

Osprey Wilds
Environmental Learning Center

Higher Ground Academy
Renewal Evaluation Report

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....3
Recommendation.....3
School Overview6
Performance Evaluation Summaries.....7
Academic Performance Evaluation8
Environmental Education Performance Evaluation 15
Financial Performance Evaluation 28
Operations Performance Evaluation 41
School Response to Renewal Evaluation 84
Academic Performance Data Profile..... 88

Report Introduction

Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center (Osprey Wilds or OW), consistent with Minnesota Statutes Chapter 124E and as part of our commissioner-approved authorizing plan and the charter contracts with each school we authorize, evaluates the Academic, Environmental Education, Financial, and Operations performance of each school. These evaluations determine whether Osprey Wilds will renew the school for a new contract term and are completed to answer the following questions:

- Is the school's learning program fulfilling the primary purpose of charter schools, which is to improve the learning, achievement, and success of all students?
- Is the school financially viable and are its finances well managed?
- Is the school organization effective and is the school well governed?
- Is the school's learning program increasing students' environmental literacy?

These evaluations are summative, and ratings are given based on a school's performance over the course of the current contract term.

The complete Renewal Evaluation framework and information about the OW renewal process can be found at <https://ospreywilds.org/charter-school-division/csd-what-we-do/>.

Recommendation

The Osprey Wilds Charter School Division (CSD) recommends that the Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center Board of Directors renew the charter contract of Higher Ground Academy (HGA) for a term of five (5) years, giving the school authority to provide instruction to students in Kindergarten-Grade 12 in the manner set forth in its Application for Charter Renewal, with a maximum total enrollment of 1,430 students. The OW Charter School Committee affirmed this recommendation at its meeting on February 19, 2025 and the OW Board of Directors affirmed this recommendation at its meeting on February 27, 2025.

This recommendation for a five-year contract is based primarily on the school's academic performance. Per Exhibit P of the school's contract, "Charter renewal will be based primarily on a school's attainment of its academic and academic-related goals identified in Exhibit G, which is evaluated according to Osprey Wilds' Academic Performance Framework." In FY24, the most recent year for which data is available, the school earned 90% of possible points on the Academic Performance Framework. As a result and as outlined in Exhibit P of the charter contract, based on its performance on its contractual academic goals Higher Ground Academy is considered eligible for renewal.

Higher Ground Academy has demonstrated strong academic performance throughout the contract term. The school exceeded targets in Mission Related Outcomes, Reading Proficiency, Post-Secondary Readiness, and Attendance, while meeting targets in Math Proficiency, Science Proficiency, and Science Growth. Reading Growth and English Language Learners (ELL) performance approached targets, and Math Growth did not meet the target, though some improvement was noted over time. Proficiency indicators remain a strength, with Reading exceeding the standard and Math and Science meeting the standard. While state-level comparisons were weaker, the school performed better than the district across all subjects. Notably, students receiving Free/Reduced Price Lunch (FRP) and English Language Learners (ELL) outperformed the district by at least 10 points in all subjects.

The school also excelled in other key areas, with 100% of students participating in a community-related project each year. Additionally, the school's graduation rates surpassed the state's six-year rate by 10 percentage points and the district's four-year rate by 18 percentage points. The primary areas for improvement include Math Growth, which has remained below standard despite some

progress, and ELL performance, which declined from meeting to approaching the standard over the contract term. Overall, the school is serving students well, particularly in Reading, Math, and Science. It is important to note the context of this academic performance includes the impacts of the pandemic. Despite these challenges, the school earned 90% of possible points on the academic performance framework through the end of the contract term.

In addition, during the current contract period HGA received national recognition, with its elementary school ranked among the "Best Elementary Schools" by US News and World Report and its secondary academy ranking in the top 25% of high schools nationally and top 12% in Minnesota. The school also secured a \$35,000 Youthprise Grant to enhance its career development program in 2024 and doubled its request to further support student career exploration in the next year.

Higher Ground Academy has demonstrated strong financial health throughout the current contract term, consistently meeting both short-term and long-term financial stability indicators. The school remains financially well-managed, with accurate enrollment projections supporting balanced budgets. As enrollment continues to grow and the middle school nears capacity, the school is actively exploring relocation options to accommodate future expansion. During this contract period, the school successfully completed building renovations, and future budgets reflect a commitment to conservative financial management while prioritizing support for student programs.

Higher Ground Academy demonstrated strong performance in environmental education (EE) throughout the current contract term, successfully meeting all established standards. Over the course of the contract, the school's approach to EE was strengthened, refined, and reprioritized to better align with its mission and the needs of its student population. In response to feedback from the previous contract period, the school enhanced its communication processes for implementing and tracking data on the Environmental Literacy Plan. Additionally, staff worked to integrate environmental education across disciplines, ensuring a more cohesive and interdisciplinary approach. These strategic investments have expanded the variety of environmental learning opportunities available to students, enriched the academic program through service-learning activities and field trips when possible, and fostered a culture of environmental stewardship within the school community.

The school demonstrates a strong commitment to equity by fostering an inclusive environment that values students' diverse backgrounds and supports their academic success. The school integrates students' cultural identities into the learning experience, employing diverse staff who reflect the student population, incorporating cultural artifacts and celebrations, and differentiating lessons to honor students' backgrounds while maintaining academic rigor. An area for growth involves supporting teachers in critically examining their cultural perspectives and biases. While staff receive initial cultural awareness training, structured opportunities for deeper reflection are needed to enhance their ability to engage with diverse learners effectively.

Prior to any future contract period, the school will be required to bring several aspects of its governance and operations into compliance with statute and the contract. As noted throughout the finance, operations, and governance evaluation, before June 30, 2025 the school must:

- Revise its teacher development and evaluation model that meets statutory requirements.
- Update its Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) Plan to comply with all legal requirements.
- Adopt all required policies and plans:
 - Use of Peace Officers and Crisis Teams to Remove Students with IEPs from School Grounds
 - Employee and Service Provider Background Check Policy

- Weighted GPA Policy
- Concussion Procedures (Required if the school provides school-sponsored youth athletic activities)
- Library Materials Policy
- Records Retention Schedule
- E-Learning Day Plan (Required if the school plans to offer online instruction due to inclement weather)
- Telehealth Plan (Required for schools that serve students in Grades 7-12)
- Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness (CACR) Strategic Plan (formerly World's Best Workforce Strategic Plan)
- Review and revise the following policies to ensure compliance with state law:
 - Public Data Access Policy
 - Data Subject Rights and Access Policy
 - Teacher Evaluation Process
 - Nepotism Policy
 - Admission Policies & Procedures
 - Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) Plan
- Revise its articles of incorporation to comply with statute.
- Revise the bylaws to comply with statute and the charter contract
- Revise the bylaws of the affiliated building company to comply with statute.
- Resolve the conflict of interest between the school board and its ABC board and post an updated roster online.
- Revise its Director Evaluation Process to evaluate school leader performance in relation to OW contractual academic and environmental education goals and expectations in accordance with statute.
- Ensure it conducts the statutorily required number of drills in the current school year and develop a plan to conduct drills and document them in future years.
- Procure a lockable storage solution for refrigerated medications at the elementary school and ensure adequate key control to all medications.
- provide access to menstrual products at no charge in restrooms regularly used by all menstruating students in Grades 4-12 in accordance with MN Stat. §121A.212.
- Conduct BCA-level background checks on all current employees and ensure this practice is in place for future employees and volunteers going forward.
- Strengthen its current background check process by creating a policy that is specifically aligned to the requirements of statute, including a criminal history background check from the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.
- Bring its Annual Report into compliance with statute and the charter contract and post it to the school's website.
- Update the school website to ensure compliance with all statutory and contractual requirements.

School Overview

Mission: The mission of Higher Ground Academy is to prepare students to become successful, ethical, and responsible citizens who are ready for all the challenges of the twenty-first century. To that end, students graduating from the Academy will be college ready, stewards of the environment, and ethical citizens who value hard work, honesty, integrity, equity, and diversity.

Vision: The tenets of HGA are that all children can learn; that children learn all of the time; that experience teaches immediately; and that expectations are built on experience. Therefore, the vision is to encourage student’s maximum intellectual and leadership development to meet 21st century standards of education through concerted preparation to pursue postsecondary and post baccalaureate studies. It is intended that HGA students will be adequately prepared to assume leadership roles in their communities and fields of endeavor.

Description: The educational philosophy of HGA is that all children can learn. Based on that philosophy, we believe that the purpose of education is to help learners succeed within their own community and in the larger society. The Academy is a college preparatory school. The term succeed is used here to mean three things. First it means actualizing one's potential. Second, it means being equipped with knowledge and skills that include but are not limited to academic content knowledge, problem solving skills, inquisitiveness, good citizenship, team work, interpersonal skills, etc. These are skills required to get admitted to a college of choice, do well in college, find and hold a job later on and become a good citizen. Third, it means developing multicultural skills, skills that allow one to function very well within and outside their own culture including in the mainstream culture.

Year school opened: 1999

Year began with OW: 2015

Current contract period: July 1, 2020-June 30, 2025

School location: St. Paul

Website: www.hgacademy.org

Grade levels served: K-12

Student demographics: (per the school’s Annual Reports)

Demographic Trends	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Total Enrollment	1021	1070	1102
Special Education	4%	4%	3%
English Learners	40%	44%	49%
Free/Reduced Priced Lunch	95%	97%	98%
Black/African American	100%	100%	98%

Performance Evaluation Summaries

Academic	
Indicator 1: Mission Related Outcomes	Exceeds
Indicator 2: English Language Learners	Approaches
Indicator 3: Reading Growth	Approaches
Indicator 4: Math Growth	Does Not Meet
Indicator 5: Reading Proficiency	Exceeds
Indicator 6: Math Proficiency	Meets
Indicator 7: Science Proficiency	Meets
Indicator 8: Other Proficiency or Growth	N/A
Indicator 9: Post Secondary Readiness	Exceeds
Indicator 10: Attendance	Exceeds
Eligible for Renewal:	90%

Environmental Education	
Indicator 1: Awareness	Meets
Indicator 2: Knowledge	Meets
Indicator 3: Attitudes	Meets
Indicator 4: Skills	Meets
Indicator 5: Action	Meets

Financial	
Indicator 1: Financial Management	
1.1: Budgeting	Meets
1.2: Enrollment Variance	Meets
1.3: Financial Policies and Practices	Does Not Meet
1.4: Financial Reporting	Does Not Meet
1.5: Financial Audit	Meets
Indicator 2: Near-Term Financial Health	
2.1: Current Ratio	Meets
2.2: Days Cash on Hand	Meets
Indicator 3: Financial Sustainability	
3.1: Fund Balance Percentage	Meets
3.2: Total Margin/Agg. 3-Year Margin	Meets
3.3: Debt to Asset Ratio	Meets

Operations	
Indicator 1: Educational Program	
1.1: Mission & Vision	Meets
1.2: Instructional Practices	Meets
1.3: Curriculum	Meets
1.4: Assessment	Meets
1.5: Professional Development	Approaches
1.6: Equity	Approaches
1.7: Environmental Education Program	Meets
1.8: Educational Requirements	Meets
1.9: Special Education	Meets
1.10: English Learners	Meets
1.11: Parent & Student Satisfaction	Approaches
Indicator 2: Governance	
2.1: Board Composition & Capacity	Approaches
2.2: Board Decision-Making & Oversight	Approaches
2.3: Management Accountability	Does Not Meet
2.4: Environmental Education Oversight	Approaches
Indicator 3: School Environment	
3.1: Facilities & Transportation	Meets
3.2: Health & Safety	Does Not Meet
3.3: Sustainable Operations	Meets
Indicator 4: Student Rights	
4.1: Admissions & Enrollment	Does Not Meet
4.2: Due Process & Privacy	Meets
Indicator 5: Personnel Practices	
5.1: Licensure	Does Not Meet
5.2: Staff Retention	Meets
5.3: Employment Practices	Does Not Meet
Indicator 6: Compliance & Reporting	
6.1: Charter School Annual Reports	Approaches
6.2: Insurance	Meets
6.3: Authorizer & State Compliance	Approaches

**Higher Ground Academy
FY24 Academic Performance Evaluation
Contract Period July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2025**

The Academic Performance Evaluation is conducted to determine progress on overall student achievement at the school as evidenced by the school's attainment of the contractual goals in the charter contract and the school's performance according to the state's accountability system – the North Star system. This evaluation is conducted annually and is designed to provide an update on the school's performance on contractual measures to date. In addition to the annual evaluations, a final academic performance evaluation is issued as part of the school's summative renewal evaluation in the last year of its charter contract.

For detailed information on the school's contractual goals, including performance rating criteria and World's Best Workforce alignment, refer to Exhibit G of the charter contract. All performance ratings presented in this evaluation are based upon currently available data. For comprehensive data by each performance measure, see the Academic Data Profile.

Summary of Indicator Points

Indicator	Points Possible	Points Earned	Performance Ranking	Percent Earned Through FY24	Percent Earned Through FY23
1: Mission Related Outcomes	6	9	Exceeds	150%	150.0%
2: English Language Learners	4	2	Approaches	50%	50.0%
3: Reading Growth	16	11.5	Approaches	72%	71.9%
4: Math Growth	16	4.5	Does Not Meet	28%	28.1%
5: Reading Proficiency	16	18	Exceeds	113%	109.4%
6: Math Proficiency	16	12.5	Meets	78%	78.1%
7: Science Proficiency (and Growth)	8	8	Meets	100%	81.3%
8: Other Proficiency or	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
9: Post-Secondary Readiness	14	18	Exceeds	129%	107.1%
10: Attendance	4	6	Exceeds	150%	150.0%
Overall	100	90	Eligible for Renewal*	90%	84.5%

**In line with Minnesota's ESSA waiver, and due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on data collection and usability, MCA, ACCESS, and MTAS data collected during the 2020-21 school year will not be used for accountability purposes. To this end, Osprey Wilds will provide a FY21 academic evaluation to all schools, yet will use FY19 data to inform accountability decisions (i.e. renewal, etc.) until FY22 data becomes available.*

Summary Analysis: Higher Ground Academy has demonstrated mostly strong academic performance on contractual measures through the term of the contract. Four indicators exceeded target (Mission Related Outcomes, Reading Proficiency, Post-Secondary Readiness, and Attendance), two indicators met target (Math Proficiency and Science Proficiency and Growth), two indicators approached target (English Language Learners and Reading Growth) and one indicator did not meet target (Math Growth). All indicators maintained their performance levels from FY23 to FY24.

Reading Growth and Math Growth saw some improvement during the contract period. Reading Growth increased performance ranking from does not meet in FY22 to approaches standard in FY23. The Math Growth indicator has maintained a does not meet standard ranking for the duration of the contract term, despite showing growth in results for the school's local growth assessment from 51% to 62% of students increasing their scale score from fall to spring by at least 50% of the points needed to qualify as college pathway. For the publicly reported North Star measures, the school met target in reading and math for the overall percentage of students whose achievement level improved on statewide assessments. The school met target in reading and approached target in math for the overall percentage of students whose achievement level decreased or stayed "does not meet standards" on statewide assessments. The school experienced some success in Reading Growth over the contract term, with results in reading showing more growth than results in math.

Proficiency indicators are an area of strength for the school. All three proficiency indicators have maintained their performance ranking over the course of the contract, with Reading exceeding standard and Math and Science meeting standard. Comparisons the state performed less well than comparisons to the district across all subjects. Two student groups in particular did very well in comparison to the district, with both the Free/Reduced Price Lunch (FRP) and English language Learner (ELL) student groups outperforming the district by at least 10 points in all subjects. The measures that did not meet target were all student comparisons to the state in Math and Science, and third grade all students comparison to the state in Reading. Overall, the proficiency indicators indicate that the school is serving students well in Reading, Math, and Science.

Other indicator areas' performance is also a strength of the school. Mission Related Outcomes, Post-Secondary Readiness, and Attendance all exceeded standard throughout the term of the contract. Of particular note is that 100% of students successfully participated in a community related project in each year. Additionally, the school's graduation rate has been very high, exceeding the six-year rate of the state by 10 percentage points and the four-year rate of the district by 18 percentage points. The one indicator that was not as strong among this group is for English Language Learners. The performance ranking for this indicator declined from meets to approaches during the contract term, with the school approaching target for both measures in comparison to the state.

It is important to note the context of this academic performance includes the impacts of the pandemic. Despite these challenges, the school earned 90% of possible points on the academic performance framework through the end of the contract term. Based on performance to date, the school is "Eligible for Renewal" per Exhibit P of the charter contract.

Indicator 1: Mission Related

6 Points

School Goal: Over the period of the contract, students at Higher Ground Academy (HGA) will demonstrate commitment and connection to their community through service.			
Performance Ratings	Measure 1.1: From FY21 to FY24, the aggregate percentage of students that successfully participate in a community related project in each year will be at least 90%.	Points	Result
		6	100%
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The aggregate percentage is at least 95%.	X	9
Meets Target (x1.0)	The aggregate percentage is at least 90%.		
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The aggregate percentage is at least 80%.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
		Points Possible	Points Earned
		6	9
			% Earned
			150.0%

Analysis: The school demonstrated very strong performance on Mission Related Outcomes through the term of the contract. One hundred percent of students successfully participated in community related projects annually.

Indicator 2: English Language Learners

4 Points

School Goal: Over the period of the contract, English Learners at HGA will demonstrate adequate progress towards English language proficiency.			
Performance Ratings	Measure 2.1 [CCR]: From FY21 to FY24, the aggregate percentage of English Learners meeting target on the ACCESS test grades K-12 will be equal to or greater than that of the state percentage of English Learners meeting target.	Points	Result
		2	-5%
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The aggregate percentage is at least 10.0 percentage points greater than the state percentage of English Learners		
Meets Target (x1.0)	The aggregate percentage is equal to or greater than the state percentage of English Learners meeting target.		
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The aggregate percentage is within 5.0 percentage points of the state percentage of English Learners meeting target.	X	1
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
Performance Ratings	Measure 2.2 [CCR]: From FY21 to FY24, the average progress toward target for English Learners grades K-12 on the ACCESS test will be equal to or greater than the state average progress toward target.	Points	Result
		2	-3%
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The aggregate percentage is least 10.0 percentage points over the state average progress toward target.		
Meets Target (x1.0)	The aggregate percentage equal to or greater than the state average progress toward target.		
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The aggregate percentage is within 5.0 percentage points of the state's average progress toward target.	X	1
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
		Points Possible	Points Earned
		4	2
			% Earned
			50.0%

Analysis: The school's performance on English Language Learner measures declined slightly through the term of the contract. The percent of English Learners meeting target was 5 percentage points lower than the state, and the school's average progress toward progress was 3 percentage points lower than the state. Both measures approached target.

Indicator 3: Reading Growth

16 Points

School Goal: Over the period of the contract, students at HGA will demonstrate growth in reading as measured by state accountability tests and nationally normed assessments.			
Performance Ratings	Measure 3.1 [CCR]: In aggregate, from FY21-FY24, the overall percentage of students whose achievement level on the statewide assessments for reading (as measured by North Star Academic Progress) improved on statewide assessments is equal to or greater than the state percentage.	Points	Result
		2	6%
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The school achieves an overall percentage greater than 10 percentage points over that of the state.		
Meets Target (x1.0)	The school achieves an overall percentage equal to or greater than that of the state.	X	2
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The school achieves an overall percentage that is within 10 percentage points of the state.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
Performance Ratings	Measure 3.2 [CCR]: In aggregate, from FY21-FY24, the overall percentage of students whose achievement level decreased or stayed "does not meet standards" on statewide assessments for reading (as measured by North Star Academic Progress) is equal to or less than the state.	Points	Result
		5	-3%
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The school achieves an overall percentage at least 10 percentage points less than that of the state.		
Meets Target (x1.0)	The school achieves an overall percentage less than or equal to that of the state.	X	5
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The school achieves an overall percentage that is no more than 10 percentage points greater than that of the state.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
Performance Ratings	Measure 3.3 [CCR]: From F21 to FY24, the aggregate percentage of students who increase their scale score on the Fastbridge assessment from fall to spring by at least 50% of the points needed to qualify as college pathway will be at least 75%.	Points	Result
		9	68%
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The aggregate percentage is at least 85.0%.		
Meets Target (x1.0)	The aggregate percentage is at least 75.0%.		
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The aggregate percentage is at least 65.0%.	X	4.5

Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.			
		Points Possible	Points Earned	% Earned
		16	11.5	71.9%

Analysis: The school demonstrated mixed, though improving, performance on Reading Growth measures through the term of the contract. Local growth outcomes for FastBridge approached target through the term of the contract, with 68% of students increasing their scale score from fall to spring by at least 50% of the points needed to qualify as college pathway. North Star Progress measures saw the school meet target for both the percent of students whose achievement levels improved and for the percent of students whose achievement levels decreased or did not meet. Overall the school earned 72% of points for this indicator, which approaches target.

Indicator 4: Math Growth

16 Points

School Goal: Over the period of the contract, students at HGA will demonstrate growth in math as measured by state accountability tests and nationally normed assessments.				
		Points	Result	
Performance Ratings	Measure 4.1 [CCR]: In aggregate, from FY21-FY24, the overall percentage of students whose achievement level on the statewide assessments for reading (as measured by North Star Academic Progress) improved on statewide assessments is equal to or greater than the state percentage.	2	6%	
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The school achieves an overall percentage greater than 10 percentage points over that of the state.			
Meets Target (x1.0)	The school achieves an overall percentage equal to or greater than that of the state.	X	2	
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The school achieves an overall percentage that is within 10 percentage points of the state.			
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.			
		Points	Result	
Performance Ratings	Measure 4.2 [CCR]: In aggregate, from FY21-FY24, the overall percentage of students whose achievement level decreased or stayed "does not meet standards" on statewide assessments for reading (as measured by North Star Academic Progress) is equal to or less than the state.	5	8%	
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The school achieves an overall percentage at least 10 percentage points less than that of the state.			
Meets Target (x1.0)	The school achieves an overall percentage less than or equal to that of the state.			
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The school achieves an overall percentage that is no more than 10 percentage points greater than that of the state.	X	2.5	
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.			
		Points	Result	
Performance Ratings	Measure 4.3 [CCR]: From F21 to FY24, the aggregate percentage of students who increase their scale score on the Fastbridge assessment from fall to spring by at least 50% of the points needed to qualify as college pathway will be at least 75%.	9	57%	
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The aggregate percentage is at least 85.0%.			
Meets Target (x1.0)	The aggregate percentage is at least 75.0%.			
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The aggregate percentage is at least 65.0%.			
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.	X	0	
		Points Possible	Points Earned	% Earned
		16	4.5	28.1%

Analysis: The school demonstrated poor performance on Math Growth measures through the term of the contract. Local growth outcomes for FastBridge did not meet target through the term of the contract, with 57% of students increasing their scale score from fall to spring by at least 50% of the points needed to qualify as college pathway. North Star Progress measures saw the school approach target for the percent of students whose achievement levels improved and not meet target for the percent of students whose achievement levels decreased or did not meet. Overall the school earned 28% of points for this indicator, which does not meet target.

