



FY 2017 Authorizer Annual Report

Authorizer Information

Name of Authorizing Organization: Audubon Center of the North Woods

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Name and Title of Primary Authorizer Contact: David Greenberg, Director of Charter School Authorizing

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Authorizer Summary:

Present an overview of your authorizing organization (for example, include your organization's mission, vision, and history). Limit half page.

The Audubon Center of the North Woods (ACNW) is a non-profit, residential environmental learning center nestled on the shores of Grindstone Lake near Sandstone, Minnesota. The Center offers a great variety of environmental learning experiences for people of all ages, with programming in natural history and science, team building, adventure programming, and outdoor/environmental education. The mission of ACNW is to instill a connection and commitment to the environment in people of all communities through experiential learning. The vision of ACNW is a healthy planet where all people live in balance with the Earth.

In 2003, ACNW became a sponsor of charter schools in order to further its mission and expand its educational programming. That year, ACNW was granted authority by the MN Department of Education to sponsor charter schools under Minnesota statute. In response to statutory change in 2009, ACNW renewed its commitment to charter schools and became an approved charter school authorizer in December 2010. Since that time, ACNW has grown to become the largest authorizer of charter schools in Minnesota by number of schools authorized. ACNW remains committed to authorizing charter schools as an effective vehicle for advancing the organization's mission and vision.

The ACNW Charter School Division (CSD) is located in Minneapolis and conducts oversight and evaluation of all schools authorized by ACNW throughout the state. The CSD is comprised of professionals with charter school authorizing and evaluation expertise. This includes both employees of ACNW and contracted evaluators. The CSD is overseen and monitored by the Charter School Committee and the ACNW Board of Directors. Ultimately, the ACNW Board makes decisions regarding the ongoing authorization of any particular school.

The authorizing mission of ACNW 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 the Audubon Center of the North Woods 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.

Authorizer Processes

New Charter School Applications in FY 2017 (B.1)

Did your organization review any new charter school applications in FY 2017?

Yes

If no, please provide an explanation:

N/A

If yes, complete the table below for each application:

Name of Charter School Applicant	Authorizer Approval or Disapproval	Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Approval or Disapproval	If Disapproved, Reason(s) for Disapproval	Application Withdrawn by Applicant
Studio Academy	Disapproval	N/A	The proposal was incomplete and incorrectly formatted.	No
Three Rivers Montessori	Approval	Approval	N/A	No
Wildflower Montessori	Approval	Approval	N/A	No

New Charter School Openings in FY 2017 (B.2)

Did your organization engage in ready-to-open activities in FY 2017?

No

If no, please provide an explanation:

ACNW did not authorize any charter schools projected to begin serving students in FY2017 or FY2018.

If yes, complete the table below for each charter school scheduled to open:

Name of Charter School Projected to Begin Serving Students in FY 2017	Projected Opening Date	Did this School Open as Planned?	If No, Provide Reason(s) and Revised Projected Opening Date
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Charter School Expansion Applications in FY 2017 (B.2)

Did your organization review any site and/or grade expansion applications in FY 2017?

Yes

If no, please provide an explanation:

N/A

If yes, complete the table below for each application:

Name of Charter School	Proposed Additional Grades to be Served and/or Location of New Site	Authorizer Approval or Disapproval	MDE Approval or Disapproval	If Disapproved, Reason(s) for Disapproval	Application Withdrawn by Applicant
East Range Academy of Technology and Science	1103 Grant Avenue Eveleth, MN 55734	Approval	Approval	N/A	No
Noble Academy	9-12 Saint Paul	Approval	Approval	N/A	No
New Discoveries Montessori Academy	6-8	Disapproval	N/A	Insufficient plan for facilities and concern about grade overlaps with co-located school	No

Official Early Learning Program Recognition Requests in FY 2017 (B.2)

Did your organization review any requests for official early learning program recognition in FY 2017?

Yes

If no, please provide an explanation:

N/A

If yes, complete the table below for each request:

Name of Charter School	Early Learning Program Seeking Recognition	Authorizer Approval or Disapproval	MDE Approval or Disapproval	If Disapproved, Reason(s) for Disapproval	Application Withdrawn by Applicant
Bright Water Elementary	Instructional Preschool	Approval	Approval	N/A	No
Excell Academy	Early Childhood Screening	Approval	Approval	N/A	No
Excell Academy	Instructional Preschool	Approval	Approval	N/A	No
Noble Academy	Instructional Prekindergarten	Approval	Approval	N/A	No

Charter School Change in Authorizer Requests in FY 2017 (B.2)

Did your organization review change in authorizer requests in FY 2017?

Yes

If no, please provide an explanation:

N/A

If yes, complete the table below for each request:

Name of Charter School	Authorizer Charter School Requested to Transfer From	Authorizer Approval or Disapproval	MDE Approval or Disapproval	If Disapproved, Reason(s) for Disapproval	Application Withdrawn by Applicant
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Name of Charter School	Authorizer Charter School Requested to Transfer From	Authorizer Approval or Disapproval	MDE Approval or Disapproval	If Disapproved, Reason(s) for Disapproval	Application Withdrawn by Applicant
North Shore Community School	Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center	Approval	Approval	N/A	No
Partnership Academy	Project for Pride in Living	Approval	Approval	N/A	No

Charter Contract Renewals in FY 2017 (B.9)

Did your organization engage in charter renewal activities in FY 2017?

