

Maine Learning Innovations

Minutes for a Meeting of the Board of Directors held October 17, 2017

Pursuant to email and public website notices, a regular meeting of the Board of Maine Learning Innovations was convened in the Maine Virtual Academy Conference room in Augusta at 2:00 PM. Members attending in person were Amy Carlisle, Peter Mills, and Ed LeBlanc. Absent were Donna Madore and Kevin Pomerleau.

Present from local staff were: Melinda Browne, Fadia Afaneh, Tanya LaCroix, and the Special Education team, Danielle Pouzol and Kelli Boucher.

Also present were Attorney Bill Ferdinand, two auditors, Patrick Nicholas and Danielle Tibbetts.

On the phone was Kim Hutchinson from K12.

Minutes. Upon motion by Ed, seconded by Amy, minutes for the meeting of September 15, 2017, were unanimously approved.

Audit Report. Danielle Tibbetts from our auditing firm presented the report of our annual audit. There were no issues of special note except for management of our cash balance. Because deposits in a single bank in excess of \$250,000 are not federally insured, she recommend that we break up and diversify our cash holdings.

Report from Attorney Bill Ferdinand.

During the legislative session, the state's contribution to school funding was greatly increased for next year, but this will have no bearing on the level of funding for our charter school which is based on a strict per capita calculation. Connections Academy explored the possibility of changing legal protocols for managing students who fail to engage adequately in their on-line education. In the end, it did not appear that a law change was necessary. There was talk of moving to more shared services, perhaps by allowing charter schools to provide more on-line services to other schools.

There is a challenge for how to provide Career & Technical Education (CTE) on-line. The state has a goal of doubling CTE. Brick & mortar schools are trying to bring CTE down into middle schools as well as high school. Chuck Wolfe heads up the CTE effort for K12. Maine Associated General Contractors (AGC) has been authorized to offer internships. The health care professions offer opportunities for certificates. Other opportunities are in forestry and agriculture, field jobs and equipment training. We could have a whole cluster of CTE students who take the rest of their training through MEVA.

Amy said we need a board member connected to industry. Bill suggested that we ask Ed Cervone who heads up the Maine Coalition for Excellence in Education (MCEE) where business and education come together.

Head of School Report

Fadia and Melinda devoted a great deal of energy last year to developing the academic plan that we are currently implementing. We have available a great deal of staff satisfaction data. The first survey this year was taken on September 11. This is in addition to the Panorama Survey required by the Charter Commission. We had set a goal of 73% and achieved a score of just under 80%. The average for K12 schools is 50%. The highest schools are at about 83%.

We have set up a process of bi-weekly grade level meetings. Our recent focus has been on student attendance. Passing rates are between 68% and 87%, with an average of 77.8%. Last year's rates were about 50%. Student withdrawal rates have also dropped precipitously since last year.

Grant management is absorbing a great deal of Melinda's time this year. K12 has scheduled an audit for our management of the Special Ed programs.

Report from the Special Education Team

Danielle Pouzol has been employed by the school for the past year. Kelli Boucher joined the school at the beginning of August after many years of working as an Ed Tech and just recently became certified as a teacher.

Our case load of Special Ed kids is presently 65 students, a designation rate of about 17 or 18% which is about average for Maine public schools. We are required to have one Special Ed teacher for each 35 students. Melinda said that she attends all IEP meetings.

Danielle said that she and Kelli have frequent conversations, at least weekly and sometimes daily, with parents of Special Ed students. Our turnaround rate on paper work is very fast. Kelli works primarily with high functioning transition students heading toward a career. Melinda said that Roberta Lucas from DOE would agree that we are on more friendly terms with parents and students than other schools and that we have good contact with parents.

Danielle and Kelli each gave examples of students who have been specially helped. Intellectually disabled kids, those with IQs typically between 60 and 70 work on life skills. Six of our students are in life skill programs. Danielle prefers the term "project based" to "life skills." We have made remarkable progress with some of them. Sometimes they are surprisingly adept at using computers. We have been teaching basic reading and writing and using small group settings for project based learning. One of them could not write a complete sentence three years ago and is now writing three page essays almost at grade level. She plans to attend CMC's culinary arts program.

Although we have problems with elements of the Special Ed curriculum, we can make it work even though it would be nice to have an alternative special program. We would like to have K12 train us on differentiation. Kelli said she is taking a course on universalized instruction which is a form of differentiation. Danielle said that 85% of last year's Special Ed underclassmen elected to stay with MEVA this year.

Program Manager's Report

Fadia reports that because the state has changed from Infinite Campus to Synergy, every school has had to re-upload its data. MEVA's enrollment for October 1 hit our target of 390 students. Our cap is up from 360 last year. So far we have held nearly all of those who initially enrolled this fall. We have 98 juniors.

We have added one more testing site this year. Kylie Tudela has offered her husband's State Farm office in Bucksport. The MEA science test will be by paper and pencil. Others will be by computer.

Student graduation plans are being reviewed so that we can explain to each students what specific credits must be earned in order to graduate. In essence, every student receives an ILP.

Executive Session. At 4:44 PM upon motion by Amy, seconded by Ed, the Board voted unanimously to go into executive session pursuant to 1MRSA§405 for the purpose of discussing the duties and evaluation of appointees and employees of Maine Virtual Academy.

At 5:24 PM, the board came out of executive session and voted to adjourn.

Respectfully Submitted,



Peter Mills, Secretary