Indicator 5: Reading Proficiency

16 Points

School Goal: Over the period of the contract, students at HGA will demonstrate proficiency in reading as measured by state accountability tests.				
		Points	Result	
Performance Ratings	Measure 5.1a [RG3]: From FY21 to FY24, the school's aggregate proficiency index score for grade 3 students is equal to or greater than the state.	1	-10	
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The aggregate proficiency index score is at least 10.0 points above the state.			
Meets Target (x1.0)	The aggregate proficiency index score is equal to or greater than the state.			
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The aggregate proficiency index score is within 5.0 points of the state score.			
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.	X	0	
		Points	Result	
Performance Ratings	Measure 5.1b [CCR]: From FY21 to FY24, the school's aggregate proficiency index score is equal to or greater than that of the state for the same grades (3-8, 10).	4	-4	
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The aggregate proficiency index score is at least 10.0 points above the state's score.			
Meets Target (x1.0)	The aggregate proficiency index score is equal to or greater than the state's score.			
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The aggregate proficiency index score is within 5.0 points of the state's score.	X	2	
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.			
		Points	Result	
Performance Ratings	Measure 5.2 [CCR]: From FY21 to FY24, the school's aggregate proficiency index score is greater than that of the resident district (ISD 625 – St. Paul Public Schools) for the same grades (3-8, 10).	3	13	
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the district's score.	X	4.5	
Meets Target (x1.0)	The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score greater than the district's score.			
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score within 5.0 points of the district's score.			

Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
Performance Ratings	Measure 5.3 [AGC]: From FY21 to FY24, the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the FRP subgroup is equal to or greater than that of the state for the same subgroup and the same grades (3-8, 10).	Points	Result
		3	13
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The aggregate proficiency index score is at least 10.0 points above the state's score.	X	4.5
Meets Target (x1.0)	The aggregate proficiency index score is equal to or greater than the state's score.		
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The aggregate proficiency index score is within 5.0 points of the state's score.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
Performance Ratings	Measure 5.4 [AGC]: From FY21 to FY24, the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the FRP subgroup is greater than that of the resident district (ISD 625 – St. Paul Public Schools) for the same subgroup and the same grades (3-8, 10).	Points	Result
		3	24
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The school's aggregate proficiency index score is at least 10.0 points above the district's score.	X	4.5
Meets Target (x1.0)	The school's aggregate proficiency index score is greater than the district's score.		
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The school's aggregate proficiency index score is within 5.0 points of the district's score.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
Performance Ratings	Measure 5.5 [AGC]: From FY21 to FY24, the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the ELL subgroup will be greater than that of the resident district (ISD 625 – St. Paul Public Schools) for the same subgroup and the same grades (3-8, 10).	Points	Result
		1	18
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The school's aggregate proficiency index score is at least 10.0 points above the district's score.	X	1.5
Meets Target (x1.0)	The school's aggregate proficiency index score is equal to or greater than the district's score.		
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The school's aggregate proficiency index score is within 5.0 points of the district's score.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
Performance Ratings	Measure 5.6 [AGC]: From FY21 to FY24, the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the Special Education subgroup is greater than that of the resident district (ISD 625 – St. Paul Public Schools) for the same subgroup and the same grades (3-8, 10)	Points	Result
		1	3
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The school's aggregate proficiency index score is at least 10.0 points above the district's score.		
Meets Target (x1.0)	The school's aggregate proficiency index score is equal to or greater than the district's score.	X	1
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The school's aggregate proficiency index score is within 5.0 points of the district's score.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
		Points Possible	Points Earned
		16	18
			% Earned
			112.5%

Analysis: The school demonstrated strong performance on Reading Proficiency contractual measures through the term of the contract by achieving 113% of the possible points. The school's aggregate proficiency index was below the state for 3rd grade students and all grades combined. All other measures either met or exceeded target, with both the FRP and ELL student groups performing 24 points and 18 points above the district results, respectively.

Indicator 6: Math Proficiency

16 Points

School Goal: Over the period of the contract, students at HGA will demonstrate proficiency in math as measured by state accountability tests.			
Performance Ratings	Measure 6.1 [CCR]: From FY21 to FY24, the school's aggregate proficiency index score will increase by at least 5.0 points from the baseline proficiency index score (baseline score – 71.1) OR be equal to or greater than that of the state for the same grades (3-8, 11).	Points	Result
		5	Baseline -28 State -15
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The aggregate proficiency index score is at least 10.0 points above the baseline score OR at least 10.0 points above the state's score.		
Meets Target (x1.0)	The aggregate proficiency index score is at least 5.0 points above the baseline score OR equal to or greater than the state's score.		
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The aggregate proficiency index score is greater than the baseline score OR within 10.0 points of the state's score.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.	X	0
Performance Ratings	Measure 6.2 [CCR]: From FY21 to FY24, the school's aggregate proficiency index score will be greater than that of the resident district (ISD 625 – St. Paul Public Schools) for the same grades (3-8, 11).	Points	Result
		3	8
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the district's score.		
Meets Target (x1.0)	The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score equal to or greater than the district's score.	X	3
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score within 5.0 points of the district's score.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
Performance Ratings	Measure 6.3 [CCR]: From FY21 to FY24, the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the FRP subgroup will increase by at least 5.0 points from the baseline proficiency index score (baseline score – 70.9) OR be equal to or greater than that of the state for the same subgroup and the same grades (3-8, 11).	Points	Result
		3	Baseline -28 State 5
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The aggregate proficiency index score is at least 10.0 points above the baseline score OR at least 10.0 points above the state's score.		
Meets Target (x1.0)	The aggregate proficiency index score is at least 5.0 points above the baseline score OR equal to or greater than the state's score.	X	3
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The aggregate proficiency index score is greater than the baseline score OR within 10.0 points of the state's score.		

Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
		Points	Result
Performance Ratings	Measure 6.4 [AGC]: From FY21 to FY24, the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the FRP subgroup will be greater than that of the resident district (ISD 625 – St. Paul Public Schools) for the same subgroup and the same grades (3-8, 11).	3	19
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the district's score.	X	4.5
Meets Target (x1.0)	The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score equal to or greater than the district's score.		
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score within 5.0 points of the district's score.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
		Points	Result
Performance Ratings	Measure 6.5 [AGC]: From FY21 to FY24, the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the ELL subgroup will be greater than that of the resident district (ISD 625 – St. Paul Public Schools) for the same subgroup and the same grades (3-8, 11).	1	9.7
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the district's score.		
Meets Target (x1.0)	The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score equal to or greater than the district's score.	X	1
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score within 5.0 points of the district's score.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
		Points	Result
Performance Ratings	Measure 6.6 [AGC]: From FY21 to FY24, the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the Special Education subgroup will be greater than that of the resident district (ISD 625 – St. Paul Public Schools) for the same subgroup and the same grades (3-8, 11).	1	0.2
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the district's score.		
Meets Target (x1.0)	The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score equal to or greater than the district's score.	X	1
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score within 5.0 points of the district's score.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
		Points Possible	Points Earned
		16	12.5
			% Earned
			78.1%

Analysis: The school demonstrated mostly strong performance on Math Proficiency contractual measures through the term of the contract by achieving 78% of the possible points. The school's aggregate proficiency index was below the baseline and the state for all grades. All other measures either met or exceeded target. It is important to note the decline of 28 points from the baseline is significant.

Indicator 7: Science Proficiency

8 Points

School Goal: Over the period of the contract, students at HGA will demonstrate proficiency in science as measured by state accountability tests.			
		Points	Result
Performance Ratings	Measure 7.1 [CCR]: From FY21 to FY24, the school's aggregate proficiency index score will increase by at least 5.0 points from the baseline proficiency index score (baseline score – 58.7) OR be equal to or greater than that of the state for the same grades (5, 8, HS).	2	Baseline State -15 -10.0
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The aggregate proficiency index score is at least 10.0 points above the baseline score OR at least 10.0 points above the state's score.		
Meets Target (x1.0)	The aggregate proficiency index score is at least 5.0 points above the baseline score OR equal to or greater than the state's score.		
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The aggregate proficiency index score is greater than the baseline score OR within 10.0 points of the state's score.	X	1
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
		Points	Result
Performance Ratings	Measure 7.2 [CCR]: From FY21 to FY24, the school's aggregate proficiency index score will be greater than that of the resident district (ISD 625 – St. Paul Public Schools) for the same grades (5, 8, HS).	2	7.6
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the district's score.		
Meets Target (x1.0)	The school's aggregate proficiency index score is greater than the district's score.	X	2
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The school's aggregate proficiency index score is within 5.0 points of the district's score.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
		Points	Result
Performance Ratings	Measure 7.3 [AGC]: From FY21 to FY24, the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the FRP subgroup is equal to or greater than that of the state for the same subgroup and the same grades (5, 8, HS).	1	9
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The aggregate proficiency index score is at least 10.0 points above the state's score.		
Meets Target (x1.0)	The aggregate proficiency index score is equal to or greater than the state's score.	X	1
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The aggregate proficiency index score is within 10.0 points of the state's score.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
		Points	Result
Performance Ratings	Measure 7.4 [AGC]: From FY21 to FY24, the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the FRP subgroup is greater than that of the resident district (ISD 625 – St. Paul Public Schools) for the same subgroup and the same grades (5, 8, HS).	1	20
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the district's score.	X	1.5
Meets Target (x1.0)	The school's aggregate proficiency index score is greater than the district's score.		
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The school's aggregate proficiency index score is within 5.0 points of the district's score.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
		Points	Result
Performance Ratings	Measure 7.5 [AGC]: From FY21 to FY24, the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the ELL subgroup will be greater than that of the resident district (ISD 625 – St. Paul Public Schools) for the same subgroup and the same grades (5, 8, HS).	1	14
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the district's score.	X	1.5

Meets Target (x1.0)	The school's aggregate proficiency index score is greater than the district's score.		
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The school's aggregate proficiency index score is within 5.0 points of the district's score.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
		Points	Result
Performance Ratings	Measure 7.6 [AGC]: From FY21 to FY24, the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the Special Education subgroup will be greater than that of the resident district (ISD 625 – St. Paul Public Schools) for the same subgroup and the same grades (5, 8, HS).	1	6
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the district's score.		
Meets Target (x1.0)	The school's aggregate proficiency index score is greater than the district's score.	X	1
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The school's aggregate proficiency index score is within 5.0 points of the district's score.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
		Points Possible	Points Earned
		8	8
			% Earned
			100.0%

Analysis: The school demonstrated strong performance on Science Proficiency measures through the term of the contract by achieving 100% of the possible points. The school's aggregate proficiency index was below the baseline and the state for all grades. All other measures either met or exceeded target.

Indicator 8: Proficiency or Growth in Other Curricular Areas or Educational Programs

N/A Points

The school does not have a contractual goal in this optional indicator area.

Indicator 9: Post-Secondary Readiness

14 Points

School Goal: Over the period of the contract, students at HGA will demonstrate readiness for post secondary success.			
		Points	Result
Performance Ratings	Measure 9.1 [GRAD]: From FY20 to FY24, the school's aggregate 6-year graduation rate will be equal to or greater than the state rate.	4	10%
Exceeds Target (x1.5)	The school's aggregate graduation rate is at least 5.0 percentage points above the state rate.	X	6
Meets Target (x1.0)	The school's aggregate graduation rate is equal to or greater than the state rate.		
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The school's aggregate graduation rate is within 5.0 percentage points of the state rate.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
		Points	Result
Performance Ratings	Measure 9.2 [GRAD]: From FY20 to FY24, the school's aggregate 4-year graduation rate will be greater than the rate of the resident district (ISD 625 – St. Paul Public Schools).	4	18%
Exceeds Target (x1.5)	The school's aggregate graduation rate is at least 10.0 percentage points above the district rate.	X	6
Meets Target (x1.0)	The school's aggregate graduation rate is greater than the district rate.		
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The school's aggregate graduation rate is within 5.0 percentage points of the district rate.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
		Points	Result
Performance Ratings	Measure 9.3 [CCR]: From FY20 to FY24, the aggregate percentage of graduating students achieving an assessment score on a college entrance or placement exam (ACT or Accuplacer) that would place them at college or career ready on at least 50% of the exam sections (e.g. English, Reading, Science, Math, Writing on the ACT or Language Arts, English, Math on the Accuplacer) will be at least 70%.	2	97%
Exceeds Target (x1.5)	The aggregate percentage is at least 80%.	X	3
Meets Target (x1.0)	The aggregate percentage is at least 70%.		
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The aggregate percentage is at least 60%.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
		Points	Result
Performance Ratings	Measure 9.4 [CCR]: From FY20 to FY24, the aggregate percentage of graduates that earned college credit prior to graduation will be at least 50%.	2	49%
Exceeds Target (x1.5)	The aggregate percentage is at least 60%.		
Meets Target (x1.0)	The aggregate percentage is at least 50%.		
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The aggregate percentage is at least 40%.	X	1
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
		Points	Result
Performance Ratings	Measure 9.5 [CCR]: From FY20 to FY21, the aggregate percentage of graduates that are accepted into at least one college prior to graduation will be at least 60%.	2	97%
Exceeds Target (x1.5)	The aggregate percentage is at least 100%.		
Meets Target (x1.0)	The aggregate percentage is at least 80%.	X	2
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The aggregate percentage is at least 60%.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
		Points Possible	Points Earned
		14	18
			% Earned
			128.6%

Analysis: The school demonstrated very strong performance on Post-Secondary Readiness contractual measures through the term of the contract by achieving 129% of the possible points. The school's graduation rate has been very high, exceeding that of the state for the 6-year rate and that of the district for the 4-year rate. Additionally, 97% of graduating students received a college-ready assessment score and the same percentage were accepted to college prior to graduation. The percent of graduating students earning college credit in the last two years of the contract was 49%, just below the target of 50%.

Indicator 10: Attendance

4 Points

<i>School Goal: Over the period of the contract, students at HGA will attend the school at high rates.</i>			
Performance Ratings	Measure 10.1: From FY20-24, the average of the school's annual consistent attendance rates is equal to or greater than that of the state.	Points	Result
		4	7%
Exceeds Target (x 1.5)	The average of the school's consistent attendance rates is 5 percentage points greater than that of the state.	X	6
Meets Target (x1.0)	The average of the school's consistent attendance rates is equal to or greater than that of the state.		
Approaches Target (x0.5)	The average of the school's consistent attendance rates is within 5 percentage points of the state.		
Does Not Meet Target (x0.0)	The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.		
		Points Possible	Points Earned
		4	6
			% Earned
			150.0%

Analysis: The school demonstrated very strong performance on the Attendance measure through the term of the contract by achieving 150% of the available points. The average consistent attendance rate was 7 points above the state's rate and thus exceeded target.

Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center Environmental Education Performance Evaluation

Overview

The Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center defines environmental education as the implementation of values and strategies that foster learning and create environmentally literate people who engage in creating healthy outcomes for individuals, communities, and the Earth. The overarching goal of environmental education is an environmentally literate population. The test of environmental literacy is the capacity of an individual to work individually and collectively toward sustaining a healthy natural environment. An individual's capacity is built through developing awareness, knowledge, skills, and attitudes in support of sustaining a healthy planet where all people live in balance with the Earth.

The Environmental Evaluation (EE) Performance Framework was derived through a review of Osprey Wilds' charter contract, Minnesota's plan for environmental education, as well as the "Awareness to Action Continuum," identified in the Tbilisi Declaration (1977) and outlined below. The five components identified below are critical to the development of environmental literacy, but they are not mutually exclusive or necessarily sequential.



No single indicator describes the full picture of a school's environmental focus or performance on its EE-related goals. The performance areas are to be used together to indicate the total picture of the school's EE efforts. As appropriate, this evaluation should provide guidance for the school on areas of improvement.

This evaluation is informed by data from state assessments, data provided by the school, Osprey Wilds site visits to the school, interviews, and other information available to Osprey Wilds. Its purpose is to determine the strength and level of the school's overall environmental focus, as well as progress on contractual goals in the charter contract. Results of this evaluation become part of the body of information used to inform charter school renewal decisions made by the Osprey Wilds Board of Directors.

The Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center (Osprey Wilds), as part of the charter contracts with each school we authorize, evaluates each school's progress towards its environmental education (EE) related goals. Each school is required, as a condition of its contract, to provide opportunities to instill a connection and commitment to the environment through experiential learning. While environmental education is a pervasive educational strategy intended to permeate all curricular components, it is particularly useful in science learning and as a component of other curricula through hands-on, place-based learning activities.

Osprey Wilds' approach to measuring a school's commitment to and performance of environmental education is evolving. This evaluation framework reflects Osprey Wilds' current established guidelines for determining mission match; however, as the expectations and processes become more defined, the evaluation metrics will reflect that definition. Osprey Wilds will work closely with schools during their contract renewal period to clarify the expectations, goals, and reporting procedures.

Environmental Education Performance Indicators

The Environmental Education Performance Framework includes eight indicators, or general categories, used to evaluate a school’s environmental education performance.

OUTCOMES	Indicator 1: Awareness	Students demonstrate an awareness of the relationship between the environment and human life and the diversity of life that shares the earth with humans.
	Indicator 2: Knowledge	Students have knowledge of how natural systems function and how human systems interact with and depend on them.
	Indicator 3: Attitudes	Students demonstrate respect and concern for the earth’s health and the motivation to participate in environmental stewardship.
	Indicator 4: Skills	Students possess the skills needed to identify and critically analyze environmental issues, and to contribute to resolving the root of environmental challenges.
	Indicator 5: Action	Students have the capacity, or are increasing their capacity, to perceive and interpret the health of environmental and social systems and take appropriate action to maintain, restore, or improve the health of those systems.

Ratings

Each measure will receive one of three ratings based on evaluation of the established indicators. Again, no one measure identifies the full picture of a school’s operational standing. The measures are to be used together to indicate the total strength of the school’s EE program.

OUTCOMES:

Meets Standard

The school met its contractual goal and provided evidence of increasing environmental literacy among its students.

Approaches Standard

The school nearly met its contractual goal and provided some evidence of environmental literacy among its students.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school did not meet its contractual goal or provided insufficient evidence of environmental literacy among its students.

Summary of Environmental Education Performance

Indicator		Rating
Outcomes	Indicator Area 1: Awareness	Meets Standard
	Indicator Area 2: Knowledge	Meets Standard
	Indicator Area 3: Attitudes	Meets Standard
	Indicator Area 4: Skills	Meets Standard
	Indicator Area 5: Action	Meets Standard

Summary

The approach to environmental education (EE) at Higher Ground Academy (HGA) was strengthened, refined, and reprioritized over the term of the contract. Environmental literacy outcomes for students have been consistently strong each of the contract years, but the contractual expectations of Exhibit H were initially not well understood among staff, school leadership, and the board. In response to feedback from the previous contract period, the school improved its communication processes for implementing and tracking data on the environmental literacy plan, and staff worked to embed environmental education into their curricula across disciplines. These investments in the EE program have provided a greater variety of environmental learning activities to students, enriched the academic program through service-learning activities and field trips when possible, and encouraged a culture of environmental stewardship at the school.

EE Performance Indicator 1: Awareness

Standard:

Students demonstrate an awareness of the relationship between the environment and human life and the diversity of life that shares the earth with humans.

School Goal:

1. Students at Higher Ground Academy have the awareness, or are increasing their awareness, of the relationship between the environment and human life as measured by curriculum-based measures across the contract period.

Rating:

Meets Standard

The school met its contractual goal and provided evidence of increasing environmental literacy among its students.

Approaches Standard

The school nearly met its contractual goal and provided some evidence of environmental literacy among its students.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school did not meet its contractual goal or provided insufficient evidence of environmental literacy among its students.

Data:

HGA's 2023-2024 ELP indicated the following measures for this indicator area:

- Grades 4, 5, 7 - Students will spend time journaling about the environment bi-weekly (This can include nature observations, field trips, speakers, and other environmental activities).
 - 60% or more of the students will score 60% or better on a five-point checklist for awareness.
 - **Results:** 4th grade- 66 out of 83 students (79%) scored 60% or higher on the checklist for awareness.
 - 5th grade- 82 out of 90 students (91%) scored 60% or greater on their checklist for Awareness.
 - 7th grade - 90 out of 90 students (100%) scored 60% or higher on the checklist for awareness.
- Grade 7- Social Studies: Students will be able to identify ways humans impact endangered species. Students will be able to identify factors that impact endangered animals and the relationship between humans and animal interactions on the environment. Students will journal as they research and will be able to identify the ways humans impact endangered species. Students will respond to questions that draw out their understanding about the problem.
 - 63 out of 90 students (70%) journals will show evidence of being able to identify ways human impact on the environment also impact endangered species. Graded on a four point rubric, 70% or more of the students will score 3 or better.
 - **Results:** This activity was not reported on.
- Students in Grade 8 will demonstrate they have awareness, or are increasing in awareness of the relationship between environments and human life through scenarios that might

include: quizzes, journal writing, videos, or pre/post surveys. These activities will utilize HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) questions and comparison pre/post surveys. Quizzes, Journal Writing, Video, or Pre-Post tests.

- In at least one learning activity, 75% of students in grade 8 will be able to identify at least one accurate example of positive interaction between humans and the environment.
 - **Results:** 80/91 (88%) of students in the 8th grade completed a quiz or wrote a paragraph. Students have learned about subduction which is Earth's natural cycle of the seafloor. 88% of the students were able to demonstrate their awareness of growing the relationship between the environment and human life with at least one example of a positive interaction between humans and the environment in writing and illustration.

Analysis:

In the 23-24 school year, the school provided evidence that the target number of students successfully met the learning target for the first and third strategy and evaluation methods. The evidence from strategy and evaluation method 1.1 and 1.3 demonstrates that students at HGA have or are increasing their awareness of the relationship between the environment and human life.

The school earned a rating of Meets Standard in this indicator area. The annual EE performance data provided to Osprey Wilds during the term of the contract demonstrates that the school has systems in place to ensure student outcomes meet the learning targets outlined in Indicator 1, and therefore the school earns an overall rating of Meets Standard.

EE Performance Indicator 2: Knowledge

Standard:

Students have knowledge of how natural systems function and how human systems interact with and depend on them.

School Goal:

1. Students at Higher Ground Academy have the knowledge, or are increasing their knowledge, of human and natural systems and processes as measured by curriculum-based measures across the contract period.

Rating:

Meets Standard

The school met its contractual goal and provided evidence of increasing environmental literacy among its students.

Approaches Standard

The school nearly met its contractual goal and provided some evidence of environmental literacy among its students.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school did not meet its contractual goal or provided insufficient evidence of environmental literacy among its students.

Data:

HGA's 2023-2024 ELP indicated the following measures for this indicator area:

- Grade 3 - Throughout the school year students will gain knowledge about a natural system. The following activities could include: Research, read aloud, field trips, recycling, reducing, reusing, endangered animals book, videos.
 - Quarterly, students will take a test designed to assess targeted knowledge. 60% or more of the students will score 60% or better on the test.
 - **Results:** 70 out of 84 students (82.74%) scored 60% or higher on the test on animal traits, life cycle, environment and how to protect them.
- Grade 6 - Throughout the school year students will gain knowledge about global warming. This could include the following activities: research, videos, poster, recycling, reducing, reusing, field trips.
 - Quarterly, students will take a test designed to assess targeted knowledge. 60% or more of the students will score 60% or better on the test.
 - **Results:** 6th grade - 92 out of 92 students (100%) scored 60% or higher on the test on climate change and pollution.
- Throughout the school year students in grade 9 will gain knowledge or are increasing their knowledge of human and natural systems and processes about how a natural system and human systems and how they interact. The following interdisciplinary projects may include research notes, letters, quiz, field trips, PSA posters, watching videos.
 - 70% or more of interdisciplinary student products demonstrate that they are comfortable with targeted knowledge OR 70% or more of students will have less than 2/10 errors in related content knowledge after taking a quiz.

- **Results:** In social studies, 84.3% (81/95) of the students turned in their recycling research. 98.8% scored a 70% or higher.

Analysis:

In the 23-24 school year, the school provided evidence that the target number of students successfully met the learning target for each strategy and evaluation method in this indicator area. This evidence demonstrates that students at HGA have or are increasing their knowledge of human and natural systems and processes.