Yes

If no, please provide an explanation:

N/A

If yes, complete the table below for each school:

Name of Charter School	Was Contract Renewed?	If Yes, Term of Contract Renewal	If No, Reason(s) for Nonrenewal
Crosslake Community School	Yes	07/01/2017-06/30/2022	N/A
Cannon River STEM School	Yes	07/01/2017-06/30/2022	N/A
Northern Lights Community School	Yes	07/01/2017-06/30/2020	N/A
Noble Academy	Yes	07/01/2017-06/30/2022	N/A
Natural Science Academy	Yes	07/01/2017-06/30/2020	N/A

Additional Authorizer Activities

Authorizing Leadership and Staff Skill Development (A.5)

Describe how your organization built the knowledge and skill base of its authorizing leadership and staff through professional development over the past year.

ACNW is committed to advancing the skills and knowledge of its staff. Staff members are evaluated at least once a year. During evaluation meetings, staff members and their supervisors identify professional development needs and set professional goals. As such, in FY17 we dedicated resources to ongoing professional development that resulted in improved authorizer practices.

On the national level, David Greenberg, Rhianon Sargent, Mike Schultz and Maggie Kane attended the October 2016 National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) Leadership Conference in Atlanta, GA. At this conference, our team not only attended sessions focused on each individual's particular areas of need, but also made and continued to deepen connections with authorizers within Minnesota and across the nation. In addition, David Greenberg, Director of Charter School Authorizing at ACNW, was a panelist on a session entitled "Evaluating Quality" during which he shared ACNW's approach to school evaluation. As a graduate of the inaugural NACSA Leaders Program in 2012, David participated in alumni calls during FY17 in which other leaders in the field of authorizing from across the country delved into current topics and challenges in the practice of charter school authorizing. Furthermore, David was a leadership coach for a participant in the fifth NACSA Leaders Program cohort. This included training for David in coaching, a site visit by David to Portland Public Schools to learn more about the authorizing practices of the district and to meet with his "coachee," and ongoing weekly check-in calls from April through October 2017. Mike Schultz, ACNW's Performance and Accountability Manager, participated in the 2017 NACSA Leaders Program from April through October 2017. Mike deepened his understanding of authorizing and leadership through readings and assignments, in-person sessions with his cohort, and ongoing weekly calls with his coach. David also participated in Kickstart School Restart – a national cohort focused on school learning about effective practices in school turnaround and restart. This was reinforced by a local initiative called the Minnesota Regional Turnaround Strategy group of which David is a member. This group visited turnaround or restart schools in Washington DC. Rhianon also had the opportunity to visit turnaround or restart schools as part of another visit to the Washington DC area. Erin Anderson attended the North American Association for Environmental Education conference in October 2016 and participated in sessions related to green schools, environmental justice, and evaluation. In addition, prior to the conference, Erin visited schools in Wisconsin with strong EE programs to experience effective practices to share with ACNW authorized schools.

On the local level, ACNW staff attended monthly Minnesota Associate of Charter School Authorizers (MACSA) meetings. In these meetings, staff members received updates from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACS), reviewed legislative initiatives, and also shared challenges, effective practice, and learning with other authorizers from around the state. Other training and development included:

- David participated on MDE's ESSA Technical Committee, which focused on learning about ESSA and providing feedback and insight to the Commissioner on Minnesota's State Plan.

- Rhianon attended the New Charter School Training at MDE in July 2016. This was an overview of all MDE departments that work with charters.
- Mike, Erin and Maggie attended the 2016 Minnesota Assessment Conference in August 2016.
- David, Erin, Maggie and Rhianon attended the annual Clifton Larson Allen Minnesota Charter School Conference in July 2016.
- Erin, Rhianon, David and Mike attended a workshop focused on effective special education oversight presented by NACSA and the National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools in June 2017.
- Erin, David, Rhianon and Maggie participated in the ACNW EE Teacher Workshop and attended sessions related to environmental justice and goal setting for EE.
- Erin attended a number of other EE related trainings and workshops including: the Institute for Non-Formal Climate Change Education, GreenStep Schools Focus Group; USGBC-MN Green Schools Roundtable; Project WET; Decolonizing Environmental Education; Project WILD and more.

ACNW authorizing staff and leadership engage in ongoing job-embedded professional development. This happens through staff meetings, internal staff trainings, board and committee meetings, ongoing consultations, and on-the-job training. Examples in FY17 include:

- a. Team review of concepts from Charter Board University.
- b. Orientation and review training/meeting in July to highlight MAPES, AAP, new Academic Evaluation Framework and more.
- c. Preparation for ACNW Leader Retreat sessions.
- d. Staff Meetings and Internal Staff Trainings: Erin presented background on environmental education; staff discuss readings related to educational equity and other related topics.
- e. Ongoing sharing of articles, readings, books amongst the team.
- f. Ongoing consultation and mentorship: Contracted evaluators such as Dr. Dan Jett and Rod Haenke share their expertise around topics of governance and instructional leadership with ACNW staff. This happens at team meetings, during phone consultations, and through site visits and other evaluation processes.
- g. On-the-Job Training: New staff and contracted evaluators accompany experienced staff or contractors on school site visits, board meeting observations, or other meetings to provide on-the-job training. For example, as part of Rhianon Sargent's and Maggie Kane's training and orientation as new evaluators, they attended a board meeting, participated in a post meeting reflection with David, and collectively completed a board observation template.

Training for ACNW Board and Charter School Committee: CSD staff provides ongoing training for ACNW board members at committee meetings and board meetings. For example, at the September 2016 meeting, David provided an overview of the status and process related to school expansions. Additionally, David shared information about the Kickstart School Restart project.

Authorizer Self-Evaluation (A.9)

Describe how your organization self-evaluated its internal ability (capacity, infrastructure, and practices) to oversee the portfolio of charter schools over the past year.

