

Annual Monitoring Report

SY2024-25



November 2025

Maine Arts Academy

*Board President: Linda Warner
Head of School: Heather King*

NARRATIVE

Maine Arts Academy, located in Augusta, is in its tenth year of operation and serves 245 students from 71 cities and towns (12 of 16 counties) throughout Maine.

17.14% of MeAA students have an IEP - just shy of the statewide average; while 40.82% of families are economically disadvantaged, slightly higher than the statewide average.

High-level takeaways from SY2024-25:

Strengths:

- Reading Proficiency
- Subgroup achievement
- College Readiness
- Graduation
- Student Attendance
- A strong, active, and engaged governing board who meet regularly

Areas of Focus:

- Math Proficiency
- Student School Culture and Climate

Student Achievement

Maine Arts Academy administers the Maine Through Year Assessment to assess reading and math proficiency of students in Grade 10. MeAA exceeds framework expectations in reading, and outperforms the state average by 30 percentage points. 39% of MeAA tenth graders are “at or above expectations” in Math – approaching framework expectations - and is an improvement from last year. Math has been, and should continue to be, a focus area for the school.

Subgroup performance remains extremely strong – with all groups exceeding framework expectations in reading - some outperforming state averages by 50 percentage points. Overall, subgroups are meeting expectations in math.

The school uses the Accuplacer to measure college-readiness and 97% of students have met the college readiness indicators in both reading and math. It is important to note that all subgroups are meeting or exceeding framework expectations.

Chronic absenteeism continues to be a strength for the school; continually meeting framework expectations year after year. While MeAA enrolls students throughout the state of Maine, the majority of their students reside in Kennebec County where the chronic absenteeism rate is approximately 24%. MeAA reports that only 15% of its student population were considered chronically absent this past school year.

Graduation rates remain strong. MeAA reports that 98% of seniors graduated in June, consistently exceeding the state average and the annual goals defined by the Maine Department of Education.

100% of MeAA seniors successfully participate in at least one post-secondary activity, and the school supports students and families with completion of the FAFSA as needed.

School Climate and Family Engagement

The Maine Charter School Commission requires that schools administer the Panorama school climate surveys annually. For the third year in a row, Maine Arts Academy students responded unfavorably to the survey questions. Family, teacher, and staff results remain strong. Once again, we encourage the MeAA governing board and administration to prioritize the students' experience of school climate and culture in the upcoming school year.

Organizational Sustainability

MeAA submits required documents to the Commission on time and accurately. The board is active - and growing - meeting regularly throughout the school year, and completing most of their annual board training requirements.

The Commission requires the "timely posting of board meeting agendas and approved meeting minutes". This is an area of the framework that the board should focus on, having partially met or not meeting framework expectations for several years in a row.

Financial Management and Viability

Financial management at Maine Arts Academy is sound. The school has consistently met its liabilities, including payroll, debt service, and benefits, and annual audits are clean with no findings. The purchase of a permanent, expansive facility in 2023 demonstrated long-term investment and stability, and the school has rebounded from the mid-term financial variability associated with that purchase.

School Mission and Student Persistence

An area of focus for MeAA has been student persistence throughout the school year and their efforts paid off this year with 88% of students enrolled on 10/1/24 still enrolled on the last day of school - up from 65% a year ago.

PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK OUTCOMES

Exceeding	Meeting	Approaching	Not Meeting
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Student Achievement

