

Maine Charter School Commission

October, 2017

On May 23 and July 10, 2017, announced on-site visits were made to Maine Connections Academy public charter school. The Maine Charter School Commission (MCSC) review team of 3 members was accompanied by the MCSC Executive Director, MCSC Director of Program Management, and Department of Education Special Services team member. The visiting team held interviews with school leadership, staff, students, parents, community partners, and the school's Governing Board. They also reviewed data provided by the school. Documents provided by the school are available from the MCSC office. Information gathered from documents, interviews, and on-site observation was used to determine the extent to which the school has met its contracted performance targets.

Commission Member, Review Team Chair	Mike Wilhelm
Commission	Laurie Pendleton
Commission	Jim Rier
MCSC Executive Director	Bob Kautz
MCSC Director of Program Management	Gina Post
DOE Special Services team member	Roberta Lucas

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

Maine Charter School Commission

ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2016-17

October 2017

Section 1: School Overview

School Name	Maine Connections Academy (MCA)
Address	75 John Roberts Road South Portland, Maine 04106

Board Chair	Amy Linscott
School Leader	Chad Strout
Special Education Director	Joy Keily

Year Opened	School year 2014-2015
Years in Operation	3
Number of Sending Districts	108
Grades Served	7-12
Number of Students	407 (October 1, 2016 "count day")
Student - teacher Ratio	1:23

Mission	The mission of Maine Connections Academy (MCA) is to help each student maximize his or her potential and meet the highest performance standards through a uniquely individualized learning program in grades 7-12 throughout the state of Maine for students who need an alternative to the traditional classroom.
Vision	The vision of MCA will be to reach students for whom a cutting-edge virtual approach provides the very best pathway to school success through a uniquely individualized learning program that combines the best in virtual education with very real connections among students, family, teachers, and the community to promote academic and emotional success for every learner.

Section 2: Indicator Summary Table

Indicator	Meets Contract agreement	Partially meets	Does not meet
Student Academic Proficiency		X ¹	
Student Academic Growth		X ²	
Achievement Gaps in proficiency and growth between major student subgroups	X		
Student Attendance		X ³	
Recurrent Enrollment from Year to Year	X		
Post-Secondary Readiness		X ⁴	
Financial Performance and Sustainability	X		
Governance Board Performance and Stewardship	X		
Adequacy of Facilities Maintenance in Support of Program	X		
Transportation	X		
School Social and Academic Climate	X		
Parent and Community Engagement	X		

¹ Year 2 students did not meet the goal of performing at 90% of the state average in math.

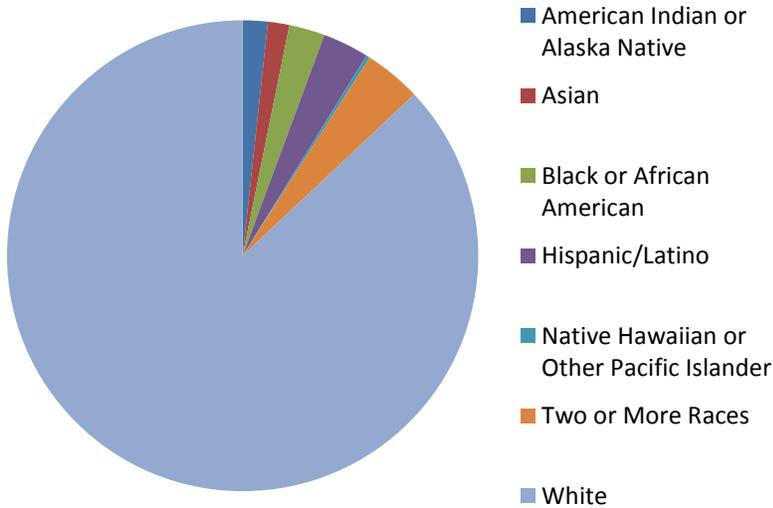
² MCA did not meet the target if increasing the percentage of students with 5% growth in math or reading.

³ The average daily attendance rate for students in grades 9 -12 was 91.1%, falling shy of the target of 92%.

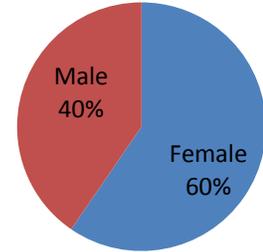
⁴ MCA did not provide data on the percent of graduates enrolled in a post-secondary institution, college, trade, and apprenticeship or on the percent of graduates who were employed full time or enlisted in the military by February of year 1 after graduation.

