



## FY 2018 Authorizer Annual Report

### Authorizer Information

**Name of Authorizing Organization:** Audubon Center of the North Woods

**Mailing Address:** 43 SE Main Street, Suite 507, Minneapolis, MN 55414

**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 2018 (B.1)

Did your organization review any new charter school applications in FY 2018?

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
Art and Science Academy	Disapproval	N/A	Application did not meet ACNW's criteria for approval	No
Aurora Waasakone Community of Learners	Approval	Approval	N/A	N/A
Pajze Preparatory School	Disapproval	N/A	Application did not meet ACNW's criteria for approval	No
St. Paul School of Northern Lights	Approval	N/A	N/A	Yes

### New Charter School Openings in FY 2018 (B.2)

Did your organization engage in ready-to-open activities in FY 2018?

No

**If no, please provide an explanation:**

ACNW did not approve any schools during FY2016 of FY2017 that were projected to begin serving students in 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 2018	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 2018 (B.2)**

**Did your organization review any site and/or grade expansion applications in FY 2018?**

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
AFSA High School	PreK-4	Approval	Approval	N/A	N/A
New Discoveries Montessori Academy	7-8	Approval	Approval	N/A	N/A
North Lakes Academy	K-4 and additional site in Forest Lake	Approval	Approval	N/A	N/A

**Official Early Learning Program Recognition Requests in FY 2018 (B.2)**

**Did your organization review any requests for official early learning program recognition in FY 2018?**

Yes

**If no, please provide an explanation:**

Enter an explanation

**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
AFSA High School	Instructional Prekindergarten	Approval	Approval	N/A	N/A
Crosslake Community School	Instructional Prekindergarten	Approval	Approval	N/A	N/A
Glacial Hills Elementary School	Instructional Preschool	Approval	Approval	N/A	N/A
North Shore Community School	Instructional Preschool	Approval	Approval	N/A	N/A

**Charter School Change in Authorizer Requests in FY 2018 (B.2)**

**Did your organization review change in authorizer requests in FY 2018?**

No

**If no, please provide an explanation:**

ACNW received no change in authorizer requests in FY2018.

**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
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**Charter Contract Renewals in FY 2018 (B.9)**

**Did your organization engage in charter renewal activities in FY 2018?**

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
Academic Arts High School	Yes	07/01/2018-06/30/2021	N/A
Aurora Charter School	Yes	07/01/2018-06/30/2020	N/A
Discovery Woods School	Yes	07/01/2018-06/30/2021	N/A
La Crescent Montessori and STEM School	Yes	07/01/2018-06/30/2021	N/A
Metro Schools	Yes	07/01/2018-06/30/2020	N/A
Oshki Ogimaag Charter School	Yes	07/01/2018-06/30/2021	N/A

Name of Charter School	Was Contract Renewed?	If Yes, Term of Contract Renewal	If No, Reason(s) for Nonrenewal
Pillager Area Charter School	Yes	07/01/2018-06/30/2021	N/A
Prairie Seeds Academy	Yes	11/20/2017-06/30/2021	N/A
Vermilion Country School	Yes	07/01/2018-06/30/2023	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 FY18 we dedicated resources to ongoing professional development that resulted in improved authorizer practices.

On the national level, David Greenberg and Rhianon Sargent attended the October 2016 National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) Leadership Conference in Phoenix, AZ. At this conference, our team attended sessions focused on each individual's particular areas of need, and also made and continued to deepen connections with authorizers within Minnesota and across the nation. In addition, David, Director of Charter School Authorizing at ACNW, was a presenter for two sessions – one entitled "Authorizer's Role in Restart: Let's Debate!" and one entitled "Accountability Protocols and Practices: Intervene for Improvement." David was a leadership coach for a participant in the seventh NACSA Leaders Program cohort. This included training for David in coaching, a site visit by David to the Indianapolis Mayor's Office to learn more about the organization's authorizing practices and to meet with his "coachee," and ongoing weekly check-in calls from April through October 2017. While Mike Schultz, Performance and Accountability Manager, left ACNW in September 2017, he participated in the NACSA Leaders Program from April 2017-October 2017.

David continued to engage in a local initiative called the Minnesota Regional Turnaround Strategy Group. This group continued to learn about turnaround or restart schools including during a visit to schools New Orleans. David also participated in the Bush Foundation's Learning Leaders program focused on Personalized Learning. This group included one other authorizer and educational leaders from MN, South Dakota, North Dakota and Native Nations in the region. This group visited schools in MN and in the Bay Area of Oakland/San Francisco.

Rhianon, David and Erin all attended the Montessori 101 Workshop at St. Catherine's University in St. Paul. This 2-day training gave us a deeper understanding of Montessori education to inform our oversight and evaluation of the nine Montessori or Montessori inspired schools in our portfolio.

While ACNW organizes and presents our annual Environmental Education Teacher Workshop and Leaders Retreat, we also participate in those learning opportunities, attending sessions relevant to EE, finance, governance and leadership.

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 practices, and learning with other authorizers from around the state. Other training and development included:

- David attended the Clifton Larson Allen Charter School Conference in July 2017.
- Rhianon attended the Twin Cities Social Justice Fair in October 2017.
- Erin attended Equity Learning Sessions at the University of Minnesota throughout FY18.
- Erin participated in webinars from the National Charter School Resource Center and *Charter Board University*.
- Erin participated in a book club focused on equity in education.