Each year of the contract term, the school earned a rating of Meets Standard in this indicator area. The annual EE performance data provided to Osprey Wilds during the term of the contract demonstrates that the school has systems in place to ensure student outcomes meet the learning targets outlined in Indicator Area 2, and therefore the school earns an overall rating of Meets Standard.

EE Performance Indicator 3: Attitudes

Standard:

Students demonstrate respect and concern for the earth's health and the motivation to participate in environmental stewardship.

School Goal:

1. Students at Higher Ground Academy have an attitude, or are increasing their attitude of, appreciation and concern for the environment as measured by curriculum-based measures across the contract period.

Rating:

Meets Standard

The school met its contractual goal and provided evidence of increasing environmental literacy among its students.

Approaches Standard

The school nearly met its contractual goal and provided some evidence of environmental literacy among its students

Does Not Meet Standard

The school did not meet its contractual goal or provided insufficient evidence of environmental literacy among its students.

Data:

HGA's 2023-2024 ELP indicated the following measures for this indicator area:

- Grade 1 - To promote environmental stewardship students will work towards their EE goal by reading about pollinators and then compare how the movie The Lorax and our Earth are the same and how they are different. Students will respond to a 3 question pre and post survey called "How can we protect our Earth?"
 - A comparison of pre and post survey will show that at least 60% of students have increased attitude of, appreciation and concern for the environment.
 - **Results:** Grade 1- 63 out of 92 students (68%) scored at least 60% on the survey questions about pollinators.
- Grade 2 - To promote environmental stewardship students will work towards their EE goal. 2nd grade students will read books about reducing, recycling, and reusing and then create posters about recycling, reducing food waste, and the importance of not contaminating organics. Students will respond to a 3 question pre and post survey indicating their knowledge of food waste and its impacts on the environment.
 - A comparison of pre and post survey will show that at least 60% of students have increased attitude of, appreciation and concern for the environment.
 - **Results:** Out of 85 students 2 (2%), demonstrated a knowledge of what food waste is. How does food waste hurt our Earth? 40% of students demonstrated knowledge and provided examples of how food waste can hurt the environment. What can you do to reduce food waste? 65% of students were able to give real world examples on how they have/can reduce food waste.

- 10th grade students will have an attitude, or are increasing their attitude of, appreciation and concern for the environmental stewardship by identifying and analyzing environmental issues that contribute to environmental challenges through learning activities like reading articles, class discussions, and questionnaires. Students will take both a pre and post survey before and after the learning
 - A comparison of pre and post surveys will provide evidence that at least 70% of 10th grade students have an increased attitude of appreciation and concern for the environment and stewardship.
 - **Results:** Pre-survey- 51 participants. Post - Survey- 52 students participated with 99% of those students reaching the goal of 70% or higher on their post-survey.

Analysis:

In the 23-24 school year, the school provided evidence that the target number of students successfully met the learning target for the first and third strategies and evaluation methods in this indicator area. This evidence demonstrates that students at HGA have an attitude, or are increasing their attitude of, appreciation and concern for the environment.

In all but one year of the contract term, the school earned a rating of Meets Standard in this indicator area. The annual EE performance data provided to Osprey Wilds during the term of the contract demonstrates that the school has systems in place to ensure student outcomes meet the learning targets outlined in Indicator Area 3, and therefore the school earns an overall rating of Meets Standard.

EE Performance Indicator 4: Skills

Standard:

Students possess the skills needed to identify and critically analyze environmental issues, and to contribute to resolving the root of environmental challenges.

School Goal:

1. Students at Higher Ground Academy have or are increasing their problem solving and critical thinking skills as it relates to the environment and human life as measured by curriculum-based measures across the contract period.

Rating:

Meets Standard

The school met its contractual goal and provided evidence of increasing environmental literacy among its students.

Approaches Standard

The school nearly met its contractual goal and provided some evidence of environmental literacy among its students.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school did not meet its contractual goal or provided insufficient evidence of environmental literacy among its students.

Data:

HGA's 2023-2024 ELP indicated the following measures for this indicator area:

- Grades K and 2 - Students will learn environment issues. Students will identify what the problem is and how they will solve the problem. Students will include learning and identifying the problem and how to solve it. Possible activities: waste in the classroom and cafeteria. Learning about reducing, reusing, and recycling. Learning about sunlight and planting.
 - Students will score 60% or better on a skills checklist for the environmental issue their grade learns about.
 - **Results:** Kindergarten- 85% of students scored 60% or better on their skills checklist. Students participated in an activity about conserving water.
 - 2nd grade - 70% of students scored 60% or greater on their checklist for skills.
- Students in 11th grade will have or will increase their problem-solving and critical thinking skills as it relates to the environment and human life by identifying and critically analyzing environmental issues that contribute to environmental challenges
 - 70% of Students in 11th grade will show evidence in a product where they have thought critically about an eco-issue and used a problem solving approach when completing the assigned project, scoring at least 80% (or 3 of 4 points) on the product rubric.
 - **Results:** In social studies, 49/54 or 90% achieved 83% accuracy when answering comprehension questions. 41/49 (83%) identified major issues causing the world's water crisis.

Analysis:

In the 23-24 school year, the school provided evidence that the target number of students successfully met the learning target for both of the strategies and evaluation methods in this indicator area. This evidence demonstrates that students at HGA have or are increasing their problem solving and critical thinking skills as it relates to the environment and human life.

Each year of the contract term, the school earned a rating of Meets Standard in this indicator area. The annual EE performance data provided to Osprey Wilds during the term of the contract demonstrates that the school has systems in place to ensure student outcomes meet the learning targets outlined in Indicator Area 4, and therefore the school earns an overall rating of Meets Standard.

EE Performance Indicator 5: Action

Standard:

Students have the capacity, or are increasing their capacity, to perceive and interpret the health of environmental and social systems and take appropriate action to maintain, restore, or improve the health of those systems.

School Goal:

1. Students at Higher Ground Academy demonstrate the capacity, or are increasing their capacity, to work individually and collectively toward sustaining a healthy natural environment as measured by curriculum-based measures across the contract period.

Rating:

Meets Standard

The school met its contractual goal and provided evidence of increasing environmental literacy among its students.

Approaches Standard

The school nearly met its contractual goal and provided some evidence of environmental literacy among its students.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school did not meet its contractual goal or provided insufficient evidence of environmental literacy among its students.

Data:

HGA's 2023-2024 ELP indicated the following measures for this indicator area:

- Grades 3, 4, 5 - Students will recycle, reduce, and reuse materials in their classroom and school to work on becoming greener students. Students will: Identify a problem and plan or problem solve ways to take action to solve the problem. Activities could include classroom or school wide recycling program, reduce waste program, or reuse different materials program, making videos, writing letters, be on the Eco Team, posters, presentations, and/or announcements.
 - 60% or more of the students will score 60% or better on the project checklist.
 - **Results:** 3rd grade - 66 out of 84 students (79%) scored 60% or higher on the checklist for action.
 - 4th grade - 81 out of 83 students (97%), scored 60% or higher on the checklist.
 - 5th grade - 81 out of 90 students (90%) scored 60% or greater on their checklist for Action.
- Grade 7-Accurately communicate information that demonstrates their knowledge, awareness, and overall animal rights activism associated with the endangered species crises and the effect on the environment.
 - 60% of students will be able to clearly demonstrate knowledge, awareness, and overall animal rights activism associated with the endangered species crises and the effect on the environment by scoring 60% or higher on the evaluation checklist.
 - Results: 90 out of 90 students (100%) scored 60% or higher on the checklist.

- Students in 12th grade will demonstrate the capacity, or are increasing their capacity, to work individually and collectively toward sustaining a healthy natural environment by becoming greener students. Action is taken as a result of the awareness, knowledge, skills gained, and the attitude change that may have an impact on the student or the community at large.
 - 70% of 12th grade Students will produce evidence of an action focused on offsetting an environmental problem by scoring at least a 4 out of 7 on the rubric assessing the project.
 - **Results:** 39/39 (100%) of the participating students made 1 quality pledge to take specific action to reduce personal/family/community food waste in their lives.

Analysis:

In the 23-24 school year, the school provided evidence that the target number of students successfully met the learning target for the first two strategies and evaluation method in this indicator area. The data reported for the third strategy and evaluation method did not align with the stated goal. This evidence demonstrates that students at HGA demonstrate the capacity, or are increasing their capacity, to work individually and collectively toward sustaining a healthy natural environment.

Each year of the contract term, the school earned a rating of Meets Standard in this indicator area. The annual EE performance data provided to Osprey Wilds during the term of the contract demonstrates that the school has systems in place to ensure student outcomes meet the learning targets outlined in Indicator Area 5, and therefore the school earns an overall rating of Meets Standard.

Higher Ground Academy

FY22-24 Financial Performance Evaluation

Contract term: July 1, 2020-June 30, 2025

Overview

The Financial Performance Evaluation is conducted to determine whether the school is compliant with legal requirements, the charter contract, and generally accepted principles of financial oversight and management, as well as to assess the financial health and viability of the school. This framework was derived through a review of model authorizer practices, charter school lender guidance, and expertise in the field. In completing the evaluation, Osprey Wilds has reviewed the school's financial audit, board meeting minutes, monthly financials, school policies, state reports, and other relevant documents. Unless otherwise noted, calculations are based on the school's most recent audited financial statements. In addition, the evaluation may incorporate information learned through site visits, attendance at board meetings, and interviews or discussions with key individuals at the school including the director, board chair, treasurer, and financial service provider. No one measure identifies the full picture of a school's financial situation. The measures are to be used together to indicate the total financial picture of the school.

Financial Performance Indicators

The Financial Performance Framework includes three indicators, or general categories, used to evaluate a school's financial performance.

1. Financial Management

This portion of the evaluation focuses on the school's performance relative to required financial management. Quality management and oversight of financials is a critical indicator of financial health. Schools that fail to meet the standards are not implementing best practices or those required by law or the charter contract and may be at greater risk for financial challenges in the present or future. This indicator includes the following measures: **Budgeting, Enrollment Variance, Financial Policies and Practices, Financial Reporting, and Financial Audit.**

2. Near-Term Financial Health

This portion of the evaluation tests a school's near term financial health and is designed to depict the school's financial position and viability in the coming year. Schools that fail to meet the standards may currently be experiencing financial difficulties and/or have a higher likelihood for financial hardship. These schools may require additional review and/or corrective action by Osprey Wilds. This indicator includes the following measures: **Current Ratio and Days Cash on Hand.**

3. Financial Sustainability

This portion of the evaluation includes longer-term financial sustainability measures and is designed to depict the school's financial position and viability over time. Schools that fail to meet the standards are more likely to face financial hardship in the future. This indicator includes the following measures: **Fund Balance Percentage, Total Margin and Aggregated Three-Year Total Margin, and Debt to Asset Ratio.**

Summary Discussion

Higher Ground Academy (HGA) demonstrated strong financial health through the end of FY24, meeting all indicators of short-term and long-term financial stability. The school reported a fund balance of 72.7% of general fund expenditures (over \$12M) and maintained a robust cash position. Despite this, minor challenges remain in financial management, particularly in ensuring the school has in place all required policies and timely reporting. Financial reporting has improved, with board meeting minutes now documenting key financial metrics, though the Finance Committee still does not record minutes. Encouragingly, board members are increasingly engaged, as documented by board meeting minutes.

HGA's enrollment continues to grow, with accurate predictions supporting balanced budgets. The school remains active in the community, attracting new families, but the middle school facility is nearing capacity, prompting discussions about relocating to a new site to accommodate future growth. This change would expand HGA and doing so would help HGA improve the educational experience of many more children. The primary statutory purpose of HGA is to improve the learning, achievement, and success of all students. The school is hopeful that a middle school expansion may bring that opportunity to many more students. During the current contract period, the school completed some building renovations, and future budgets project continued conservative financial practices while emphasizing support for student programs.

Notably, HGA Elementary was recognized by US News and World Report as one of the "Best Elementary Schools" in 2024. Higher Ground Secondary Academy ranked among the top 25% of high schools nationally and top 12% in Minnesota. The school also secured a \$35,000 Youthprise Grant to enhance its career development program in 2024 and doubled its request to further support student career exploration in the next year.

In summary, this is a financially healthy, well-managed school. The board may consider how it strengthens its role in setting and monitoring budgets. Strategic investment of the fund balance could help sustain student outcomes during transitions, particularly as the school considers moving its middle school to a new location. The board should be prepared to mitigate potential negative impacts on student outcomes, school culture, and teacher retention, all of which are often impacted by significant change. Overall, FY24 was a financially successful year for HGA, with conservative budgeting practices leading to net income exceeding expectations and a positive outlook for future financial stability and growth.

Summary of Financial Performance

Financial Statements – Three-year Summary			
	2022	2023	2024
Balance Sheet			
Cash	\$8,954,412	\$8,723,094	\$10,614,203
Current Assets	\$11,323,449	\$13,322,143	\$14,297,782
Non-Current Assets	\$1,376,893	\$1,248,635	\$1,107,984
Total Assets	\$12,700,342	\$14,570,778	\$15,405,766
Current Liabilities	\$1,485,031	\$1,484,418	\$1,454,885
Non-Current Liabilities	\$1,700,675	\$1,882,579	\$1,833,456
Total Liabilities	\$3,185,706	\$3,366,997	\$3,288,341
Net Assets	\$9,514,636	\$11,203,781	\$12,117,425
Income Statement (All Funds)			
Total Revenue	\$18,107,208	\$19,149,032	\$19,709,537
Total Expenditures	\$16,906,366	\$17,149,715	\$18,704,366
Debt Proceeds & Capital Leases	\$0	\$0	\$0
Surplus (Deficit)	\$1,200,842	\$1,999,317	\$1,005,171
Total Fund Balance	\$9,838,407	\$11,837,725	\$12,842,896
Total Unrestricted General Fund Balance	\$8,155,039	\$11,578,618	\$12,500,274
Enrollment Information – Pupil Units (P.U.)			
Budgeted Enrollment	1184.00	1172.00	1181.00
Actual Enrollment	1103.57	1142.14	1173.27
Maximum Total Enrollment (number of students) <i>Per section 6.5(a) of the charter contract</i>	1300	1300	1300

Financial Performance Evaluation –Summary			
Management Indicators	2022	2023	2024
Budgeting	Meets	Does Not Meet	Meets
Enrollment Variance	93.2%	97.5%	99.3%
Financial Policies and Practices	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet
Financial Reporting	Meets	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet
Financial Audit	Does Not Meet	Does Not Meet	Meets
Near-Term Indicators			
Current Ratio	7.63	8.97	9.83
Days Cash on Hand	191	188	196
Sustainability Indicators			
Fund Balance Percentage	62.4%	72.2%	72.7%
Total Margin/Aggregated 3-Year Total Margin	6.6%/8.5%	10.4%/11.6%	5.1%/7.4%
Debt to Asset Ratio	0.25	0.23	0.21

Financial Performance Indicator 1: Financial Management

1.1 Budgeting: *Does the school effectively establish and monitor budgets?*

Meets Standard

The school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations and provisions of the charter contract relating to budgets.

- Board meeting minutes and/or audit notes document approval of fiscal year budget on or prior to the June 30 statutory deadline (MN Stat. §123B.77 Subd. 4).
- The board approves mid-year budget updates as necessary;
- At least monthly, the board reviews and approves quality financial statements in accordance with Section 6.9(a) of the charter contract, which include the following reports: budgeted and actual revenue and expenses by year-to-date percentages, disbursements and deposits, and student enrollment report with enrollment expressed in terms of funding mechanisms (e.g. Pupil Units);
- At least quarterly (for quarters ending 9/30, 12/31, 3/31, and 6/30), the board reviews and approves quality financial statements in accordance with Section 6.9(a) of the charter contract, which include the following reports: a balance sheet, income statement that includes revenues and expenses by UFARS programs (in accordance with Exhibit R of the contract), up-to-date cash flow projections, and fiscal year-end fund balance projections.
- Revenue and expenditure budget variances are within 5% of the February 1 approved budget.

The variance compares actuals to projected revenues and expenditures based on the school's approved budget as of February 1* for all fund areas.

*The intention is to compare year-end actuals to the approved budget in place on February 1. In lieu of that OW will compare to the most recent revised budget that is available. Please ensure Osprey Wilds has the school's most recent board-approved budget as of February 1 of each fiscal year. OW will not use working budgets for this calculation, only a board-approved budget.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Calculation

Revenue Variance = (Actual Revenue – Projected Revenue) ÷ Projected Revenue
-2.9% = (\$ 19,709,537 - \$ 20,298,959) ÷ \$ 20,298,959

Expenditure Variance = (Actual Expenditures – Projected Expenditures) ÷ Projected Expenditures
-6.5% = (\$ 18,704,366 - \$ 20,000,094) ÷ \$ 20,000,094

Analysis

Budget approval by statutory deadline. HGA approved the FY24 and FY25 budgets prior to the start of the respective fiscal years. Meeting minutes do not provide any evidence of a process leading up to final budget approval. Typically the board delegates setting budget priorities to school leadership and is not involved in the budgeting process beyond approving the initial budget and revisions. The board uses a working budget that is amended as needed but formal revisions are not typically done until year end.

Board review of financial statements. HGA contracts with Creative Planning for financial management and accounting services, receiving quality financial statements that include a working budget, balance sheet, cash flow statement, enrollment figures, check and wire registers, and an Executive Summary highlighting key financial points and indicators. While the board appears to delegate financial oversight to the Finance Committee, the committee does not take minutes for inclusion in board packets. Although board meeting minutes reflect the school's current financial position, there is minimal evidence that all board members actively engage in financial oversight.

Budget variances. Revenue variances were minimal, and while expense variances were slightly higher, the school attributes this to budgeted capital purchases and improvements that were not carried out. As a result, OW is not concerned at this time. The school has demonstrated strong financial management by revising its working budget appropriately, avoiding deficit spending, and increasing its fund balance. Generally school management is very conservative in budgeting. However, given the size of the school's budget and large student population, the board may want to consider how it is effectively fulfilling its fiduciary responsibilities and oversight role.

1.2 Enrollment Variance: *Does the school accurately project enrollment?*

The enrollment variance analysis will indicate whether the school is on target with enrollment projections from approved budgets and compares actuals to projected enrollment based on the school's originally approved budget. A school that fails to meet its enrollment targets may not be able to meet its budgeted expenses, and a poor enrollment variance is an important indicator of potential financial issues. Enrollment variance is used to evaluate a charter school's financial health as well as board and management capacity to forecast. Thus, while enrollment variance is a primary measure of financial health, it can also be seen as a secondary measure for organizational aptitude. Enrollment Variance is based on Per Pupil Units (PPU) as this is the primary driver of funding.

Calculation

Enrollment Variance = Actual Enrollment divided by Projected Enrollment
99.3% = $1173.27 \div 1181.00$

Meets Standard:

Enrollment Variance exceeds 95%.

Does Not Meet Standard:

Enrollment Variance is between 85% and 95%.

Falls Far Below Standard:

Enrollment Variance is less than 85%.

Analysis

HGA's enrollment variance in FY24 was 99.3%, consistently meeting its enrollment projections every year except one during the current contract term. This accuracy is attributed to diligent monthly monitoring, which supports realistic budgeting and meets the standard for this measure. The slight variance in ADM in FY24 is attributed to several students opting for PSEO programs. The school remains actively involved in its community, attracting interest from new families. One of its facilities is nearing capacity, prompting considerations for a potential future relocation of the middle school. Current financial statements for FY25 indicate enrollment is averaging 20 students above target. Future long-term budgets reflect conservative projections and a focus on supporting students effectively.

1.3 Financial Policies and Practices: *Does the school implement appropriate financial policies and practices?*

Meets Standard

The school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations and provisions of the charter contract relating to financial policies and practices, including but not limited to:

- Procurement Policy (MN Stat. §124E.26)
- Fund Balance Policy (OW Contract, Exhibit P)
- Credit Card Policy (OW Contract, Exhibit P)
- Conflict of Interest Policy (MN Stat. §124E.14)
- Electronic Funds Transfer Policy (MN Stat. §471.38)
- Contributions and Fundraising Policy (OW Contract Section 6.13)
- Group Health Insurance Policy (required if the school provides group health insurance coverage) (MN Stat. §124E.12, Subd. 5(b))
- Assessing Student Fees Policy (required if the school charges fees for textbooks, workbooks, and library books) (MN Stat. §123B.37)
- School Meals Policy (required if the school participates in the National School Lunch Program) (MN Stat. §124D.111 Subd. 1(a))
- The school has no audit findings related to appropriate use of public funds.*
- Evidence suggests the school has sufficient internal controls to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

*Public entities, such as charter schools, must spend public funds for a public purpose. Minnesota law defines public funds as "all funds, regardless of source or purpose, held or administered by a government entity, unless otherwise restricted." (MN Stat. §118A.01 Subd. 4) Any funds in the school's bank accounts or processed by the school are public funds. This includes state and federal dollars as well as grant funds or individual donations. An expenditure serves the public purpose (and is an appropriate use of public funds) if it benefits the community as a whole, is directly related to the functions of the school, and does not have as its primary objective the benefit of private interest.

Analysis

HGA generally has comprehensive and effective financial management policies, which are regularly reviewed. Document reviews and the two most recent annual audits confirm that these policies are implemented faithfully. However, the audits did highlight concerns about internal controls, which have since been addressed. The board actively reviews and approves check registers, raising questions about any items that cause concern.

In FY23, the HGA audit included a finding that the school was missing formal, written policies to ensure it followed federal rules for managing money, approving expenses, and purchasing goods or services using federal funds. The recommendation was for HGA to review federal regulations (Uniform Guidance) and create written policies to comply with these rules. The audit indicated that the issue has since been resolved because HGA has now adopted the necessary policies.

In FY23 the audit found that HGA did not properly document the number of meals served, which are reported to the State to receive federal funding. When auditors reviewed four months of meal reports, they found that in two of those months, the numbers reported did not match internal

records. However, overall, HGA reported fewer meals than were actually served, meaning it did not overclaim funds.

The recommendation was for the Academy to improve how it tracks, records, and reports meal counts—especially for free and reduced-price meals—and to keep proper documentation. The issue has now been resolved by implementing a two-step process for submitting meal claims to ensure accuracy. The school has been responsive to corrective action plans and implements sufficient internal controls to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse.

Osprey Wilds has on file the following board approved financial-related policies:

- Procurement Policy, revised October 15, 2024
- Fund Balance Policy, revised December 19, 2023
- Credit Card Policy, adopted November 19, 2024
- Conflict of Interest Policy, revised October 15, 2024
- Gift Acceptance Policy, adopted November 19, 2024
- Group Health Insurance Policy, undated
- Student Fees Policy, approved June 2, 2022
- School Meals Policy, approved September 20, 2022
- Cash Management Policy, approved December 19, 2023

Going forward, the board should ensure that policies include the date of approval and revision when they are published.

As of the date of this evaluation, the school does not have an Electronic Funds Transfer Policy. The school board must draft and adopt this required policy as soon as possible or prior to any future contract period, no later than June 30, 2025.

1.4 Financial Reporting: *Did the school complete timely and accurate financial reporting?*

Meets Standard

The school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations and provisions of the charter contract relating to financial reporting.

- Financial audit, including required supplemental information, is submitted to Osprey Wilds and MDE no later than the December 31 statutory deadline (MN Stat. §124E.16 Subd. 1(b)).
- Preliminary and final UFARS data are submitted on-time (September 15 and November 30 respectively).
- The school annually submits timely and accurate Average Daily Membership (ADM) estimates to MDE via ADM Web Estimates (ADMWE).
- CSP grant reports, SOD plans and reports and/or other required financial reports are submitted to MDE in a timely and accurate fashion.
- The school maintains an 80% on-time rate for financial reporting to Osprey Wilds via Aerie.*

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

*This includes the following tasks: Annual Budget, Financial Audit, IRS Form 990, Monthly Financial Statements, and Quarterly Financial Statements.

