

Maine Charter School Commission



Application for Renewal of a Public Charter School

Maine Virtual Academy (MEVA)

6 East Chestnut Street, Suite 230
Augusta, Maine 04330

Dr. Melinda Browne, Head of School
(207) 613-8900, ext. 2001, mbrowne@mainevirtual.org

Approved by the MEVA Governing Board on September 17, 2019.

Submitted to the Maine Charter School Commission on September 30, 2019.

Maine Charter School Commission

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Maine Charter School Commission

Maine Public Charter School Renewal Application Form

Name of Public Charter School: Maine Virtual Academy

Name of Entity that Holds the Charter: Maine Learning Innovations

Name/Title of Primary Contact Person: Dr. Melinda Browne, Head of School

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Telephone: (207) 613-8900, ext. 2001

Email Address: mbrowne@mainevirtual.org

Physical Address of School: 6 East Chestnut Street, Suite 230, Augusta, Maine 04330

School's Initial Opening Date: September 2015

Current Grades Enrolled: 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12

Grade Levels to be Served Per *Current* Charter Contract: 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12

Maximum Projected Enrollment Per *Current* Charter Contract: 390 students

Proposed Grade Levels to be Served at Full Enrollment for *Second Charter Term*: 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12

Proposed Maximum Projected Enrollment at Full Growth for *Second Charter Term*: 390 students

Renewal Application Certification

Signature of School Leader: *Melinda Browne* Date: Sept. 30, 2019

Printed Name: Dr. Melinda Browne, Ed.D., Head of School

Signature of Board Chair: *Amy Carlisle* Date: Sept. 30, 2019

Printed Name: Amy Carlisle, J.D., Governing Board Chair

Charter Renewal Applications MUST be submitted through Epicenter to the Maine Charter School Commission no later than Monday, September 30, 2019

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Maine Virtual Academy Renewal Application

I. Introduction to the School

To provide the reader with basic introductory information about your school, include Table A below.

Table A – Introductory Information

| | | | |
|----------------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Name of School | | | |
| Year Opened | 2015 | Current Enrollment | 390 |
| Maximum Enrollment | 390 | Current Grade Span | 7-12 |
| Chartered Grade Span | 7-12 | Students on Waitlist | 200 |

We are proud of what the Maine Virtual Academy (MEVA) team has accomplished over the last four years: Double-digit improvements in chronic absenteeism (11.83% in 18/19, *from 38% in 15/16*), 4-year graduation rates (60% in 18/19, *from 37% in 15/16*), and retention (86% in 18/19, *from 66% in 15/16*) all while maintaining an unwavering focus on providing excellent services to our students and their families. Our learning community stakeholders’ deep appreciation of MEVA is communicated loud and clear, through positive responses on our school climate surveys, administered seven times during each school year, and via the Panorama Survey, given each spring. Outfitted with our cutting-edge tools and methodologies, we expect to continue to make notable progress and to become an exemplar for other schools in Maine and beyond.

At MEVA, we care about the experience of our students, parents/Learning Coaches, and families. That is why our teachers and administrators stay in close communication with them, making a strong effort to understand their unique needs. Serving these stakeholders well is our top priority. We know that they value MEVA because we are an attentive, student-centered school. Going to school at MEVA encourages collaboration. We believe that students, parents/Learning Coaches, and families are the most important members of our team, and we are here to help them accomplish their students’ goals. We encourage our students’ academic ambitions by providing them with individualized course choices and targeted instruction to get them to where they want to go. MEVA is always ready to work with students from diverse circumstances, who are seeking a flexible, safe, and supportive learning community, for a variety of reasons, including talent-development, career explorations, and social or medical challenges.

II. Executive Summary

Provide the enrollment and demographic information for the current school year 2018-2019 (Table B below). Then provide a brief (one to two page) description of the school, including an overview of the mission and vision, educational program, community and local connections, leadership and governance.

