

# Annual Monitoring Report SY2024-25

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**November 2025**

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**Maine Connections Academy**

***Board President: Billy Thompson***

***Executive Director: Walter Wallace***

# NARRATIVE

Maine Connections Academy, located in South Portland, is in its twelfth year of operation and serves approximately 500 students from across the state of Maine.

21.83% of MCA students have an IEP - slightly higher than the statewide average; while 51.59% of families are economically disadvantaged, significantly higher than the statewide average.

High-level takeaways from SY2024-25:

*Strengths:*

- Reading Growth and Proficiency
- Math Growth
- Subgroup achievement
- College Readiness
- Graduation
- Student Attendance
- School Culture and Climate

*Areas of Focus:*

- Math Proficiency

## Student Achievement

Maine Connections Academy administers the Maine Through Year Assessment to assess the reading and math proficiency of students in Grade 7, Grade 8, and Grade 10 and consistently meets or exceeds framework expectations in reading. Students are approaching expectations in math for the second year in a row and should remain a focus for the school in the upcoming school year.

After having received a waiver from the Commission for the administration of the NWEA MAP assessment to measure student growth, MCA was required to administer the assessment to students in Grades 7 and 8 in the fall of 2024 and the spring of 2025. Results were outstanding, with students exceeding framework expectations.

Subgroup performance remains strong – with all groups meeting framework expectations in both reading and math.

The school uses the Accuplacer to measure college-readiness and 86% of students have met the college readiness indicator in reading and 83% in math. Overall, subgroups are meeting expectations.

Chronic absenteeism continues to be a strength for the school. MCA enrolls students throughout the state of Maine and the statewide average for chronic absenteeism is 23.4%. MCA reports that only 9.69% of its student population were considered chronically absent this past school year - exceeding framework expectations.

4 and 5-year graduation rates have consistently been a strength for the school. MCA reports that 92.63% of seniors graduated in June (4-year cohort) and 93.08% graduated in the 5-year cohort - both exceeding the state average and the annual goals defined by the Maine Department of Education. Of particular note is the 6-year graduation rate of 90.57%, exceeding framework expectations. This is a remarkable improvement from 74.16% last year.

100% of MCA 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 and MCA consistently exceeds expectations for school climate and culture among all stakeholder groups.

#### Organizational Sustainability

MCA submits required documents to the Commission on time and accurately.

The MCA board holds regular meetings throughout the school year, but does not meet expectations for required board trainings, completing only 13% of the requirements this year.

#### Financial Management and Viability

Based on FY25 4th quarter financials, Maine Connections Academy is low risk in all financial criteria on the Performance Framework and maintains a strong financial position. The school is able to maintain an efficient administrative team because of administrative support from Pearson. MCA excels at grant management, staying up to date with application, performance reports, and invoicing. The school engaged the services of RHR Smith & Company, Certified Public Accountants and received a clean audit for FY24.

#### School Mission and Student Persistence

Student persistence continues to be a strength with 92% of students persisting throughout the year and 96% submitting an intent to re-enroll for the upcoming school year.

# PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK OUTCOMES

Exceeding	Meeting	Approaching	Not Meeting
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## Student Achievement

Proficiency	
<p>Maine Through Year Assessment (ELA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grade 7 (Meeting) - 69% of MCA students in grade 7 are “at or above state expectations” compared to 68% statewide per the Acacia platform</li> <li>Grade 8 (Meeting) - 61% of MCA students in grade 8 are “at or above state expectations” compared to 60% statewide per the Acacia platform</li> <li>Grade 10 (Meeting) - 63% of MCA high school students are “at or above state expectations” compared to 59% statewide per the Acacia platform</li> </ul>	<p><b>Meeting</b></p> <p>Between <math>\geq</math>-5% and &lt;5% of state average of schools “at or above state expectations”</p>
<p>Maine Through Year Assessment (Math)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grade 7 (Meeting) - 34% of MCA grade 7 students are “at or above state expectations” compared to 39% statewide per the Acacia platform</li> <li>Grade 8 (Not Meeting) - 16% of MCA grade 8 students are “at or above state expectations” compared to 41% statewide per the Acacia platform</li> <li>Grade 10 (Approaching) - 37% of MCA high school students are “at or above state expectations” compared to 49% statewide per the Acacia platform</li> </ul>	<p><b>Approaching</b></p> <p>Between <math>\geq</math>-15% and &lt;-5% of state average of schools “at or above state expectations”</p>
<p>Maine Through Year Assessment – Subgroups (ELA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students with IEPs (Meeting)</li> <li>Male (Exceeding)</li> <li>Female (Meeting)</li> <li>Economically Disadvantaged (Meeting)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Meeting</b></p> <p>Between <math>\geq</math>-5% and &lt;5% of state average of schools “at or above state expectations”</p>
<p>Maine Through Year Assessment – Subgroups (Math)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students with IEPs (Meeting)</li> <li>Male (Approaching)</li> <li>Female (Approaching)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Approaching</b></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economically Disadvantaged (Approaching)</li> </ul>	Between $\geq$ -15% and $<$ -5% of state average of schools “at or above state expectations”
<b>Growth</b>	
NWEA MAP Assessment (Reading)	<b>Exceeding - 57%</b>
NWEA MAP Assessment (Language Usage)	<b>Meeting - 55%</b>
NWEA MAP Assessment (Math)	<b>Exceeding - 61%</b>
NWEA MAP Assessment – Subgroups (Reading) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students with IEPs (Meeting)</li> <li>Economically Disadvantaged (Meeting)</li> <li>Female (Meeting)</li> <li>Male (Exceeding)</li> </ul>	<b>Meeting</b>  Between 45%-54.9%
NWEA MAP Assessment – Subgroups (Language Usage) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students with IEPs (Meeting)</li> <li>Economically Disadvantaged (Exceeding)</li> <li>Female (Exceeding)</li> <li>Male (Exceeding)</li> </ul>	<b>Exceeding</b>  Exceeds 55%
NWEA MAP Assessment – Subgroups (Math) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students with IEPs (Exceeding)</li> <li>Economically Disadvantaged (Exceeding)</li> <li>Female (Exceeding)</li> <li>Male (Exceeding)</li> </ul>	<b>Exceeding</b>  Exceeds 55%
<b>Graduation</b>	
4-Year High School Graduation Rate - <i>School reports 92.63%</i>	<b>Exceeding</b>
5-Year High School Graduation Rate - <i>School reports 93.08%</i>	<b>Exceeding</b>
6-Year High School Graduation Rate - <i>School reports 90.57%</i>	<b>Exceeding</b>
<b>Post-Secondary Readiness</b>	
Accuplacer - <i>85% of students are meeting the college readiness indicator of 239 or above in Reading; 83% of students are meeting the college readiness indicator of 226 or above in Math</i>	<b>Meeting</b>
Accuplacer - Subgroups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students with IEPs (Approaching)</li> <li>Economically Disadvantaged (Meeting)</li> <li>Students with a 504 Plan (Meeting)</li> <li>Male (Approaching)</li> <li>Female (Exceeding)</li> </ul>	<b>Meeting</b>