ACNW continually evaluates its internal ability to oversee our portfolio of schools. We intentionally work to build capacity, infrastructure, and oversight practices through multiple means.

First, during FY17 ACNW submitted its Approved Authorizing Plan (AAP) to MDE in response to our MAPES evaluation. The process of preparing, submitting, and revising the AAP based on MDE feedback prompted much review of our systems and practices as an authorizing organization. The AAP development gave us the opportunity to reorganize and align our policies and practices with AAP requirements (and consistent with MAPES) and helped us identify strengths and opportunities for improvement.

At the staff level, we engage in ongoing and planned evaluation of our capacity and practices to oversee our portfolio of charter schools. Staff meets approximately quarterly to reflect on progress on our strategic plan. These meetings also provide an impetus to identify new tools or strategies for conducting quality oversight. Through regular reviews of our mission- and vision-driven strategic plan, we routinely review our internal practices against our authorizing mission and vision. In FY17, ACNW tracked progress on meeting outcomes in our strategic plan and made revisions to the plan based on actual practice.

As part of our self-evaluation activities, we ensure that we gather feedback from our portfolio of schools. For example, we gather feedback from schools at our annual Leaders Retreat and EE Teacher Workshop. In addition, in FY17 we conducted comprehensive survey of school leaders and board members through Survey Monkey. This survey provided important feedback on strengths and opportunities for improvement. For example, school leaders indicated that they are clear on ACNW's performance expectations and satisfied with evaluation and feedback received; however, they also indicated a lack of clarity around ACNW's intervention processes. This led to an initial focus in FY18 on clarifying our intervention process and communications approach.

Authorizer High Quality Authorizing Dissemination (A.10)

Describe how your organization disseminated best authorizing practices and/or assisted other authorizers in high quality authorizing over the past year.

ACNW has been a leader among authorizers in Minnesota, sharing best practices and assisting other authorizers in high quality authorizing. ACNW is continually engaging with other Minnesota authorizers through the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACSA), a state-level organization analogous to the National Association of Charter Schools (NACSA), as well as through other channels. Examples from FY17 include:

- NACSA engaged David to serve in the role of a coach in the sixth Leaders Program Cohort. In his role as coach, David shared best practices (and was exposed to new ideas and practices) with his "coachee," who is an authorizer leader in Portland, OR, in addition to having ongoing engagement with coaches and leaders across the country. David shared his learning from this work with MN authorizers through ongoing conversations and MACSA meetings.
- St. Thomas staff asked ACNW to support its staff evaluation by provided 360 feedback.
- David shared with the MACSA group key learnings from Kickstart School Restart and MN Turnaround Strategy Group.
- ACNW also reaches out to and responds to requests from other authorizers for information or support. The following are examples of such activity in FY17:

- PPL asked ACNW to provide support in carrying out its authorizing activities during the second half of FY17. The organization had key staffing changes and decided to discontinue its role as an authorizer, so PPL contracted with ACNW to conduct its core authorizing activities.
- VOA requested a copy of ACNW's Academic Performance Framework.
- PUC requested that ACNW provide feedback on a grant proposal.
- ACNW reached out to multiple authorizers to seek input on guidelines for CMO contracts. This led to approximately 20 emails among over 10 authorizers around the country, including in MN.

Charter School Support, Development, and Technical Assistance (B.7)

Describe how your organization supported its portfolio of charter schools through intentional assistance and development offerings over the past year.

Given that the primary role of the authorizer is conducting oversight and evaluation of the schools it authorizes, providing technical assistance can be a complicated endeavor. ACNW has taken the approach that we can provide quality technical assistance and development primarily by setting clear criteria and expectations, providing examples of what it means to meet such criteria and expectations, and providing quality feedback to schools regarding their performance in relation to these criteria and expectations. ACNW did this in a number of ways during FY16:

First, ACNW publishes and disseminates via e-mail an "Authorizer Update" newsletter on a monthly basis. In this newsletter we highlight upcoming important dates, provide timely information regarding ACNW policies and practices, share information on quality practices being implemented at other schools, and provide links to relevant resources. This e-mail is sent to school leaders, board members, and others who have signed up to be on the listserv. Similar to the Authorizer Update, ACNW also sends a monthly Environmental Education Update to schools with resources, ideas, and upcoming professional development opportunities. Archives of these updates are available on our website at www.auduboncharterschools.org/strategic-support/.

Second, ACNW hosts an annual Leaders Retreat for all ACNW authorized schools. Participation by each school at this retreat is required (as outlined in the charter contract) with the goal of having the school leader and board chair in attendance. The FY17 Leaders Retreat was held in November 2016 and was attended by over 85 people representing 30 schools authorized by ACNW. The framing of the retreat was "Connecting decision making and the work of the school to statutory purposes and school mission" and the goal was to help participants govern and lead more effectively through this frame while helping them to establish relationships with other charter school leaders. Day one of the retreat focused on ESSA updates, strategic planning and sessions around facilities, innovation and Epicenter. Day two sessions included a keynote and workshop by Tonicia Abdur Salaam on putting values into action. Additional workshops included sessions from ACNW school leaders, ACNW staff and other professionals in the education field on topics such as running effective board meetings, implementing

strategic plans, charter school finance, and staff retention. Participants provided positive feedback on the value of connecting and learning with their peers, and left the conference with tools to better carry out their roles.

Third, ACNW conducted evaluations on each school in our portfolio in the areas of academic, environmental education, finance, and operations performance. When possible, feedback from evaluation activities is presented to the schools' boards during a regular meeting to ensure their understanding of the criteria and the school's performance in relation to those criteria. As stated above, we believe this provides critical technical assistance to guide schools' ongoing improvement efforts.