Analysis

HGA received the MDE School Finance Award in 2022 for FY21 reporting and in 2024 for FY23 reporting. Because the FY22 audit was submitted late to MDE the school did not receive the award in 2023.

The school's on-time financial reporting rate to OW via Epicenter was 86% for FY22 and 60% for FY23, resulting in an average of 71%, which falls short of OW's 80% expectation for on-time reporting. FY24 is excluded from this calculation due to challenges with the Aerie implementation, though evidence indicates an on-time rate of just 40% for FY24, with an improvement to 70% so far in FY25.

1.5 Financial Audit: *Did the school receive an unqualified/unmodified audit opinion absent any significant deficiencies or material weaknesses?*

Meets Standard

The school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations and provisions of the charter contract relating to the annual financial audit.

- The most recent financial audit includes no significant deficiencies or material weaknesses.
- The most recent financial audit included an unqualified/unmodified opinion.
- Any previous year audit findings have not been repeated in most recent audit.
- Appropriate corrective action plan is in place to ensure any finding is not repeated in the next fiscal year.
- The audit report did not include a going concern disclosure in the notes or an explanatory paragraph within the audit report.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Analysis

HGA's FY22-FY24 audits received an unmodified ("clean") opinion. However, the FY22 did have legal compliance findings. Although the school resolved a recurring legal compliance finding related to payment of invoices from previous audits (FY18-FY21), two new compliance findings were noted. The first was for collateral (deposits exceeding FDIC limits), and the second was for late submission of audited financial statements to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). The school implements Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) and these issues were not repeated in subsequent audits.

However, the FY23 audit identified two significant deficiencies. The first involved "Internal Control Over Compliance for Cash Management, Allowable Costs, and Procurement," which has since been resolved with new cash management policies. The second deficiency pertained to "Documentation Supporting Meal Claims," which has also been addressed through a two-step submission process. Both findings were resolved and did not recur in FY24, resulting in the school having an audit free of findings in its most recent year.

Financial Performance Indicator 2: Near-Term Financial Health

2.1 Current Ratio: *Does the school have enough current assets to pay off its current liabilities?*

The current ratio measures a school's ability to pay its obligations over the next 12 months. A current ratio of greater than 1.0 indicates that the school's current assets exceed its current liabilities, thus indicating ability to meet current obligations. A ratio of less than 1.0 indicates that the school does not have sufficient current assets to cover the current liabilities and is not in a satisfactory position to meet its financial obligations over the next 12 months.

Calculation

Current Ratio = Current Assets divided by Current Liabilities

$$9.83 = \$ 14,297,782 \div \$ 1,454,885$$

Meets Standard

Current Ratio is greater than or equal to 1.1, or Current Ratio is between 1.0 and 1.1 and one-year trend is positive (current year ratio is higher than last year's).

Does Not Meet Standard

Current Ratio is between 0.9 and 1.0 or equals 1.0, or Current Ratio is between 1.0 and 1.1 and one-year trend is negative.

Does Not Meet Standard

Current Ratio is less than or equal to 0.9.

Analysis

HGA's current ratio improved over the contract term from 8.28 in FY21 to 9.83 in FY24 and is well above the standard for this measure. This demonstrates that the school has continued to maintain a strong position to meet current obligations.

2.2 Days Cash on Hand: *Does the school have sufficient cash on hand to fund operations?*

The days cash measure calculates the extent to which a school has sufficient cash to meet its cash obligations. Depreciation expense is removed from the total expenses because it is not a cash expense. This critical measure takes on additional importance given the timing of school payments in Minnesota. For this measure, target levels may be adjusted based on the holdback percentage to ensure reasonable expectations, while still evaluating a school for cash levels necessary for financial health. Measures below are based on the holdback rate of 10%.

December 31 data is also included to provide a fuller picture of the school's cash position throughout the year and is averaged with June 30. In addition, any short-term borrowing done by the school to manage cash flow will be documented here, though it will not figure into calculations. Short-term borrowing will also be evident in the Current Ratio.

Calculation

Days Cash = Cash divided by [(Total Expenses – Depreciation Expense)/365]

Previous fiscal year end (June 30):

207 days = $\$ 10,614,203 \div [(\$ 19,763,006 - \$ 1,058,640) \div 365]$

December 31 of previous fiscal year:

185 days = $\$ 9,486,967 \div [(\$ 19,763,006 - \$ 1,058,640) \div 365]$

196 days = Average days cash

Meets Standard:

- Average days cash is 60 or higher; or
- Average days cash is between 30 and 60 days and one-year trend is positive.

Does Not Meet Standard:

- Average days cash is between 15 and 30 days; or
- Average days cash is between 30 and 60 days and one-year trend is negative.

Falls Far Below Standard:

- Average days cash is less than 15 days cash.

Analysis

HGA's days cash increased from 157 days in FY21 to 196 days in FY24. While the increases in FY21 and FY22 were largely due to pandemic relief funding, higher enrollment and careful budgeting have also contributed to maintaining this strong financial position. This level is well above the standard, helping the school avoid the need for short-term borrowing.

Financial Performance Indicator 3: Financial Sustainability

3.1 Fund Balance Percentage: *Does the school have sufficient reserves on hand to serve as a cushion for unexpected situations or to help fuel growth or investment in new programs?*

The fund balance percentage measures the equity a school has built up in its general fund. Using the Fund Balance in the General Fund, this calculation indicates the percentage of available funds that the school has in reserve in relation to its Total General Fund Annual Expenditures.

Calculation

Fund Balance Percentage = General Fund Balance divided by Total General Fund Annual Expenditure

$$72.7\% = \$ 12,677,118 \div \$ 17,446,786$$

Meets Standard:

Fund Balance Percentage is greater than or equal to 20.0%.

Does Not Meet Standard:

Fund Balance Percentage is between 10.0-19.9%.

Falls Far Below Standard:

Fund Balance Percentage is less than 9.9%.

Analysis

HGA's fund balance percentage at the end of FY24 was 72.7%, a significant increase from 41.2% at the end of the previous contract term and is well above standard. A strong fund balance percentage positions the school well for its future growth plans and provides an opportunity to strategically invest its funds to ensure sustainable strong outcomes for students.

3.2 Total Margin and Aggregated Three-Year Total Margin: *Does the school operate with an annual surplus or has the school needed to deplete its fund balance to operate?*

The total margin measures whether a school added to its fund balance in a current year (positive total margin) or if the school depleted the fund balance in the current year (negative total margin).

The aggregated three-year total margin is helpful for measuring the long-term financial stability of the school by smoothing the impact of single-year fluctuations on the single-year total margin indicator. The performance of the school in the most recent year, however, is indicative of the sustainability of the school. It is expected that the school has a positive total margin in the most recent year, however in some instances, a school with a larger fund balance may have a planned spend down as part of a strategy to invest in some aspect of its program. Such instances will be noted in the analysis.

Calculation

Total Margin = Most recent year Surplus (or Deficit) divided by Total Revenue
5.1% = \$ 1,005,171 ÷ \$ 19,709,537

Aggregated Three-Year Total Margin = Total Three-Year Surplus (or Deficit) divided by Total Three-Year Revenue

$$7.4\% = \$ 4,205,330 \div \$ 56,965,777$$

Meets Standard:

- Aggregated Three-Year Total Margin is positive and the most recent year Total Margin is positive; or
- Aggregated Three-Year Total Margin is greater than -1.5%, the trend is positive for the last two years, and the most recent year Total Margin is positive; or
- Aggregated Three-Year Total Margin is greater than -1.5%, the fund balance Meets Standard, and the school has executed a planned spending of its fund balance to invest in program needs.

Does Not Meet Standard:

- Aggregated Three-Year Total Margin is greater than -1.5%, but trend does not Meet Standard.

Falls Far Below Standard:

- Aggregated Three-Year Total Margin is less than or equal to -1.5%; or
- The most recent year Total Margin is less than -10.0%.

Analysis

HGA achieved both a positive Total Margin and a positive Aggregated Three-Year Total Margin at the close of FY24, which aligns with the increase in net income, days cash, and the school’s fund balance as noted in indicators above.

3.3 Debt to Asset Ratio: *Does the school have sufficient resources to manage its debt?*

The debt to asset ratio compares the school’s liabilities to its assets. Simply put, the ratio demonstrates what a school owes against what it owns. A lower debt to asset ratio generally indicates stronger financial health. Charter schools in Minnesota generally do not own buildings; therefore the assets are not recorded in the books of the school. However, beginning in FY23, lease accounting standards changed and charter schools are now required to recognize a lease liability and a corresponding intangible asset representing its “right to use” the asset. As a result, a school’s financial statements can be materially impacted by this change in accounting methodology. The target levels are therefore set to reflect this impact.

In cases where a school has an affiliated building company, this measure does not take into account the building company’s assets or liabilities. These calculations do not include any pension-related assets or liabilities (i.e. Teachers Retirement Association (TRA) and Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA)) because these inclusions to audited financial statements do not bear on a school’s financial viability or trends.

Calculation

Debt to Asset Ratio = Total Liabilities divided by Total Assets

$$0.10 = \$ 1,592,347 \div \$ 15,405,766$$

Meets Standard:

- Debt to Asset Ratio is less than or equal to 0.9

Does Not Meet Standard:

- Debt to Asset Ratio is greater than 0.9 but less than or equal to 1.0.

Falls Far Below Standard:

Debt to Asset Ratio is greater than 1.0.

Analysis

HGA's debt-to-asset ratio has remained strong throughout the contract term, ending FY24 at 0.10 which also positively reflects the school's financial position. This ratio does not account for any net pension liabilities related to TRA or PERA, or long-term debts associated with the school's affiliated building company. The school's lease agreements include payments for printers and copiers totaling \$137,462, as well as \$1,695,994 in lease payments due within one year, paid from the general fund to the building company for the acquisition, construction, and renovation of the school's building.

Higher Ground Academy

Operations Performance Evaluation

Overview

The Operations Performance Evaluation is conducted not only to determine whether the school is compliant with legal requirements, the charter contract, and generally accepted principles of governance, oversight, and management, but also to assess the operational standing of the school. In completing this evaluation, Osprey Wilds has reviewed the school's board meeting minutes, school policies, state reports, compliance with Aerie tasks and deadlines, and other relevant documents and information. In addition, the evaluation will incorporate information learned through site visits, attendance at board meetings, and interviews or discussion with key individuals at the school including the director, board chair, teachers, or others. Results of this evaluation become part of the body of information used to inform charter school renewal decisions made by the board of directors of Osprey Wilds.

Operations Performance Indicators

The Operations Performance Framework includes six indicators, or general categories, used to evaluate a school's operations performance.

1. Educational Program

This portion of the evaluation focuses on how the school has implemented key components of the educational program. This indicator includes the following measures: **Mission & Vision, Instructional Practices, Curriculum, Assessment, Professional Development, Equity, Environmental Education Program, Educational Requirements, Special Education, English Learners, and Parent & Student Satisfaction.**

2. Governance

This portion of the evaluation focuses on the board's governance, oversight, and evaluation. This indicator includes the following measures: **Board Composition & Capacity, Board Decision-Making & Oversight, Management Accountability, and Environmental Education Oversight.**

3. School Environment

This portion of the evaluation focuses on the environment that the school has created for students. This indicator includes the following measures: **Facilities & Transportation, Health & Safety, and Sustainable Operations.**

4. Student Rights

This portion of the evaluation focuses on the practices and procedures of the school related to student enrollment and privacy rights. This indicator includes the following measures: **Admissions & Enrollment and Due Process & Privacy.**

5. Personnel Practices

This portion of the evaluation focuses on the school's practices and successes related to staffing. This indicator includes the following measures: **Licensure, Staff Retention and Employment Practices.**

6. Compliance & Reporting

This portion of the evaluation focuses on the school's ability to meet various authorizer and state compliance and reporting deadlines and activities. This indicator includes the following measures: **Charter School Annual Reports, Insurance and Authorizer & State Compliance.**

Operations Performance Evaluation Summary	
Indicator Area 1: Educational Program	
1.1: Mission & Vision	Meets Standard
1.2: Instructional Practices	Meets Standard
1.3: Curriculum	Meets Standard
1.4: Assessment	Meets Standard
1.5: Professional Development	Approaches Standard-
1.6: Equity	Approaches Standard
1.7: Environmental Education Program	Meets Standard
1.8: Educational Requirements	Meets Standard
1.9: Special Education	Meets Standard
1.10: English Learners	Does Not Meet Standard
1.11: Parent & Student Satisfaction	Approaches Standard
Indicator Area 2: Governance	
2.1: Board Composition & Capacity	Approaches Standard
2.2: Board Decision-Making & Oversight	Approaches Standard
2.3: Management Accountability	Does Not Meet Standard
2.4: Environmental Education Oversight	Approaches Standard
Indicator Area 3: School Environment	
3.1: Facilities & Transportation	Meets Standard
3.2: Health & Safety	Does Not Meet Standard
3.3: Sustainable Operations	Meets Standard
Indicator Area 4: Student Rights	
4.1: Admissions & Enrollment	Does Not Meet Standard
4.2: Due Process & Privacy	Meets Standard
Indicator Area 5: Personnel Practices	
5.1: Licensure	Does Not Meet Standard
5.2: Staff Retention	Meets Standard
5.3: Employment Practices	Does Not Meet Standard
Indicator Area 6: Compliance & Reporting	
6.1: Charter School Annual Reports	Approaches Standard
6.2: Insurance	Meets Standard
6.3: Authorizer & State Compliance	Approaches Standard

Operations Performance Indicator 1: Education Program

1.1 Mission & Vision: Does the school demonstrate fidelity to the mission and vision outlined in the contract?

Meets Standard

The school implements programs that align to the mission and vision outlined in its current charter contract, including but not limited to:

- Implementation of statutory purposes
- Instructional program and curriculum, including key pedagogical approach, aligned to the mission and vision of the school
- Staffing levels and assignments aligned to the mission and vision of the school
- Stakeholders can identify the school mission
- Adapts environmental education in service of the school's mission and vision or to the needs and unique aspects of the school community.

Approaches Standard

The school implements programs that align to the mission and vision outlined in its current charter contract, with one or more of the above elements developing or in need of improvement.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: Exhibits D & F of the charter contract, family focus group data from site visits, Annual Report, school website, annual school survey data

Analysis:

Higher Ground Academy (HGA) operates with a clear mission: to prepare students to become successful, ethical, and responsible citizens ready to face the challenges of the 21st century. The school strives to graduate students who are college-ready, environmentally conscious, and individuals of integrity who value diversity, equity, and hard work. This mission is evident across all aspects of the school, including instructional programs, staffing, community engagement, and environmental education integration.

HGA's instructional program reflects its mission through rigorous academic standards, growth-oriented practices, and a focus on sustainability. Environmental education (EE) is integrated across subjects, ensuring students understand the role of sustainability in modern society. For instance, literacy lessons often incorporate environmental themes to build critical thinking and ethical awareness, while STEM education emphasizes practical applications, such as renewable energy projects. The instructional approach is supported by the Marzano model, which prioritizes clearly defined learning targets, scaffolded instruction, and benchmark-focused teaching. This framework ensures that lessons are purposefully designed to meet diverse learner needs while fostering higher-order thinking skills. Additionally, the school's curriculum adapts to its culturally diverse student population by incorporating East African culture through programs like Somali language classes, fostering inclusivity and a sense of identity.

Staffing at HGA is strategically aligned with its mission. The school ensures a student-centered focus through adequate teacher-to-student ratios and specialized support services. Dedicated

English Learner (EL) and Title I instructors address the unique needs of students from diverse backgrounds, while teacher assistants in lower grades provide additional support for personalized instruction. At the high school level, counselors and social workers focus on students' academic and emotional well-being, reinforcing the school's holistic approach to education. Professional development opportunities for staff focus on cultural competency and instructional excellence, further ensuring alignment with the school's mission and vision. HGA operates under the leadership of an Executive Director (ED) who reports directly to the board. The ED is supported by a team of administrators, including the Chief of Operations, Human Resources Director, and Curriculum Director, who assist in managing the school's operations. Additionally, HGA collaborates with Indigo Education to oversee its special education program.

Stakeholder engagement is a key strength at HGA. The school actively involves parents and community members through regular communication, culturally inclusive events, and bilingual liaisons who connect non-English-speaking families to school resources. These efforts foster a sense of collaboration and trust, ensuring that stakeholders understand and support the school's mission. Parents frequently express confidence in the school's ability to prepare their children for future success, citing its commitment to safety, diversity, and academic rigor. Higher Ground fosters such strong relationships within its community that many students are inspired to return and pursue careers in education at Higher Ground and continue its mission.

Environmental education is central to HGA's mission and is integrated into both the curriculum and extracurricular activities. The school implements programs such as composting and recycling initiatives, environmental-themed field trips, and classroom discussions on global environmental issues. These initiatives emphasize practical sustainability practices and foster critical thinking about climate change and resource management. By embedding environmental stewardship into daily learning, HGA prepares students to be responsible global citizens.

1.2 Instructional Practices: Does the school implement instructional practices that focus on student achievement?

Meets Standard

The school implements instructional practices focused on student achievement, with the following elements fully developed and functioning effectively:

- Instructional practices aligned with Exhibit D, Description of Educational Program, of the charter contract.
- Research-based instructional strategies and methodologies.
- Systematic processes for academic intervention, differentiation, and acceleration.
- Instructional planning processes.
- Instructional techniques to actively engage students and enhance learning.
- Instruction based on state standards.
- Classroom management that supports content delivery.

Approaches Standard

The school implements instructional practices focused on student achievement, with one or more of the above elements developing or in need of improvement.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

n.b. The only way to merit a ratio of “meets standard” is to also receive 50% or more of the possible points on the Academic Performance Evaluation.

Data sources: Annual Report, classroom observations and staff interviews on site visits, renewal application, teacher evaluation policies and rubrics

Analysis:

Higher Ground Academy demonstrates a robust commitment to implementing instructional practices that focus on student achievement, with numerous elements fully developed and effectively functioning. Observations over the contract term indicate that instructional methods are closely aligned with Exhibit D of the charter contract and adhere strictly to state standards, ensuring a systematic and purposeful approach to education. Interviews with instructional leadership and teachers indicate that teachers begin their lesson planning by unpacking the standards and designing learning activities that align with these requirements. This was observed during classroom observations, teachers demonstrated the use of lesson plans that explicitly included standards-based objectives and activities tailored to these objectives. This foundational focus ensures that academic outcomes remain a priority and provides students with structured, high-quality learning experiences. Teachers are held accountable for maintaining these standards through rigorous oversight, including frequent lesson plan reviews and feedback from administrators, fostering a culture of high expectations and professional responsibility.

Research-based instructional strategies are a cornerstone of the school’s approach. Effective methods such as modeling, guided and independent practice, cooperative learning, and inquiry-based methodologies are regularly observed in classrooms. These strategies not only support rigorous learning but also ensure that students are engaged through hands-on, interactive activities. Differentiation and reciprocal teaching strategies further enhance the ability of teachers to meet the needs of diverse learners. In the elementary grades and high school, multilingual learner (ML) strategies, including the use of visual aids, sentence stems, and scaffolding, are effectively integrated into lessons, enabling students to build language skills while engaging with academic content. However, middle school classrooms were observed to lack consistency in the application of these strategies, indicating an area where improvement is needed to provide consistent support for all students, particularly those requiring additional language assistance.

Systematic processes for intervention and differentiation are well-established, though there are areas for growth. Tiered support systems address varying student needs, with specific accommodations made for EL and special education students. The school employs dedicated EL classrooms and incorporates differentiated lesson plans to cater to individual learning levels. Observations highlighted examples of students taking risks and engaging in learning activities tailored to their abilities, supported by strong teacher-student relationships. However, the limited availability of EL teachers in middle school presents a challenge, as the existing resources are stretched thin.

The school employs an emergent Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS) for providing intervention. Tier I support is provided by general education teachers within the classroom environment, Tier II interventions are delivered by Title I teachers to students requiring additional assistance, and Tier III intensive one-on-one support is provided by reading specialists for students classified as “high risk.” Fastbridge data is instrumental in classifying students into categories such as “High Risk,” “Low Risk,” “Some Risk,” and “College Pathway,” which determines the intensity and type of support provided.

HGA has some initial practices in place for supporting accelerated learners, though its approach to acceleration appears limited and focused primarily on older students. High school students have access to advanced coursework through Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO), which allows them to earn college credits while still in high school. Starting in FY25, the introduction of honors classes will offer another pathway for high-performing students seeking greater academic rigor. Additionally, the Fastbridge assessment system identifies students as "College Pathway," flagging them as candidates for acceleration.

Instructional planning is another area where the school excels. Teachers are required to submit lesson plans that are reviewed by administrators, who provide detailed feedback to ensure alignment with standards and instructional goals. Interviews with staff and leadership confirmed regularly scheduled meetings between teachers and leadership focus on analyzing data, evaluating student engagement, and identifying areas for instructional improvement. This reflective approach promotes continuous improvement and ensures that the instructional practices remain student-centered and responsive to their needs.

Student engagement is a clear strength of the school's instructional practices. Classroom observations over the contract term included a wide array of interactive and collaborative activities, including peer-to-peer discussions, academic games, hands-on projects, and technology-enhanced lessons. Teachers incorporate opportunities for inquiry, critical thinking, and rigorous learning into their lessons, ensuring that students remain actively involved and motivated. In classrooms where independent practice was observed, students were engaged in meaningful activities that challenged them to apply new knowledge. Classroom management strategies play a vital role in fostering this engagement. Teachers use proximity control, clear routines, attention signals, and positive reinforcement to maintain a structured and respectful learning environment. These practices create a safe and inclusive atmosphere, particularly for EL students, who benefit from the clarity and consistency of expectations.

The school also prioritizes professional development, providing teachers with robust training opportunities to refine their instructional practices. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) serve as a valuable platform for collaboration, where teachers share best practices, discuss effective differentiation techniques, and develop strategies to address behavioral challenges. The administration supports this growth by conducting frequent classroom observations and providing individualized feedback. Instructional leaders are deeply involved in ensuring alignment with standards, equipping teachers with resources, and fostering a shared commitment to high academic expectations.

1.3 Curriculum: Does the school use a cohesive and comprehensive curriculum that promotes academic proficiency and growth for all students?

Meets Standard

The school uses a standards-aligned curriculum and supporting materials for each grade, with the following elements fully developed and functioning effectively:

- Curriculum aligned with Exhibit D, Description of Educational Program, of the charter contract.
- Curriculum is evidence-based and aligned with state standards.
- School provides appropriate grade-level and content-specific curricular resources

- and materials.
- School defines horizontal and vertical alignment within and across grade levels and content areas.
- School communicates curricular expectations to staff.
- School has systems in place to ensure that curricular expectations are implemented with fidelity.
- Instructional staff understand and use curriculum documents and related materials to deliver instruction.
- Processes for reviewing and adjusting the curriculum based on student outcomes.

Approaches Standard

The school uses a standards-aligned curriculum and supporting materials for each grade, with one or more of the above elements developing or in need of improvement.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: List of school-wide curricula, curriculum maps, pacing guides, professional development materials, classroom observations and staff interviews on site visits, assessment calendars, renewal application

Analysis:

Higher Ground Academy’s curriculum directly reflects the goals and principles outlined in Exhibit D of the charter contract. The curriculum aligns with the school’s mission to prepare students for college and 21st-century challenges while fostering environmental stewardship. This alignment is evident in the inclusion of multidisciplinary goals, such as embedding environmental education (EE) and multicultural skills into the curriculum. The emphasis on academic rigor and preparing students for leadership roles supports the mission and academic program outlined in Exhibit D.