Post-Secondary Activity - <i>100% of students successfully participated in at least one post-secondary activity</i>	<b>Exceeding</b>
FAFSA - <i>School provided support to 28.8% of families/students</i>	<b>Reported as Required</b>
<b>Other</b>	
Student Attendance/Chronic Absenteeism	<b>9.69% - School Reported</b>

## School Climate and Family Engagement

Panorama School Climate Survey – Family Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Climate - 99th Percentile</li> <li>• Safety - 99th Percentile</li> <li>• School Fit - 90th Percentile</li> </ul>	<b>Exceeding</b>  3 of the 3 required scales are in the 50th percentile or higher compared to like schools nationally
Panorama School Climate Survey – Student Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Climate - 99th Percentile</li> <li>• Safety - 99th Percentile</li> <li>• Rigorous Expectations - 70th Percentile</li> <li>• Teacher/Student Relationships - 99th Percentile</li> </ul>	<b>Exceeding</b>  3 of the 3 required scales are in the 50th percentile or higher compared to like schools nationally
Panorama School Climate Survey – Teacher Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Climate - 90th Percentile</li> <li>• Leadership - 70th Percentile</li> <li>• Professional Learning - 99th Percentile</li> <li>• Feedback and Coaching - 99th Percentile</li> </ul>	<b>Exceeding</b>  3 of the 3 required scales are in the 50th percentile or higher compared to like schools nationally
Panorama School Climate Survey – Staff Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Climate - 99th Percentile</li> <li>• Leadership - 90th Percentile</li> <li>• Professional Learning - 99th Percentile</li> <li>• Feedback and Coaching - 99th Percentile</li> </ul>	<b>Exceeding</b>  3 of the 3 required scales are in the 50th percentile or higher compared to like schools nationally
Panorama Survey Action Plan - <i>School developed + implemented plan</i>	<b>Meeting</b>

## Organizational Sustainability

Governing Board Effectiveness	<b>Low Risk</b>
Board Meetings Held in Accordance with Bylaws and FOAA	<b>9 Meetings Held</b>
Timely Publication of Board Meeting Agendas and Approved Minutes	<b>0 Agendas/0 Minutes</b>

Reporting Accuracy and Timeliness - <i>100% on time; 100% accurate</i>	<b>Exceeding</b>
Board Training - <i>8 requirements; 1 completed (13%)</i>	<b>Not Meeting</b>
Facility Meets Local and State Requirements	<b>Meeting</b>

### Financial Management and Viability\*

Near Term Measures	
Current Ratio	<b>Low Risk</b>
Unrestricted Days Cash on Hand - <i>99 Days Cash on Hand</i>	<b>Low Risk</b>
Enrollment Variance	<b>Low Risk</b>
Debt Default - <i>None</i>	<b>Low Risk</b>
Sustainability Measures	
Total 3-Year Margin	<b>Low Risk</b>
Debt to Asset Ratio	<b>Low Risk</b>
2-Year Cash Flow	<b>Low Risk</b>
Financial Obligations	<b>Low Risk</b>
Other	
Financial Planning and Budgeting - <i>School submitted 3-Year Plan</i>	<b>Meeting</b>

*\*Based on FY25 QTR4 financials*

### School Mission and Student Persistence

Mission and Key Design Implementation	<b>Meeting</b>
Student Persistence: School Year - <i>469 of 510 students (92%)</i>	<b>Exceeding</b>
Student Persistence: Year-to-Year - <i>365 of 380 students (96%)</i>	<b>Exceeding</b>

### School Customization

Participation in extracurricular activities	<b>Meeting - 83%</b>
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## SCHOOL WRITTEN ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT

Maine Connections Academy (MCA) is Maine's first full time, virtual public charter school offering a rigorous academic program to students in grades 7-12. MCA operates under the authorization of the Maine Department of Education and Maine Charter School Commission.



*MCA was founded during the 2014-15 school year and graduated its eleventh class in June 2025. The school has an enrollment of 500 students; thirty three percent middle school, grades 7-8 and sixty seven percent high school, grades 9-12.*

*From Kittery to Fort Kent, our school community spans statewide with approximately 20% of students residing in the southern regions and the greater Portland area. Our students come from urban, suburban, and rural communities with a variety of unique talents, strengths, and needs.*

*Sixty-five percent of MCA educators have a master's degree or higher (self-reported). MCA Board, Leadership, students, parents, staff, and teachers work collaboratively to ensure that all students experience a positive, caring, and personalized learning environment through which they can maximize their potential and meet the highest performance standards.*

*MCA meets the goals of the Maine Association for Charter Schools:*

- *Innovative new public schools*
- *Autonomy for Accountability*
- *Free to all students – no tuition*
- *Open to all students*
- *A voluntary option for students, parents, and teachers*
- *Accountable for students learning*

### ***Are We An Academic Success?***

#### **Mission**

*The mission of MCA is to maximize learner-centered instruction and effectively leverage 21st century education resources to provide a high-quality education to students in grades 7-12 throughout the state who need expanded educational options. MCA personalizes each student's education path to maximize his or her potential with a focus on meeting and exceeding the highest performance standards.*

#### **Vision**

*The vision of MCA is to reach students throughout Maine for whom a cutting-edge virtual approach provides the best pathway to school success. MCA implements a uniquely individualized learning program for each student in a way that most districts simply cannot offer in the traditional educational model. MCA combines the best in virtual education with real connections among students, families, teachers, and the community to promote academic and emotional success for every learner. Every single day, MCA lives its mission and vision by focusing on the students, the curriculum, and leveraging 21st century education resources.*



*By providing opportunities for success to students who otherwise may have been unsuccessful in their educational goals, MCA helps to increase the number of students in Maine who have a strong academic foundation and a love of learning. The Governing Board worked with the Maine Charter School Commission to establish appropriate academic, financial, and organizational performance expectations for a full-time virtual charter school that are clear, quantifiable, rigorous, and attainable. MCA uses these to establish expectations, guide practice, assess progress, and inform decision making.*

#### Targeted Student Population

*MCA is a “go to” school for those students who need a personalized, flexible education, even for a brief period, due to academic or non-academic needs, serving students with various needs, including:*

- *Students who are in rural communities and lack access to public school options;*
- *Students who are far ahead of or far behind their peers in school, including students at risk of academic failure and those coping with social issues who may particularly benefit from personalized instruction;*
- *Students pursuing artistic or athletic careers or career development opportunities that require a flexible schedule;*
- *Students who are homebound due to illness, physical or social/emotional disability;*
- *Students with special learning needs; and*
- *Students with family livelihood responsibilities. These students attend tasks, e.g., harvesting and working in the fishing industry, while attending a school with a flexible education plan.*

*MCA serves special populations through Individualized Educational Programs (IEP), Section 504 plans, and Gifted and Talented programs. Data is sourced from the 5/31/2025 Pearson Monthly School Report for Maine Connections Academy:*

*On 5/31/2025, 23% (n=109) of MCA students were enrolled with an IEP, 17% (n=81) enrolled under section 504, and 4% (n=19) participated in Gifted and Talented.*

*On 5/31/2025, 51.6% (n=245) of MCA students qualified for free or reduced meals.*

#### How does the school’s program serve the school’s mission and vision?

*MCA embodies multiple hallmarks of excellence:*

- *A rigorous, proven curriculum that is aligned to the eight core content areas, the Maine Learning Results, the Common Core State Standards, and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS);*
- *Maine-certified teachers;*
- *Dedicated advisor for each student;*