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 FY18 include:

- a. Preparation for ACNW Leader Retreat sessions.
- b. Staff Meetings and Internal Staff Trainings: review of issues related to the Cruz-Guzman lawsuit; Ongoing sharing of articles, readings, books amongst the team.
- c. Ongoing consultation and mentorship: Contracted evaluators such as Dr. Dan Jett their expertise around topics of governance and leadership with ACNW staff. This happens at team meetings, during phone consultations, and through site visits and other evaluation processes.
- d. On-the-Job Training and sharing of effective practices: because team members often have the opportunity to do site visits, board observations and other school meetings together, we have the opportunity to learn together through doing and through feedback.

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 2017 meeting, David provided an overview of school performance as it relates to charter contracts and MCA assessments. This included a training on how ACNW evaluates school performance.

## **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.**

During FY18, ACNW engaged in a project to evaluate the internal capacity and infrastructure of the Charter School Division (CSD) to oversee our portfolio of schools. Given staffing changes that occurred during the first part of FY18 (specifically the departure of Mike Schultz, Performance and Accountability Manager, and the increase in hours of Erin Anderson, Environmental Education Evaluator from part time to full time), ACNW determined the need to evaluate our staffing structure. Early in 2018, we hired for the position of Data and Communications Coordinator. This coincided with the full scale review of our organization's capacity and the hiring of the external consultant to guide this review starting in February 2018. The external consultant reviewed our key authorizing practices (Approved Authorizing Plan), job descriptions and organizational chart, met with key stakeholders including all CSD staff and key consultants, and ultimately made recommendations regarding a revised staffing structure to better meet our organization's needs. A key outcome from the project was the identification of the need to hire a position focused on school's academic performance, a role we had not previously had. This ultimately led to the termination of the Data and Communications Coordinator position, the hiring of Nalani McCutcheon, Authorizing Specialist-Academics, restructuring of some practices related to school communications and primary contacts for schools and the clarification of the role of the administrative and financial evaluation support provided by Jolene Palme, who is also Finance Manager at the Audubon Center in Sandstone. Starting in FY19, the CSD had the following positions: Director of Charter School Authorizing, Authorizing Specialist-Academics, Authorizing Specialist-Environmental Education, Authorizing Specialist-Governance and Operations, Administrative Support, and external consultants as needed.

In addition to the above, 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 periodically 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 FY18, 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 also 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 a focus in FY18 on clarifying our intervention process and communications approach which was implemented during the year, particularly as it relates to school academic performance.



## 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), as well as through other channels. Further, ACNW is a resource to authorizers around the country. Examples from FY18 include:

- NACSA engaged David to serve in the role of a coach in the seventh 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 Indianapolis, IN, 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.
- David participated on the MACSA Standards and Principles Committee which was focused on the development of standards and principles of quality authorizing in Minnesota. All ACNW staff engaged in review and feedback in the development of these standards and principles which were ultimately approved by MACSA in December 2018.
- ACNW facilitated a meeting among a number of authorizers to learn about Epicenter. The meeting took place in June 2018 at ACNW’s office and was attended by staff from six MN authorizers and representatives from the National Charter Schools Institute.
- During the fall of 2017, ACNW worked with UST staff to share practices related to charter school startup and Ready to Open (RTO) processes. This culminated in a revised document that now informs both organizations’ RTO work.
- UST staff participated in ACNW’s new school application review process during our FY18 cycle. Not only did their input support ACNW’s decision-making process, but also, UST staff had the opportunity to take away effective practices from ACNW’s process to incorporate into their process.
- Rhianon met with new UST staff to share insights into ACNW’s Operations Performance Framework and approach to school operations monitoring and evaluation.
- Erin participated in a quality school review as part of a PUC team conducting site visits to schools in renewal, sharing ACNW’s approach and her expertise with their staff.
- Staff from the Washington State Charter School Commission reached out to Rhianon to get insight into ACNW’s approach to accountability for Montessori schools.

## **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 FY18:

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/](http://www.auduboncharterschools.org/strategic-support/).

Second, ACNW hosts an annual learning opportunities for school leaders, board members and teachers at all ACNW authorized schools, including the Leaders Retreat and Environmental Education Teacher Workshop. Participation by each school at both events is optional (starting in FY18 – previously it had been required as outlined in the charter contract).

The FY18 Leaders Retreat was held in November 2017 and was attended by approximately 90 people representing 34 schools authorized by ACNW. The framing of the retreat was “Mission-Informed Evaluation” and the goal was to help participants lead in a way that fosters innovative evaluation, promotes quality academic outcomes for all students, and supports overall school quality. An additional goal was to help participants establish relationships with other charter school leaders and board members.

Day one of the retreat focused on success stories from two ACNW authorized schools and evaluating what really matters in regards to each school’s mission. Day two sessions included a keynote and workshop by Sarah Brown from the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI). Additional workshops included sessions from ACNW staff and other professionals in the education field on topics such as evaluating school financial health, executive director evaluation, basics of evaluation, and strategic planning. 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.

The FY18 Environmental Education Teacher Workshop was held in August 2017 and was attended by approximately 65 people representing 32 schools authorized by ACNW. The workshop was designed to specifically address issues and questions ACNW had heard directly from teachers over the previous two years. Sessions focused on environmental literacy, linking it to standards and instructional materials; finding new ways to facilitate challenging conversations with students, parents, and staff; and connecting with teachers in other ACNW schools who are finding new and innovative ways to create environmentally literate students

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 FY18 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/](http://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 2017 EE Teacher Workshop and November 2017 LR include:

- 12 schools shared effective practices related to their EE program.
- “Excellence in EE: Guidelines for Learning Workshop” presented by North American Association for Environmental Education.
- Roundtable / working groups focused on sharing effective practices.
- School leaders from Cannon River STEM and Noble Academy shared successes regarding school evaluation.

