MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

The following document is provided by the

LAW AND LEGISLATIVE DIGITAL LIBRARY

at the Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library

http://legislature.maine.gov/lawlib



Reproduced from electronic originals (may include minor formatting differences from printed original)



ANNUAL REPORT

to the

COMMISSIONER

2021-2022 School Year

Table of Contents

Commission Members	2
Staff Members	2
Letter to the Commissioner	3
Charter School Profiles	5
Purpose	7
Mission, Vision, Values and Priorities	7
Section A: Progress toward the strategic vision	9
Section B: Performance of the charter school portfolio	9
Section C: Charter School Authorizing	14
Section D: Services to support excellent performance	16
Section E: Financial performance	17
Section F: Demographics	18

Commission Members

Seat #1	Dr. Tom Keller (also State Board of Education)
Seat #2	Wilson G. Hess, Chair (also State Board of Education)
Seat #3	Victoria Kornfield (also State Board of Education)
Seat #4	Nichi Farnham, Vice Chair
Seat #5	Norman Higgins
Seat #6	James Handy
Seat #7	Leigh Weisenburger Albert

Staff Members

Lana Ewing, Interim Executive Director lana.ewing@maine.gov (207)446-8898

Amy Allen, Interim Chief of Staff & Director of Operations amy.l.allen@maine.gov (207)592-6364

Dania Heard, Part Time Administrative Assistant dania.heard@maine.gov

Letter to the Commissioner

Commissioner Makin,

It is with enthusiasm that we submit to you the 2021-2022 Annual Charter School Report. This report fulfills our statutory obligation to provide the Commissioner of Education with an annual status report on the performance of charter schools in the state.

Since the last Annual Report to the Commissioner, many significant changes have happened at the Charter School Commission. We have seen turnover of Commission members with the departure of long-time appointees Shelley Reed and Jim Rier and the appointment of Tom Keller, Norman Higgins, James Handy, and Leigh Weisenburger Albert. Additionally, we experienced staff transitions with the departure of Executive Director Jeremy Jones and Chief Program Officer Gina Post. Lana Ewing, the former Chief of Staff and Interim Chief Program Officer, was appointed Interim Executive Director. The Commission has formed an Ad Hoc Search Committee to spearhead the search for the permanent Executive Director, who we hope to appoint in the spring.

Despite changes in Commission and staff members, we were able to spend the majority of the last year focused on strategic plan execution. The strategic plan has been a primary driver of our work since adoption and we commit to maintain focus on our priorities. The work continues in earnest and we take our responsibility to monitor charter schools seriously. Actions completed that were driven by our strategic plan were numerous, including:

- Implementing a Committee Structure to streamline the Commission's oversight responsibilities;
- Forming partnerships with the National Association of Charter Schools (NACSA) and National Charter School Institute (NCSI) to provide professional development to the Commission and to the Charter School Boards:
- Launching Charter School Board online learning modules on topics including board roles and responsibilities, governing documents, school management, financial stewardship and budgeting, financial health and facilities, effective board meetings, academic performance and board development and advocacy:
- And, developing and approving a new Performance Framework through which the Commission monitors the performance and overall health of the charter schools. The new Performance Framework goes into effect this year, SY 2022-2023.

In October of 2022, the Commission voted to not renew Harpswell Coastal Academy's charter for an additional five years, making this vote the first time that the Commission has

decided not to renew a school based on performance. The Commission's nonrenewal decision was based on merit and objective evidence of the school's performance collected and analyzed over the term of the charter contract in accordance with the Performance Framework developed by the Commission pursuant to Title 20-A, section 2409 and set forth in the charter contract with Harpswell Coastal Academy. Harpswell Coastal Academy's application for renewal was not granted by the Commission due to its failure to meet or make sufficient progress toward the performance expectations set forth in the charter contract, including enrollment standards, chronic absenteeism, academics, and overall fiscal fragility.

Maine Connections Academy is currently in the fourth year of their charter contract. We look forward to the renewal process beginning this year, which will include the Commission staff holding focus groups with the school's students, families, staff, administration and governing board and conducting a public hearing. Commission staff will analyze the organization's performance including financial management, strategic planning and student achievement. The Commission will consider this application at its October 2023 Commission meeting.