Section 3: Demographics

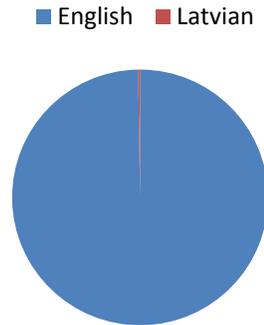
Race/Ethnicity



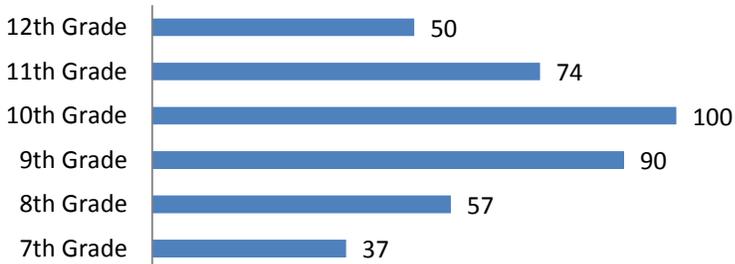
Sex



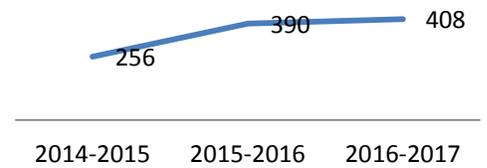
Language



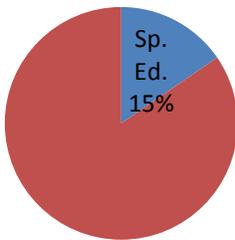
2016-2017 Enrollment by Grade



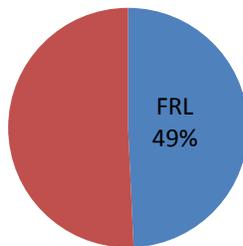
Enrollment by Year



Special Education



Free/Reduced Lunch



Section 4: Academics

Targets:

Student Academic Proficiency:

State Assessments

- Percentage of students at proficiency level will increase every year by at least 2% points over the prior year. Year 2 students will be at 90% of state average for those students at met or above.

School Developed Assessments

- School specified assessment - data, formative and viewed as support for staff.

Student Academic Growth:

- Target of 2% annual growth expected for continuously enrolled students.
- 75% score on the LEAP post-test or a 10% point gain from their pretest score will be 85% or higher, or will increase 5% points each year until it reaches 85%.
- Establish benchmarks for each student

Achievement Gaps in proficiency and growth between major student subgroups:

- Achievement gaps in proficiency and growth between major subgroups using ESEA-based system

Performance:

Student Academic Proficiency

Students in grades 7, 8, and 11 participated in the Maine State Assessments in 2017. This was the second year the test was used. MCA met the target of a 2% increase in proficiency in ELA, but not in math.

Grades 7, 8, 11

	2016		2017		% change	Target met?
	# of students tested	% at or above expectations	# of students tested	% at or above expectations		
ELA	155	52.9%	152	61.2%	+8.3%	yes
Math	153	33.9	150	28.7	-5.2	no

On school developed assessments pass/fail rate results for the First semester were mixed. The school generally saw more success in the second semester than first. Failure rates generally increased at the high school level where they decreased in the previous year. In some ways, this represented a leveling out from 2015-16; student scores in 2016-17 were generally more even than in years prior. MCA will continue to monitor and evaluate results and needs. MCA indicated math continues to be an area of focus. The tables on the following page provide a breakdown of results. The tables on the following page show student grades for the first and second semester (A-D = pass, E = fail).

