



FY 2019 Authorizer Annual Report

Authorizer Information

Name of Authorizing Organization: Audubon Center of the North Woods

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Authorizer Summary:

The Audubon Center of the North Woods (ACNW) is a nonprofit, 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 Minnesota students through effective charter school authorizing. 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 2019 (B.1)

Did your organization review any new charter school applications in FY 2019?

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
Academy of Science and Citizenship	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes
Aspire Academy	Disapproval	N/A	Application did not meet ACNW's criteria for approval	No
Evergreen Preparatory School	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes

New Charter School Openings in FY 2019 (B.2)

Did your organization engage in ready-to-open activities in FY 2019?

Yes

If no, please provide an explanation:

N/A

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

Name of Charter School Projected to Begin Serving Students in FY 2019	Projected Opening Date	Did this School Open as Planned?	If No, Provide Reason(s) and Revised Projected Opening Date
Three Rivers Montessori	09/04/2018	No	School was not awarded CSP funding on the expected timeline. Revised projected opening date is 09/08/2020.
Minnesota Wildflower Montessori School	09/04/2018	Yes	N/A

Charter School Expansion Applications in FY 2019 (B.2)

Did your organization review any site and/or grade expansion applications in FY 2019?

No

If no, please provide an explanation:

ACNW did not receive any site and / or grade expansion applications in FY2019.

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

Official Early Learning Program Recognition Requests in FY 2019 (B.2)

Did your organization review any requests for official early learning program recognition in FY 2019?

No

If no, please provide an explanation:

ACNW did not receive any requests for official early learning program recognition in FY2019.

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

Charter School Change in Authorizer Requests in FY 2019 (B.2)

Did your organization review change in authorizer requests in FY 2019?

No

If no, please provide an explanation:

ACNW did not receive any change in authorizer requests in FY2019.

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 2019 (B.9)

Did your organization engage in charter renewal activities in FY 2019?

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
Best Academy	Yes	07/01/2019-06/30/2020	N/A

Name of Charter School	Was Contract Renewed?	If Yes, Term of Contract Renewal	If No, Reason(s) for Nonrenewal
Discovery Public School	Yes	07/01/2019-06/30/2022	N/A
East Range Academy of Technology & Science	Yes	07/01/2019-06/30/2022	N/A
Excell Academy for Higher Learning	Yes	07/01/2019-06/30/2024	N/A
Laura Jeffrey Academy	Yes	07/01/2019-06/30/2022	N/A
River's Edge Academy	Yes	07/01/2019-06/30/2022	As of July 1, 2019 River's Edge Academy merged with Saint Paul City School and is no longer authorized by ACNW.
Riverway Learning Community	Yes	07/01/2019-06/30/2024	N/A
Voyageurs Expeditionary School	Yes	07/01/2019-06/30/2022	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 FY19 we dedicated resources to ongoing professional development that resulted in improved authorizer practices.

On the national level, David Greenberg, Rhianon Sargent, Erin Anderson, and Nalani McCutcheon attended the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) Leadership Conference in Orlando, CA in October 2018. At this conference, the ACNW 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 for the first half of FY19, presented as part of a session titled, “To Grow or Not to Grow? Determining Operational Readiness for Replication and Expansion” David was also a leadership coach for a participant in the NACSA Leaders Program. 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 2018.

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. David also participated as a member of MN Comeback’s Charter Committee which works on policy and other issues relevant to charters. (When David resigned mid-year, those roles passed to Rhianon.)

In July 2018, Rhianon participated in the Summer Institute in Education Systems Leadership and Policy, a week-long interactive seminar in Denver, Colorado designed for current and aspiring leaders and entrepreneurs working in public and private sector organizations engaged in education systems transformation and redesign.

In October 2018, Erin attended the North American Association for Environmental Education Conference in Spokane, WA. In April 2019, Erin and Nalani attended the Green Schools Conference and Expo in Saint Paul, MN, a national event focused on sustainability in schools.

In addition, ACNW organizes and presents an annual Environmental Education Teacher Workshop and Leaders Retreat, and ACNW staff participates in those learning opportunities, attending sessions relevant to environmental education, 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, Rhianon, and Erin attended the MDE Authorizer Conference in July 2018.
- Erin attended the A+ Education Conference (formerly the Minnesota Assessment Conference) in August 2018.
- Erin attended Equity Learning Sessions at the University of Minnesota in July and August 2018.
- Rhianon attended workshops, including the Fundamentals of Nonprofit Finance and Board Boot Camp, in September 2018.
- Nalani attended the Great Minnesota Schools / MN Comeback Annual Meeting in September 2018.
- David attended bushCONNECT, an educational and networking event organized by the Bush Foundation in October 2018, and Rhianon attended in May 2019.
- Jolene Palme, who provides admin support for the Charter School Division, participated in a MACS course on School Finances in November 2018.
- Nalani participated in data practices training at MDE in January 2019.
- Nalani was certified as an adult mental health first aid trainer in February 2019.
- Erin participated in a book club focused on equity in education throughout FY2019.

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 FY19 include:

- Preparation for ACNW Leaders Retreat sessions and EE Teacher Workshop sessions.
- Staff meetings and internal staff trainings: Review of issues related to the Cruz-Guzman lawsuit; ongoing sharing of articles, readings, and books among the team; onboarding new staff to internal processes, relevant statute, and the Minnesota educational landscape.
- Ongoing consultation and mentorship: Contracted evaluators such as Dr. Dan Jett to share 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.
- 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 observation and 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 August 2018 Charter School Committee meeting, David provided an overview of the Cruz-Guzman lawsuit and its potential impacts on charters. At the June 2019 ACNW Board Meeting, Erin provided the CSD's annual work cycle, which included an overview of how ACNW evaluates school performance at multiple points throughout the school year and the school's contract.

