Minutes

MeANS Board of Directors Meeting

**Thursday, 11/18/21** **from 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm**

**At the Maine Academy of Natural Sciences School building**

**13 Easler Drive**

**Hinckley, Maine**

Board members present: Cheryl Bulmer (Zoom), Scott Byrd (Zoom), Mike Muir (Zoom), Anna Perkins (Zoom), Whitney King (Zoom), Kim Patnode (Zoom), Shannon Webber (Zoom), Dana Doran (Zoom), Martha Harris (Zoom), Jesse Wechsler

Staff Members Present: Matt Newberg, Abigail Skrabak, Christine Sullivan, Danni Best, Evan Coleman, Becky Dennison, Angela Hesketh (Zoom)

Board Members Not Present: Sally Beaulieu, Cheryl Mercier

1. Board Chair Call the meeting to order (Cheryl Bulmer) 4:32
2. Additions/Adjustment to the Agenda
3. Public Comment: Cheryl B. read a *Thank you note from the Threshold Teachers for the bonus check they received.*
4. Student/Staff presentation:

Evan is the new curriculum coordinator. He has experience as an instructional coach with project-based learning experience. He is working with staff to implement more hands-on learning. He shared that he wants to give an overview of where we are and where we are going.

Teachers were asked three questions: What defines a classroom? A student? An educator?

There are currently three types of instructional blocks:

1. Core Academics-Including English, math, science, and social studies. This happens during the first four hours. It looks like a study hall. Teachers support students in meeting the standards for each core class. Instruction is tailored to individual needs. Students work independently with little collaboration.
2. Project blocks and electives are one hour per day. Evan noted that more planning might be needed to make this block look more organized and meaningful.
3. Intensives may include a field trip and are focused on natural sciences. They look the most like project-based learning.

Harvest fest was used to begin the shift to project based learning. Evan also shared that they would like to make each instructional block look more like intensives. Incorporating projects that meet a standard. Current projects include studying apples and making vinegar in Chemistry, building bridges in Earth Science, and creating bait traps in English. (Also noted studying natural disasters, state maps, building puzzles, studying aquaponics and photography).

The goal would be to add a planning period to have thoughtful planned projects. Teachers will work with the curriculum coordinator during this time. Evan shared this will cut down on elective time which appeared to be too long. The goal is to build a new schedule for trimester two.

They are looking to engage seniors in their learning. This would be to change their focus on just meeting their standards and getting done. There is a plan to create defining moments for each grade level. Some examples include 9th graders having an orientation get together. It could be a week-long trip mentored by seniors, 10th graders would focus on career and doing things for their community, 11th and 12th graders would connect their interests to their future. All students would be required to do an internship as well as a capstone project that gives back to the community. Possibly have them give a senior class gift for future generations.

Scott stated that it was a thoughtful presentation. He shared that the Charter Commission asked MeANS to find ways to report out more data in ways that are not standardized testing. He asked how students are taking responsibility for their learning. Evan shared that they want students to track their learning and reflect on it meaningfully by talking through what the struggles are for the next year and share that with families. They are looking into digital portfolios that share their four-year trajectory. Evan stated that they are looking to conduct a survey or get written feedback focused on experiences rather than academics. He shared they would roll out other ideas with student input.

**Whitney**: Assessment must be front and center of what we are doing, right down to the metrics and align those with external standards. Challenges for MeANS is to sell to the students on the fact that their education will have a different trajectory. It is strongly encouraged to talk to students, but the teachers need to help as well. **Evan**: There is a Habits of Mind rubric that can be used to talk with each student. As a proficiency-based learning institute we don’t really have an evaluation of the process of learning. To improve daily engagement, it would be helpful to reintegrate the Habits of Mind rubric.

**Anna**: stated the teachers will like the structure and working with the students one on one. It makes a lot of sense, decreasing the time for electives and having more structure. **Jesse**: Any thoughts that they have about the structure? **Evan**: Every time we talked about the change, everyone seemed really excited about doing projects. It seems to have become one big planning period, so how do we use that time?

