



# HIGHER GROUND ACADEMY



*Continuous record of better performance than the state average on the measures that matter the most; reading growth and mathematics growth on the MCA, graduation rate, college enrollment rate, and persistence in college.*

**Celebrating 25 years of great service and accomplishment!**

- ★ Good governance
- ★ Effective and experienced leadership
- ★ Effective and dedicated teachers and staff
- ★ Consistently ranked as "beats odds" school by the Star Tribune of Minneapolis.
- ★ Strong financial position and receives MDE's Finance Award consistently.
- ★ Continuously ranked as one of the good schools in Minnesota by US News and world report.



*How are the children? The children are well and learning.*

# **Higher Ground Academy**

**PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL DISTRICT #4027**

**SCHOOL YEAR 2023-2024**

**WORLD'S BEST WORKFORCE & ANNUAL REPORT**

**Approved by the board: September 15, 2024**

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## **1. School Information**

### **CONTACT INFORMATION:**

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GRADES SERVED: K-12

YEAR OPENED: 1999

### **MISSION:**

The mission of Higher Ground Academy (HGA) is to prepare students to become successful, ethical, and responsible citizens who are ready for the challenges of the twenty-first century. To that end, students graduating from HGA 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 upon experience. Therefore, the vision is to encourage students' maximum intellectual and leadership development to meet 21st century standards of education through concerted preparation to pursue post-secondary 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.

### **AUTHORIZER INFORMATION:**

You may want to include a brief narrative about the authorizer/school relationship – when the relationship started, the term of the current contract, and other relevant information.

The authorizing mission of Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center is to ensure quality academic and environmental literacy outcomes for students in Minnesota by conducting effective oversight and evaluation of its authorized schools, providing strategic support to schools, and making informed and merit-based decisions about its portfolio of charter schools.

The authorizing vision of Osprey Wilds is to authorize a portfolio of high performing charter schools that instill a connection and commitment to the environment in their school communities, while working towards a healthy planet where all people live in balance with the Earth.

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## **2. Implementation of Primary and Additional Statutory Purposes**

The primary purpose of Higher Ground Academy (HGA) is to improve learning and achievement. Although more work remains to be done, HGA's record exhibits improved learning for many of its students. Among other attributes, HGA's high graduation rate, college acceptance rate, and the large percentage of its students who stay enrolled in college two years or more after entering college (<https://rc.education.mn.gov/#mySchool/p--3>) testify to this fact. HGA implements three key strategies to improve the learning and achievement of all pupils. See the following:

1. Adoption and implementation of curriculum that is aligned to Minnesota's academic standards
2. Establishing high expectations and a system of accountability for students and staff
3. Identifying and providing precise and personalized support to at risk students

HGA expects that all teachers will teach the curriculum that is adopted by the district. This curriculum is aligned to the education standards of the state of Minnesota. However, teachers have flexibility to supplement the school mandated curriculum with sound educational ideas and resources that they believe will improve student learning. HGA does periodic revision of its curriculum. For example, the school completed revision of its kindergarten through grade six mathematics curriculum this summer. This revision was prompted by the under performance of the district's students on state mandated mathematics assessment. HGA students and staff are held to high standards and that all learners can achieve educational goals. Furthermore, there is a belief that all students can meet Minnesota state academic standards provided their social and cultural needs and preferences for learning modality are met. School staff members make a concerted effort to support and meet the needs of students. This effort is coupled with a system of accountability for students and staff. Students are given multiple opportunities by teachers to improve and complete work. Student performance on assessments is one criteria used to evaluate teachers.

HGA identifies and supports students at risk of failing. A data-based system is implemented to identify such students. These particular students are supported by the school's support programs both during and after school. Many of those who are at risk have social-emotional and behavioral needs in addition to their academic struggles. Therefore, HGA has adopted a multi-tiered support system to support all those students who have issues that could prevent them from benefiting from their educational experience at HGA.

## **3. Student Enrollment & Demographics**

### **Student Enrollment:**

In the school year 2019-20, HGA moved its middle and high schools to a new building located at 1471 Brewster Street. That school year, HGA failed to meet its enrollment target for the first time since the school year 2003-2004. The primary reason for the decline is the projected enrollment was considerably more than the number of the students on HGA's waiting list. The other reason is the advent of the COVID-19 epidemic. The epidemic placed a lot of pressure on families who could not arrange childcare for their children while they went to work. As it is to be recalled, that was the time of on-line learning. As a result, many of our families sent their children abroad where COVID-19 related restrictions were relatively lax. The same phenomena

were observed the following school year, school year 2021-22. As a result, HGA also failed to meet its target that school year.

Enrollment started to be on par with the district’s projected numbers in school year 2022-23. During the reporting period, enrollment exceeded the projected number by nearly 30 students. This trend continues in the current school year. While the projected number of students for the current school year was 1,125, the actual number of enrolled students is 1,182. That is an increase by 57 students. Also, the percentage of non-East African enrolled students has increased from less than 1% in school year 2022-23 to more than 5% in the current year. The district attributes both positive changes to the appointment of a new marketing director who effectively promotes the school among other non-East African communities.

<b>Number of Students Enrolled</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
Preschool or PreK	0	0	0
Kindergarten	88	93	88
1st Grade	88	77	88
2nd Grade	90	82	92
3rd Grade	74	81	85
4th Grade	80	84	84
5th Grade	74	76	83
6th Grade	83	84	90
7th Grade	82	91	92
8th Grade	92	100	90
9th Grade	73	87	85
10th Grade	75	76	78
11th Grade	65	76	70
12th Grade	55	64	73
<b>Total</b>	<b>1021</b>	<b>1070</b>	<b>1102</b>
<b>Total ADM (Average Daily Membership) for year</b>	<b>1104.33</b>	<b>1142.86</b>	<b>1174.05</b>

**Student Demographics:**

Analysis of Higher Ground Academy’s (HGA) demographic characteristics reflects some changes in the composition of the student population. The number of female students edged the number male counterparts by a small margin (545 males: 557 females). Ethnically, the student population continues to be predominantly African American/African descent. Special education (SPED) showed a slight decline in population from year to year. It decreased from 46 in FY 23 to 34 in FY 23. The population that continues to show significant growth is the English Language Learners (ELL) group. In the reporting year, HGA enrolled 539 English Language Learner (ELL/EL) students. That was an increase of 55 students from school year 2022-23. HGA enrolls new immigrant students from Ethiopia, Syria, Libya, Sudan, Yemen, and Afghanistan. As a result, the district’s ELL population continues to increase.

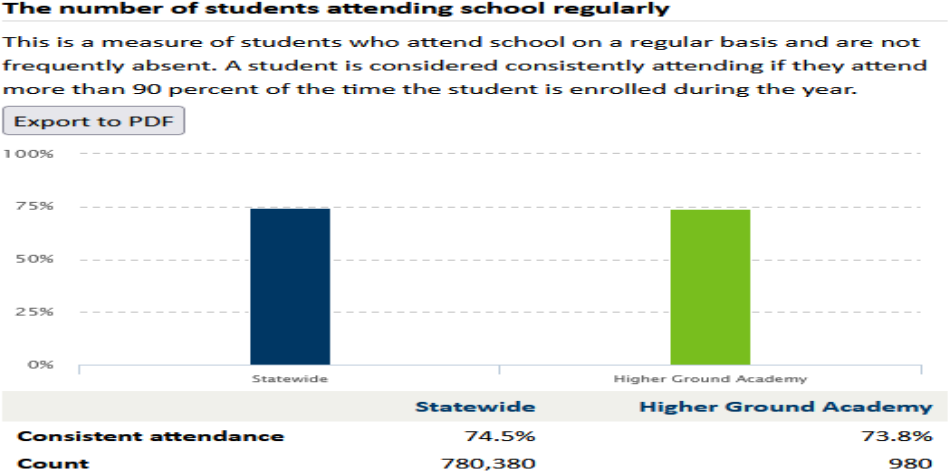
Another interesting development in school year 2023-24 is the increase in the number of enrolled students who identify themselves as “White.” The number of students from the said group increased from 0 (zero) in the school year 2022-23 to 18 in the reporting year. This is primarily due to the effort of the district’s marketing director who endeavors to reach out to diverse communities.

<b>Demographic Trends</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
Total Enrollment	1021	1070	1102
Special Education	38	46	34
English Learners	406	474	539
Free/Reduced Priced Lunch	975	1034	1079
Black, not of Hispanic Origin	1021	1068	1079
Hispanic/Latino	0	0	0
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0	5
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	0	0
White, not of Hispanic Origin	0	0	18
Two or more races	0	0	0

**4. Student Attendance, Attrition & Mobility**

**Student Attendance:**

According to MDE’s most recent report on student attendance, the percentage of HGA students who attended school regularly during the previous school year was 73.8%. This is less by .7% (point seven percent) percentage points when compared to that of the state (see table below).



The district’s administration and staff are concerned about the significant drop in the school’s consistent attendance rate from school year 2022-23 to school year 2023-24. The district’s consistent attendance rate was 87.1% in the school year 2-22 - 23. The district’s family liaisons will actively engage parents of students experiencing chronic absenteeism in the current school year so as to determine the reasons for the problem and find solutions to jointly address them. The issue was one of the agenda items at this year’s World’s Best Workforce (WBWF) report meeting which was held September 10, 2024.

	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
<b>Student Consistent Attendance Rate</b>		87.1%	73.8%

**Student Attrition:**

Student attrition continued to be a concern in the school year 2023-24. Exit surveys show that the most significant reason for student attrition is family mobility. As families establish residence in distant locations from the service area of the school, students transfer from HGA to various school districts within proximity of their residence. In recent years, residential rentals have increased in the Twin Cities. As a result, many low income families, including those whose children attend Higher Ground Academy, have no other choice but to move to areas that are a considerable distance from the HGA. Thus, many students have withdrawn from HGA. In response to this phenomena, the district's service area has expanded. However, that has significantly impacted HGA's transportation cost.

<b>Percentage of students* who were continuously enrolled between October 1 of the 2023-2023 school year and October 1 of the 2023-24 school year.</b>	<b><u>93%</u></b>
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<b>Percentage of students* who continued enrollment in the school from spring 2023 to October 1, 2023.</b>	<b><u>95%</u></b>
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**Student Mobility:**

Student mobility data from school year 2020-21 to school year 2023-24.

	<b>Summer Transfers In</b>	<b>Number of students on Oct. 1</b>	<b>Mid-year Transfers In</b>	<b>Mid-year Transfers Out</b>	<b>Total Mid-year Transfers</b>	<b>Mobility Index* (as a percent)</b>
<b>2020-21</b>	148	1033	90	85	157	15.2
<b>2021-22</b>	136	1025	87	77	164	16.0
<b>2022-23</b>	201	1054	69	167	236	22.3
<b>2023-24</b>	155	1172	70	29	99	8.4

\*Total mid-year transfers (in and out) divided by number of students as of October 1.

HGA has been experiencing double digit mobility rates throughout the last four school years. Our conversations with families suggest that the major factors for this are the circumstances that are impacting their lives. Primary among those factors is the rising costs of the housing market. Both owning and renting homes in the vicinity of the district have become unaffordable for families in recent years. As a result, some families are compelled to move to distant suburbs. HGA replaces those vacancies with new students from its waiting list. While this solves one problem it creates another. Students who join the district mid-year often experience challenges in terms of socialization and adaptation of the rules and expectations of the district.

<b>Percentage of students who were enrolled for 95% or more of the 2023-24 school year.</b>	<b><u>79%</u></b>
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**5. Educational Approach & Curriculum**

Curriculum:

The curriculum of HGA reflects the mission, the vision, and the purpose of the school. As such, HGA’s curriculum equips students with the skills and knowledge that prepare them for a successful life in the twenty-first century. HGA offers a comprehensive curriculum that includes literacy, mathematics, sciences, social studies, fine arts, technology, and physical education for all students at all grade levels. Additionally, high school students are offered more curricular options, including participation in Post-Secondary Enrollment Option (PSEO) courses. In previous years, options to participate in Advanced Placement (AP) courses were also available to high school students. However, such courses are not currently offered because of low student interest. For the first time in FY25, HGA students will have the opportunity to take honors classes.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and Environmental Stewardship are two other important components of the district’s curriculum. Studies continue to suggest that the future jobs of the 21st century will be in the STEM fields. Therefore, we found it necessary to add STEM to our curriculum. In previous years, STEM was taught as a singular subject at HGA. Although, as of FY24, the district has been experimenting with embedding STEM within the other curricular areas, mostly the sciences and mathematics.

Developing among our students a sense of responsibility for the environment by way of Environmental Education (EE) is another important area of knowledge and skills that is essential for living in the 21st century. Therefore EE is taught at all grade levels. Similar to STEM, EE is embedded within the curriculum of the other subjects. For example, in literacy, students read literary materials directly related to the environment.

Despite the challenges and uncertainties in reference to the phenomenon known as “globalization,” the population in the Minnesota community continues to be diverse. In essence, to become successful in such a diverse society, one needs to develop multicultural skills. This is particularly important for students attending HGA as most of their families are not of mainstream culture. On a daily basis our students have to code switch between cultures, their home culture which their parents want them to maintain and the mainstream culture i.e., what some people regard as the “Euro-centric culture.”

In the absence of the skills for dealing with continuous changes in the cultural landscape, students will have serious functional disabilities. Thus, multiculturalism is infused into HGA’s curriculum. By doing so, we hope to build in our students the skills that will help them cope with the cultural changes.

HGA offers a standard based curriculum. To that end, HGA’s curriculum is aligned to the Minnesota Education Standards which can be found at MDE.org. It is expected that all students meet the state’s academic standards that are appropriate for their grade level.

**Instruction:**

The three pillars of the instructional program are rigorous instruction, growth mindset, and student centered learning. Rigorous instruction refers to an instructional design whereas all students are prepared for and provided with challenging instructional activities. The ultimate goal of such a design is to engage all students in activities that require higher order thinking in an environment where adequate scaffolding is provided to learners who are not yet up to the task. This is accomplished with Robert Marzano's (Marzano, 2017) teaching and learning design/model. The key ingredient of Marzano's Model is what he terms, "planning with scales and targets."

The Marzano Model operates best in a standard-based teaching and learning situation. According to the model, teachers' lesson planning begins with analyzing a particular benchmark or a set of benchmarks that can be chunked together. The analysis involves identifying the nouns and verbs in a benchmark(s). According to Marzano, the nouns are the entities that students need to know to enable them to successfully meet the benchmark whereas mastering the verbs allows them to accomplish the task of the benchmark at the level it is written. For example, if a benchmark requires students to analyze the life cycle of an organism, students need to learn what "analyze" means and how to "analyze". Accordingly, they should also know what organisms are and what a life cycle entails. It is only then that the student can successfully meet that particular benchmark.

After analyzing a benchmark(s), teachers are expected to write learning targets. The targets have four levels/scales, levels 1.0 to 4.0. At levels 1.0, and 2.0, targets are always at the lowest cognitive levels such as recalling, identifying, restating factual information and/or the steps of a procedure (Marzano, 2017). After receiving all the necessary scaffolds with level 1.0 and 2.0, target(s), the students are ready to work on Level 3.0 target(s) which typically is/are the benchmark itself. Level 4.0 offers the students an opportunity to extend their skills and knowledge beyond what the benchmark necessitates. Typically, level 4.0 targets require students to apply their knowledge to elevated situations.

Growth Mindset refers to a culture or a habit of thinking where students are encouraged to be aware of where they currently are in their learning, overall and within a given lesson, and to be mindful of where they are headed i.e., goals to reach. From a practical point of view, this is better achieved within the Marzano Model/framework where students are aware of which benchmark and learning target that they are currently focusing on and where they are headed after that. A student working at a level 1.0 target should know that his/her ultimate goal is to reach target 4.0. However, he/she needs to be aware that he/she must accomplish targets 2.0 and 3.0 to be successful in meeting target 4.0.

The meaning of student centered learning/teaching differs based on the context in which it is used. In our model, the term student centered is used to refer to an instructional model where students work at their individual levels. In such an environment, it is likely that at any moment there will be activities at all the four levels within a given class. In such a classroom, students work at their readiness level. Thus, the instruction is student centered.

**Remediation and Acceleration:**

Remediation: HGA is at the initial stage of implementing a multi-tiered support system for remediation. The current program relies on classroom teachers for Tier I remediation. For Tier II

remediation, the district utilizes mentors and coaches from our partner organization, the Dreamline Foundation, a component of the Sanneh Foundation. Licensed Title I teachers provide support at the level of Tier III.

At the onset of FY25, HGA will adopt a revised model of the tiered system of support. In the revised model, mainstream teachers will continue to provide Tier I support. Dreamline coaches will be replaced by the teachers who previously provided Tier III support. To replace those who previously provided Tier III support, HGA has hired reading specialists.

HGA utilizes multiple sets of data that include teachers' observation and data from standardized tests to identify students needing extra help. However, the primary source of data for this purpose is the Fastbridge Assessment. The Fastbridge classifies students as "high risk," "low risk," "some risk," and "college pathway." Those who are classified as "college pathway" students need acceleration. It is the students in the other categories that need extra support. The extent and nature of support a student needs depends on the level of risk that he/she is experiencing. By way of explanation, students who are at "high risk" will require intensive one-on-one support from a specialist whereas those in the other categories mostly need some support from their teacher and/or a tutor.