MCA Fall Semester Results (All Students)					
Subject Area	A	B	C	D	F
Language Arts					
Grades 7-8	18%	28%	28%	9%	17%
High School	16%	32%	21%	12%	18%
Mathematics					
Grades 7-8	13%	23%	18%	24%	23%
High School	16%	24%	21%	18%	21%
Science					
Grades 7-8	29%	26%	19%	16%	11%
High School	36%	29%	16%	10%	9%
Social Studies					
Grades 7-8	20%	27%	22%	20%	12%
High School	39%	30%	11%	10%	11%

MCA Spring Semester Results (enrolled on or before 10/1)					
Subject Area	A	B	C	D	F
Language Arts					
Grades 7-8	20%	19%	22%	19%	19%
High School	18%	31%	16%	11%	24%
Mathematics					
Grades 7-8	13%	19%	16%	34%	18%
High School	17%	25%	19%	16%	24%
Science					
Grades 7-8	42%	24%	19%	2%	13%
High School	44%	27%	12%	6%	11%
Social Studies					
Grades 7-8	25%	30%	20%	12%	12%
High School	41%	30%	8%	7%	1%

MCA used a variety of tools at the beginning of the year to determine a student's individual learning needs, including the initial Leap and Scantron assessments. MCA met the target for establishing individual benchmarks.

Students in grades 7 and 8 completed the LEAP test in both Math & Reading. Students in Grades 9-12 completed the Scantron Performance Series (SPS) in both Math & Reading. Students were included in the data if they had both a pretest and posttest score in Connexus.

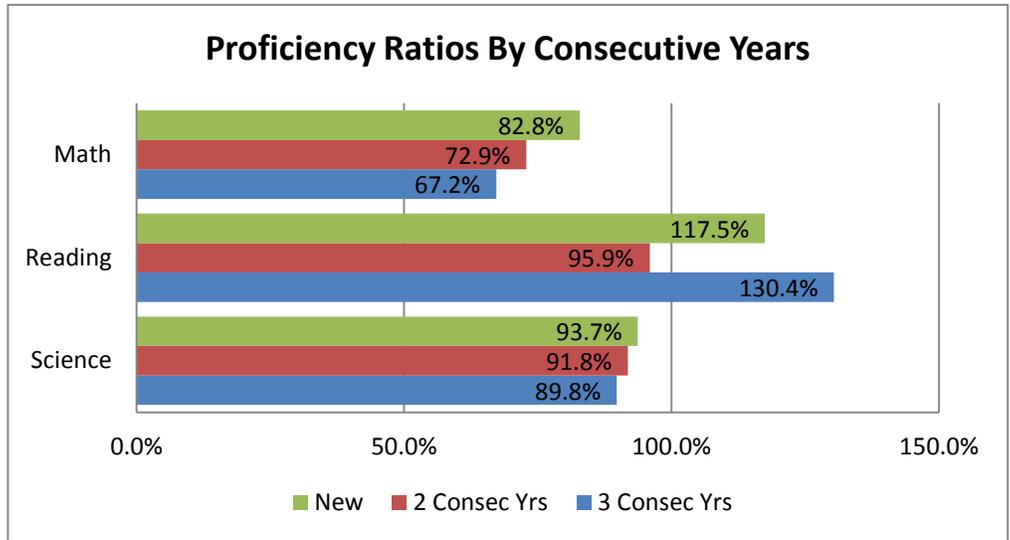
LEAP: Growth for the LEAP is defined as having a score of at least 75% on the posttest or improving by at least 10 percentage points from pretest to posttest. The number of students who completed both a pre- and posttest increased slightly in the 16-17 school year. The percent of students showing growth in Math increased from 43.2% to 56.8% meeting the target. The percent of students showing growth in Reading increased from 62.7% to 65.5%.

Scantron Performance Series: Growth for the Scantron Performance Series is defined as having a score at High Average or Above Average on the posttest, maintaining Above Average, or improving by at least one level of normative scores from pretest to posttest. The number of students who completed both a pre- and posttest improved this school year. However, the percentage of students showing growth in Math decreased from 68.8% to 63.8%, and the percent of students showing growth in Reading dropped from 92.3% to 59.3%. The target was not met in this area.

	LEAP Math	LEAP Reading	Scantron Math	Scantron Reading
Number of Students	57	57	126	128
Pretest Results: Average Score for LEAP % scoring High Average or Above Average for SPS	43.2	62.7	62.8	72.1
Posttest Results: Average Score for LEAP % scoring High Average or Above Average for SPS	56.8	65.5	61.6	69.9
% with Growth	52.6	56.1	52.4	64.8

MEA Growth:

The chart to the right shows that Year 2 students met the goal of performing at 90% of the state average in Reading and Science. Year 2 students did not meet the goal in Math.