**Evan**: The current metric is the common core standards and NWEA metrics. **Matt**: There was a rubric asking what should freshmen have accomplished which was to gauge their pace and see how they are doing. It has switched to self-paced, which is good for the students, but not for teachers. Our goal is to have a general expectation for each grade. The project should hit the standard, blend the standards and curriculum. We want the information to be on the website to hopefully generate more interest.

1. Consent Agenda: (***Action requested*** by Approval of Consent Agenda)
   1. Board Meeting Minutes from 10/21/21
   2. HR committee Minutes 10/28/21: **Cheryl**: Are there any questions or comments on the documents? **Kim:** Item 4 in HR Committee Meeting Minutes, second bullet, it should be third reading not a second reading.
   3. Academic Affairs committee Minutes 10/18/21
   4. Head of School report

**Cheryl: Motion to accept Consent Agenda with the adjustment to the HR Minutes? Kim moved Jesse second.**

**Kim, Aye**

**Jesse, Aye**

**Shannon, Aye**

**Anna, Aye**

**Dana, Aye**

**Scott, Aye**

**Mike, Aye**

**Martha, Aye**

**Whitney, Aye**

**Cheryl B. Aye**

1. Action items
   1. **Kim Patnode:** The third reading of Personnel Policies Section 200: the only change needed to be changed there was an auto correction of MeANS. In the second reading Mike had some suggestions, section 300 needed more discussion. We will be bringing those to the board in the next couple months. **Martha**: On pg 23 200.08, policy definitions MeANS is misspelled, same on pg. 24.