Fourth, ACNW provided schools with specific templates for key submissions including but not limited to the required charter school annual report and World's Best Workforce Report. While schools were not required to use this template, they had to meet statutory requirements in the report. Anecdotally, we saw that, in general, schools that used the template published and submitted charter school annual reports/World's Best Workforce Reports of higher quality.

Fifth, as school performance dictated, ACNW issued "interventions" such as Notices of Concern or Notices of Deficiency. These interventions are designed to provide specific feedback to schools on areas of performance that are of concern along with key requirements to address those concerns. While ACNW does not provide direct assistance to support schools in addressing concerns, we strongly believe that through these interventions and the specific requirements we outline for schools to address, we are providing schools with needed guidance to improve their performance.

Finally, ACNW uses Epicenter as a compliance tool to gather key documents and provide schools with a calendar of key requirements. This tool serves both ACNW and the school, as it give us a systematic means to gather and monitor schools' compliance activities and other key school performance data, but it also gives assistance to schools in that it provides a calendar of reminders for ACNW, MDE, and other important submission/compliance deadlines.

High Quality Charter School Replication and Dissemination of Best School Practices (B.8)

Describe how your organization planned and promoted, within its portfolio, the model replication and dissemination of best practices of high performance charters schools over the past year.

ACNW has consistently disseminated best practices of high performing charter schools to school leaders, board members, and other key staff at ACNW authorized schools. ACNW's intentional plan for disseminating best practices and replicating successful models is clearly referenced in our strategic plan, and is aligned with the "strategic support" component of our authorizing mission.

A sample of these activities and resources during FY17 is outlined below:

- Authorizer Updates and Environmental Education (EE) Updates include information and resources on best school practices and highlights on specific successes of ACNW authorized schools. An archive of Authorizer Updates and EE Updates are available on our website at www.auduboncharterschools.org/strategic-support/.
- The annual ACNW Leaders Retreat (LR) brings together school leaders, teachers, and board members from ACNW authorized schools to learn about and share best practices. This retreat

has happened annually since at least 2010. Examples of retreat sessions that focused on replication and dissemination of best school practices at the August 2016 EE Teacher Workshop and November 2016 LR include:

- 12 schools shared effective practices related to their EE program.
- Academic Arts High School did a session to share their “Live Plan Project.”
- Excell Academy shared effective practices for staff retention.

At both the EE Teacher Workshop and LR, sessions included a mixture of school leaders, ACNW staff or evaluators, and hired experts sharing their best practices. Materials from these sessions as well as the agenda and other conference documents are made available to participants after the retreat via a conference website.

- ACNW provides exemplars of best school practices to all schools via Epicenter. Such exemplars include but are not limited to sample policies, templates, and guidance documents. ACNW provides all school leaders and board chairs with easy access to colleagues to support the dissemination of best practices among schools. Each month in the Authorizer Update and at other times via emails or phone communications, ACNW provides to schools contact information for school leaders and board chairs to encourage communication, sharing, and dissemination.

In Spring 2017, seven ACNW authorized schools were identified as “High Quality Charter Schools” for the purposes of the Federal Charter School Program Grant. This was up from four the previous year. Two received CSP expansion grants during FY17. Crosslake Community School is using the grant to implement a high school expansion, while Noble Academy is using the grant to replicate its K-8 program at a new site. While Noble had to postpone implementation one year, Crosslake has implemented its new program.

Portfolio Information

General Charter School Portfolio Data (as of June 30, 2017)

Preoperational Charter Schools in Authorizer’s Portfolio:

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number (if assigned)	Charter School Program (CSP) Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Approved to Serve	Projected Enrollment	Proposed Location	Proposed Opening Date
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Operational Charter Schools in Authorizer’s Portfolio:

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2017	Location	Charter School Demographic and Enrollment Information	Charter School's World's Best Workforce Report
Academic Arts High School	4119	Yes	9-12	West Saint Paul	Academic Arts High School	Academic Arts High School
AFSA High School	4074	No	5-12	Vadnais Heights	AFSA High School	AFSA High School
Aurora Charter School	4067	No	PreK-8	Minneapolis	Aurora Charter School	Aurora Charter School
Best Academy	4192	Yes	K-8	Minneapolis	Best Academy	Best Academy
Bright Water Elementary	4189	Yes	K-6	Minneapolis	Bright Water Elementary	Bright Water Elementary
Cannon River STEM School	4194	Yes	K-8	Faribault	Cannon River STEM School	Cannon River STEM School
Crosslake Community School	4059	Yes	K-12	Crosslake	Crosslake Community School	Crosslake Community School
Discovery Public School	4081	No	6-12	Faribault	Discovery Public School	Discovery Public School
Discovery Woods	4198	Yes	PreK-6	Brainerd	Discovery Woods	Discovery Woods
East Range Academy	4166	Yes	9-12	Eveleth	East Range Academy	East Range Academy
Excell Academy	4068	No	PreK-8	Brooklyn Park	Excell Academy	Excell Academy

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2017	Location	Charter School Demographic and Enrollment Information	Charter School's World's Best Workforce Report
Glacial Hills Elementary	4168	Yes	K-6	Starbuck	Glacial Hills Elementary	Glacial Hills Elementary
Great Expectations School	4100	Yes	K-8	Grand Marais	Great Expectations School	Great Expectations School
Harvest Prep School	4032	No	K-4	Minneapolis	Harvest Prep School	Harvest Prep School
Higher Ground Academy	4027	No	K-12	Saint Paul	Higher Ground Academy	Higher Ground Academy
La Crescent Montessori & STEM School	4054	No	PreK-12	La Crescent	La Crescent Montessori & STEM School	La Crescent Montessori & STEM School
Laura Jeffrey Academy	4164	Yes	5-8	Saint Paul	Laura Jeffrey Academy	Laura Jeffrey Academy
Metro Schools	4131	Yes	5-12	Minneapolis	Metro Schools	Metro Schools
Natural Science Academy	4187	Yes	K-5	Saint Paul Park	Natural Science Academy	Natural Science Academy
New Discoveries Montessori Academy	4161	Yes	PreK-6	Hutchinson	New Discoveries Montessori Academy	New Discoveries Montessori Academy
Noble Academy	4171	Yes	K-8	Brooklyn Park	Noble Academy	Noble Academy