- *An array of clubs and activities; AND*
- *An educational management system, Pearson Online Classroom, designed specifically for the virtual environment to provide accountability through comprehensive data collection, analysis, and reporting.*

*MCA supports students throughout the state, including those living in rural geographies, by hosting field trips and family events in their areas. MCA serves students and provides services throughout the state.*

#### *Academic Program*

*MCA offers students in grades 7-12 throughout Maine the Connection Academy's comprehensive online virtual school program, which is a challenging, standards-based alternative to a brick-and-mortar school curriculum or a homeschool curriculum.*

*MCA provides a curriculum that aligns to the Maine Learning Results, the Common Core State Standards, and the NGSS. As Maine statute requires, MCA provides instruction in the eight content areas: Career and Education Development, English Language Arts, Health Education and Physical Education, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social Studies, Visual and Performing Arts, and World Languages.*

*MCA offers a wide variety of Connections courses that provide a solid foundation for whatever path a graduate may choose, be it attending college or starting a career. The Connections Academy comprehensive academic program combines the latest advancements in online instruction with the best curriculum tools.*

*The Connections Academy courses also develop skills in the important "four Cs" of 21st century learning:*

- *Critical thinking and problem solving*
- *Communication*
- *Creativity and innovation*
- *Collaboration*

*MCA offers students anywhere in the state hundreds of courses, dozens of clubs and activities, and access to resources that will help prepare them for the global economy they will be living and working in as adults. The personalized approach at MCA helps Maine students develop critical skills, including independent thinking, problem solving, and collaborating with people in their community and potentially across the globe.*

### Middle School

*The program of instruction for students in grades 7 and 8 is individualized, personalized, and delivered in a non-traditional environment to give students the best pathways to success. The high-quality proprietary curriculum features age-appropriate and visually appealing formats that present students with lesson objectives, essential questions, overview of content, engaging instructional content, application and practice activities, review, and a check for understanding. Course design elements include age-appropriate photographs, videos, graphics, graphic organizers, and vivid electronic texts. Distinctions in design for grades 7 and 8 include more text on the screen, photographs, and graphics targeting an older audience.*

*MCA teachers host LiveLesson sessions (synchronous learning sessions) and provide recordings (asynchronous learning sessions) for students who have schedule conflicts. Teachers also provide synchronous direct instruction (individuals or small group) that is teacher-initiated or in response to student-initiated questions. Synchronous contacts are also initiated by MCA teachers to gauge student mastery through curriculum-based assessments (CBAs).*

*In grades 7 and 8, students sharpen their language arts, math, and critical thinking skills through a blend of online and offline work. They also deepen their understanding of history and science. Through exciting electives, students learn new skills, find art in everyday life, and explore modern technologies. Students are provided online and offline materials to encourage real world interaction. They can also join clubs that enrich them in innovative ways, like joining the e-sports team, the cooking club, and publishing art. Gifted students can even start earning high school credits early.*

### High School

*The online high school program is fine-tuned to launch each student into a successful future. MCA is committed to helping all students prepare for bright futures after high school. Today, students need a broad education and 21st century skills to ensure successful long-term careers.*

*MCA provides a balanced, challenging high school experience focused on students pursuing paths that lead to success, whether via college or immediate career choice. MCA provides Credit Recovery in addition to Dual Credit Offerings and Early College enrollment through the University of Maine system and the Maine Community College system. Students may also elect to participate in a local Career and Technical Education program. Their personalized path is monitored along the way by the student, parents/guardians, teachers, and their school counselor. MCA provides comprehensive programs, often with multiple levels of academic coursework: Foundations, Standard, Honors, and Advanced Placement. While all levels are designed to meet state standards and provide students with a rigorous*

curriculum, the levels enable differentiation based on student needs and college and career goals. Students will work with their school counselor to determine appropriate course level placement.

The high school program includes substantial teacher-directed instruction through synchronous and asynchronous e-learning tools. The high school curriculum integrates digital and/or print versions of textbooks from major publishers with enhanced multimedia, interactive materials and resources, discussions, and communication/conferencing tools. In addition, students will have offline assignments, projects, novels, and practice work.

#### Career Technical Education Courses

Fortunately, students no longer need to choose between the academic courses needed for college and a vocational or technical training program. The Career Technical Education (CTE) courses offered by Connections Academy school allow students to combine both college preparation and real-world workforce skills development into one customized education program. CTE courses encourage students to explore and prepare for careers in finance, marketing, psychology, criminal justice and more.

List of CTE Courses available at MCA, 24-25:

<p>Access - Office Fundamentals Series Accounting</p> <p>Allied Health Assistant</p> <p>Business Communications</p> <p>Business Information Management</p> <p>Business Law</p> <p>Business Ownership</p> <p>Computer Science</p> <p>Dental Assistant</p> <p>Digital Media Fundamentals</p> <p>Digital Media Web Design</p> <p>Early Childhood Education</p> <p>Entrepreneurship</p> <p>Health Science Foundations</p> <p>Health Science Theory</p> <p>Human Resource Management</p> <p>Introduction to Networking</p>	<p>Introduction to Programming</p> <p>Legal Admin Specialist</p> <p>Management</p> <p>Marketing Foundations</p> <p>Marketing</p> <p>Medical Assistant</p> <p>Medical Office Administration</p> <p>Medical Terminology</p> <p>Network Security Fundamentals</p> <p>Office Administration</p> <p>Principles of Business, Marketing and Finance</p> <p>Principles of Information Technology</p> <p>Programming</p> <p>Speech and Debate</p> <p>Sports Management</p> <p>Web Development</p> <p>Word - Office Fundamentals Series</p>
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Are our students succeeding academically? What do test scores say about the school's academic success?

College acceptances and state test results in English Language Arts (ELA), math, and science for grades 7 through 12 can be used to describe MCAs academic success. Achievement outcomes include the percent scoring proficient or advanced and year-over-year comparisons from initial school year performance until this year’s publication of scores.

#### English Language (ELA) Performance

For the 2024-2025 school year, 69% of MCA 7th grade students, 61.5% of 8th grade students, and 63% of high school students scored proficient or above on the ELA state assessments – each grade level slightly outperforming the state average.

#### Math Performance

MCAs 7th grade students had a 34% proficiency rate. In 8th grade, 16.7% of students met proficiency. High school students performed at 37.2%. These rates were below state averages.

#### Science Performance

For the 2024-2025 school year, MCAs middle school students achieved a 100% first semester course pass rate in science both 7th and 8th graders. High school science pass rates also remained strong: 96.49% for 9th grade, 95.16% for 10th grade, 92.21% for 11th grade, and 91.04% for 12th grade.

#### College Acceptances

The Figure below lists colleges where students who graduated from MCA in SY24-25 were accepted. Since Maine provides free community college tuition, MCA students opt to begin college at a two-year college and then transfer to a four-year university.

