



NORTHERN LIGHTS
COMMUNITY SCHOOL



NORTHERN LIGHTS COMMUNITY SCHOOL

PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL DISTRICT #4146

SCHOOL YEAR 2019-2020
WORLD'S BEST WORKFORCE & ANNUAL REPORT

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Cover Photo: Live. Laugh. Learn. Three NLCS students enjoy a moment of levity.

1. School Information

CONTACT INFORMATION

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GRADES SERVED

6-12

YEAR OPENED

2005

MISSION AND VISION

Northern Lights Community School seeks to create a safe, small, and enthusiastic learning community in which all students are known well, taught as individuals, and encouraged to be good stewards of our environment.

- Every student will be treated as a unique individual and will have a personalized learning plan.
- Every student will be ensured a safe, family-oriented learning environment that focuses on continual growth.
- Every student will learn to be an environmental steward and service-oriented citizen.
- Every student will acquire essential life skills to ensure success in the 21st Century.
- Every student will learn through authentic hands-on projects.
- Every student will have autonomy over her or his education as s/he drives toward mastery.

AUTHORIZER INFORMATION

Northern Lights Community School has been authorized by the Audubon Center of the North Woods (ACNW) since summer 2011. The current contract runs through the 2022-2023 school year.

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

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

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2. Implementation of Primary and Additional Statutory Purposes

Northern Lights Community School was established under pre-2013 charter school legislation to address each of the existing statutory purposes. The statutory purposes and NLCS's efforts to fulfill them are listed below.

Note: Charter schools are no longer required to meet all of the following statutory purposes and may choose to focus on just one or two. NLCS has chosen to continue to meet all of them at this time.

1. *Improve pupil learning and student achievement.*

The staff at Northern Lights Community School strives to base curricular and academic decisions on a true and complete understanding of each student's learning. When students enter the school, efforts are made to understand their background knowledge and current skill levels, and then group placements and expectation levels are established to promote achievement. While NLCS students, as an aggregate, tend to perform below grade level on standardized tests of math and reading skills, most show annual academic growth. Students are also evaluated through a variety of rubrics and checklists that indicate mastery of topics such as environmental learning, use of technology, and acquisition of life skills.

2. *Increase learning opportunities for pupils.*

Northern Lights Community School is the only project-based school in Itasca County. As a school of choice, it often attracts students who are interested in a hands-on approach to learning as well as students who are dissatisfied with traditional school approaches. Nearby school districts sponsor a small number of alternative programs, but NLCS continues to be the only local alternative that does not require administrative-backed placements. Alternatives within area traditional school districts do not allow students to choose to attend.

3. *Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods.*

Learning at Northern Lights Community School is student-centered rather than teacher-centered. With completion of authentic projects as the primary way in which students earn credit, teachers are facilitators rather than lecturers. They consider each student's needs and abilities, help students plan and design projects, coach and encourage, and oversee the quality of work. Students, in turn, must become active participants in creating their own learning.

4. *Measure learning outcomes and create different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes.*

All Northern Lights Community School students have portfolios that demonstrate rationale for progress toward graduation. Portfolios create a means for both students and teachers to evaluate progress and reflect on the quality of work. Portfolios also allow students to document work such as service learning or environmental projects that are not measured well with traditional tests and they allow students who are not good test takers to demonstrate mastery of subject matter.

NLCS staff members have also designed a variety of rubrics and checklists that help track students' progress in areas including projects, portfolios, essential life skills, technology proficiency, and environmental literacy.

5. Establish new forms of accountability for schools.

In addition to following the academic progress of students, Northern Lights Community School has used the Hope Survey for the past 11 years to assess the school environment from the perspective of students. Online surveys ask students a variety of questions related to autonomy, belongingness, goal orientation, academic press, engagement, and hope. According to Hope literature, the survey diagnoses whether a school culture has the components that encourage higher levels of engagement in learning. The staff uses results from the previous year's surveys as a basis for setting goals to address specific Hope components.

NLCS also measures satisfaction of both students and parents through annual surveys distributed and collected during the school year. Survey results are discussed among staff and board members and included in annual reports.

6. Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the chance to be responsible for the learning program at the school.

Staff members share responsibility for operation of the school with the director. They meet frequently to coordinate plans and exchange information, and they often mentor one another. Currently, teachers maintain a majority on the school's seven-member board of directors. As board members, they deal not only with the learning program but also with state and federal mandates, finance, and policy creation for the school.

NLCS also has a successful instructional leadership team that is responsible for ensuring student learning. The leadership team meets bi-weekly to address specific needs of the academic program, and it works to hold the program accountable for reaching learning goals. During the 2018-2019 school year, the team included the school director, seven staff members, and a parent. In addition, one teacher served alongside the school director, business manager, and financial advisor on a school finance team.

Teachers at NLCS are required to have a professional learning plan (PLP) that contains at least four goals, two of which address the areas of math and reading. Each teacher is evaluated twice per year based on student performance, lesson observation, and progress on the PLP. Teachers also maintain teaching portfolios. In addition, NLCS promotes a variety of professional development opportunities throughout the school year based on needs established through teacher surveys, student data, and the director's needs assessment. Teachers and staff members have opportunities to play lead roles in developing trainings and workshops.

3. Student Enrollment & Demographics

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Northern Lights Community School has an enrollment cap of 105 students - a number deliberately kept low to facilitate the school's mission. Students typically come from several local school districts including Grand Rapids, Deer River, Hibbing, Hill City, Greenway, and Nashwauk/Keewatin.

Numbers used in the chart below are taken from the October 1 student count. Total ADM is calculated at the end of the school year.

Number of Students Enrolled	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21 (est.)
6th Grade	2	5	7
7th Grade	16	10	9
8th Grade	9	28	9
9th Grade	18	15	27
10th Grade	13	13	17
11th Grade	17	9	13
12th Grade	17	16	10
Total	92	96	92
Total ADM (Average Daily Membership) for year	89.59	94.33	90.26

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

In part because NLCS is a school of choice, some student demographic information differs significantly from other local schools. Special populations information reported by the Minnesota Department of Education for the 2019-2020 school year indicates that almost 55 percent of NLCS students were eligible for special education services, and almost 80 percent were eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Just over seven percent of students were considered homeless. These numbers are considerably higher than those for students in the Grand Rapids School District, the resident district for most NLCS students. Grand Rapids reported that 20 percent of students (K-12) were eligible for special education services; 38.2 percent were eligible for free or reduced-price meals; and the homeless student population was 0.4 percent.

