application is approved by its authorizer after a rigorous review process. At that point, a contract is negotiated specifying the measures by which the school will be evaluated as the authorizer monitors the school’s performance, especially in the areas of finance and academics.

When Public Law 2011, Chapter 414 took effect in 2011, Maine became the 41<sup>st</sup> state to allow public charter schools.

Charter contracts for schools authorized by the Maine Charter School Commission are for five years, over which time the MCSC will carefully analyze the school’s performance. If a charter school fails to measure up, it may be closed. If it is judged successful, financially stable and achieving positive student achievement, its contract may be renewed for five or more years.

Maine's first charter schools opened in the 2012-13 school year, and today the following nine charter schools enroll over 2,300 students and are authorized by the Maine Charter School Commission to operate in Maine – ACADIA Academy, Baxter Academy for Technology and Science, Cornville Regional Charter School, Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences, Harpswell Coastal Academy, Maine Academy of Natural Sciences, Maine Arts Academy (*formerly Snow Pond Arts Academy*), Maine Connections Academy and Maine Virtual Academy.

**Map of 9 Maine Charter Schools Authorized  
by the Maine Charter School Commission  
April 2017**



## What is the Maine Charter School Commission?

The Maine Charter School Commission was created by Public Law 2011, Chapter 414, to authorize and oversee public charter schools in Maine. A ten (10) school limit was placed on the number of schools the Commission could authorize in the first 10 years.

Maine's charter school law provides guidance for the Commission in the following areas:

- 1) Content of applications that must be filled by charter school founders;
- 2) Execution of charter school contracts with the charter school's governing boards;
- 3) Oversight of charter schools it has authorized, including academic and operational accountability;
- 4) Analysis of data provided to the Commission by the charter school; and
- 5) Monitoring to ensure legal compliance with all applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations.

The Maine Charter School Commission consists of seven (7) members appointed by the State Board of Education for three-year terms. Three members must be members of the State Board of Education, and they nominate the other four (4) members from the public at large, who must be approved by a majority vote of the State Board of Education.

In addition to fulfilling its statutory obligations, the Maine Charter School Commission provides information to the public regarding charter schools in Maine.

### The Mission of the Maine Charter School Commission

#### To allow charter schools to be established as public schools that:

- Improve pupil learning by creating more high quality schools with high standards for pupil performance;
- Close achievement gaps between high-performing and low-performing groups of public school students;
- Increase high-quality educational opportunities within the public education system;
- Provide alternative learning environments for students who are not thriving in traditional school settings;
- Create new professional opportunities for teachers and other school personnel;
- Encourage the use of different, high-quality models of teaching and other aspects of schooling; and
- Provide students, parents, community members and local entities with expanded opportunities for involvement in the public education system.

## Who are the Commission Members?



**Dr. Fern M.Y. Desjardins** (*Seat 1*) is a resident of St. Agatha. Dr. Desjardins had a 43-year career in PK-12 education as an elementary school teacher, principal, and Superintendent of Schools in the rural, small school system of MSAD 33. Under her principalship, Dr. Levesque Elementary school was designated a Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education. Dr. Desjardins is a life-long learner who holds a Doctoral Degree in Educational Leadership and a Master's Degree in Language Arts from UMaine, a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Educational Leadership from University of Southern Maine, and a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from University of Maine Fort Kent. She has taught graduate level courses for UMaine as an adjunct faculty member in their outreach programs in Aroostook County, served on UMFK's Board of Visitors (one year as President and two as Vice-President), Northern Maine Medical Center's (NMMC) Board of Trustees, and she has been an active member of numerous educational associations and committees. Since her retirement, Dr. Desjardins maintains educational affiliations by working as a facilitator for school systems and by serving on various committees or special projects of the Maine DOE. She volunteers at her local church, parish, and at the diocese level. Dr. Desjardins and her husband, Francis, have three grown



**Jana F. Lapoint** (*Seat 2*) is a resident of Falmouth. Jana earned a Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degree from the University of Bridgeport. She is a former business teacher and taught at the New Canaan High School in Connecticut. Jana previously owned Lapoint Industries in Auburn, Maine which is now owned by her sons, John and Alan Lapoint. Jana served as a trustee on the Maine Community College System for 11 years, with two years as Chair. She also served for 6 years as a Trustee of Dean College in Franklin, Massachusetts and 6 years as a trustee of Cheverus High School. Jana received a Distinguished Service Award from Dean College and a Women of Distinction Award from the Girl Scouts of Maine. Jana also served on the Board of Habitat for Humanity for 8 years and has been a volunteer for Ronald McDonald House of Portland for many years. She has been on the State Board of Education for 8 years. Jana has four grown children, 13 grandchildren, and 2 great grandchildren.