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2017	Location	Charter School Demographic and Enrollment Information	Charter School's World's Best Workforce Report
North Lakes Academy	4053	No	5-12	Forest Lake	North Lakes Academy	North Lakes Academy
Northern Lights Community School	4146	Yes	6-12	Warba	Northern Lights Community School	Northern Lights Community School
Odyssey Academy	4030	No	K-8	Brooklyn Center	Odyssey Academy	N/A
Oshki Ogimaag	4195	Yes	K-6	Grand Portage	Oshki Ogimaag	Oshki Ogimaag
Partnership Academy	4097	No	PreK-5	Richfield	Partnership Academy	Partnership Academy
Pillager Area Charter School	4080	No	9-12	Pillager	Pillager Area Charter School	Pillager Area Charter School
Prairie Seeds Academy	4126	Yes	K-12	Brooklyn Park	Prairie Seeds Academy	Prairie Seeds Academy
River's Edge Academy	4190	Yes	9-12	Saint Paul	River's Edge Academy	River's Edge Academy
Riverway Learning Community	4064	No	PreK-12	Winona	Riverway Learning Community	Riverway Learning Community
Swan River Montessori	4137	Yes	PreK-6	Monticello	Swan River Montessori	Swan River Montessori
Vermilion Country School	4207	Yes	7-12	Tower	Vermilion Country School	Vermilion Country School

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2017	Location	Charter School Demographic and Enrollment Information	Charter School's World's Best Workforce Report
Voyageurs Expeditionary School	4107	Yes	6-12	Bemidji	Voyageurs Expeditionary School	Voyageurs Expeditionary School
World Learner School	4016	No	1-8	Chaska	World Learner School	World Learner School

MDE Officially Recognized Early Learning Programs at Charter Schools in Authorizer's Portfolio:

Name of Charter School	Officially Recognized for Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening	Officially Recognized for Preschool Instructional Program for Children 3-5 Years	Officially Recognized for Prekindergarten Instructional Program for Four Year Olds to Prepare Children for Entry into Kindergarten the Following Year
Aurora Charter School	No	Yes	No
Discovery Woods	No	Yes	No
Excell Academy	Yes	Yes	Yes
La Crescent Montessori School	No	Yes	No
New Discoveries Montessori Academy	No	Yes	No
Partnership Academy	No	Yes	No
Riverway Learning Community	No	Yes	No
Swan River Montessori	No	Yes	No

Charter School Portfolio Activity in FY 2017

In FY 2017, did any charter schools leave your organization’s portfolio and transfer to another authorizer during or at the end of the year?

No

If yes, complete the table below for each applicable school:

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	New Authorizing Organization	Effective Date of Transfer
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

In FY 2017, did your organization terminate or revoke the charter contract for any charter school before the end of the contract term?

Yes

If yes, complete the table below for each applicable school:

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	Reason(s) for Contract Termination	Effective Date of Contract Termination
Odyssey Academy	4030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to demonstrate satisfactory academic achievement for all students, including the requirements for pupil performance contained in the contract. • Failure to provide an environment conducive to student learning. • Failure to engage in required or appropriate governance and oversight. 	09/15/2017

In FY 2017, did any charter schools voluntarily close (i.e., closure was initiated by the school) during or at the end of the year?

Yes

If yes, complete the table below for each applicable school:

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	Reason(s) for Closure	Effective Date of Closure
Minneapolis College Prep	4203	Financial / low enrollment	08/24/2016

Charter School Portfolio Performance

World’s Best Workforce

Describe how your organization incorporates achievement of World’s Best Workforce goals in its ongoing oversight and evaluation of charter schools.

ACNW works with schools to develop contractual goals and measures for academic performance that are directly aligned to World’s Best Workforce (WBWF) goals. For example, for Reading Proficiency, the contractual measures break out 3rd grade data to align to the “all third-graders can read at grade level” WBWF goal. For a complete example of how contractual goals are aligned to WBWF see [Exhibit G](#) of ACNW’s charter contract available on our website.

Academic Performance

Present outcome data regarding key academic performance indicators your organization used when evaluating your portfolio of charter schools. Provide a narrative analysis of this data, indicating strengths and areas for improvement.

