**Interim monitoring visit to MeANS**

**January 23, 2013**

**(Report Date: February 8, 2013)**

To: Glenn Cummings, Exec. Director, MeANS

Troy Frost, Co-Principal, MeANS

Emanuel Pariser, Co-Principal, MeANS

From: Richard Barnes, Review Team Chair, Maine Charter School Commission

Site Team members: Richard Barnes, Heidi Sampson, William Shuttleworth; Bob Kautz, MCSC Exec. Director; Nancy Connolly and Cindy Bernstein, representing the Div. of Special Education at MDOE.

Brief overview of the visit:

Throughout the day we met with several representatives from MeANS:

* Bob Tardy, Governing Board member, for MeANS and Good Will Hinckley
* Glenn Cummings, President of Good Will Hinckley and Exec. Director for MeANS
* Emanuel Pariser and Troy Frost, Co-Principals of MeANS
* Sheri Dodge, Bus. Mgr, MeANS
* Stephanie Jannenga, Special Education, MeANS
* Heather \_\_\_\_, Development Director, MeANS
* Brenda Poulin, educational technician
* Jeff Chase, Agricultural specialist/teacher
* Food service staff and several students, both in a formal Q and A and in informal classroom or lunchroom settings
* A parent

The Team had an overview orientation and presentation by school administrators and Board member Bob Tardy. We were given a tour of the campus, including classroom building, lunchroom area, and some of the locations for the school’s natural science and agricultural activities. During this time we had brief informal interactions with several students. After lunch we had an opportunity to interview students, two teachers, and a parent.

We reviewed several documents provided by MeANS prior to or on the date of our visit:

* Enrollment report by SAU
* Attendance report
* Gallup student poll results
* Protocol for MeANS assessment plan
* TABE results and analysis (baseline assessment data)

Summary comments on the Team’s visit:

The Team was very impressed with the candor with which the school leaders and staff spoke about the challenges facing MeANS in the future as well as its successes to date. We offered the following commendations and recommendations to the MeANS board and staff as the highlights of our interim visit report:

Commendations

1. The staff and student relationships, and the overall school climate are strong. The school’s embodiment of its professed “core values of respect, responsibility and service to the community” was apparent throughout our visit. Students were uniformly positive about their experience at the school.
2. The integration of an agriculture focus in curriculum with the emphasis on local food in the excellent food service program presents a strong statement of values in action.
3. The strong integration of project based learning with core academic standards, although it remains a work in progress, is apparent in the classrooms.
4. There is a strong emphasis on maintaining continuous communication with parents, whether the student is a day commuter or a weekday dorm student.
5. The school staff and administrators are very aware and forthcoming about the challenges that still lay before the school in such diverse areas as student recreational opportunity, substance abuse prevention, meeting special education needs and continuing to work on the staff’s understanding and mastery of standards-based teaching.
6. One student’s comment during our interview (and badly paraphrased here) struck all of us on the team as summing up our impressions for the day: “I had never thought that it would matter to me if a teacher showed any care or interest in me as a student—until I [arrived here] and found one who actually did.”

Recommendations:

1. That the school work to improve the staff’s understanding of and establishment of proficiency standards for all students. We recommend that the MeANS faculty join one or more professional development consortia operating in your area that are working on such standards and to continue comparing your student work products in the classroom with exemplars available from MDOE and other sources. **The Commission will expect to see a professional development plan in place by June, 2013 for the MeANS staff to meet its stated goals on standards-based graduation requirements.**
2. We encourage the staff to have the students focus on classroom cleanliness and order to the same degree as occurs in the cottage dormitory program.
3. Review the school’s level of emphasis on technology use, especially with regard to interconnectivity with the Internet through student access to wi-fi.
4. Be prepared to give the Commission a more detailed update on the school’s plan for meeting expected future needs and costs for providing special education services, provision for future of the residential program, and fundraising for a new, expanded classroom building for academic programs. **(See also the interim report from the Division of Special Education sent separately.)**
5. **Although not noted in our verbal report-out, we have subsequently discovered that one key staff member, given her present status as an Ed Tech III, may not be eligible to become a fully certifiable teacher as required by the law (sec. 2412.6.B). Many Ed Tech IIIs appropriately serve in relatively independent roles as instructors, and our review team does not question her competence as an instructor for her students. However, MeANS is not presently in compliance with its contract, and will not be in compliance until it creates a more formal arrangement with a teacher or teachers of record who meet the state qualifications for a “highly qualified/highly effective” teacher in the affected content area(s). Steps must be taken immediately to correct this oversight. We request a report back within 10 days as to your plan to address this, both in the immediate future and for the longer term. (This concern is separately noted in the report from Jan Breton in regard to the Special Education program.)**

**PLEASE NOTE**: The above report is “interim” in nature, and is intended to be informative for both the Commission and the MeANS Board and staff. It is not an official site visit report and is not to be considered a part of the permanent file for the contract.

This report was shared in a telephone follow-up conference call between the undersigned Review Team leader and the Co-Principals, Emanuel Pariser and Troy Frost on Feb. 6, 2013.

Submitted by,

Richard Barnes

February 8, 2013

Attachments:

1. Summary checklist from interim monitoring visit

Summary of Performance Indicators - January 2013 site visit

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Indicator | Not yet documented/ or begun | Under development/ in progress | Substantially underway or completed |
| Student Academic Proficiency |  | First cut at setting benchmarks—TABE scores on students |  |
| Student Academic Growth |  | Baseline data gathered |  |
| Achievement Gaps in proficiency and growth between major student subgroups |  | The curriculum is highly individualized—standards for proficiency and growth are in progress |  |
| Student Attendance |  | A good system in place |  |
| Recurrent Enrollment from Year to Year | N/A |  |  |
| Postsecondary readiness (for HS) | There is a senior class, their status is unclear. | Several students are taking KVCC courses |  |
| Financial Performance and Sustainability |  | See concern noted in narrative |  |
| Governance Board Performance and Stewardship |  |  | Governance committees are in place—MCSC will check on this in April. |
| Adequacy of Facilities Maintenance in Support of Program |  | Fundraising is underway to renovate a permanent classroom building |  |
| School Social and Academic Climate |  |  | Very positive social climate. |
| Parent and Community Engagement |  |  | Weekly parental contact from the co-principals. |