Table B – Current Year Enrollment and Demographic Information

| | |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| Number of Students Enrolled | 395 |
| Number of Students on Waiting List | 200 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Number of Male Students | 167 |
| Number of Female Students | 228 |
| Number White Students | 363 |
| Number of Black Students | 1 |
| Number of Hispanic Students | 2 |
| Number of Asian Students | 4 |
| Number of Other Students | 25 |
| Number of Students with Disabilities | 51 |
| Number of English Language Learners | 0 |
| Number of Homeless Students | 0 |
| Number Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch | 223 |

The following table provides an overview of the MEVA mission, vision and educational program:

| Key Components of the MEVA Mission & Vision | The MEVA Educational Program develops each student's full potential, and improves student learning outcomes | Golden Nuggets |
|--|--|---|
| Learner-centered instruction | MEVA teachers develop each student's full potential by assessing individual needs, providing data-driven, targeted instruction, and closing learning gaps. To encourage critical thinking, teachers unpack their lesson standards, utilizing Bloom's taxonomy, providing scaffolding to learners at multiple instructional levels. Teachers gather evidence of students' mastery utilizing Daily Do Now exercises. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments • Leveled Learning Targets • Daily Do Now Exercises |
| Research-based curriculum | <p>Teachers align the K12, Inc. research-based curriculum with the Maine Learning Results by creating instructional maps and pacing plans to guide their efforts over the semesters.</p> <p>As part of their comprehensive professional development, teachers work with an individual instructional coach, who focuses on expanding virtual teaching methods that improve students' outcomes.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional Maps • Course pacing • Instructional Coaching |
| Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) | MEVA's Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) is an assemblage of student-centered courses, activities and explorations, as well as specific learning goals, which meet students' needs. Information is consistently gathered through enduring connection calls and presented via GradPlans, which document students' credits and postsecondary readiness. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enduring Connection Calls • GradPlans • Virtual Job Shadowing • Advisory |

| | | |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| | Daily grade-level advisory groups focus on life skills, social and emotional learning (SEL), problem solving, grit and self-direction. | |
| High level of accountability | <p>By reducing chronic absenteeism and bolstering student retention and engagement, MEVA is constantly working towards meeting its Wildly Important Goal (WIG) of facilitating students’ academic growth and steady progress towards graduation. The entire MEVA faculty meets weekly to review data, to assess the efficacy of their prior commitments, and to make new commitments aimed at impacting outcomes.</p> <p>Interventions are offered to struggling students, including referrals to the Student Support Team, which focuses on increasing students’ academic engagement and success.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wildly Important Goal (WIG) • Weekly WIG Meetings • Data Analysis and Reports (leading and lag measures). • Student Support Team referrals |

MEVA is focused on fully realizing its mission and vision through its educational program that meets students’ needs. To tackle the key components, the educational program utilizes innovative tools such as instructional maps, enduring connection calls, Grad-Plans, virtual job shadowing and wildly important goals. As a result, MEVA has improved students’ outcomes.

MEVA’s educational program benefits from community and local connections, including regional CTE programs, Early College, vocational rehabilitation, local employers and districts. We utilize our community partners to provide opportunities for students to develop their potential through career preparations, college courses, employment internships, sports and the arts. Students take advantage of the flexibility that MEVA offers to pursue their dreams.

To ensure continuous improvement, MEVA’s leadership team meets weekly to address the school’s comprehensive needs and plans. The team routinely operates with “all hands on-deck,” distributing responsibilities across domains. We utilize cutting edge communication tools such as DropBox and SLACK to keep the conversations flowing asynchronously. The 2018-2019 leadership team is as follows:

| MEVA Leadership Team | 2018-2019 |
|--|--------------------|
| Head of School | Dr. Melinda Browne |
| Operations Manager | Fadia Afaneh |
| Assistant Director of Special Services | Danielle Pouzol |
| Academic Advisor | Michael Susi |
| Attendance Coordinator | Mehry Mohammadi |
| Family Academic Support Liaison | Lizzie Malvicini |
| ESEA (Title IA) Coordinator | Nicole Hart |
| Registrar | Stephanie Emery |
| HR/Business Office Manager | Jillian Dearborn |

The leadership team positions cover the full gamut of roles to keep the school operating smoothly, providing responsive service to all our stakeholders. An academic administrator position is new for the 2019-2020 academic year and focuses on developing and supporting general education teachers.

Excellent governance is maintained by an active governing board that meets monthly at the MEVA office suite. The members are as follows:

| MEVA Governing Board | 2019-2020 |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Chair | Amy Carlisle |
| Secretary | Peter Mills |
| Treasurer | Edward LeBlanc |
| Member | Donna Madore |

The governing board works tirelessly to ensure the stewardship of the school. MEVA’s stable leadership, continuous school improvement and strong stakeholder satisfaction can be attributed to their efforts.