Because only one percent of the student population self-identified as American Indian in 2019-20, NLCS qualified for a small amount of federal funding to implement Indian education programming.

As in other northern Minnesota schools, however, the NLCS student population tends to be primarily white, and the school has never had an opportunity to serve a student who is not proficient in English.

Demographic Trends	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21 (est.)
Total Enrollment	92	95	92
Male	50.5%	54%	48%
Female	49.5%	46%	52%
Special Education	43.5%	54.7%	48.9%
English Learners	0	0	0
Free/Reduced Priced Lunch	75%	78.9%	75%
Black, not of Hispanic Origin	0	0	3.3%
Hispanic/Latino	2.2%	3.2%	0
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0	0
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0	1.1%	8.7%
White, not of Hispanic Origin	83.7%	82.1%	82.6%
Two or More Races	14.1%	13.7%	5.4%

4. Student Attendance, Attrition & Mobility

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Attendance rates throughout the school year are typically high – around 90%. We believe that our

high attendance rate is a point of pride and is proof that our students enjoy coming to school and want to be here. By the end of the year, the overall student attendance rate tends to settle just below 90% after the typical cold and flu season is over and seniors are out of the building more often as they finish their credits early and start seeking employment.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Overall Student Attendance Rate	88.7%	85.3%	80.96%

STUDENT ATTRITION

Northern Lights Community School enrolls students at any time throughout the school year as needed to maintain a total of 105 enrollment. We typically see more movement in and out of our school at the high school level (grades 10 through 12). The younger students (grades 6 through 9) tend to stay put once they enroll. Our high school students come and go due to a variety of reasons including family moving, health problems, job requirements, and credit deficiency. We are not a credit recovery school and students who fall behind sometimes seek out an Area Learning Center or night school program to make up credits.

Percentage of students* who were continuously enrolled between October 1 of the 2018-2019 school year and October 1 of the 2019-20 school year.	68%
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**Graduating students not included*

Percentage of students* who continued enrollment in the school from Spring 2019 to October 1, 2019.	88%
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**Graduating students not included*

STUDENT MOBILITY

	Summer Transfers In	Number of students on Oct. 1	Mid-year Transfers In	Mid-year Transfers Out	Total Mid-year Transfers	Mobility Index* (as a percent)
2016-17	26	106	26	26	52	49%
2017-18	18	106	21	21	42	40%
2018-19	20	92	40	31	71	78%
2019-20**	22	97	5	29	34	35%

* Total mid-year transfers divided by number of students on October 1.

** All numbers are estimated and will not be finalized with MDE until after this report is made.

NLCS sees the most movement in and out of our program at the high school level. Typically, 75% of our population is enrolled in grades 9-12.

Percentage of students who were enrolled for 95% or more of the 2019-20 school year.	58%
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5. Educational Approach & Curriculum

As charged in its mission statement, Northern Lights Community School provides a small and accepting learning community in which students are treated as unique individuals — each with tremendous talent. Every student has a personal learning plan (PLP), and assessments are used to measure progress toward goals. Students' voices and their interests are at the center of all educational decisions.

The core of NLCS's educational approach is authentic learning — work that encourages students to create meaningful and useful products they may share. As described by Audrey Rule in the *Journal of Authentic Learning* (August 2006), the approach has four themes:

1. Performing activities that involve real-world problems and mimic the work of professionals including presenting findings to audiences beyond the classroom;
2. Use of open-ended inquiry, thinking skills and metacognition;
3. Engaging students in written or spoken communication and social learning; and
4. Encouraging students to direct their own learning through project work

NLCS board and staff members believe that students who feel personally connected to what they are learning will be both motivated and empowered to complete high school and move on to work or additional education.

Middle level learners (grades 6–8) focus on goals for reading, math, and essential life skills. They also complete authentic learning projects based on their interests, and they document their work in portfolios. In addition, high school students (grades 9–12) include goals that ensure career and/or college readiness, and they are required to include at least one authentic community-based project in their portfolios.

Students are assigned to an advisory group — the middle school group for students in grades 6-8 or one of three advisories for high school students. All advisories have mixed ages of students. Students in the high school program stay in the same group throughout their high school career. A licensed teacher leads each advisory, and each advisory has a permanent project manager (program paraprofessional) available on a daily basis to work with students individually or in small groups. The advisory system supports the school's effort to ensure that each student is known well.

NLCS offers an extensive array of special services to meet the needs of its students. Five staff members hold certifications in special education, another is licensed in adaptive physical education, several project managers assist special education students within advisory groups, and a licensed teacher oversees the Title I program. The school implements an inclusive special education model. All students with disabilities are provided special instruction and services within the least restrictive setting with a focus on providing support within the advisory classroom. Appropriate plans to meet the special education needs, goals and objectives of a pupil are determined on an individual basis by a team that includes teachers, parents, and the student; and students who require high levels of assistance are provided with one-to-one paraprofessionals to ensure access to the general education curriculum throughout the entire day.

6. Innovative Practices & Implementation

Like all charter schools within the state of Minnesota, NLCS aims to improve pupil learning and achievement. NLCS offers increased learning opportunities for students who have not been

successful in other schools. Staff members use a variety of measures to track student progress during the school year, and they seek ways to help each student improve skills. Constant communication is valued. When a student is not making adequate progress toward earning credits, advisors meet with the student and his or her parents to identify solutions.

A variety of effective practices come together to support the students and staff at Northern Lights Community School. Some of the most apparent are project-based learning, personalized learning, and emphasis on the environment across the curriculum.

Project-based learning is the natural vehicle to carry the kind of authentic learning described in the *Educational Approach & Curriculum* section. Projects incorporate a variety of subject areas and reflect the interests of the students who design and complete them. Students have opportunities to write and talk about their projects. Presentation nights are held during the school year, and projects are represented in students' portfolios. Staff members help students learn how to build better projects, align projects to key learning targets, and increase academic proficiency through advisor-led and individual projects. Advisors work together within their professional learning community to share ideas and develop projects.

Maintaining a small school helps ensure that no students are lost in a crowd, and the advisory system described earlier creates opportunities for good relationship building between adults and students. When teachers and mentors establish supportive, non-threatening relationships with students, they come to know students' talents, backgrounds, self-concepts, aspirations, strengths and priorities. Staff members at NLCS personalize learning by using what they know about students to create challenging and interest-grabbing lessons and projects.