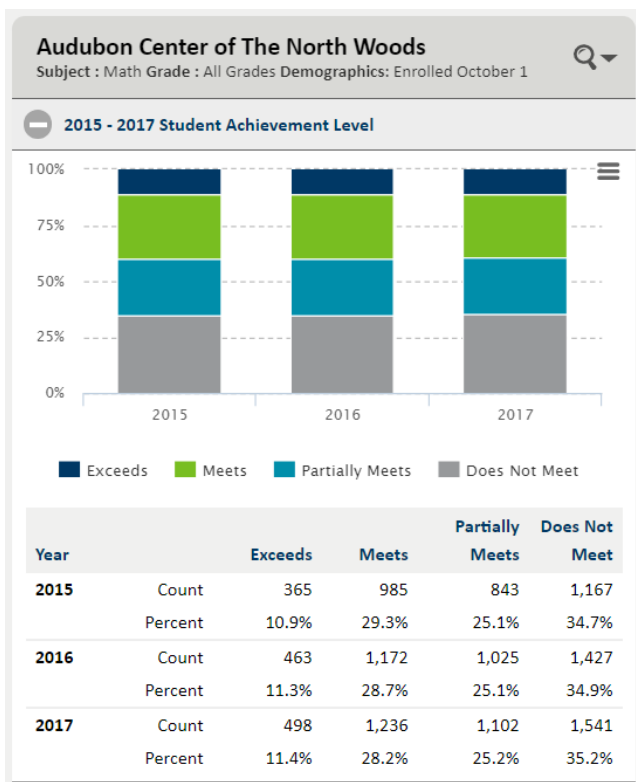
The following table includes the performance of ACNW authorized schools in each indicator area on the Academic Performance Evaluation. ACNW provides a comprehensive academic performance evaluation annually that covers indicator areas shown in the table. Performance ratings are based on whether schools meet contractual goals in each area. Each goal area may include multiple measures that could include absolute performance, improvement or comparative performance. Information is from the most recent evaluation for each school – the majority of these are from FY17 (based on FY16 academic data), though a few include updated FY17 year-end data. Not all schools had ratings in each area. For example, Post-Secondary Readiness is only for schools that serve students grades 9-12.

Indicator Area	Percent of schools that met or exceeded the standard	Percent of schools that approach the standard
A.1 Mission Related Outcomes	48%	10%
A.2 English Learners	67%	17%
A.3 Reading Growth	42%	27%
A.4 Math Growth	25%	34%
A.5 Reading Proficiency	40%	20%
A.6 Math Proficiency	20%	23%
A.7 Science Proficiency	53%	10%
A.8 Proficiency in Other Curricular Areas	43%	14%
A.9 Post Secondary Readiness	38%	23%
A.10 Attendance	71%	18%

Data shows that areas of strength include outcomes for English Learners (which uses AMAO data), Mission Related Outcomes, Science Proficiency, Reading Growth and Attendance. Both Math Proficiency and Growth are clear areas of weakness. ACNW has used this data to drive feedback to school leaders and boards of directors.

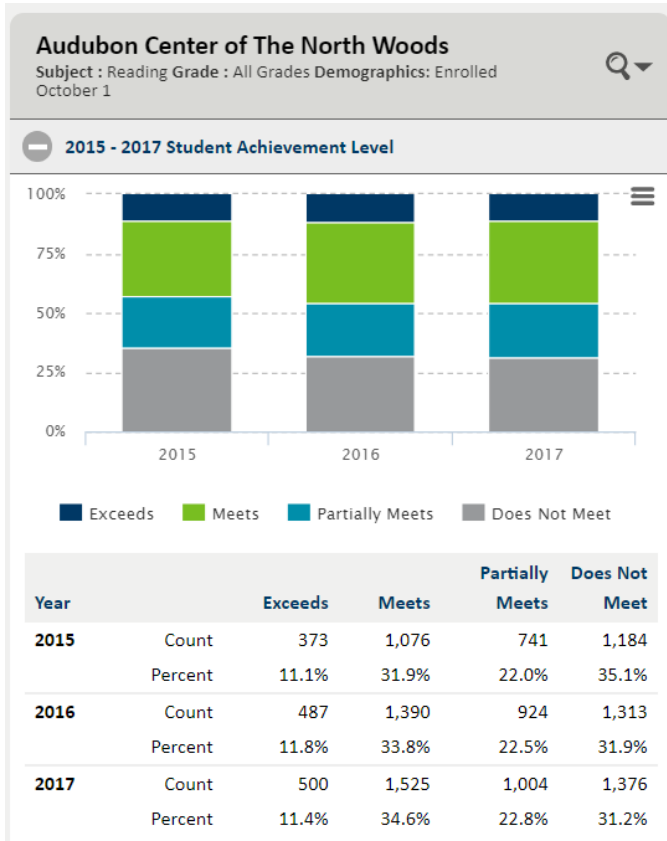
Additional data on statewide assessments is as follows:

Math



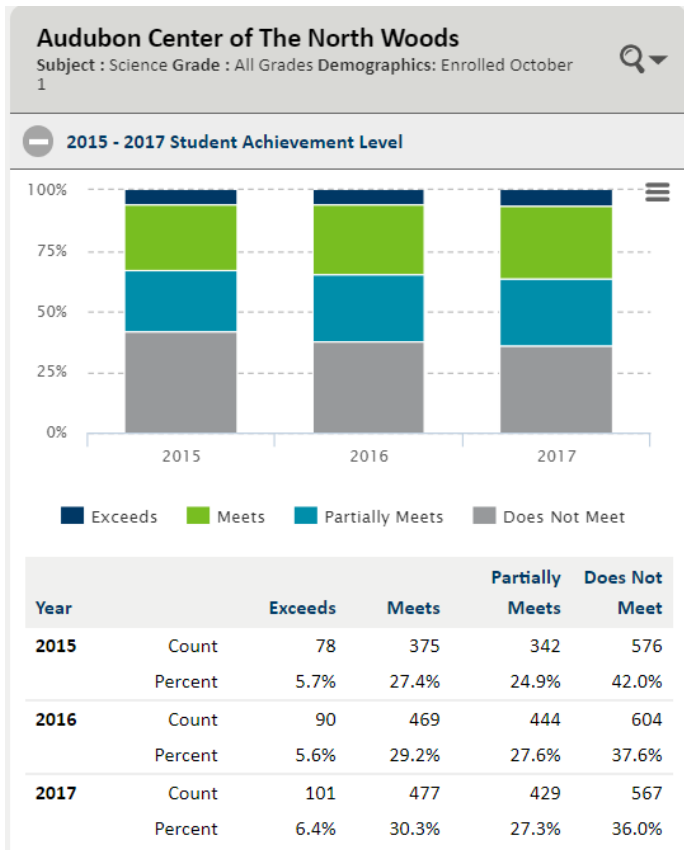
MCA Math proficiency data shows that, overall, ACNW’s portfolio has not made progress since 2015 in this area. Proficiency index has dropped slightly over this time.