We appreciate your partnership to ensure that all of Maine's students and families have excellent school options and we look forward to discussing the details of this report with you and your team.

Lana Ewing, Interim Executive Director

Maine Charter School Commission

Charter School Profiles (2022-23 School Year)

ACADIA Academy 12 Westminster Street, Lewiston	www.acadiaacademy.org
Amy Dieterich, Board President	Casey Baugher, Head of School
Grades Served - PK-6	Percentage Special Education = 16%
Enrollment - 247	Percentage Economically Disadvantaged = 23%

Baxter Academy for Technology and Science 185 Lancaster Street, Portland	www.baxter-academy.org
Thorn Dickinson, Board Chair	Anna Marie Klein-Christie, Executive Director
Grades Served = 9-12	Percentage Special Education = 21%
Enrollment = 355	Percentage Economically Disadvantaged= 17%

Community Regional Charter School 48 South Factory Street, Skowhegan	www.crcsme.org
Danielle Denis, Board Chair	Travis Works, Executive Director
Grades Served = PK-12	Percentage Special Education = 25%
Enrollment = 358	Percentage Economically Disadvantaged=64%

Ecology Learning Center 230 Main Street, Unity	www.ecologylearningcenter.org
Laura Graham, Board Chair	Lēza Packard, Head of School
Grades Served = 9-12	Percentage Special Education = 22%
Enrollment = 102	Percentage Economically Disadvantaged=37%

Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences 25 Shaker Road, Gray	www.fiddleheadschool.org
Dr. Joseph Mattos, Board Chair	Jacinda Cotton-Castro, Executive Director
Grades Served = PK-8	Percentage Special Education = 28%
Enrollment = 192	Percentage Economically Disadvantaged=13%

Harpswell Coastal Academy 9 Ash Point Road, Harpswell	www.harpswellcoastalacademy.org
Cynthia Shelmerdine, Board Chair	Mel Christensen-Fletcher, Interim Head of School
Grades Served = 5-12	Percentage Special Education =27%
Enrollment = 171	Percentage Economically Disadvantaged=27%

Maine Academy of Natural Sciences 13 Easler Road, Hinckley	www.meansacademy.org
Mike Muir, Board Chair	Matt Newberg, Head of School
Grades Served = 9-12	Percentage Special Education = 29%
Enrollment = 173	Percentage Economically Disadvantaged=61%

Maine Arts Academy 11 Goldenrod Lane, Sidney	www.maineartsacademy.org
Sherry Gilbert, Board President	Heather King, Head of School
Grades Served = 9-12	Percentage Special Education = 13%
Enrollment = 225	Percentage Economically Disadvantaged=23%

Maine Connections Academy 8 Science Park Road, Floor #3, Scarborough	www.connectionsacademy.com/maine-virtual-school
Billy Thompson, Interim Board President	Walter Wallace, Head of School
Grades Served = 7-12	Percentage Special Education = 20%
Enrollment = 466	Percentage Economically Disadvantaged=41%

Maine Virtual Academy 6 Chestnut Street, Augusta	www.mainevirtualacademy.org
Donna Pelletier, Board President	Dr. Melinda Browne, Head of School
Grades Served - 7-12	Percentage Special Education - 20%
Enrollment - 438	Percentage Economically Disadvantaged=53%

Purpose

This Annual Report to the Commissioner satisfies MRSA Title 20-A, Chapter 112, §2405.4 Reporting and Evaluation - an authorizer shall submit to the Commissioner an annual report within 150 days of the end of each school fiscal year summarizing:

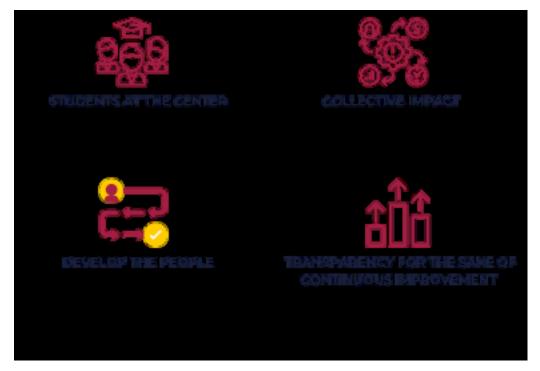
- The authorizer's strategic vision for chartering and progress toward achieving that vision
- The performance of all operating public charter schools overseen by the authorizer, according to the performance measures and expectations specified in the charter contracts
- The status of the authorizer's public charter school portfolio of approved charter applications, identifying all public charter schools within that portfolio as approved, but not yet open; operating; renewed; transferred; terminated; closed; or never opened
- The oversight and services provided by the authorizer to the public charter schools under the authorizer's purview
- The total amount of funds collected from each public charter school the authorizer authorized pursuant to subsection 5, paragraph B and the costs incurred by the authorizer to oversee each public charter school.

Mission, vision, values, strategic priorities

Mission: To authorize, monitor and develop unique public charter schools that provide a dynamic, superlative education for every student

Vision: All of Maine's children will have access to a vibrant ecosystem of diverse schools so that all of them can become happy, healthy and thriving citizens

Values:



Strategic Priorities

Strategic Priority #1: Increase student achievement and social-emotional well-being

Develop compassionate, self-actualized, and engaged citizens who live with choice and purpose

We exist to authorize and monitor unique schools that support the achievement and social mobility of children in Maine. Our first priority focuses on student achievement and social-emotional well-being because we believe the purpose of school is to help students understand the world around them and the world within them.

Strategic Priority #2: Create the conditions for sustained excellence

Champion policies and practices that nurture the ecosystem of effective and diverse schools

In order to continue the important work already started, the Commission seeks to create and nurture the conditions for sustained growth and excellence over time. A positive consequence of paying attention to the conditions that generate success is that we create an environment where schools can be successful independent of the Commission.

Strategic Priority #3: Develop effective governing boards

Develop self-sustaining, effective, autonomous governing boards

The strength and performance of governing boards will determine the long-term success of the organization. At the core, the governing board's role is to ensure that the organization is financially healthy and it is holding the officers of the school accountable for the safety and achievement of its students. Charter school governing boards protect the sanctity of the school's mission and vision. In developing the boards, we better position the organization to mitigate liability, generate strong practices and policies that ensure success, and plan for sustained excellence.

Strategic Priority #4: Foster collaborative innovation

Model continuous improvement and innovative educational delivery

The Commission has an opportunity to provide a catalyst to changes in the field, ultimately affecting student achievement and well-being. Through networking experts, providing opportunities for knowledge-building and convening leaders to problem-solve on shared challenges, the Commission can multiply the positive impact on communities through collaboration.

Strategic Priority #5: Engage and activate stakeholders

Poke the campfire to ensure the public is knowledgeable about how charter schools contribute to a vibrant, thriving ecosystem of schools

A significant opportunity for the charter school program in Maine is making sure that we are engaging our stakeholders and audience in a conversation about the value proposition that charter schools provide. When we effectively communicate with and on behalf of our communities, we strengthen the culture of charter schools, reduce misconceptions and replace them with honest information, and create feedback loops to continue the progress and growth of the state's charter

school program.

Section A: progress toward the strategic vision

Updated the Performance Framework

The Commission has adopted and implemented the new Performance Framework, a key component of the charter contract, to hold schools accountable to academic achievement, post-secondary readiness, operational excellence, financial health, and governing board effectiveness. The revised metrics make clear the Commission's commitment to high expectations.

Formation of Committees

The Commission has formed three permanent and one Ad Hoc Committee, including an Executive Committee, School Performance Committee, Finance Committee and Ad Hoc Search Committee for a permanent Executive Director. The Committees allow the Commission to thoroughly and efficiently monitor the charter schools, as well as provide a model of governance best practice to the Charter School Boards.

Board Development

The Charter Commission has partnered with the National Charter Schools Institute to develop a board training curriculum that provides support to school board development. The series of online modules launched in spring 2022 and board member participation is required in SY 2022-2023, as outlined in the newly revised Performance Framework.