Study of the environment supports both the project-based and personalized learning emphases at NLCS. The following list, adapted from a November 2013 article in Project Learning Tree's *BLOG*, cites advantages of environmental education (EE).

- Environmental education is hands-on and interactive.
- It offers opportunities to work outside the classroom and to see how social, ecological, economic, cultural, and political issues interact.
- It encourages students to do research and use critical thinking skills.
- EE offers opportunities to incorporate state learning standards.
- It helps students develop a sense of place — an appreciation for the area in which they live.
- And it allows students to see the effects of their own actions.

After-school activities for students have included cross-country running, track & field, and archery teams for both boys and girls. NLCS teams compete with teams from other regional schools and are supported with general education funds along with some fund-raising. Licensed coaches supervise teams, and NLCS is registered with the Minnesota State High School League. Due to low interest by students, only archery was offered during the 2019-20 school year.

Additional clubs and activities operated within the school include the following:

- The YES! Club is an environmental club funded with grants and general education funds.
- Journey is a Native American club supervised by staff members. The club promotes understanding and appreciation of Native American cultural practices and traditions.
- Chain Reaction is a student club with a mission to spread kindness. The club puts on events, recognizes students, and creates a culture of kindness at NLCS.
- The NLCS GSA club exists to bring together and recognize lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, and straight youth in a positive and non-judgmental environment where they

can fully express their individuality and share experiences. Their intent is to create alliances that increase awareness, decrease prejudices, and create a safe school atmosphere for all.

- The NLCS student government consists of students elected by their peers to serve as school leaders. Student council representatives help to make school decisions, discuss improvement initiatives, solve student issues, and award grants to students.
- Students also worked together to raise money for field trips. Fundraisers included a haunted house, food sales, a rock-a-thon, bingo games, and more.

Within the environment of a project-based school, a fundraiser such as the annual haunted house involves students in writing, creating props, calculating budgets, and performing. The project helps them earn credits in language arts, drama, technology, service learning, and math.

7. Academic Performance: Goals & Benchmarks

PROGRESS ON ACNW CONTRACTUAL ACADEMIC GOALS & WBWF ALIGNMENT

The World's Best Workforce Bill was passed by the Minnesota legislature in 2013 to ensure that every school district in Minnesota is working to increase student performance. At the middle and high school levels the legislation promotes three goals.

1. All racial and economic achievement gaps between students are closed.
2. All students are ready for career and college.
3. All students graduate from high school.

In addition to the World's Best Workforce benchmarks, several academic and non-academic goals have been established as part of Northern Lights Community School's contract with the Audubon Center of the North Woods. Each of the goals identifies targets for instruction and student achievement.

The goals and measures established in cooperation with the Audubon Center of the North Woods are coded to correspond to World's Best Workforce goals in the following ways:

- Achievement Gap Closure (AGC)
- Career and College Ready (CCR)
- Graduate from High School (GRAD)

Normally, several measures would have been used during the 2019-2020 school year to determine students' progress: Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) tests, Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs), school-developed rubrics, attendance and community service logs, and the Hope Survey. Unfortunately, several end-of-year assessments (such as the MCAs and Hope Survey) could not be administered due to the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent distance learning.

World's Best Workforce (WBWF) Goal Areas:

- **Achievement Gap Closure [AGC]:** All racial and economic achievement gaps between students are closed.
- **Career and College Ready [CCR]:** All students are career-and college-ready before graduating from high school.
- **Graduate from High School [GRAD]:** All students graduate from high school.

Indicator 1: Mission Related Outcomes

Goal: Over the period of the contract, students at Northern Lights Community School (NLCS) will show continued excellence by meeting specific quality expectations on projects presented,

community service hours served, and the Hope Survey.

WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal: CCR

Key Measures & Results for this Goal:

Measure 1.1 – From FY18 to FY19, the aggregate percentage of students who complete a project annually that scores a 3 or higher on each indicator area of the NLCS Project Rubric will be at least 90%.

Results: 88.7%

Measure 1.2 – From FY17 to FY19, the aggregate percentage of students who volunteer at least 25 hours of community service annually will be at least 90%.

Results: 93.3%

Measure 1.3 – From FY17 to FY19, students at NLCS will annually demonstrate growth in the four domains of Belongingness and the domain of Academic Press as measured by the Hope Survey. Overall average growth will be demonstrated in at least four domains each year.

Results: 47.3%*

*due to COVID-19, there was no Hope Survey data for the end of the 2019-20 school year

Indicator 2: English Language Learners

The academic success of all Northern Lights Community School students, including English language learners, is a responsibility shared by teachers, staff members, families and the community at large. NLCS did not have any ELL students enrolled in 2019-20, but guidelines are in place that will hold potential ELL students to the same high learning expectations established for all students.

Like every other student who attends NLCS, an ELL student would have a personalized learning plan. During the initial intake process, the staff would work with the family and student needing ELL services to create a support plan to ensure that individual needs would be met. English learners would be evaluated with appropriate and valid assessments that are aligned to state and local standards and that take into account the language development stages and cultural backgrounds of the individual.

WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal: AGC, CCR, GRAD

Key Measures & Results for this Goal: NLCS has never had an identified ELL student and therefore has no data to report for this goal. An ELL Plan of Service is in place in the event an English Language Learner enrolls at NLCS.

Indicator 3: Reading Growth

School Goal: Over the period of the contract, students at NLCS will demonstrate growth in reading as measured by the state accountability tests and nationally normed assessments.

WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal: CCR

Key Measures & Results for this Goal:

Measure 3.1 – From FY17 to FY19, the average growth z-score for all students on state accountability tests will be equal to or greater than 0.00.

Results: 0.063

Measure 3.2 – From FY17 to FY19, the aggregate percentage of students who achieve a positive z-score on the state accountability tests will be greater than 50.0%

Results: 56.7%

Measure 3.3 – From FY17 to FY19, the aggregate percentage of students in grades 6-10 who meet their fall to winter, fall to spring, or winter to spring NWEA RIT expected growth target will be at least 60%.

Results: 80.2%

Measure 3.4 – From FY17 to FY19, the aggregate percentage of students in grades 11-12 who show continued growth from the fall to winter, fall to spring, or winter to spring NWEA MAP assessments will be at least 75%.