**Cheryl B: Motion to accept Personnel Policies, Section 200, with those two corrections. Mike moves, Martha seconds.**

**Kim, Aye**

**Jesse, Aye**

**Shannon, Aye**

**Anna, Aye**

**Dana, Aye**

**Scott, Aye**

**Mike, Aye**

**Martha, Aye**

**Whitney, Aye**

**Cheryl B. Aye**

1. **1st Quarter Financials (Angela Hesketh):**  We were close to budget. The donation to Threshold is in the cash account.Mike will talk about it with the investing team then will share suggestions at the next meeting. Budget states a $257k loss for the first quarter and an actual loss before the grants for $214K. The grants show $93K as income because the grant revenue for the buses is reflected without expense as the buses are in fixed assets on the balance sheet. We have rented Keys Cottage for volunteers but get some additional revenue from renting the apartment on the top floor to offset the rent expense. Payroll is down because of the staff shortage. We are trying to recruit staff. The 1st quarter is in line with what we predicted.
   1. **Questions: Cheryl B:** One comment regarding budget concerns, is our placement costs. Gas is high, which is an issue to highlight. **Angela**: In regard to our out of district placement costs, we do have money set aside for that. The cost of the audit, however, is up more than what we budgeted. Specifically, $6,000 more due to the additional audit due to the extra grant money which put us over $750k. We talked about the fuel costs in the finance committee. CMP also has hiked up electricity costs.
   2. **Angela:** One of the places we are saving is payroll, because we ran short staffed. We do have an additional grant for funding staff this year. It’s the 3rd round of the ESSERF grant, and it’s for additional training for staff. It is a grant we must apply for. But the grant can go to some payroll and teacher engagement costs. **Cheryl B:** We can use that for budgeted items? **Angela**: ESSERF for March of 2020 was a little different, this round can be pre budgeted.
   3. **Matt:** We have determined that out placement at CMLC is $285/day. We are charged only for the days that the students attend. If they attend every day that would be $4500, so for two that would be under $10,000 per month. **Christine**: It’s 5 days a week but does not go through July. Unfortunately, we have no idea what the cost is going to be because the students may not attend. We are ready to set up an IEP for tomorrow but have not heard back from either of the students’ families. In regard to transportation, we do not have the ability to transport the students. Skowhegan will transport for us.
   4. **Christine:** The on campus teachers’ expense will increase because we have a student with auditory needs. The student will need a full time interpreter, which will be $70/hr. We may be able to get an interpreter for less if they are working for a consultant. Student is gradually losing hearing. They are missing information, and are not getting the full instruction, and therefore not having as much access to instruction as others. Also, Threshold needed a 7th teacher, for the 70 students we have in that program. That salary will come out of the Threshold gift, starting at the end of November. The Threshold gift was $600k received in September of 2020. **Angela:** My recommendation, if the board agrees, is to use the funds for the teacher’s salary right from the start. **Jesse:** Are you recommending that the salary will be paid for the current year from the gift? **Matt**: This may be a longer conversation. As we plan for the future, we may need to look at the Threshold ratio of 6 teachers to 70 students (this is one less teacher than we had in the past) a ratio of 1 teacher to 10 students may not be reasonable moving forward. We will need to figure out what will work in the future. Also, part of that $600k gift will go to Emanuel as a contracted provider, $30k a year for the 5 years which included the year ending June 2021. **Angela**: We cannot move the money in the bank account until we get an investment plan. It is secured until we get investments moving. There were no other questions.
2. Information sharing
   1. **Head of School Evaluation Process (Kim Patnode)**: We suggested a preliminary timeline, however due to some circumstances we will need to rethink the timeline. On pg. 35/36 is the framework summary, with guidance from the Charter Commission regarding the timeline. We needed to be flexible in September because of COVID and being short staffed. In the board pack there is a self-evaluation and growth plan. In April, we will review and do a final evaluation. We need to review if Matt has met his goals, prior to contract renewal. Thank you, Matt, for getting that done for this school year. The HR Committee will put together recommendations for the May board meeting. The Head of School’s two-year contract will expire this summer and we will need to come back to the board.
   2. **Head of School update**
      1. **Professional Development Plan** (**Matt):** In regard to the self-evaluation, on pg. 37 for “needs improvement,” Engagement Learning and Monitoring Growth, needs improvement. Workshops and Professional Development is hard, I have signed up for a couple, but have felt disconnected from collaborating with other school leaders. With Programs and Interventions, we have really struggled with student behavior and academics. More so on behavior than academics. Looking for remedial intervention for academic help. School culture feels strong, trying to celebrate the success of teachers and staff. In regards to Professional Instruction and Leadership, he feels as if this was strong. What improved was stakeholder engagement through the renewal process there was a lot of community engagement and the public hearing compliments. Emanual was good at drumming up engagement. Matt reached out to the parent group that was interviewed and it was good to connect with them. COVID has been tricky with engaging with community partners. Matt’s personal goal is to improve on community engagement with professional partners, and be a leader for professional development. Last fall we were at 74% of student body completing NWEA, and the Charter gave us the goal to hit 92%. We just completed testing and we hit 92%! Christine worked hard with all the teachers, and it was a group effort. He shared they need to hit that again in the winter and in the spring. We have a student growth goal and a goal to increase graduation rate. For standard tracking, we want to get ahead of students missing standards, and set up an intervention or remediation. For Matt’s professional goal, I want to figure out the student behavior piece then develop goals with the staff. He wants to work closer with Danni to work on a professional growth plan. He wants to help her facilitate behavior management in Infinite Campus. Danni’s job is a thankless job, and I want to help her, so it is not a singular effort. **Jesse:** With staffing shortage, do you foresee any free time? **Matt:** Yes, I had a leadership meeting recently and feel as if it’s the first time this year that we are gaining momentum so there will be some time. **Jesse:** Congrats on leading the school!