Proficiency	
Maine Through Year Assessment (ELA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade 10 - 89% of MeAA high school students are "at or above state expectations" compared to 59% statewide per the <i>Acacia platform</i> 	Exceeding ≥5% of state average of schools "at or above state expectations"
Maine Through Year Assessment (Math) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade 10 - 39% of MeAA high school students are "at or above state expectations" compared to 49% statewide per the <i>Acacia platform</i> 	Approaching Between ≥-15% and <-5% of state average of schools "at or above state expectations"
Maine Through Year Assessment – Subgroups (ELA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students with IEPs (Exceeding) Male (Exceeding) Female (Exceeding) Economically Disadvantaged (Exceeding) 	Exceeding ≥5% of state average of schools "at or above state expectations"
Maine Through Year Assessment – Subgroups (Math) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students with IEPs (Meeting) Male (Meeting) Female (Approaching) Economically Disadvantaged (Approaching) 	Meeting Between ≥-5% and <5% of state average of schools "at or above state expectations"
Graduation	
4-Year High School Graduation Rate - <i>School reports</i> 98%	Exceeding
5-Year High School Graduation Rate	<i>Not Applicable</i>
6-Year High School Graduation Rate	<i>Not Applicable</i>
Post-Secondary Readiness	
Accuplacer - 97% of MeAA students are meeting the College Readiness Indicator in both Reading and Math	Exceeding
Accuplacer - Subgroups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students with IEPs - 91% (Exceeding) 	Exceeding

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economically Disadvantaged - 87% (Exceeding) Students with a 504 Plan - 100% (Exceeding) Male - 84% (Meeting) Female - 100% (Exceeding) 	85% or more students are meeting or exceeding the goal in both reading and math
Participation in Post-Secondary Activity - <i>School reports 100%</i>	Exceeding
FAFSA Support - <i>MeAA provided support to 61% of families/students</i>	Reported as Required
Other	
Student Attendance/Chronic Absenteeism	15% - School Reported

School Climate and Family Engagement

Panorama School Climate Survey – Family Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Climate - 99th Percentile Safety - 99th Percentile School Fit - 99th Percentile 	Exceeding 3 of the 3 required scales are 50% or higher when compared to like schools nationally
Panorama School Climate Survey – Student Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Climate - 10th Percentile Safety - 90th Percentile Rigorous Expectations - 20th Percentile Teacher-Student Relationships - 30th Percentile 	Not Meeting Fewer than 2 of the 4 required scales are 50% or higher when compared to like schools nationally
Panorama School Climate Survey – Teacher Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Climate - 99th Percentile Leadership - 90th Percentile Professional Learning - 99th Percentile Feedback and Coaching - 90th Percentile 	Exceeding 4 of the 4 required scales are 50% or higher when compared to like schools nationally
Panorama School Climate Survey – Staff Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Climate - 99th Percentile Leadership - 99th Percentile Professional Learning - 90th Percentile Feedback and Coaching - 99th Percentile 	Exceeding 4 of the 4 required scales are 50% or higher when compared to like schools nationally
Panorama Survey Action Plan - <i>School developed + implemented plan</i>	Meeting

Organizational Sustainability

Governing Board Effectiveness	Low Risk
Board Meetings Held in Accordance with Bylaws and FOAA	Meeting - 12 Meetings Held
Timely Publication of Board Meeting Agendas and Approved Minutes	2 Agendas/1 Minutes Late
Reporting Accuracy and Timeliness - 96% <i>on time</i> ; 100% accurate	Exceeding
Board Training - 13 requirements; 11 completed (85%)	Approaching
Facility Meets Local and State Requirements	Meeting

Financial Management and Viability*

Near Term Measures	
Current Ratio	Low Risk
Unrestricted Days Cash on Hand - 36 Days Cash on Hand	Moderate Risk
Enrollment Variance	Low Risk
Debt Default - <i>None</i>	Low Risk
Sustainability Measures	
Total 3-Year Margin	High Risk
Debt to Asset Ratio	Low Risk
2-Year Cash Flow	Low Risk
Financial Obligations Coverage Ratio	Low Risk
Other	
Financial Planning and Budgeting - <i>School submitted 3-Year Plan</i>	Meeting

*Based on FY25 QTR4 Financials

School Mission and Student Persistence

Mission and Key Design Implementation	Meeting
Student Persistence: School Year - 215 of 245 students (88%)	Meeting
Student Persistence: Year-to-Year - 136 of 151 students (90%)	Meeting

School Customization

At the end of their graduating year, 85%-95% of MeAA students will have participated in at least two activities to share their art with the community such as performances, art shows, dance competitions, volunteer performances, fashion shows, and other opportunities to share their passion for the arts.	Exceeding 98%
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At the end of their graduating year, 85% of MeAA students will have met proficiency or higher on two or more performances based on the performance rubrics.