Results: 70.8%

Indicator 4: Math Growth

School Goal: Over the period of the contract, students at NLCS will demonstrate growth in math as measured by the state accountability tests and nationally normed assessments.

WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal: CCR

Key Measures & Results for this Goal:

Measure 4.1 – From FY17 to FY19, the average growth z-score for all students on state accountability tests will be equal to or greater than 0.00.

Results: -0.388

Measure 4.2 – From FY17 to FY19, the aggregate percentage of students who achieve a positive z-score on the state accountability tests will be greater than 50.0%

Results: 36.8%

Measure 4.3 – From FY17 to FY19, the aggregate percentage of students in grades 6-10 who meet their fall to winter, fall to spring, or winter to spring NWEA RIT expected growth target will be at least 60%.

Results: 74.3%

Measure 4.4 – From FY17 to FY19, the aggregate percentage of students in grades 11-12 who show continued growth from the fall to winter, fall to spring, or winter to spring NWEA MAP assessments will be at least 75%.

Results: 72.5%

Indicator 5: Reading Proficiency

School Goal: Over the period of the contract, students at NLCS will demonstrate proficiency in reading as measured by the state accountability tests.

WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal: CCR, AGC

Key Measures & Results for this Goal:

Measure 5.1 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score for students in grades 6-8 and 10 will increase by at least 5.0 points from baseline proficiency index score (FY14-16 baseline – 50.0) OR will be greater than that of the state for the same grades (6-8 & 10).

Results: 49.3 NLCS - 50.0 baseline = -.07 49.3 NLCS – 70.3 GR = -21

Measure 5.2 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score for students in grades 6-8 and 10 will be greater than that of the resident district (ISD 318 – Grand Rapids) for the same grades (6-8 & 10).

Results: 49.3 NLCS – 73.8 GR = -24.5

Measure 5.3 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score for students in the Free/Reduced Priced Lunch subgroup will be greater than that of the state for the same subgroup and the same grades (6-8 & 10).

Results: 53.3 NLCS – 53 state = +0.30

Measure 5.4 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score for students in the Free/Reduced Priced Lunch subgroup will be greater than that of the resident district (ISD 318 – Grand Rapids) for the same subgroup and the same grades (6-8 & 10).

Results: 53.3 NLCS – 62.6 GR = -9.3

Measure 5.5 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score for students in the Special Education subgroup will be greater than that of the state for the same subgroup and the same grades (6-8 & 10).

Results: 40.9 NLCS – 37 state = +3.9

Measure 5.6 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score for students in the Special Education subgroup will be greater than that of the resident district (ISD 318 – Grand Rapids) for the same subgroup and the same grades (6-8 & 10).

Results: *Sample size too small to score.*

Indicator 6: Math Proficiency

School Goal: Over the period of the contract, students at NLCS will demonstrate proficiency in math as measured by the state accountability tests.

WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal: CCR, AGC

Key Measures & Results for this Goal:

Measure 6.1 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score for students in grades 6-8 and 11 will increase by at least 8.0 points from baseline proficiency index score (FY14-16 baseline – 21.4) OR will be greater than that of the state for the same grades (6-8 & 10).

Results: 24.7 NLCS – 21.4 baseline = +3.3 24.7 NLCS – 65.4 state = -40.7

Measure 6.2 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score for students in grades 6-8 and 11 will be greater than that of the resident district (ISD 318 – Grand Rapids) for the same grades (6-8 & 10).

Results: 24.7 NLCS – 66.9 GR = -42.2

Measure 6.3 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score for students in the Free/Reduced Priced Lunch subgroup will be greater than that of the state for the same subgroup and the same grades (6-8 & 11).

Results: 26.4 NLCS – 45.7 state = -19.3

Measure 6.4 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score for students in the Free/Reduced Priced Lunch subgroup will be greater than that of the resident district (ISD 318 – Grand Rapids) for the same subgroup and the same grades (6-8 & 11).

Results: 26.4 NLCS – 56.9 GR = -30.5

Measure 6.5 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score for students in the Special Education subgroup will be greater than that of the state for the same subgroup and the same grades (6-8 & 11).

Results: 25.0 NLCS – 32.2 state = -7.2

Measure 6.6 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score for students in the Special Education subgroup will be greater than that of the resident district (ISD 318 – Grand Rapids) for the same subgroup and the same grades (6-8 & 11).

Results: 25.0 NLCS – 49.8 state = -24.8

Indicator 7: Science Proficiency (and Growth)

School Goal: Over the period of the contract, students at NLCS will demonstrate proficiency in science as measured by the state accountability tests.

WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal: CCR, AGC

Key Measures & Results for this Goal:

Measure 7.1 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score for students in grades 8 and high school will increase by at least 6.0 points from baseline proficiency index score (FY14-16 baseline – 42.6) OR will be greater than that of the state for the same grades (8 & High School).

Results: 38.8 NLCS – 42.6 baseline = -3.8 38.8 NLCS – 63.3 state = -24.5

Measure 7.2 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score for students in grades 8 and High School will be greater than that of the resident district (ISD 318 – Grand Rapids) for the same grades (8 & High School).

Results: 38.8 NLCS – 67.6 GR = -28.8

Measure 7.3 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score for students in the Free/Reduced Priced Lunch subgroup will be greater than that of the state for the same subgroup and the same grades (8 & High School).

Results: 37.5 NLCS – 40.9 state = -3.4

Measure 7.4 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score for students in the Free/Reduced Priced Lunch subgroup will be greater than that of the resident district (ISD 318 – Grand Rapids) for the same subgroup and the same grades (8 & High School).

Results: 37.5 NLCS – 58 GR = -20.5

Measure 7.5 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score for students in the Special Education subgroup will be greater than that of the state for the same subgroup and the same grades (8 & High School).

Results: 16.7 NLCS – 36 state = -19.3

Measure 7.6 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate proficiency index score for students in the Special Education subgroup will be greater than that of the resident district (ISD 318 – Grand Rapids) for the same subgroup and the same grades (8 & High School).

Results: 16.7 NLCS – 51 GR = -34.3

Measure 7.7 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate percentage of students who demonstrate proficiency (i.e., earn a score of at least 75.0% on curriculum-based assessments) in science-related courses will be at least 90.0%.