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 2018, eleven (or 32% of) ACNW authorized schools were identified as “High Quality Charter Schools” for the purposes of the Federal Charter School Program Grant. This was up from seven (21%) the previous year and four (13%) the prior year. Two schools from the 2018 list were awarded CSP expansion grants: AFSA High School is using the grant to implement a PreK-grade 4 expansion, while New Discoveries Montessori Academy is using the grant to implement a grade 7-8 expansion. New Discoveries Montessori Academy implemented the expansion effective FY19, AFSA’s expansion will be implemented effective FY20.

## Portfolio Information

### General Charter School Portfolio Data (as of June 30, 2018)

#### 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 when Fully Enrolled	Proposed Location	Proposed Opening Date
Aurora Waasakone Community of Learners	LEA Number	No	Grade Levels Approved	Projected Enrollment	Bemidji	09/07/2019

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number (if assigned)	Charter School Program (CSP) Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Approved to Serve	Projected Enrollment when Fully Enrolled	Proposed Location	Proposed Opening Date
Minnesota Wildflower Montessori School	LEA Number	Yes	Grade Levels Approved	Projected Enrollment	Minneapolis and Twin Cities	09/04/2018
Three Rivers Montessori	LEA Number	No	Grade Levels Approved	Projected Enrollment	Elk River	09/07/2019

**Operational Charter Schools in Authorizer's Portfolio:**

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2018	Location	Charter School Demographic and Enrollment Information	Charter School's World's Best Workforce Report
Academic Arts High School	4119	No	9-12	West Saint Paul	<a href="#">Academic Arts High School</a>	<a href="#">Academic Arts High School</a>
AFSA High School	4074	Yes	5-12	Vadnais Heights	<a href="#">AFSA High School</a>	<a href="#">AFSA High School</a>
Aurora Charter School	4067	No	PreK-8	Minneapolis	<a href="#">Aurora Charter School</a>	<a href="#">Aurora Charter School</a>
Best Academy	4192	Yes	K-8	Minneapolis	<a href="#">Best Academy</a>	<a href="#">Best Academy</a>
Bright Water Elementary	4189	No	K-6	Minneapolis	<a href="#">Bright Water Elementary</a>	<a href="#">Bright Water Elementary</a>
Cannon River STEM School	4194	No	K-8	Faribault	<a href="#">Cannon River STEM School</a>	<a href="#">Cannon River STEM School</a>

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2018	Location	Charter School Demographic and Enrollment Information	Charter School's World's Best Workforce Report
Crosslake Community School	4059	Yes	K-12	Crosslake	<a href="#">Crosslake Community School</a>	<a href="#">Crosslake Community School</a>
Discovery Public School	4081	No	6-12	Faribault	<a href="#">Discovery Public School</a>	<a href="#">Discovery Public School</a>
Discovery Woods School	4198	Yes	PreK-6	Brainerd	<a href="#">Discovery Woods</a>	<a href="#">Discovery Woods</a>
East Range Academy	4166	No	9-12	Eveleth	<a href="#">East Range Academy</a>	<a href="#">East Range Academy</a>
Excell Academy	4068	No	PreK-8	Brooklyn Park	<a href="#">Excell Academy</a>	<a href="#">Excell Academy</a>
Glacial Hills Elementary	4168	No	K-6	Starbuck	<a href="#">Glacial Hills Elementary</a>	<a href="#">Glacial Hills Elementary</a>
Great Expectations School	4100	No	K-8	Grand Marais	<a href="#">Great Expectations School</a>	<a href="#">Great Expectations School</a>
Harvest Prep School	4032	No	K-4	Minneapolis	<a href="#">Harvest Prep School</a>	<a href="#">Harvest Prep School</a>
Higher Ground Academy	4027	No	K-12	Saint Paul	<a href="#">Higher Ground Academy</a>	<a href="#">Higher Ground Academy</a>
La Crescent Montessori & STEM School	4054	No	PreK-12	La Crescent	<a href="#">La Crescent Montessori &amp; STEM School</a>	<a href="#">La Crescent Montessori &amp; STEM School</a>

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2018	Location	Charter School Demographic and Enrollment Information	Charter School's World's Best Workforce Report
Laura Jeffrey Academy	4164	No	5-8	Saint Paul	<a href="#">Laura Jeffrey Academy</a>	<a href="#">Laura Jeffrey Academy</a>
Metro Schools	4131	No	5-12	Minneapolis	<a href="#">Metro Schools</a>	<a href="#">Metro Schools</a>
Natural Science Academy	4187	No	K-5	Saint Paul Park	<a href="#">Natural Science Academy</a>	<a href="#">Natural Science Academy</a>
New Discoveries Montessori Academy	4161	Yes	PreK-6	Hutchinson	<a href="#">New Discoveries Montessori Academy</a>	<a href="#">New Discoveries Montessori Academy</a>
Noble Academy	4171	Yes	K-8	Brooklyn Park	<a href="#">Noble Academy</a>	<a href="#">Noble Academy</a>
North Lakes Academy	4053	No	5-12	Forest Lake	<a href="#">North Lakes Academy</a>	<a href="#">North Lakes Academy</a>
Northern Lights Community School	4146	No	6-12	Warba	<a href="#">Northern Lights Community School</a>	<a href="#">Northern Lights Community School</a>
North Shore Community School	4084	No	K-6	Duluth	<a href="#">North School Community School</a>	<a href="#">North Shore Community School</a>
Oshki Ogimaag Charter School	4195	No	K-6	Grand Portage	<a href="#">Oshki Ogimaag</a>	<a href="#">Oshki Ogimaag</a>
Partnership Academy	4097	No	PreK-5	Richfield	<a href="#">Partnership Academy</a>	<a href="#">Partnership Academy</a>