Section B: performance of the charter school portfolio

Portfolio performance summary

School leadership, teachers, students and families work hard every day to provide great educational opportunities to all students. We know there is a demand for the charter schools, as over 2,700 students from 148 sending districts attend Maine charter schools. Families and students choose to attend the charter schools because they reflect personal values; like an arts academy, or a STEM school with an incredible maker's space for emerging engineers where students designed and built emergency ventilators during COVID, or a school with a significant portion of education happening outside in nature, or a school building an agricultural barn with a RREV grant from the education department to encourage real world hands-on learning.

The Charter Commission takes seriously their charge to monitor the performance of the charter schools.

- Based on the SY 21-22 self-reported NWEA data, the majority of charter schools are performing above the state average for meeting expectations on the state assessment. As a whole, the portfolio of schools are not consistently meeting the achievement metrics in the Performance Framework.
- Based on the SY 21-22 draft chronic absenteeism data (non-certified), the Commission is pleased that five out of ten of the charter schools have chronic absenteeism numbers that are lower than the state average, however, there are charter schools in the portfolio that are currently not meeting the goal on the Performance Framework of fewer than 18% of students being chronically absent.
- Based on the SY 21-22 certified graduation rate data, the charter schools show mixed results as we move toward the state goal that by the end of 2030 90% of students will graduate in four years. One of the high schools in the portfolio is meeting the 2030 state goal. Two other of the charter high schools have strong graduation data that the state is not able to report because of small graduating class sizes. Others in the portfolio are moving toward goal completion.

Below is a summary of how the charter school portfolio as a whole performed on the Performance Framework during the 2021-22 school year:

Legend of School Abbreviations

AA - ACADIA Academy	HCA - Harpswell Coastal Academy
BA - Baxter Academy	MEANS - Maine Academy of Natural Sciences
CRCS - Community Regional Charter School	MeAA - Maine Arts Academy
ELC - Ecology Learning Center	MCA - Maine Connections Academy
FSAS - Fiddlehead School	MeVA - Maine Virtual Academy

Student /	Academic Proficiency	
Target 1	Report data as required	
Target 2	Report data as required	
	Met	Did Not Meet
Target 1	AA FSAS MeVA CRCS MCA ELC HCA MeAA MEANS BA	
Target 2	AA FSAS MeVA CRCS MCA ELC HCA MeAA MEANS BA	

^{*} ACADIA administers the Brigance to Pre-K students and Exceeded the target expectation.

Student A	Academic Growth
Target 1	ELA MAP RIT score growth within a school year (fall to spring)
Target 2	Math MAP RIT score growth within a school year (fall to spring)

Target 3	% of students meeting projected growth on ELA reading MAP test					
Target 4	% of students	% of students meeting projected growth on Math MAP test				
Target 5	% of students meeting projected growth on ELA language MAP test					
	Exceeded	Exceeded Met Partially Met Did Not Meet				
Target 1	AA		FSAS CRCS ELC	MeVA MCA HCA MeAA MEANS BA		
Target 2	AA	FSAS	CRCS HCA MeAA	MeVA MCA ELC MEANS BA		
Target 3		ELC	FSAS MeVA CRCS MEANS BA	AA MCA HCA MeAA		
Target 4			MeVA ELC HCA MEANS	AA FSAS MCA CRCS MeAA BA		
Target 5		MeAA	FSAS MeVA CRCS ELC MEANS BA	AA MCA HCA		

Achievement Gaps				
Target 1	Achievement gaps between major subgroups on MEA			
Target 2	Achievement gaps between major subgroups on NWEA MAP test			
	Met	Partially Met	Did Not Meet	
Target 1	НСА	AA FSAS MeVA MCA CRCS ELC MeAA BA	MEANS	
Target 2	НСА	AA FSAS MeVA MCA CRCS ELC MeAA BA	MEANS	

Student Attendance					
Target 1	Chronic absenteeism				
Target 2	Average Daily Attendance				
	Exceeded	Met	Partially Met	Did Not Meet	
Target 1	FSAS MeVA	MCA	MeANS	AA BA CRCS ELC HCA MeAA	
Target 2 (K – 8)	MeVA MCA	FSAS	CRCS	AA ELC HCA	
Target 3 (HS)	MeVA MCA	МеАА ВА	CRCS	HCA MEANS	