MCA 24-25 College Acceptances	
Beal College	Northern Maine Community College
Boston College	Point Park University
Central Maine Community College	Southern Maine Community College
Dean College	Trinity Laban Conservatory
Eastern Maine Community College	University of Rhode Island
Franciscan University	University of Maine, Augusta
Husson College	University of Maine, Farmington

<i>Keene State College</i>	<i>University of Maine, Orono</i>
<i>Kennebec Valley Community College</i>	<i>University of Maine, Presque Isle</i>
<i>Marymount Manhattan College</i>	<i>University of Southern Maine</i>
<i>Montclair State University</i>	<i>Washington County Community College</i>

*How are our students doing in comparison to other students?*

*MCA students continue to perform competitively when compared to national norms on the NWEA MAP assessment. For the 2024-2025 school year, 43% of 7th grade and 47% of 8th grade students met their projected growth targets in Reading – within the schools target range of 45-55%. In Language Usage, 58% of 7th graders and 47% of 8th graders met their projected RIT growth, showing strong performance in that domain. Math results were especially notable, with 59% of 7th grade students and 62% of 8th grade students meeting their projected RIT growth goals – surpassing the school’s targeted growth range.*

*Special Student Populations*

*MCA is dedicated to serving special student populations. As such, MCA provides a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to children with disabilities, including identifying, evaluating, planning educational programs, and implementing placements in accordance with IDEA.*

*MCA also supports the special education student population in accordance with the Maine Unified Special Education Regulations (MUSER). MCA has an open enrollment policy: any eligible public-school student in Maine can attend. The school does not discriminate in its pupil admissions policies or practices based on geography, intellectual or athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, status as a student with a disability, test scores, disabilities, etc. As a public school, MCA will, through its policies and procedures, comply with all applicable requirements of IDEA, 20 U.S.C. 1400 et. seq. and implementing regulations, including Section 300.209 of Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. 794 (sec. 504).*

*MCA serves the full range of needs of students with disabilities, including but not limited to:*

- *Consultative support for the general education teachers to provide modifications and accommodations to the general education curriculum;*
- *Direct Special Education support may be provided via the telephone, Internet, LiveLesson sessions, as well as in person depending on the needs of the student;*



- *Direct related service support (for example: speech-language, occupational, or physical therapy, psychological counseling, among others) provided face-to-face, via computer, in homes, community sites, and therapist offices;*
- *Ongoing progress monitoring for every student: including frequent and thorough review of student performance, attendance or non-attendance, and participation data as reported to the student, parent and teacher through their respective home pages;*
- *Carefully logging every conversation (phone, WebMail message, LiveLesson session student attendance or non-attendance) and consultation with the student and/or parent as well as general education teachers; and*
- *Specific tracking and reporting for providers of direct/related services, with close scrutiny by the special education staff of any missed appointments or incomplete services.*

*In addition, MCA serves the full range of needs of gifted students, including but not limited to:*

- *A full suite of courses designed for gifted students, including gifted courses in Math, Science and Language Arts for students in grades 7-8 and 13 Advanced Placement® courses for gifted high school students;*
- *Proactive identification of giftedness and a customized placement process that provides gifted students with coursework and programming attuned to their abilities;*
- *Consultative support for teachers on modifications for gifted students and ongoing support in implementing gifted education practices across all subjects;*
- *Progress monitoring and detailed conversation logs that track gifted student progress and ensure alignment between challenge and ability.*

*MCA provides English Learner students with the following supports:*

- *We administer a Language Use Survey to every student who enrolls at MCA.*
- *Based on the responses on the Language Use Survey, students who are potentially eligible for English language services will have their records reviewed for indication of English Learner services at their previous school. Students who qualify for screening will be administered the WIDA Screener® diagnostic assessment upon enrollment within thirty days of the first day of school or within two weeks of enrollment thereafter.*
- *Parents will be notified of the diagnostic screening results (in a language they understand).*
- *Students who qualify for English Learner services receive ongoing English language support services as well as structured support in their general education classrooms.*
- *All English Learners will participate in the annual ACCESS 2.0® English Learner assessment within the designated time frame for Maine.*
- *Students who meet the state-required exit criteria will be moved to monitor status under Maine guidelines.*



- *Students who do not meet the state-required exit criteria will remain in the English Learner program until they meet the state-required exit criteria.*

#### *Are we meeting the needs of all our students?*

*Yes. MCAs instructional methods, educational philosophy, and program include some unique elements that are all inclusive to the needs of every learner. MCA contracts for specific educational and operational support always with the oversight and approval of the Governing Board. MCA maintains high compliance with IEP completion and reporting. Co-teaching is routinely used, which includes our special education teacher's collaboration on common planning, lesson building, instruction and one-on-one support. This model has allowed all students attending MCA to remain in the Least Restrictive Environment.*

#### *Assessment*

*MCA provides assessments that are aligned to the Maine Learning Results, the Common Core State Standards, and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). MCA also accommodates students with disabilities and provides alternate assessments in accordance with state law.*

*MCA uses the following tools to evaluate the progress of students:*

- **Placement Tests:** *During enrollment in the program, each new student will take part in a placement process that includes review of previous school records and assessment results, review with parents, and use of placement tests as needed to help evaluate the appropriate set of courses for the student. Connections' Academic Placement Advisors and the school's Counselors will then consult with the principal to determine a grade-level and/or course placement in consultation with parents/guardians.*
- **Formative Assessments:** *MCA utilizes NWEA MAP as a formative assessment; this is selected for their appropriateness in grades 7-11. NWEA reading, language, and math assessments provide essential diagnostic information for developing the Personalized Learning Plan and planning instruction. It provides an early predictor of performance on mandated tests and reports key accountability data on progress throughout the academic year. Students are assessed on pre-, mid-, and post-testing throughout the school year. Additionally, identified students are assessed using IXL diagnostic tools. These also allow us to identify students that may need additional support.*
- **Ongoing Informal Assessments:** *Students engage in formative assessments through whole group LiveLesson and small group intervention time. The assessments tap into all levels of student learning such as scored daily assignments, daily checks for understanding which require students to apply and integrate new skills in a thoughtful manner, and regular online quizzes and tests to measure understanding of newly presented material.*

- **Unit Assessments and Online Portfolio Assignments:** *Throughout each local unit of study, students must complete a series of online assessments.* Assessments include written compositions, science lab reports, short-answer questions, essays, book responses, and a variety of work samples. These assessments require direct teacher evaluation. Other assessments include quizzes and unit tests. While the quizzes are brief and frequent, the more comprehensive unit tests occur at the end of an entire unit. Online assessments provide students and families with immediate objective feedback while offline assessments provide valuable reflection, feedback, and expertise from credentialed teachers. Student progress reports and grades include a combination of quizzes, tests, work samples, and teacher feedback.
- **Curriculum-Based Assessments:** *MCA uses curriculum-based assessments (CBAs) as a quick and effective way to gather additional information on students' understanding of concepts through telephone conversation or one on one video meetings through the secure classroom platform. Curriculum-based assessments pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in student mastery of concepts and authenticate student learning of concepts previously completed.*

Are we implementing our academic program as we envisioned?