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2018	Location	Charter School Demographic and Enrollment Information	Charter School's World's Best Workforce Report
Pillager Area Charter School	4080	No	9-12	Pillager	<a href="#">Pillager Area Charter School</a>	<a href="#">Pillager Area Charter School</a>
Prairie Seeds Academy	4126	No	K-12	Brooklyn Park	<a href="#">Prairie Seeds Academy</a>	<a href="#">Prairie Seeds Academy</a>
River's Edge Academy	4190	No	9-12	Saint Paul	<a href="#">River's Edge Academy</a>	<a href="#">River's Edge Academy</a>
Riverway Learning Community	4064	No	PreK-12	Winona	<a href="#">Riverway Learning Community</a>	<a href="#">Riverway Learning Community</a>
Swan River Montessori	4137	No	PreK-6	Monticello	<a href="#">Swan River Montessori</a>	<a href="#">Swan River Montessori</a>
Vermilion Country School	4207	Yes	7-12	Tower	<a href="#">Vermilion Country School</a>	<a href="#">Vermilion Country School</a>
Voyageurs Expeditionary School	4107	Yes	6-12	Bemidji	<a href="#">Voyageurs Expeditionary School</a>	<a href="#">Voyageurs Expeditionary School</a>
World Learner School	4016	No	1-8	Chaska	<a href="#">World Learner School</a>	<a href="#">World Learner School</a>

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



<b>Name of Charter School</b>	<b>Officially Recognized Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening Program</b>	<b>Officially Recognized Instructional Preschool Program</b> to provide early childhood education and preparation for transition to kindergarten for children ages 3-5	<b>Officially Recognized Instructional Prekindergarten Program</b> for four-year-olds to prepare children for entry into kindergarten the following year
AFSA High School	Yes	No	Yes
Aurora Charter School	No	Yes	No
Bright Water Elementary	No	Yes	No
Crosslake Community School	No	No	Yes
Discovery Woods	No	Yes	No
Excell Academy	Yes	Yes	Yes
La Crescent Montessori School	No	Yes	No
Minnesota Wildflower Montessori School	No	Yes	No
New Discoveries Montessori Academy	No	Yes	No
Noble Academy	No	No	Yes
North Shore Community School	No	Yes	No
Partnership Academy	No	Yes	Yes
Riverway Learning Community	No	Yes	No
Swan River Montessori	No	Yes	No

**Charter School Portfolio Activity in FY 2018**

In FY 2018, 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 2018, did your organization terminate or revoke the charter contract for any charter school before the end of the contract term?

No

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
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

In FY 2018, did any charter schools voluntarily close (i.e., closure was initiated by the school) 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	Reason(s) for Closure	Effective Date of Closure
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

## 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 3<sup>rd</sup> grade data to align to the "all third-graders can read at grade level" WBWF goal. For a complete example of how contractual academic 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 and that is based on a school's academic contractual goals (or Exhibit G.) 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 FY18 (based on FY17 academic data), though a few include updated FY18 year-end data for eight schools in the last year of the contract in FY19. 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 – FY18	Percent of schools that met or exceeded the standard – FY17
A.1 Mission Related Outcomes	53%	48%
A.2 English Learners	40%	67%
A.3 Reading Growth	42%	42%
A.4 Math Growth	47%	25%
A.5 Reading Proficiency	47%	40%
A.6 Math Proficiency	21%	20%
A.7 Science Proficiency	50%	52%
A.8 Proficiency in Other Curricular Areas	39%	43%
A.9 Post-Secondary Readiness	47%	38%

A.10 Attendance	67%	71%
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Data shows that areas of improvement include Math Growth, Reading Proficiency and Post-Secondary Readiness. The indicator area of English Learners (which uses AMAO or ACCESS data) saw a steep decline from the previous year. Further, Math Proficiency continues to be a clear area of weakness. ACNW has used this data to drive feedback to school leaders and boards of directors.

Schools earn an overall score on their academic goals and the academic performance framework, which is calculated as a percent. ACNW has two strategic goals as it relates to schools academic performance:

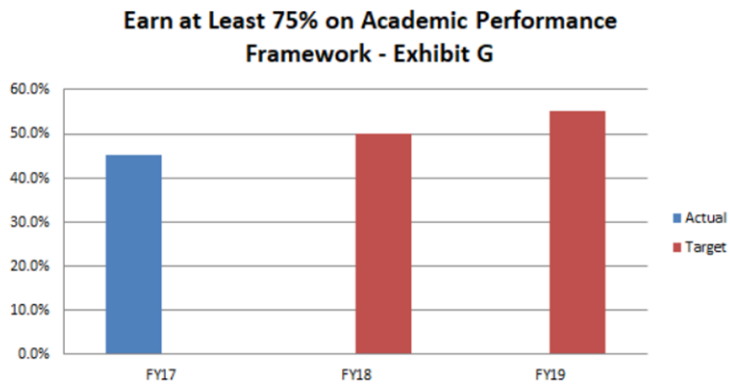
1. Increase the percentage of schools that earn at least 75% on the Academic Performance Evaluation:

Based on FY17 data (FY18 evaluations), 45.2% of schools earned at least 75% of points.

Evaluation of FY18 performance (FY19 evaluation) has not yet been completed for all schools. Eight schools in renewal have completed evaluations. Based on this data, 50.0% of schools earned at least 75% of points. This will be fully updated to reflect all schools' FY18 performance by February 2019.