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 FY19, ACNW's long-time Director of Charter School Authorizer, David Greenberg, left the organization mid-year, which prompted a search for his replacement. Through the search process, the board and organizational leadership evaluated the Charter School Division's internal capacity and existing practices to identify the needs of the Division and identify key abilities for the person who filled this role. This led to further review of how the team and its workload are organized, which resulted in changes that will be effective FY20.

In addition, the ACNW board engaged in strategic planning for FY20-25 which required self-evaluation of the current strategic plan in order to set new goals for the upcoming five-year period. Staff meets periodically to reflect on progress toward the strategic plan. These meetings also provide an impetus to identify new tools or strategies for conducting quality oversight. Through regular reviews of ACNW's mission- and vision-driven strategic plan, the team routinely reviews its internal practices against the authorizing mission and vision. Over the course of the previous strategic plan, ACNW tracked progress on meeting outcomes in our strategic plan and made revisions to the plan based on actual practice.

In addition to the above, at the staff level, ACNW engages in ongoing and planned evaluation of its capacity and practices to oversee its portfolio of charter schools. As part of the self-evaluation activities, ACNW staff gathers feedback from the portfolio of schools at least twice per year, during the annual Leaders Retreat and the EE

Teacher Workshop. This feedback is used to inform ACNW's ongoing authorizing work, as well as staff skill development (A.5) and charter school support, development, and technical assistance (B.7).

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 engages with other Minnesota authorizers through the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACSA) monthly meetings, as well as through other channels. Further, ACNW is a resource to authorizers around the country. Examples from FY19 include:

- NACSA engaged David to serve in the role of a coach in its Leaders Program. 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.
- Rhianon served on the MACSA Policy Committee and Erin served on the MACSA Executive Committee, both of which regularly provide leadership to the MN authorizing community through policy agendas and professional development opportunities at monthly meetings.
- In November 2018 ACNW provided feedback to NEO and an opportunity to present to ACNW authorized schools in support of the MN Charter Board Training Grant Project.
- 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 in December 2018.
- In January & February 2019, ACNW invited representatives from PUC, Bethel, and UST to participate in ACNW's new school review process in order to share practices related to these protocols (application review, capacity interviews, and evaluations).
- Beginning in February 2019 Erin participated on a MACSA sub-committee to review new charter school applications and associated processes from authorizers in Minnesota in order to identify effective practices, reasons for early school closures, and quality applications. This resulted in a number of findings in line with MACSA's Principles and Standards that MACSA will continue to pursue into FY20 and FY21. ACNW shared its new school application process and new school ready-to-open standards.
- David participated in the Minnesota Regional Turnaround Strategy Group which prepared the *Community-Drive Turnaround Field Guide* to establish guiding principles, a process, and phases for helping schools and authorizers navigate rapid school improvement (i.e. turnaround).
- In April 2019 ACNW provided insight into authorizing rural charter schools as part of a case study to better understand the conditions that help charter schools succeed in rural settings, conducted by Bellwether Education Partners.

- In June 2019 ACNW invited Bethel staff to participate in ACNW's new school ready to open process in order to share practices related to these protocols (ready to open checklist, ready to open meeting).

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 FY19:

- In previous years, ACNW has published and disseminated via e-mail an "Authorizer Update" newsletter on a monthly basis. In FY19 this was replaced with the *Sounding Board*, a resource designed to promote quality charter school governance. The content of these publications is driven primarily by issues ACNW staff identifies through its oversight and evaluation (i.e. board meeting observations, review of monthly board meeting minutes, questions / concerns submitted by schools, etc.). ACNW also sends a monthly Environmental Education Update to schools with resources, ideas, and upcoming professional development opportunities. Archives of the *Sounding Board* and Environmental Education Update are available on the [ACNW Charter School Division website](#).
- ACNW hosts 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 FY19 Leaders Retreat was held in November 2018 and was attended by approximately 75 people representing 29 schools authorized by ACNW. The goal of the retreat was to help school leaders and board members create a culture of learning among the adults in their schools, and create an environment where teachers feel safe making and discussing mistakes. An additional goal was to help participants establish relationships with other charter school leaders and board members.

School leaders engaged in hands-on activities and heard from speakers on the retreat's main themes: creating a culture of learning among adults that translates to students, cultivating a growth mindset among adult learners in the school, and creating the opportunity to admit and learn from mistakes. Participants chose from breakout sessions on topics that aligned with their needs, including charter school board training, school finance, academic evaluation and accountability systems, and cultivating growth mindsets. Breakout sessions were organized to target school leaders or board members, allowing participants to choose a track that works best for them.

The keynote session, "Establishing a Culture of Learning," was provided by Lindsey Hoy and Karn Engelsingjerd from ANet (Achievement Network), a nonprofit dedicated to educational equity.

Participants also read and discussed excerpts from the book *Beyond Test Scores: A Better Way to Measure School Quality* by Jack Schneider. Additional workshops included sessions from ACNW staff and other professionals in the education field on topics such as evaluating school financial health, charter school board training, the North Star accountability system, and environmental education. 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 FY19 Environmental Education Teacher Workshop was held in August 2018 and was attended by approximately 67 people representing 33 schools authorized by ACNW. The workshop was focused on place-based learning and was keynoted by David Sobel. Every teacher who attended received a copy of the book *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities* by David Sobel. Over the course of the workshop teachers studied this approach to teaching that emphasizes connections among school, community, and environment. Teachers also received training in (and a copy of) either Project Learning Tree (K-5) or Project WILD (6-12) curriculum, a water quality test kit to use with their classroom, and ideas for writing in nature.