Yes. MCA continues to support the framework and the core priority areas as follows:

- **Effective, Learner-Centered Instruction** - *MCA students work with rigorous curriculum supporting the Maine Learning Results and aligned to the Common Core State Standards and NGSS. Instruction, both synchronous (direct teacher-led) and asynchronous (not teacher-led), is focused on the individual student and is based on assessment data, including frequent formative assessments and directed curriculum-based assessments. Students, parents, and teachers are provided data that is accurate and timely, allowing student growth to be tracked over time.*
- **Great Teachers and Leaders** - *Teachers participate in a performance evaluation system aligned to teaching standards, school goals, and student performance. Through ongoing teacher training and professional development, participation in professional learning communities, peer review, and varied career ladder opportunities, teachers are effective and consistently focused on student learning and continuous improvement. Instructional leaders utilize data provided through Connections' proprietary educational management system Pearson Online Classroom, and the state accountability system to drive professional development both for individual teachers and the school.*
- **Multiple Pathways for Learner Achievement** - *Students work individually with their teachers on their Personalized Learning Plan (PLP), maximizing their potential by ensuring that academic strengths are challenged and that academic weaknesses are diagnosed and addressed. Instruction is customized to best fit students' individual needs. Teachers tap into a*

wide array of resources and modify lessons as needed for each student. With the flexibility of virtual schooling, students can truly learn “anytime, anywhere!”

- **Comprehensive School and Community Supports** - Virtual schools like MCA open a vast range of possibilities and options for the delivery of the full continuum of special education and related services such as speech-language, occupational, or physical therapy; psychological counseling; and other services to eligible students. Additionally, MCA employs a Social Worker to support students and families with non-academic support. With parent involvement as a central element of MCA, the whole family may get involved in health programs, community programs, and field trips. Through a comprehensive counseling program focused on college and career readiness, students are provided career and workforce resources, course and club options, and work-study internship opportunities.
- **Coordinated and Effective State Support** - MCA offers students throughout Maine, regardless of zip code, a high-quality school for students in grades 7-12 utilizing state-of-the-art technology tools. Virtual schools offer a unique opportunity to utilize data to drive instruction and performance. Accessible to key stakeholders, including parents and students, accountability is robust and transparent.
- **Proficiency Based Learning** - MCA incorporates Proficiency Based Learning through course alignment with standards, independent studies, and project-based options. Students can make up standards through a variety of alternative assignments and projects when needed.

An individualized and supported educational program facilitates the development of personal responsibility among students. MCA will continue to focus on molding motivated, competent, lifelong learners. We have implemented resources such as IXL to strengthen our RTI process which is crucial for us due to the students that enroll. Many of our students are either one or two grade levels behind in their academic knowledge when entering MCA. A strong RTI program is needed to ensure that the student remediates prior learning and proper tier placement occurs. By tracking the students with fidelity, we have been successful in breaking down and analyzing student data. We have also experienced the benefits that come from assisting with differentiated lesson planning. Our team continues to engage in meaningful collaboration regarding data reflection and attend various professional developments to strengthen our RTI/MTSS work.

## **Climate and Discipline**

### **Climate**

MCA provides a full-time school experience with a virtual learning community which connects students, teachers, and families through unique technology tools as well as face-to-face interactions. MCA is a whole-school experience for its students with academic, social, behavioral, emotional, and

*college/career support. Students participate in clubs, activities, and electives to complete the full-school experience.*

*Students participate in enriching in-person community activities and field trips to round out the comprehensive learning experience. We hold school-wide virtual pep-rallies. Students can earn points at the school store through interaction with staff and others.*

*Additionally, MCA is committed to providing a safe, positive, productive, and nurturing educational environment for all its students and staff. The school conveys this commitment through its written policies in the School Handbook and Employee Handbook and through its collaboratively developed school culture. MCA complies with all laws and regulations related to the safety of students, including Maine 20-A MRS 1001. MCA staff are all trained in safety and response to students in crisis yearly.*

*MCA encourages the use of technology to promote students' learning. MCA provides a safe and supportive environment by keeping students safe from online predators and solicitors. An Internet Safety Course for students, parents, and Learning Coaches is provided by Connections Academy. It is an i-SAFE course that provides information about the various threats, challenges, and safety protocols needed to work and learn online. It contains valuable information about practicing safe behaviors online. This course is also required training for all school staff. The staff course is Online Safety: What Every Educator Needs to Know. MCA also has in place the following policies and procedures:*

- *Anti-Harassment Policy;*
- *Anti-Bullying Policy;*
- *Emergency Resource Guide;*
- *Disciplinary Removal of Students with Disabilities—Administrative Procedure;*
- *Disciplinary Removal of Students with Disabilities—Policy;*
- *School Seclusion and Restraint Policy; and*
- *School Discipline Policy.*

### **Discipline**

*MCA has a defined discipline policy that is detailed in the student and staff handbooks. MCA has few discipline needs with the top need relating back to student engagement and interaction with courses; MCA added advisors for each student to ensure students have the support they need for this.*

### **Is our school a safe and positive environment for staff, students, and families?**

*Yes. Per Title 20-A of the Maine revised statute, as a public school, MCA is committed to adhering to policies and procedures to ensure a safe environment for students and to prevent bullying. MCA provides a safe, positive, productive, and nurturing educational environment for all its students, and*

*conveys this commitment through its written policies and collaboratively-developed school culture. MCA educates administrators, teachers, families and students on bullying prevention strategies and techniques. Part of the training stresses the impact of bullying and why it is important for schools to develop and sustain bullying prevention strategies.*

*MCA encourages the promotion of positive interpersonal relations between members of the school community, and defines harassment, intimidation, bullying, cyber-bullying, or hazing toward a student, whether by other students, staff, or third parties, as “prohibited behaviors” that are not to be tolerated. The School Handbook explains that this prohibition includes aggressive behavior, physical, verbal, psychological abuse, and violence within a dating relationship. These types of behavior are forms of intimidation and harassment and are strictly prohibited, regardless of whether the target of the prohibited behavior are members of legally protected groups, such as sex, sexual orientation, race, color, national origin, marital status, age, or disability. MCA and the Governing Board do not tolerate any gestures, comments, threats, or actions that cause or threaten to cause bodily harm or personal degradation. MCA has had no substantiated reports of bullying, harassment, or intimidation.*

*Students and families are given opportunities to socialize and enhance learning with other families, staff and students through field trips, academic summits, and other school events. Students are placed in advisories and called regularly. MCA strives to support and communicate with students’ families to increase positive interactions and experiences.*

*In addition, MCA has strict policies in place to prevent truancy and plagiarism. MCA holds students to a high standard regarding academic honesty and strictly adheres to the consequences of the infringement of these guidelines. MCA has constructed protocols to combat concerns around truancy and chronic absenteeism.*

*Students’ attendance is monitored and addressed weekly through reports from the school principal. We have increased monitoring, oversight, and meetings to address our attendance concerns. MCA follows Maine state truancy laws. As there is a need for attendance to be continuously monitored and addressed, MCA utilizes behavioral intervention to work with our students and families who may be experiencing barriers in attendance. Our MTSS coordinator and Special Education Attendance Lead use the attendance report to monitor attendance which allows for quick intervention.*

*What have we learned from parent and student surveys?*

*Parent Survey Results*



*Parents' results on the 24-25 Panorama survey are overwhelmingly positive, with sustained positive ratings in School Safety (95%) and School Climate (83%). MCA's focus area is in School Fit, scoring at 72%, all above the national average.*