Results: 86.8%

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

School Goal: Over the period of the contract, students at NLCS will demonstrate proficiency in other key subject areas as measured by curriculum-based assessments and other local measures.

WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal: CCR

Key Measures & Results for this Goal:

Measure 8.1 – From FY18 to FY19, the aggregate percentage of essays with a score of 4 or higher on each indicator area of the WiLATA rubric will be at least 90.0%. Each student enrolled October 1 through the end of the school year will have their eight highest scoring essays included in this measure.

Results: 95%

Measure 8.2 – From FY17 to FY19, the aggregate percentage of high school students who demonstrate technology proficiency by completing the technology skills checklist will be at least 90.0%

Results: 100%

Indicator 9: Post-Secondary Readiness

School Goal: Over the period of the contract, students at NLCS will demonstrate readiness for post-secondary success.

WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal: GRAD, CCR

Key Measures & Results for this Goal:

Measure 9.1 – From FY17 to FY19, the aggregate 4-year graduation rate will be at least 67%.

Results: 69.0%

Measure 9.2 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate 4-year graduation rate will be equal to or greater than that of the resident district (ISD 318 – Grand Rapids).

Results: 69% NLCS – 90.9% GR = -21.9

Measure 9.3 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate 5-year graduation rate will be equal to or greater than that of the resident district (ISD 318- Grand Rapids).

Results: 71.1% NLCS – 93.6% GR = -22.5

Measure 9.4 – From FY17 to FY19, the school’s aggregate 6-year graduation rate will be equal to or greater than that of the resident district (ISD 318 – Grand Rapids).

Results: 73% NLCS – 93.5% GR = -20.5

Measure 9.5 – From FY17 to FY19, the aggregate percentage of graduates who demonstrate career and/or college readiness by completing their school story autobiography, resume, cover letter, career exploration, career WiLATA essay, mock job interview, job application, and senior project will be at least 90%.

Results: 100%

Indicator 10: Attendance

School Goal: Over the period of the contract, students at NLCS will attend school at high rates.

Key Measures & Results for this Goal:

Measure 10.1 – From FY17 to FY19, the average of the school’s annual attendance rates will be at least 92%.

Results: 88%

Federal and State Accountability

Summary of the World’s Best Workforce data profile:

8th Grade Math Scores

Counts Too Small to Report (CTSTR)

Achievement Gap Data

Subject	Student Group	2018 % Achieving	2019 % Achieving*	2019 Count Proficient*	2025 Goal
Math	All	12.8%	2.50%	1	90%
Math	White	9.7%	2.70%	1	85%
Math	Free/Red.	13.3%	0	0	85%
Reading	All	34.1%	2.56%	1	90%
Reading	White	30.3%	2.85%	1	85%
Reading	Free/Red.	40.0%	3.84%	1	85%

*A large portion of the student population “opted out” of testing in the spring of 2019.

Graduation Rates

Student Group	2018 Four Year Rate	2019 Four Year Rate	2019 Four Year Graduate Count	2020 Goal	2019 Seven Year Rate
All Students	77.3%	76.9%	10	90.0%	83%

Teacher Equity Data

Percent of Staff Inexperienced 2019*	Percent of Classes Taught by an Educator Out of Field 2019	Percent of Staff without an Advanced Degree 2019	Poverty Quartile	Minority Quartile
16.67%	36.54%	41.67%	Highest	-

*An “inexperienced” teacher is defined as a teacher who has been employed for three years or less.

High Quality Charter School Status:

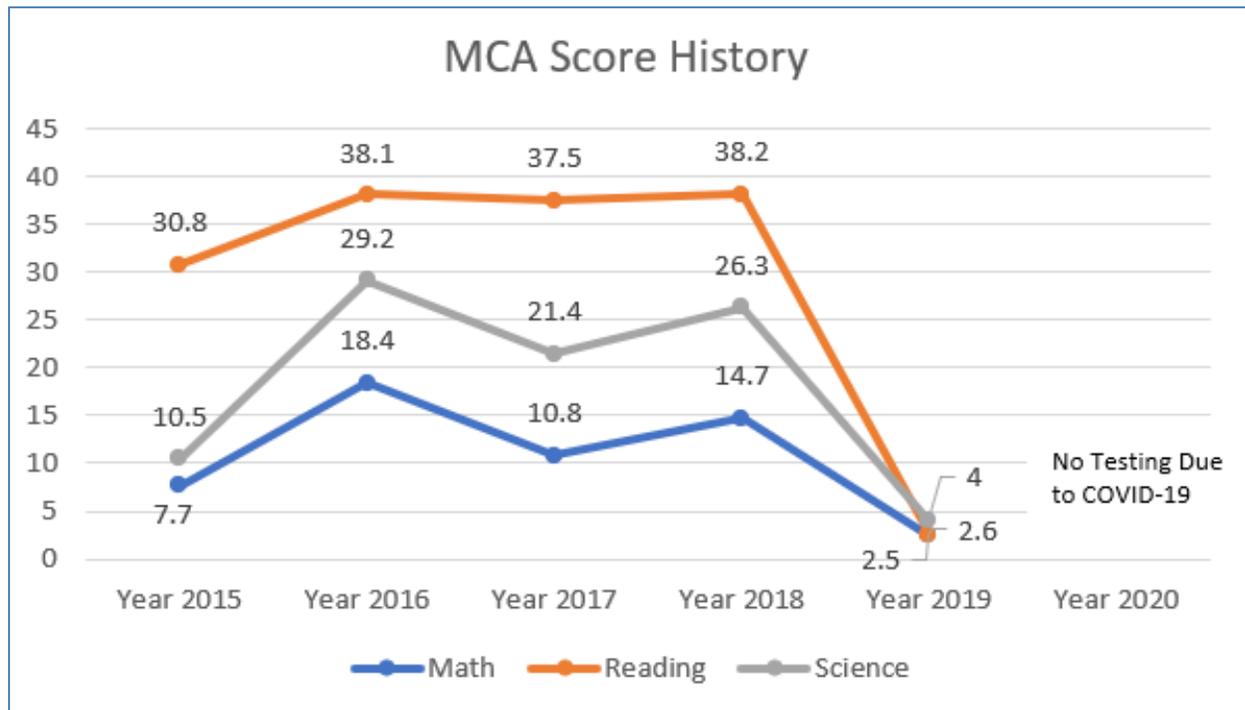
Northern Lights Community School does not qualify as a “High Quality” charter school for the purposes of the Federal CSP replication/significant expansion grant.