## Academic Performance Goal #1

Increase the percentage of schools that earn at least 75% on the Academic Performance Evaluation



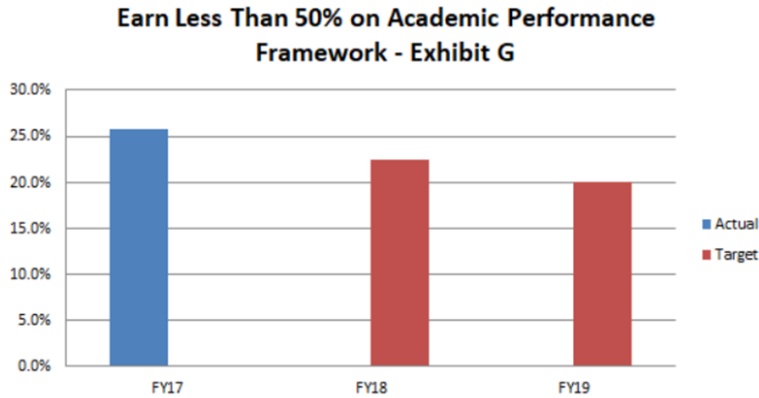
2. Reduce the percentage of schools that earn less than 50% on the Academic Performance Evaluation

Based on FY17 data (FY18 evaluations), 25.8% of schools earned less than 50% of points.

Evaluation of FY18 performance (FY19 evaluation) has not yet been completed for all schools. Eight schools in renewal have completed evaluations. Based on this data, 25.0% of schools earned less than 50% of points. This will be fully updated to reflect all schools' FY18 performance by February 2019.

## Academic Performance Goal #2

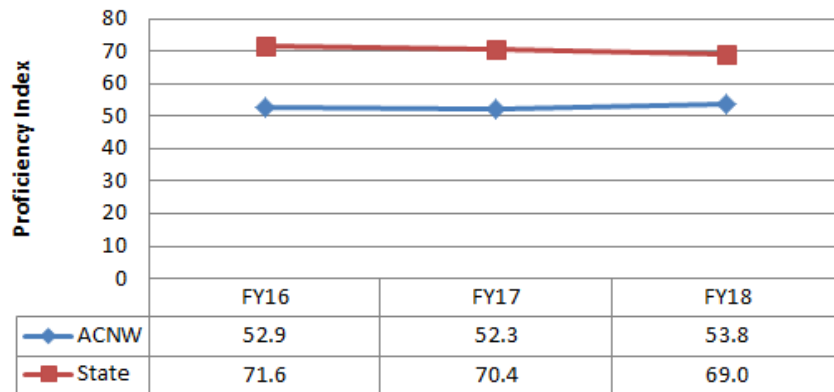
Reduce the percentage of schools that earn less than 50% on the Academic Performance Evaluation



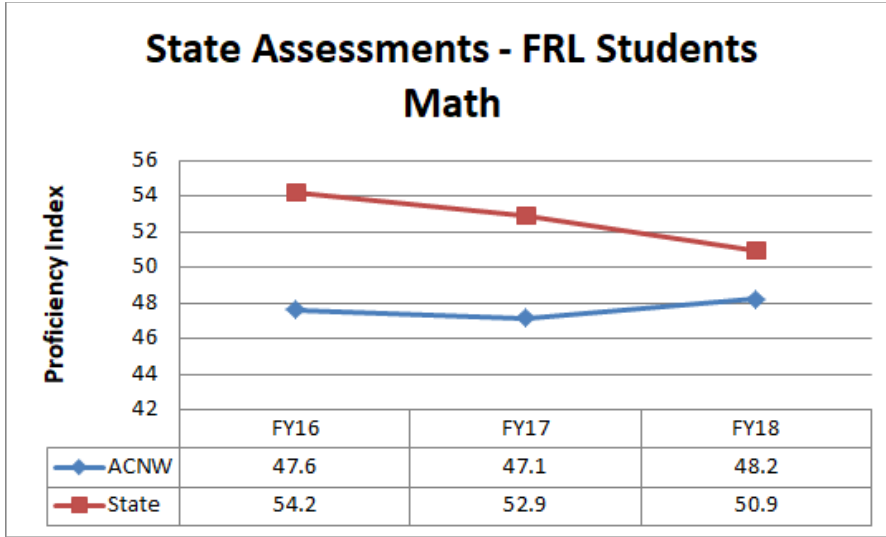
Additional data on statewide assessments is as follows:

### Math

#### State Assessments - All Students - Math

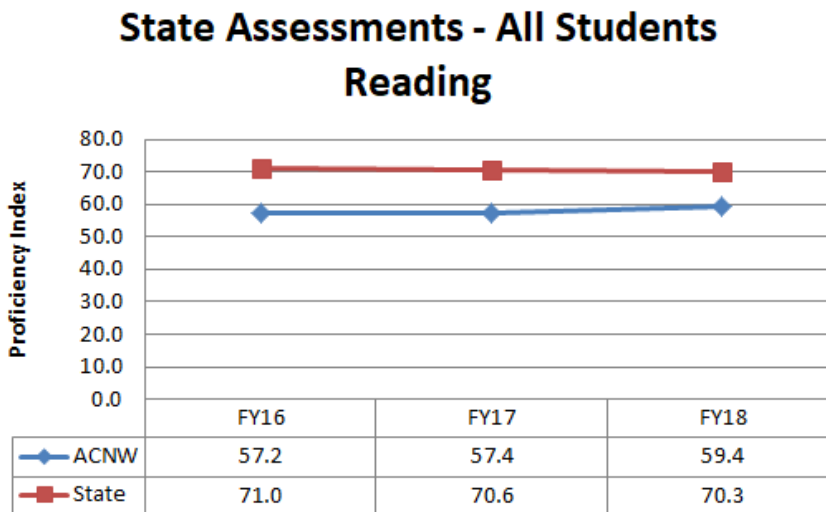


(Proficiency index is calculated as follows: students who earn a score of meets or exceeds on the assessment earn 1 point; students who earn a score of partially proficient earn 0.5 points. The total number of points is divided by the total number of students expected to have tested and then multiplied by 100. All data is based on students enrolled as of October 1.)