**John A Bird – Vice Chair (Seat 3)** is a resident of Rockland. John spent the last eighteen years of a forty-seven-year career in the non-profit world as a leadership and management consultant to non-profit organizations across the country and internationally. He retired as President of a ten-partner firm, Educator’s Collaborative, in July 2007. His clients included 268 independent schools and other organizations located in 41 states and five foreign nations and territories. Before beginning his consulting career in 1989, John spent 29 years in independent education, five years in full-time teaching, five years as a senior administrator and teacher, and 19 years as a head of school. In addition to his long career in the field of education, John currently serves on the boards of the Strand Theater, the Penobscot Bay YMCA, and the Island Institute. He currently serves as vice chair for the Maine Charter School Commission. John grew up in Rockland, Maine and received his B.A. degree from Bowdoin College. He also has an M.A. from George Washington University. John and his wife, Mary Alice, live in Rockland. They have three grown children and six grandchildren.



**Dr. J. Michael Wilhelm – Chair (Seat 4)** retired as a Superintendent of Schools in 2011 after 42 years as a teacher, principal, assistant superintendent and superintendent. His final 22 years as a system administrator were spent in MSAD #75 where he was involved in the planning, application and oversight of the construction of the Mt. Ararat Middle School and the Bowdoin Central School. In 2003, Dr. Wilhelm’s accomplishments were honored when he became Maine Superintendent of the Year. Since 2011 he served as interim superintendent in RSU 16, RSU 13, and RSU 15 and has taught courses in curriculum development, educational history and policy, and effective teaching as adjunct faculty at the University of Southern Maine and Bowdoin College. He currently serves as chair for the Maine Charter School Commission. Dr. Wilhelm lives in Casco with his wife Donna, who was a teacher for forty years. He has four children and five grandchildren.



**Shelley Reed** (*Seat 5*), working in the career of education for thirty-eight years, retired from the Maine Department of Education in 2011 as the consultant for Truancy, Dropout, Alternative Education, and Homeless Youth. This work with students-at-risk led to membership on Keeping Maine’s Children Connected, Juvenile Justice Advisory Group, Shared Youth Vision Council, multiple task forces, and preparation of legislation on behalf of Maine’s youth. Previous to DOE experience, Shelley taught first and second grade in Auburn and was an elementary school counselor in Lewiston. Recent past affiliations include the Restorative Justice Institute of Maine developing trainings to support the work of communities initiating restorative practices. Shelley currently serves as President, Sunday School Superintendent and Teacher at her church, and is Secretary for the Androscoggin Yacht Club and is active at the Wayne library. She enjoys kayaking, gardening, the beach, and diving into a good book. Wayne is home to her and husband David. Her three grown children reside in Vermont, Uganda, and Taiwan.



**James E. Rier** (*Seat 6*) was employed for over 10 years, until 2015, as an employee of the Maine Department of Education. He began as the Director of Finance and Operations and in 2011 was appointed Deputy Commissioner. Jim’s final year at the DOE was as the Commissioner of Education. Jim is known as one of the state’s foremost experts on education funding and worked on several high-profile initiatives such as leading reforms to the state’s 2005 school funding law, child development services and the essential programs and services model. Jim earned a Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering from the General Motors Institute in Flint, Michigan. He was a senior project engineer for Buick and for 25 years was president of Rier Motors Co. in Machias, Maine. He also served on the Maine State Board of Education and on the boards of directors for Bangor Hydro Electric Co., the Maine Community Foundation, the Regional Medical Center at Lubec and the Washington County Education & Economic Development Alliance. Jim lives in Topsham with his wife Linda.



**Laurie Pendleton** (*Seat 7*) is the Director of Content Development at the Association for College and University Educators and has over 25 years of experience in education as a classroom teacher, building leader, and professional development specialist. For the last 18 years, she has supported schools throughout the United States, the United Kingdom, and the United Arab Emirates in the implementation of school reform efforts. For five years, Laurie has served as a Professional Development Associate for the Leadership and Learning Center, a subsidiary of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Prior to that, she worked with Leeds Global Partners to create and deliver Professional Development for effective teaching practices in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. She also held a variety of positions in the Education Department of Edison Learning, a national educational management organization. Laurie received her undergraduate degree from the University of Maine at Farmington, was a member of the first cohort in the Educational Leadership Program at the University of Maine at Orono, and holds MS in Curriculum and Instruction through Capella University.