- ACNW conducted academic and finance evaluations on each school in our portfolio, and evaluated the environmental education and operations performance of each school in renewal during FY19 (eight schools). In addition, in FY19 six schools received environmental education formative evaluations, intended to provide feedback on the school's performance on its environmental literacy (aligned to the goals outlined in Exhibit H of the school's contract and updated annually). Evaluations are informed by site visits and board observations and 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.
- 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.
- As school performance dictated, ACNW issued interventions such as Notices of Concern or Notices of Deficiency. These interventions 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.
- 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:

- Environmental Education (EE) Updates include information and resources on best school practices and highlights on specific successes of ACNW authorized schools. An archive of EE Updates is available on the [Charter School Division website](#).
- 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.
- An annual ACNW EE Teacher Workshop brings together environmental education coordinators, teachers and school leaders from ACNW authorized schools to learn about and share environmental education strategies, techniques and best practices. This workshop has happened annually since 2015.
- 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. ACNW maintains and provides to its authorized schools contact information for school leaders and board chairs to encourage communication, sharing, and dissemination.

In Spring 2019, five ACNW authorized schools were identified as "High Quality Charter Schools" for the purposes of the Federal Charter School Program Grant: Noble Academy (which replicated in FY19 to form Nompeng Academy, and is planning to add grades 9-12 in FY21), North Lakes Academy (which expanded to add grades K-4 in FY20), Higher Ground Academy (which added a second site in FY20 and an additional 200 students), Discovery Woods School, and Swan River Montessori. 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.

General Charter School Portfolio Data (as of June 30, 2019)

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	4271	Yes	K-8	90	Bemidji, MN	09/04/2019
Three Rivers Montessori	4266	Yes	PreK-8	240	Elk River, MN	09/08/2020

Operational Charter Schools in Authorizer's Portfolio:

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2019	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	Academic Arts High School	Academic Arts High School
AFSA High School	4074	Yes	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	No	K-6	Minneapolis	Bright Water Elementary	<i>The school has not yet completed its FY19 Annual Report.</i>
Cannon River STEM School	4194	No	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

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2019	Location	Charter School Demographic and Enrollment Information	Charter School's World's Best Workforce Report
Discovery Public School	4081	No	6-12	Faribault	Discovery Public School	Discovery Public School
Discovery Woods School	4198	Yes	PreK-6	Brainerd	Discovery Woods	Discovery Woods
East Range Academy	4166	No	9-12	Eveleth	East Range Academy	<i>The school has not yet completed its FY19 Annual Report.</i>
Excell Academy	4068	No	PreK-8	Brooklyn Park	Excell Academy	Excell Academy
Glacial Hills Elementary	4168	No	K-6	Starbuck	Glacial Hills Elementary	Glacial Hills Elementary
Great Expectations School	4100	No	K-8	Grand Marais	Great Expectations School	Great Expectations 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	No	5-8	Saint Paul	Laura Jeffrey Academy	Laura Jeffrey Academy
Metro Schools	4131	No	5-12	Minneapolis	Metro Schools	Metro Schools

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2019	Location	Charter School Demographic and Enrollment Information	Charter School's World's Best Workforce Report
Minnesota Wildflower Montessori School	4265	Yes	PreK-K	Minneapolis	Minnesota Wildflower Montessori School	Minnesota Wildflower Montessori School
Natural Science Academy	4187	No	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
North Lakes Academy	4053	No	5-12	Forest Lake	North Lakes Academy	North Lakes Academy
Northern Lights Community School	4146	No	6-12	Warba	Northern Lights Community School	Northern Lights Community School
North Shore Community School	4084	No	K-6	Duluth	North School Community School	North Shore Community School
Oshki Ogimaag Charter School	4195	No	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

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2019	Location	Charter School Demographic and Enrollment Information	Charter School's World's Best Workforce Report
Prairie Seeds Academy	4126	No	K-12	Brooklyn Park	Prairie Seeds Academy	Prairie Seeds Academy
River's Edge Academy	4190	No	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	No	PreK-6	Monticello	Swan River Montessori	Swan River Montessori
Vermilion Country School	4207	Yes	7-12	Tower	Vermilion Country School	Vermilion Country School
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 Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening Program	Officially Recognized Instructional Preschool Program to provide early childhood education and preparation for transition to kindergarten for children ages 3-5	Officially Recognized Instructional Prekindergarten Program 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

Name of Charter School	Officially Recognized Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening Program	Officially Recognized Instructional Preschool Program to provide early childhood education and preparation for transition to kindergarten for children ages 3-5	Officially Recognized Instructional Prekindergarten Program for four-year-olds to prepare children for entry into kindergarten the following year
Swan River Montessori	No	Yes	No

Charter Schools with Charter Management Organization (CMO)/Education Management Organization (EMO)

Name of Charter School	Management Organization Name	Employer Identification Number (EIN)	Management Organization Address Location	Management Organization Address Mailing	Management Organization Type
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Choose an item

Charter School Portfolio Activity in FY 2019

In FY 2019, 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 2019, 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 2019, 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
River’s Edge Academy	4190	Merged with another entity. REA was the non-surviving entity.	06/30/2019

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 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, completed in FY19 (based on FY18 academic data). Not all schools had ratings in each area. For example, Post-Secondary Readiness is only for schools that serve students grades 9-12.