Photo - A Tier II teacher working with a group of students

### **Service for English Learners:**

It is the mission of the HGA English Language Learner (ELL) Program to provide its students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to be both communicatively and academically successful in the use of the English language. This is accomplished by providing a program that values the native language and culture of the ELL student, provides students with the content knowledge and necessary background information to meaningfully participate in the curricula, and equips students with academic language skills that are the essential tools for full participation in the K-12 educational setting and future participation in the greater community. ELL students are identified through a multi-stepped process:

Step 1: The first step is to administer the Home Language Survey which is a mandated survey that identifies students who may not be proficient in English. If necessary, the Home Language Survey will be translated into languages spoken by HGA district students. The primary purpose of the Home Language Survey is to determine if a student speaks another language other than English at home and may need assessment for English language proficiency. The Home Language Survey also helps the school personnel collect other useful information about a student that will assist in understanding the student's personal and educational history so as to plan appropriate educational programs for the student. HGA designates trained professionals to administer the survey. HGA then establishes a record to document the administration of the Home Language Survey and other language assessment tests that may be administered to the student.

Step 2: The school will assess the English proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening for students whose home language is multi-lingual or who are not speakers of the English language. A student's degree of previous exposure to English and school background may also indicate a student's need for language instruction. In this case, HGA will administer a test mandated by the state to determine eligibility. HGA follows the MDE procedure for screening language proficiency using the W-Apt or WIDA-Model.

NOTE: A state may mandate specific assessments, but research suggests that data from various sources combined better predict language proficiency of a student than a single test. This data may include oral language proficiency data including the Home Language Survey, oral language proficiency tests, for example, the FastBridge Test, oral language interviews, and observations; social data such as school experiences, student's interaction with others; and, or academic data such as achievement scores, and classroom grades.

Step 3: Determination of ELL students is based on the results of the WIDA Model or W-APT and other assessments made in steps 1 and 2. The school uses this data to determine whether a student is eligible for English language support. The decision is made by trained professionals who use the results of the language assessments as well as other relevant information about a student to develop a plan of academic support to help each student reach English language proficiency.

**Step 4:** Placement is the final step. If students are determined eligible to receive English language programming, the school will place them in an instructional program that will provide subject matter instruction in English and academic English language skill development. Both areas are leveled to meet and develop a student's English language proficiency. Both are delivered by "highly qualified" teachers. Step 4.1.: Students who test at level 1 ("Entering") on the WIDA Model screener remain in their general education classroom and receive additional help depending upon their daily needs of English Language instruction by a "highly qualified" ELL teacher. Additional help and frequency are adjusted to the individual needs of the student and conducted in 1:1 tutoring or small group sessions.

**Step 4:** Students who test between levels 2 ("Beginning") and level 4 ("Expanding") on the WIDA Model screener are also placed in general education classrooms. Targeted assistance in content is provided by "highly qualified" ELL teachers in the mainstream setting. The frequency of ELL service for these students will depend on their individual needs in 1:1 tutoring or small group sessions.

Step 5: Code student's ELL status: The school will code all students qualifying as ELL in the database (MARSS) to indicate the student's ELL status. This includes the student's home language, LEP status and the start date for ELL services. See attachment for a more detailed description of HGA's English Language Learner program.

### **Special Education Program:**

HGA has a progressive special education program that emphasizes the mainstreaming of students. Studies have shown that with meaningful assistance, many special needs students can overcome their disability. Therefore, HGA's goal is transitioning students from the special education program in the shortest possible time.

Child Find: Students transferring with an IEP from other schools will continue receiving services per their existing IEP's unless they are due for reevaluation. For those who never had an IEP, yet exhibit signs of disability, a step-by-step process is applied in order to minimize the chance of improper identification as a disabled child. HGA has a fortified Title I program i.e., the ALRM program that provides "focused" and "precise" instruction to underperforming students. These are students who are struggling in reading and mathematics according to pretest measures and teachers' observations. Students participating in the Title I program will have a learning plan which shows their performance level i.e., overall and in specific skill areas. The plan also contains end goals to be achieved as a result of the Title I intervention and benchmarks that serve as indicators of progress towards the end goals. The pretest, which is the Fastbridge Test, will be administered at the beginning of the year. In December, students in the Title I program retake the Fastbridge Test. If the result from the December test, coupled with progress monitoring data collected by both the mainstream and Title I teachers fail to show progress towards benchmark goals, the student is referred to the more intensive i.e., one-on-one instruction with a reading specialist. The reading specialist, the student's classroom teacher and the principal closely monitor if the student is making progress towards end goals. If the student working with the reading specialist for an approximate month fails to make progress, a referral for an IEP evaluation is made.

This approach has been implemented at HGA and has proved to be effective in reducing unnecessary referrals to special education. Reducing unnecessary referrals to special education is a requirement of the "All Students Succeed Act."

### **HGA offers services to students with disabilities in the following areas:**

- Specific Learning Disabilities;
- Speech and Language;
- Emotional Behavioral Disorder;
- Attention Deficit Hyper-Active Disorder;
- Delayed Cognitive Development;

### **HGA contracts with third party vendors for:**

- Occupational Therapy;
- Psychological Services;
- Special Ed. Directorship; and
- Transition Services

The services of Indigo Education, a third party vendor is acquired for the directorship of HGA's special education program. HGA also works with third party vendors for services that involve less than full time employment such as occupational therapy and speech pathology.

State and federal guidelines are followed in all processes involved in the development of IEPs, revising and keeping the IEPs current, due process, and implementing the IEP. There is a recurrent child study team meeting involving special education teachers, the special education director, parent representative, mainstream teacher representative, and the principal. During child study meetings student progress is discussed, IEPs are reviewed, and IEP implementation is monitored.

Children with disabilities receive service according to their IEP. As much as possible, service to students with IEPs is offered in the "least restrictive" environment. A small portion of students i.e., having severe cognitive disabilities and those with severe emotional and behavioral disorders receive pull out service. The duration of such service is determined by the student's IEP. HGA does all that is possible to educate such children in the least restrictive environment.

Special education teachers attend weekly teachers' meetings with the mainstream teachers. Among other matters, at those meetings, special education teachers inform mainstream teachers and support staff about the IEPs of their students and provide suggestions and ideas as to better support them in their classrooms. Mainstream teachers are required to accommodate special needs students. Accommodations for special needs students are reflected in their weekly lesson plans. All teachers, including special education teachers, are expected to submit weekly lesson plans.

### **Instructional Leadership and Staffing:**

HGA comprises three schools. Two of the schools, HGA Elementary and HGA Middle School campuses are both located at 1381 Marshall Avenue, Saint Paul, Minnesota, 55104. HGA Secondary campus is located at 1471 Brewster Street, Saint Paul, Minnesota, 55108.

At HGA Elementary, grades K through five are taught. It enrolls slightly more than 500 students. The majority of the students at this school are in grades kindergarten through the second grade. HGA Elementary School employed 21 regular education teachers, four EL teachers, one special education teacher, and two Title I teachers during the reporting school year. Teachers of K through the second grade were supported by a teaching assistant. The elementary academy is administered by a principal whose main task is instructional leadership. The principal is supported by district officers who handle discipline and other operational tasks.

HGA Middle School is a relatively small school comprising grades six and seven. Total enrollment at this school in FY24 was approximately 175 students. Ten regular education

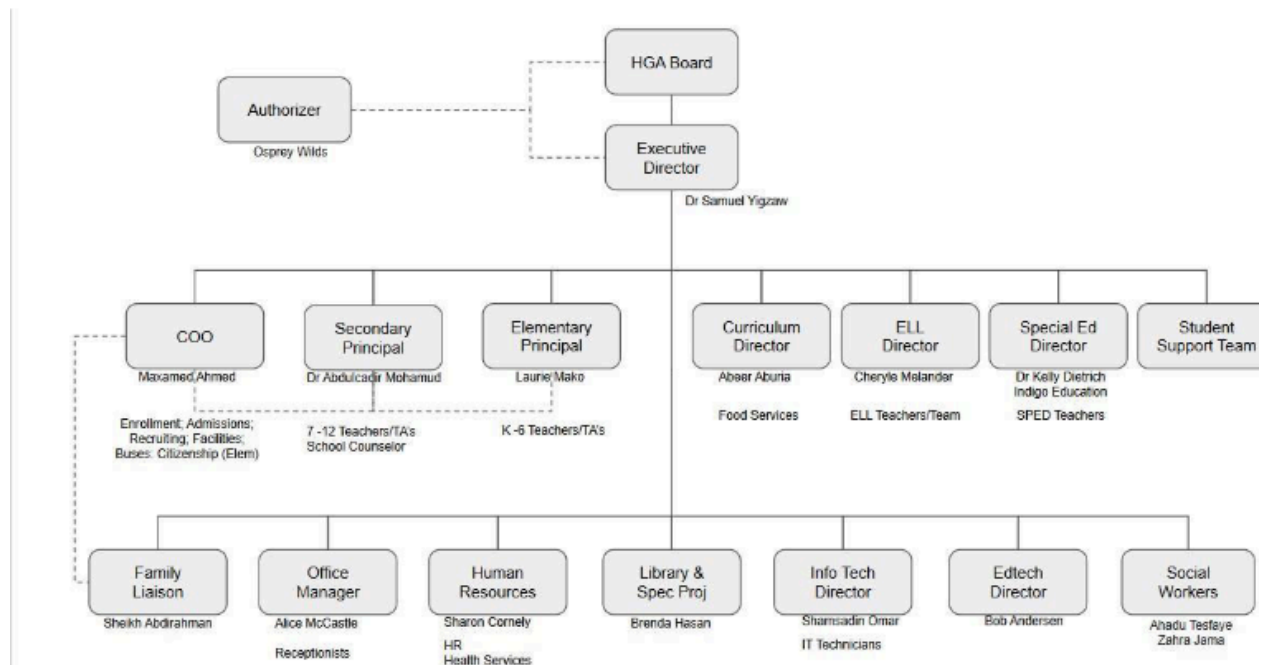
teachers, one special education teacher, one Title I teacher, and two EL teachers teach at HGA Middle School. One social worker is employed for both the elementary and middle schools. Until the end of FY24, the elementary school principal was also in charge of the middle school. This role of leading the middle school will be transferred to HGA Executive Director as of fall 2024.

Through the end of the FY24 school year, a single team managed student discipline at the two schools. Both schools will have their own discipline management staff, the Citizenship Development Team. The change will be effective as of fall 2024.

HGA Secondary School is housed in the “Bill Wilson Building” which is located at 1471 Brewster Street, in Saint Paul Minnesota, 55108. In FY24, this campus enrolled 404 students. The building has capacity for 500 students. The levels served are grades eight through 12. The total number of teachers at this facility is 24. In addition, two special education, four EL, and one Title I teacher are employed at the high school. HGA Secondary is administered by a principal. A Dean of Students handles student disciplinary issues. Additionally, the school employs one school counselor and two social workers.

At the district level, HGA is run by an Executive Director (ED) who reports to the board. The ED is supported by a team of administrators who help the ED manage the affairs of the school. Those administrators include, the Chief of Operations, the Human Resources Director, and the Curriculum Director. HGA partners with Indigo Education for the management of its special education program (see organizational chart below).

**Organizational Chart:**



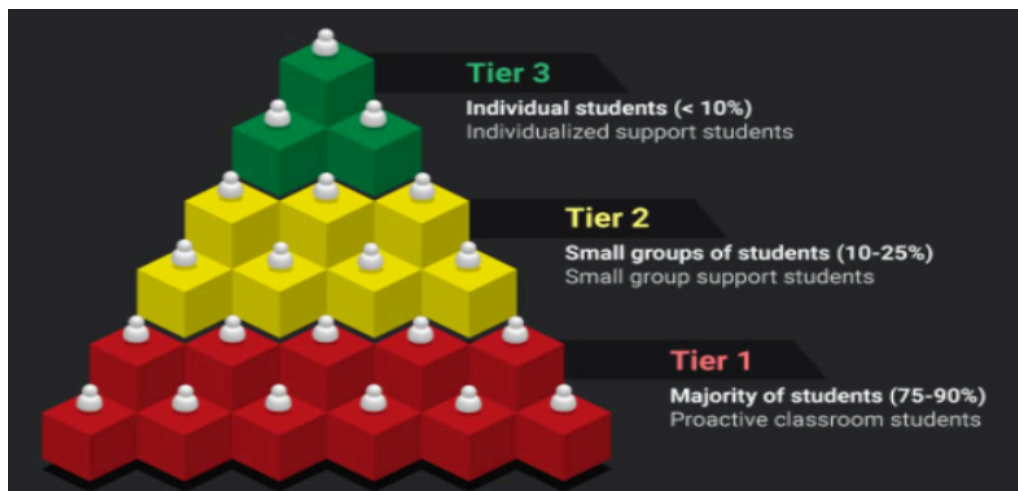
In the school year 2024-25, HGA eliminated two leadership positions and eight paraprofessional positions. Reasons for these changes are the growing number of enrolled English Language

Learners and large class size at some of grade levels in both the elementary and middle schools. HGA is funding three new English Language Learner teacher positions and four elementary teacher positions with the savings.

## 6. Innovative Practices & Implementation

Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS):

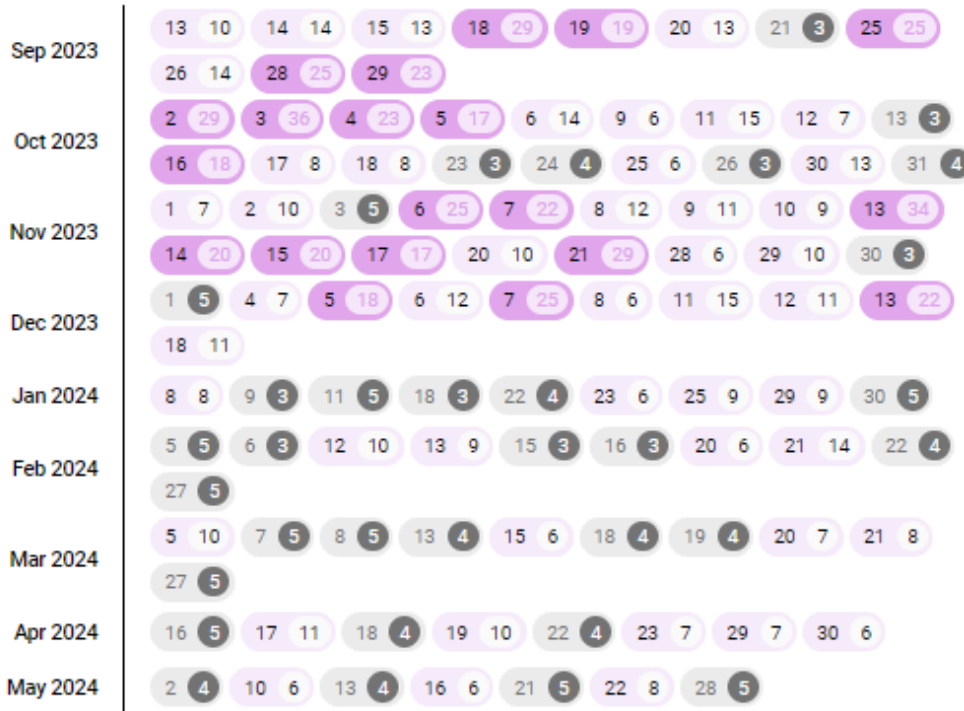
Creating a positive school environment where students respect the rules of the school and aspire to be good, responsible, and ethical citizens is one of HGA's commitments as expressed in its mission statement. To fulfill this commitment, the district has dedicated more time, effort, and resources within the last four school years towards improving students' behavior and addressing their social emotional needs.



As a result of a collaborative effort between the administration, teachers, and the citizenship development staff a multitier Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) has been installed since FY22. The primary goal of the program is reducing students' out of class/office discipline referrals. Students who experience behavioral and social emotional challenges are identified and provided coaching and mentorship. The district utilizes classroom teachers, mentors from a partner organization, and district employed social workers to support those students who have needs. This has been a very successful effort. Overall, schoolwide out of class discipline referrals have declined the last three years (see graph on the next page).

Date of Referral:

1,129 responses, 78 not shown



Key-Each pair shows the date of referral and the number of referrals on that day.

The graph is derived from a shared database where teachers make student referrals for out of class intervention. As the graph shows, student out of class discipline referrals decreased significantly from fall to spring. For example, there were double digit discipline referrals in September, more than 20 on most days. The amount of referrals have been reduced significantly in April and May. This is a huge accomplishment considering the connection between behavior and student learning.

Attendance:

Student attendance at HGA has always been above average. However, similar to other aspects of school operations, attendance was unstable following the COVID-19 quarantine. Each school day, a large number of students were absent without good reason. The district has been working with parents to address this issue. As a result, there have been some improvements in recent years. The table below shows the percentage of students who attended school more than 90% of the time in FY23. Accordingly, 84.4% of HGA's students attended school regularly. This is significantly lower compared to that of the pre-pandemic years, which were mostly above 95%. However, the current rate is relatively better/more compared to the statewide average which is 69.8%.