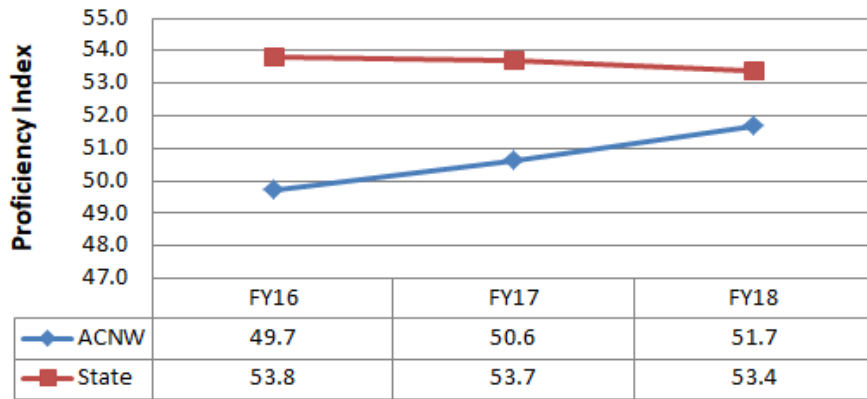


MCA Math proficiency data on statewide assessments shows that, overall, ACNW’s portfolio performs below the state for all students and has made minimal progress over the past three years. For students who are eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch, performance is nearly on par with the state in FY18; ACNW has closed the gap with the state from a difference of 6.6 index points in FY16 to 1.3 index points in FY18.

#### Reading

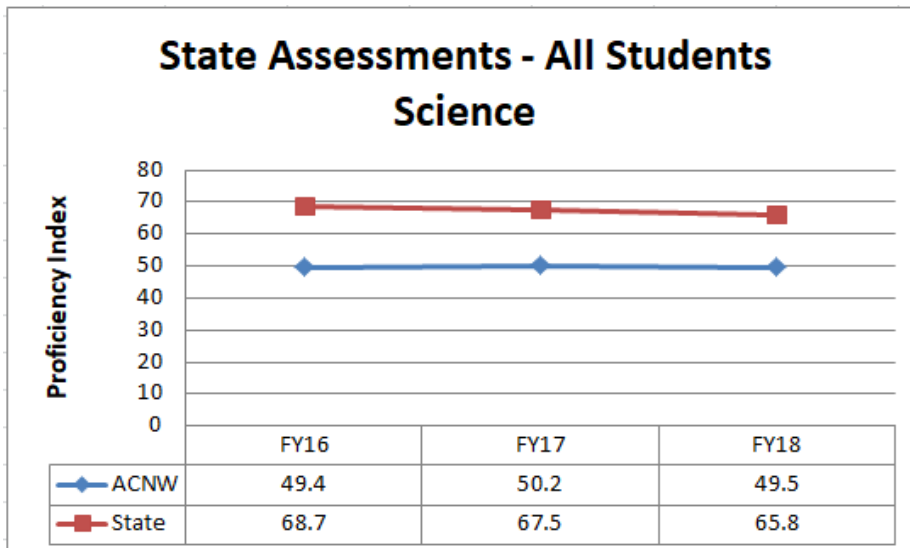


## State Assessments - FRL Students Reading

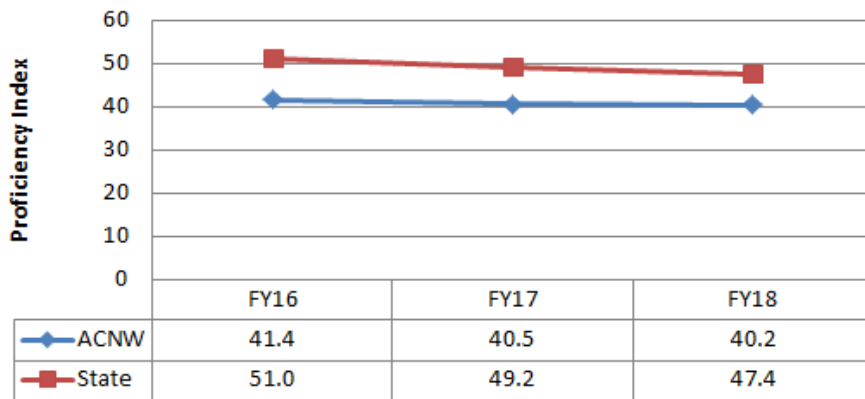


MCA Reading proficiency data on statewide assessments shows that, overall, ACNW’s portfolio performs below the state for all students and has made some progress over the past three years. ACNW has closed the gap for all students with the state from a difference of 13.8 index points in FY16 to 10.9 index points in FY18. For students who are eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch, performance is nearly on par with the state in FY18; ACNW has closed the gap with the state from a difference of 4.1 index points in FY16 to 1.7 index points in FY18.

### Science



## State Assessments - FRL Students Science



MCA Science proficiency data on statewide assessments shows that, overall, ACNW’s portfolio performs below the state for all students and has made minimal progress over the past three years. While ACNW has closed the gap with the state slightly both for all students and for students who are eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch, this gap reduction is based on the fact that the state’s overall performance has declined, not because ACNW’s performance has improved.

### 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 completed between FY15 and FY18. Complete information on ACNW’s financial performance evaluation is available on our [website](#).