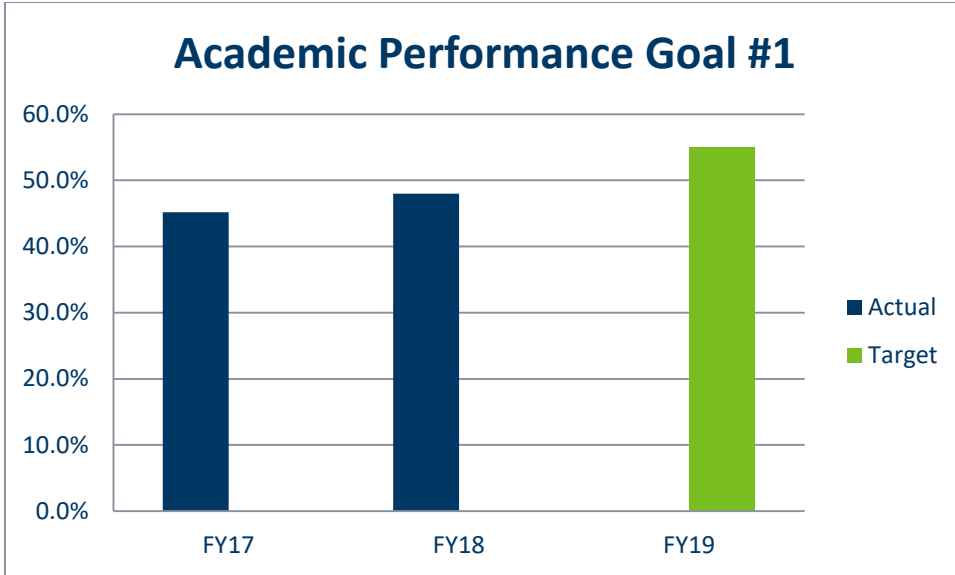
Indicator Area	Percent of schools that met or exceeded the standard – FY19	Percent of schools that met or exceeded the standard – FY18	Percent of schools that met or exceeded the standard – FY17
A.1 Mission Related Outcomes	60%	50%	47%
A.2 English Learners	17.1%	40%	67%
A.3 Reading Growth	51.4%	52.9%	42%
A.4 Math Growth	51.4%	39.4%	25%
A.5 Reading Proficiency	48.6%	47.1%	40%
A.6 Math Proficiency	22.9%	15.6%	20%
A.7 Science Proficiency	45.7%	51.5%	52%
A.8 Proficiency in Other Curricular Areas	37.1%	33.3%	43%
A.9 Post-Secondary Readiness	22.9%	46.7%	38%
A.10 Attendance	60.0%	66.7%	71%

Data shows that areas of improvement from FY17 to FY19 include Reading Growth, Math Growth, Reading Proficiency, Math Proficiency, and Mission Related Outcomes. The indicator area of English Learners (which uses AMAO or ACCESS data) continued to decline from previous years. (It is important to note, however, that EL indicators were not able to be effectively scored in FY18 due to lack of data provided by MDE. ACNW is currently shifting our measurements to align with data provided by the North Star system.) Further, Math Proficiency continues to be a clear area of weakness, although performance has improved slightly, and it is clear that Post-Secondary Readiness needs greater focus. 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:

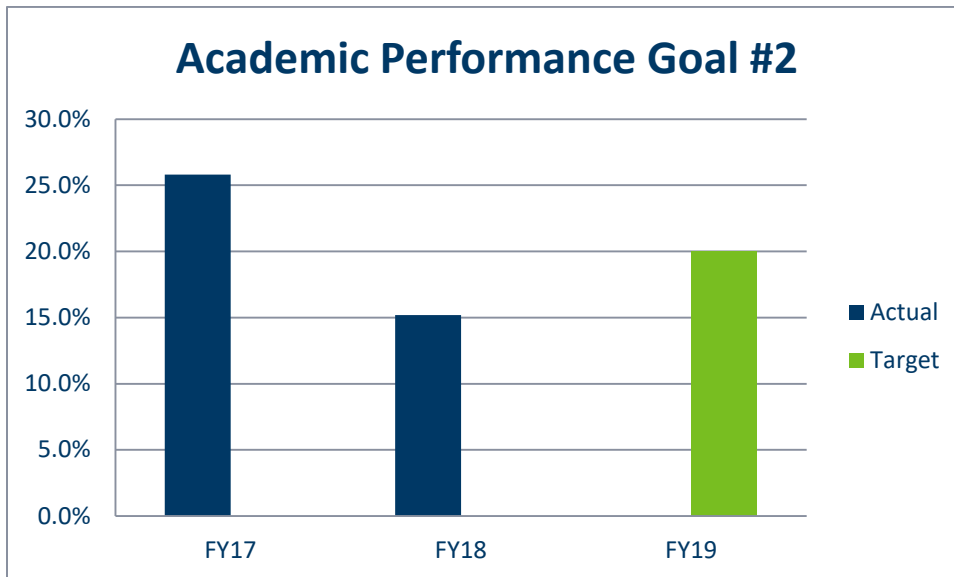
1. Increase the percentage of schools that earn at least 75% on the Academic Performance Evaluation:

In order to meet this goal, ACNW is working with schools to more closely align the measures in their contracts to reflect the AR in SMART (Achievable and Realistic). Based on FY18 data (FY19 evaluations), 48% of schools earned at least 75% of points. (The previous year, 45.2% of schools earned at least 75% of points.)