### Technology Integration

Studies are showing that today’s students are different from the generations of students before them in many ways. One of those ways is technology. Today’s students are very astute with technology and their engagement with learning improves when technology is involved. HGA students are not exceptions to this. Therefore, the school continues to invest in classroom technology. At present, all classrooms have access to wireless networks, smart boards, and projectors. The school has iPads and desktop computers. Various instructional software are also utilized to enhance teaching and learning. Some include MathX, IXL, Lexia, and Read Naturally. Furthermore, the school has enough online licenses for all curricula used by the school.

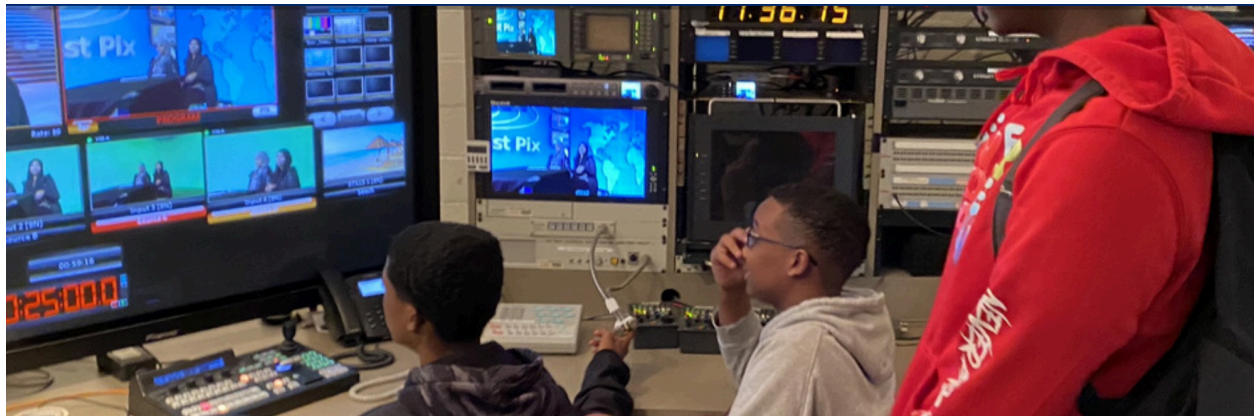


Photo - HGA Secondary Academy using interactive TV in their social studies class (spring 2024)

### Post-Secondary Enrollment Option (PSEO):

Preparing students for success in the 21st century is another one of HGA’s propositions, also stated in its mission statement. To achieve this goal, HGA offers a comprehensive curriculum that prepares students for a career of post high school education in colleges and universities. In addition, HGA encourages students to participate in Advanced Placement courses or Post-Secondary Enrollment Option (PSEO) courses.

Until the 2018-19 school year, HGA offered Advanced Placement (AP) Human Geography, AP Chemistry, AP Biology, and a few other AP courses. Usually, two AP courses were offered in any given year. Since school year 2019-20, student interest in AP courses has dwindled. While students participation in PSEO has significantly risen during the last five school years. The table below shows the proportion of HGA graduates who earned PSEO credits during their junior and/or senior year by fiscal year (FY) from FY20 to FY24.

<b>Measure 9.4 Performance Data: Students Earning College Credit</b>			
<b>Higher Ground Academy</b>	<b>Number of Graduating Students</b>	<b>Number of Graduating Students Earning College Credit</b>	<b>Percent of Graduating Students Earning College Credit</b>
FY20	58	31	53.4%
FY21	44	19	43.2%
FY22	54	23	42.8%
FY23	64	33	51.6%
FY24	75	39	52.0%
Aggregate	295	145	49.2%

### Health Sciences and Medical Careers Program (HSMCP):

In the fall of 2020, HGA restarted the Health Sciences and Medical Careers Program (HSMCP). The program is designed to academically and socially prepare HGA students to successfully pursue higher education in health sciences, locally at accredited universities, such as, the University of Minnesota and Metropolitan State University, eventually leading to career placement to serve future needs of Minnesota. HGA will assure students participating in this program will graduate and become adequately prepared for college. As planned, the program started with 25 students in the fall of 2020. In the school year 2023 – 24, 42 HGA Secondary Academy students participated in the program. The program will have the capacity to enroll as many as 200 students aspiring or interested in health sciences and medical disciplines in a few years.

This program will be fundamental in developing academically and socially ready students to pursue coursework, consequently, entering careers in the health sciences. HSMCP will emphasize and promote student development in core components of:

1. academic and student mentoring; preparing students to succeed in pursuing post-secondary coursework in health sciences and student life, and by,
2. exploration through hands-on experience and exposure within healthcare settings; volunteerism, mentoring, and coaching, from current professionals and support staff—ultimately, supplementing with potential opportunity for internship at clinics and hospitals. Positions include, but are not limited to, dialysis volunteer, blood donation center volunteer, bone marrow volunteer, etc.



Photo - Students from the Medical School of the University of Minnesota demonstrating a medical procedure to HGA students (spring 2024).

## 7. Academic Performance: Goals and Benchmarks:

This section of the report explores the progress that HGA has been making towards meeting its FY21 to FY24 contractual academic goals. Data from statewide assessments together with data gathered internally from FastBridge assessment will be presented and analyzed. As required by the contract, the data will be segregated by student groups such as English learners (ELs), special education students, free and reduced price meal receiving students, and all other student groups. The presentation follows the “indicators” and “measures” format in the contract.

### **Indicator 1: Mission Related Outcomes**

**Goal:** Throughout the period of the contract, students of Higher Ground Academy (HGA) will demonstrate commitment and connection to their community through service.

**WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal:** All students will participate in a community related project.

**Key Measures 1.1 & Results for this Goal:** From FY20 to FY25, the aggregate percentage of students that successfully participate in a community related project in each year will be at least 80%.

- Exceeds Standard - The aggregate percentage is at least 90%.
- Meets Standard - The aggregate percentage is at least 80%.
- Approaches Standard - The aggregate percentage is at least 70%.

- Does Not Meet Standard - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

**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%
<b>Aggregate</b>	4,246	4,246	100.0%

*Source: Requested data provided to OW by school*

As in previous school years, the HGA community raised money for the Leukemia-Lymphoma Foundation. A total of all students of both campuses participated in this effort. During the last four years of this contract cycle, HGA students and staff have raised more than \$10,000 for the same foundation. The generosity of our population that has so little to begin with is remarkable.

**Indicator 2: English Language Learners**

**Goal:** Throughout the period of the contract, English learners of HGA will demonstrate adequate progress towards English language proficiency.

**WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal:** All racial and economic achievement gaps between students are closed.

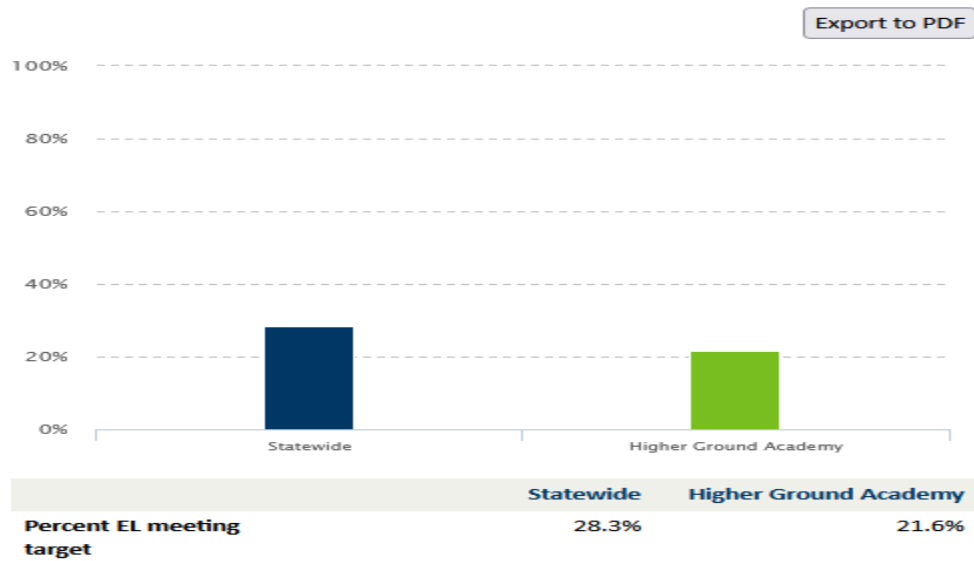
**Key Measures 2.1 (AGC) & Results for this Goal:** From FY21 to FY24, the aggregate percentage of English learners meeting targets on the ACCESS Test grades K-12 will be equal to or greater than that of the state’s percentage of English learners.

- Exceeds target - The aggregate percentage is at least 10.0 percentage points greater than the state’s percentage of English learners meeting target.
- Meets target - The aggregate percentage is equal to or greater than the state’s percentage of English learners meeting target.
- Approaches target - The aggregate percentage is within 5.0 percentage points of the state’s percentage of English language meeting target.
- Does not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

HGA is partially meeting/approaching this target. From FY21 to FY24, HGA’s aggregate percentage of English learners meeting targets on the ACCESS Test is within 5 percentage points (-4.6%) lower than the state’s percentage of English learners. The data presented in the graph below is from the 2023 – 24 school year only.

**Percent of ELs meeting target**

The "percent of ELs meeting targets" is the percentage of English learners who reached or went past their target.



**HGA ACCESS data for the school year 2023-24. See also the table below.**

Percentage of students making progress towards English Language Proficiency	School
<b>2023-24</b>	21.6%

The average progress students made towards their individual targets	School
<b>2023-24</b>	40%

Measure and Key indicators 2.2: From FY21 to FY2: The average progress toward target for English learners’ grades K-12 on the ACCESS Test will be equal to or greater than the state’s average progress toward target.

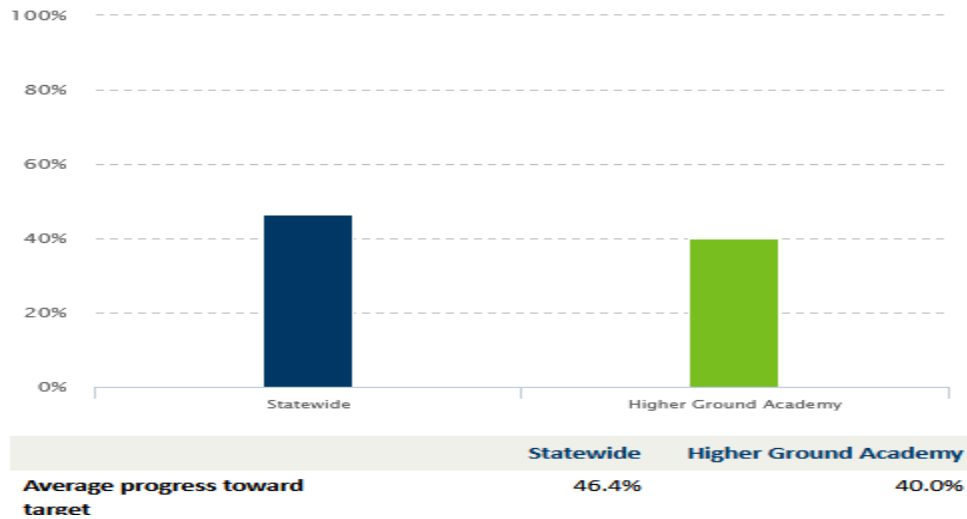
- Exceeds target - The aggregate percentage is at least 10.0 percentage points more than the state’s average progress towards target.
- Meets target - The aggregate percentage equal to or greater than the state’s average progress toward target.
- Approaches target - The aggregate percentage is within 5% from the state.
- Does not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

HGA’s FY21 to FY24 average progress toward target for English learners’ grades K-12 on the ACCESS test is 45.4% whereas that of the state is 48.9%. The gap between the two is 3.5% in favor of the state. However, since the gap is within 5% from the state, HGA is approaching targets on this measure. The data in the graph below is from the school year 2023 -24 only. The data in the graph below is from the school year 2023 – 24 only.

**Average progress toward target**

The "average progress toward target" is the average amount of progress English learners made towards their targets. For example, an average progress toward target of 75 would mean that English learners, on average, made it 75 percent of the way to their targets.

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**Analysis:**

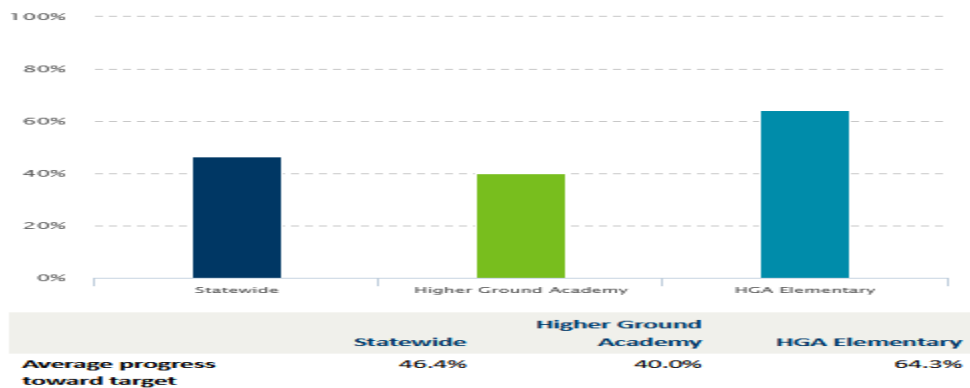
As a district, HGA is approaching its targets under indicator 2-English Language Learners. In both measures under this indicator area, HGA’s performance is within 5 percentage points from the state average. HGA has been struggling to register strong results for the EL population. Undoubtedly, a very careful deliberation is needed to determine the causes for this. However, the recent influx of new immigrant students to the school from war torn countries such as Yemen, Syria, and Afghanistan where children’s education has been disrupted by ongoing conflicts is a very strong suspect. Among other things it had the impact of increasing the teacher to student ratio at the district’s schools.

On a positive note, HGA Elementary did much better than the stage average on the Access test (see table below). The source of the table is mde.org

**Average progress toward target**

The "average progress toward target" is the average amount of progress English learners made towards their targets. For example, an average progress toward target of 75 would mean that English learners, on average, made it 75 percent of the way to their targets.

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### Indicator 3: Reading Growth

**Goal:** Throughout the period of the contract, students attending HGA will demonstrate growth in reading as measured by state accountability tests and nationally normed assessments.

**WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal:** All students are career and college ready before graduating from high school.

**Measure 3.1 (CCR) - 2 Points:** In aggregate, from FY21-FY24, the overall percentage of students whose achievement level on the statewide reading assessments (as measured by North Star Academic Progress) “improved” on statewide assessments is equal to or greater than the state percentage.

- Exceeds target - The school achieves an overall percentage greater than 10 percentage points above that of the state.
- Meets targets - The school achieves an overall percentage equal to or greater than that of the state.
- Approaches target - The school achieves an overall percentage that is within 10 percentage points of the state.
- Did not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

HGA met this target (see tables and graph below). In aggregate, from FY21-FY24, the overall percentage of HGA students whose achievement level on the statewide reading assessments (as measured by North Star Academic Progress) “improved” on statewide assessments is 25.5%. That is 6.2% higher than the state percentage.

**Indicator 3: Reading Growth**

**Measure 3.1 Performance Data:**

**Reading: North Star Academic Progress -- All Students (Meeting enrollment crite**

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%

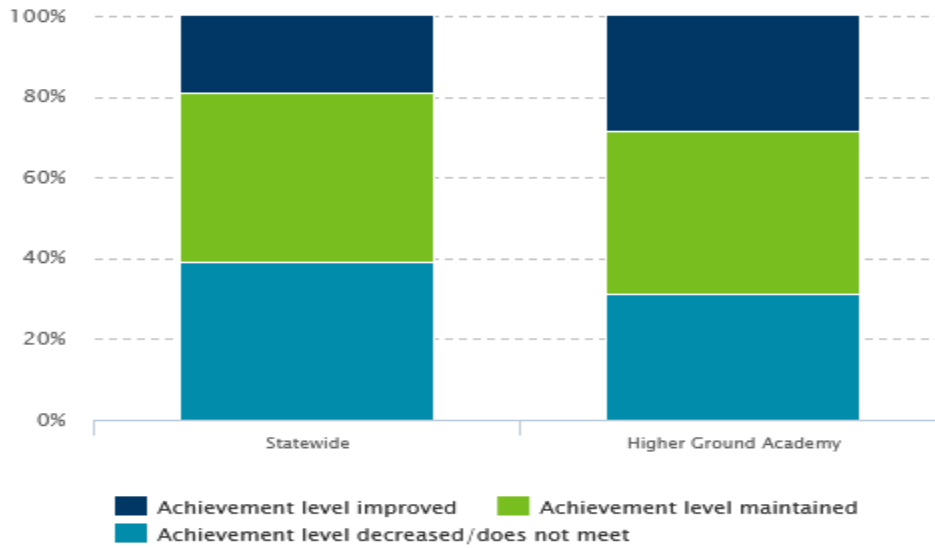
*Source: Data provided to OW by school*

**Reading: North Star Academic Progress -- All Students (Meeting enrollment crite**

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			19.1%
Aggregate	100811	529163	19.1%

**Reading academic progress**

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		Statewide	Higher Ground Academy
<b>Achievement level improved</b>	Count	55,303	111
	Percent	19.1%	28.5%
<b>Achievement level maintained</b>	Count	121,577	157
	Percent	41.9%	40.4%
<b>Achievement level decreased or stayed "does not meet standards"</b>	Count	113,049	121
	Percent	39.0%	31.1%

Source: MDE.org

**Measure 3.2:** In aggregate, from FY21-FY24, the overall percentage of students whose achievement level decreased or stayed “does not meet standards” on statewide assessments for “ready” (as measured by North Star Academic Progress) is equal to or less than the state.