Student E	Student Enrollment				
Target 1	Enrollment within a school year				
Target 2	Recurrent enrollment from one year to the next				
	Exceeded	Met	Partially Met	Did Not Meet	
Target 1	AA FSAS MeVA ELC BA MCA	CRCS HCA MeAA	MEANS		
Target 2	AA FSAS MeVA CRCS ELC HCA MeAA BA MCA		MEANS		

Post-Secondary Readiness				
Target 1	4-year high school graduation rate			
Target 2	5 and 6-year average high school grac	duation rate		
Target 3	Participation in at least one post-seco	ndary activity		
Target 4	Successful Completion of post-secondary activity			
	Exceeded	Met	Partially Met	Did Not Meet
Target 1	BA		HCA MCA MeANS	
Target 2	Pending release of MDOE data	Pending release of MDOE data	Pending release of MDOE data	Pending release of MDOE data
Target 3	MeVA MCA CRCS HCA MeAA MEANS			ВА
Target 4	MeVA MCA CRCS HCA MeAA MEANS BA			

^{*}Not applicable for ACADIA Academy, Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences

^{*}Data for CRCS, MeAA, and MeVA not publicly provided by the Department of Education

Financial Performance					
Target 1	Near Term – (A) Current Ratio; (B) Unrestricted Days Cash on Hand				
Target 2	Sustainability – (A) Total Margin; (B) Debt to asset ratio				
Target 3	Annual audit has no material findings/misstatements				
	Exceeded Met Partially Met Did Not Meet				
Target 1	Pending financial audit	Pending financial audit	Pending financial audit	Pending financial audit	
Target 2	Pending financial audit	Pending financial audit	Pending financial audit	Pending financial audit	

Target 3 Pending financial audit Pending financial audit Pending financial audit Pending financial audit
--

Governance				
Target 1	Public Accountability			
Target 2	Timely Publication of Board agenda and minutes			
	Exceeded	Met	Partially Met	Did Not Meet
Target 1	AA MeVA CRCS ELC HCA MeAA	FSAS MCA MEANS BA	No option to partially meet	
Target 2	No option to exceed	MeVA CRCS HCA MEANS BA MCA	ELC MeAA	AA FSAS

Facilities	Facilities Management		
Target 1	Meet Local/State requirements		
Target 2	Capital Improvement Plan approved by governing board		
	Met	Did Not Meet	
Target 1	AA FSAS MeVA MCA CRCS ELC HCA MeAA MEANS BA		
Target 2	FSAS MeVA MCA CRCS ELC HCA MeAA BA	AA MEANS	

School Climate						
Target 1	Reporting behavior incidents as required by law					
Target 2	Panorama School Climate Survey Participation - Family					
Target 3	Panorama School Climate Survey Participation - Student					
Target 4	Panorama School Climate Survey Participation - Staff					
Target 5	Panorama School Climate Survey Action Plan					
	Exceeded	Met	Partially Met	Did Not Meet		
Target 1	No option to exceed	FSAS MeVA MCA MeAA MEANS BA	No option to partially meet meet	AA CRCS ELC HCA		
Target 2	AA FSAS MCA HCA MEANS	MeVA ELC BA		CRCS MeAA		
Target 3	AA MCA CRCS HCA	FSAS MeVA ELC	MEANS	MeAA BA		

Target 4	MeVA MCA CRCS HCA MEANS		AA FSAS MeAA	ELC BA	
Target 5	Not applicable as an action plan was not required to be submitted during the 2021-22 school year.				

Campus indicator performance tables

For school specific performance tables, use the links below to navigate to the school's individual report. Reports include charter specific data.

- ACADIA Academy
- Baxter Academy for Technology and Science
- Community Regional Charter School
- <u>Ecology Learning Center</u>
- Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences
- Harpswell Coastal Academy
- Maine Academy of Natural Sciences
- Maine Arts Academy
- Maine Connections Academy
- Maine Virtual Academy

Section C: Charter School Authorizing

Charter schools in renewal

In October of SY 21-22 CRCS and MEANs were renewed with conditions in the areas of finances, board development, and academics. The schools met the conditions and in the spring of SY 21-22 signed 5 year renewal charter contracts.

The section below summarizes actions taken by the Commission to approve schools for operation in the state. It includes information on when schools opened and which schools have been renewed for operations.