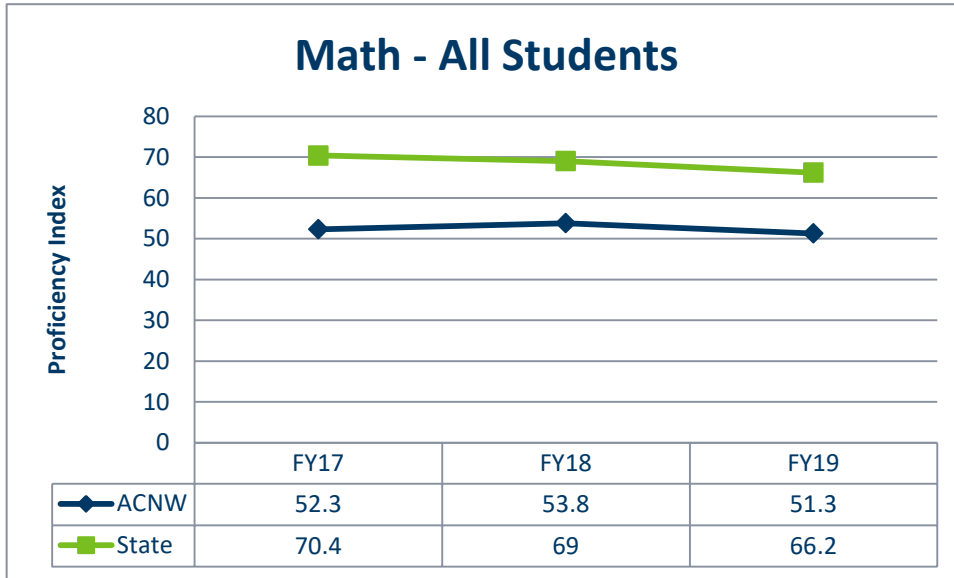
- 2. Reduce the percentage of schools that earn less than 50% on the Academic Performance Evaluation

Based on FY18 data (evaluations completed during the FY19 school year), 15.2% of schools earned less than 50% of points. (The previous year, 25.8% of schools earned less than 50% of points.)

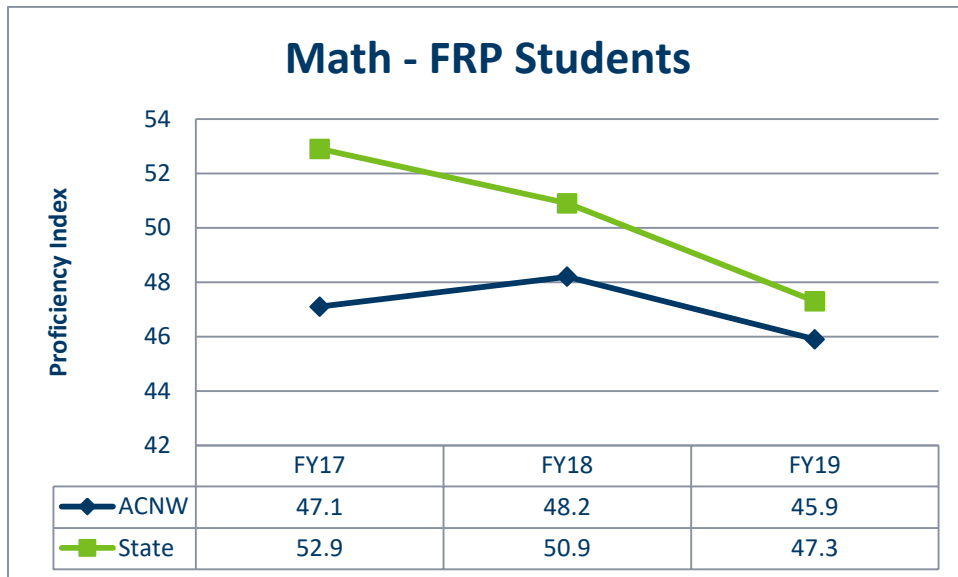


Additional data on statewide assessments is as follows:

Math

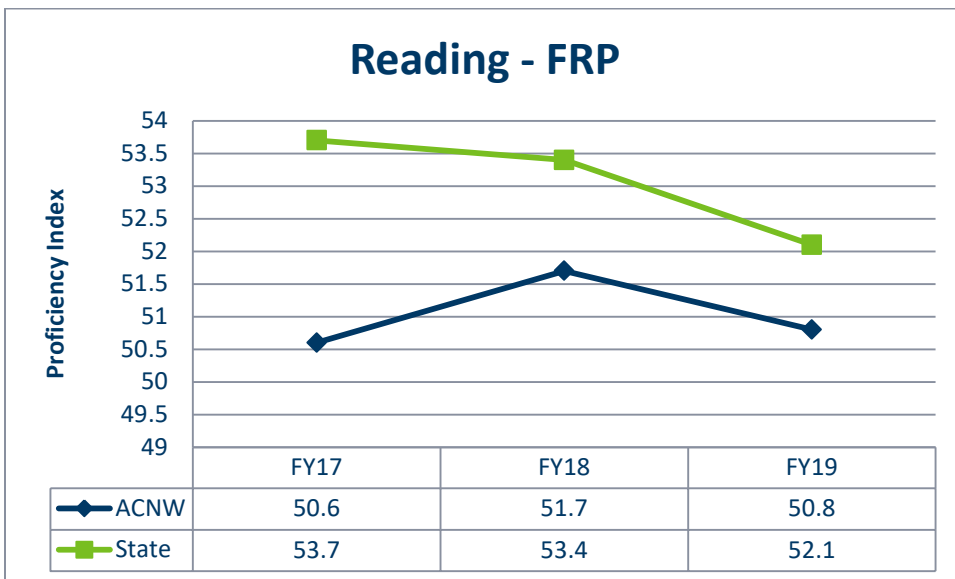
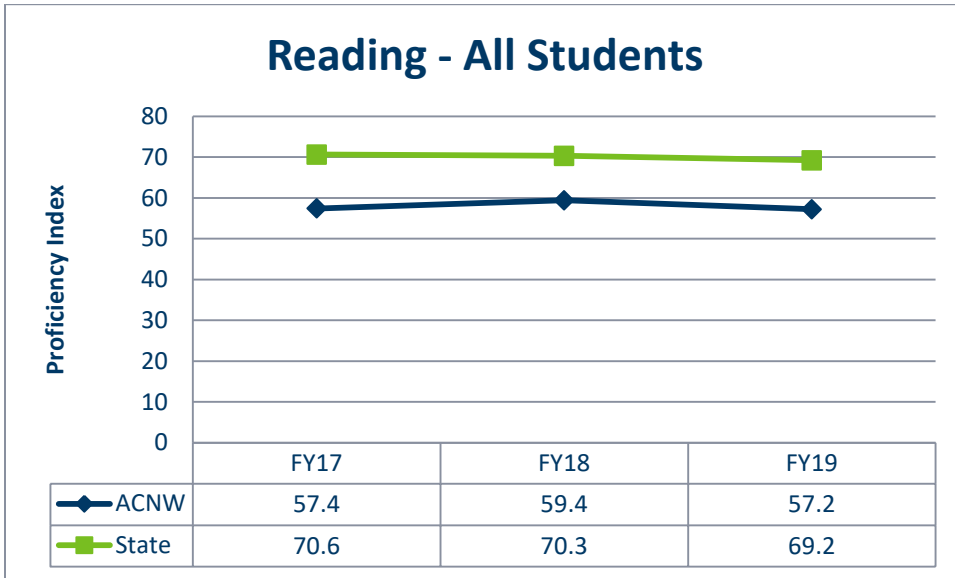