III. Looking Back: The Record of Performance

This section provides an opportunity to supplement or augment the performance record. Schools should use the Renewal Performance Report as a guide for their responses and submit only evidence of performance related to the Performance Framework that is not included in the Renewal Performance Report and/or that the authorizer may not have. Responses should reference the specific criteria and benchmarks in the Performance Framework to which the information applies. Responses may include, but are not limited to, information about interim assessments or progress reports; evidence of performance on school- or mission-specific goals; and describe improvements undertaken at the school; and evidence of progress for any areas in which the school has not previously met or is not currently meeting the performance standard.

Responses should focus on information or evidence relevant to the school’s academic, financial and organizational performance and the school’s performance expectations as defined by the authorizer’s Performance Framework and the school’s charter contract.

Renewal Recommendations will be based on all evidence of school performance in the record, including but not limited to, the school’s responses in this section.

1. Academic Performance

- a. *Using the results contained in the Performance Framework, explain whether or not the school has met its performance expectations.*
- b. *Provide any academic performance-related evidence, supplemental data or contextual information that may not be captured in authorizer records. Submissions may include supplements related to the Renewal Performance Report. Please reference the specific Performance Framework measures to which the information applies, as appropriate.*
- c. *Provide evidence of outcomes related to any mission-specific academic goals and measures established in the charter contract (if not already captured in Renewal Performance Report).*

Over its four years, MEVA has made impressive gains towards meeting all its performance measures as follows:

- Improved its chronic absenteeism rate by 27 points.
- Increased its retention rate by 20 points.
- Improved its 4-year graduation rate by 23 points.

MEVA has achieved its performance targets in student growth and proficiency on the NWEA.

1. Literacy: Proficiency Data Source # 1 NWEA (Low Average to Advanced Bands)

| NWEA Reading Proficiency (Low Average to Advanced Bands) | Grade 7 | Grade 8 | Grade 9 | Grade 10 | Grade 11 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Year | | | | | |
| 2015-16 | 96% | 100% | 87% | 97% | 86% |
| 2016-17 | 75% | 88% | 93% | 93% | 90% |
| 2017-18 | 72% | 78% | 89% | 84% | 84% |
| 2018-19 | 76% | 78% | 89% | 95% | 84% |

2. Mathematics: Proficiency Data Source # 1 NWEA (Low Average to Advanced Bands)

| NWEA Math Proficiency (Low Average to Advanced Bands) | Grade 7 | Grade 8 | Grade 9 | Grade 10 | Grade 11 |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Year | | | | | |
| 2015-16 | 73% | 80% | 71% | 90% | 86% |
| 2016-17 | 62% | 81% | 89% | 89% | 86% |
| 2017-18 | 67% | 75% | 88% | 88% | 76% |
| 2018-19 | 72% | 80% | 80% | 92% | 77% |

3. Growth: Data Source # 1 NWEA Reading

| Met NWEA Reading Fall to Spring Growth (within the Standard Error or 0.5 CGI) | Grade 7 | Grade 8 | Grade 9 | Grade 10 |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Year | | | | |
| 2016-17 | 72% | 61% | 78% | 90% |
| 2017-18 | 32% | 60% | 75% | 77% |
| 2018-19 | 68% | 80% | 74% | 89% |

4. Growth: Data Source # 1 NWEA Math

| Met NWEA Math Fall to Spring Growth (within the Standard Error or 0.5 CGI) | Grade 7 | Grade 8 | Grade 9 | Grade 10 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Year | | | | |
| 2016-17 | 50% | 52% | 69% | 82% |
| 2017-18 | 25% | 57% | 84% | 71% |
| 2018-19 | 54% | 73% | 88% | 88% |

2. Financial Performance

- a. Provide an assurance that the school is current in meeting its liabilities, including but not limited to payroll taxes, debt service payments, and employee benefits.
- b. Provide any financial performance-related evidence, supplemental data or contextual information that may not be captured in authorizer records. Submissions may include, but are not limited to, updated financial records and other updates regarding the Renewal Performance Report. Please reference the specific Performance Framework measures to which the information applies, as appropriate. Please complete the budget template, Appendix D.

The solid financial performance of the school was adequately captured by the MEVA Year 4 Performance Report.

3. Organizational Performance

- a. Provide any organizational performance-related evidence, supplemental data or contextual information that may not be captured in authorizer records. Submissions may include evidence of current compliance in areas for which the school was found previously to be non-compliant

- or other updates relevant to the Renewal Performance Report. Please reference the specific Performance Framework measures to which the information applies, as appropriate.*
- b. *Provide evidence of outcomes related to any school-established organizational goals, as appropriate.*

The strong and stable organizational performance of the school was adequately captured by the MEVA Year 4 Performance Report.