LEAP Growth:

- In 2016-17, for students who had been enrolled at least two continuous years, the LEAP Math post-test scores showed 64.5% (20 out of 31 students) met the target of at least 75% or a 10% gain from pre to post-test.
- In 2015-16, for students who had been enrolled at least two continuous years, the LEAP Math post-test scores showed 37.0% (10 out of 27 students) met the target of at least 75% or a 10% gain from pre to post-test.
- In 2016-17, for students who had been enrolled at least two continuous years, the LEAP Reading post-test scores showed 64.5% (20 out of 31 students) met the target of at least 75% or a 10% gain from pre to post-test.
- In 2015-16, for students who had been enrolled at least two continuous years, the LEAP Reading post-test scores showed 29.6% (8 out of 27 students)) met the target of at least 75% or a 10% gain from pre to post-test.

MCA met the target of 2% annual growth expected for continuously enrolled students in both math and reading.

LEAP Math Growth

The chart to the right shows the percentage of students with growth on the LEAP Math test. In 2016-17, 60.0% of 7th grade students showed growth (compared to 68.4% in 2015-16). In 2016-17, 48.6% of 8th grade students showed growth (compared to 69.4% in 2015-16). MCA did not meet the target of increasing by 5% points.

Grade	Number of students with pre and post test scores	% of students with growth
7	20	60%
8	37	48.6%
overall	57	52.6%

LEAP Reading Growth

The chart below shows the percentage of students with growth on the LEAP Reading test. In 2016-17, 61.9% of 7th grade students showed growth (compared to 68.8% in 2015-16). In 2016-17, 52.8% of 8th grade students showed growth (compared to 60.0% in 2015-16). MCA did not meet the target of increasing by 5% points.

Grade	Number of students with pre and post test scores	% of students with growth
7	21	61.9%
8	36	52.8%
overall	57	56.1%

Achievement gaps in proficiency and growth on MEA

MCA performance in Math overall decreased from 2015-16 to 2016-17. The performance gap for Low Income & White/Caucasian students increased from 2015-16 to 2016-17. Performance for students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) remained relatively constant.

In ELA, MCA performance improved by 23.1 percentage points. While the Low Income subgroup demonstrated a small increase, the students with an Individual Education Plan and White/Caucasian subgroups demonstrated larger increases in performance from 2015-16 to 2016-17.

Overall MCA performance in Science remained relatively constant across the two years. By examining the performance ratios, we can see that relative performance improved for the students with an IEP. Performance was relatively unchanged for the White/Caucasian subgroup. A small decline was present for the Low Income subgroup.

Section 5: Enrollment & Attendance

MCA met its enrollment targets and partially met its attendance targets.

Targets:

- Average Daily Attendance Rate of 93% for grades 7 and 8, and 92% for grades 9-12
- Unexcused Absences
- Retention rate of 70% of students during the school year
- 50% of students to be re-enrolled from one year to the next
- Continuous enrollment of students for multiple years

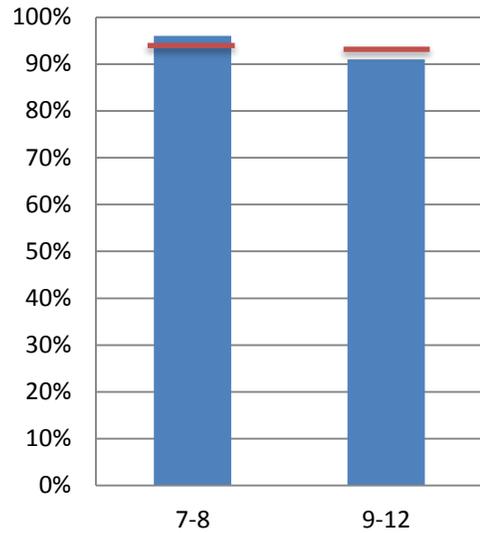
Performance:

The average daily attendance rate for students in grades 7 - 8 was 96.3%, meeting the target of 93%. The average daily attendance rate for students in grades 9 -12 was 91.1%, falling shy of the target of 92%.

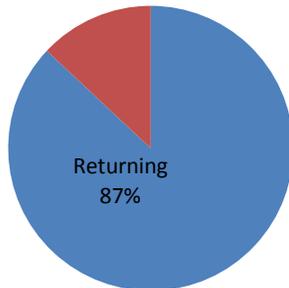
The majority of students (323) had an attendance rate above 90%. However, ten students had an attendance rate that is less than 25%. There were 23 students who had an attendance rate below 50% and 37 students who had an attendance rate below 75%.