The curriculum is selected to comply with Minnesota’s academic standards, ensuring equity and consistency in educational quality. Evidence-based practices, such as using Marzano’s "scale and learning targets" to increase rigor and adapt lessons to student readiness, highlight the thoughtful integration of research-backed methods. The school’s decision to adopt a new mathematics curriculum in FY24, following an evaluation of its alignment with state standards, demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement.

Teachers report having access to necessary materials and resources for their lessons. When additional resources are needed to enhance instruction, the school ensures they are provided. This responsiveness ensures that both students and educators have the tools required to meet grade-level and content-specific expectations.

The curriculum has been aligned to state standards; however, vertical alignment has not been fully implemented. While there is no vertical alignment, the school continues to follow the standards across grade levels to ensure consistency."

Curricular expectations are communicated clearly to instructional staff through rigorous observation protocols, planning meetings, and timely feedback on lesson plans. Teachers participate in curriculum meetings where goals and alignment are discussed. The use of tools like

Schoology allows for transparent communication about curricular expectations and facilitates lesson planning.

The school has systems in place to monitor and ensure fidelity in curriculum implementation. Teachers submit lesson plans, which administrators review and provide feedback to ensure alignment with expectations. Additionally, regular observation protocols are in place to evaluate instruction and adherence to the curriculum.

Teachers demonstrate a clear understanding of curriculum documents and related materials. The smooth and precise delivery of lessons indicates that teachers are well-prepared and adept at using these materials to guide instruction.

The school uses a structured process to evaluate and revise its curriculum, informed by data from standardized tests and teacher feedback. For instance, the decision to replace the mathematics curriculum after analyzing MCA assessment data highlights the effectiveness of this process. A five-year renewal cycle ensures that curricula remain relevant and aligned with educational goals. Teachers are actively involved in reviewing and selecting new curricular materials, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability.

1.4 Assessment: Does the school systematically collect, review, and use outcome-based data to improve student learning?

Meets Standard

The school uses assessment data to promote academic proficiency and growth for all students, with the following elements fully developed and functioning effectively:

- Assessment administration practices align with Section 6.7, Methods of Student Assessment, and Exhibit G of the charter contract.
- Processes for routine data analysis inform curricular and instructional decisions.
- School uses assessment results to identify individual student needs and adjust instruction to improve academic proficiency and growth.

Approaches Standard

The school uses assessment data to promote academic proficiency and growth for all students, with one or more of the above elements developing or in need of improvement.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: Annual Report, site visit, academic data report, academic performance evaluation, assessment calendars

Analysis:

HGA gathers and reports on data in accordance with Exhibit G and Section 6.7 of the charter contract. The school uses multiple standardized and curriculum-based assessment tools to evaluate student learning and growth comprehensively. Fastbridge Assessments are administered at least twice annually (fall and spring) to track growth over time, with additional testing conducted in the winter for students in remedial programs, such as Title I, Special Education, and English Learner (EL) services. The frequent use of Curriculum-Based Measures within Fastbridge ensures that progress towards grade-level standards is routinely monitored. The Minnesota Comprehensive

Assessments (MCAs) serve as an annual statewide assessment to evaluate proficiency among individual students and student groups. Additional Curriculum-Based Measures are embedded within the school's adopted curricula and supplemented by teacher-made assessments, providing ongoing data on student performance relative to state standards. These practices reflect HGA's adherence to contractual expectations by incorporating a variety of assessments to ensure equitable evaluation of all students' academic progress.

HGA has established effective processes for routine data analysis, which play a critical role in guiding instructional and curricular adjustments. Regular data meetings are conducted monthly in elementary classrooms, while middle school teams meet biweekly. These sessions involve reviewing assessment data, identifying students needing interventions, and determining the support required. For example, 8th grade teachers meet weekly to discuss individual student progress, integrating data into their discussions to ensure data-driven instruction. Teachers and leadership emphasizes collaboration among teachers and administrators to examine assessment results, ensuring that decisions about interventions, enrichment, and curriculum adjustments are evidence-based and aligned with student needs. During data meetings, teachers are supported to ensure that instruction is informed by data, encouraging the regular application of Fastbridge scores and other assessment results in shaping instructional strategies. By embedding data analysis into the school's operational rhythm, HGA ensures that instructional decisions are responsive to emerging student needs and aligned with its mission of preparing students for the 21st century. .

HGA effectively uses assessment results to identify individual student needs and tailor instruction to enhance academic proficiency and growth. The school recognizes the distinct needs of EL students and ensures that language acquisition support does not preclude them from receiving necessary academic interventions. Routine data analysis meetings help monitor individual and group progress, enabling timely instructional adjustments. Teachers are expected to incorporate assessment data into their planning and provide targeted interventions to support academic growth. Data-driven instructional planning ensures that students on the "College Pathway" are appropriately challenged, while those requiring remediation receive structured support tailored to their needs.

1.5 Professional Development: Does the school implement a professional development program designed to improve the learning, achievement, and success of all students?

Meets Standard

The school implements a program of professional development, including regular evaluation, with the following elements fully developed and functioning effectively:

- Primary goal of professional development is to improve student outcomes.
- School develops and implements a teacher evaluation and peer review process in accordance with MN Stat. §122A.40 Subd. 8 (b), clauses 2-13.
- Teacher evaluation process is implemented with consistency.
- School supports teachers to improve their instructional practice through interim accountability structures such as feedback, observations, mentoring, PLCs, etc.
- Professional development and training opportunities are responsive to students' academic performance.
- Staff and teachers receive appropriate training to increase students' environmental literacy.

Approaches Standard

The school implements professional development and teacher evaluation, with one or more of the above elements developing or in need of improvement.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data Sources: Professional development agendas, school calendars, staff interviews on site visits, Annual Report, renewal evaluation, staff handbook

Analysis:

The school's professional development (PD) efforts are designed to directly support student learning and achievement. Programs such as the CAREIALL initiative for the READ Act focus on enhancing instructional effectiveness in literacy, a critical area for student success. Additionally, the school provides opportunities for training in working with English Learners (EL), curriculum development, and instructional design, ensuring that teachers are well-equipped to meet diverse student needs.

The school maintains consistency in its evaluation process by ensuring lesson plan reviews, formal and informal classroom observations, and feedback mechanisms are consistently applied. The school has established a structured teacher evaluation process that aligns with state regulations. Teachers are required to submit lesson plans weekly, which are reviewed by the principal. Observations occur twice annually, including both scheduled and unannounced visits. Interviews with teachers at both sites indicate that they receive timely feedback and an annual review conducted by the Executive Director and Principal. This thorough evaluation process ensures compliance with the statutory requirements while promoting professional growth.

HGA uses iObservation, an online template for teacher evaluation based on Marzano's framework. The four domains assessed include classroom strategies and behaviors, planning and preparing, reflecting and teaching, and collegiality and professionalism.

Review of the teacher evaluation process that was submitted during the renewal process indicates the school's teacher evaluation and peer review process does not fulfill the requirements of statute. By law, the teacher evaluation process must include (among other things):

- a three-year professional review cycle that includes an individual growth and development plan. While the school's plan states that all teachers are formally evaluated twice each year, HGA's process is missing an individual growth and development plan and a peer review process.
- uses student growth measures to determine 35% of teacher summative evaluation results;
- includes longitudinal data on student engagement and other student outcome measures explicitly aligned with the elements of curriculum for which teachers are responsible;
- an option for a teacher to develop and present a portfolio for the summative evaluation;
- effective training for qualified and trained evaluators, such as school administrators;
- staff professional development activities must be coordinated with the evaluation process and outcomes. As noted elsewhere in this section, professional development at HGA is responsive to students' academic performance. However, it is not clear how it is connected to the teacher evaluation process and / or driven by annual results of the process.

Prior to any future contract period, HGA must revise its teacher development and evaluation model that meets statutory requirements.

Please note, beginning July 1, 2025, the model must be based on professional teaching standards established in Minnesota Rules, part 8710.2000, and include culturally responsive methodologies. The teacher evaluation rubric does not align with Minnesota's recently revised standards of effective practice and does not include culturally responsive methodologies. In revising its teacher evaluation and peer review process, the school should consider incorporating these required changes. The Minnesota Department of Education has posted many resources to support this work on its [Culturally Responsive Practices webpage](#) and [Teacher Development and Evaluation webpage](#).

The school's professional development opportunities are tailored to address students' academic needs. For example, a significant portion of PD time during the 2024-25 school year is dedicated to literacy development under the READ Act, ensuring teachers are prepared to address reading challenges effectively. Additionally, the school offers flexibility for teachers to pursue other PD opportunities that align with their instructional needs.

In FY22, all returning HGA teachers completed 15.5 hours of professional development, while new teachers completed 24 hours of PD at the start of the school year. The workshops included a variety of topics led by both internal staff and professional developers from Learning Sciences International. The PD agenda covered Positive Behavior Intervention System, establishing relationships, routines, roles, and rigor, improving student outcomes by empowering teams, Nearpod for elementary and secondary schools, Zoom Education, mandated reporting, and suicide prevention.

In FY23, HGA teachers completed 21 hours of PD, and new teachers participated in an additional 24 hours at the start of the year. The PD was conducted by internal staff, professional developers from various organizations, and a Ramsey County employee from Saint Paul. The workshop topics included creating a culturally aware school culture, environmental education, bullying prevention, PBIS and classroom management, technology integration, and e-learning/teaching.

For the 2023-24 school year, PD activities continued with various workshops and training sessions. New teacher week offered 16 hours of PD covering classroom management, PBIS, lesson planning, environmental education, ELL practices, and educational technology, along with mentor meetings and orientation. During Returning Teacher Week, a total of 31.5 hours of PD were provided for all teachers, including training on a new McGraw Hill curriculum, SmartBoard use, Turnitin, Seesaw, SuperKids, and Mandated Reporter training. Additionally, topics like PBIS, wellness policy, and environmental practices were covered, while paraprofessionals received 6 hours of training on compliance and roles. Throughout the year, PD continued with early release days offering 5.5 hours of training on differentiated learning, ELL support, PBIS, and classroom management for teachers. Paraprofessionals participated in sessions on roles, emergency procedures, and discipline. A mini-conference also took place with over 60 teachers engaging in hands-on demonstrations and mini-presentations on topics such as Schoology, teaching mats, growth mindset, and more, while teachers worked on online courses for cultural competency and blood borne pathogens. Elementary teachers received 3 hours of environmental education training, and secondary teachers attended 2 hours of cybersecurity and e-learning practices. In addition, staff underwent 3.5 hours of CPR training and certification, and 3 hours of Crisis Prevention and Intervention training were delivered in short segments for teachers and support staff.

HGA's comprehensive PD program aims to enhance staff skills and ensure compliance with required standards.

Interviews with teachers and administrative staff indicate that the professional development (PD) offerings for FY25 will focus on addressing challenges observed in the classrooms, with a strong emphasis on serving English Learners (ELs). The PD coordinator plays a key role in identifying these challenges and aligning PD to meet them. For ESL staff, the school provides specialized training such as the WIDA program, which offers a variety of PD opportunities to enhance teachers' skills in working with EL students. For general education staff, PD on supporting ELs is integrated into team meetings, where teachers share strategies for supporting ELs in their classrooms.

As part of the professional development program, dedicated sessions focus on environmental education practices, ensuring that staff are equipped to incorporate sustainability concepts into the curriculum. Workshops and training on environmental best practices help foster a school-wide culture of environmental responsibility.

1.6 Equity: Does the school provide educational programming that engages students in ways that are culturally and linguistically appropriate, responsive, and relevant?

Meets Standard

The school implements programs that provide equitable opportunities for all students in accordance with MN Stat. §120B.11 (Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness) and MN Stat. §122A.40, including but not limited to:

- School supports teachers to establish positive, individual relationships with their students.
- School supports teachers to create meaningful and engaging connections between students' home and school lives.
- School supports teachers to learn about students' cultures in order to make purposeful connections to the curriculum.
- School supports students to develop positive ethnic and cultural identities while also helping them achieve academically.
- School helps teachers develop an awareness of their own cultural lens and the ways in which it might impact their teaching.
- School supports teachers to develop instructional practices and techniques that use cultural knowledge to make learning experiences more relevant and effective for students.
- Educational approach and instructional materials position students' languages, cultures, and identities as assets rather than barriers to learning.

Approaches Standard

The school implements programs that provide equitable opportunities for students, with one or more of the above elements developing or in need of improvement.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data Sources: Professional development agendas/offerings, interviews on site visits, Annual Report, renewal evaluation, staff and family handbooks, facilities observations

Analysis:

The school demonstrates a strong commitment to providing equitable opportunities for all students, in alignment with MN Stat. §120B.11 (Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness) and MN Stat. §122A.40. Teachers are supported in establishing positive relationships with students through intentional practices such as staff presence in hallways during transitions, where they engage with students and help them refocus on learning. Additionally, the school encourages family involvement by welcoming parents for conferences and events. However, the lack of a translation line limits teachers' ability to communicate effectively with non-English-speaking families. During the site visit, it became clear that general education teachers would benefit from having this resource available, rather than relying on other staff members in the building to help them communicate with families. Implementing such a service would enhance these connections and build stronger relationships with all families.

The school also fosters meaningful connections between students' home and school lives through open communication and inclusive events, although language barriers again pose challenges. Teachers make concerted efforts to incorporate students' cultures into their lessons, creating culturally relevant and sensitive classroom experiences. While this is evident in their teaching, formal lesson plans that explicitly document these efforts are lacking. Offering professional development (PD) to help teachers design culturally responsive lessons would further strengthen this practice.

Efforts to support students in developing positive ethnic and cultural identities alongside academic success are commendable. The school employs diverse staff who reflect the student population, celebrates cultural identities through displays and artifacts, and differentiates lessons to honor students' backgrounds while maintaining academic rigor. These actions contribute to an inclusive environment where students feel valued and supported.

One area needing improvement is providing teachers with structured opportunities to explore their cultural lenses and the impact these may have on teaching. While teachers incorporate students' cultures into their lessons, they lack support to reflect on their biases and the ways in which it might impact their teaching. Addressing this gap would enhance their ability to engage with diverse learners more effectively, and is required by Minnesota's Standards of Effective Practice for teachers. Nevertheless, the school supports teachers in using cultural knowledge to make learning more relevant, providing cultural awareness training for new staff, and encouraging the integration of cultural contexts into lessons for English learners.

Finally, the school successfully positions students' languages, cultures, and identities as strengths. This is reflected in lessons that highlight students' cultural backgrounds, staff efforts to incorporate cultural knowledge into teaching, and positive student feedback indicating that they feel valued and understood. To build on this foundation, the school should prioritize interpretation services, additional professional development for teachers on creating lessons that are culturally and linguistically appropriate, responsive, and relevant, and formal documentation of culturally responsive teaching strategies. These steps will ensure continued compliance with state statutes while promoting equity and inclusivity for all students.

1.7 Environmental Education Program: Does the school implement values and strategies that foster learning and create environmentally literate people who engage in creating healthy outcomes for individuals, communities, and the Earth?

Meets Standard

The school implements values and strategies that foster learning and create environmentally literate people who engage in creating healthy outcomes for individuals, communities, and the Earth.

- The school employs environmental education as a strategy for teaching and learning within its science curriculum and at least one other discipline (e.g. language arts or physical education).

Approaches Standard

The school employs environmental education as a strategy for teaching and learning within its science curriculum. Its application is not evident in other disciplines.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school occasionally teaches concepts related directly to the natural environment but does not employ environmental education as a pervasive educational strategy for teaching and learning in any discipline.

Data sources: Site visits, Annual Reports, Environmental Literacy Plan data

Analysis:

As a school, HGA has embraced environmental stewardship as a cultural norm through the adoption of the core value “Be Green.” EE is not a siloed subject because it is consistently integrated into classroom projects in subjects like ELA and Social Studies. In one high school course, students wrote and mailed letters to their senators advocating on behalf of environmental issues that were important to them. During the term of the contract, staff at both the elementary and high school worked diligently to revitalize the school’s approach to EE to ensure environmental education was employed as a strategy for teaching and learning beyond the science curriculum. The school has identified environmental stewardship as a priority for students who will go on to become local and global leaders, facing the complex and intersectional issues of the world. As stated in the school’s renewal application:

Environmental Education (EE) and thereby developing among our students a sense of responsibility for the environment is another important area of knowledge and skills that is essential for 21st century living. Therefore EE is taught at all grade levels. Just like STEM, EE is embedded within the curriculum of the other subjects. For instance, in literacy students read literary materials dealing with the environment.

This contract term the school received grant funding to improve its recycling program and introduce composting through a Food-to-Farm program. Teachers have leveraged hands-on projects to teach and reteach waste sorting to reduce the amount of food waste and draw connections between human actions and their impacts on the local environment. Other avenues through which students are provided opportunities to develop environmental literacy include a school garden and field trips.

1.8 Educational Requirements: Does the school comply with applicable educational requirements?

Meets Standard

The school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract relating to education requirements, including but not limited to:

- School calendar meets state requirements.
- Graduation requirements meet state standards.
- School administers state assessments as required.
- ~~Preschool / prekindergarten meets state requirements and contractual obligations (if applicable).~~
- Evidence suggests the school complies with requirements of Title or federal and state programs.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: MDE report, Annual Report, school calendar, student / family handbook, annual assessment calendars, site visits, MDE Title reviews, school corrective action plans, Serious Testing Incidents identified during MDE’s High-Quality Charter School identification process

Analysis:

The school must revise its graduation requirements such that students who begin grade 9 in the 2024-25 school year and later must successfully complete a course for credit in personal finance in grade 10, 11, or 12. A teacher of a personal finance course that satisfies the graduation requirement must have a field license or out-of-field permission in agricultural education, business, family and consumer science, social studies, or math.

1.9 Special Education: Does the school protect the rights of students with disabilities and comply with applicable requirements?

Meets Standard

Consistent with the school’s status and responsibilities as a Local Education Agency (LEA), the school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract (including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act) relating to the treatment of students with identified disabilities and those suspected of having a disability, including but not limited to:

- Identification and referral including evaluation of representation of groups (i.e., a Child Find screening is in place and the school adheres to this process)
- Operational compliance including the academic program, assessments, staffing and all other aspects of the school’s program and responsibilities (i.e., school adheres to Special Education laws/IDEA and CAPs)
- Discipline, including due process protections, manifestation determinations, and behavioral intervention plans
- Carrying out Individual Education Plans and Section 504 plans
- Access to the school’s facility and program to students and parents in a lawful manner and consistent with students’ abilities
- Accommodations on assessments
- Securing all applicable funding
- School has a TSES manual
- Parent Advisory Council consists of at least half parents of students with a disability and meets no less than once a year in accordance with MN Stat. §125A.24

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: Site visits, Annual Reports, TSES manual, MDE compliance reviews

Analysis:

The school has a clear Child Find process in place, which includes a structured tiered intervention system. The process involves identification of students based on academic or behavioral concerns, implementation of a six-week intervention plan by general education teachers, systematic monitoring and data collection, and evaluation and eligibility determination with family collaboration. However, there is a noted gap in staff awareness, as some general education teachers were unaware of the Child Find process. The school may consider additional staff training on the Child Find process and increased communication between the general education and special education teacher to ensure consistent implementation.

The school adheres to IDEA requirements and has a TSES manual in place. The instructional model includes both push-in and pull-out services based on student needs. Nevertheless, there is a need for improved collaboration between general and special education staff to ensure alignment of instructional goals and curriculum.

IEP snapshots are provided to general education teachers, and paraprofessionals receive training on accommodations and modifications. The facility is accessible for students and parents.

1.10 English Learners: Does the school protect the rights of English Learners (EL) and comply with applicable requirements?

Meets Standard

Consistent with the school's status and responsibilities as a Local Education Agency (LEA), the school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract (including Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA] and U.S. Department of Education authorities) relating to English Learners (EL) requirements, including but not limited to:

- School has a Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) Plan.
- ~~School has a Language Access Plan (starting in the 2025-26 school year).~~
- Evidence suggests the school complies with its LIEP Plan and applicable requirements.
- Enrollment packet includes the Minnesota Language Survey (MNLS).

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: Site visits, Annual Reports, Minnesota Language Survey, LIEP Plan, student enrollment packet, Language Access Plan

Analysis:

Higher Ground Academy demonstrates a commitment to supporting its multilingual learners through the implementation of a Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) Plan. The school has a documented LIEP, and it is evident that efforts are being made to align instructional strategies with the plan. However, the plan itself requires updates to ensure compliance with current

Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) regulations. Updating this document is critical to maintaining compliance and improving the effectiveness of English Learner (EL) programming.

Additionally, there is evidence that systemic challenges affect the timely identification and support of new EL students. Reports from staff indicate delays in notifying teachers and families about EL program placement, which risks violating the MDE's required timelines. Addressing this gap through improved coordination and accountability could ensure better alignment with the school's obligations under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

The collaboration between EL teachers and general education staff is currently limited. Although lesson plans are shared via email to facilitate some degree of alignment, there is no structured time for regular collaboration. This limits the ability of EL teachers to provide targeted support and integrate language acquisition strategies into general education classrooms. Given the increasing number of newcomer students, this lack of systemic collaboration poses a risk to the academic success of multilingual learners. A structured framework for collaborative planning between EL and general education teachers could support school staff to meet the linguistic and academic needs of these students.

Interviews during site visits across the contract period indicate the school is consistently challenged by understaffing in the EL program. This was particularly acute at the renewal site visit in October 2024. At that time, only one EL teacher served the entire middle school population, and interviews with EL staff at the secondary school indicated that staffing level is inadequate to meet the diverse needs of this group.

In elementary classrooms, EL strategies such as the use of visual aids, sentence stems, and scaffolded activities were observed as effective tools for language acquisition. These strategies promote student engagement and create a positive learning environment. However, in middle and high school classrooms, these foundational strategies are less consistently applied, which may compromise the effectiveness of language instruction for older students. HGA may consider expanding professional development to include training on EL strategies for all grade levels to enhance the consistency and quality of instruction across the school.

HGA has a Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) Plan in place. However, it is missing several elements that are required of LIEP plans by state and federal statute. The LIEP plan provides English Learner (EL) identification procedures but does not include the steps to determine eligibility for additional services (with the exception of special education). Once a student has been identified as an English Learner, the school must screen the student for potential identification and qualification for additional classifications (e.g. SLIFE, RAEL, migrant, immigrant, special education, gifted and talented). If the student qualifies for an additional category, the information should be noted in the student's cumulative folder and used when appropriate.

In addition, the section of the LIEP plan does not describe the amount and scope of EL instruction by proficiency and grade level.

The LIEP plan does not address initial and ongoing parental notification requirements. The school is required to provide parental notification within ten calendar days of enrollment of an English Learner in a language instruction educational program. The letter must be provided in a language accessible to the parent / guardian and inform them of their rights.

The LIEP plan does not address assessment and ongoing identification procedures. Under both federal and state law, all students enrolled in K-12 grades and identified as English Learners must participate in the annual English language proficiency assessment, ACCESS 2.0. All students who have been identified as English Learners, regardless of whether or not they are enrolled in an LIEP, must participate in the ACCESS 2.0 assessment. After a student is placed in the LIEP, charter schools must annually identify students who continue to be eligible for English language instruction. In addition, the school must annually notify parents and guardians of ELs within 30 calendar days of enrollment of an EL in an LIEP. When an EL continues in an LIEP, the school must use the English learner program placement letter located on the TransACT.com website. TransACT ESSA documents are provided free of charge to all Minnesota schools.