## Maine's Public Charter Schools



### ACADIA ACADEMY

*A Charter Academy for Developing Independence & Achievement*

“ACADIA” is an acronym for “A Charter Academy for Developing Independence and Achievement.” Opened for the 2016-17 school year, the school provides a rigorous, comprehensive educational program for children of the Lewiston, Auburn and surrounding areas in grades Pre-K through 4. ACADIA promotes high educational achievement through directed teaching opportunities that are entwined with extensive experiential learning opportunities. ACADIA faculty and staff support the development of the whole child as each student develops academically, socially and emotionally in a safe community that requires personal accountability and meaningful participation. It is ACADIA Academy’s intent to support individual students in developing their full potential, while teaching them the value of belonging, connectedness and contribution to the larger community.



### Baxter Academy

Baxter Academy for Technology and Science, located in Portland, opened its doors in September 2013. The school’s students come from nearly 40 Maine school districts, spanning from Blue Hill to towns south of Kennebunk. Baxter’s curriculum is rooted in inquiry and project-based learning, and is connected across subjects. The school’s mission is to be a rigorous, college preparatory high school promoting student ownership of learning through a curriculum focused specifically on science, technology, engineering, and math. Its vision is to use a technology-rich, project-based learning approach to education at the secondary level. In 2017, Baxter Academy for Technology and Science was granted a 10-year renewal to its charter.



Cornville Regional Charter School was the first elementary public charter school in the state of Maine. Located in Cornville and Skowhegan, it opened its doors on October 1, 2012, to students in grades K-6. Currently, the school educates students in grades PreK through 10 from approximately 10 Maine school districts from St. Albans to Fairfield and points in between. In 2016, with its 5-year renewal, Cornville Regional Charter School was approved to open a PreK and a high school, both which opened in Skowhegan for the 2017-18 school year. The school’s mission is to create a safe, respectful, nurturing and active learning community where every child is given the opportunity to thrive academically, to be accepted, to celebrate accomplishments and to develop a lifetime love of learning. Its vision is to create a school where learning is built around each student so that all students become engaged learners with relevant and challenging work.



Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences, located in Gray, opened its doors in September 2013. The school's students come from 15 Maine school districts from Portland to Rumford. Fiddlehead's curriculum is based on the Reggio Emilia learning approach (image of the child, children's relationship and interactions within a system, role of the families, role of space, and teacher and children as partners in learning). Fiddlehead's mission is to unfold the potential of children in a respectful, loving culture through authentic and meaningful experiences that sustain a sense of wonder, a love of learning, and embrace the interconnectedness of all things. Its vision is to provide for the foundational needs of growing children in a community where children, teachers, and families learn together in a nurturing environment. In 2017, Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences was granted a 10-year renewal to its charter.



Harpswell Coastal Academy, located in Harpswell, opened in September 2013. The school serves students from over a dozen Maine school districts from Portland to Wiscasset. Its curriculum is based on incorporating marine and natural resources, farms and forests, and sustainable entrepreneurship often through direct and ongoing partnerships with professionals in those fields. Harpswell's mission is to offer rigorous, personalized, project-based education to mid-coast Maine students. Its vision is to use Maine's shorelines, working waterfronts, forests, and farms as classrooms. The school's goal is to prepare caring, creative, resilient citizen-scholars who will flourish in a rapidly changing economy. In 2017, Harpswell Coastal Academy was granted a 5-year renewal to its charter.



Maine Academy of Natural Sciences (MeANS), located in Hinckley, opened in September 2011, and was the first Maine high school to focus on the natural sciences. Currently, the school educates students from over 30 Maine school districts from Portland to Athens. Its mission is to offer a student-centered, staff-guided high school whose purpose is to inspire and engage students. MeANS welcomes a diverse range of students including those whose previous learning environment has not inspired them to fulfill their potential as learners, those who have become profoundly disconnected from their education, as well as those who have a passion for the school's themes of agriculture, forestry and sustainability. Its vision is to encourage students to re-engage with their education, to grow as critical thinkers and problem solvers by developing habits of heart and mind that lead them to take responsibility for their own actions, as well as for the welfare of their community. In 2016, with its 5-year charter renewal, the Maine Academy of Natural Sciences was approved to open Threshold, a program for home-bound students.