Exceeding

98%

SCHOOL WRITTEN ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT

We have continued to meet our mission and vision to provide a rigorous academic and well rounded visual and performing arts curriculum, educating students in grades 9-12 (soon to be 7th and 8th grade too!) from across the state of Maine, in our 9th year of operation. By providing a rigorous academic and arts curriculum, we continuously strive to raise the academic bar by meeting students where they are at but holding high expectations. This is evidence in the math growth we have achieved this year. We also continue to provide a well-rounded arts education by offering numerous arts choices ranging from theater, photography, film studies, visual arts, digital art, dance, vocals and instrumentation. Students have numerous opportunities to go out in the community and perform or showcase their art. We have provided 17 opportunities to perform or showcase art in the community this year. We continuously find success with accepting and fostering a climate where students feel they belong and are not bullied. Numerous students come to us from other schools because they feel they were bullied or did not fit in. We provide a home for them at Maine Arts Academy and instill confidence in them through the arts.

86% of students with IEPs performed at or above state expectations on the Accuplacer in both reading and math. 100% of students with 504 plans performed above state expectations on the Accuplacer in both reading and math assessment!

91% of 10th graders were at or above state expectations in Reading/ELA! Only 3 students were below state expectations.

95% of the 104 students assessed by the Accuplacer this year performed at or above state expectations in both reading and math. 2% of eleventh grade students performed below state expectations in reading and 5% of eleventh grade students performed below state expectations in math. These students will be reassessed in January 2026 prior to graduating. 64% of students assessed by the SAT scored above state expectations in evidence-based reading and writing.

Through Year Assessment achievement percentiles improved in math this year. Fall data showed 19% of tenth grade students well below the state expectation. Spring data shows only 2% in this category presently. 21% of our students demonstrated growth in math at the 61st to 80th percentile and another

25% grew above the 80th percentile! Through Year Assessment achievement in reading remains high, at the 66th percentile. 100% of economically disadvantaged students performed at or above state expectations in reading on the Through Year Assessment.

This year, we strived to work on school climate by putting clubs back into our schedule. Clubs ranged from National Honor Society, Student Council, Dungeon and Dragons, Chess, Running Club, Outdoor Club, Biking Club, Math Support Club, Debate Club, Theater Club, Dance Club, Literary Magazine Club, etc... We also added some student activities like Family Fall Night with an open mic. We had 500 people attend. We had an afternoon outside teaching students how to make S'mores and Open Mic.

Students who violate the student handbook or school board policy are referred to the principal. For most first infractions, restorative justice practices are implemented and parents are notified. For first infractions, students also receive a warning that if the conduct reoccurs, behavioral consequences will intensify. Administrators facilitate mediated conversations between parties when there is a resolvable conflict between students with great success. Parents are also notified of this tiered-response method implemented by the school. Repeated offenses result in detentions, in-school suspensions, and out-of-school suspensions. If student behavior interferes with the normal daily functioning of the school or presents a safety concern, the school meets with families and establishes a safety plan for the student to adhere to when returning to school from a suspension.