Indicator Area	Percent of schools that met the standard FY18	Percent of schools that met the standard FY17
O.1.1 Mission and Vision	91%	91%
O.1.2 Instruction and Assessment	50%	48%
O.1.3 Educational Requirements	100%	100%
O.1.4 Special Education	100%	100%
O.1.5 English Learners	74%	75%
O.1.6 Parent & Student Satisfaction	81%	77%



O.2.1 Board Composition & Capacity	48%	47%
O.2.2 Board Decision Making & Oversight	61%	68%
O.2.3 Management Accountability	52%	58%
O.3.1 Facilities & Transportation	100%	97%
O.3.2 Health & Safety	100%	100%
O.4.1 Admissions & Enrollment	94%	91%
O.4.2 Due Process & Privacy	97%	94%
O.5.1 Licensure	100%	94%
O.5.2 Staff Retention	97%	94%
O.5.3 Employment Practices	97%	100%
O.6.1 Charter School Annual Reports	71%	100%
O.6.2 Insurance	95%	83%
O.6.3 Authorizer & State Compliance	55%	29%

Areas of strength of ACNW authorized school are in meeting key compliance requirements including healthy and safety, facilities and transportation, employment, insurance, educational requirements and special education requirements. These areas have remained strong over the past two years. Schools generally are implementing education programs aligned to their stated missions and visions.

Areas for improvement continue to include in the areas related to board governance and Authorizer & State Compliance. As such ACNW has continued in efforts to provide training, guidance and feedback to the schools in this area as outlined in other parts of this report.

ACNW continues to strengthen its mechanisms for providing meaningful and timely feedback to the schools it authorizes in the area of operations. ACNW provides 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.

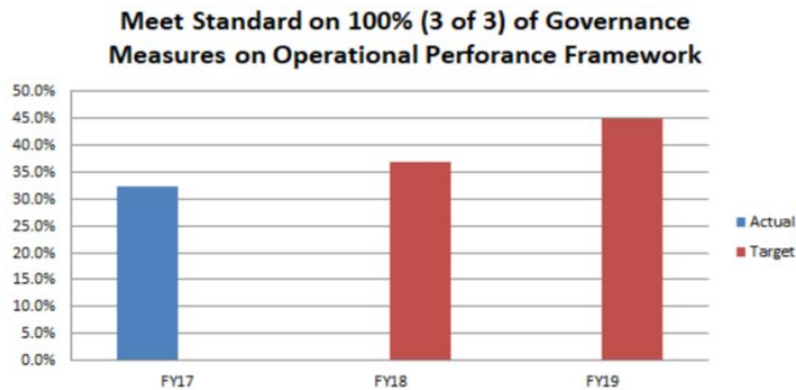
ACNW has one strategic goal as it relates to schools' operations performance:

1. Increase the percentage of schools that Meet Standards on 100% (3 of 3) of governance measures on Operations Performance Evaluation.

Through FY18 evaluation, data shows that 32% of schools met standards on 100% of governance measures (O.2.1, O.2.2 and O.2.3 above).

## Governance Performance Goal

Increase the percentage of schools that Meet Standards on 100% (3 of 3) of governance measures on Operations Performance Evaluation.



## 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 FY18 (based on FY17 year-end financial data), though eight schools in renewal during FY19 have completed evaluations based on FY18 year-end data. Complete information on ACNW’s financial performance evaluation is available on our [website](#).

Indicator Area	Percent of schools that met the standard FY18	Percent of schools that met the standard FY17
F.1.1 Budgeting	74%	83%
F.1.2 Financial Policies & Practices	88%	91%
F.1.3 Financial Reporting	82%	83%
F.1.4 Financial Audit	59%	63%
F.2.1 Current Ratio	100%	100%
F.2.2 Days Cash on Hand	56%	57%
F.2.3 Enrollment Variance	77%	65%
F.3.1 Fund Balance Percentage	59%	49%
F.3.2 Total Margin/Aggregate Three-Year Total Margin	77%	71%
F.3.3 Debt to Asset Ratio	88%	91%

Data documents that overall, schools are performing well financially. Financial management indicators are strong for most schools, though approximately 41% of schools' audits include material weaknesses or significant deficiencies up from 37% in FY17. 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. Many schools need to take out lines of credit during the year given their cash position. Schools have shown improvement in terms of their effectiveness in terms of projecting enrollment; 77% of schools met the standard on this measure, up from 65% in FY17. Nearly 60% of schools meet the current fund balance target of 20% at FY17 or FY18 year end. (ACNW adjusted this target to 20% from 25% based on research and ongoing discussions with auditors, providers and school leaders. We determined that 20% is a better target, and this level will encourage schools to invest more resources in the program, while still maintaining a strong fund balance that promotes long-term sustainability.

ACNW has one strategic goal as it relates to schools' financial performance:

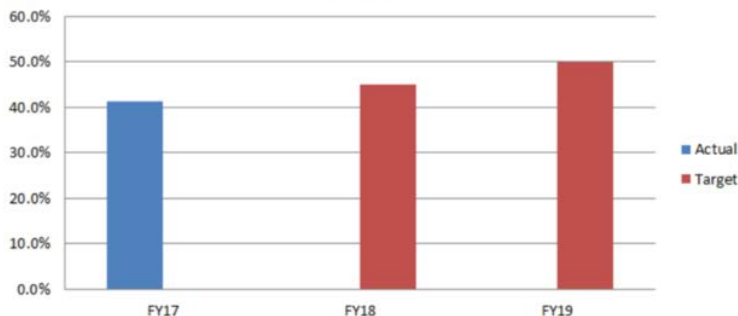
1. Increase the percentage of schools that Meet Standards on 100% (4 of 4) of financial management measures on Financial Performance Evaluation.

Through FY18 evaluation, data shows that 41% of schools met standards on 100% of financial management measures (F.1.1, F.1.2, F.1.3 and F.14 above).