ESSA Identification:

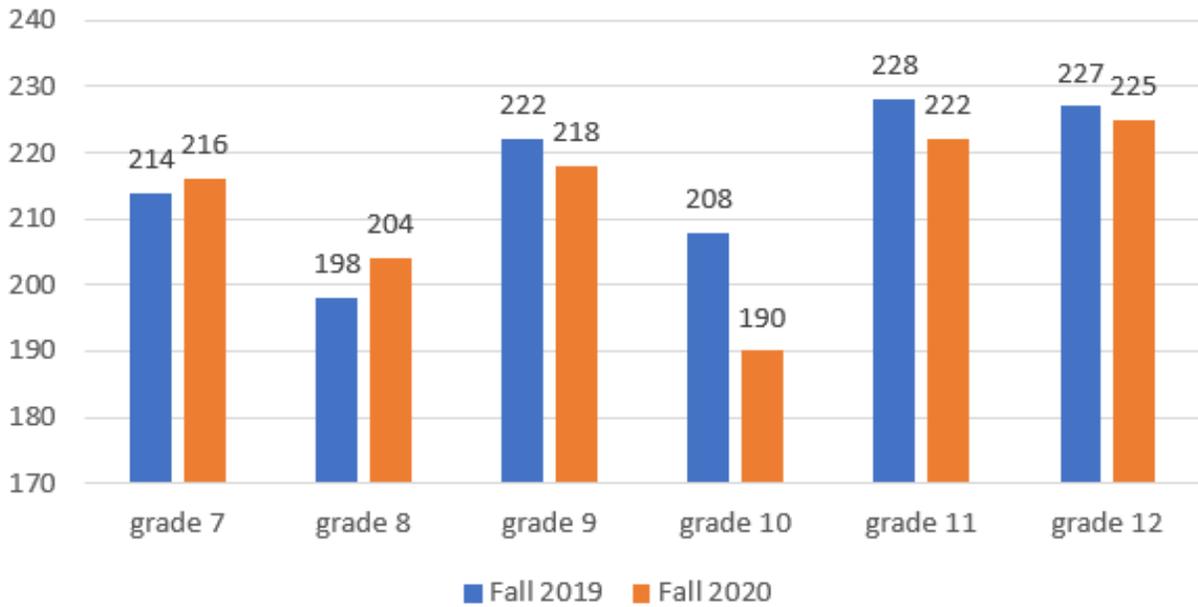
Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) legislation, NLCS has not been identified as a school in need of additional/outside support.

ADDITIONAL ACADEMIC DATA

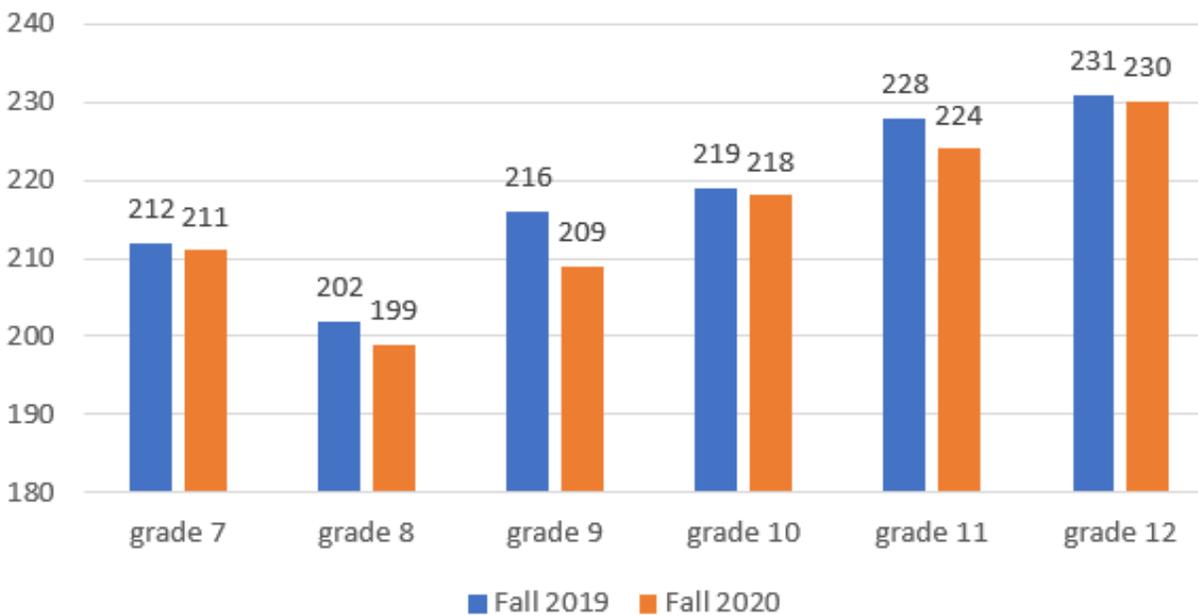
Northern Lights Community School draws students from eight area school districts and enrolls new students throughout the school year. Although we recognize the importance and legitimacy of the annual, state-required MCA tests, we also know we don’t have much control over the education students receive before they enter our program. We set academic goals in regard to proficiency testing (MCA tests), but we also set growth goals using the NWEA MAP testing that occurs three times each year to measure our success. Our past MCA scores were showing some growth, but then dropped significantly in 2018-19 due to an unusually high opt-out rate by the parents/guardians of our students. The MCA tests were not administered in the spring of 2020 due to COVID-19. The NWEA MAP testing results show some growth in math at the lower grade levels from fall of 2019 to fall of 2020, but mostly slight losses. We attribute these losses from one year to the next to the disruption in school due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite our best efforts, we did not have direct access to our students after February 2020.



NWEA MAP Math - Fall '19 to Fall '20



NWEA MAP Reading - Fall '19 to Fall '20



8. Educational Effectiveness: Assessment & Evaluation

As documented in other sections of this annual report, assessment and evaluation are an integral part of everything that happens at Northern Lights Community School. Students and staff members are constantly measuring and making decisions based on their discoveries.

Assessments take many forms including checklists, observations, rubrics, standardized tests, surveys, and pre and post-experience curriculum-based exams. When the question “How will we know we have achieved this?” comes up, someone devises an appropriate measure.