Reading



MCA Reading proficiency data shows that, overall, ACNW’s portfolio has made some progress since 2015 in this area. The proficiency index has increased by 3.0 points over this time.

Science



MCA Science proficiency data shows that, overall, ACNW’s portfolio has made meaningful progress since 2015 in this area. The proficiency index has increased by 4.8 points over this time.

Operational Performance

Present outcome data regarding key operational performance indicators your organization used when evaluating your portfolio of charter schools. Provide a narrative analysis of this data, indicating strengths and areas for improvement.

The following table includes the performance of ACNW authorized schools in each indicator area on the Operational Performance Evaluation. ACNW provides expansive qualitative and compliance-related feedback in Operational Performance at least once during the contract term, so these ratings are based on the most recent evaluation for each school, from FY14 through FY17. This will change in the FY18 school year as ACNW is moving to an annual evaluation of operations in order to give schools more consistent and relevant feedback.

Indicator Area	Percent of schools that met the standard
O.1.1 Mission and Vision	91%
O.1.2 Instruction and Assessment	48%
O.1.3 Educational Requirements	100%
O.1.4 Special Education	100%
O.1.5 English Learners	75%
O.1.6 Parent & Student Satisfaction	77%
O.2.1 Board Composition & Capacity	47%
O.2.2 Board Decision Making & Oversight	68%
O.2.3 Management Accountability	58%
O.3.1 Facilities & Transportation	97%
O.3.2 Health & Safety	100%
O.4.1 Admissions & Enrollment	91%
O.4.2 Due Process & Privacy	94%
O.5.1 Licensure	94%
O.5.2 Staff Retention	94%
O.5.3 Employment Practices	100%
O.6.1 Charter School Annual Reports	100%
O.6.2 Insurance	83%
O.6.3 Authorizer & State Compliance	29%

Areas of strength of ACNW authorized school are in requirements associated with special populations, including English Learner and Special Education students. Additionally, 91% of schools were shown to be implementing education programs aligned to their stated missions and visions.

Areas for improvement include board governance and Authorizer & State Compliance. As such ACNW has increased efforts to provide training and guidance to the schools via the annual Leaders Retreat which is used as a time to provide support and reinforce contractual expectations in addition to providing more robust board observation/review feedback.

ACNW continues to strengthen its mechanisms for providing meaningful and timely feedback to the schools it authorizes in the area of operations. As noted above, we will begin to complete full Operations Performance Evaluations annually during FY18. Additionally, ACNW has already provided site visit feedback that is more clearly aligned to the ACNW frameworks so that schools are able to make clear connections to contractual obligations and expectations. ACNW has used its Leaders Retreat as a time to provide clarification on each of those frameworks, allowing school to ask questions and gain additional insight into the rationale for each indicator. This has led to school's having a greater understanding of ACNW requirements and expectations, allowing them to utilize the information more effectively. Additionally, ACNW has seen an increased focus on the areas that are the subject of continuous feedback.

In addition to site visit feedback, ACNW has a variety of mechanisms for feedback. For example, the FY17 Annual Report reviews have been completed and sent to schools. The FY17 Annual Reports have seen a vast improvement over the prior year. While there were roughly the same numbers of schools whose Annual Reports were not in compliance, the number and severity of the issues were not as substantial. As of January 9, 2018 all 34 operational schools have their FY17 annual reports posted to their website.

Financial Performance

Present outcome data regarding key financial performance indicators your organization used when evaluating your portfolio of charter schools. Provide a narrative analysis of this data, indicating strengths and areas for improvement.

The following table includes the performance of ACNW authorized schools in each indicator area on the Financial Performance Evaluation. ACNW provides a comprehensive financial evaluation annually that covers areas of financial management, short-term financial health and long-term financial health. Information is from the most recent evaluation for each school – the majority of these are from FY17 (based on FY16 year-end financial data), though a few include updated FY17 year-end data.

Indicator Area	Percent of schools that met the standard
F.1.1 Budgeting	74%
F.1.2 Financial Policies & Practices	91%
F.1.3 Financial Reporting	83%
F.1.4 Financial Audit	63%
F.2.1 Current Ratio	100%
F.2.2 Days Cash on Hand	63%
F.2.3 Enrollment Variance	74%
F.3.1 Fund Balance Percentage	51%
F.3.2 Total Margin/Aggregate Three-Year Total Margin	71%
F.3.3 Debt to Asset Ratio	91%

Data documents that overall, schools are performing well financially. Financial management indicators are strong for most schools, though approximately 37% of schools' audits include material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. Additionally, ACNW sees the need for improvement in the area of budgeting. In many cases this relates to school board not considering how it invests in the school's program to improve student outcomes.