2021-22 School Year

1	Approved	None	
2	Operating	ACADIA Academy	Originally opened in 2016
		Baxter Academy for Technology and Science	Originally opened in

			2013
		Community Regional Charter School	Originally opened in 2012
		Ecology Learning Center	Originally opened in 2020
		Fiddlehead School- of Arts & Sciences	Originally opened in 2013
		Harpswell Coastal Academy	Originally opened in 2013
		Maine Academy of Natural Sciences	Originally opened in 2012
		Maine Arts Academy	Originally opened in 2016
		Maine Connections Academy	Originally opened in 2014
		Maine Virtual Academy	Originally opened in 2015
3	Renewed	Community Regional Charter School	2021 for 5 Years
		Maine Academy of Natural Sciences	2021 for 5 years
4	Transferred	None	
5	Terminated	None	
6	Closed	None	
7	Never Opened	None	

Section D: Services to support excellent performance

Modern Classrooms Project

The Charter Commission is committing resources to the growth and development of educators. Given the unique approach of charter schools to meet the needs of every student, the Commission partnered with the Modern Classrooms Project in the fall of 2021 to support the ability of classroom teachers to personalize instruction for students. MCSC was awarded a sub-grant from the Maine Department of Education to continue the partnership into the school year 2022-2023.

Panorama

Panorama's vision is that "Panorama helps schools and districts transform their approach to education, so that every student thrives in school, every student benefits from an excellent education, and every student graduates prepared with the knowledge, skills, and mindsets they need to thrive in the modern, ever-changing world. Through our work to improve education, we help create a world where every child has equitable access to opportunities in school and in society more broadly." The Maine Charter School Commission began its partnership with Panorama Education in 2016 and survey participation rates for students, families, teachers, and staff are measured as part of the Commission's Performance Framework.

NWEA

NWEA is a research-based, not-for-profit organization that supports students and educators worldwide by creating assessment solutions that precisely measure growth and proficiency—and provide insights to help tailor instruction. The Maine Charter School Commission began its partnership with NWEA in the fall of 2019 with the expectation that schools would administer the assessments in the fall, winter, and spring of each year. Both academic proficiency and growth are measured as part of the Commission's Performance Framework.

Infinite Campus

Infinite Campus is a powerful student information system that supports student learning by ensuring school districts streamline educational processes, promote stakeholder collaboration and personalize learning. The Commission continued its partnership with Infinite Campus throughout the 2021-22 school year with 8 of the 10 public charter schools actively using the platform.

Epicenter

Maine's public charter schools are held to a rigorous Performance Framework which measures academic, operational, and financial targets. Epicenter is a web-based platform that streamlines school operations, board governance, and school compliance activities and

puts data and documents at the fingertips of authorizers and authorized schools 24/7/365. The Commission began its partnership with Epicenter in the fall of 2016 and the relationship is strong to this day. During the 2021-22 school year, the renewal application went online for the first time and a project was initiated to convert the Performance Framework into Epicenter's online Scorecard component, which will make reporting more streamlined going forward.

Lotterease

Maine public charter schools must follow enrollment as outlined in Maine State Law (Title 20-A, Chapter 112, §2404). There are many different parts to enrollment and lottery, which can be complicated when using a paper process. The Commission sought a web-based platform that could assist schools in the management of the enrollment process from the initial contact with families through full enrollment of their child(ren) and partnered with Lotterease in 2020.

Website Enhancement

During the 2021-22 school year, the Commission engaged the services of InforME (Information Resource of Maine) – the Internet gateway for businesses and citizens to interact with the government electronically. Work has begun on a major overhaul of the Commission's current website that will include graphics, easier navigation, charter school profiles, a section on charter school governing board development, and other enhancements that we are anxious to unveil in the coming months.

Section E: Financial performance

State law allows the Charter School Commission to draw up to 3% of the annual per-pupil allocation received by each public charter school under its authorization. In FY22, the Commission remained at the 2.35% allocation.

Based on the FY22 ED279s, the Commission's revenue was \$706,037.24 of which \$699,614.41 was spent on monitoring performance and supporting the success of Maine's public charter schools. The balance was carried over to FY23.

Section F: Demographics