Maine Arts Academy - *formerly Snow Pond Arts Academy* - located in Sidney, opened for the 2016-17 school year as a performing arts charter high school that integrates the power of the arts with a rigorous academic experience. Maine Arts Academy uses an arts-integrated approach that integrates the arts into all academic learning. All students have a full rigorous academic schedule as well as daily participation in performing arts and visual arts courses. Maine Arts Academy educates students from over 30 districts statewide.



Maine Connections Academy (MCA), located in South Portland, opened in September 2014 as Maine's first virtual public charter school, and it currently educates students from over 100 school districts statewide. The school's curriculum combines online and offline resources working with specialists to deliver comprehensive, high quality education. The school's mission is to help each student maximize his or her potential and meet the highest performance standards through a uniquely individualized learning program in grades 7-12 for students who desire an alternative to the traditional classroom. MCA's vision is to reach students for whom a virtual approach provides the best pathway to school success through an individualized learning program that combines the best in virtual education with close connections among students, family, teachers, and the community to promote academic and emotional success for every learner.



Maine Virtual Academy (MeVA), located in Augusta, opened in September 2015 as the second virtual public charter school in Maine. Currently, MeVA educates students from over 100 school districts all over the state of Maine. Its curriculum is based upon the teaching affiliated with the K-12 Inc. online program. It offers courses in Language Arts/English, Math, Science, History, Art, Health/PE, Music and Foreign Language. The school's mission is to develop each student's full potential with learner-centered instruction, a research-based curriculum and educational tools and resources to provide a high-quality learning experience for grade 7-12 students in need of alternative educational options. MeVA's vision is to improve student learning outcomes through individualized instruction, as evidenced by student academic proficiency, student academic growth, post-secondary readiness, and the demonstration of skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and self-direction.

## Enrollment

Enrollment in Maine's public charter schools is open to all Maine students who wish to attend with preference given to children of the school's founders, governing board members and full time employees as long as they constitute no more than 10% of the school's total student population.

Annually, enrollment preference is given to returning students as well as to newly enrolling siblings of returning students. Schools must give public notice that the enrollment period is open and families wishing to apply must submit an Intent to Apply form to the school during this period. Once the enrollment period closes, if capacity is insufficient to enroll all students who wish to attend, the public charter school must select students through a random selection process.

A public charter school may not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, income level, disabling condition, proficiency in the English language or academic or athletic ability.

## Maine Charter School Laws, Rules and Statutes

- Maine Public Law 2011 Chapter 414: Public Charter School Law (Effective 9-28-11)
- Maine Education Statute – Title 20A: Chapter 112: Public Charter Schools  
*Specific provisions for charter schools, including enrollment process, performance expectations, charter renewal and external audits*
- Maine Department of Education Rules – Chapter 140: Public Charter Schools  
*Specific provisions for charter schools, including enrollment, records transfers, and participation in the state data system (Adopted 12-2-12)*
- Maine Charter School Commission Rules
  - ❖ Chapter 1 – Commission Organization and Operation (Effective 6-16-13)  
*This rule describes the organization and operation of the Commission.*
  - ❖ Chapter 2 – Procedures for Commission Authorization of Public Charter Schools (Effective 5-1-12; Amended 6-16-13)  
*This rule sets forth the process by which the Maine Charter School Commission solicits, accepts and reviews applications for the formation of public charter schools. The rule also sets forth the performance indicators that will be used as the performance framework for any approved application and minimum requirements for a sound charter contract in the monitoring and compliance of the contracted public charter schools.*
  - ❖ Chapter 3 – Procedures for Charter School Renewal (Effective 6-23-14)  
*This rule sets forth the process by which the Maine Charter School Commission decides whether to renew the charter of a public charter school according to Maine Revised Statutes Title 20-A Chapter 112§2411 Charter Term Renewal*