#### **Student Survey Results**

*Students rated the school climate as favorable with 78%, +6%, with a sub-category rating in the school having positive energy, 88%, +4%. 88%, +1% of students say teachers are excited to be teaching classes. Students identified increasing engagement in classroom lessons as an area for focus, 64% favorable rating for lesson motivation.*

#### **Staff Survey Results**

*MCA staff via the 24-25 Panorama Survey rated School Leadership effectiveness at 89% favorable. MCAs area of focus continues to be on delivering valuable professional development sessions.*

#### **Teacher Survey Results**

*MCA teachers continue to rate School Climate, Professional Learning and Feedback and Coaching in the top quartile. While the majority of teachers feel positive about the School Culture, there are some that would like more input into decision-making, opening up opportunities for committee work.*

### **Are We an Organizational Success?**

#### **Calendar and Schedule**

*MCA follows a traditional school year calendar that includes 180 school days (currently exceeding Maine requirements) during which instruction by school staff. The Governing Board approves the school calendar annually, and the calendar provides 180 days of instruction for students with 193 workdays for teachers (significantly more than other schools in Maine). The school calendar may be extended to allow families more flexibility in completing the year's work, or to provide extra learning time for students who are at risk (generally not by more than two weeks).*

#### **Student Recruitment, Enrollment, and Retention**

*Student recruitment and enrollment policies are balanced with the mutual goals of ensuring that families are aware of their choices with the competing demand of being fiscally conservative. Enrollment begins in February for the school year starting in August, with reasonable public notice given at least 30 days before the enrollment application deadline and according to all Maine rules and regulations. Enrolled students can begin re-enrollment in January.*

MCA actively recruits families that represent the full cultural, demographic and socioeconomic range of Maine. The next Figure illustrates the student demographics of MCA as compared to the averages throughout Maine.

<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>MCA</i>	<i>State of Maine</i>
<i>White</i>	<i>88.49%</i>	<i>84.83%</i>
<i>Hispanic or Latino</i>	<i>1.98%</i>	<i>3.79%</i>
<i>Multiple Races</i>	<i>5.16%</i>	<i>3.83%</i>
<i>Black/African American</i>	<i>2.98%</i>	<i>5.28%</i>
<i>Asian</i>	<i>0.4%</i>	<i>1.37%</i>
<i>American Indian or Alaska Native</i>	<i>0.79%</i>	<i>0.79%</i>

For student outreach, MCA uses creative messaging, and tactics tailored to prospective families, highlighting virtual school offerings that benefit families and students. Key activities include:

- **Paid search campaigns on Google and Bing** for people searching online schools and related terms.
  - Ads point families to landing pages where they fill out a form to request information and become a lead or apply.
  - Leads/applicants receive a series of follow-up nurture communications (via email and SMS text) aimed at converting to enrollments.
- **Paid Advertising** on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and a range of targeted websites, streaming video, and audio platforms.
- **Earned Media** through local and national PR outreach to drive awareness via news outlets and highlight student stories and other school news.
- **Virtual Events**, which include national events hosted by Pearson Virtual Schools (PVS), and monthly MCA-specific information sessions to answer questions, engage, and convert prospective families.
- **Owned Social and the website**, are “always on” and not only help with awareness and consideration among prospective families but are key channels for building engagement and advocacy among enrolled families.



### **Staffing and Human Resources**

*In January of 2025 the school's Leadership Team and the Governing Board, with support from several Pearson Virtual Schools teams such as Human Resources, Partner School Success Operations Team, and School Financial Services, collaborated with MCA to build a budget to frame the upcoming school year. During this process, key factors were reviewed including the structure of the school and anticipated growth. School Leaders set staffing ratios (number of staff for a position based on the number of students enrolled) for each position at the school, so staffing is tied closely to student enrollment.*

*Because there are many stages of student enrollment, and this is tracked and analyzed by a team of marketing, finance, human resources, and school admin professionals all year long, this team meets weekly throughout the year to assess both the needs based on the data (student enrollment) and the staffing needs raised by the school leader to review and approve positions. The process accounts for the ever-changing needs of the school and how students can best be supported in alignment with the school's budget.*

*The staffing needs are aligned with the mission and vision of the school supporting the breadth and depth of the virtual school environment. Support through lesson plans, curriculum, educational resources staff, professional development and technology support gives the school staff and leadership the opportunity to focus on each student's personalized learning experience.*

*The school places significant importance on the quality of teachers and administration. The professional development for teachers and staff is integrated and aligned with the student curriculum, student pedagogy, student information system, data, evaluation systems, and other services. There are unique skill sets, dispositions, and training needed to be an effective teacher in a virtual school environment. The school aims to attract high-quality teachers, knowledgeable in their content areas. The school identifies, trains, monitors, and supports teachers under the supervision and guidance of the Governing Board, as well as supports the performance evaluation process in a virtual school environment.*

### **What does our staff turnover tell us about how well we are meeting the needs of our staff?**

*Using the feedback and data collected from staff engagement surveys as the driving force behind decisions made in relation to the needs of staff, MCA has demonstrated the ability to retain its teachers. The number of voluntary separations for the school year 2024-2025 was much lower when compared to the prior school year. The ability to maintain a stable staff provides students with continuous, uninterrupted support. This year's data shows turnover to be just 2 voluntary separations.*

**Management and Operations**

*The operating structure is like a traditional educational environment. Walter Wallace, Executive Director, provides comprehensive leadership and oversight of school operations, including supervision of staff, state compliance and reporting, budget management, grant administration, and performance monitoring. The position also manages relationship with the Board and Charter Commission, coordinates educational programs, and ensures alignment with the school's mission through strategic planning, community engagement, and policy development.*

*Lauren Thompson, Principal, provides leadership in staff supervision, enrollment management, and school operations, including oversight of High school staff, the hiring process, professional development planning, and student support systems. It also involves managing school-wide timelines, data tracking, attendance processes, internal and external communications, and ensuring alignment with school policies, budget guidelines, and overall school improvement goals.*

*Does our current staffing meet the needs of our program?*

*Yes. The school is fully staffed with the appropriate number of staff based on the number of enrolled students and the targets established by the school and the Governing Board. In the 24-25 SY, MCA added a Data and Assessment Coordinator to help with the increased requirements, and a Special Education Attendance Lead to assist with student engagement. Social work hours were increased during the summer for consistency of service.*

*Are we following applicable state law regarding hiring of staff?*

*Yes. All teachers are fully certified in Maine to teach the content and grade levels in which they are assigned.*

**Parent and Community Involvement**

*Real connections are an important component at MCA so students can participate regularly in both face-to-face and virtual community activities. In-person activities include regular field trips and outings facilitated by MCA staff. Teachers often go out into the community for field trips, state assessments, information sessions and other school events.*

*Field trips are also focused on college and career readiness for the secondary students; field trips to local universities and colleges are scheduled as well as trips to explore local businesses and attend college and career fairs.*

*MCA provides school-based clubs that meet both face-to-face and virtually. In addition, through Connections Academy, students are offered access to more than 30 academic clubs and activities*

*through which they can explore interests beyond the classroom, develop leadership skills, and make friends within their school and with students from other Connections Academy schools.*

*How are we ensuring meaningful family involvement in their child's education and in our school?*

