Maine Learning Innovations

Minutes for a Meeting of the Board of Directors held February 25, 2025

Pursuant to email and public website notices, a virtual meeting of the Board of Maine Learning Innovations was convened on Zoom at 4:00 PM, February 25th, 2025. Board members attending were Donna Pelletier, Stacey Blanchard, Cherieann Harrison, and Tina Meserve. Susan Walters was excused. A quorum was present.

Attending for Maine Virtual Academy (MEVA) were Melinda Browne, Don Fournier, Christina O'Grady, Lena Vitagliano, Chelsea Osgood, Lauren Sroka, Kim Pasternack, Jillian Dearborn, Jennifer Hight, and Stephanie Emery.

Attending from Stride was Tom Travia.

Opening Items.

Approval of Minutes. Tina motioned to approve the minutes of the Maine Virtual Academy (MEVA) Governing Board Business Meeting of January 28th, 2025. Stacey seconded. All in favor, so moved.

Finance Report.

Dr. Browne – states that the 990 has not come through yet. The individual who had been working on this was out on parental leave. Dr. Browne mentions that we should be receiving it soon.

Donna called for a motion to table this until next time.

Tina motioned to table the FY24 Form 990. Cherieann seconded. All in favor, so moved.

Preliminary FY26 ED-279 Review:

- We distributed the preliminary ED-279, downloaded today.
- The figures were based on an Oct. 1st student count of 470. *In addition, there were 5 students from unorganized territories not included in the EPS calculation.*
- MEVA's total allocation less (not including) the Maine Charter School Commission's fee (2.45%) is **$5,507,134.23**. *Adjustments may be made throughout FY26.*
- We are closely monitoring any possible financial changes.

Dr. Browne – mentions that MEVA has taken more students this year, the 10/1 count was 470. This increase led to a greater subsidy of about $500K more than last year. We will have additional revenue from five (5) Unorganized Territories (EUT) students. This is new for MEVA; we are gathering information we need to plan for this billing.

Donna asked further, what did they do last year for the EUT students if they are not counted in the ED-279?

Dr. Browne said the state was operating in error, since it had always paid the bill. They were subsidizing those students through the ED-279. We do not know how much funding we will get per student. This is real time billing monthly, beginning in November 2025, like a private school. If the student leaves, we may not get paid for them. Dr. Browne mentions, this is unchartered territory with collecting tuition monthly. This is tricky since it is not based on 10/1 counts. Billing is based on the first day they attend to the last day they attend, beginning on our first day of school, August 25th, 2025.

Dr. Browne and Donna discussed concerns surrounding the current landscape with school funding right now.

Dr. Browne mentioned, we do not know how much of the ED-279 is federally funded and it is not as clear as the federal grants are. Dr. Browne mentions, it is nice to be a virtual school at this moment, the issues are a little less complex, but we could be impacted like everyone else. She will keep the board posted on any cuts if that is the case.

Tina- reiterates, we are getting an increase of approximately $500K. Do we anticipate any staffing needs? Dr. Browne said it depends on funding. We are currently serving our students well right now at MEVA. Dr. Browne Is confident that MEVA is fine and will keep an eye on things as we go.

FY26 Budget Planning Update:

- Workshops on 1/13, 2/10, 2/27, and 3/4. 2:00 pm.

Dr. Browne stated the third workshop is this Thursday, February 27th, and another one is planned for March 4th. Chad Cote from Clark Insurance will be attending the March 4th workshop to discuss FY26 insurance details further.

Administration. Dr. Melinda Browne presented the Head of School Report.

SY-2024/2025 Progress:

- We continue to disaggregate our NWEA and iReady data on a course level to inform teachers' practices.
- Teachers routinely share ideas, experiences, and data at department meetings and course planning meetings. We are cultivating a collaborative environment.
- We are aiming to have the grade 9 curriculum maps ready for your review/approval at the March meeting. Our next committee meeting is on 3/6, 3:00 pm.
- Overall, we are doing well and accomplishing our mission and vision.

Dr. Browne provided much data to the board members at the end of January 2025 with Winter 2025 NWEA results. MEVA continues to disaggregate the I-Ready results in addition to the NWEA and shares this data with teachers. The results were strong for winter, she hoped this trend would continue through spring. We continue to cultivate a collaborative teacher and learning environment. The school is aiming to have grade 9 curriculum maps

ready to present for the next board meeting. Overall, MEVA is doing well. Dr. Browne asserted that MEVA is accomplishing goals within the mission and vision.

SY 2024/25 Progress with Teacher Presentations. Dr. Browne introduced Lauren Sroka and Kim Pasternack.