(Proficiency index is calculated as follows: students who earn a score of meets or exceeds on the assessment earn 1 point; students who earn a score of partially proficient earn 0.5 points. The total number of points is divided by the total number of students expected to have tested and then multiplied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



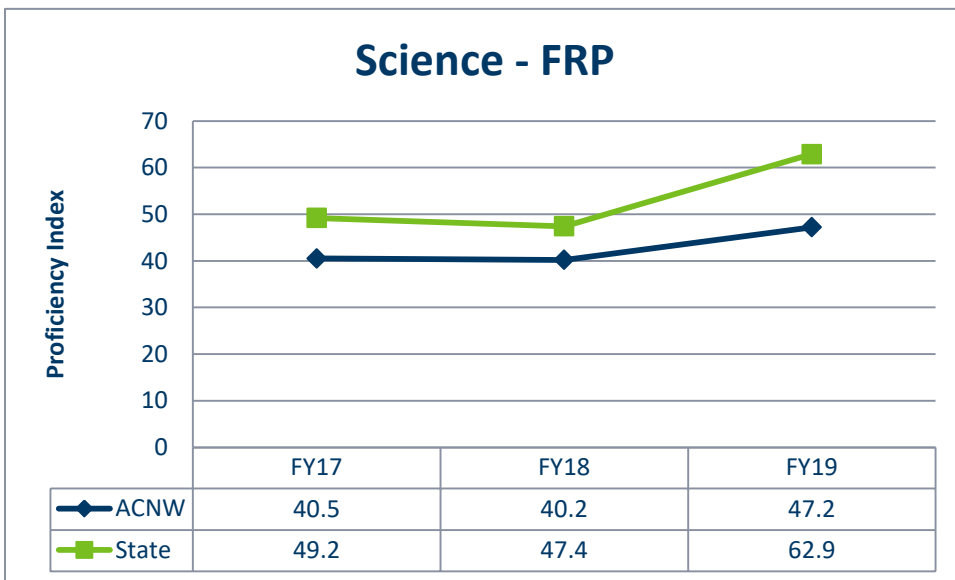
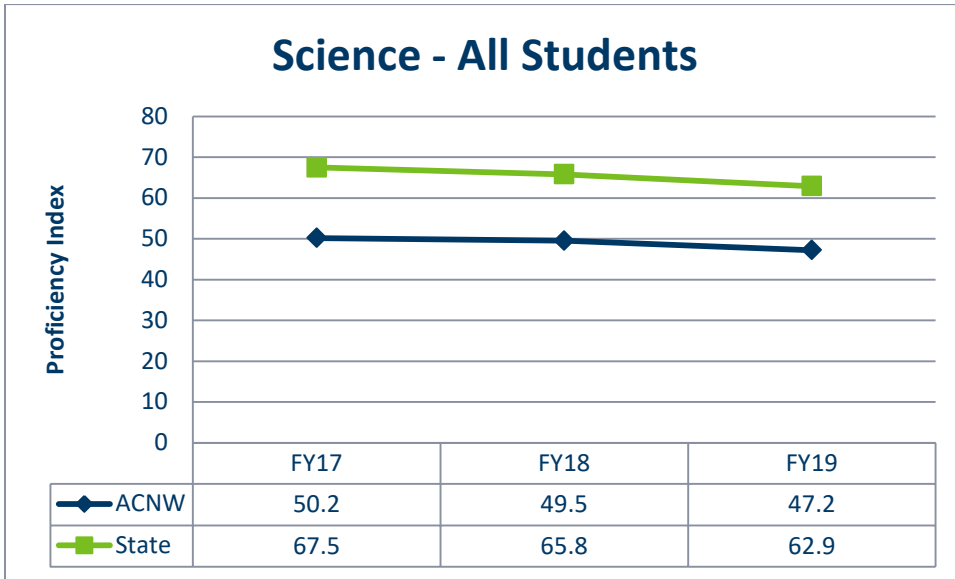
MCA Math proficiency data on statewide assessments shows that, overall, ACNW’s portfolio performs below the state for all students and has made minimal progress over the past three years. For students who are eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch, performance is just below the state in FY19; ACNW has closed the gap with the state from a difference of 6.6 index points in FY16 to 1.4 index points in FY19.

Reading



MCA Reading proficiency data on statewide assessments shows that, overall, ACNW’s portfolio performs below the state for all students and has remained relatively flat for the last three years. For students who are eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch, performance is just below the state in FY19; ACNW has closed the gap with the state from a difference of 4.1 index points in FY16 to 1.3 index points in FY19.