Please note, beginning on p. 7 of the plan, everything from the "Disability / Disabilities" section to the end of the document is a repeat of the previous sections. The school may consider removing the repetitive sections when it revises the report.

Prior to any future contract period, HGA must update its LIEP plan to comply with the standardized procedures that must be used by all districts and charter schools in the identification, entrance and exit of English learners and English learners who are dually identified. The guidance to accompany the Minnesota Language Survey is found on the Minnesota Department of Education's website on the [English Learner Education webpage](#). The guidance to accompany the standardized procedures (including a Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) Plan example with guidance) can also be found on the Minnesota Department of Education's website on the [English Learner Education webpage](#).

1.11 Parent & Student Satisfaction: Are parents and students satisfied with the school's educational program?

Meets Standard

Parent and students satisfaction data consistently documents a high degree of satisfaction with the school's educational program.

- School administers both parent and student satisfaction surveys annually.
- Evidence suggests there is a high degree of parents and students satisfied with the academic program of the school.

Approaches Standard

Parent and students satisfaction data documents a moderate and/or inconsistent degree of satisfaction with the school's educational program.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: Student interviews and family focus group data from site visits, Annual Reports, survey data, classroom observations

Analysis:

During OW site visits, HGA students expressed being happy with the programming offered by the school. Students feel safe in the school and believe that staff are working to meet their needs.

Students report feeling affirmed in their identities and that staff have high expectations for their learning.

At the renewal site visit, parents reported being happy with the school and the educational offerings for their students. The parent survey data available in annual reports show that parents have an overall favorable view of the school. Two areas which seem to be of particular concern for parents are the nutrition program and transportation services, which the school should consider being responsive to. Surveys conducted by the school indicate that students do not enjoy the food options provided by the nutrition program. Additionally, parents expressed in school surveys and interviews with OW staff that the transportation service does not reliably deliver students to school on time to start the school day. The school should consider how to be responsive to this important feedback.

According to the school's annual reports, from FY21-FY24 parents were surveyed twice, during FY 22 and FY24, and students were not surveyed at all. The FY21 annual report included a "Student & Parent Satisfaction" section in the table of contents, but it was absent from the annual report. The parent survey data that was included in annual reports, was not presented in a format that is easy to read. In particular, the pie graphs in FY24 were difficult to read and the bar graph in FY22 was confusing to read.

Going forward, and as required by MN Stat. §120B.11 Subd. 7 and the OW Operations Performance Evaluation Framework, HGA must develop a plan to gather and report on data that the school has collected regarding student and parent "connection to and level of satisfaction" with the school's educational program in each year of the contract period. This must be presented in the Annual Report.

Operations Performance Indicator 2: Governance

2.1 Board Composition & Capacity: Does the school's board demonstrate the capacity to effectively govern a successful charter school?

Meets Standard

The school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract and school bylaws relating to school board composition and training, and the board demonstrates the capacity to govern an effective charter school, with the following elements fully developed and functioning effectively:

- Board complies with applicable laws and its own bylaws with respect to board composition, including ex-officio (non-voting) members.
- Board conducts required background checks on all board members prior to being seated in accordance with Section 6.20 of the charter contract.
- Board members complete statutorily mandated initial and annual training.
- Board conducts an annual assessment of the training needs of individual members and the full board as required by statute.
- ~~Board conducts an annual assessment of the board's performance.~~
- Board elections are consistent with statute and bylaws.
- Officer elections are consistent with statute and bylaws.

Approaches Standard

The school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract relating to the school board, however one or more of the above elements is developing or in need of improvement.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: Annual Report, school submissions to Aerie, board meeting minutes, Osprey Wilds site visits and board observations, school bylaws, board roster

Analysis:

Board composition. Over the course of the contract Higher Ground Academy has materially complied with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract and school bylaws relating to school board composition. Article V, Section 2 of the HGA bylaws states:

The Board of Directors shall consist of not less than three (3) nor more than nine (9) members one of whom must be a licensed teacher, a parent or guardian of a student, a community member who is neither a parent/guardian of a student or a teacher employed by the Corporation.

The school complies with these requirements, as well as statutory requirements governing parent, community, and teacher membership.

Background checks. Over the course of the contract period, HGA has consistently conducted background checks of its board members, as required by Section 6.20 of its charter contract.

Going forward, the board must consistently notify Osprey Wilds that it has completed background checks on board members and whether or not the background checks on board members contain adverse information for all members in accordance with Section 6.20 of the charter contract. Please note, if the background check did include adverse information, the school does not have to indicate what the finding was. However, OW staff may follow up to ensure the school appropriately minimizes any risks to student safety and public interests.

Board training. The FY21 Annual Report includes initial training information that is incomplete (the information in the table seems to have been misaligned). The initial training table was copied in subsequent Annual Reports, so each of them contain misaligned and incomplete information that contains errors. In addition, the FY21 report indicates that two members who were seated in September 2015 (Toussaint, Tkachenko) had not started initial board training until January 2017, about 18 months after being seated. Similarly, the member seated in May 2018 did not receive Employment Policies and Practices training until May of 2021 according to the school's report. 2023 MN Stat. §124E.07 Subd. 7 states, "A new board member who does not begin the required initial training within six months after being seated and complete that training within 12 months after being seated is automatically ineligible to continue to serve as a board member." These members should have been removed from the board for failure to complete this training.

The FY22 Annual Report indicates that Abdirashid Muse was seated in October 2021 but completed the Financial Management training with Brenda Kes in 2017 which seems to be an error. The table documenting annual training indicates that Abdirashid Muse received Budget Revision and Audit Report Training in December 2021 which may have met the Financial Management requirement for initial training. In addition, the FY22 Annual Report includes a table documenting Annual Training for FY21 which is confusing. The FY23 Annual Report includes tables documenting Annual Training for FY19-FY23 which is confusing and unnecessary.

The FY24 Annual Report indicates that the newly seated member (Ahmed) completed three training sessions in alignment with initial board training requirements. Please note that in the time Ahmed has been serving the requirements for new board members have changed and they must now complete training on six areas. Charter school law requires:

Prior to beginning their term, a new board member must complete training on a charter school board's role and responsibilities, open meeting law, and data practices law... A new board member must complete training on employment policies and practices under chapter 181; public school funding and financial management; and the board's roles and responsibilities regarding student success, achievement, and performance within 12 months of being seated on the board or the individual is automatically ineligible to continue to serve as a board member. (2024 MN Stat. §124E.07 Subd. 7)

Annual assessment of training needs. Please note that beginning in 2024, MN Stat. §124E.07 Subd. 7 (d) requires:

Every charter school board member must complete annual training throughout the member's term based on an annual assessment of the training needs of individual members and the full board. Ongoing training includes but is not limited to budgeting, financial management, recruiting and hiring a charter school director or chief administrator, evaluating a charter school director or chief administrator, governance-management relationships, student support services, student discipline, state standards, cultural diversity, succession planning, strategic planning, program oversight and evaluation, compensation systems, human resources policies, effective parent and community

relationships, authorizer contract and relationships, charter school law, legal liability, board recruitment and elections, board meetings and operations, policy development and review, and school health and safety.

The school did not provide evidence that the board completed or a plan to complete this annual assessment in the 2024-25 school year, the first year the requirement was in place. The board should ensure that it completes an annual assessment of the training needs of individual members and the full board, and completes annual training in response to that assessment. In addition, charter school law now makes it clear that the charter school is responsible for covering the costs related to board training.

Assessment of board performance. Beginning in the 2024-25 school year, MN Stat. §124E.07 Subd. 7(g) requires, “The board must ensure that an annual assessment of the board’s performance is conducted and the results are reported in the school’s annual report.” The school may consider using the governance-related items in OW’s operations and finance performance evaluation frameworks to conduct this assessment.

Board elections. It appears that HGA has materially complied over the course of the contract with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract and school bylaws relating to school board elections. Article III, Section 7 of the bylaws state:

At an annual meeting or any special meeting properly called, in accord with the provisions of MN. Stat. 124E.07 Subd.5 parents and employees of the Corporation shall be permitted to vote to elect directors. Members of the corporation having the right to elect directors under the provisions of Mn Stat. Ch. 317A et.seq., shall elect the directors in accord with the outcome of voting by the parents, guardians, board members, and staff employed by the Corporation.

Article III, Section 3 of the bylaws state:

The annual meeting of the members of the Corporation shall be held at such time and location as determined by the Board of Directors. Notification shall be by newsletter or email or website notification at least fourteen (14) days prior to the meeting date. Such notice shall contain the date, time and place of the meeting.

The board held an annual meeting in each year of the charter contract, and held elections at its annual meetings on May 18, 2021, May 17, 2022, May 16, 2023, and May 21, 2024. The school indicated that elections would take place on May 20, 2025.

Officer elections. Article VI, Section 1 of the HGA bylaws states:

The officers of the Corporation shall be elected for one (1) year terms by the Board of Directors, and shall consist of a Board Chair, Chief Financial Officer, Secretary, a Chief Administrator (that person reporting to the Board charged with the day-to-day management of the Corporation’s activity will also be an ex-officio member of the Board and a Chief Financial Officer (that person being the most senior staff person of the School charged with reporting to the Chief Administrator on the financial affairs of the Corporation) shall also be an ex-officio member of the Board and such other officers as the Board of Directors shall determine from time to time.

Review of minutes from the term of the contract indicates that the board elected officers at its July 21, 2020 meeting but did not conduct officer elections at any other point during the contract term.

While the board agendas often include a note in the “Progress Toward Performance Improvement Plan” agenda item about the need to hold and document board officer elections, this outstanding obligation from the previous contract period was not resolved.

In addition, prior to any future contract period the board must revise its bylaws to comply with changes to statute. As of 2024, charter school law was revised so that the chief administrator is the only school staff member that can serve on the board in an unelected role. (MN Stat. §124E.07 Subd. 3(d))

2.2 Board Decision-Making & Oversight: Is the board engaged in appropriate decision-making and oversight through effective and transparent board meetings?

Meets Standard

The school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract relating to board decision-making and oversight, with the following elements fully developed and functioning effectively:

- Meeting minutes include, at a minimum, the following:
 - Board member attendance;
 - Actions taken by the board, including specifics on any amendments;
 - Who made a motion and second; and
 - The result of the vote, including number of votes for and against if other than unanimous.
- Meetings are held consistent with Open Meeting Law
 - Meeting times and location are posted properly on the school website and/or onsite at the school, including for special or emergency meetings.
 - If meeting includes board member participation via interactive technology, it is done so consistent with MN Stat. §13D.02.
 - A quorum is present when the board meeting is convened.
 - One set of board materials is available for public inspection.
 - If meeting is closed, it is done so in accordance with MN Stat. 13D.05: agenda and minutes show statutory authority to close the meeting, and minutes appropriately summarize actions taken during the closed meeting (as required).
- The board reviews the school’s performance related to its contractual academic and academic-related goals (Exhibit G) at least four times per year.
- The board reviews the school’s performance related to its contractual environmental education goals (Exhibit H) and environmental literacy plan at least four times per year.
- The board monitors the school’s financial management, short-term financial sustainability, and long-term financial viability at each meeting.
- The board reviews the school’s performance related to its Outstanding Obligations from the Previous Contract in Exhibit S of the charter contract at least four times per year (if applicable).
- The board takes appropriate action to ensure the school’s success based on its review of school performance.
- Required policies are in place and policies that must be approved or reviewed annually are addressed.
- Articles of Incorporation (Exhibit B) are compliant with statute and the charter contract.
- Bylaws (Exhibit C) are compliant with statute and the charter contract.

- The board reviews and approves or accepts key organizational documents (e.g. Annual Report, Financial Audit, Contract with Authorizer, and other Authorizer related documents).
- The board ensures that the school's affiliated building company complies with all applicable legal requirements (if applicable).
- ~~The board ensures that the school's charter management organization (CMO) or education management organization (EMO) complies with all applicable legal requirements and contractual obligations (if applicable).~~

Approaches Standard

The school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations and provisions of the charter contract relating to the board decision-making and oversight, however one or more of the above elements is developing or in need of improvement.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: Board meeting minutes, Osprey Wilds board reviews and observations, and site visit interviews, director evaluation policy

Analysis:

Meeting minutes. The board meeting minutes for Higher Ground Academy demonstrate a consistent effort to document key discussions, decisions, and actions taken by the board. Overall, the minutes include the required components, including board member attendance, motions made and seconded, and the outcomes of votes. Additionally, the minutes provide context for the discussions, making it possible for an external reader to understand the general flow of the meeting and the rationale behind decisions.

One strength of these minutes is their clarity and organization. The documentation of executive reports, financial discussions, and policy updates is thorough and provides useful insight into the board's priorities and operational concerns. The inclusion of financial reports, budget updates, and financial presentations related to grants and expenditures is particularly strong, as it ensures transparency and accountability.

While actions taken by the board are recorded, the level of detail regarding discussions leading up to decisions is sometimes inconsistent. For instance, while financial approvals and policy discussions are well documented, some academic or operational concerns could benefit from more detail about board deliberations. However, the school may consider how it can leverage brief summaries of discussions without turning the minutes into a transcript of what was said by each board member or presenter. That approach would enhance clarity for those reviewing the records after the fact.

Open Meeting Law. Review of meeting minutes indicates the board did not hold any closed sessions over the course of the contract term. However, it consistently struggled with meeting the requirements of MN Open Meeting Law when board members are participating virtually. Going forward and in any future contract period, the HGA board must meet **all** requirements on the list below in order for *any* member of the board to participate remotely:

- The meeting agenda must include advance notice that members will be participating remotely and the addresses of where they would be participating from. (13D.02 Subd. 4)

- This means it cannot be an impromptu decision. The board member must provide notice ahead of time and the public must be notified ahead of time.
- Each location at which a member of the board is present is open and accessible to the public. (13D.02 Subd. 1 (a) (5))
 - This would not include board members' homes, because it is very unlikely that those spaces meet egress and accessibility requirements of the ADA (generally required of most public spaces).
 - In addition, because MN Stat. §13D.02 Subd. 4 requires notice of all member locations, it is not safe to post board members' home addresses on public meeting notices.
- At least one voting member of the board must be physically present and attend the board meeting at the board's regular meeting site, which also must be open and accessible to the public. An ex-officio member's presence at the regular meeting site does not satisfy this requirement. (13D.02, Subd. 1 (a) (3))
- All board members have to be able to see **and** hear each other, all discussion, and any presentations or public input, regardless of where they are located. (13D.02 Subd. 1 (a) (1))
 - This means that you cannot just have a laptop set up in the corner. You need to have a setup whereby a person or persons participating remotely can see all members of the board and any presenters or members of the public who speak.
 - This also means that members cannot call in by telephone. They must be present for the entire meeting (not just for votes) on Zoom, Google Meet, Teams, etc.
- Members of the public present at the regular meeting location must be able to see **and** hear all discussion, testimony, and votes. (13D.02 Subd. 1 (a) (2))
 - This means that members of the public must be able to see the person or persons who are participating remotely.
- All votes must be conducted via roll call whenever any member is participating virtually. It is important to remember to document the voting as a roll call in meeting minutes, which means listing each board member and how they voted on each motion or resolution. (13D.02 Subd. 1 (a) (4))
- Meeting minutes must document the names of board members who attended virtually and the reason(s) the board member(s) appeared via online format. (13D.02 Subd. 6)
- If members cannot be counted for quorum, they also cannot participate in meeting proceedings (e.g. discussion). (13D.02 Subd. 2)
 - A member can only be present for quorum if they meet all of the above criteria.
- If interactive technology is used to conduct a meeting (even if it is for only one board member), to the extent practical, the charter school board must also allow members of the public to observe the meeting remotely. (13D.02 Subd. 3)
 - This means that the school should post the link online or on the agenda *before the meeting* that a member of the public would need to use to access the meeting.

Regular monitoring of contractual obligations. Early in the school's current contractual period, the board reviewed Exhibit S (Performance Improvement Plan) of the current contract and developed a plan to review progress toward its academic and environmental education goals and outstanding obligations from the prior contract period. As a result, over the course of the current contract period the board, with significant support from school leadership, has consistently met the expectation to monitor its contractual obligations. Based on its review of school performance, the board takes appropriate action to ensure the school's success.

Required policies. OW reviewed the board policies on file and posted on the HGA website. The school is missing the following required policies:

- Use of Peace Officers and Crisis Teams to Remove Students with IEPs from School Grounds
- Employee and Service Provider Background Check Policy
- Weighted GPA Policy
- Concussion Procedures (Required if the school provides school-sponsored youth athletic activities)
- Library Materials Policy
- Records Retention Schedule
- E-Learning Day Plan (Required if the school plans to offer online instruction due to inclement weather)
- Telehealth Plan (Required for schools that serve students in Grades 7-12)
- Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness (CACR) Strategic Plan (formerly World's Best Workforce Strategic Plan)

The school must draft these policies and bring them before the board for consideration as soon as possible or prior to any future contract period (no later than June 30, 2025).

In addition, a review of policies identified several that must be revised to bring them into compliance with recent statutory changes. The school must review the following policies and revise to ensure compliance with state law prior to any future contract period:

- Public Data Access Policy
- Data Subject Rights and Access Policy
- Teacher Evaluation Process
- Nepotism Policy
- Admission Policies & Procedures
- Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) Plan

Additional notes about required changes to these policies can be found on the school's 24-25 Compliance Spreadsheet on Google Drive.

For all schools in renewal in 2024 and going forward, Osprey Wilds requires schools to adopt grievance procedures. The school may want to begin working on developing this policy and practices. The contract language reads:

The School shall adopt and publish grievance procedures ("Grievance Procedures") for the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints. Osprey Wilds should not be listed as a party to receive complaints in the Grievance Procedures. The Grievance Procedures should be published, without limitation, on the School website, in the School's staff handbook, and in the School's student and/or family handbook.

Articles. The school's articles of incorporation state, "The Board of Directors shall consist of a minimum of three (3) members..." The conflicts with MN Stat. §124E.07 Subd. 1, which requires that a charter school board is composed of at least five members. Prior to any future contract period, the board must revise its articles of incorporation to comply with statute.

Bylaws. The school's bylaws are out of compliance with statute. The board must revise the bylaws to comply with statute and the charter contract prior to any future contract period.

Affiliated building company. MN Stat. 124E. 13 Subd. 3 requires, "The board of directors of the charter school must ensure the affiliated nonprofit building corporation complies with all applicable legal requirements." HGA's oversight must include the five requirements referenced in

this statute: website compliance, conflicts of interest, financial oversight, statutory requirements, and facility oversight. OW reviewed the school website and the school board’s oversight of the affiliated building company (ABC) and found the following additional violations related to the ABC:

- Charter school law prohibits conflicts of interest among the ABC board and the charter school board. MN Stat. 124E.07, Subd. 3(b) states (in part), “An individual is prohibited from serving as a member of the charter school board of directors if...the individual...is a...principal with a...nonprofit entity...with whom the charter school contracts...for...facilities...”

This means that there can be no overlap between the board of the school and the board of the ABC. Current school board member, Mary Tate, cannot be a member on both boards.

Section 2.2 of the ABC bylaws requires, “At least two Directors must at all times while a member of the Board also be members of the Board of Directors of the Member, Higher Ground Academy.” As noted above, this is not allowable under MN charter school law because it creates a conflict of interest between the tenant (the school) and the landlord (the ABC). Prior to any future contract period, the ABC board must revise its bylaws to comply with statute.

Prior to any future contract period, HGA must resolve the conflict of interest between the school board and its ABC board and post an updated roster online.

Per MN nonprofit law, the ABC board is required to keep “correct and complete copies of its articles and bylaws, accounting records, voting agreements, and minutes of meetings of members, board of directors, and committees having any of the authority of the board of directors for the last six years.” (MN Stat. §317A.461) Minutes from ABC board meetings are posted for school years FY23 and FY24. In its response to this evaluation, the school stated that the ABC board did not meet in FY22 and FY21, and did not provide minutes from FY20 or FY19. In any future contract period, the charter school board must ensure that a meeting of the ABC board is held at least once per year, per MN Stat. 317A.231, and that the minutes are retained for at least six years.

In its response to this evaluation, HGA confirmed that the ABC had one request for access to data during the contract term, which it respond to in accordance with the school’s public data access policy and data subject rights and access policy. The ABC does not handle private data on individuals or protected nonpublic data.

2.3 Management Accountability: Does the board hold management accountable for clear and measurable outcomes?

Meets Standard

The school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract relating to holding management accountable for reaching performance targets, including but not limited to:

- Board establishes qualifications for all persons who hold administrative, academic supervision, or instructional leadership roles in accordance with MN Stat. §124E.12 Subd. 2(a).
- Board establishes a formal performance evaluation process for the school leader or EMO/CMO in accordance with MN Stat. §124E.07 Subd. 6.

- Board implements a formal performance evaluation process for the school leader or EMO/CMO in accordance with MN Stat. §124E.12 Subd. 2(a).
- ~~School leaders who do not hold a valid administrative license annually develop, implement, and report on a professional development plan approved by the charter school board of directors in accordance with MN Stat. §124E.12 Subd. 2(b) (if applicable).~~
- ~~School leaders who do not hold a valid administrative license annually complete a minimum of 25 hours of competency-based training corresponding to the professional development plan approved by the charter school board of directors in accordance with MN Stat. §124E.12 Subd. 2(b) (if applicable).~~
- School leader performance evaluation process evaluates performance in relation to OW contractual academic and environmental education goals and expectations.
- Board engages in periodic school leadership evaluation activities throughout the school year (at least four times per year) as documented by board meeting minutes.

Approaches Standard

The school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations and provisions of the charter contract relating to management accountability, however one or more of the above elements is developing or in need of improvement.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: Board meeting minutes, Osprey Wilds board review and observations, Osprey Wilds site visit interviews, renewal application

Analysis:

The Higher Ground Academy board has established qualifications for the Executive Director role that comply with statute. HGA also provided qualifications for all administrative, academic supervision, and instructional leadership roles. This includes the Director of Curriculum, Director of Personnel Affairs, Chief of Operations, and Principals.

HGA requires its Executive Director hold a master’s degree or higher in “Education, Educational Leadership, Public Administration, Business Administration, Organizational Management, or a related field.” A Minnesota K-12 administrative license is preferred but not required. 2024 MN Stat. §124E.12(a) requires that the board establish these qualifications and that they must include a requirement that a person hold a minimum of a four-year degree from an accredited institution or equivalent experience. Per law, other qualifications for these positions shall include, as appropriate for the specific position: instruction and assessment, curriculum design, human resource and personnel management, professional ethics, child development, financial management, legal and compliance management, special education oversight, contract management, effective communication, cultural competency, board and authorizer relationships, parent relationships, and community partnerships.

Samuel Yigzaw, the school’s current Executive Director, holds a Ph.D. in Education, an administrative license (Principal K-12 valid through June 30, 2027), as well as a MN Superintendent License (valid through June 30, 2027).

The HGA board has established a detailed Director Evaluation Process (adopted October 15, 2024) that outlines procedures and a clear timeline for implementation. The board did not have a process in place for most of the contract period and it will be important for the board to implement this process with fidelity during the final year of the current contract period and in any future contract period.

In its renewal application, the school indicated that the board conducted only indirect evaluation activities prior to the adoption of the Executive Director Evaluation Policy in October 2024:

To date, that process has been indirect based on the Director's report i.e., Academic, EE, and others that he gives to the board at the monthly meetings and by looking at the overall health of the organization such as enrollment and finance. In the spring of FY24, the board formed a committee of three members to spearhead a process for a formal evaluation of the Director. The committee recommended a process that starts with the Executive Director and the board agreeing on his goals/performance targets for the school year. This will take place in the fall. That will be followed by two interim evaluations, one during winter and another in the spring, where the Director will give interim progress reports. Then the process will conclude with a formal evaluation at the end of the school year. The three person committee will facilitate the final evaluation.