*Family involvement is key to MCAs program. Families are encouraged to participate in back-to-school, on-going, and end-of-the-year events and activities such as picnics, academic summits, and educational field trips offered throughout the year. These activities and events are organized through stipend engagement positions.*

*In addition to their own personal login and password to Pearson Online Classroom and access to up-to-the-minute data on their child's education, parents have multiple opportunities to shape the overall school experience. They may be selected to serve as parent members of the Governing Board. Parents are also asked for input through face-to-face meetings with school staff and are always welcome to visit the local office to connect with staff.*

*The Governing Board is interested in providing service-learning opportunities as described previously. National Honor Society coordinates community service projects, such as raising money via art raffles to be donated to charities such as Ronald McDonald House and Youth Arts Access Fund.*

*Parents, community members, and teachers all have multiple opportunities to collaborate on face-to-face learning activities with students during field trips and other outings. Teachers attending field trips typically work with location staff and parents to provide structured learning activities on site. The principal and faculty initiate the first face-to-face opportunities within the first two months of the start of school.*

***Are we a Governance Success?***

*As set forth in the Bylaws, the Governing Board's mission is to provide top-quality personalized education for students and families who seek an alternative to the conventional classroom. The Governing Board maintains a commitment to excellence in curriculum, instruction, accountability, and communication for virtual schools and works with the Maine Charter School Commission and in accordance with its charter terms.*

***Governing Body***

*The Governing Board is incorporated as an independent, public, non-profit corporation and is not a subsidiary of another entity, or in any way connected with, or under the control of another entity. The Governing Board is an effective steward of public money and provides independent governance of the school's administrators.*

*The Governing Board members are parents, educators, and business and community leaders who are committed to providing an innovative virtual charter school for students in Maine. Governing Board members have unique skills and expertise in virtual education, technology, internal controls, and financial analysis. These qualifications will help ensure the success of the school and the effective representation of key stakeholders.*

*The roles and responsibilities of the Governing Board include, but are not limited to, the following:*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Protect the legal interests of the charter school and adhere to all applicable laws,</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Comply with state and federal reporting requirements,</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Approve the school budget,</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Practice strategic planning,</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Practice financial management strategies,</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Ensure adequate resources and manage them effectively,</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Act as fiduciary of the school,</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Assess the organization's performance including monitoring achievement of accountability framework,</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Establish a framework for the budget,</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Attend mandatory training annually that is relevant to effective leadership,</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Authorize major expenditures, substantial program changes, etc.,</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Act as tribunal for disciplinary hearings,</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Elect the officers of the corporation and determine their terms,</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Approve real estate transactions,</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Ensure that the charter is achieving its vision and mission,</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Negotiate and enter a charter with Maine Charter School Commission,</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Oversee services and activities of the virtual education service provider,</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Exercise sound legal and ethical practices and policies,</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Set Governing Board policy,</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Manage liabilities wisely,</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Provide academic program approval,</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Advocate good external relations with the community, school districts, media, neighbors, parents, and students,</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Evaluate and monitor the activities and success of the school leader and other members of the school leadership team,</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Hire contractors, negotiate service agreements, and hold contractors accountable for performance under such</i></li> </ul>

	<i>agreements, and</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Govern the operations of the school but leave daily operations to the school leader,</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Review and renew the contract with the virtual education service provider.</i></li> </ul>

### **Governing Board Composition**

#### **William Thompson, Governing Board President/Secretary**

*Billy is currently the Chief of Staff to the House Minority Office. Prior to joining the House Minority Office, he served as the Senior Education Policy Advisor to Governor LePage. Billy graduated from Colby College with an AB in Philosophy and Governing and holds a MA in Political Science from George Mason University.*

*Previously he served on the DC staff of Senator Collins and held a Presidential Appointment at the Department of Homeland Security as Assistant Director of Legislative Affairs for DHS Intelligence. He also worked in the Maine Senate as Director of Communications, the Maine House as the Director of Policy and as the Director of Policy for the Speaker of the Maine House.*

*He is a member of the Brunswick School Board and served two terms as chairman. He has been married to his wife, Michelle, for 12 years and they have a seven-year-old daughter, Reagan, twin three-year-old sons, Billy and Bales, three dogs, two cats and a fish named Peter.*

#### **Jennifer Cummings, Governing Board Treasurer**

*As Director of Business at the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME), Jennifer Cummings oversees a strong and experienced lending team that works with Maine lenders and businesses to help them get to “yes”. FAME has a unique role in Maine, tasked with taking on greater risk than traditional lenders for the benefit of the state. FAME does this primarily by offering Maine lenders commercial loan insurance and providing direct loans to Maine businesses through its FAME Direct Loan program, frequently facilitating deals that would not otherwise be possible.*

*At FAME success is measured by the number of jobs created and retained, as well as the amount of capital deployed: since 1983 when FAME opened its doors, over 100,000 jobs have been created or retained across all of Maine’s major industries and over \$2 billion in loans and equity capital has been funneled into the Maine economy. Jenn has over 20 years of experience as a commercial finance professional, both as a commercial loan officer and workout officer. She joined FAME in 2013 as Senior Workout Officer and now serves as Director of Business. A Maine native, Jenn received her BS in International Business and Logistics from Maine Maritime Academy and earned her MBA from Thomas*

College. When not at work, she enjoys spending time outside with her family, hiking and skiing. Jenn lives in Manchester with her two daughters, Grace (13) and Eleanor (7).

**Jana Lapoint, Governing Board Member**

*Jana Lapoint joined Maine Connections Academy as a board member, continuing her long and successful career in education. She has a BD in history and an MS in business education, as well as more than a decade of experience teaching high school students. In 1995, Jana was appointed by former governor Angus King to the board of trustees of the Maine Community College System. She also served on the Maine State Charter Commission, with two of those years as chair, during which time she proudly signed the documents that established the Vocational College as a community college of Maine. From 2010-2021, Jana served as vice chair on the Maine State Board of Education. In addition, she acted as a trustee at Dean College in Franklin, Massachusetts, and Cheverus High School in Portland, Maine. Jana has four children, 13 grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.*

**Connie Ronco, Governing Board Member**

*Connie Ronco is a part time faculty member in the College of Education/Human Development at the University of Maine. In her previous career she was the department chair of the Early Childhood and Education Programs at Eastern Maine Community College and a classroom teacher in public and private schools. She has also served as an adjunct faculty at the University of New England. She completed her education at University of Maine, earning a B.S. in Human Development, a M.S. in Education, and a CAGS in Educational Leadership. Connie is a dedicated educational professional in Maine, having served over 40 years in the field as a teacher, administrator, and institutional leader. She enjoys her role in mentoring and guiding pre-service educators as they prepare to become the future teachers for Maine students and beyond. As Team Leader for the Achieving the Dream Initiative at Eastern Maine Community College, Connie has been a champion for student success and retention and has been instrumental in bringing many best practices, such as learning communities, a student success center, math pathways and college success courses to support first generation and at-risk students to succeed in college. Connie is an advocate for students and believes that families should have choice for the best educational experiences for their children. Connie lives in Winterport with her husband and enjoys spending time with her family and grandchildren.*