Science



MCA Science proficiency data on statewide assessments shows that, overall, ACNW’s portfolio performs below the state for all students and has decreased slightly over the past three years. As the state’s performance has increased, so also has ACNW’s (both for all students and for students who are eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch), although not at the same rate as the state.

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 FY16 and FY19. Complete information on ACNW's financial performance evaluation is available on our [website](#).

Indicator Area	Percent of schools that met the standard FY19	Percent of schools that met the standard FY18	Percent of schools that met the standard FY17
O.1.1 Mission and Vision	81%	91%	91%
O.1.2 Instruction and Assessment	48%	50%	48%
O.1.3 Educational Requirements	100%	100%	100%
O.1.4 Special Education	100%	100%	100%
O.1.5 English Learners	81%	74%	75%
O.1.6 Parent & Student Satisfaction	90%	81%	77%
O.2.1 Board Composition & Capacity	47%	48%	47%
O.2.2 Board Decision Making & Oversight	53%	61%	68%
O.2.3 Management Accountability	50%	52%	58%
O.3.1 Facilities & Transportation	100%	100%	97%
O.3.2 Health & Safety	100%	100%	100%
O.4.1 Admissions & Enrollment	81%	94%	91%
O.4.2 Due Process & Privacy	94%	97%	94%
O.5.1 Licensure	100%	100%	94%
O.5.2 Staff Retention	94%	97%	94%
O.5.3 Employment Practices	94%	97%	100%
O.6.1 Charter School Annual Reports	77%	71%	100%
O.6.2 Insurance	79%	95%	83%
O.6.3 Authorizer & State Compliance	69%	55%	29%

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

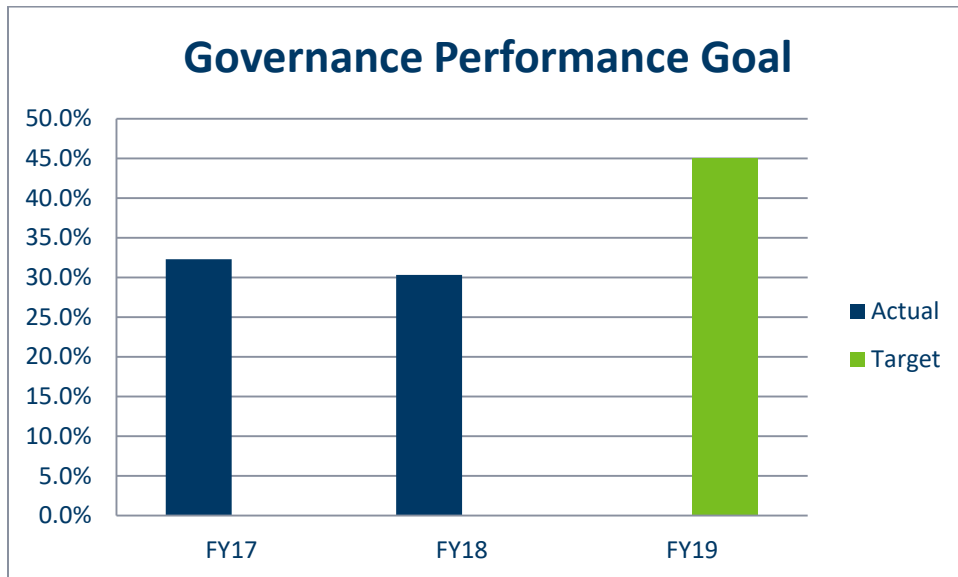
Areas for improvement continue to include in the areas related to board governance and authorizer & state compliance, although the latter is improving. As such ACNW has continued in efforts to provide training, guidance, and feedback to the schools in this area as outlined in other parts of this report. Beginning in FY20 and beyond, ACNW is further evaluating its training and feedback for effectiveness and anticipates further changes to facilitate stronger board governance and decision-making related to the primary purpose of charter schools.

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 Standard on 100% (3 of 3) of governance measures on Operations Performance Evaluation.

Through the FY19 evaluation (which includes data from the schools up to FY18), data shows that 30.3% (10/33) of schools met standard on 100% of governance measures (O.2.1, O.2.2 and O.2.3). (The previous year, 32% of schools met standard on 100% of governance measures.)



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, completed in FY19 (based on FY18 year-end financial data). Complete information on ACNW's financial performance evaluation is available on our [website](#).

Indicator Area	Percent of schools that met the standard FY19	Percent of schools that met the standard FY18	Percent of schools that met the standard FY17
F.1.1 Budgeting	88.2%	74%	83%
F.1.2 Financial Policies & Practices	85.3%	88%	91%
F.1.3 Financial Reporting	91.2%	82%	83%
F.1.4 Financial Audit	61.8%	59%	63%
F.2.1 Current Ratio	100.0%	100%	100%
F.2.2 Days Cash on Hand	58.8%	56%	57%
F.2.3 Enrollment Variance	73.5%	77%	65%
F.3.1 Fund Balance Percentage	52.9%	59%	49%
F.3.2 Total Margin/Aggregate Three-Year Total Margin	73.5%	77%	71%
F.3.3 Debt to Asset Ratio	91.1%	88%	91%