      2. **Other Head of School Announcements:** Matt shared that we are still understaffed. There is currently a math opening. We found an Ed Tech, so now we are up to 2. Administration is helping, but we all feel stretched. Matt met with Gina about the Charter renewal and sent out the document. The conversation went well, the stipulations are
      3. reasonable. **Cheryl:** We spoke with the Charter, the 5 year renewal would be negotiable, and would be negotiable heading into the spring, but I don’t remember the board being involved. In regard to the negotiation process, it pertains to the number of students enrolled. The future enrollment numbers are not set in stone and can be negotiated in the spring. **Scott**: We didn’t get into parts of negotiations. The last stipulation needs to be a goal for financial reporting. **Cheryl:** will talk to a consultant concerning how we are measuring this in future and what is a good way to report for the board? This may need to be a goal for the finance committee. They said 92% are using the Accuplacer pilot program. We may need to look at Threshold as a separate program. **Matt:** Gina said the Commission is moving away from the math growth test and the Maine state NWEA won’t be the assessment. The stipulation was in the winter we would be testing Juniors and Seniors through Accuplacer. Next year will be different, Accuplacer will be mandated to evaluate post-secondary readiness. Matt will need to go over the data so we can think about it. They want participation to be substantially met by May 2022 but we will push it to the end of June. Assessments will happen anyway. It was emphasized that the board and school will need to continue to think and nail down its enrollment numbers. Once the contract is signed we will need to tie down enrollment. **Scott:** Next board meeting, we will need to dig into those dynamics. What are the numbers for sustainability? The January meeting may be a good time to talk about that.
   3. **Report out of committee goals** **(Scott):** Executive committees should report out goals across the board. The Board’s 2-year evaluation is this spring. This is generic but we can add questions that are specific to our needs. Look at the Charter stipulations and align them with our core mission with the students. He suggested we bring in our consultant to help with strategic planning. Matt supports getting our consultant involved to help with applied science vs core content. Students don't get tested on science, but there are ways to test that. Another goal is board recruitment and talent. In the future there will be lots of transitions off the board, the Board President’s forum will help with that.
      1. **Finance Committee (Mike Muir):**  We discussed the role of the board with finances how we function on that level. The Commission wants the board to be involved, but what’s their recommendation? And if we are on track? We need to work on development, but schools are not used to working on financial development. **Cheryl**: We asked the Charter Commission and will see what comes back. **Mike:** We are working on differentiating between Threshold vs building finances, and also working on strategic and sustainability goals. **Jesse:** What does the board, financial goals look like, would it be aspirational? **Mike:** We will see what Charter suggests. We are considering taking what the Commission gave us as an example to the board. Usually, the finance committee brings anything big to the board. **Jesse:** Are we required to put this as a stipulation to the contract? **Matt:** Cheryl did a great job asking about this. This started before Jeremy came on to the Commission. **Mike:** They need some clarity. Angela usually uploads what has been seen and approved and the Commission wants the board to see this as well. Whatever they see they want the board to see. **Whitney**: Isn’t the financial summary discussed with the board? We don’t necessarily go through it line by line. We should have what needs to be discussed in a short summary. Aggregate dates are important for numbers, but we don’t need to know about small things like gas.
      2. **Academic Affairs Committee (Sally Beaulieu): Cheryl B:** Sally is not here. The committee’s goals are to observe the school once per trimester. Cheryl went in on Threshold Monday. And then Sally will meet to discuss with the committee. We know the results would be shared back with the board, but not sure about the faculty. Committee will discuss this suggestion.
      3. **HR Committee (Kim Patnode):**  We are primarily ready to wrap up the personal policy section and get them posted. The training goal for the committee was focused on the head of school evaluation. The tasks for the personnel committee were sharing the forms from the president's forum and seeing what is required and suggested for training. And to see what the Charter can do for us. **Jesse:** Is the HR committee helping with hiring or is that for administration? **Kim:** We can be supportive but not directly involved in staffing. **Jesse:** How does the board support hiring? **Matt**: The board is governance, the Head of School brings names to the Board. At leaders' meetings we could address the staffing topic. Matt could also talk to other Heads of Schools about retention.
      4. **Development Committee (Scott Byrd):** We have federal funding to be used. “By all means” yearly appeals will be sent out.  **Matt:** By All Means will be launched next week. Scott, will you come in to do a pitch? **Scott:** Yes. **Matt:** We are sending letters to everyone on our mailing list, which will include board members. Revenue from the campaign last year was under $4,000. Marketing has been a huge thing we are looking at working with local businesses to improve..
3. Other – None
4. Prep for the next meeting **– Next meeting is Thursday, January 20 at 4:30pm. If the committees could meet to work on their goals. If they need help, please reach out. Martha wants to be on the HR committee. Please make sure website bios are updated. Get Abby any changes and pictures. GWH requests participants on their governance board because they haven’t had an official member. Send Cheryl an email if you are interested.**
5. **Event auction is happening today, all money is for boarding students.**

**Jesse moved to end the meeting; Scott seconded.**

**Kim, Aye**

**Jesse, Aye**

**Shannon, Aye**

**Anna, Aye**

**Dana, Aye**

**Scott, Aye**

**Mike, Aye**

**Martha, Aye**

**Whitney, Aye**

**Cheryl B. Aye**

1. Adjourn 6:33