The following topics touch on processes and systems currently in place at the school. There is some repetition since many of the areas are also included in other parts of this report.

2019-2020 Areas of Need

Based upon the reflections of staff members and records of students’ progress on academic goals, areas of need identified at the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year included continuing to strengthen the mathematics program, helping students increase reading skills, continuing work to tie seminars and student projects to core educational requirements, and maintaining acceptable student behavior expectations.

Assessing and Evaluating Each Student’s Progress

The Northern Lights Community School staff seeks to identify both the strengths and needs of individual students. All types of assessments including standardized tests and locally created rubrics are used to gather evidence of progress. A key element, however, is the fact that students tend to be known well within a small school community. Advisors and project managers play key roles in building upon students’ strengths and ensuring their academic progress, and each student has a personal learning plan that includes academic, behavioral and social goals. Personal learning plans are revisited throughout the academic year and twice during student-led conferences with each student’s family.

Reviewing and Evaluating Instruction and Curriculum

An instructional leadership team (ILT) made up of teachers and the school director meets monthly throughout the school year. The team is responsible for analyzing formative and summative learning data and then planning and implementing school-wide initiatives for instruction.

Strategies for Improving Instruction, Curriculum, and Student Achievement

All teachers at Northern Lights Community School participate in the NLCS Professional Learning Community that meets for an hour and a half each month. Purposes of the PLC include creating solutions related to student concerns, growing as professionals, sharing resources, and meeting school goals. Meetings are also designed to provide training on topics such as proctoring exams, using Project Foundry software to track students’ projects, and building project-based learning teaching skills. The school offers additional staff development opportunities throughout the school year.

Finally, as described in the *Implementation of Primary and Additional Statutory Purposes* section, NLCS teachers are required to have annual professional learning plans, and they each maintain teaching portfolios.

Effective Practices

Within Northern Lights Community School, there is an expectation that all staff members hold high expectations for students. In addition to other practices related to student and staff assessments and professional development mentioned throughout this report, the common goal of promoting student success is pursued in a variety of ways:

- The school lives by its mission. The focus remains on creating a safe and small learning community in which individuals are valued. While the mission was written with students in mind, it applies as well to staff members.
- Student learning is a priority, and staff members work to help students understand how to set and achieve learning goals. By concentrating on individual talents and interests, advisors help students set goals that are meaningful and reachable.
- Requirements for success are clear; and do-overs are an accepted means of eliminating failure.
- Staff members are full participants in operation of the school, and they share responsibility for the quality of education it provides to students.

Equitable Distribution of Experienced and Qualified Teachers

Northern Lights Community School, by deliberate design, is a small school in which each student is known well as an individual. It is also a school of choice. Teachers who work at NLCS, as well as students who enroll here, are at the school because they want to be, not because outsiders have assigned them there.

By virtue of the school's design and the staff's experience, all students work with experienced and qualified teachers. In 2019-20, NLCS had 16 staff members who held licenses in various areas (teaching, Special Education, social work, administration) with the Minnesota Department of Education.

% of Experienced Educators (more than 3 years)	% of Teachers Teaching Within Their Licensure	% of Teachers with Advanced Degrees
81.3%	100%	48.6%

Strategies to Increase Equitable Access to Effective and Diverse Teachers

Northern Lights unfortunately suffers from a lack of diversity in the employee candidate pool due to the geographic location of the school. Where a school within the Twin Cities metro area might receive 200 applications for an available teaching position, it is not unusual for NLCS to receive three or less (and sometimes none). The colleges and universities with teacher prep programs are generally located in larger metro areas, and the pay and benefits offered by a small, rural charter school are just not attractive enough to compel many people to move to a more remote area of the state. Certainly, a diverse workforce is a priority, but for now we take what we can get.

9. Student & Parent Satisfaction

Surveys of students and parents indicate high levels of satisfaction with Northern Lights Community School. For some students who have not succeeded in other public schools, NLCS offers a new environment in which to do well.

The following survey data was taken from the 2019 Minnesota Student Survey:

- 93% of students indicated that an adult at NLCS has helped them think about education options after high school
- 76% of students said they care about doing well in school most to all of the time
- 77% agreed to strongly agreed that things they learn in school are useful
- 91% agreed to strongly agreed that overall, adults at NLCS treat students fairly
- 85% agreed to strongly agreed that adults at NLCS listen to them
- 94% agreed to strongly agreed that teachers at NLCS care about students
- 97% agreed to strongly agreed that teachers at NLCS are interested in them as a person

The following survey data was taken from the 2018 SPARK Youth Voice Survey:

- 83% of students felt that teachers at NLCS push them to be their best often or very often (compared to 69% reported in participating Itasca County schools)
- 72% of students felt that NLCS teachers provide the support they need to help get things done (compared to 59% reported in participating Itasca County schools)
- 73% reported that teachers and staff at NLCS accept them for who they are (compared to 69% reported in participating Itasca County schools)
- 89% of NLCS students reported they care about school (compared to 69% reported in participating Itasca County schools)
- 74% of NLCS students reported the main reason for working hard at school is to learn new knowledge and skills (compared to 57% reported in participating Itasca County schools)

Parent surveys were distributed to parents and guardians during the 2016-17 school year. A new survey was intended to be given to parents at the end of the 2019-20 school year, but our spring parent conferences/open house was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 100% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that NLCS is the best school their sons or daughters have attended.
- 100% agreed or strongly agreed that their son or daughter's advisor really cares about him or her.
- 100% agreed or strongly agreed that their child is safer at NLCS than at other schools he or she attended in the past.
- 98% agreed or strongly agreed that their child learns more at NLCS than at other schools s/he has attended.
- 100% agreed or strongly agreed that their questions and concerns are answered and addressed by NLCS staff members.
- 100% agreed or strongly agreed that their child's advisor challenges him or her to do their best.
- 100% agreed or strongly agreed that learning through projects at NLCS prepares their son or daughter for "the real world."
- 100% agreed or strongly agreed that their son or daughter feels successful at NLCS.
- 100% agreed or strongly agreed that their son or daughter is "allowed to be their own person" at NLCS.
- 100% agreed or strongly agreed that their son or daughter has a better understanding of the environment since enrolling at NLCS.