Review of meeting minutes indicates the board did not implement a formal performance evaluation process for the school leader during the contract period. Over the term of the contract, the board engaged in periodic school leadership evaluation activities as documented by board meeting minutes:

February 16, 2021: The board reviewed expectations for the ED Evaluation process and talked about the survey that is conducted and whether it aligns with requirements outlined in the school's Performance Improvement Plan (Exhibit S).

December 21, 2021: Notes that a detailed plan was created to address shortcomings from the school's previous renewal evaluation (Exhibit S), which includes the school leader evaluation process though it is not named specifically in the minutes.

October 20, 2020: Agenda item "ED Evaluation". This is a report of the Executive Director's performance presented to the board.

In any future contract period, OW expects that the board will implement a formal performance evaluation process for the school leader in accordance with MN Stat. §124E.12 Subd. 2(a). The board must engage in periodic school leadership evaluation activities throughout the school year (at least four times per year) and document those activities in board meeting minutes.

The school's Director Evaluation Process states, "The board will review student performance and organizational goals established by the HGA Authorizer, MDE and the board in the fall." It is not clear if or how the evaluation process will hold the school leader accountable for performance in relation to OW contractual academic and environmental education goals and expectations in alignment with statute. MN §124E.07 Subd. 6 requires, "The board shall adopt personnel evaluation policies and practices that, at a minimum...evaluate how charter contract goals and commitments are executed..."

Prior to any future contract period, the school must revise its Director Evaluation Process to evaluate school leader performance in relation to OW contractual academic and environmental education goals and expectations in accordance with statute.

2.4 Environmental Education Oversight: Does the board of directors allocate the appropriate financial, human, and organizational resources to carry out environmental education and monitors the school's progress toward its goals?

Meets Standard

Board governance results in quality environmental literacy outcomes for students, including but not limited to:

- Board ensures long-term strategic or organizational planning includes environmental education (if applicable).
- Board allocates appropriate resources, such as funding and staffing, to implement an environmental education program.
- Board ensures the organization fulfills contractual obligations related to Exhibit H and the environmental literacy plan.
- Board holds the school's operational decision-makers accountable for sustainable operations.
- The school has systems in place to track its progress toward increasing student environmental literacy.

Approaches Standard

The board of directors allocate the appropriate financial, human, and organizational resources to carry out environmental education, with one or more of the above elements developing or in need of improvement.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: Board meeting minutes, board meeting observations, site visit interviews, annual budget, renewal evaluation, Environmental Literacy Plan (ELP) survey

Analysis:

In the Future Strategic Direction section of the renewal application, HGA mentioned the possibility of a relocation of the middle school program to a new site. If the school were to relocate the middle school program, the school stated that the needs of the environmental education program would be a key consideration when looking for a facility.

HGA has a designated EE Coordinator responsible for coordinating the school's EE program at each site. Throughout this contract term, the EE Coordinators worked with administration and the staff at each site to improve staff understandings of EE expectations and contractual EE goals, improving the implementation and tracking of the environmental literacy plan.

The EE team also began to include a regular update to the board on progress toward the Exhibit H environmental goals. A review of board meeting minutes show that these updates were given two to three times a year, although in FY22 the board received four updates regarding progress toward environmental literacy goals. In any future contract, OW expects that the board will consistently monitor progress toward Exhibit H EE goals at least four times a year.

The board has supported school staff in the pursuit of significant grant funding from the local county to shore up recycling and waste reduction programs, contributing to sustainable operations at the school.

Operations Indicator 3: School Environment

3.1 Facilities & Transportation: Do the school's facilities and transportation practices effectively serve students?

Meets Standard

The school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract relating to the school facilities, grounds and transportation, including but not limited to:

- Fire inspections and records are maintained.
- Certificate of occupancy is on file.
- School has a plan for transportation services.
- Evidence suggests the physical space is safe.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: Site visits, Annual Report, lease aid application

3.2 Health & Safety: Is the school an effective steward of the health and safety of all students?

Meets Standard

The school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract relating to health and safety, including but not limited to:

- Crisis Management Policy is aligned to MN §121A.035, Subd. 2.
- The school annually conducts at least five school lock-down drills, five school fire drills consistent with MN Stat. §299F.30, and one tornado drill in accordance with MN §121A.035, Subd. 2.
- School complies with MDE food and nutrition program requirements.
- School has a plan for nursing services and dispensing pharmaceuticals.
- School provides access to menstrual products at no charge in restrooms regularly used by all menstruating students in Grades 4-12 in accordance with MN Stat. §121A.212.
- Evidence suggests parents/students perceive the school provides a safe learning environment.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: Site visit, Annual Report, Crisis Management Policy

Analysis:

The school did not provide evidence that it annually conducts at least five school lock-down drills, five school fire drills consistent with MN Stat. §299F.30, and one tornado drill in accordance with MN §121A.035, Subd. 2. Prior to any future contract period, the school must ensure it conducts the statutorily required number of drills in the current school year and develop a plan to conduct drills and document them in future years.

Pharmaceuticals at the elementary school are currently not stored in a lockable container. Prior to any future contract period, the school must have a lockable storage solution with limited staff key access.

The school currently has menstrual products available to students at the secondary school, but not at the elementary school. Prior to any future contract period, the school must provide access to menstrual products at no charge in restrooms regularly used by all menstruating students in Grades 4-12 in accordance with MN Stat. §121A.212. This law has generally not been interpreted as a mandate to put menstrual products into restrooms designated only for boys, but menstrual products must be accessible to transgender male students. OW expects that they would be provided in girls' restrooms, gender neutral restrooms, and the nurses' office.

3.3 Sustainable Operations: Does the operational decision-making by school leadership and staff, reflect a commitment to environmental sustainability?

Meets Standard

The school has a waste reduction and recycling program in place and provides observable evidence that its decision-making and operations reflect a commitment to environmental sustainability, including but not limited to:

- Facilities (e.g. lowering energy costs, refillable water bottle stations, low-VOC cleaners)
- Food (e.g. locally sourced food, low or no waste packaging, ort collection, composting)
- Schoolyard and outdoor areas (e.g. school garden or forest, native plantings)
- Other (e.g. transportation, purchasing, etc.)

Approaches Standard

The school has a waste reduction and recycling program in place and one or more of the above elements developing or in need of improvement.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school does not have a waste reduction and recycling program in place or does not meet any of the criteria listed above.

Data sources: Site visit, Annual Report, and Osprey Wilds site visit interviews, Osprey Wilds board review and observations

Analysis:

This contract term, HGA made concerted efforts to improve sustainability initiatives at the school, most especially through waste reduction. The school received several years of grant funding from the county to implement recycling, composting, and food-to-farm programs. Since grant funding for composting has ended, the school has continued to pay for the program, and hopes to leverage money from refinancing to support continued composting and potentially other efforts like installing solar panels. In addition to the food-to-farm and composting programs, the school also has a garden and refillable water bottle stations. Operationalizing sustainability at both campuses is a large undertaking, but one that the school is making in line with its values.

Operations Performance Indicator 4: Student Rights

4.1 Admissions & Enrollment: Does the school implement open, impartial and transparent admissions and enrollment practices?

Meets Standard

The school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract relating to the admission and enrollment rights of students, including but not limited to policies and practices related to admissions, lottery, waiting lists, fair and open recruitment.

- Lottery policy is in alignment with applicable laws and implemented with fidelity.
- Early Kindergarten admission policy is in alignment with applicable laws and implemented with fidelity (if applicable).
- School disseminates information about its offerings and enrollment procedures to families that reflect the diversity of Minnesota's population and targeted groups in accordance with MN Stat. §124E.17.
 - Targeted groups include low-income families and communities, students of color, students at risk of academic failure, and students underrepresented in the school's student body relative to Minnesota's population.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: Lottery policy, school website, student enrollment packet, application for enrollment, lottery observations, Annual Report

Analysis:

Prior to any future contract period, the school must revise its Lottery Policy to include the following:

- Give enrollment preference to a Minnesota resident pupil over pupils that do not reside in Minnesota.
- Explicitly state that a charter school must require a pupil who does not reside in Minnesota to annually apply in accordance with MN Stat. 124E.11.
- Clarify that a staff member eligible for an enrollment preference for their child, including a foster child, must be an individual employed at the school whose employment is stipulated in advance to total at least 480 hours in a school calendar year.
- Establish a hierarchy prioritizing enrollment preference for siblings first before enrollment preference for children of staff
- Revise the policy to include language to not limit admission to pupils on the basis of intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, or athletic ability and may not establish any criteria or requirements for admission that are inconsistent with this section.

Prior to any future contract period, the school must revise its Early Enrollment for Kindergarten Policy to include the following:

- Ensure the documentation required for age verification complies with MN Stat. 120A.20 Subd. 4. The school currently requires birth certificates; however, state law allows for much broader means of age identification. Documentation may include a passport, a hospital birth record or physician's certificate, a baptismal or religious certificate, an adoption record,

health records, immunization records, immigration records, previously verified school records, early childhood screening records, Minnesota Immunization Information Connection records, or an affidavit from a parent.

- Include language from the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, per MN Statutes 121A.40 to 121A.56. Once a child is enrolled in the school, the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act applies for all students at any charter school. The policy may not include language around a 'trial period' for early entrance. Once enrolled, the student remains enrolled in line with PFDA.

4.2 Due Process & Privacy: Does the school honor due process and privacy for all students?

Meets Standard

The school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract relating to the due process, privacy, and civil rights of students, including but not limited to:

- Transfer of student records
- Evidence indicates the school implements equitable discipline practices and due process protections in compliance with the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, MN Stat. §121A.40 to 121A.56, and laws governing the discipline and removal of students from class (121A.60, 121A.61, and 121A.65).
- Evidence suggests school complies with laws prohibiting religious instruction.
- Evidence suggests school complies with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), laws related to student records and privacy.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: Relevant school policies, student & family handbook, annual charter school statement of assurances, lease aid application, discipline policy

Analysis:

Osprey Wilds found no evidence to suggest that the school does not substantially honor due process and privacy for all students. HGA has its policies listed on its website, including student discipline, bullying prohibition, and several non-discrimination policies.

OW has no evidence the school has not complied with FERPA or laws related to student records and privacy. However, it does not have in place data practices policies that are compliant with statute. Prior to any future contract period, the school must update its Charter School Data Practices Law Policy to comply with statutory requirements:

- The school must have a Public Data Access Policy in accordance with MN Stat. §13.025 Subd. 2. Statute requires, "The responsible authority shall prepare a written policy of the rights of data subjects under section 13.04 and the specific procedures used by the government entity for access by the data subject to public or private data on individuals. The written policy must be updated no later than August 1 of each year, and at any other time as necessary to reflect changes in personnel, procedures, or other circumstances that impact the public's ability to access data."
- The school must have a Data Subject Rights and Access Policy in accordance with MN Stat. §13.025 Subd. 3. Statute requires, "The responsible authority shall prepare a written data

access policy and update it no later than August 1 of each year, and at any other time as necessary to reflect changes in personnel, procedures, or other circumstances that impact the public's ability to access data.”

HGA’s current policy is currently one paragraph that states, “ It is the policy of Higher Ground Academy charter school to follow the state data practices law, consistent with Minn. Stat. § 124E.03, subd. 5(a), including regarding staff ability to report unethical or fraudulent actions of a charter where they work...” This does not comply with the requirements of statute.

Operations Indicator 5: Personnel Practices

5.1 Licensure: Is the school's staff appropriately licensed?

Meets Standard

The school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract relating to appropriate licensure of school staff.

School staff is appropriately licensed.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: Annual Report, STAR report, requests for special permissions

Analysis:

The school's STAR reports for FY22, FY23, and FY24 all included multiple violations. In each of the three years, the school was reported to have teachers with expired licenses and teachers teaching a subject inconsistent with their license. In any future contract terms, the school should ensure that all staff are appropriately licensed and that all licenses are currently active.

5.2 Staff Retention: Does the school retain staff at a level that is conducive to operating a successful school?

Meets Standard

The school demonstrates stability in instructional and non-instructional staffing that is conducive to operating a successful school.

80% retention ratio or system that is designed to negate negative effects of high turnover as evidenced by positive academic outcomes

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: Annual Report, STAR report, renewal application, site visit interviews

Analysis:

In all four years of the contract, the school has retained teaching staff at a rate of over 80%, with a high of 89% retention at the end of FY23. Non licensed staff retention rates hovered around 78% from FY21-FY23, but at the end of FY24, non-licensed staff were retained at 85%. All staff retention averaged 83% for all years of the contract.

5.3 Employment Practices: Does the school engage in appropriate and equitable hiring, evaluation and termination practices?

Meets Standard

The school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract relating to employment including transparent hiring, evaluation and dismissal policies and practices, including but not limited to:

- Evidence suggests the school has open and fair hiring practices based on clear job descriptions.
- The school has clear employment and evaluation policies outlined in the employee handbook.
- Evidence suggests the school follows the evaluation processes and policies outlined in its employee handbook.
- Evidence suggests the school follows the termination processes and policies outlined in its employee handbook.
- The school conducts appropriate background checks on staff and volunteers in accordance with MN Stat. §123B.03.
- The school disseminates a clear employee handbook.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: Staff/ employee handbook, staff interviews, background check reviews, organizational chart, hiring policy and procedure manual or relevant policies

Analysis:

The staff handbook includes a clear equal employment opportunity (EEO) statement, which suggests the school has open and fair hiring practices. The school has clear evaluation policies for employees outlined in the staff handbook and staff interviews indicate that teacher evaluations are completed with fidelity.

The background check records for at least 23 HGA employees are listed as “international” with no indication of a date of background checks. As a result, it is not clear if the school conducted background checks when the staff was hired or when the last time was these employees were background checked. In its response to this evaluation, the school stated, “Since the teachers are new to the U.S., their background checks were completed in their home countries. We do have copies of each teacher’s background checks from their home country.”

Minnesota state law is very clear and requires, “A school hiring authority shall request a criminal history background check from the superintendent of the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension on all individuals who are offered employment in a school...” (MN Stat. §123B.03 Subd. 1) Prior to any future contract period, the school must conduct BCA-level background checks on all current employees and ensure this practice is in place for future employees and volunteers going forward.

Charter school law requires that schools have in place an Employee and Service Provider Background Check Policy. Prior to any future contract period, Higher Ground Academy is required to strengthen its current background check process by creating a policy that is specifically aligned to the requirements of statute, including a criminal history background check from the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. In addition, the policy should identify that all employees, board members, and volunteers at the school are subject to a background check, in accordance with state law and the charter contract, as well as the procedures for obtaining background check information, how the school will use the data, what the school will do with an adverse background check, how often

background checks will be re-obtained (e.g. every three to five years), and how the school will dispose of data collected. The school must have this in place prior to any future contract period.

In addition to revising the Background Check Policy, the school is also required to notify parents and guardians annually regarding the policy. The school may use the student handbook or similar communication as the vehicle for the annual notification. Specifically, MN §123B.03 Subd. 1(e) states:

At the beginning of each school year or when a student enrolls, a school hiring authority must notify parents and guardians about the school hiring authority's policy requiring a criminal history background check on employees and other individuals who provide services to the school, and identify those positions subject to a background check and the extent of the hiring authority's discretion in requiring a background check.

The notification to families must include:

- A clear statement that the school requires criminal history background checks for certain employees and individuals who provide services to the school.
- A list or description of positions that require a background check, such as teachers, administrators, support staff, coaches, volunteers working with students, and contractors (e.g. school bus drivers, food service workers).
- A statement explaining the school's discretionary authority regarding background checks, such as whether background checks are required for all employees and service providers or only specific roles, whether the school reserves the right to require background checks in additional situations, and whether background checks are required for volunteers and under what circumstances (e.g., one-time vs. ongoing interactions with students).

You may also wish to include a description of what the background check includes, how often background checks are conducted, and how families can get more information. In any future contract period, the school must revise its student and family handbook to include this statutorily required notification.

Operations Performance Indicator 6: Compliance & Reporting

6.1 Charter School Annual Reports: Does the school comply with statutory and contractual requirements regarding annual reports?

Meets Standard

The school complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract relating to charter school annual reports, including but not limited to:

- Statutory and contractual requirements
- Report submitted to Osprey Wilds by deadline
- Posted to school website and distributed to stakeholders
- MN Stat. §120B.11 reporting requirements

Approaches Standard

The school complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract relating to charter school annual reports, however one or more of the above elements is developing or in need of improvement.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: Annual Reports

Analysis:

HGA provides a link to its current and previous Annual Reports on the school website. The school submitted its FY22 report late to OW, but otherwise submissions have been timely.

HGA's FY24 Annual Report is not compliant as it failed to list Professional Development activities for the School Leader, the parent and student survey data is incomplete, and the report is missing updated information from WBWF: Educational Effectiveness, Assessment & Evaluation per MN Stat. §120B.11 Subd. 2(6). Information about the primary and additional purposes of the charter school should be updated in line with updated statutory requirements as well. While these areas are developing or in need of improvement, many sections of the report are thoroughly addressed.

Prior to any future contract term, the school will be required to bring its Annual Report into compliance with statute and the charter contract and post it to the school's website.

6.2 Insurance: Does the school secure and maintain insurance coverages required by statute and the charter contract?

Meets Standard

The school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract relating to insurance coverages, including but not limited to:

- Workers' compensation insurance
- Insurance covering all of the School's real and personal property, whether owned or leased
- Insurance required by MN §124E.09 and MN §466.04, including minimum of:

- Commercial general liability insurance in comprehensive form
- Bodily injury and property damage combined of one and a half million dollars (\$1,500,000) per occurrence
- Personal injury of one and a half million dollars (\$1,500,000) per occurrence
- Three million dollars (\$3,000,000) per occurrence for the release or threatened release of a hazardous substance
- If not included under its general liability coverage, additional coverages as follows:
 - Minimum automobile liability insurance coverage, bodily injury and property damage, of one million dollars (\$1,000,000) per occurrence if the School owns or operates motor vehicles
 - Officer and employee errors and omissions/professional liability of one and a half million dollars (\$1,500,000) per occurrence
 - Employee dishonesty insurance of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000)
- Providing Osprey Wilds in a timely fashion with certificate of coverage that includes Osprey Wilds as certificate holder

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: Certificate of Liability Insurance (Acord Form), insurance policy documents, interviews and correspondence with insurance provider(s)

6.3 Authorizer & State Compliance: Does the school comply with authorizer and state deadlines and compliance requirements?

Meets Standard

The school materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract relating to relevant compliance and reporting requirements to the authorizer, state education agency, and federal authorities, including but not limited to:

- Evidence suggests the school completes state reporting on time.
- School website meets statutory requirements.
- Minimum 80% on-time percentages in Aerie
- Evidence suggests the school fulfills requirements related to TRA and PERA

Approaches Standard

The school complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract relating to compliance requirements, however one or more of the above elements is developing or in need of improvement.

Does Not Meet Standard

The school failed to implement the program in the manner described above; the failure(s) were material and significant to the viability of the school.

Data sources: Aerie on-time rate, MDE communications, TRA/PERA communications, school website

Analysis:

Evidence suggests HGA generally completes state reporting on time, however the school was late to submit the charter school assurances to MDE in FY22, FY24, and FY25.

The school has maintained an average Aerie on-time submission rate of 86% over the term of the contract, exceeding the required 80%. The annual on-time rates were 87% in FY21, 86% in FY22, and 84% in FY23. While FY24 is excluded from the calculation due to challenges related to the Aerie implementation, available evidence indicates the school continued its timely reporting practices into FY24.

The school's website is not fully compliant with statute. Prior to any future contract term, the school should update its website to include the following components as detailed in the school's compliance spreadsheet:

- Per MN Stat. §124D.09 Subd. 12(c), the school is required to adopt a policy regarding weighted grade point averages for any high school or dual enrollment course. The board must adopt an identical policy regarding weighted grade point averages for credits earned via post secondary coursework as it gives to credits earned via concurrent enrollment coursework. The policy must state whether the district offers weighted grades. The school must annually publish on its website a list of courses for which a student may earn a weighted grade.
- Per MN Stat. §256.962 subd. 6, the school must post the link provided to information on how to obtain an application assistance for MN health care programs on the charter school's website.

There are a few elements on the website that should be updated later this year:

- The school indicated the board election would be held May 30, 2025. These dates have been posted on the school website, but in addition, the candidates' names, biographies, and candidate statements must be posted on the school website at least ten calendar days before the election.

Evidence suggests that the school fulfills requirements related to TRA and PERA.