MCA reported 28 counts of truancy for a total of 1849 days truant. The average days per incident were 66.

Average Daily Attendance



Re-enrollment Rate



The during-school year retention rate was 85%. MCA met the target of a during-school year retention rate of 70%.

Of 349 students eligible to return to MCA, 302 have indicated they plan to return for the 2017-18 school year. This is an 87% Intent to Return Rate, exceeding the target of 50%.

At the end of the 2016-17 school year 24% of students at MCA had been enrolled for 3 years; 30% for 2 years; and 46% for 1 year. MCA met the target of reporting on continuous enrollment.

Section 6: Post-Secondary Readiness:

MCA partially met its post-secondary readiness targets.

Targets:

- Senior graduation rate of 70% increasing 5 points in every year getting to 90% in year 5
- Explore possibility of dual enrollment courses
- ACT, SAT, Accuplacer, and other tests to be determined
- 30% of graduates enrolled in a post-secondary institution, college, trade, and apprenticeship by February of year 1 after graduation.
- 10% of graduates not enrolled in post-secondary institutions but employed full time or enlisted in the military by February of year 1 after graduation.

The class of 2017 Graduation Rate was 91.7%, 44 out of 48 seniors. 4.2% (2 out of 48) graduated early. MCA met the graduation rate target of 90%.

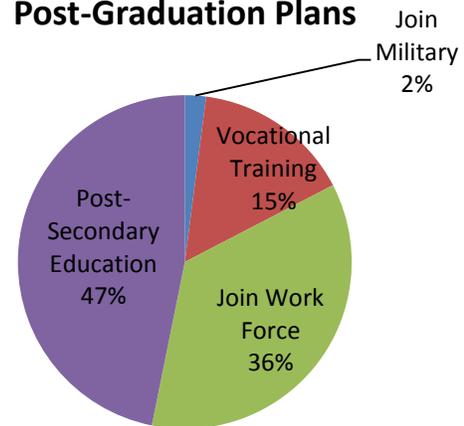
During the 2016-17 school year 55% (48 out of 88) of MCA’s juniors and seniors earned Dual-Enrollment College Credit. MCA met the target of dual enrollment course participation.

45.8% of 2017 Graduates Enrolling in 2-4 year

Post-Secondary Institutions

- 18.8% Applied and Accepted to 2 year College (9 graduates)
- 33.3% Applied and Accepted to 4 Year College (16 graduates)
- 14.6% Pursuing Vocational Training (7 graduates)
- 35.4% are planning to join the work force (17 students)
- 2% are planning to join the Military (1 student)

Post-Graduation Plans



Of 70 juniors 63 (90%) participated in the SAT.

ELA	Below/Well Below State Expectations	At/Above State Expectations
# of students (percentage of participants)	23 Students (36.5%)	40 Students (63.5%)

Math	Below/Well Below State Expectations	At/Above State Expectations
# of students (percentage of participants)	50 Students (79.3%)	13 Students (20.7%)

MCA did not provide data on the percent of graduates enrolled in a post-secondary institution, college, trade, and apprenticeship by February of year 1 after graduation. It is unknown whether or not 30% of graduates were enrolled in a post-secondary institution, college, trade, and apprenticeship by February of year 1 after graduation.

MCA did not provide data on the percent of graduates who were employed full time or enlisted in the military by February of year 1 after graduation. It is unknown whether or not 10% of graduates not enrolled in post-secondary institutions were employed full time or enlisted in the military by February of year 1 after graduation.

Section 7: Governance

MCA met its governance targets.

Targets

- Monthly Governance Board Meetings
- Bylaws and policies in application regularly reviewed

Board President	Amy Linscott
Board Treasurer	Nick McGee
Board Secretary	Carol Weston
Board Member	Bernice Stockley
Board Member	John Larouche
Board Member	Amy Volk

In accordance with the school's charter application and applicable Maine laws, the Board meets at least eight times per year, but meets more often if needed. The agenda for regular meetings are posted on the website and at the location of the meeting in accordance with Public Records and Proceedings Act, Maine Revised Statutes, Title 1, Ch 13. The public may address the Board at meetings. Approved meeting minutes are posted to the school Board's website shortly after the Board has approved them.