- Exceeds target - The school achieves an overall percentage at least 10 percentage points higher than that of the state.
- Meets target - The school achieves an overall percentage equal to that of the state.
- Approaches target - The school achieves an overall percentage that is no more than 10 percentage points less than that of the state.
- Did not meet target: The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

**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			39.00%
Aggregate	203805	529163	38.6%

Source: MDE Data Center

\*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

HGA approaches this target (see table above).

**Measure 3.3:** From FY21-FY24, the aggregate percentage of students who increased 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%.

- The aggregate percentage is at least 85%.
- The aggregate percentage is at least 75%. (HGA school goal)
- The aggregate percentage is at least 65%.
- The school did not meet the criteria.

Rounded to the nearest whole number, HGA's 74.9% average performance in the school year

2023-24 is 75%. Therefore, HGA met this target.

### Summary

Overall, HGA met targets in two of the three measures of Indicator 3; Reading Growth. HGA approaches the target of the third measure. This is an enormous accomplishment for HGA! As commonly recognized by educational psychologists, it is growth that matters the most rather than the rate of proficiency. While the district’s average proficiency rate continues to lag compared to the state, it outperforms the other by a significant percentage (8.9%) when compared to the percentage of students who show growth.

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	968	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

**Goal:** Throughout the period of the contract, students of HGA will demonstrate growth in math as measured by the state accountability tests and nationally normed assessments.

**WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal:** All students are career and college ready before graduating from high school.

#### Key Measures & Results for this Goal:

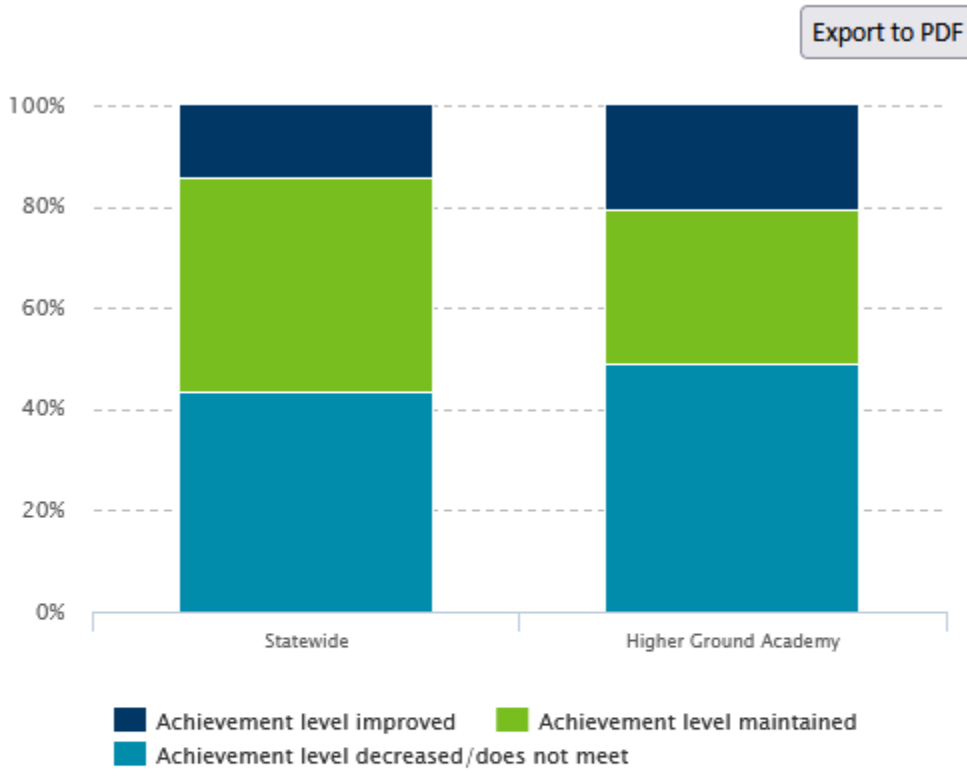
**Measure 4.1 (CCR)** In aggregate, from FY21-FY23, the overall percentage of students whose achievement level on the statewide assessments for math (as measured by North Star Academic Progress) ”improved” on statewide assessments is equal to or greater than the state percentage.

- The school achieves an overall percentage greater than 10 percentage points over that of the state.
- The school achieves an overall percentage equal to or greater than that of the state.
- The school achieves an overall percentage that is within 10 percentage points of the state.

- The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

In the school year 2023-24, HGA met this target. 20.5% of HGA students registered growth in mathematics whereas just 14.2% of the students in the state showed growth (see the graph on the following page).

**Math academic progress**



		Statewide	Higher Ground Academy
<b>Achievement level improved</b>	Count	41,023	80
	Percent	14.2%	20.5%
<b>Achievement level maintained</b>	Count	121,985	118

**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 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.

- The school achieves an overall percentage greater than 10 percentage points over that of the state.
- The school achieves an overall percentage equal to or greater than that of the state.
- The school achieves an overall percentage that is within 10 percentage points of the state.

- The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

HGA partially met this criteria in the school year 2023-24 (see table below).

<b>Measure 4.2 Performance Data:</b>			
<b>Math: North Star Academic Progress -- All Students (Meeting enrollment criteria)</b>			
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%
<i>Source: Data provided to OW by school</i>			
<b>Math: North Star Academic Progress -- All Students (Meeting enrollment criteria)</b>			
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			43.6%
Aggregate	220119	524620	42.4%
<i>Source: MDE Data Center</i>			

**Measure 4.3:** From FY21-FY24, the aggregate percentage of students who increased 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%.

- The aggregate percentage is at least 85%.
- The aggregate percentage is at least 75%.
- The aggregate percentage is at least 65%.
- The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

HGA did not meet this criteria.

**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*

There are three measures of this indicator - Math Growth. In the school year 2023-24, HGA met one of them and partially met another. HGA did not meet the target on the third measure. The third measure relates to the percentage of students who demonstrated progress on the school administered mathematics FastBridge assessment. Meeting targets of this measure has continuously been elusive for the school. The staff of HGA believe that this may be linked to the timing of the test. HGA administers this test towards the end of the school year i.e., after the MCAs. Therefore, there is suspicion that test fatigue may be related to the results of the test. It should be acknowledged however, that the target under this measure i.e., 75% of the students reaching their target may be a bit too steep in light of the significant number of EL students, “new comers,” and children from low income families that the district serves.

**Indicator 5: Reading Proficiency**

**Goal:** Throughout the period of the contract, students of HGA will demonstrate proficiency in reading as measured by the state accountability tests.

**WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal:** All students are career and college ready before graduating from high school.

**Key Measures & Results for this Goal:**

**Measure 5.1 A:** From FY21 to FY24, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score for third grade students is equal to or greater than the state score of the state.

- Exceeds target - The aggregate proficiency index score is at least 10.0 points above the state.
- Meets target - The aggregate proficiency index score is equal to or greater than the state’s

score.

- Approaches target - The aggregate proficiency index score is within 5.0 points of the state's score.
- Does not meet target - The aggregate proficiency index score is more than 5.0 points below the state's score.

Reading: All State Accountability Tests – All Students (Meeting enrollment criteria), Grade 3						
Higher Ground Academy	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total Students	Proficiency Index
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

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

State of Minnesota	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total	Proficiency Index
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					0	55.1
Aggregate	19,033	63,878	27,509	60,864	171,284	56.4

Source: MDE Data Center

The FY21 to FY24 aggregate third grade reading proficiency rate of HGA is more than 10 points lower than that of the state. Therefore, HGA is not meeting this target.

**Measure 5.1b:** 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).

- Exceeds target - The aggregate proficiency index score is at least 10.0 points above the state.
- Meets target - The aggregate proficiency index score is equal to or greater than the state's score.
- Approaches target - The aggregate proficiency index score is within 5.0 points of the state's score.
- Does not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

As of FY24, HGA is partially meeting this target (see table on the next page).

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 Students	Proficiency Index
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

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

State of Minnesota	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total Students	Proficiency Index
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					0	60.0
Aggregate	174,214	431,055	241,475	328,090	1,174,834	61.8

Source: MDE Data Center

St. Paul Public School District (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	1358	3,462	2763	6638	14,221	43.6
FY24					0	43.7
Aggregate	3,596	9,103	7,093	17,302	37,094	43.8

Source: MDE Data Center

**Measure 5.2:** 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).

- Exceeds target - The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the district’s score.
- Meets target - The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score greater than the district’s score.
- Approaches target - The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score within 5.0 points of the district’s score.
- Does not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

As of FY24, HGA is exceeding this target (see table above).

**Measure 5.3:** 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).

- Exceeds target - The aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the state’s score.
- Meets target -The aggregate proficiency index score is equal to or greater than the state’s score.

- Approaches target - The aggregate proficiency index score is within 5.0 points of the state's score.
- Does not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

HGA is exceeding this target. The gap between the state's aggregate score and that of HGA for the FRP group is more than 10 index points in favor of HGA (see table below).

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 Students	Proficiency Index
FY21*	39	173	125	144	481	57.1
FY22	38	218	111	186	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
<i>Source: Requested data provided to OW by school</i>						
<i>*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated</i>						
State of Minnesota	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total Students	Proficiency Index
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					0	44.8
Aggregate	25,400	108,041	94,750	187,686	415,877	43.8
St. Paul Public School District (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					0	32.4
Aggregate	797	4,701	5,076	14,439	25,013	32.1
<i>Source: MDE Data Center</i>						

**Measure 5.4:** From FY21 to FY24, the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the FRP subgroup is equal to or greater than that of the resident district (ISD 625 - St. Paul Public Schools) for the same subgroup and the same grades (3-8, 10).

- Exceeds target: The aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the district's score.
- Meets target: The aggregate proficiency index score is greater than the district's score.
- Approaches target: The aggregate proficiency index score is within 5.0 points of the district's score.
- Does not meet target: The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

HGA is also exceeding this target (see table above).

**Measure 5.5:** 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).

- Exceeds target: The aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the district’s score.
- Meets target: The aggregate proficiency index score is equal to or greater than the district’s score.
- Approaches target: The aggregate proficiency index score is within 5.0 points of the district’s score.
- Does not meet target: The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

HGA is exceeding this target.

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 Students	Proficiency Index
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
<i>Source: Requested data provided to OW by school</i>						
St. Paul Public School District (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					0	17.5
Aggregate	68	897	1884	7438	10,287	18.5
<i>Source: MDE Data Center</i>						

**Measure 5.6:** From FY21 to FY24, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score for the Special Education subgroup is greater than that of the resident district for the same subgroup and the same grades (3-8, 10).

- Exceeds target -The school’s aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points more than the district’s score.
- Meets target - The school’s aggregate proficiency index score is equal to or greater than the district’s score.
- Approaches target - The aggregate school’s proficiency index score is within 5.0 points of the district’s score.
- Does not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

The aggregate proficiency index score of HGA’s ELL students is double that of the ELL students in the resident district. Therefore, HGA is exceeding this target (see table above).

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 Students	Proficiency Index
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

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

St. Paul Public School District	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total Students	Proficiency Index
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					0	24.5
Aggregate	260	626	557	3,594	5,037	23.1

Source: MDE Data Center

### Summary:

There are seven measures of indicator 7: Reading Proficiency. To date, HGA is exceeding four of those targets. All four of them deal with the performance of student groups that are considered to be underserved such as those receiving ELL and special education services and/or those qualifying for free or reduced price meals. HGA students met the target on the measures that compares the average performance of all the district’s students who participated on the assessment with that of all the tested students in the state. Despite the concentration of “At-risk” students, HGA is definitely closing the gap with the state in regards to this measure.

Regrettably, HGA is failing to meet the target on the measure that compares its third grade students with that of their counterparts from the state. As a matter of fact, the gap between HGA and the state on this measure widened in the school year 2023-24. During the reporting year, all the third grade teachers at the school were new. The administration of the district believes that the observed discrepancy has to do with the lack of experience of the new teachers.

The district’s administration and the teachers are troubled by the failure to meet the third grade reading proficiency measures. Therefore, a number of measures that are intended to improve teacher effectiveness and thereby improve student learning are in place during the current school year. The first one among them is reducing class size. In the previous school years, there were three sections each at the 3rd through the 6th grade levels. Thus, the student to teacher ratio at those levels was 1 to 25. In the school year 2024 - 25, one more section is added to each grade level. Thus, the teacher to student ratio is reduced to 1 to 22 or less. Furthermore, the district hired a reading specialist for the first time who is supporting teachers and struggling students. In addition to those measures, HGA’s elementary teachers, specialist teachers, middle and high school literacy teachers are participating in the mandated Read Act training. Based on all these measures, we are confident that we will see improved results in the school year 2024 - 25.

## **Indicator 6: Math Proficiency**

**Goal:** Throughout the period of the contract, students of HGA will demonstrate proficiency in math as measured by the state accountability tests.

**WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal:** All students are career and college ready before graduating from high school.

### **Key Measures & Results for this Goal:**

**Measure 6.1:** 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).

- Exceeds target - 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 - 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 - 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: The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

HGA is not meeting this target (see table on the next page). This measure is based on HGA's performance during the previous contract cycle. That contract cycle ended right before COVID-19. It is to be recalled that HGA was really closing the gap with state, in both subjects, at that time. Regrettably, a lot of things changed after COVID-19. The greatest impact of COVID-19 on our system is on mobility of students and staff. We have been experiencing high student and staff turnover rates during each of the years in the current contract. That has impacted our proficiency rate in all subjects, not just in mathematics.

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 Students	Proficiency Index
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

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 Students	Proficiency Index
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					0	56.8
Aggregate	176,680	362,670	258,372	353,281	1,151,003	58.1

Source: MDE Data Center

\*All students if enrollment criteria is not calculated

St. Paul Public School District	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total Students	Proficiency Index
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					0	35.3
Aggregate	2,916	5,762	6,716	19,910	35,304	34.1

Source: MDE Data Center

**Measure 6.2:** 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).

- Exceeds target - The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the district’s score.
- Meets target - The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score equal to or greater than the district’s score.
- Approaches target - The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score within 5.0 points of the district’s score.
- Does not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

HGA is meeting this target.

**Measure 6.3:** 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 - 79.9) OR be equal to or greater than that of the state for the same subgroup and the same grades (3-8, 11).

- Exceeds target - 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 - 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 - Is within 5.0 points below the target.
- Does not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

Result:

HGA is meeting this target. From FY21 to FY24, HGA's aggregate proficiency index score for the FRP subgroup is 5.1% index points greater than that of the state for the same subgroup and the same grades (3-8, 11).

**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 Students	Proficiency Index
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

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

State of Minnesota	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total Students	Proficiency Index
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					0	23.4
Aggregate	23,278	78,279	94,807	210,862	407,226	36.6

Source: MDE Data Center

St. Paul Public School District (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					0	24.3
Aggregate	593	2,660	4,286	16,329	23,868	22.6

Source: MDE Data Center

**Measure 6.4:** 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).

- Exceeds target - The school archives an aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the district's score.
- Meets target - The school archives an aggregate proficiency index score equal to or greater than the district's score.
- Approaches target - The school archives an aggregate proficiency index score within 5.0

points of the district's score.

- Does not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

Result:

HGA is exceeding the target on this measure. HGA's FY21 to FY24 aggregate proficiency index score for the FRP subgroup is greater than that of the resident district (ISD 625 - St. Paul Public Schools) by 19.1% proficiency index points for the same subgroup and the same grades (3-8, 11).

**Measure 6.5:** 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).

- Exceeds target - The school archives an aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the district's score.
- Meets target -The school archives an aggregate proficiency index score greater than the district's score.
- Approaches target - The school archives an aggregate proficiency index score within 5.0 points of the district's score.
- Does not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

Result:

From FY21 to FY24, HGA's aggregate proficiency index score for the ELL 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, 11) by 10.4% index points. HGA is exceeding target on this measure.

**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 Students	Proficiency Index
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
<b>Aggregate</b>	13	127	224	574	938	26.9

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

St. Paul Public School District	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total Students	Proficiency Index
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					0	17.6
<b>Aggregate</b>	127	819	1,393	7,491	9,830	16.5

Source: MDE Data Center

**Measure 6.6:** 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).

- Exceeds target - The school archives an aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the district's score.
- Meets target - The school archives an aggregate proficiency index score to or greater than the district's score.
- Approaches target - The school archives an aggregate proficiency index score within 5.0 points of the district's score.
- Does not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

HGA is meeting the target on this measure. The aggregate proficiency index score of HGA for the Special Education subgroup for the current reporting period is just .2% index point higher than that of the resident district (ISD 625 - St. Paul Public Schools) for the same subgroup and the same grades (3-8, 11).