## Additional Maine Laws that Apply to Charter Schools

- Federal laws and regulations, including IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, ADA, FERPA, ESEA, Civil Rights
- Local ordinances
- State educational assessment system
- Fingerprinting/criminal record check
- Freedom of Access Act
- Open Meeting Laws
- Conflict of Interest law for school governing boards
- Health and Safety
  - ✓ Health screening
  - ✓ Communicable disease control
  - ✓ Safe water supply requirements (Air Quality, HVAC)
  - ✓ School health services (school nurse, physician)
  - ✓ Sanitation standards
  - ✓ Safety (firearms, anti-hazing)
  - ✓ Prohibition on use of performance enhancing substances
  - ✓ School substance abuse services
  - ✓ State Fire Marshal inspection for Fire Safety compliance
  - ✓ Control of hazardous chemicals
  - ✓ Immunization requirements
  - ✓ School bomb threat procedures and reporting
  - ✓ Emergency management planning
  - ✓ Medication administration procedures, including laws and rules relating to EpiPens
  - ✓ Safe and efficient transportation
  - ✓ Suicide prevention training
  - ✓ Concussion management
  - ✓ Bullying prevention
- Maine Title 5, Chapter 337: Human Rights Act
- Teacher certification (if not otherwise qualified)
- Collective bargaining
- Special education, including federal and state law and regulations (Chapter 101, Maine Unified Special Education Regulations [MUSER])
- Non-religious association with public school
- Military recruitment in school
- Any other law made specifically applicable to charter schools

## Impact of Other Laws and Requirements

In general, state laws that apply to school administrative units do not apply to public charter schools unless the law is made specifically applicable to them, or the charter school statute, Title 20-A, Chapter 112, includes reference to the law.

However, charter schools may be required by other mandates to follow the same or similar requirements as state law. Examples include the following:

- (1) Federal requirements such as FERPA apply to charter schools, so many of the Maine laws on student record maintenance and confidentiality apply to charter schools through the federal law and regulations.
- (2) The school's authorizer (the Maine Charter School Commission) may include the statutory requirement in its contract with the charter school. This is the case with the requirement that students receive a diploma only if they have demonstrated proficiency in the eight (8) content areas of the Maine Learning Results and the Guiding Principles.
- (3) Guidance from the US Department of Education related to Maine's Flexibility (waiver) from NCLB/ESEA requires that charter schools be included in the requirement to implement teacher and principal evaluation and support system (performance evaluation and professional growth systems [PEPG] under Title 20-A, Chapter 508).
- (4) While the statutory process for student expulsion may not apply to charter schools, they are required to provide due process to any students who face potential expulsion, so they follow many of the same procedures as required by state law.

## **Public Charter School Funding**

### ***LD 131 (PL 201, Chapter 54)***

Based on the passage of LD 131 in 2014, PL 2015 Chapter 54, the State Department of Education will make direct payments to those public charter schools (PCS's) authorized by the Maine Charter School Commission; local school administrative units will no longer make payments to these public charter schools.

The calculation of each public charter school's subsidy will be based on a calculation similar to the public school administrative unit's State Calculation for Funding Public Education (PreK-12) Report (ED279) and mirrors those requirements in current law for funding public charter schools.

Public Charter School (PCS) ED279 Printout:

- PCS EPS Per-Pupil Rates will be based on the EPS Per-Pupil Rates of the student's resident school administrative unit (SAU). For the estimated new students, the State Average EPS Per-Pupil Rates will be used.
- Student counts for funding allocations will be based on prior year October 1<sup>st</sup> student counts plus estimated counts for those public charter schools that have increased enrollment ceilings established by the Charter School Commission.
- PCS Operating Allocation will include allocations for students who are economically disadvantaged, limited English proficient and targeted funds (Assessment/Technology/PreK-2).
- PCS Other Subsidizable Costs will include allocations for students who are identified (IEP) as special education and if the public charter school is eligible, funding will also include allocations for transportation and gifted & talented programs.
- PCS Operating Allocation will be adjusted by the same transition percentage as applied to the SAUs – currently 97%.
- PCS's are not eligible for the following funding:
  - ✓ Declining enrollment adjustments
  - ✓ Isolated small school adjustments
  - ✓ Debt service allocations
  - ✓ Bus purchases.