Section 8: Administration

School Leader	Doug Bourget
CFO	Amy Trunnell
Special Education Director	Joy Kiely

Between the 2016-17 and the 2016-17 school years MCA had a change in Head of School. The new Head of School transitioned smoothly into the role from his prior teaching position at the school.

At the end of the 2016-17 school year the principal of one year resigned. The school's new Dean of Students, an MCA teacher of 3 years, took the role of interim principal until a principal was hired.

Section 9: School Climate

MCA met its School Climate targets.

Targets:

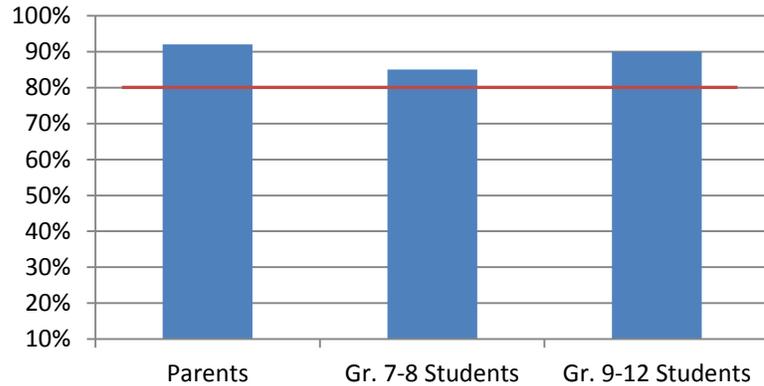
- Instances of bullying, harassment or other abusive behavior
- 80% of parents, staff, and students will express satisfaction on a confidential survey regarding social and academic climate
- Emotional and social growth of students

Performance:

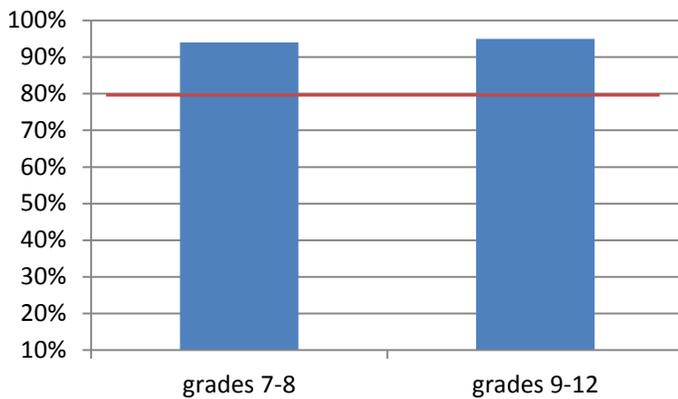
During the 2016-17 school year MCA reported one instance of abusive behavior. An MCA teacher reached out to a student offering a summer school opportunity and the student replied to the staff member with a sexually harassing message. The student was suspended and the staff member chose not to press charges. MCA met the target of reporting on bullying, harassment, or other abusive behaviors.

MCA conducted a 2016-2017 survey of parents and students. Almost 92% of parents gave the school an A or a B on the Parent Satisfaction Survey. 86% of students in grades 7-8 and 93% of students in grades 9-12 gave the school an A or B on the Student Satisfaction Survey. MCA met the target of 80% satisfaction.

Percent of Population Rating MCA A or B



Satisfaction with MCA Program



Also, on the same survey, 85% of students in grades 7-8 and 92% of students in grades 9-12 reported being satisfied with the Maine Connections Academy program. MCA met the target for 80% satisfaction.

MCA participated in Panorama Education Surveys for a second year in 2017. Families, students, and staff/teachers provided feedback for MCA. The table on the following page summarizes MCA's strengths and areas of growth, as demonstrated by the survey results.