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 Students	Proficiency Index
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
<i>Source: Requested data provided to OW by school</i>						
St. Paul Public School District	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total Students	Proficiency Index
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					0	21.8
Aggregate	218	490	578	3,537	4,823	20.5
<i>Source: MDE Data Center</i>						

### Summary:

The school's progress on this indicator is being measured against six targets, targets 6.1-6.6 (see above). With one more year remaining in the current contract cycle, HGA is meeting targets of three of them and exceeding in two. Almost all targets that HGA is either meeting or exceeding currently are those that compare the proficiency of its “high risk” students with that of similar groups of students in the entire state or Saint Paul Public Schools. There is a type of consensus within the educational community throughout the United States that identifies children of color, immigrant students, and children from low income families as “high risk” for failure. Based on that, nearly 100% of students are at “high risk.” That means, HGA is doing a much better job than its counterparts in educating “high risk” students. This is cause for celebration!

Regrettably however, HGA is unable to achieve the level of success that it had during the previous contract cycle. The district's aggregate proficiency index score from FY16 to FY20 was 70.9% index points. At present, the district's aggregate mathematics proficiency index score is 41.7% points. Obviously, this has a lot to do with the many ways education has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemics.

## **Indicator 7: Science Proficiency (and Growth)**

**Goal:** Throughout the period of the contract, students of HGA will demonstrate proficiency in science as measured by the state accountability tests.

**WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal:** All students are career and college ready before graduating from high school.

### **Key Measures & Results for this Goal:**

**Measure 7.1:** 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).

- Exceeds target - 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 - 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 - 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 - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

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 Students	Proficiency Index
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
<i>Source: Requested data provided to OW by school</i>						
State of Minnesota	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total Students	Proficiency Index
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					0	52.7
Aggregate	37,443	160,718	132,521	151,622	482,304	54.4
<i>Source: MDE Data Center</i>						
St. Paul Public School District	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total Students	Proficiency Index
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					0	31.3
Aggregate	572	2,719	2,997	7,263	13,551	34.2

**Result:**

HGA is not meeting the target on this measure (see table above).

**Measure 7.2:** 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).

- Exceeds target - The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the district’s score.
- Meets target - The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score equal to or greater than the district’s score.
- Approaches target - The school achieves an aggregate proficiency index score within 5.0 points of the district’s score.
- Does not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

**Result:**

From FY21 to FY24, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score in science is 8.6% points higher than that of the resident district - St. Paul Public Schools (see table above). Therefore, HGA is meeting this target.

**Measure 7.3:** 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).

- Exceeds target - The aggregate proficiency index score is at least 10.0 points above the state’s score.
- Meets target - The aggregate proficiency index score is equal to or greater than the state’s score.
- Approaches target - The aggregate proficiency index score is within 10.0 points of the state’s score.
- Does not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

Result:

From FY21 to FY24, HGA’s aggregate proficiency index score for the FRP subgroup is 8.7% higher than that of the state for the same subgroup and the same grades (see table on the next page). HGA is meeting the target on this measure (see table on the next page).

**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 Students	Proficiency Index
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

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

State of Minnesota	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total Students	Proficiency Index
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					0	36.2
Aggregate	4,765	32,668	43,232	83,593	164,258	35.9

Source: MDE Data Center

St. Paul Public School District	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total Students	Proficiency Index
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					0	24.4
Aggregate	112	1,050	1,864	5,901	8,927	23.2

**Measure 7.4:** 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).

- Exceeds target - The school archives an aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the district’s score.
- Meets target - The school’s aggregate proficiency index score is greater than the district’s

score.

- Approaches target - The school’s aggregate proficiency index score within 5.0 points of the district’s score.
- Does not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

Result:

HGA is exceeding the target on this measure. From FY21 to FY24, HGA’s aggregate proficiency index score for the FRP subgroup is 20.5% index points higher than that of the resident district (ISD 625 - St. Paul Public Schools) for the same subgroup and the same grades (5,8, HS).

**Measure 7.5:** 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 both subgroups and grades (5,8, HS).

- Exceeds target - The school archives an aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the district’s score.
- Meets target - The school’s aggregate proficiency index score is greater than the district’s score.
- Approaches target - The school’s aggregate proficiency index score is within 5.0 points of the district’s score.
- Does not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

Result:

HGA is exceeding the target on this measure. From FY21 to FY24, HGA’s aggregate proficiency index score for the ELL subgroup is 13.7% index points higher than that of the resident district (ISD 625 - St. Paul Public Schools) for both subgroups and grades (5,8, HS) (see the table below).

**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 Students	Proficiency Index
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

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

St. Paul Public School District (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					0	10.8
Aggregate	12	166	465	2,900	3,543	11.6

Source: MDE Data Center

**Measure 7.6:** 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).

- Exceeds target - The school archives an aggregate proficiency index score at least 10.0 points above the district's score.
- Meets target - The school archives an aggregate proficiency index score to or greater than the district's score.
- Approaches target - The school archives an aggregate proficiency index score within 5.0 points of the district's score.
- Does not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

Result:

HGA is meeting the target on this measure as the district's aggregate proficiency index score for the Special Education subgroup from FY21 to FY24 is 3.8% index points higher than that of the resident district (see table below).

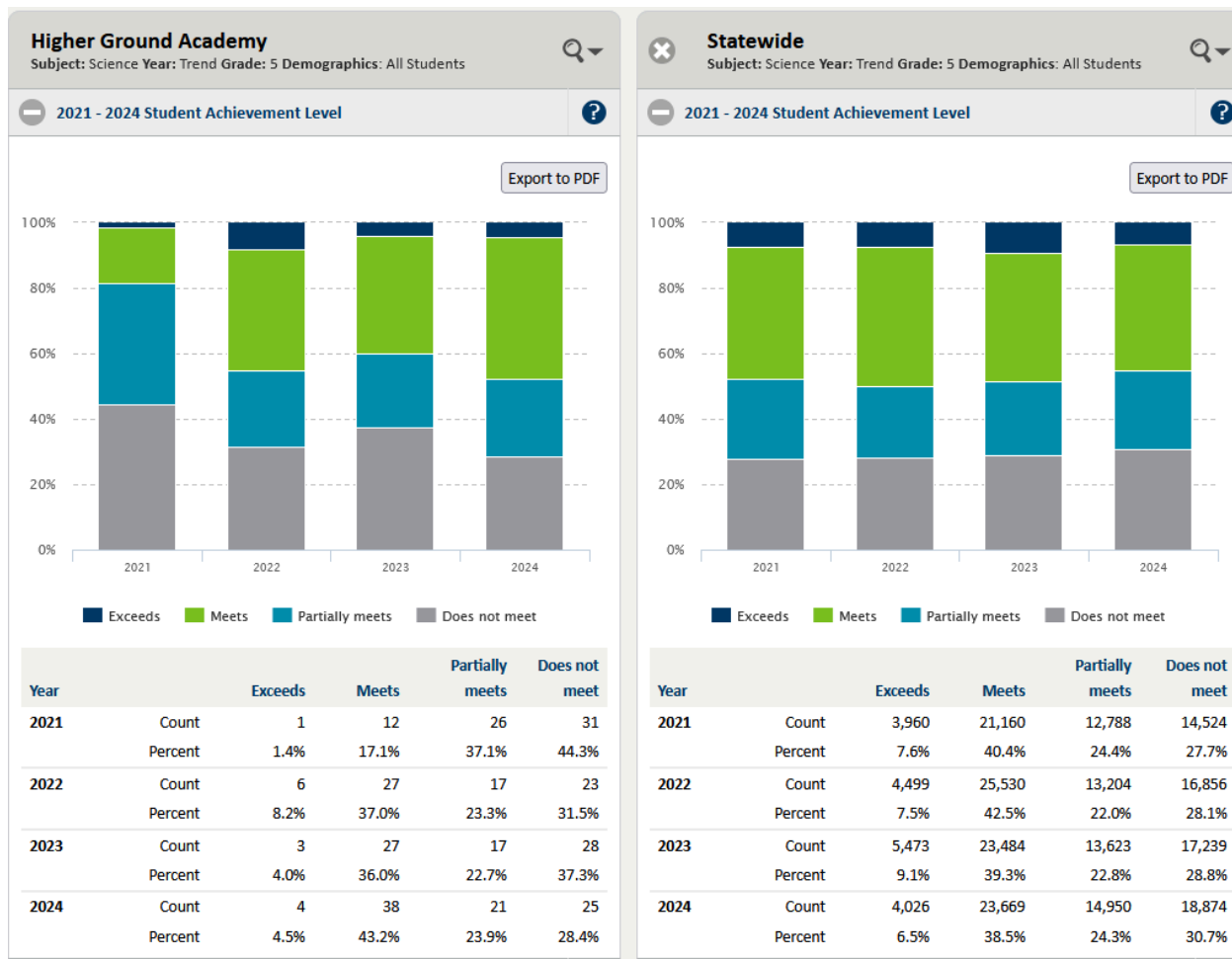
Measures 7.6 Performance Data:						
Science: All State Accountability Tests – Special Education Students (Meeting enrollment criteria), Grades 5, 8 & High School						
Higher Ground Academy	Exceeds	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	Total Students	Proficiency Index
FY21	0	0	0	4	4	
FY22	0	0	2	6	8	
FY23	0	2	4	6	12	33.3
FY24	1	1	4	5	11	36.4
Aggregate	1	3	10	21	35	25.7
<i>Source: Requested data provided to OW by school</i>						
St. Paul Public School District (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					0	22.2
Aggregate	62	215	200	1,218	1,695	21.9

**Summary:**

In the FY20 to FY25 contract, there are six measures identified as indicators of HGA's progress towards proficiency in science. As of FY24, HGA is meeting targets on three of the measures and exceeding targets on another two. HGA is not meeting its target on the sixth measure. As in the case of the reading and mathematics indicators, HGA struggles to meet the target on the measure that compares its overall proficiency rate with that of the state. However, in regards to underserved populations i.e., English Learner students, special education (students having individual education plans), and those who qualify for free or reduced price meals, HGA produces amazing results by meeting or exceeding the targets.

The science MCA is administered to students in grades five (5), eight (8), and high school. During each of the school years of the current contract, HGA's fifth grade students performed better compared to the statewide average (see graph on the next page). Regrettably, proficiency

levels/rate of HGA students falls short of target for the other grade levels tested. While the causes/s dependant upon this incident must be studied, one significant variable that is not common between our fifth grade teachers and those who teach at the other two grade levels participating in the science MCA is teachers' years of experience.



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

**Goal:** Higher Ground Academy does not have a contractual goal in this optional indicator area.

**Indicator 9: Post-Secondary Readiness**

**Goal:** Throughout the period of the contract, students of HGA will demonstrate readiness for post-secondary success.

**WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal: Graduate from High School (GRAD):** All HGA students graduate from high school.

## Key Measures & Results for this Goal:

**Measure 9.1: (GRAD):** From FY20 to FY24, the school's aggregate six-year graduation rate will be equal to or greater than the state rate.

- Exceeds target - The school's aggregate graduation rate is at least 5.0 percentage points above the state's rate.
- Meets target - The school's aggregate graduation rate is equal to or greater than the state's rate.
- Approaches target - The school's aggregate graduation rate is within 5.0 percentage points of the state's rate.
- Does not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

Result:

HGA is exceeding this target. From FY20 to FY2, the school's aggregate six-year graduation rate is 10% higher than that of the state (see table below).

6-Year Graduation Rate					
Higher Ground Academy	Graduated	Continuing	Dropped Out	Unknown	Graduation Rate
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%

State of Minnesota	Graduated	Continuing	Dropped Out	Unknown	Graduation Rate
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					87.7%
FY24					
Aggregate	178,046	3,648	12,513	8,617	87.7%

Source: MDE Data Center

**Measure 9.2: (GRAD):** From FY16 to FY20, the school's aggregate four year graduation rate will be greater than the state rate of the resident district (ISD 625 - St. Paul Public Schools).

- Exceeds target - The school's aggregate graduation rate is at least 10.0 percentage points above the district's rate.
- Meets target - The school's aggregate graduation rate is greater than the district's rate.
- Approaches target - The school's aggregate graduation rate is within 5.0 percentage points of the district's score.
- Does not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

Result:

From FY20 to FY2, HGA's aggregate four year graduation rate is 92.3%. This is 15.7% points

higher than the rate of the resident district (ISD 625 - St. Paul Public Schools). Therefore, HGA is exceeding this target.

**Measure 9.2 Performance Data:**

**4-Year Graduation Rate**

Higher Ground Academy	Graduated	Continuing	Dropped Out	Unknown	Graduation Rate
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	
FY24					
Aggregate	204	10	1	6	92.3%

St. Paul Public School District (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					68.5%
FY24					
Aggregate	5,930	1,020	379	416	76.6%

*Source: MDE Data Center*

**Measure 9.3:** From FY21 to FY24, the aggregate percentage of graduating students achieving an assessment score on a college entrance or placement exam (ACT, SAT, Accuplacer or ASVAB) that would place them at college ready or needing no more than one semester of remediation will be at least 70%.

- Exceeds target - The aggregate percentage is at least 80%.
- Meets target - The aggregate percentage is at least 70%.
- Approaches target - The aggregate percentage is at least 60%.
- Does not meet target -The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

Many colleges and universities do not require results of entrance exams for college admission. Therefore, the majority of our students have not been taking placement exams. While that is the case, being admitted by a college is one of the graduation requirements at HGA. Between FY20 and FY24, the average graduation rate of HGA students was 96.6%. Also, 50% of the students who graduated from HGA during the said period previously earned college credits during their high school years. Therefore, we believe that with such a result, HGA is exceeding this target.

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

**Measure 9.4:** From FY16 to FY19, the aggregate percentage of graduates that are accepted into at least one college prior to graduation will be at least

- Exceeds target - The aggregate percentage is at least 100%.
- Meets target - The aggregate percentage is at least 80%.
- Approaches target - The aggregate percentage is at least 60%.
- Does not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

Result

HGA is exceeding this target (see table 9.3 above).

**Summary:**

There are four measures under indicator 9 - Post Secondary Readiness. HGA is currently exceeding the targets on all four of them. It is to be recalled that HGA is a college preparatory school. As a result, this is a huge accomplishment for the school. It gives the school bragging rights, as it has stayed true to its mission.

Additional data from the Minnesota Department of Education show that our students are resolute in college. According to the table on the following page, 85% of the students who graduated from HGA in 2022 were still in college 16 months after they first enrolled in college. In contrast, only 61% of the students who graduated from other Minnesota schools remained in college after the stated number of months. In conjunction, this fact shows that students from the HGA are well prepared to succeed in college. Again, this is about remaining true to the mission of the district. It is the fruit of the hard work of HGAs educators who have supported our students throughout the years and who believed in the mission and purpose of the school.

Higher Ground Academy			
High School Graduation Year: 2022 Demographics: All Students			
2022 College-Going			?
<p>The total number of students earning a regular high school (HS) diploma and who enrolled in any Institution of Higher Education (IHE) within 16 months of graduation.</p> <p>Note: Data for most recent graduates is considered preliminary because it does not reflect a 16-month enrollment period.</p>			
Organization name	Number of students earning HS diploma	Number enrolled in any IHE within 16 months	Percent enrolled in any IHE within 16 months
Statewide	62,932	38,168	61%
Higher Ground Academy	54	46	85%

**Indicator 10: Attendance**

**Goal:** Throughout the period of the contract, students of HGA will attend the school with consistency.

**WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal:** All HGA students graduate from high school.

**Key Measures & Results for this Goal:**

**Measure 10.1:** From FY20 to FY24, the average of the school’s annual consistent attendance rates is equal to or greater than the state rate.

- Exceeds target - The average of the school’s consistent attendance rates is 5 percentage points greater than that of the state.
- Meets target - The average of the school’s consistent attendance rates is equal to or greater than that of the state.
- Approaches target - The average of the school’s consistent attendance rates is within 5 percentage points greater than that of the state.
- Does not meet target - The school did not meet the criteria for any of the ratings above.

**HGA exceeds this target.**

**Summary:**

From FY20 to FY24, the average of the school’s annual consistent attendance rates is 82%. That is 10% higher than the overall state rate. HGA registered a higher student attendance rate compared to the state's average in FY22 and FY23. In FY24 however, HGA’s average attendance

rate was .7% (point 7 percent) lower than the state. This has been unwelcome news to the staff and administration of the school. HGA intends to utilize its family liaison more effectively to improve its relationship with families as a measure for improving student attendance.

**Measure 10.1 Performance Data: Student Attendance**

Higher Ground Academy	Count Consistently Attending	Total	Annual Consistent Attendance Rate
FY20**			
FY21**			
FY22	792	938	84%
FY23	980	1125	87.1%
FY24			73.8%
<b>Average</b>	1772	2063	82%

Source: Requested data provided to OW by school

State of Minnesota	Count Consistently Attending	Total	Annual Consistent Attendance Rate
FY20**			
FY21**			
FY22	544,971	781,072	70%
FY23			
FY24			74.5%
<b>Average</b>	544971	781072	72%

Source: MDE Data Center

**Federal and State Accountability**

**High Quality Charter School Status:**

The multitude of data presented in the previous section shows that HGA is indeed a strong school. HGA’s student population is composed of a significant number of students from low-income families (more than 95%), English Language Learners (40%+), and children of color (approx. 97%, in FY24). It is well known that children with such a background are not succeeding in many other schools, including the traditional public schools. Therefore, HGA is succeeding where others fail. For this it is recognized as a “Beat Odds” school by the “Minneapolis Star Tribune”. It is also recognized by the” US NEWS” and “World Report”, as one of the good ones in the state.