**Nicki Peluso, Governing Board Member**

*Nicole Peluso has three students enrolled in 7th grade at MCA. She is a strong supporter of and greatly appreciates having school choice for her family and other Maine families. She has dedicated the last 15 years to raising her children and serves as their primary caregiver and household manager, committed to fostering a positive and supportive home environment for her family. Nicole has a strong*



*volunteer background at schools her children have attended, and she appreciates the opportunity to the MCA school community by serving on the MCA board.*

*Does our governing board have the capacity to effectively lead and manage the school?*

*Yes. Each of the five Governing Board members bring unique skills and expertise to support the school and make decisions regarding budgeting, curriculum, and operating procedures. All Governing Board members have community ties across the state. There is a wide range of expertise on the Governing Board demonstrating the capacity for successful and continued operations.*

*Are our practices open and transparent to the community?*

*Yes. The Governing Board complies with Maine's open meeting laws by ensuring that all meeting days and times are appropriately posted at the school site, on the school's website, and published in all applicable ways for public information. Parents and the public are welcome to attend and may address the Governing Board during the public comment period.*

*The Governing Board adopted a regular monthly schedule. Agendas and meeting minutes are available on the MCA website. The public, included but not limited to, key stakeholders such as parents, staff, and interested members of the public, are notified through postings at the school site and online, and are encouraged to attend, in person or via telephone.*

*Are we following effective board stewardship?*

*Yes. The Governing Board understands the importance of being an independent functioning entity and the commitment by each Governing Board Member to ensure the legal, fiduciary, and oversight authority for MCA with autonomy over key decisions, as referenced in MRS 20-A §2401, sections, 6,9A. During the initial charter, the Governing Board has been active in Board training and development, including engaging with a third-party facilitator to undergo strategic planning and then formally adopting a strategic plan. The Governing Board has contracted with Connections; however, the Governing Board is legally and operationally independent from Connections. Connections is responsible for reporting to the Governing Board and answerable to the Governing Board. Furthermore, the Governing Board conducts an annual review of Connections.*

***Are We a Financial Success?***

***Budget***

*The school's mission is to maximize learner-centered instruction and effectively leverage 21st century education resources to provide a high-quality education to students in grades 7-12 throughout the state who need expanded educational options, especially those in rural and remote communities who*



*are unlikely to have access to a brick-and-mortar charter school. To achieve its mission, the school must remain fiscally sound. To do so, the Governing Board develops an annual budget and analyzes cash flow needs carefully.*

***Is the operating budget balanced?***

*Annually, the Governing Board prepares and approves a balanced Fiscal Budget. The Budget is analyzed and is reviewed by the Governing Board at its regularly scheduled meetings. Additionally, the school has a CFO who ensures funds are expended in alignment with the approved Budget. Since the school's inception, it has ended each school year with a balanced budget.*

**Financial Management**

*The Governing Board is responsible for the completion and results of all accounting reports as required by law, regulation, or the charter, including a report of budgeted and actual expenses. The Governing Board provides any information required by the Maine Department of Education, Maine Charter School Commission, or its auditors. On an annual basis and prior to any deadline specified in the charter, MCA presents a balanced budget (i.e., not resulting in a cumulative net asset deficit) for the following fiscal year to the Maine Department of Education, Maine Charter School Commission, and its auditors.*

*MCA provides the Maine Department of Education, Maine Charter School Commission, and its auditors with any requested information regarding staff, students, and finances including but not limited to information needed to carry out the purpose of the Essential Programs and Services Funding Act, Title 20-A, Chapter 606-B. The information is provided according to the time schedule and in the form required by the Maine Department of Education, Maine Charter School Commission, or its auditors.*

*MCA follows a financial and accounting plan that is compliant with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and provides an accurate accounting of all its finances, ensures sufficient information for audit purposes, and provides data in the format needed for accurate and timely reporting to the Maine Department of Education, Maine Charter School Commission, or its auditors.*

*MCA has also established policies and procedures and institutes rigorous internal financial controls.*

*In addition, MCA incorporates the position of a CFO (third party consultant) into the organization of the school, Amy Trunnell, CPA. Ms. Trunnell has more than 35 years of experience in her field and holds a Bachelor of Business Administration.*

***What role does fundraising play in the school's fiscal operation?***

*MCA does not currently engage in fundraising.*

### **Facilities**

*MCA leases permanent space for administrative and teaching staff in South Portland, ME which is the main teaching/learning center where administrative and some teaching staff work. The teaching/learning center includes a conference room for use in IEP conferences and other special education-related activities.*

*The teaching/learning center can also serve as a place to host parent teacher conferences and staff groups. MCA students participate in state proficiency tests depending upon grade level. The school sets up in-person, proctored locations for state testing throughout the state based on the geographic location of the student population.*

### **Transportation**

*As MCA is an online, virtual school serving students throughout Maine, it does not provide routine transportation. Students do not require transportation services for regular school activities which occur primarily in their homes and immediate vicinity. The only mandatory school events that may require students to report somewhere other than their home or immediate neighborhood are: a) special orientation sessions, and b) state standardized tests, which students take at proctored locations. MCA provides transportation for required activities and state testing and when a student does not have transportation necessary to go to the proctored location.*

### **Insurance**

*MCA has commercial general liability, automobile liability and workers' compensation insurance and can provide documentation upon request.*

### **Food Service**

*Since MCA serves students statewide who learn in their homes, the school does not offer a food service program. Parents are fully informed of this fact prior to their students' enrollment in the school so they may make the best school choice for their family.*

*For purposes of demographic documentation, however, MCA requests during the enrollment process that families who qualify for free or reduced-price meals – based on past eligibility for these services or current family income – identify themselves. The purpose of collecting this information is to ensure that the school is prepared to arrange supplemental educational resources available to students and the school based on incidence of poverty. Parents are fully informed that volunteering this information does not entitle their family to meal service. MCA staff refers families who qualify for free or*

*reduced-price meals to local social service agencies for food assistance upon request. If federally funded lunch program is changed to permit the distribution of direct assistance to families, MCA is prepared to seek funds to provide this service.*

***Education Service Providers (ESP)***

*Is the relationship with the ESP beneficial to the implementation of the school's program?*

*Yes. Pearson Virtual Schools, dba Connections Academy is a crucial partner in achieving the school's mission, with strong oversight by the Governing Board, to empower children with knowledge, skills, and character traits to be successful in their education through an engaging, personalized learning experience at the full-time virtual school. The Governing Board has chosen to contract with Connections Academy and as such, the school has benefited with quality academic materials for students, and national best practices expertise and guidance. Connections Academy has a proven record of success collaborating with public virtual schools and consistent strong ratings from parents. Additionally, third-party evaluations of MCA show positive reports of the relationship between MCA and Connections Academy.*

*Is the ESP meeting the needs of the school?*

*Yes. The Governing Board approves products and services that Connections Academy provides the school. The school annually reviews the various investments Connections is making in its products and services, including a review of the curriculum program, intervention programs, professional development program, and the software platform used to deliver these programs and services.*

*Is the ESP responsive to the needs of the school?*

*Yes. The Governing Board benefits from Pearson's Connections Academy's 22 years of experience as a high-quality virtual school provider. Connections leverages significant resources to the benefit of the school. This partnership creates a virtual school setting new standards of excellence in the virtual school arena and positively impacts student learning.*