	STRENGTHS	AREAS OF GROWTH
STUDENT	<p>+STUDENT GRIT: Overall, students at Maine Connections Academy respond 62% favorably to questions about their own Grit. When compared to other schools in the MCSC, MCA students report 6% more favorably and rank near the 70th percentile when compared to schools across the country. Students respond particularly favorably when asked about their likelihood to try again after failing to reach an important goal: 69% of students report being 'quite likely' or 'extremely likely' to try again.</p>	<p>-LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT: At 32% favorable, School Engagement favorability decreased by 12% from Spring 2016 to Spring 2017. Compared to schools across the country, students at Maine Connections Academy respond near the 10th percentile. In particular, 9th grade students report the lowest level of Engagement at 23% favorable.</p> <p>-RIGOR OF EXPECTATIONS, ESPECIALLY OF 8TH GRADE STUDENTS: Overall, students at Maine Connections Academy report 73% favorability about the rigor of expectations at school, which ranks near the 40th percentile when compared to schools across the country. Of note, students in lower grade levels report less favorably about Rigorous Expectations than students in upper grade levels. While 8th grade students report least favorably at 68% favorability, 12th grade students report the most favorably at 83% favorable.</p>
FAMILY	<p>+FAMILIES REPORT LOW BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT: Overall, families at Maine Connections Academy respond 87% favorably to questions about Barriers to Engagement, which is 2% above the Maine Charter School Commission average. Most notably, families respond most favorably about the school's communication with people from their own culture and about the school's welcoming of parents. Of importance and worth celebrating, when it comes to Barriers to Engagement, there are few significant reported differences among subgroups.</p>	<p>-FAMILY PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT GRIT ARE WELL BELOW STUDENT SELF-PERCEPTIONS: At 44% favorable, family perception of student Grit at Maine Connections Academy is 2% below the MCSC average and falls near the 20th percentile compared to other schools across the country. Of particular concern, family perception of student Grit is significantly lower than student self-perception of Grit. While students report 62% favorability and near the 70th percentile compared to schools across the country, families report only 44% favorably which places MCA near the 20th percentile on this topic.</p> <p>-DOWNWARD TRAJECTORY OF SCHOOL FIT: At 55% favorable, family perception of School Fit at Maine Connections Academy is 13% below the MCSC average and is near the 20th percentile compared to other schools across the country. Of particular concern, the favorable perception of School Fit dropped by 15% from Spring 2016 to Spring 2017, more than any other topic.</p>
TEACHER & STAFF	<p>+POSITIVE TRAJECTORY OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: Of all topics, Professional Learning improved the most in terms of favorability from Spring 2016 to Spring 2017 (with a 12% increase in favorability). Five questions in particular increased by over 20% between last year and this year. With an overall topic score of 56%, staff & teacher perception of Professional Learning at Maine Connections Academy is slightly higher than the MCSC average of 54% and is near the 60th percentile when compared to other schools across the country.</p>	<p>-FEEDBACK AND COACHING: At 36% favorable, teachers and staff at MCA view Feedback & Coaching as one of the least favorable topics. Compared to other schools across the country, MCA is near the 30th percentile and is 2% above the MCSC average of 34%. Teachers and staff respond least favorably when asked about the quantity and usefulness of feedback received (though there is cause for celebration in the close to 30% increase in favorability over the evaluation process from last year to this year).</p>

Section 10: Parent and Community Engagement

MCA met its Parent and Community engagement targets.

Targets:

- A plan for Parent Conferences established
- Capture data to show percent of logged contact between learning coaches and teachers
- Establish 3 Partnerships in year 1, maintain partnerships and develop one new one

Performance:

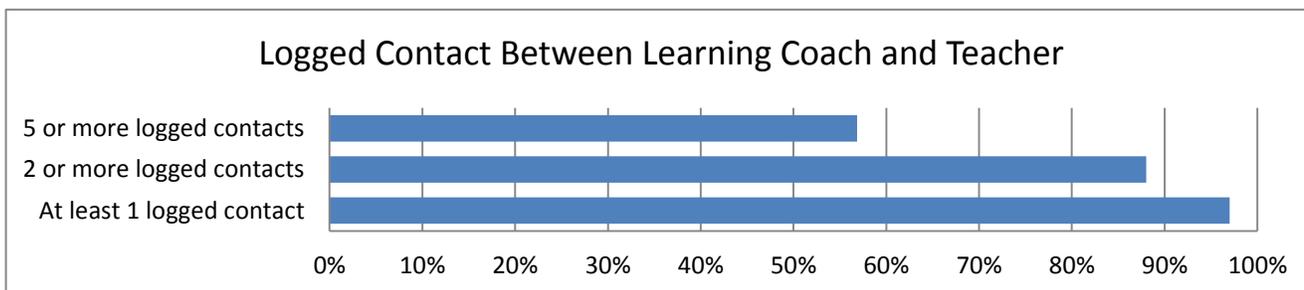
After the initial PLP conference at the beginning of the year, teachers have at minimum bi-weekly phone calls scheduled with families. Additional conferences are scheduled as needed. There are also conferences at the end of the year for course placement purposes. MCA met its conference target.