We have continued to strive to implement our arts programming as the school envisioned it when it was established but oftentimes students come to us because they are bullied or didn't fit in somewhere else and are beginners in the arts. We use arts to engage them and get them hooked on a passion! Originally, the founders of the school established it to attract students who were proficient in the arts. We are starting from scratch with many of our students and we work to help them gain proficiency in the arts. Our dance department and our visual arts departments do attract students who are highly talented. Many of our dance students come with years of dancing experience. Our visual arts department is thriving as well. Each year it grows with more students interested in either digital art, visual arts, photography or film making. Our Theater department has also flourished this year performing two complete plays at the University of Maine at Augusta. Some of the other departments have struggled to attract students who are highly proficient. Our music department competes with other large schools who have more money, more resources and more staff. This has been a struggle and we continue to find ways to be innovative with this department so it is unique and carves out a one of a kind niche.

We have continued to implement our academic programming as we envisioned. Academics are going well and have been a success! Teachers are engaged and have begun the tradition of team teaching each year in January for a special unit of their choosing. Oftentimes this allows the arts and academics

to collaborate on an interesting topic. An example of this was French and Theater collaborated on a unit focusing on French Theater.

Our test scores show that academics are a success! Our Reading/ELA scores continue to be far above the state with preliminary spring Through Year Testing achievement showing 93% of tenth graders at our above state level for reading. Our math scores continue to improve and students have demonstrated tremendous growth. Preliminary spring Through Year Testing achievement shows 70% of tenth graders showed growth in math.

Our school is safe! We have worked hard to create a building that is set up with bullet resistant safety glass, cameras, doors that require scan cards and signage. We have encouraged staff and students to "say something if you see something". We use a modified version of the "Alice" program to encourage all staff to use the protocol.

Students participated in numerous arts performances and we also gave back to our community by hosting a Fall Family Night with over 500 people in attendance, and a Spring Bunny Hop. Students also participated in the United Way Day of Caring and volunteered several hours at different places throughout Augusta. Students helped clear trails at Viles Arboretum. Another group of students cleaned and cut trees at the Capital Area Recreational Facility. Another group painted and cleaned at the Augusta Colonial Theater and another group went to the Veterans Home to provide an art workshop to the residents there. Day of Caring is an annual tradition and it is a wonderful way to have students come together for a great cause. Students also participated in a Homecoming Dance, Winter Ball and Spring Prom. Because students live in and travel from 13 counties, student-centered activities can be challenging outside of school hours, but they have been a success this year! We strive to foster a positive climate for students.

We have a small dedicated parent group who organized a fundraiser and provided breakfast to all the teachers for Teacher Appreciation Week. They also helped set up our new library. Their support has been steady and extremely helpful. A goal for the parent group would be growth! It would be wonderful to have more parents involved but so many of our parents live far and wide.

We are not able to see the results of the Panorama Survey from this year. Last year our staff survey was very high in all categories but our student survey was quite low. We are hoping with the numerous activities we provided this year, student results will be much better. The building improvements should also help with students being more comfortable in the classroom.

Our calendar and schedule is strong and successful. The model for student schedules allows students to take a variety of arts courses in their day to day schedule. We have modeled our new middle school

schedule off of the high school schedule which has worked so well. Middle school students will have several arts opportunities during their day.

Student recruitment and enrollment has improved! We have a dedicated admissions and marketing employee that has a bachelor degree in the field. She has improved our marketing by branding us, creating merchandise, and a mascot. Student life, performances and successes are regularly published. This was the first year Maine Arts Academy had a lottery in the history of the school. At this time, we have a few high school spots left and there is a waiting list for middle school.

Student retention has been more of a struggle since we moved to Augusta, but there are three things that we believe influence this newer pattern. 1. Our free and reduced lunch percentage increased by 14% which leads us to believe that more students struggle with roadblocks. Families move around and housing is less stable. 2. We have heard numerous times this year that students say our academics are harder than the school they transferred from. We have had students tell us this directly and we have had teachers report that students have told them this same thing. We had a teacher report that a student was going back to their previous school because we are much more rigorous. 3. Lastly, many mainstream students enroll and then will leave. We have numerous students who simply do not fit into the mainstream mold and at times this can be overwhelming for the conventional student. We have instituted a “new student enrollment” 2-week check in period to see how a new student is doing, if they need anything and if they are happy at MeAA.