Despite these facts, HGA does not receive a “High Quality Charter School” status at this time. The leadership and staff of the school will work very hard to achieve such a status within the next few years.

However, HGA has a plan to relocate its middle school to a new site during the upcoming contract cycle. With that, the school anticipates that total enrollment of its three schools will increase to 1,500 students.

### **ESSA Identification**

HGA is not identified to receive comprehensive support or additional targeted support.

## **8. Education Effectiveness Practices**

### **Process for assessing and evaluating student learning and growth.**

HGA utilizes the following process for assessing and evaluating student learning and growth:

1. Fastbridge Assessment- All students participate in Fastbridge testing at least twice a year - fall and spring. Some students, more specifically those who participate in remedial programs i.e., Title, Special Education and EL, participate in the winter administration of the Fastbridge Assessment. Additionally, students in HGA’s elementary program are assessed more frequently with the Curriculum Based Measure (CBM, a component of the Fastbridge Assessment). Student growth is tracked by comparing test results from the different test administrations i.e, fall and winter or fall and spring.

2. Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA)- HGA encourages all students to participate in the annually administered statewide assessment known as the MCA. Data from the MCA is analyzed to understand whether there is growth for individual students as well as the different student groups.

3. Curriculum Based Measures (CBM)- Students’ progress towards grade level state standards is also measured using CBM that come with the curricula that are adopted by the school and other frequently administered teacher made assessment instruments.

### **Reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of instruction and curriculum.**

Evaluating Instruction- HGA uses multiple measures to evaluate instruction. Those include:

1. Walkthroughs and Formal Evaluations: All teachers are formally evaluated by their principal twice a year, once in the fall and then in the spring. New teachers and struggling teachers are observed more often than that. Principals, as well as the Executive Director routinely visit classes for brief walkthroughs. The Executive Director also completes a formal observation when the principal’s make a recommendation for a non-renewal of a teacher’s contract due to performance.

2. Informal Observations- These include parent and student surveys, conversations with parents and students, results from both standardized exams and teacher made assessments, etc.

Evaluating Curriculum:

HGA evaluates its curriculum through:

1. Surveys and Conversations with Teachers- HGA solicits input from teachers and parents about the effectiveness of the school's curriculum via surveys. Discussions about curriculum are also held with teachers during weekly student progress meetings.
2. Standardized Tests- These tests provide data about the effectiveness of HGA's curriculum. For example, the very little growth on average proficiency rate of HGA's students on the mathematics MCA Assessment between FY 20 and FY 23 prompted a need to evaluate the alignment between HGA's curriculum and the state's mathematics standards. The finding was that the alignment was not as stalwart as it needed to be. Therefore, a new curriculum was adopted in FY24.
3. HGA has adopted a five year renewal cycle for the district's curriculum. Teachers are fully involved in the process of reviewing new curricula.

### **Practices and programming for remediation and acceleration.**

Remediation- HGA implements a multi-tiered support system for remediation. The system relies on classroom teachers for Tier I remediation. Title I teachers provide support at the level of Tier II. A reading specialist provides Tier III support/intervention. The reading specialist is currently supporting students in the K - 5 grade levels. HGA intends to recruit more reading specialists so that Tier III support is available to students at the other grade level.

HGA utilizes multiple sets of data that include teachers' observation and data from standardized tests to identify students needing extra help. However, the primary source of data for this purpose is the Fastbridge Assessment. The Fastbridge classifies students as "High Risk," "Low Risk," "Some Risk," and "College Pathway." Those who are classified as "College Pathway" students need acceleration. It is the students in the other categories that need extra support. The extent and nature of support a student needs depends on the level of risk that he/she is experiencing. Students who are at "high risk" will require intensive one-on-one support from a specialist whereas those in the other categories particularly need support from their teacher and/or a tutor.

## **9. Environmental Education (EE)**

The mission of Higher Ground Academy's authorizer, the Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center, is to instill a connection and commitment to the environment in people of all communities through experiential learning. Osprey Wilds defines environmental education as the implementation of values and strategies that foster learning and create environmentally literate citizens who engage in creating healthy outcomes for individuals, communities, and Earth. The overarching goal of environmental education is an environmentally literate citizenry. The test of environmental literacy is the capacity of an individual to work individually and collectively toward sustaining a healthy, natural environment. This requires sufficient awareness, knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order to create a healthy planet where all people live in balance with Earth.

School year 2023-24 was another good year for EE at HGA. The transformation of the EE program at both HGA schools that began the previous school year through a grant that was received from Ramsey County continued. As it is to be recalled, a group of elementary and secondary teachers and administrators submitted a grant proposal to Ramsey County. Approved by Ramsey County, the proposal included a plan to create a “Food to Farm” program, composting, and revamping the existing recycling efforts. HGA was awarded a two year \$54,000 grant for costs associated with the activities included in the plan.



Photo: HGA student at a nature center on a school field trip.

During year one of the project i.e., school year 2022-23, training was provided to HGA students and staff both internally and by experts from Ramsey County at the start of the school year. All equipment required for the project were purchased mostly with grant funding. The composting,

and “Food to Farm” projects were successfully implemented at both campuses. Despite much progress compared to the previous fiscal year, the recycling program was nowhere near where it needed to be. Whereas all students participated in the composting and food to farm projects, student and to a certain extent staff, participation in the recycling program was less than optimal.



Photo: HGA students conducting an experiment during an EE session.

The second year of implementation was the school year 2023-24. As in the previous school year, training was provided to the staff and the students at the beginning of the school year. Like that of the previous school year, the programs went well with the exception of the recycling program. The biggest challenge was not distinguishing the differences between the recycling bins and the trash bins. To the most part, that was due to lack of attention rather than an attitude of defiance towards the environment.

### **Infusing EE into the Curriculum:**

In the classrooms, students worked on various activities aimed at building their awareness, knowledge, and skills as it relates to environmental stewardship. They also participated in activities aimed at improving their attitude about the environment. Students used their awareness, knowledge, skills, and improved attitude about the environment to take actions that may lead to its preservation. For example, some high school students wrote and mailed letters to their senators encouraging them to take interest in issues concerning the environment.



A student-led Food to Farm program at HGA Elementary Academy

## 10. Governance & Management

### Includes Annual Board Training & Administrator Professional Development Report(s)

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Member Name	Board Position	Affiliation	Date Elected	Date Seated	Term End Date	Email Address
Daniel McGrath	Chair	Chair	May 15, 2023	06/21/2016	2026	Dan@hgacademy.org
Samuel Yigzaw	Ex Officio Member	Ex Officio Member				samuel@hgacademy.org
Mary Tate	Secretary	Member	May 21, 2024	06/21/2016	2027	Marythgacademy.org
Denise Toussaint	Treasurer	Treasurer/ Vice Chair	May 17, 2023	09/1/2015	2025	Denise@hgacademy.org
Brian Swerine	Community Member	Secretary	May 17, 2024	10/18/2016	2025	Bswerine@hgacademy.org
Shannon Tanghe	Community Member	Member	May 15, 2023	01/23/2018	2026	Shannon@hgacademy.org
Liban Ahmed	Teacher	Member		06/18/2024	2027	<u>Libana@hgacademy.org</u>
Basima Mohamud	Parent	Member	May 21, 2024 replaced a member who resigned	02/18/2024	2024	Basima@hgacademy.org

#### The School Board

##### Membership:

One of the strengths of the HGA school board is the consistency of its members. Many of the members have served two or more terms. As such they know enough about the school. Therefore, when they make decisions or approve policies it is with adequate background information. In recent years, the parent position has been experiencing fluidity. The parent member who was elected to serve in that position in 2022, Mr. Mohamed Abdille, resigned shortly after he was reelected to serve a third term. He was then replaced by another parent member Mr. Abdirashid Muse. Muse served slightly more than a year and he also resigned citing conflict with his job. He was replaced by Dr. Basima Mohamed, an alumni of HGA. She holds a Ph.D. in Neuro Education. More importantly, she is a parent of a student who attends HGA. Mohamed served on the board from February, 2024 to June, 2024. Though her tenure was short, her presence was felt both by the other board members and the constituents that she represented due to her wisdom, unique perspectives as well as her strong advocacy for parents and students.

Unfortunately, Mohamed resigned from her position on the board effective July 1, 2024. The reason for her resignation was personal. The board is now actively recruiting an interim

replacement for the parent position. The replacement will serve on the board until the next election, at which time members will elect a new member to serve the full three year term. Longstanding HGA teacher and member on the board, Mrs. Neliya Tkachenko, lost her bid to serve another term. Unlike the parent member position on the board, there is always enough competition among teachers. Also, more constitutes a vote whenever there is/are a teacher(s) candidate(s) on the ballot. The 2024 election was not an exception. There were two more candidates on the 2024 ballot besides Tkachenko. More ballots were also received. The other two teacher candidates were high school social studies teacher Catherine Eisele and Liban Ahmed, an elementary special education teacher. Even though both Tkachenko and Eisele received a respectable number of votes, Ahmed was the winner by a decent margin. He was seated on the board at the August, 2024 board meeting.

### **Policies:**

The HGA board of directors continues to actively provide guidance and oversight to the district's administration. In the school year 2023-24, the board adopted five new policies and revised another five existing ones. Three of the newly adopted policies concern financial management, specifically, cash management, fund balance, and procurement. Another policy involves lead testing and the other policy pertains to malicious and sadistic conduct. The latter two policies are mandated by the Minnesota legislature as of 2023.

Additionally, the board reviewed five existing policies. The reason for revising the policies is in order to make certain they comply with new statutes passed in 2023. The revised policies were the discipline policy, the parent and family engagement policy, the student fee policy, the pledge of allegiance policy, and the policy on the subjects of harassment, violence and sexual abuse.

### **Training;**

With regards to training, board members participated in two workshops during the school year 2023–24. One of the two training sessions/opportunities was offered by Dr. David Webb, author of “HomeRun Leadership (Web, 2022). This training was intended to empower board members with the skills of making “better, faster team decisions (Webb, 2022). The other training was about school finance. It was offered by Dustine Reeves from Creative Planning. This training was attended by all board members.

Additionally, Ahmed, the teacher member, completed all the three required trainings prior to assuming his position on the board. See the tables below for board trainings to date.

## Initial Training

Initial Training				
Board Member Name	Original Date Seated	Board's Role & Responsibilities	Employment Policies & Practices	Financial Management
Dan McGrath	06/21/2016	1/24/17 Eugene Piccolo	1/24/17 Eugene Piccolo	3/21/17 Brenda Kes
Samuel Yigzaw	Ex Officio	1/24/17 Eugene Piccolo	1/24/17 Eugene Piccolo	3/21/17 Brenda Kes
Denise Toussaint	06/21/2016	1/24/17 Eugene Piccolo	1/24/17 Eugene Piccolo	3/21/17 Brenda Kes
Mary Tate	09/1/2015	1/24/17 Eugene Piccolo	1/24/17 Eugene Piccolo	3/21/17 Brenda Kes
Shannon Tanghe	10/18/2016	1/24/17 Eugene Piccolo	1/24/17 Eugene Piccolo	3/21/17 Brenda Kes
Brian Swerine	01/23/2018	1/24/17 Eugene Piccolo	1/24/17 Eugene Piccolo	3/21/17 Brenda Kes
Liban Ahmed	06/18/2024	6/27/24 Osprey Wilds	7/2/24 Osprey Wilds	8/17/24 Osprey Wilds
Basima Mohamud	06/18/2024			

## Annual Training

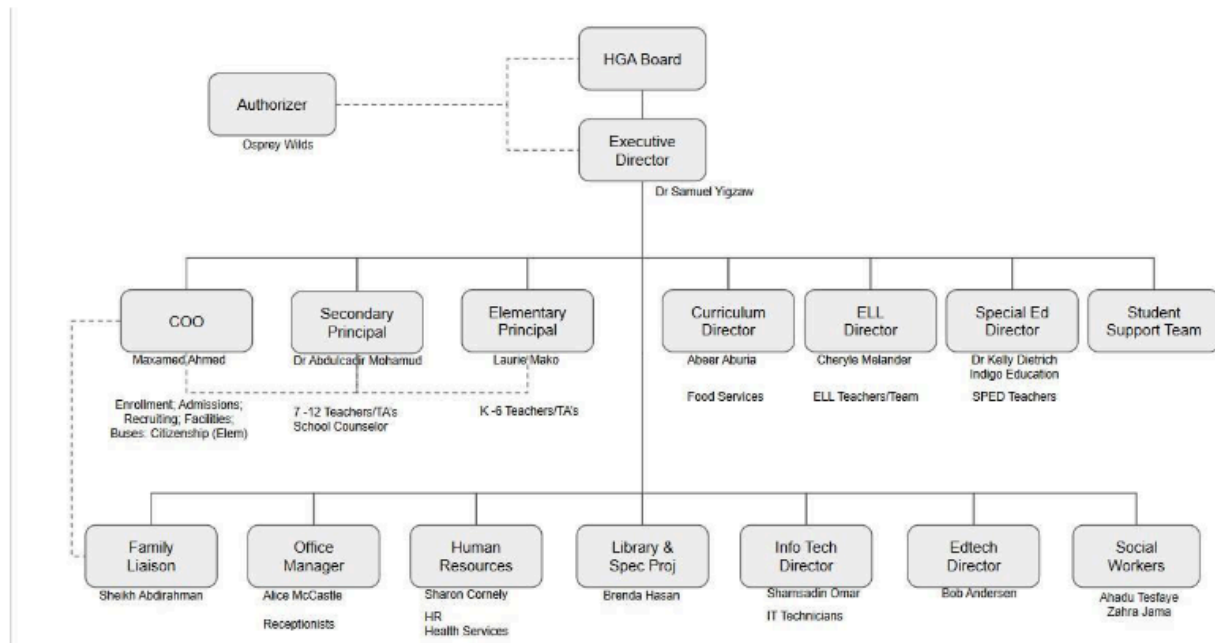
Ongoing annual training attended by board members in FY24 (July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024).

Annual Training – FY24				
Board Member Name	Date Training	of	Training Title or Topic	Presenter or Trainer
Dan McGrath	9/13/24		IROD Training Homerun Leadership	Dr. Dave Webb
Samuel Yigzaw	9/13/24		IROD Training Homerun Leadership	Dr. Dave Webb
Denise Toussaint	9/13/24		IROD Training Homerun Leadership	Dr. Dave Webb
Mary Tate	9/13/24		IROD Training Homerun Leadership	Dr. Dave Webb
Shannon Tanghe	9/13/24		IROD Training Homerun Leadership	Dr. Dave Webb
Brian Swerine	9/13/24		IROD Training Homerun Leadership	Dr. Dave Webb
Liban Ahmed	9/13/24		IROD Training Homerun Leadership	Dr. Dave Webb
Basima Mohamud	9/13/24		IROD Training Homerun Leadership	Dr. Dave Webb

Annual Training – FY24			
Board Member Name	Training #1: Financial Management Ryan Schmidt 1/16/24	Training #2: Title or Topic, Presenter or Trainer, Date	Training #3: Title or Topic, Presenter or Trainer, Date
Dan McGrath	Attended? YES	Attended? YES	Attended? YES
Samuel Yigzaw	Attended? YES	Attended? YES	Attended? YES or NO
Denise Toussaint	Attended? YES	Attended? YES	Attended? YES
Mary Tate	Attended? YES	Attended? YES	Attended? YES
Shannon Tanghe	Attended? YES	Attended? YES	Attended? YES
Liban Ahmed	Attended? YES	Attended? YES	Attended? YES
Basima Mohamud	Attended? YES	Attended? NO	Attended? NO

## MANAGEMENT

### Organizational Chart:



The Executive Director of Higher Ground Academy is Samuel Yigzaw. Yigzaw has been with HGA since the academy’s first year of operation, 1999. Since then, he has served HGA, as a

teacher, Director of Curriculum and Assessment, and principal. In the fall of 2018, the HGA Board of Directors appointed Yigzaw as Executive Director. His first appointment was for two years. Two years later, Samuel's contract was renewed for another five years.

To help him manage the day to day operation of the HGA, Yigzaw appointed administrators, a chief of operations, two principals, a director of curriculum, a director of personnel affairs, and an assistant director for data and student progress. In the spring of 2020, following the advent of "distance learning", a director of instructional technology position was created. In the school year 2019-20, HGA became two schools, HGA Elementary and HGA Secondary. Thus, HGA has two principals. All other administrators serve both schools. Names, educational background, and work experience of all administrators are listed (see below).

### **Administrators:**

Samuel Yigzaw

Job title: Executive Director

Education: Ph.D. in Education

Licensure: MN K–12 Admin, MN Social Studies All, Grades: 5-12. MN Superintendent license, June 2024.

Professional Experience: Educator since 1982. classroom teacher, curriculum director, principal, school board member.