Response to Renewal Evaluation

Domain	Deficiency	Page in the report	Response	Artifact
Financial Performance (FP) 1.3	Provide the date when the Group Health Insurance was board approved	27	The group health policy was approved before 2015. (exact date unknown). I remember being asked to forward it to Osprey in 2015 during the process of authorizer transfer. It will be revised before the June, 2025 board meeting.	
FP 1.3	Electronic Fund Transfer Policy	27	The board will approve this policy before June, 2025.	
Operations & Performance (OP) 1.5	Documentation related to its teacher evaluation and peer review process	46	From the feedback it is clear that our current practice needs to be revised in order to comply with the new statutes and MD guidelines. Therefore, we will review our existing policy and submit it before June, 2025.	
OP 1.10	Enrollment Packet with the Complete MN Language Survey	53	The language survey is already in the application packet (navigate the link in the next column).	Kindergarten application form Grades 1 - 12 application form
OP 2.1	The boards plan for completing its annual assessment of the training needs of individual members	57	The board assesses its training needs even though there is no set plan and schedule for doing so. Going forward however, the attached plan will be adopted.	Plan for conducting board training needs
Op 2.1	Board minutes showing election of officer	58		Board minute 7/20 Board Minute

				6/21
OP 2.2	Required policies	62	Link to Whistle Blower Policy	Whistle Blower Policy
OP 2.2	ABC Minutes for the last six years	63	The ABC board did not meet in FY22 and FY21	Minutes from 1/23 Minutes from 7/23 Minutes from 4/24 Minutes from 4/24
OP 2.2	Resolve conflict of interest between the ABC board and the HGA board	63	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mary Tate will be replaced on the ABC Board. 	
OP 2.2	Request for access to data (re: ABC)	63	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2021, a request was made by a gentleman named Michael J. McGibbons. The requested information was provided in a timely manner (see attached email copy). Our lawyer, John Cairns, was involved in the process and ensured compliance with MN Stat. §13.04. 	Letter from Mr. Gibbons
OP 2.3	Admin qualifications	64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualification of Chief Operations Officer Qualification of Curriculum Director Qualification of Principal 	COO Qualification Curriculum Director Qualification Principal Qualification Executive

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualification of Executive Director • Qualification of Director of Personnel Affairs 	Director Qualification Director of PA Qualification
OP 4.1	Revised Early enrollment for Kindergarten policy	71	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current policy will be revised before 6/25 • There is no fee for assessment. • Immunization records and Birth certificates must be provided to the school before the student is enrolled in the school (This is our current practice). 	
OP 5.3	Background checks	74	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the teachers are new to the U.S., their background checks were completed in their home countries. We do have copies of each teacher's background checks from their home country. We can provide restricted access to the documents if there is a need. 	
OP 6.3	Website compliance	77	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election policies and procedures: Published • Weighted GPA Policy will be approved before 6/2025 	Board Elections Procedure

			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Application for assistance to MN healthcare programs - The links are already on our webpage.	<u>Application for MN Healthcare Assistance</u>
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Higher Ground Academy

Indicator 1: Mission Related Outcomes

Measure 1.1 Performance Data:

Community Related Projects

Higher Ground Academy	Number of Students with Successful Participation in Community Project	Number of Students	Percentage of Students with Successful Participation in Community Project
FY21	1036	1036	100.0%
FY22	1022	1022	100.0%
FY23	1070	1070	100.0%
FY24	1,118	1118	100.0%
Aggregate	4,246	4,246	100.0%
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	3210	3210	100.0%

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

Indicator 2: English Language Learners

Measure 2.1 Performance Data:

English Language Learners: ACCESS, Aggregate Percentage Meeting Target - All students (Meeting enrollment criteria), Grades K-12

Year	Total Number of Students Participating in ACCESS Assessment	Total Number of ELs Meeting the State Progress Target	Percent of English Learners Meeting the State Progress Target	State of MN Total Number of Students Participating in ACCESS Assessment	State of MN Total Number of ELs Meeting the State Progress Target	State of Minnesota Percentage of English Learners Meeting Target
FY21*						
FY22	332	80	24.1%	60355	16839	27.9%
FY23	365	93	25.5%	63509	18366	28.9%
FY24	393	85	21.6%	66134	18681	28.2%
Aggregate	1090	258	23.7%	189998	53886	28.4%

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

Measure 2.2 Performance Data:

English Language Learners: ACCESS, Average Progress Toward Target - All students (Meeting enrollment criteria), Grades K-12

Year	Number of English Learners	School Average Progress Toward Target	State Average Progress Toward Target
FY21*			
FY22	332	53.5%	53.1%
FY23	365	43%	47.3%
FY24	393	40%	46.4%
Aggregate	1090	45.5%	48.9%

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

Indicator 3: Reading Growth

Measure 3.1 Performance Data:

Reading: North Star Academic Progress -- All Students (Meeting enrollment criteria)

Higher Ground Academy	Count whose reading achievement level improved	Count tested	Percent of Students whose achievement level improved
FY21*			

FY22	88	325	27.1%
FY23	75	370	20.3%
FY24	111	389	28.5%
Aggregate	274	1084	25.3%

Source: Data provided to OW by school

Reading: North Star Academic Progress -- All Students (Meeting enrollment criteria)

State of Minnesota	Count whose reading achievement level improved	Count tested	Percent of Students whose achievement level improved
FY21*			
FY22	49599	245117	20.2%
FY23	51212	284046	18.0%
FY24	55303	289929	19.1%
Aggregate	156114	819092	19.1%

Source: MDE Data Center

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

Measure 3.2 Performance Data:

Reading: North Star Academic Progress -- All Students (Meeting enrollment criteria)

Higher Ground Academy	Count whose reading achievement level decreased or stayed "does not meet standards"	Count tested	Percent of Students whose achievement level stayed "does not meet" or decreased
FY21*			
FY22	113	325	34.8%
FY23	146	370	39.5%
FY24	121	389	31.1%
Aggregate	380	1084	35.1%

Source: Data provided to OW by school

Reading: North Star Academic Progress -- All Students (Meeting enrollment criteria)

State of Minnesota	Count whose reading achievement level stayed "does not meet" or decreased	Count tested	Percent of Students whose achievement level stayed "does not meet" or decreased
FY21*			
FY22	90144	245117	36.8%
FY23	113661	284046	40.0%
FY24	113049	289929	39.0%
Aggregate	316854	819092	38.6%

Source: MDE Data Center

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

Measure 3.3 – Performance Data: FastBridge Assessment

Reading: FastBridge Assessment- All students (Meeting enrollment criteria)

Higher Ground Academy	Number of students who increase their scale score from fall to spring by at least 50% of the points needed for college pathway	Total Number of Students	Percentage of students who increase their scale score from fall to spring by at least 50% of the points needed for college pathway

FY21			
FY22	584	966	60.5%
FY23	417	587	71.0%
FY24	722	964	74.9%
Aggregate	1723	2517	68.5%

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

Indicator 4: Math Growth

Measure 4.1 Performance Data:

Math: North Star Academic Progress -- All Students (Meeting enrollment criteria)

Higher Ground Academy	Count whose math achievement level improved	Count tested	Percent of Students whose achievement level improved
FY21*			
FY22	77	312	24.7%
FY23	78	366	21.3%
FY24	80	390	20.5%
Aggregate	235	1068	22.0%

Source: Data provided to OW by school

Math: North Star Academic Progress -- All Students (Meeting enrollment criteria)

State of Minnesota	Count whose math achievement level improved	Count tested	Percent of Students whose achievement level improved
FY21*			
FY22	44136	241968	18.2%
FY23	41951	282652	14.8%
FY24	41023	288827	14.2%
Aggregate	127110	813447	15.8%

Source: MDE Data Center

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

Measure 4.2 Performance Data:

Math: North Star Academic Progress -- All Students (Meeting enrollment criteria)

Higher Ground Academy	Count whose achievement level decreased or stayed "does not meet standards"	Count tested	Percent of Students whose achievement level stayed "does not meet" or decreased
FY21*			
FY22	155	312	49.7%
FY23	196	366	53.6%
FY24	192	390	49.2%
Aggregate	543	1068	50.8%

Source: Data provided to OW by school

Math: North Star Academic Progress -- All Students (Meeting enrollment criteria)

State of Minnesota	Count whose achievement level stayed "does not meet" or decreased	Count tested	Percent of Students whose achievement level stayed "does not meet" or decreased
FY21*			
FY22	96749	241968	40.0%
FY23	123370	282652	43.6%
FY24	125819	288827	43.6%
Aggregate	345938	813447	42.4%

Source: MDE Data Center

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

Measure 4.3 – Performance Data: FastBridge Assessment
Math: FastBridge Assessment- All students (Meeting enrollment criteria)

Higher Ground Academy	Number of students who increase their scale score from fall to spring by at least 50% of the points needed for college pathway	Total Number of Students	Percentage of students who increase their scale score from fall to spring by at least 50% of the points needed for college pathway
FY21			
FY22	510	1002	50.9%
FY23	437	723	60.4%
FY24	555	900	61.7%
Aggregate	1502	2625	57.2%

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

Indicator 5: Reading Proficiency

Measure 5.1a Performance Data:

Reading: All State Accountability Tests – All Students (Meeting enrollment criteria), Grade 3

Higher Ground Academy	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	4	27	11	39	81	45.1
FY22	4	23	14	25	66	51.5
FY23	4	25	16	34	79	42.5
FY24	4	19	21	37	81	40.4
Aggregate	16	94	62	135	307	44.9
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	12	67	51	96	226	46.2

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

State of Minnesota	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	5,613	20,085	8,522	18,789	53,009	56.5
FY22	6,790	21,935	9,403	20,756	58,884	56.8
FY23	6,630	21,858	9,584	21,319	59,391	56.0
FY24	6,246	21,751	9,635	21,579	59,211	55.1
Aggregate	25,279	85,629	37,144	82,443	230,495	56.2
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	19666	65544	28622	63654	177,486	56.1

Source: MDE Data Center

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

Measure 5.1b-5.2 Performance Data:

Reading: All State Accountability Tests – All Students (Meeting enrollment criteria), Grade 3-8 & 10

Higher Ground Academy	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	39	178	128	147	492	57.1
FY22	38	219	108	165	530	58.7
FY23	44	190	125	178	537	55.2
F24	52	203	139	160	554	58.6
Aggregate	173	790	500	650	2,113	57.4
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	134	612	372	503	1,621	57.5

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

State of Minnesota	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	53,408	132,169	72,184	95,698	353,459	62.7
FY22	62,191	151,324	85,002	114,287	412,804	62.0
FY23	58,615	147,562	84,289	118,105	408,571	60.8
FY24	59,687	150,393	85,848	119,511	415,439	60.0
Aggregate	233,901	581,448	327,323	447,601	1,590,273	61.6
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	180493	449279	255139	351903	1,236,814	61.2

Source: MDE Data Center

St. Paul Public School (ISD 625)	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total Students	Proficiency Index
FY21*	863	2,157	1,649	4,410	9,079	42.3
FY22	1,375	3,484	2,681	6,254	13,794	44.9
FY23	1,358	3,462	2,763	6,638	14,221	43.6
FY24	1,374	3,421	2,674	6,148	13,617	43.7

Aggregate	4,970	12,524	9,767	23,450	50,711	44.1
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	4107	10367	8118	19040	41,632	44.5

Source: MDE Data Center

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

Measure 5.3- 5.4 Performance Data:

Reading: All State Accountability Tests – FRP Students (Meeting enrollment criteria), Grade 3-8 & 10

Higher Ground Academy	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	39	173	125	144	481	57.1
FY22	38	218	111	166	533	58.4
FY23	44	187	125	176	532	55.2
FY24	52	201	139	159	551	58.5
Aggregate	173	779	500	645	2,097	57.3
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	134	606	375	501	1,616	57.4

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

State of Minnesota	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	6,642	29,844	25,278	50,830	112,594	43.6
FY22	7,569	34,802	29,810	60,212	132,393	43.3
FY23	11,189	43,395	39,662	76,644	170,890	43.5
FY24	11,399	48,474	39,462	75,958	175,293	44.8
Aggregate	36,799	156,515	134,212	263,644	591,170	43.8
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	30157	126671	108934	212814	478,576	44.2

St. Paul Public School (ISD 625)	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total Students	Proficiency Index
FY21*	180	1,054	1,159	3,683	6,076	29.8
FY22	291	1,729	1,796	4,956	8,772	33.3
FY23	326	1,918	2,121	5,800	10,165	32.5
FY24	293	1,868	2,010	5,323	9,494	32.4
Aggregate	1,090	6,569	7,086	19,762	34,507	32.5
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	910	5515	5927	16079	28,431	33.0

Source: MDE Data Center

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

Measure 5.5 Performance Data:

Reading: All State Accountability Tests – English Learners (Meeting enrollment criteria), Grade 3-8 & 10

Higher Ground Academy	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	0	42	62	108	212	34.4
FY22	1	72	57	129	259	39.2
FY23	3	48	66	122	239	35.1
FY24	4	54	74	115	247	38.5
Aggregate	8	216	259	474	957	36.9
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	8	174	197	366	745	37.7

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

St. Paul Public School (ISD 625)	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total Students	Proficiency Index
FY21*	14	163	399	1899	2,475	15.2
FY22	36	369	760	2,795	3,960	19.8
FY23	18	365	725	2,744	3,852	19.4
FY24	11	334	729	2,746	3,820	17.5
Aggregate	79	1231	2613	10184	14,107	18.5
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	65	1068	2214	8285	11,632	19.3

Source: MDE Data Center

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

Measure 5.6 Performance Data:

Reading: All State Accountability Tests – Special Education Students (Meeting enrollment criteria), Grade 3-8 & 10

Higher Ground Academy	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	0	0	2	15	17	5.9
FY22	0	3	1	16	20	17.5
FY23	0	3	7	11	21	31.0
FY24	0	4	4	11	19	31.6
Aggregate	0	10	14	53	77	22.1
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	0	10	12	38	60	26.7

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

St. Paul Public School	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	50	125	119	840	1,134	20.7

FY22	95	252	225	1,337	1,909	24.1
FY23	115	249	213	1,417	1,994	23.6
FY24	103	261	241	1,385	1,990	24.5
Aggregate	363	887	798	4,979	7,027	23.5
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	313	762	679	4139	5,893	24.0

Source: MDE Data Center

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

Indicator 6: Math Proficiency

Measures 6.1-6.2 Performance Data:

Math: All State Accountability Tests – All Students (Meeting enrollment criteria), Grades 3-8 & 11

Higher Ground Academy	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
Baseline						71.1
FY21*	18	85	139	228	470	36.7
FY22	44	103	131	232	510	41.7
FY23	33	125	145	230	533	43.2
FY24	36	130	158	223	547	44.8
Aggregate	131	443	573	913	2,060	41.8
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	113	358	434	685	1,590	43.3

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

State of Minnesota	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	52,678	98,906	82,468	108,707	342,759	56.3
FY22	65,387	116,202	91,615	126,469	399,673	56.9
FY23	58,615	147,562	84,289	118,105	408,571	60.8
FY24	69,263	117,895	92,473	125,735	405,366	56.8
Aggregate	245,943	480,565	350,845	479,016	1,556,369	58.0
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	193,265	381,659	268,377	370,309	1,213,610	58.4

Source: MDE Data Center

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

St. Paul Public School	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	598	1,272	1,576	5,310	8,756	30.4
FY22	1,138	2,192	2,473	7,162	12,965	35.2
FY23	1,180	2,298	2,667	7,438	13,583	35.4
FY24	1,241	2,261	2,509	7,080	13,091	35.3
Aggregate	4,157	8,023	9,225	26,990	48,395	34.7
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	3,559	6,751	7,649	21,680	39,639	35.7

Source: MDE Data Center

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

Measures 6.3-6.4 Performance Data:

Math: All State Accountability Tests – FRP Students (Meeting enrollment criteria), Grades 3-8 & 11

Higher Ground Academy	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
Baseline						70.9
FY21*	18	84	133	224	459	36.7
FY22	44	104	131	236	515	41.5
FY23	33	123	143	226	525	43.3
FY24	36	128	157	222	543	44.7
Aggregate	131	439	564	908	2,042	41.7
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	113	355	431	684	1,583	43.2

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

State of Minnesota	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	5,255	19,458	25,245	58,982	108,940	34.3
FY22	6,709	23,631	29,030	68,502	127,872	35.1
FY23	11,314	35,190	40,532	83,378	170,414	39.2
FY24	11,785	35,330	40,451	82,866	170,432	23.4
Aggregate	35,063	113,609	135,258	293,728	577,658	37.4
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	29,808	94,151	110,013	234,746	468,718	38.2

Source: MDE Data Center

St. Paul Public School (ISD 625)	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total Students	Proficiency Index
FY21*	90	476	929	4,364	5,859	17.6
FY22	225	967	1,520	5,556	8,268	23.6
FY23	278	1,217	1,837	6,409	9,741	24.8

FY24	299	1,102	1,705	6,034	9,140	24.3
Aggregate	892	3,762	5,991	22,363	33,008	23.2
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	802	3286	5062	17999	27,149	24.4

Source: MDE Data Center

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

Measures 6.5 Performance Data:

Math: All State Accountability Tests – English Learners (Meeting enrollment criteria), Grades 3-8 & 11

Higher Ground Academy	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	1	20	53	138	212	22.4
FY22	5	36	59	151	251	28.1
FY23	3	33	54	142	232	#REF!
FY24	4	38	58	143	243	27.2
Aggregate	13	127	224	574	938	26.9
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	12	107	171	436	726	28.2

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

St. Paul Public School	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	13	129	262	1,993	2,397	11.4
FY22	63	341	553	2,815	3,772	18.0
FY23	51	349	578	2,683	3,661	18.8
FY24	45	338	624	2,732	3,739	17.6
Aggregate	172	1,157	2,017	10,223	13,569	16.5
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	159	1028	1755	8230	11,172	18.5

Source: MDE Data Center

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

Measures 6.6 Performance Data:

Math: All State Accountability Tests – Special Education Students (Meeting enrollment criteria), Grades 3-8 & 11

Higher Ground Academy	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	1	20	53	138	212	22.4
FY22	0	4	1	14	19	23.7
FY23	0	1	2	16	19	10.5
FY24	0	0	4	17	21	9.5
Aggregate	1	25	60	185	271	20.7
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	0	5	7	47	59	14.4

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

St. Paul Public School	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	39	92	91	873	1,095	16.1
FY22	77	193	256	1,282	1,808	22.0
FY23	102	205	231	1,382	1,920	22.0
FY24	103	217	213	1,404	1,937	21.8
Aggregate	321	707	791	4,941	6,760	20.5
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	282	615	700	4068	5,665	22.0

Source: MDE Data Center

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

Indicator 7: Science Proficiency

Measures 7.1-7.2 Performance Data:

Science: All State Accountability Tests – All Students (Meeting enrollment criteria), Grades 5, 8 & High School

Higher Ground Academy	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
Baseline						58.7
FY21*	1	25	56	55	137	39.4
FY22	8	41	47	67	163	44.5
FY23	9	58	71	108	246	41.7
FY24	9	81	87	124	301	44.4
Aggregate	27	205	261	354	847	42.8
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	26	180	205	299	710	43.5

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

State of Minnesota	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	10,546	48,270	38,723	38,812	136,351	57.3
FY22	13,953	58,044	47,160	55,045	174,202	54.9
FY23	12,944	54,404	46,638	57,765	171,751	52.8
FY24	12,778	57,140	46,732	60,074	176,724	52.7
Aggregate	50,221	217,858	179,253	211,696	659,028	54.4
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	39675	169588	140530	172884	522,677	53.5

Source: MDE Data Center

St. Paul Public School	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
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FY21*	109	567	604	1,572	2,852	34.3
FY22	217	1,079	1,201	2,672	5,169	36.7
FY23	246	1,073	1,192	3,019	5,530	34.6
FY24	249	1,149	1,209	2,907	5,514	31.3
Aggregate	821	3,868	4,206	10,170	19,065	34.2
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	712	3301	3602	8598	16,213	35.9

Source: MDE Data Center

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

Measures 7.3- 7.4 Performance Data:

Science: All State Accountability Tests – FRP Students (Meeting enrollment criteria), Grades 5, 8 & High School

Higher Ground Academy	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	1	25	55	53	134	39.9
FY22	8	54	44	66	172	48.8
FY23	9	54	68	104	235	41.3
FY24	9	81	87	124	301	44.4
Aggregate	27	214	254	347	842	43.7
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	26	189	199	294	708	44.4

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

State of Minnesota	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	1,155	8,231	11,021	19,683	40,090	37.2
FY22	1,477	9,996	13,498	27,376	52,347	34.8
FY23	2,133	14,441	18,713	36,534	71,821	36.1
FY24	2,197	14,873	18,466	37,150	72,686	36.2
Aggregate	6,962	47,541	61,698	120,743	236,944	36.0
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	5807	39310	50677	101060	196,854	35.8

Source: MDE Data Center

St. Paul Public School	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	17	162	351	1,299	1,829	19.4
FY22	39	417	707	2,033	3,196	25.3
FY23	56	471	806	2,569	3,902	23.8
FY24	51	463	789	2,441	3,744	24.4
Aggregate	163	1,513	2,653	8,342	12,671	23.2
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	146	1351	2302	7043	10,842	24.4

Source: MDE Data Center

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

Measures 7.5 Performance Data:

Science: All State Accountability Tests –English Learners (Meeting enrollment criteria), Grades 5, 8 & High School

Higher Ground Academy	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21*	0	3	13	26	42	22.6
FY22	1	8	22	50	81	24.7
FY23	1	16	27	74	118	25.8
FY24	1	16	36	82	135	25.9
Aggregate	3	43	98	232	376	25.3
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	3	40	85	206	334	25.6

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

St. Paul Public School (ISD 625)	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total Students	Proficiency Index
FY21*	2	20	54	575	651	7.5
FY22	8	73	204	1,110	1,395	13.1
FY23	2	73	207	1,215	1,497	11.9
FY24	3	59	193	1,204	1,459	10.8
Aggregate	15	225	658	4,104	5,002	11.4
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	13	205	604	3529	4,351	12.0

Source: MDE Data Center

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

Measures 7.6 Performance Data:

Science: All State Accountability Tests – Special Education Students (Meeting enrollment criteria), Grades 5, 8 & High School

Higher Ground Academy	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency
FY21	0	0	0	4	4	0.0
FY22	0	0	2	6	8	12.5
FY23	0	2	4	6	12	33.3
FY24	1	1	4	5	11	36.4
Aggregate	1	3	10	21	35	25.7
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	1	3	10	17	31	29.0

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

St. Paul Public School (ISD 625)	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total Students	Proficiency Index
FY21	9	41	31	256	337	19.4
FY22	25	86	85	428	624	24.6
FY23	28	88	84	534	734	21.5
FY24	28	103	94	538	763	22.2
Aggregate	90	318	294	1,756	2,458	21.9
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	81	277	263	1500	2,121	23.1

Source: MDE Data Center

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

Indicator 9: Post Secondary Readiness

Measure 9.1 Performance Data:

6-Year Graduation Rate

Higher Ground Academy	Graduated	Continuing	Dropped Out	Unknown	Graduation
FY20	42	0	0	0	100.0%
FY21*	28	0	0	1	96.6%
FY22	56	0	0	1	98.2%
FY23	40	1	0	1	95.2%
FY24					
Aggregate	166	1	0	3	97.6%
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	96	1	0	2	97.0%

State of Minnesota	Graduated	Continuing	Dropped Out	Unknown	Graduation
FY20	58,772	1,220	4,439	2,623	87.6%
FY21*	59,918	1,272	4,181	2,856	87.8%
FY22	59,356	1,156	3,893	3,138	87.9%
FY23	60,069	1,109	4,152	3,158	87.7%
FY24					
Aggregate	238,115	4,757	16,665	11,775	87.7%
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	119,425	2,265	8,045	6,296	87.8%

Source: MDE Data Center

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

Measure 9.2 Performance Data:

4-Year Graduation Rate

Higher Ground Academy	Graduated	Continuing	Dropped Out	Unknown	Graduation
FY20	55	1	0	2	94.8%
FY21*	39	3	0	1	90.7%
FY22	50	5	0	0	90.9%
FY23	60	1	1	3	92.3%
FY24					
Aggregate	204	10	1	6	92.3%
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	110	6	1	3	91.7%

St. Paul Public School (ISD 625)	Graduated	Continuing	Dropped Out	Unknown	Graduation Rate
FY20	1,996	322	139	93	78.3%
FY21*	1,995	382	105	143	76.0%
FY22	1,939	316	135	180	75.4%
FY23	1,787	286	193	344	68.5%
FY24					
Aggregate	7,717	1,306	572	760	74.5%
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	3,726	602	328	524	71.9%

Source: MDE Data Center

*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

Measure 9.3 Performance Data: Graduating Students Assessment Scores

Higher Ground Academy	Number of Graduating Students	Number of Students that achieve college or career ready of at least 50% on exam sections	Percentage of Students that achieve college or career ready of at least 50% on exam sections
FY20			
FY21			

FY22	54	53	98.1%
FY23	64	62	96.9%
FY24	77	73	94.8%
Aggregate	195	53	96.6%

*Based on results from ACT, SAT, ACCUPLACER, and/or ASVAB
Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

Measure 9.4 Performance Data: Students Earning College Credit

Higher Ground Academy	Number of	Number of	Percent of
FY20	58	31	53.4%
FY21	44	19	43.2%
FY22	54	23	42.6%
FY23	64	33	51.6%
FY24	75	39	52.0%
Aggregate	295	145	49.2%
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	193	95	49.2%

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

Measure 9.5 Performance Data: Students accepted into college

Higher Ground Academy	Number of Graduating Students	Number of Students Accepted into College	Percent of Students Accepted into College
FY20	58	56	96.6%
FY21	44	41	93.2%
FY22	54	53	98.1%
FY23	64	62	96.9%
FY24	75	73	97.3%
Aggregate	295	285	96.6%
FY22-FY24 Aggregate	193	188	97.4%

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

Indicator 10: Attendance

Measure 10.1 Performance Data: Student Attendance

Higher Ground Academy	Count	Total	Annual
FY20**			
FY21**			
FY22	792	938	84%
FY23	723	980	73.8%
FY24			
Average	1515	1918	79.0%

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

State of Minnesota	Count	Total	Annual
FY20**			
FY21**			
FY22	544,971	781,072	70%
FY23	581,195	780,380	74%
FY24			
Average	1,126,166	1,561,452	72%

Source: MDE Data Center

**Consistent attendance not reported by State