Lauren Sroka joined MEVA during the fall of 2017 (Grades 7 & 8). Kim Pasternack joined MEVA a few years ago (Grades 7 & 8)

Lauren Sroka shared the resources the students were using weekly in her class. Everything was aligned with the Maine Learning Results. Lauren uses Common Lit, the 360 curricula, which includes targeted lessons that can help students with areas of weakness. The info from Common Lit was transferred and built into units within Brightspace. Each lesson /unit had specific instruction, a quiz, and a writing assignment in relation to the text. Another resource Lauren shared was No Red Ink. This program contained grade level language standards. This provided in-depth instruction for students learning a new skill. This program also taught how to cite things properly in their work Lauren encouraged reading peer book recommendations. Students' reading goals were established to improve their comprehension and reading scores. Students also participated in a "Time to Reflect" activity throughout the week, via four (4) separate ways. 1. Morning check ins 2. NWEA Reflection 3. Text Discussions and 4. "FriYaY" Reflection, where students get to rate themselves. We asked them to take this seriously, giving students this supportive opportunity to breathe, promoting their self-regulation.

Donna said that this came from a true teacher spoken from her craft. She loved the reflection piece and asked Lauren how the students are doing with it. Lauren replied it was a mix; some students were doing great with it and some were not great. However, it allowed us to know how they were doing. It told us what the students expected from themselves.

Kim Pasternack demonstrated the Nearpod platform. She shared a demo link with the board and attendees in the Zoom chat. Kim worked with students needing a slower pace. She also used Common Lit units in her class. It followed Ms. Sroka's class closely. Kim mentions that she adjusted content to suit the students' levels. They also use No Red Ink in her class similarly to Laurens class. They also run the class in small groups. One of the fun things Kim did in her class was escape rooms, to keep the students engaged and to help refresh their energy if they got tired. Kim provided examples within Nearpod on how she keeps kids active and engaged through games and fun visuals. She had different themes for each day of the week.

Donna expressed her appreciation to the teachers for sharing their creative strategies to engage the students.

MEVA Working Academic Plan:

- We distributed a copy of our working Academic Plan for your information.
- The plan includes details about the MTSS process, curriculum mapping, and instructional practices, as well as many other topics.
- The purpose of the working plan is to guide the faculty.

- We continue to make refinements as needed, based on feedback, goals, and experience. Evidence suggests that the plan is helping MEVA accomplish our goals.

Dr. Browne sent the Working Academic Plan to the board for informational and review purposes. This document was intended to be a guide/plan for faculty. It was a working document and was always being refined, based on feedback and data.

Governance.

MEVA Internet Stipend Procedure/Application.

Stacey questioned that the Internet Stipend form had no mention of an allotment. Jillian Dearborn stated that the rates varied by location and by carrier. There was not a set amount. Stacey asked what prevented someone from getting the biggest service package? Jillian replied, we required parents to send us a copy of their bill and we informed them that we only paid the internet portion of the bill. We also only paid for the duration of the school year. Dr. Browne added that we made payments directly to the vendors; we did not reimburse the parent. MEVA utilized the Preventing Students Homelessness grant to fund the project.

Donna asked Jillian about the month payment began and ended. Jillian informed the board that payment started in August and went through June, unless a student participated in summer school. In which case, payments were made through summer.

Donna asked how many families signed up for this program? Jillian stated, about five to ten (5-10) per year.

Dr. Browne reported that Preventing Student Homelessness was a small grant of about $5,000 per year, for students experiencing financial hardship. There was still money available in the FY25 grant.

Discussions surrounding whether this grant will be obtained next year transpired further into the meeting. There was uncertainty given the political climate.

Stacey expressed concerns about the visibility of the form, as it could open the door for people to take advantage of the program, if they knew it was offered. Jillian stated, the form had always been out there. This updated form clarified frequent questions that related to covering equipment. MEVA did not cover equipment to support their internet service.

Tina motioned to approve the MEVA Internet Stipend Procedure/Application. Cherieann seconded. All in favor, so moved.

Maine Association of Public Charter Schools (MAPCS).

Tina motioned to join Maine Association of Public Charter Schools (MAPCS). Cherieann seconded. None in favor (4 opposed. 0 in favor) Motion did not pass. MEVA will not join MAPCS.

Cherieann wanted to know more about why schools did not come together on their own. She made the point that paying an outside vendor to handle the discussions was not cost effective or necessary. She would like more information as to why people feel this organization was needed, especially considering budgetary uncertainty.

Stacey aligned her concerns with Cherieann and was uncertain about the benefit of joining. She wanted more information about the advantages.

Dr. Browne made the point that MEVA was a good citizen and helped charter school peers when requested.

Public Discussion.

Dr. Browne reported that the new Title IX revisions will be on the table at the next meeting, March 18th, so that the board understands the changes. There were planned updates to all the handbooks to suit. She expressed the importance for the board to have knowledge of the change.

Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:07 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephanie Emery and Dr. Melinda Browne
Secretary pro tempore