## Financial Performance Goal

Increase the percentage of schools that Meet Standards on 100% (4 of 4) of financial management measures on Financial Performance Evaluation.

**Meets Standard on 100% of Financial Management Measures**

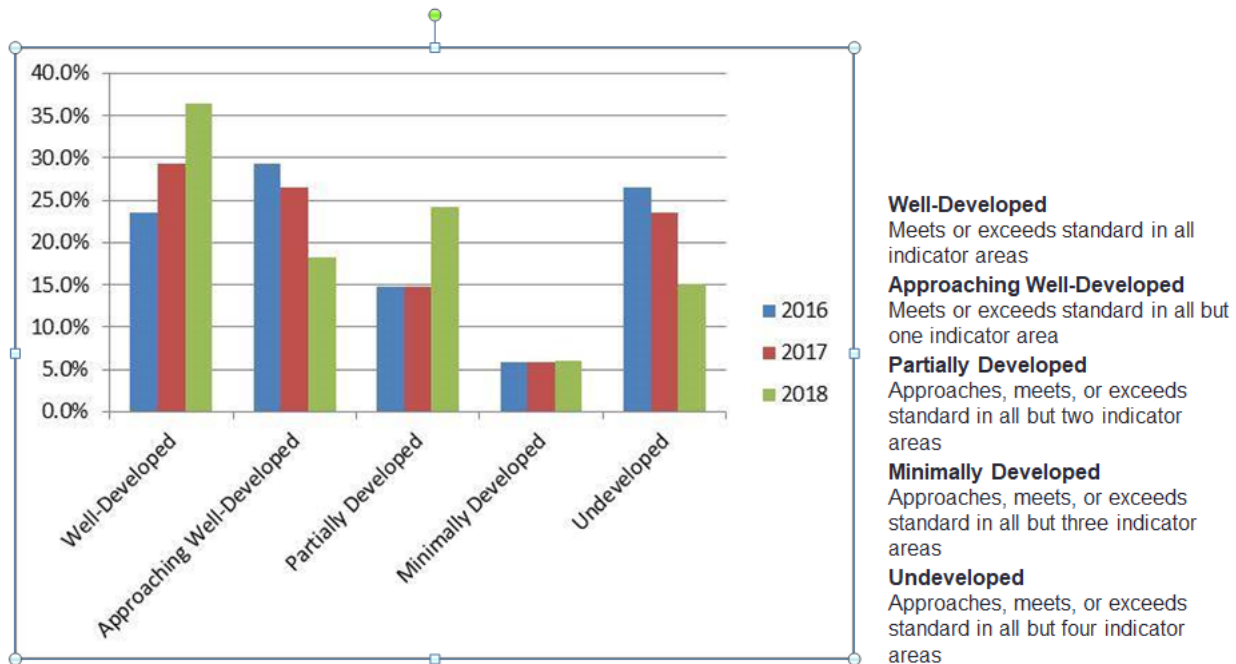


## Other Performance

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.

Consistent with ACNW’s mission, all schools authorized by ACNW must work to advance the environmental literacy of all students through engaging students in environmental education-based learning experiences. The following summarizes performance of schools in ACNW’s portfolio over the past 3 years.

### ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PERFORMANCE – most recent data (FY14-FY18)



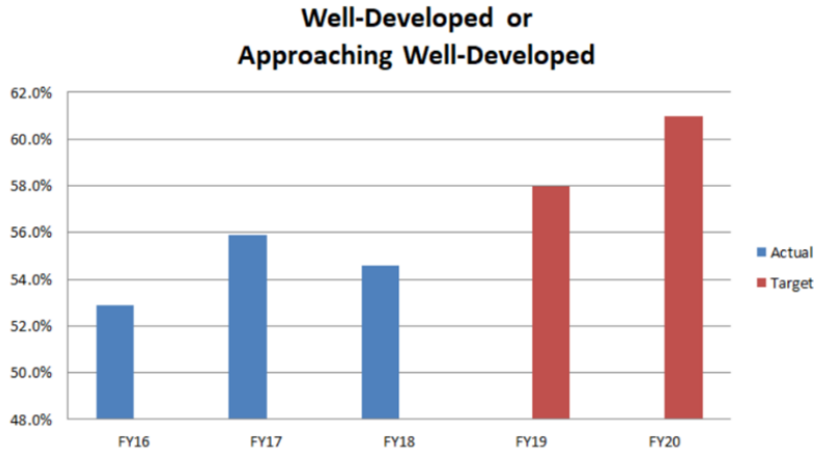
Overall, the performance of ACNW authorized charter schools in the area of environmental education (EE) improved in FY18 – a higher percentage of schools earned a rating of well-developed, and a lower percentage of schools earned a rating of undeveloped. In FY18, 12 schools earned a rating of well-developed compared to 10 in FY17. Further, in FY18, only five schools had undeveloped programs compared to eight schools in FY17.

ACNW has a strategic goal in this area as follows:

1. Increase the percentage of schools that earn an EE Program Rating of Well-Developed or Approaching Well-Developed.

## Environmental Education Goal

Increase the percentage of schools that earn an EE Program Rating of Well-Developed or Approaching Well-Developed.



While performance overall improved as discussed above, ACNW did not make progress on this specific strategic goal during FY18, as the percentage of schools that earned an EE program rating of well-developed or approaching well-developed declined slightly from 55.9% in FY17 to 54.5% in FY18.

Of note in this area, one of ACNW’s authorized schools, River’s Edge Academy, earned recognition from the US Department of Education as a “Green Ribbon School.” River’s Edge was one of three schools in Minnesota and 46 nationally to be recognized for: reducing environmental impact; promoting a healthy physical environment; and offering effective environmental and sustainability education.