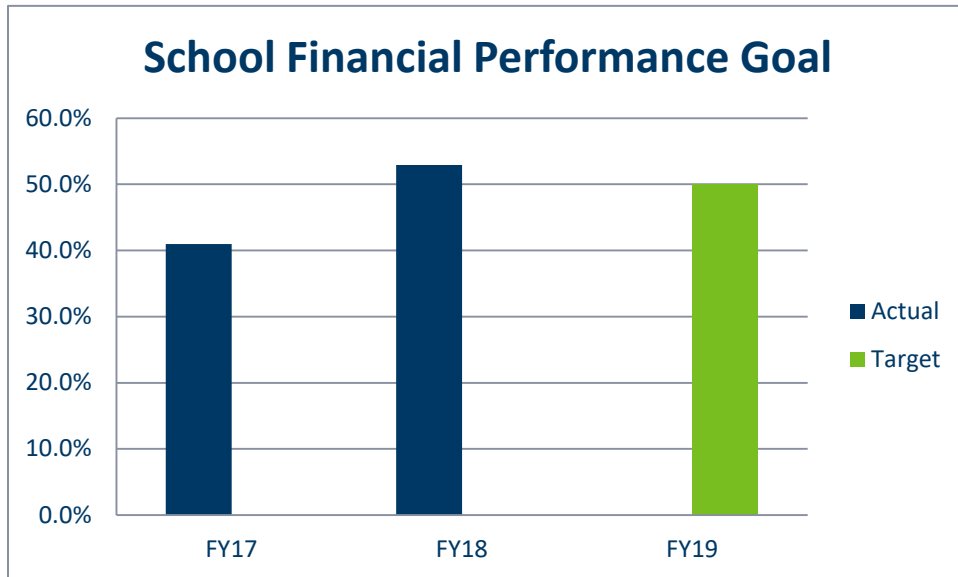
Data documents that overall, schools are performing well financially. Financial management indicators are strong for most schools, though approximately 38% of schools' audits include material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. (Although this has been a focus area, this number seems to have been relatively stable for the last three years.) 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; 73.5% of schools met the standard on this measure, up from 65% in FY17 (although a slight decrease from FY18). More than half of schools meet the current fund balance target of 20% at FY18 year end. (In FY18, 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.

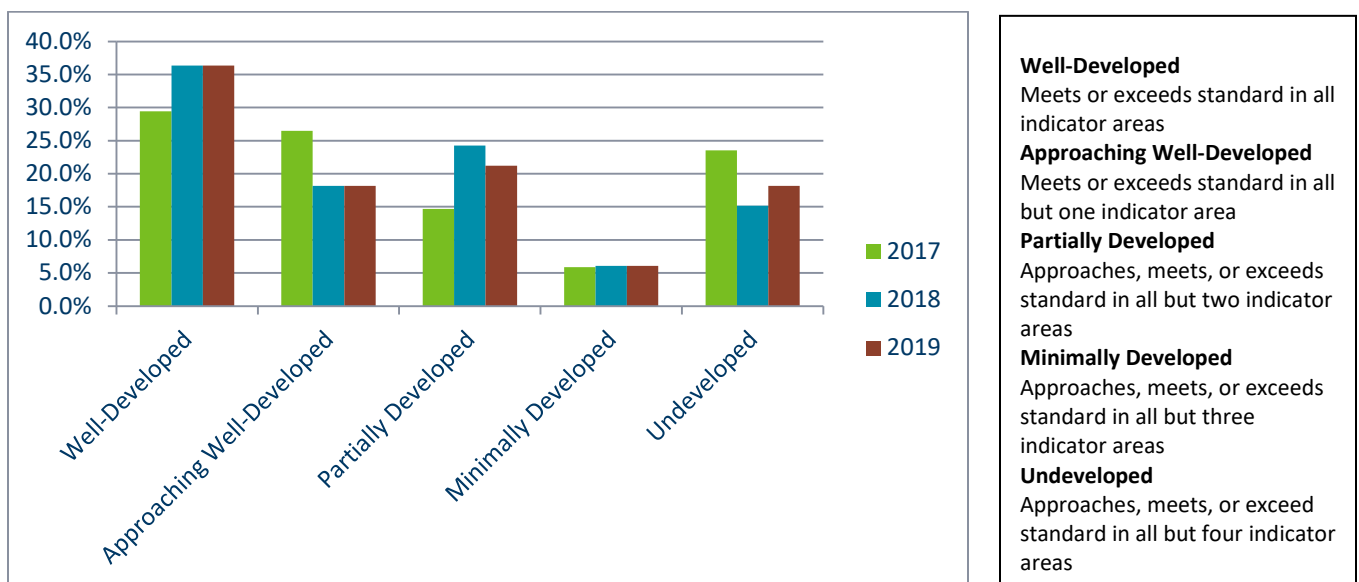
Through FY19 evaluation (based on FY18 year-end financial data), data shows that 52.9% (18/34) of schools met standards on 100% of financial management measures (F.1.1, F.1.2, F.1.3 and F.4 above).



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 increase the environmental literacy of all students through environmental education. The following summarizes performance of schools in ACNW’s portfolio over the past 3 years.



Overall, the performance of ACNW authorized charter schools in the area of environmental education (EE) stayed relatively stable in FY19 – the same percentage of schools earned a rating of well-developed and approaching well-developed as in FY18, although a slightly higher percentage of schools earned a rating of undeveloped. In FY19, 12 schools earned a rating of well-developed, and six earned a rating of approaching well-developed. Further, in FY19, only six 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.

While performance has overall improved since ACNW began gathering data toward this goal, ACNW did not make progress on this specific strategic goal during FY19, 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 and FY19. This is in part because we are shifting our method of evaluating school performance (based on when they were renewed, there are currently three different evaluation frameworks in use) and working towards measure that are more accurate and SMART. ACNW anticipates this will improve as more schools transition to environmental learning plans and improve their ability to implement ELPs and gather accurate data.

ACNW will continue to focus on this area in FY20, and was awarded a MN GreenCorps member to support schools in implementing their environmental education programs. In addition, ACNW staff is focused on working with the schools to develop relevant and realistic environmental education goals, creating responsive EE teacher workshops and other trainings to support implementation, and staffing the Charter School Division with experienced environmental education and school staff.