Teaching experience include middle school, high school, and post-secondary (Adjunct faculty at the University of MN from 1998–2002 and Associate Professor of Education at St. Mary's University of Minnesota, 2006–2018

Maxamed Ahmed

Job Title: Chief of Operations

Education: MBA in Organizational Management

Professional Experience: Facilitator of STEAM Lab, assistant to the Executive Director in school year 2018–19, HGA COO, fall 2020-present

Abdulcadir Mohamud

Job Title: Principal, HGA Secondary Academy

Education: M.A. in Electrical Engineering, Ph.D. in Education

Licensure: MN 5–12 mathematics, MN K–12 administrative

Professional experience (only those that are relevant to current job): Taught high school mathematics, lead teacher, principal fall 2021-present

Laurie Mako

Job Title: Principal, HGA Elementary and HGA Middle Schools

Education: M.A. in Education

Licensure: MN K-6 (elementary) teaching license, MN K-12 administrative

Professional Experience: Taught various grade levels, mostly grade 3, lead teacher grades 3–5, principal fall 2021-present

Abeer Aburia

Job Title: Curriculum Director

Education: Education Specialist

Licensure: MN K–6 (elementary) teaching license, MN K-12 administrative

Professional Experience: Taught various grade levels, mostly grade 6, lead teacher grades K-2, principal winter 2020-present

Cheryl Melander

Job title: Assistant Principal, ELL program coordinator

Education: doctorate degree,

Licensure: MN K–6 (elementary) teaching, MN K–12 administrative professional experience: elementary teacher

Sharon Cornely

Job title: Director of Personnel Affairs

Education: M.A. in Education

Professional Development Plan for Not Licensed Administrators:

1. Maxamed Ahmed, Chief Operations Officer (COO)

Professional Development Goals/Areas of Focus for FY 24: Improve managerial skills in the area of “people management.”

Professional Development Goals/Areas of Focus for FY 25: Maxamed will be more effective with business management skills

Activities: Will attend professional development workshop “Accounting for Decision Making

2. Robert Anderson, Director of Instructional Technology

Professional Development Goal for FY24 : Learn Clever Portal in order to ensure the portal supports teachers' and administrators' operational needs. Training: Attended Clever certification training.

Professional Development goal for FY 24 : Learn grant writing so that he will be able to write technology grants

### **Changes in School Year 2024-25**

In recent years, HGA’s ELL population has grown exponentially from approximately 3% of the total student population during the school year 2018-19 to more than 40% percent in 2023-24. This huge increase is due to two main reasons. First is the influx of new immigrant students from countries such as Syria, Yemen, and Afghanistan. The other is the current screening process is more compliant in regards to the requirements of the Minnesota Department of Education. In the past, HGA mistakenly excluded students who speak English fluently from the screening process even though English is not their home language. That practice has now been revised to include all students who come from households that speak a non-English language(s) at home. Surprisingly, HGA has learned that about 40% of its students qualify to receive English Learner (EL) support. This massive increase in the ELL population overwhelmed the resources of the EL program to the point that the teacher to student ratio was 1:60+.

In addition to the concerns of the ELL program, the district's top leadership noticed a disparity in the amount of behavior/discipline referrals among various classrooms/teachers. The data gathered through the district’s Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) showed that the majority of the behavior issues come from classrooms where the teacher to student ratio was more than 1:22.

After deliberating on the above concerns, HGA's executive leadership concluded that two actions were needed to address them: 1) improve behavior in the classroom by lowering the student to teacher ratio at all grade levels. 2) reduce the teacher to student ratio in the ELL program. Both measures will increase teacher effectiveness and improve student behavior. The question was how to pay for these changes. Though it was unpleasant to take such course of action, the leadership determined that it had to eliminate certain positions in an effort to pay for the necessary changes. Thus, at the level of administration, the position of assistant principal and ELL program coordinator was eliminated. HGA now contracts with a third party vendor to support ELL teachers at a fraction of the salary of the former assistant principal. In addition, HGA decided to not replace the HR Director who resigned at the end of the last fiscal year. Instead, duties of that position are now divided among other administrators. The former HR Director continues the position as manager of employee benefits as a 20% employee.

HGA has also eliminated a number of other positions. The majority of those are support staff member positions. In the previous school years, HGA provided teacher assistants to all teachers at the elementary and middle schools. In the current school year, only those teaching grades K-2 have teacher assistants. At those grade levels, teacher to student ratio remains 1:25 with few exceptions.

Due to the savings as a result of the measures described above, the teacher to student ratio at HGA Elementary grades 3-5 is 1:22 or less in most classrooms in the current year. With regards to the EL program, the teacher to student ratio is now close to 1:40. Comparatively, this is a decent ratio. However, considering the extent of the needs of the new ELL students, the ratio must continue to increase if the program is going to be more effective.

### **Date of School Leader Evaluation**

Informal evaluation of the Executive Director was conducted at almost all meetings. The board will conduct formal evaluation of the Executive Director in June, 2025.

### **13. Staffing**

#### **Teachers:**

It is the commitment of Higher Ground Academy to provide "highly qualified" teachers for all students at all grade levels. The term "highly qualified" is used to mean teachers have the appropriate licensure for the subject and or grade level that they teach. In addition, a "highly qualified" teacher possesses effective classroom teaching experience of three or more years, is culturally competent, and cares about the welfare of students. The leadership of the school believes that only when every teacher in every classroom is "highly qualified" that the school will be true to its mission and purpose.

Currently, the great majority of our teachers are "highly qualified". The rest are working diligently towards becoming one, with the support of the district. Regrettably however, the district finds itself in competition with both the traditional public schools and other charters for teachers. Simply put, each year, we are experiencing the loss of one or more of our teachers. These teachers leave our school to work for one of the traditional public schools, mostly those in the suburbs. HGA believes that this is an unfair practice considering its investment in developing those particular teachers during his/her initial years of teaching.

Teacher attrition rate in the school year 2023 24 was 11% (eight out seventy teachers did not return in the current school year). As previously stated, some teachers left HGA to work for other districts. Some of the other reasons for the departure of our teachers include, changing profession, personal health, and retirement. The table below displays the names, license folder number, assignment, and his/her status in the current year for each individual the district employed in the reporting year.

School year 2023 – 24 teaching staff

Name	Folder #	License & assignment	2024 – 25 status	Comments
Trina Murray	489643	Elem. Ed/Kindergarten	R	
Jenna Spitzak	1004348	Elem. Ed/Kindergarten	R	
Victoria Carley-Smith	1004390	Elem. Ed/Kindergarten	R	
Cassandra Saye	486466	Elem. Ed./1 <sup>st</sup> grade	R	
Fathiya Dubad	1016478	Elem. Ed./1 <sup>st</sup> grade	R	
Keith Balke	509822	Elem. Ed./2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	R	
Dereje Daba	396910	Elem. Ed./2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	R	
Jenna Schulke	1018889	Elem. Ed./1 <sup>st</sup> grade	NR	
Theres Ronnei	3551888	Elem. Ed./1 <sup>st</sup> grade	NR	
Pamela LaManna	418545	Elem. Ed./5 <sup>th</sup> grade	R	
Thomas Carney	484396	Elem. Ed./2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	R	
Sarah Kinnard Taylor	503904	Elem. Ed./4 <sup>th</sup> grade	NR	
Destiny Stampley	100193	Elem. Ed./5 <sup>th</sup> grade	R	
Andrew Urevig	1007210	Elem. Ed./5 <sup>th</sup> grade	R	
Rihana Cherise Payne	1017722	Elem. Ed./6 <sup>th</sup> grade	NR	
Paul Krumrei	1018430	Elem. Ed./6 <sup>th</sup> grade	NR	
Ahmed Abdirahman	515225	Arabic/grades K - 5	R	Tier I
Mohamud Mohamud	1006717	Arabic/grades K - 5	R	Tier I
Heidi Heideman	1000382	ELL/grades 3 - 5	R	Tier I
Young Waters	518071	ELL/grades K - 2	R	
Broc Gross	506749	ELL/grades 6 - 7	R	
Tracy Chapman	410411	Elementary	R	
Liban Ahmed	1002989	Special Ed./grades K - 7	R	
Johanna Thomas	244058	Elem. Ed./Title I	R	
Aloysious Spsychalla	436880	Phy. Ed./grades K - 5	R	
Spencer Richards	518676	Phy. Ed./grade 6	R	
Alexia Ramirez	1012330	ELL/grades K - 5	R	
Ismail Samatar	365213	ELL/grades 9 - 12	NR	
Joyce Delmoro	1029889	Art/grades K - 5	R	
Ruby Limbo	1029864	Science/grade 7	R	
Josephine G. Feria	1029868	Elem. Ed./grade 3	R	
Reyjay Bartolome	1029880	Elem. Ed./grade 4	R	
Mitzi Martin	1029876	Elem. Ed./grade 4	R	
Christian Solayao	1029871	Phy. Ed./grade 7	R	

Marjonh Tamonan	1029888	Elem. Ed./grade 6	R	
Saskia Broessa	1028386	Elem. Ed./grade 4	R	
Aida Faye	490548	Sped./Grades K - 7	R	
Mohamed Geedi	1029982	Arabic/grades 6 – 7	R	Tier I
Christopher Lumahan	1029885	Elem. Ed./grade 3	R	
Ja Mae Moua	1031705	Elem. Ed./grade 1	NR	Tier I
Adan Yusuf	1030139	ELL/grades K - 5	R	Tier I
Esther Pranke	1004433	Social St./grade 7	R	
Faisal Walko	414899	Mathematics/grades 7	R	
Riad Abdullahi	476320	Mathematics/grade 8	R	
Kedir Abdurezak	443793	Chemistry/grade 11	R	
Endale Beyene	433578	Chemistry/grade 10	R	
Bren Jansen	1030104	Biology/grades 11 & 12	R	
Bashir Colaad	466183	Mathematics/grade 10	R	
Stanley Quidato	1030377	Special Ed./grades 8 - 12	R	
Yves Ivan Atienza	1030378	Phy. Ed./grade 9	R	
Ronnie Gentile	1030103	Social St./grade 8	NR	
Dennis Napoles	1030376	Science/grade 8	R	
Jacquelyn Oliver	497603	Social St./grade 11	NR	
Kelsey Carlson	1000169	ELA/grade 9	R	
Kristine Wallace	1020477	ELA/grade 8	R	Tier I
Daneilla Clayton Andrews	1017748	ELA/grade 10	R	
Sabrina Ali Abdirahman	1024274	Biology/grades 9 - 10	NR	Tier I
Eli Rynder Schreurs	1018098	Social St. grade 10	R	
Jeanette Corn	444063	ELA/grade 8	R	
Catherine Eisele	445546	Social St./grade 9	R	
Joseph Denker	463238	Social St./grade 12	R	
Mohamed Jama	1008226	Math/grades 11 - 12	R	Tier I
Mubaarak Mohamed	1001167	Special Ed./grades 8 - 12	R	
Eli Sontag	512808	Science/grade 8		
Beilaqh Kavita Egara	1030129	ELA/grades 11 - 12	R	
Omar Ali	515059	ELL/grades 8 - 10	R	
Jena McDermott	1018652	ELL/grades 8 - 10	R	
Fosi Hassan	504110	Counselor/grades 9 - 12	R	

\* R = Returning, NR = Not Returning

### 2023-24 Teacher Professional Development Activities:

Annually in August, HGA conducts two weeks of professional development workshops before the start of classes. The first week from August 21-25, typically referred to as New Teacher

Week, 16 hours of professional development were offered to all new teachers by in-house experts on the following topics: classroom management, PBIS, teaching and learning at HGA, lesson planning, environmental education, ELL practices, school culture and educational technology. Additionally, our new teachers met with their team leads/mentors, received tours and general orientation information.

During the week of August 28, typically referred to as Returning Teacher Week, HGA provided a total of 31.5 hours of professional development for returning teachers, new teachers and paraprofessionals.

- 17.5 hours were provided to teachers on a new McGraw Hill curriculum, SmartBoard use, Turnitin academic writing software, the Seesaw learning management system, and the SuperKids reading curriculum by subject matter experts from these respective companies. Additionally, annual state required training on Mandated Reporter was provided to all teachers.
- 8 hours of professional development were provided by in-house experts on topics that included: teaching and learning, discipline, PBIS, the new Wellness policy, and environmental practices.
- Paraprofessionals received 6 hours of dedicated professional development training in compliance with new MDE requirements from in-house staff on: PBIS, discipline, confidentiality, privacy, emergency procedures, and staff roles and responsibilities.

After classroom learning resumed, professional development workshops were held, on days in which there were no classes, during early release days, (in which the children leave mid-morning) and independent, online learning.

On early release day, September 27, 2024, 5.5 hours of professional development were offered. This included five hours of instruction designed for teachers by in-house presenters on differentiated learning, working with ELL students and the ELL team, PBIS and classroom management. Paraprofessionals received sessions on roles and responsibilities, emergency procedures, PBIS and discipline.

On early release day October 18, 2024 and October 19, 2024, a day dedicated to professional development 5.5 hours of training were offered: working with ELL students and ELL team, PBIS, Crittercoin (a PBIS technology) and Nearpod, an educational technology. Two hours were conducted as an HGA mini-conference. More than 60 teachers opted-in to relevant, concurrent mini-presentations and hands-on demonstrations provided by teachers on topics such as: Schoology, teaching mats, growth mindset, relationship building with students, Apple classroom, SmartBoards and relicensure. Also during these two days, teachers were provided time to work

on two online courses: cultural competency (required for relicensure) and bloodborne pathogens (a federally mandated OSHA requirement for schools).

On early release day, December 20, 2024, the Jeffers Organization consultants provided 3 hours of hands-on environmental education training to all elementary school teachers, while the secondary school teachers received 2 hours of training on cybersecurity and e-learning/school closure practices.

On February 2, 2025, all staff received 3.5 hours of CPR Training and certification.

Lastly, between April 29 and May 7, 2025, a total of 3 hours of training were delivered after school to teachers and support staff in 30 minute segments on Crisis Prevention and Intervention (CPI). This was provided by HGA’s in-house certified CPI trainer.

**Teacher Equity Data:**

In the reporting year, sixty-six teachers taught at HGA. Out of those, forty two (63.6%) had three or more years of teaching experience. Twenty-eight of the sixty-six teachers (42%) hold advanced degrees. Out of the seventeen teachers holding advanced degrees, three have a Ph.D. All the rest hold Masters of Arts/Science degrees. One hundred percent (100%) of the teachers were appropriately licensed to teach the subject and the grade level they taught. Furthermore, fifty-seven point five percent (57.5%) of the sixty six teachers, were members of racial or ethnic minority groups

The table on the next page summarizes this data.

	<b>Licensed Educators (% of total)</b>	<b>3+ Years’ Experience (% of total)</b>	<b>Working in Area of Licensure (% of total)</b>	<b>Advanced Degrees (% of total)</b>	<b>Racially / Ethnically Diverse (% of total)</b>
Teachers	66 (100%)	42 (63.6%)	66 (100%)	28 (42%)	57.5%
Admin Staff	5	5 (100%)	5 (100%)	5 (100%)	60%

Even though more effort is needed in terms of recruiting additional teachers from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds, the progress achieved thus far is remarkable. Particularly, worth mentioning is the composition of the teaching staff in the school’s special education program. As in FY23, all the four special education teachers of the school in FY 24 were members of the racial and/or ethnic minority groups. In part, this success is due to the school’s effort to work with alumni who are interested in becoming educators. Such individuals are hired by the school to work as paraprofessionals while working towards postsecondary degrees and a teaching

license. HGA will intensify this effort in the coming years.