IV. Looking to the Future

This section provides the opportunity to detail the school's plans for the next charter term.

1. Adjustments to the Performance Framework, if any

Describe and state the rationale for any proposed changes in targets for the performance indicators as stated in the existing contract.

MEVA proposes to adopt the Maine Charter School Commission's suggested performance framework in the new five-year charter term beginning in SY2020-2021.

2. Describe, if applicable, plans to change the school's current model as it relates to the topics below. Include a timetable for implementation.

Substantive changes, including, but not limited to, grade span served, program delivery, or target population will require additional data analysis and research-based evidence after the initial charter is renewed.

a. Education Plan – No changes planned.

- i. Mission, Vision, Identification of targeted student population and the community the school hopes to serve.
- ii. Academic Program
- iii. Special Student Populations
- iv. Assessment
- v. School Climate and Discipline

For information on Sub-recipient Award Calculation and Allocation Policy and Procedure for IDEA Grant, see <http://www.maine.gov/csc/Allocationspolicy011017final.pdf>.

MEVA is strengthening its career/technical educational opportunities by expanding its exploratory courses for both high school and middle school students. Employment market relevant topics include computer science, business, education, and health occupations.

b. Organizational Plan – No changes planned.

- i. *School Calendar and Daily Schedule*
- ii. *Student Recruitment and Enrollment*
- iii. *Staffing and Human Resources*
- iv. *Management and Operation*
- v. *Parent and Community Development*

c. Governance Plan

- i. *Governing Body*
- ii. *Governing Board Composition*

The MEVA governing board is recruiting members and plans to add a parent to the board by September 1, 2020.

d. *Business and Financial Services – No changes planned.*

- i. *Budget*
- ii. *Financial Management*
- iii. *Facilities*
- iv. *Transportation*
- v. *Insurance*
- vi. *Food Service*

e. *Education Service Providers – No changes planned.*

V. Addressing Special Issues

This section provides the opportunity to address special issues that the school foresees may have a dramatic impact on the school's educational programs, governance, facilities, services, or budget and to address concerns raised in the Maine Charter School Commission's Performance Report for Renewal.

There are no special issues that MEVA foresees, nor concerns, raised in the MEVA Year 4 Performance Report prepared by the Maine Charter School Commission.

Appendix A: Governing Board Turnover

Governing Board Turnover

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

| School Year | Total Membership | Members Joining | Members Departing |
|-------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 2015-2016 | 5 | 0 | 1 |
| 2016-2017 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| 2017-2018 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 2018-2019 | 4 | 0 | 0 |

Appendix B: Staff Turnover

Staffing and Staff Turnover

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

| | 2015-2016 | 2016-2017 | 2017-2018 | 2018-2019 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <i>Administrators</i> | | | | |
| Number and FTEs | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Departures during school year (7/1 – Last Day of School) | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Departures at end of school year (by 6/30) | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Teachers</i> | | | | |
| Number and FTEs | 12 | 18 | 19 | 25 |
| Departures during school year (7/1 – Last Day of School) | 1 | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| Departures at end of school year (by 6/30) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| <i>Other Staff</i> | | | | |
| Number and FTEs | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| Departures during school year (7/1 – Last Day of School) | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Departures at end of school year (by 6/30) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Explanation of Staff Turnover: MEVA has experienced normal faculty turnover. Primary reasons for leaving MEVA include commuting distance, career advancement, and desire to work within a brick & mortar school-district. To bolster retention, the MEVA governing board has facilitated significant improvements in employee health benefits and work environment, by implementing health reimbursement accounts, and leasing expanded offices for teachers.

Appendix C: Student Turnover

Student Turnover

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

| | 2015-2016 | 2016-2017 | 2017-2018 | 2018-2019 |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Number of Students | 297 | 355 | 390 | 395 |
| Departures during school year | 101 | 96 | 78 | 55 |
| Departures at end of school year | 45 | 51 | 69 | 65 |

Explanation of Student Turnover: MEVA has reduced its student turnover by improving onboarding, building multi-tiered system of supports, delivering regular connection calls, and maintaining responsive communications. Departures include students graduating from MEVA with a high school diploma.

Appendix D: Projected Budget

Please go to <http://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/charter/rfp/renewalcharter> to download the budget template that must be completed and submitted for Appendix D.

See the attached spreadsheet for the MEVA budget.