Short term indicators are generally strong with 100% of schools well positioned to meet current obligations, though days cash leaves room for improvement as does school's effectiveness in terms of enrollment projections. Just over half of schools meet the current fund balance target of 25%. ACNW will be adjusting this target to 20%. Based on research, ongoing discussions with auditors, providers and school leaders, we have

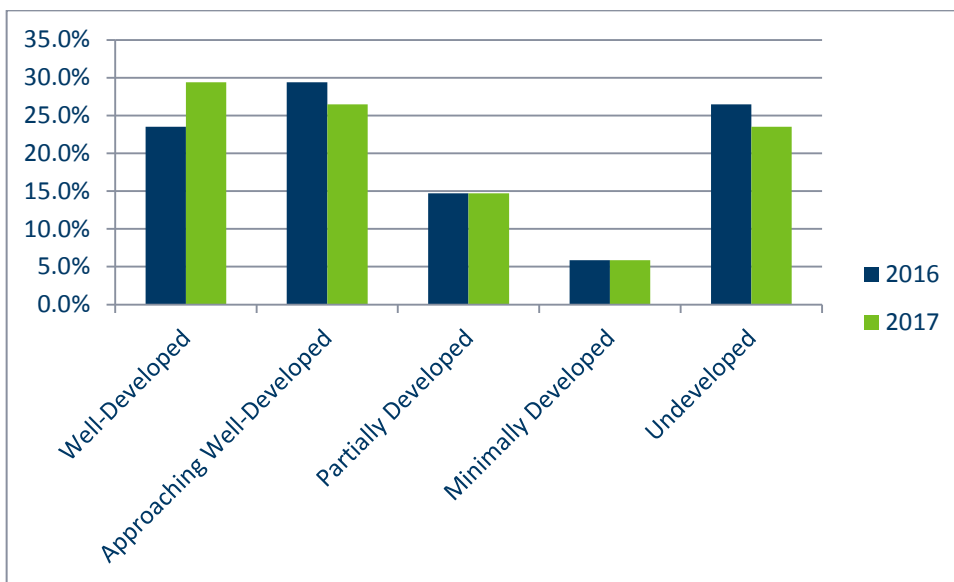
determined that 20% is a better target. This will encourage schools to invest more resources in the program, while still maintaining a strong fund balance that promotes long-term sustainability.

Other Performance

Present outcome data regarding other key performance indicators your organization used when evaluating your portfolio of charter schools. Provide a narrative analysis of this data, indicating strengths and areas for improvement.

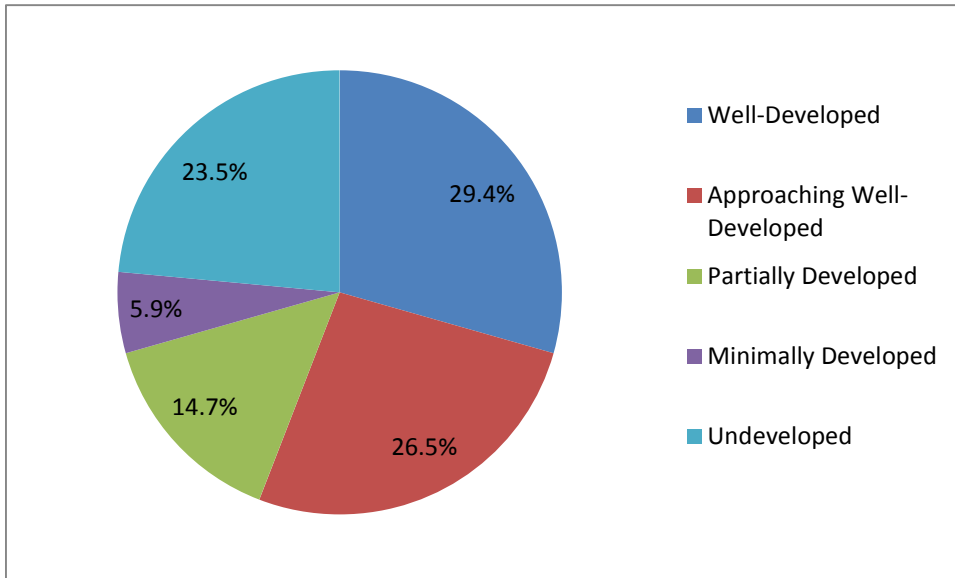
Overall, the performance of ACNW authorized charter schools in the area of environmental education (EE) was relatively strong in FY17. Ten schools were considered well-developed in terms of their EE performance and program, which means that the school met or exceeded standards in all indicators outlined in ACNW's Environmental Education Performance Framework and the charter contract. Nine schools were considered approaching well-developed, which means that the school met or exceeded standards in all but one indicator area. Five schools had partially developed EE programs, which means approaching, meeting, or exceeding standards in all but two indicator areas. The two schools with minimally developed EE programs did not meet standard in three indicator areas, and the eight schools with undeveloped EE programs did not meet standard in four or more indicator areas. Comparing 2016 data to 2017 performance, the number of schools with well-developed programs has increased, and the number of schools with undeveloped programs has decreased.

Chart of 2016 / 2017 EE Performance



Schools that exceed standard meet their contractual goals and provide evidence of fully established EE programs and increasing environmental literacy among their students, faculty, and staff. Schools that meet standard also meet their contractual goals and provide evidence of increasing environmental literacy among their students, faculty, and staff. Schools that approach standard nearly meet or partially meet their contractual goals and provide evidence of emergent environmental literacy among their students, faculty, and staff. Finally, schools that do not meet standard provide no evidence that demonstrates an emergent level of environmental literacy among their students, faculty, and staff.

2017 EE Performance



Percent of Schools that Meet or Exceed the Standard in Applicable Ratings

Indicator Area	Percent of schools that met or exceeded the standard
E1. EE-Based Curriculum Components	86%
E2. Field Trips to Natural Areas	82%
E3. Promote Environmental Stewardship	82%
E4. Elective EE Trend Areas	73%
E5. Ongoing EE Trend Areas	89%
E6. Commitment	74%
E8. Environmental Literacy	77%