## Other Funding:

- **Special Education:**

- ✓ High cost in-district: Additional allocation assigned to the public charter school because of a high-cost in-district special education placement in accordance with section 15681-A, subsection 2, paragraph B. *“B. For high-cost in-district special education placements. Additional funds must be allocated for each student estimated to cost 3 times the statewide special education EPS per-pupil rate. The additional funds for each student must equal the amount by which that student’s estimated costs exceed 3 times the statewide special education EPS per-pupil rate;”*
- ✓ High cost out-of-district: Additional allocation assigned to the school administrative unit because of a high-cost out-of-district special education placement in accordance with section 15681-A, subsection 2, paragraph C. *“C. For high-cost out-of-district special education placements. Additional funds must be allocated for each student estimated to cost 4 times the statewide special education EPS per-pupil rate. The additional funds for each student must equal the amount by which that student’s estimated costs exceed 4 times the statewide special education EPS per-pupil rate;”*

- **Career & Technical Education (CTE)**

- ✓ Cost of CTE education programs: A public charter school student’s eligibility for and the funding of the student’s career and technical education programming are the same as if the student were attending school within that student’s resident school administrative unit.
- ✓ Transportation to CTE programs: If the public charter school is located outside the student’s resident school administrative unit, the public charter school is responsible for ensuring that the student is transported to the career and technical education center or to a location from which the student will be transported to the career and technical education center by the resident school administrative unit, the career and technical education region or the career and technical education center.

**Payment Process**

Any estimated student counts will be reviewed and adjusted based on the fall student counts in the new school year.

The payment for the Maine Charter School Commission, up to 3%, will automatically be withheld from the Charter School ED279 calculations and the Department will transfer these funds to the Maine Charter School Commission.

Payments to public charter schools will be made monthly July through June, same as for district school administrative units.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is a Public Charter School?**

*Charter schools are public schools of choice that students can choose to attend as an alternative to traditional public schools. Maine's nine charter schools currently enroll approximately 2,300 students, a little more than one percent of the public school students in Maine.*

### **How is a Maine public charter school different from a private school or a magnet school?**

*Public charter schools cannot charge tuition or set admissions standards, as private schools and magnet schools can.*

### **Why are public charter schools good for Maine?**

*Charter schools give families an opportunity to choose a public school most suitable for their child's educational well-being.*

### **How are students admitted to Maine public charter schools?**

*Public charter schools in Maine must accept any Maine resident student who wishes to attend. If there are more applications than openings, a lottery system is used. When a local school district authorizes a public charter school, enrollment preference is given to students residing in that district.*

### **Who can authorize Maine public charter schools?**

*In Maine, there are two types of entities permitted to authorize public charter schools. The Maine Charter School Commission can authorize up to 10 public charter schools throughout the state during the first 10 years of Maine's charter school law. Local school boards, or multiple local school districts working collaboratively, also have the ability to authorize charter schools within their school administrative units.*

### **Who oversees a Maine public charter school?**

*Public charter schools are overseen by the Maine Department of Education, the Maine Charter School Commission, and the school's own board of directors. Charter school board of directors are not elected officials; rather the school asks them to serve.*

### **How are Maine public charter schools funded?**

*Charter schools are public schools; therefore, the money that follows the students who choose to attend charters remains in the public education system. No public charter receives more funding than a traditional school district. General education revenue must be paid to a charter school as though it were a district school.*

### **Can Maine public charter schools charge tuition?**

*No. a public charter school may not charge tuition and may only charge such fees as may be imposed by other non-charter public schools in the state.*

### **Do teachers in Maine public charter schools have to be certified?**

*Full-time teachers in a public charter school must either hold an appropriate teaching certificate or become certified within three years of the date they are hired. Teachers with an advanced degree, professional certification, or unique expertise or experience in their curricular area are exempted from the certification requirement. Charter school administrators do not need to be certified.*

### **What is a virtual public charter school?**

*A virtual public charter school is a public charter school that operates predominantly through an online program.*

**Do Maine public charter school students have to meet the same graduation requirements as traditional public school students?**

*In 2012, the Maine Legislature passed a law mandating that all public school diplomas in Maine be awarded based on the mastery of knowledge and skills in eight content areas. The Maine Charter School Commission has made the proficiency requirements part of the charter contracts.*

**Can students with disabilities or special education needs attend a public charter school?**

*Yes. Public charter schools are required to provide special education services just like traditional public schools. All Maine public charter schools have special education teachers on staff.*

**What is the role of collective bargaining in public charter schools?**

*Public charter school employees are permitted to form unions and participate in collective bargaining, as any public school may do.*



More information is available at:  
[www.maine.gov/csc](http://www.maine.gov/csc)

Maine Department of Education  
[www.maine.gov/dae](http://www.maine.gov/dae)

Maine Association for Charter Schools  
[www.mainecharterschools.org](http://www.mainecharterschools.org)



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