Staffing and human resources has been a success! We have carefully screened applicants through a thorough interview process, adding questions about boundaries, problem solving and social media. Our staff retention rate for the 2024/2025 school year will be 85%. We have 6 total staff out of 40 leaving. 4 staff have given their notice not to return next year (our Principal, long time music teacher moving on to pursuits with Colby and Bowdoin College, our special education director is moving to Georgia and food service director is leaving and not pursuing a food career). We had to let two employees go this year as well. Our employee handbook has been vetted by a human resource company and attorney. Our bus drivers are enrolled in a drug testing pool with the Transportation Association of Maine. If there are any employee complaints or performance issues, they are handled immediately through the correct channels.

Our operations director manages our building seamlessly. He and his employees have single handedly remodeled over 20 rooms so that students are learning in large, well lit classrooms. He also has gotten an entire transportation department established with 7 buses and 7 drivers. Bus drivers are entered into a random drug testing pool and are vetted well for a CDL license and criminal background check.

Both the Head of School and the Principal have worked together for years and have an excellent relationship capitalizing on their different skill sets. The relationship has helped build the school with a solid foundation but with movement to continue growing. Although the Principal will be leaving at the end of June, the institutional knowledge held by the Head of School, numerous teachers and board members will allow the school to transition with a new Principal. Ms. Merrill has put solid systems in place that will continue. We are building our team to help better support special education and middle school. We are targeting more behavior support, counseling and a more diverse staff to support the varying needs of students who are identified with a learning, behavioral or emotional disability. Overall the school is running smoothly and the administration feels there is ample educational and arts staff, but that we need more support staff.

We always follow applicable state laws regarding charter schools. Whether through hiring practices, special education, and discrimination practices, we follow the law.

Student performances and art exhibits continue to be well attended by families and community members. Student art is displayed throughout the community in venues like University of Maine at Augusta, Monkey Tree Gallery in Gardiner, Westbrook Performing Arts Center, Sam's Italian Restaurant, Slates Restaurant, Maine Arts Alliance at the State House, Cushnoc Brewing Window Display, Blanchard Gallery in Hallowell, Hallowell Art Walk, Main House in Hallowell, Gourmet Clay in numerous restaurants, Painted Film for the Maine International Film Festival and numerous other performances and venues. The school had 2 full theater productions this year performed at the University of Maine at Augusta and then several mini theater productions. Our dancers performed 6 times out in the community, most notably with Colby College students for their annual performance night. Our music department performed 7 times this year. Our art programs are thriving. Parents truly show up for these shows!

Maine Arts Academy has partnered with Colby College, Bates College, the University of Maine at Augusta, Healthy Communities of the Capital Area, Viles Arboretum, Capital Area Recreation, Kennebec Savings, Colonial Theater, the New Maine Veterans Home, the Boys and Girls Club in Augusta, Pineland Suzuki, Carvers Drivers Education, Boy Scouts, the Indigo Arts Alliance, Stain Glass Express, and other smaller partnerships through the 2024/2025 school year. Continuity engagement is strong.

The Maine Arts Academy board of directors is thriving! We have two new board members to add to the depth and breadth of a board that has experience and longevity. April Hughes from Healthy Community of the Capital Area joined our board this year. Rachel White, a science professor from the University of Maine at Orono also joined our board. Rachel was a previous teacher for our school in the first 3 years it was in existence. Both bring a younger energy to the board. We have another board member application pending from a younger candidate who is involved in the arts. The governing board has a

wealth of experience and knowledge with members like an attorney, retired music teacher, retired special education teacher, fundraiser, financial expert, and now someone from a non-profit who is an expert in drug and alcohol prevention and a professor who understands the school because she taught for us for three years. Linda Warner is our new board president and has worked hard to help board members understand the role of a board and how to oversee a school and non-profit.