Banner messaging, school newsletters and informational WebMails on notifications and events are other forms of parent communication utilized by the school. Communication records are maintained through the Student Log system.

94% of students have at least 1 logged contact between the Learning Coach and teacher. MCA met the target of reporting teacher and learning coach contact.

MCA met its goal of capturing logged contact data.

- 76% of students have their Learning Coach contacts met
- 97% of students have at least 1 logged contact between Learning Coach and teacher 88% of students have at least 2 logged contacts between Learning Coach and teacher
- 58% of students have 5 or more logged contacts between Learning Coach and teacher



During the 2016-17 school year MCA continued with previously established partners and developed new partnerships.

Educational partnerships include:

- University of Maine Fort Kent (for dual enrollment)
- University of Maine system (for state assessment administration)
- Maine Principal's Association
- Mitchell Institute (student scholarship, networking and leadership organization)
- The Locker Project- provided resources for food drive at End of Year Celebration; MCA is aiming to become a food pantry school.
- National Honors Society

These educational partnerships meet the target of maintaining three partnerships and establishing at least one new partnership.

Section 11: Finances

MCA met its targets for Finances.

Targets:

- Monthly Financial Reports
- Target of plus or minus 10% variation between budget and actual revenue and expenditures

Performance:

MCA's school board is updated on a monthly basis with a complete set of financial reports including balance sheet, actual to budget updates, bank reconciliations, and year end projections as needed to name a few. During the 2016-17 school year the Board Treasurer continued to work with the Head of School and CFO on an as needed basis to make sure the school is operating under sound financial decisions. The governing board continues to vote monthly to authorize payment of expenses, thus offering another layer of protection and continued oversight. MCA will have a new finance manager in the 2017-18 school year.

An annual financial audit was completed for FY 2016, and was submitted to the MCSC and the Department of Education. It was determined there were no findings or other matters about which the auditor had concerns.

Section 12: Facilities & Maintenance and Transportation

MCA met its targets for Facilities & Maintenance and Transportation

Targets:

- Adequacy of Facilities Maintenance in Support of the Program
- Adequacy of Transportation in Support of the Program

Performance:

During the 2016-17 school year MCA office space operated at full capacity. MCA is cleaned regularly. The school reported there are no room utilization issues and the space is functional for staff, though the office is starting to feel cramped. The Head of School believes additional office and meeting space could improve operations. As the school grows and additional staff is added, the school feels it will need to expand or relocate to another facility.

During the 2015-16 school year, there was a small issue with water leaking in one of the outside doors. Work was immediately done to mitigate the issue and when the weather improved, a new door was installed to ensure the issue was fully corrected. Repairs continued in 2016-17 but the most recent repair this spring resolved the issue.

MCA did not have to provide any transportation for students. When transportation was a challenge for students, MCA sent a teacher to the student's home to facilitate testing. Transportation fees were incurred transporting teachers to facilitation of state wide assessments and student activities.

Section 13: Evidence of Mission and Vision Implementation (see page 2)

In order to improve its awareness of its own Mission and Vision, MCA created artistic, framed versions of the documents posted within the building. This year the school used the mission and vision to improve its focus on making academic connections. The school increased academic field trips and hosted its first Academic Summit at Kennebec Valley Community College in Fairfield, Maine. To ensure that each student finds success at school, MCA increased its focus on student support and conducted over 100 student support team meetings during the 2016-17 school year.

Section 14: Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations

1. MCA has been successful in increasing its partnerships with supportive organizations; i.e, University of Maine, National honor society, and others
2. The staff has had a positive response to the school provided professional learning
3. The school has had successful application of dual enrollment opportunities.
4. There has been an increase in the graduation rate.

Recommendations

1. Assess the students' perception of school fit and grit
2. Understand the contradictory teacher responses to professional development over all (+)and feedback and coaching (-).
3. Understand the poor academic test results re: targets and establish a plan to improve those that fall below expectations
4. Continue to address attendance and truancy issues