<b>Percentage of Licensed Teachers from 2023-24 not returning in 2024-25 (non-returning teachers/total teachers from 2023-24 x 100)</b>	<b>11%</b>
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<b>2023-24 Other Licensed (non-teaching) Staff</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>License and Assignment</b>	<b>2024-25 Status*</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Samuel Yigzaw	336710/Executive Director	R	
Laurie Mako	410554/Principal	R	
Abeer Aburia	418975/Curriculum Director	R	
Cheryl Melander	472766/ELL Coordinator	NR	
Abdeulcadir Mohamud	405305/Principal	R	

\* R = Returning, NR = Not Returning

<b>2023-24 Non-Licensed Staff</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>2024-25 Status*</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Zahra Jama	Social Worker	R	
Kim Phillips	Nurse's Aide	NR	
Nasteha Ali	Discipline	R	
Fousia Abdulkadir	Receptionist	R	
Hawe Tahiro	Discipline/liaison	R	
Molly McGuire	Teacher Assistant	R	
Fartun Ali	Teacher Assistant	R	
Amina Hassan	Teacher Assistant	R	
Naimo Ali	Teacher Assistant	R	
Ubah Abdi	Teacher Assistant	R	
Sakariya Mohamed	Transportation	R	
Ahmed Ahmed	Lab Technician	R	
Omarr Williams	Janitorial	R	
Robert Anderson	Instructional Tech.	R	
Shamsadine Omar	Technology	R	
Brenda Hasan	Librarian	R	
Khadar Ali	Teacher Assistant	NR	
Saleh Saleh	Discipline	R	
Awil Hussein	Teacher Assistant	R	
Idil Abdi	Sp. Ed. Para.	R	
Marian Abdulle	Food service	R	
Suad Ateyah	Substitute teacher	R	
Sharon Cornely	Human resources	NR	
Bernadine Anderson	Data manager	R	
Abdirahman Ahmed	Discipline	R	
Ifrah Dirie	Sp. Ed. Para.	R	

<b>2023-24 Non-Licensed Staff</b>			
Zam Zam Garad	Teacher Assistant	R	
Samsam Mohamed	Teacher Assistant	R	
Asha Mohamed	Teacher Assistant	R	
Abdishakur Salad	Teacher Assistant	R	
Mohamed Jimale	Tech. Assistant	R	
Heidi Gruhn	Title I Para.	R	
Idil Hassan Abdi	Sp. Ed. Para	R	
Halimo Hassan	Sp. Ed.	R	
Maxamed Ahmed	Operations Officer	R	
Alice McCastle	Admin. Assist	R	
Aisha Aden	Sp. Ed. Para	R	
Adan Yusuf	ELL Para	R	
Faisa Muse	Teachers Aide	NR	
Ernestine Kemp	Title I	R	
Fatuma Ali	Food service	R	
Nimo Garar	Food service	R	
Zakariyya Kadir	Tech. support	R	
Ifrah Mohamed	Sp. Ed. para	R	
Abubakar Mubarak	Teacher assistant	R	
Khadim Safi	ELL para.	R	
Khadija Warsame	Teacher's aide	R	
Fekadu Wordofa	Maintenance	R	
Asia Isahaq	Discipline	NR	
Hawa Egal	Sp. Ed.	R	
Afifa Abdi	Teacher assistant	R	
Salman Mohamed	Teacher assistant	R	
Khalid Khalid	Sp. Ed. para	NR	
Kassim Tilmo	Dean of students	R	
Kafia Mohamed	Discipline	NR	
Faduma Mohamed	Food service	R	
Abdikafi Ahmed	Discipline	NR	
Johnnie McCalister	Nurse's aide	R	
Yvette Vinson	Food service	R	
Foosia Mohmuud	Receptionist	R	
An-Her Ankhu-Ra	Security	R	
Hinda Gure	Security	R	
Sheikh Abdirahman Ahmed	Family Liaison	R	
Ahadu Tesfaye	Social worker	R	
Fartun Mohamed	Teacher's aide	NR	
Sumeya Ali	Student support	R	
Maryan Hassan	Discipline	R	
Thomas Meeson	ELL para	R	
Asia Isahaq	Discipline	NR	
Huda Abdullahi	Social worker	R	

<b>2023-24 Non-Licensed Staff</b>			
Hawa Munye	Food service	R	
Zamzam Yusuf	Janitorial	R	
Mohamed Farah	Sp. Ed. para	NR	

\* R = Returning, NR = Not Returning

## **11. Operational Performance**

### **Food Service:**

In FY23, Minnesota enacted a statute that establishes all students, regardless of family financial status, qualify for free meals everyday school day. Higher Ground Academy takes pride in being a school that has been providing free meals prior to the new statute. Each school year, more than 95% of the students attending HGA qualify for free or reduced price meals. However, HGA has provided free meals to all enrolled students since its first year of operation.

HGA contracts with a third party vendor, Saint Paul Restaurants and Catering (SPRC), for its food service program. The reporting year was the second year of the district's partnership with SPRC. It is to be recalled that CKC Good Foods was HGA's food service partner for many years. However, in FY22, CKS Good Foods lost the contract to SPRC in a publicly advertised bidding process. SPRC's contract is for a year with a provision to renew it up to four more times, a year at time.

### **Transportation:**

HGA's five year contract with Pride Transportation ended on June 7, 2024, the last day of the school year. In the beginning of May, 2024, HGA asked for RFP's from providers of school transportation. Intentionally, vendors were asked to submit two separate RFS's- one for school buses and another for vans. The reason for this is that there are more vendors that provide van services only. A total of thirteen companies submitted their RFS's. Out of those, only three were interested in providing bus transport.

The RFP's were opened to the public and within the presence of a school board member and HGA's business manager. The two lowest bidders Pride Transportation and Dire Dawa Transport won the contract for buses and vans respectively. Under the new contract, HGA will pay \$275/day/bus and \$135/day/van during the school year 2023-24.

## **12. Finances**

### **Financial Information:**

For questions regarding school finances and for complete financials for 2023-24 and/or an organizational budget for 2024-25, contact:

Name: Dustin J. Reeves

Position: Controller - Outsourced Business Accounting

Contact info:

Phone: (952)-563-6834

Email: dustin.reeves@creativeplanning.com

Creative Planning Financial Service Provider provides accounting services for Higher Ground Academy.

Information presented below is derived from preliminary audit figures. The full financial audit will be completed and presented to the Minnesota Department of Education and Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center no later than December 31, 2024.

### **Overview:**

Higher Ground Academy maintained a stable enrollment during fiscal year 2024, ending the year with a total of 1,081 ADM or 1,173 Pupil Unit (WADM). This was in comparison to a revised budget enrollment of 1,088 ADM. This small difference in ADM is due to the fact that there were several students that elected PSEO programs. The school is eligible for Lease Aid Funding for these students. In addition to state and federal funding awarded to Higher Ground Academy during Fiscal Year 2024, the school qualified for a grant through Youthprise as well. The holdback for fiscal year 2024 remained at its current level of 10%. HGA has a healthy fund balance and cash balance to offset this holdback.

### **Revenues**

Revenues received for Higher Ground Academy included the following sources:

State Aids: \$16,479,161

Federal Aids: \$2,102,326

Local Revenues: \$292,296

Food Services: \$1,293,426

Overall revenues (across all funds) slightly exceeded budget targets - \$20,167,209 in funds were received compared to a revised budget of \$20,121,352.

### **Expenses**

Expenditures for Higher Ground Academy during FY24 consisted of the following main categories:

Salaries and Benefits: \$8,019,253

Purchased Services: \$1,773,383

Supplies and Materials: \$539,626

Equipment: \$237,623

SPED/Title/Cares: \$2,842,352

Other Categories: \$80,608

Of the above expenditures, the following expenditures are related to Fund 02:

Salaries and Benefits: \$250,030

Purchased Services: \$6,262

Supplies and Materials: \$1,031,573

Equipment: \$3,802

Other Categories: \$1,760

### **Net Surplus or Deficit and Fund Balance**

Fiscal Year 2024 was another successful year for Higher Ground Academy on a financial basis. Net income has exceeded expectations due to conservative budgeting practices and a review of future fiscal year needs for student participation in various programs. Future budgets do also project conservative budgeting, as well as a need to support students in a productive manner.

### **13. Future Plans**

Expansion Plan:

One potential change that may happen during the new contract cycle is moving the middle school to a different location. Higher Ground Academy consists of three schools - HGA Elementary, HGA Middle School and HGA Secondary. At this time, HGA Elementary serves students in grades K-5, grades 6 and 7 are served by HGA Middle School, and grades 8-12 are served by HGA Secondary. Currently, HGA Elementary and HGA Middle School are both located at the Marshall Avenue campus. The secondary facility is at the Brewster St. campus. The Marshall Avenue facility is once again reaching its capacity. At the same time, new families are showing interest in enrolling their children in the two schools. Observing this situation, administrators of the two schools are suggesting moving HGA Middle School to a new location. In this effort space will be created for additional students to attend HGA Elementary. Similarly, HGA Middle School Academy can be moved to a larger space with a capacity to enroll more students.

The change described above will expand HGA. Doing so will help HGA improve the educational experience of many more children. The statutory purpose that HGA aspires to achieve is “improving the educational experience” of children. Thus far, HGA has succeeded in doing that. The intended change will bring that opportunity to many more students.

### **Identify plans over the next contract term for enrollment, growth and/or relocation.**

HGA Enrollment, Growth, and Relocation Plan:

The original projection was that we will reach the combined maximum enrollment capacity in both facilities i.e., 1225 students, by FY29. However, current trends suggest that HGA may reach that goal before the said date. Enrollment at the end of FY24 was 1,117. That is only 108 students less than the projection.

The current enrollment projection may change depending on the decision of the board regarding the addition of a new home for HGA Middle School. If a new home is acquired for that school, the projected enrollment will grow to 1,500 from the current number by the end of the new contract cycle or soon after that.

With regards to demographics, first as it has been throughout the school’s history, HGA is open to anyone interested. Beginning FY24, HGA created a marketing department. This department is

small, employing one effective director, whose job is to market HGA to diverse communities in Minnesota. During the first year the marketing director registered an impressive success. In a brief period of a year, enrollment of non-East Africans increased to almost 3%. Prior to that, it was less than 1% in FY23.

Building on the FY24 success, HGA intends to continue to increase enrollment of students from non-East African communities to 20% or more by the end of the new contract cycle.

With regards to the number of enrolled students, we intend to grow by almost 400 students in the next five to seven years. That will raise the total enrollment of the school to 1,500. The distribution of students by schools will be as follows:

1. HGA Elementary Academy = 650 students
2. HGA Middle School Academy = 400
3. HGA High School Academy = 450
4. Total = 1,500

#### **14. Parent Satisfaction Survey:**

On September 12, 2023, HGA held the annual World Best WorkForce (WBWF) report meeting. The well attended meeting was held at the Marshal campus between 5:00-7:00 P.M. A report about the school's performance in relation to the WBWF goals was presented by the Executive Director Samuel Yigzaw. Additionally, Director Yigzaw provided the audience of (mostly) parents, teachers, and staff an update about the state of the school. He also introduced an idea that has been discussed among the staff i.e., delaying the start time for middle and high school students by an hour as of the 2025-26 school year. Many middle and high school students come to class very tired on most days. As a result, teachers suggested changing the start time to 8:00 A.M. or 8:30 A.M. It was difficult to gauge the reaction, though it appeared that many of the parents welcomed this idea.

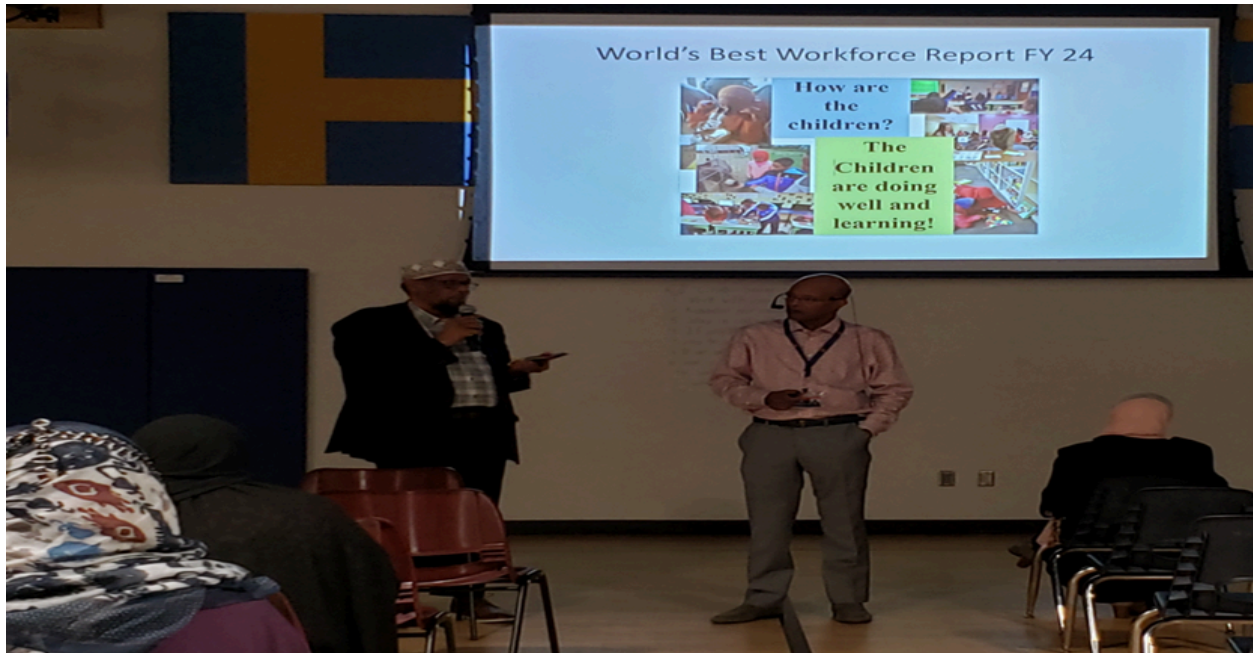
Following the report, there was a question and answer session. The audience was interested and engaged. The majority of the parents expressed their concern about the student transportation program. Commonly heard themes were, "...buses not showing up on time " or "... buses not showing up at all."

Another concern that a large number of the parents expressed was about the food served by the school's cafeteria. The parents simply said, "Our children are coming home hungry because they do not eat the food that the school serves."

The following day the district leadership went to work on the parents' concerns. Taking action, HGA leadership met with the providers of transportation and student meals. The problem with the transportation program was straightforward. Buses must pick up students on time and everyday, twice a day! Yet, the concern about the food service program was a bit complex. A number of meetings were held with the student council to get their insight on this matter. Anecdotal data was gathered by teachers and cafeteria staff about the food that HGA students eat and do not eat. The collected data was shared with the food service provider, SPRC.

Three months later, between November 15, 2024 and November 22, 2024, HGA conducted a phone survey among parents to assess whether the parents are satisfied with the changes that

were made to the two programs. It was a non-random survey where the goal was to gather as many responses as possible. The survey consisted of five items. The survey items and the parents' responses were received (see below).



### Survey Items and Parent Responses.

1. How long have your children attended Higher Ground Academy?

Answer: \_\_\_\_ years

Response:

74 Out of 128 participants reported that they have been with HGA 3 years or more.

2. Compared to how it was at the beginning of the school year, how would you rate HGA's student transportation system right now?

\_\_\_\_ Much better/showing significant improvement

\_\_\_\_ Better, but there are still a few problems

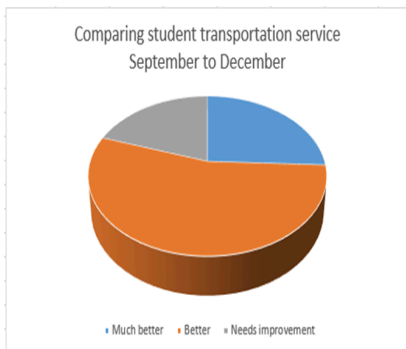
\_\_\_\_ It still needs improvement

Response:

Much better = 33 parents (26%)

Better = 70 parents (55%)

Still needs improvement = 25 parents (20%)



3. How about the food service program?

- Much better/showing significant improvement  
 Better, but there are still a few problems  
 It still needs improvement

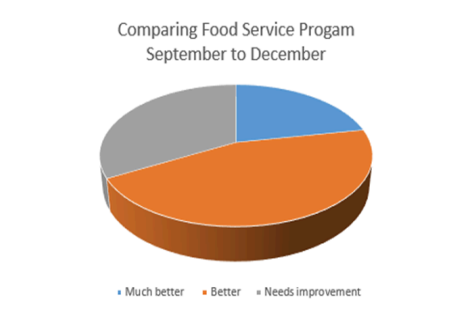
Response:

Response:

Much better = 28 parents (22%)

Better = 58 parents (45%)

Still needs improvement = 42 parents (33%)



4. How satisfied are you with your children's education so far?

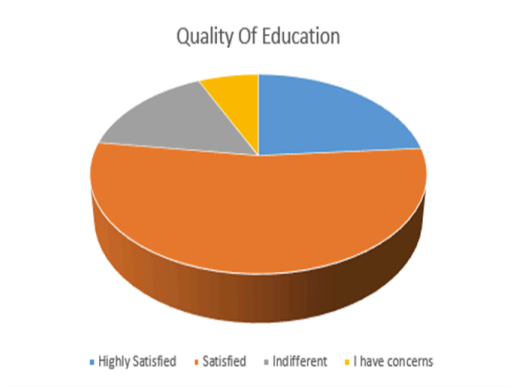
Response:

Highly satisfied = 31 parents (24%)

Satisfied = 69 parents (53.9%)

I can't say = 20 parents (16%)

I have concerns = 8 parents (6.1%)



5. Higher Ground Academy is considering a plan to start the school day for students in grades 8-12 at 8:30 A.M. and end the day at 4:30 P.M. Do you think this plan will work for you and your children?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Please explain and tell us why?

Of the 128 survey participants, 53 responded to this question. Of the 53 respondents, 61% (32 parents) approved the plan.

### **Analysis of Survey Responses:**

Out of the 475 families whose children attend HGA, 128 (27%) participated in the survey. Out of the 128 respondents, the child/children of 74 (58%) attended HGA for more than three school years. All the participants responded to the first 4 items on the survey. Only 43 (34%) of them responded to the 5<sup>th</sup> item on the survey which applied only to those parents whose child/children attended the HGA Secondary Academy.

Judging from the parents' response (see pie charts above), a large proportion of them seem to have recognized the progress that was being made with both programs. However, almost 40 percent of the parents did not agree with the proposed change to the daily schedule of the Secondary Academy. While the proposal to make the change appeared reasonable to many on the staff, HGA was unable to proceed with the plan at this time because doing so will result in significant decline in enrollment.