Financially, we have taken on a monumental task by purchasing a 70,000 square foot building that needed to be transformed into a school. Over 20 rooms have been remodeled and enlarged, an auditorium space has been built, a dance studio has been built, classroom lighting has been updated and installed, outdoor lighting has been updated, safety glass on all our windows has been installed, HVAC systems have been updated and numerous other changes have been made to update the building. The value versus cost has been substantial.

Our budget is balanced and we keep a close eye on it due to the numerous projects we have had to spend money on. We constantly work on enrollment so that we increase our state subsidy. We also have received numerous grants this year. Kennebec Savings awarded us their Catalyst Grant for \$30,000, the state awarded us \$50,000 for biking and photography, the state awarded us \$30,000 for a tech grant to purchase 20 IMAC computers for our digital art program. We received \$4,000 for film and photography equipment from a foundation. We received \$10,000 for food service equipment and programming, and \$93,000 for safety. We were awarded \$28,000 for summer school.

We continue to look ahead with strategic planning goals that focus on maintaining the building far into the future. Maine Arts Academy will have a Capx account with \$250,000 in it by the end of this fiscal year. This account will be held by Kennebec Savings for the school to withdraw from if a new roof or other building projects need to be completed. The school is looking at replacing parts of the roof in the future and possibly installing solar panels. We have updated several classrooms with new lighting but would also like to update the hallways with new lighting. The success and care of our facility is a priority. The school owns 4 large buses and 4 mini buses. Maine Arts Academy plans on purchasing another large bus this summer (2025).

Insurance policies have stayed consistent and comprehensive in nature. We have a very comprehensive facilities policy, we have insurance that covers professional liability, we have insurance that covers all our vehicles as well. We offer Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield to all full-time employees. Maine Arts Academy contributes about \$3,000 toward each employees' deductible. We also offer vision, dental and life insurance. We offer health insurance to all our bus drivers with paid vacation. This is something other schools do not do.

Our food service program is going well. Our current food service director has worked for us for two years and is moving on. We have hired two new employees for the kitchen who have already begun to shadow our director. Our new director begins July 1. We are looking forward to some improvements in offering more variety in our meals for the 2025/2026 school year.

Evidence that the school's management and operations procedures and practices serve the mission, vision and needs of the students through the resources, professional development and support offered to teachers and students. Each teacher receives \$1000 towards purchasing learning materials for their classroom that help support students. We have increased this to \$2,000 for the arts teachers next year for even more support to meet our mission and vision. MeAA offers to pay for 1 college course per teacher each year. Teachers really take advantage of this and optimize their professional development.

Our budget is also evidence that we are meeting our mission. MeAA is managing a large building, has put aside \$250,000 for capital funds, and continues to expand and support academics and arts. We are adding AP classes on campus next year. We will be offering an AP math and history course. This will be in addition to the numerous college courses we offer on campus and online through the University of Maine at Augusta.

Students with 504 plans or IEPs are supported throughout their time at MeAA in order for them to access academics and arts without barriers. We offer a math tutoring period each day, an Academic Support period for all students and Learning Support period for IEP students so their learning goals are met.

We have continued our relationship with E-Therapy to offer Speech, Occupational, and Social Work services to our students. We have also continued our relationship with Belinda Sharpe. Belinda completes all our psychological assessments and evaluations. She has worked for us since the school opened in 2016. We also contract with Wendy Betts who helps keep us compliant with grant reporting and applications. Wendy has also worked with our school for several years. Both these relationships are meeting the needs of the school.

We are always assessing our procedures, methods and approaches to make sure they are working for us. We are not afraid to make changes and adjust as we continue to operate. We are not afraid to make mistakes and believe that the nature of a highly successful school is one that takes risks, has a solid foundation, always meets the mission and vision and can adjust from mistakes.