10. Environmental Education

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

Northern Lights Community School strives to help students be environmentally aware and responsible citizens. The staff supports the idea that students are better equipped to understand needs on a global scale when they have a strong understanding of how their school affects the local community. NLCS offers environmental science through curriculum-based and standards-aligned seminars that involve inquiry, place-based activities, problem solving, and stewardship. A seminar is offered during each block of the school year, and each has both pre and post-assessment activities to measure student learning. Evaluation methods include the NLCS project rubric, NLCS seminar curriculum-based assessments, staff data tracking, and field experiences. NLCS students also have many opportunities to interact with nature in Itasca County, as well as on occasional trips out of the region. At the same time, they are constantly exposed to environmentally positive practices right on the school campus. In addition to the greenhouse, garden, and community recycling center, there are visible efforts to conserve energy such as use of LED lighting and motion sensors, and attempts to use renewable energy via passive solar, solar voltaic and the geothermal heating system. Students see daily evidence that their school not only talks about the environment, but also makes an effort to support it.

NLCS is a member of the International Green Schools Alliance — a worldwide effort that involves schools in sharing and implementing ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In recent years, students have created a recycling center open to community use and have taken on the task of measuring and finding use for waste material from the breakfast and lunch program. Their hands-on efforts to help the school and community also provide real reasons to use math and communications skills. In addition, current students can access and use data about the school's solar voltaic system through their computers or via the NLCS website.

Staff members continue to learn about different aspects of environmental education through trainings and workshops during the school year, and they work to incorporate environmental education practices throughout the NLCS curriculum. To measure the effectiveness of the school's emphasis on environmental learning, NLCS has several Environmental Education goals in place and the board gets quarterly EE reports from the EE coordinators.

Challenges to maintaining an environmental education program are similar to those of maintaining other effective practices within a project-based school: professional development, curriculum mapping, finding ways to integrate environmental education in the often-tested academic areas of reading and math, and finding ways to fund all of the interesting initiatives staff members and students would like to pursue.

Successes for the 2019-20 school year included:

1. NLCS YES Club took 1st place in the NE Regional Competition
2. NLCS YES Club took 2nd place at the State Championship
3. Staff cleaned up garbage for Adopt-a-Highway campaign
4. Students tracked daily compost and hydration station usage
5. Rainbow trout were raised and released as part of Trout in the Classroom
6. Students maintained a phenology walk on the property that is open to the public
7. Most advisories implemented Nature Journaling as part of their lesson plans

11. Governance & Management – Includes Annual Board Training & Administrator Professional Development Report(s)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Northern Lights Community School Board of Directors had 11 regular monthly meetings during the 2019-2020 school year. In addition to board members, Mike Hamernick (the school’s director) and Becky McCauley (the school’s business manager) typically attended meetings in person. The school’s financial advisor, Todd Netzke, participated via phone or video conference. After approval, board minutes were posted on the school’s website (www.nlcschool.org).

The board of directors met on the third Tuesday of the month and provided oversight for finance, operations, and academic aspects of the school. A typical meeting included examination of current financial data, a report from the school director (operations, environmental projects, academic data), and a review of one or more school policies. The board holds the NLCS director responsible for day-to-day operation of the school, and each year board members evaluate the director’s work through a process defined by school policy.

The election of board members occurs at the October annual meeting.*

Current Board Membership Table:

Member Name	Board Position	Affiliation	Date Elected/ Re-Elected	Date Seated	Term End Date	E-mail Address
Karen Howell	Member	Teacher/ Founder	10/29/19	Sept. 2006	Oct. 2022	Fleming5216@gmail.com
Courtney Johnson	Vice-Chair	Community Member	10/27/20	May 2020	Oct. 2020	Courtney.johnson@nlcschool.org
Josie Pitts-Lobe	Chair & Treasurer	Teacher	10/23/18	Oct. 2012	Oct. 2021	josieleepitts@gmail.com
Shannon Zozgornik	Member	Community Member	10/23/18	Sep. 2016	Oct. 2021	zozgornik@hotmail.com
Donna Hanson-Kaasa	Secretary	Teacher	10/29/19	Oct. 2019	Oct. 2022	lkhanson@paulbunyan.net
Shelly Eichorn	Member	Parent	10/29/19	Oct. 2019	Oct. 2022	Shelly.eichorn@nlcschool.org
Aimee Love	Member	Teacher	10/23/18	Oct. 2018	Oct. 2021	alove@nlcschool.org

* Updated to include Oct. 27, 2020, election results.

Board Training and Development

The school board members followed a training schedule set at the beginning of the school year that covered all required areas for new members and fostered continued learning and development of the board. Most in-house trainings were taken from the book *Charter School Board University* by Brian L. Carpenter, Ph.D. Some members sought out individual training at off-site conferences throughout the year. Several board members attended the annual Audubon Leadership Conference in November of 2019.

Initial Training

All board members who served prior to the 2019-2020 school year completed board training required by the Minnesota Department of Education on the dates included in the chart below. The newest members (Hanson-Kaasa, Johnson, Eichorn) are currently working on the initial training requirements.

Initial Training				
Board Member Name	Original Date Seated	Board's Role & Responsibilities	Employment Policies & Practices	Financial Management
Karen Fleming	Sept. 2006	June 2006 EdVisions Summer Institute	June 2006 EdVisions Summer Institute	June 2006 EdVisions Summer Institute
Josie Pitts-Lobe	Oct. 2012	10/10/2012 Charles Speiker	10/10/2012 Charles Speiker	10/10/2012 Charles Speiker
Shannon Zozgornik	Sept. 2016	10/25/2016 Art Norton	11/12/2016 Beth Finch	1/17/2017 Zach McNeil
Aimee Love	Oct. 2018	1/16/19 MSBA	1/16/19 MSBA	1/16/19 MSBA
Donna Hanson-Kaasa	Oct. 2019	1/15/20 MSBA	1/15/20 MSBA	1/15/20 MSBA
Courtney Johnson	May 2020	6/17/20 MACS	6/24/20 MACS	6/23/20 MACS
Shelly Eichorn	Oct. 2019	3/14/20 MACS	4/21/20 MACS	2/19/20 MACS

Annual Training

After completion of the three required trainings within 12 months of being seated, every charter school board member shall attend annual training throughout the member's term.

Annual Training – FY20			
Board Member Name	Date of Training	Training Title or Topic	Presenter or Trainer
Karen Howell	12/17/2019	Ways Your Board Can Get in Trouble Without Even Trying	Charter School Board University
Josie Pitts-Lobe	12/17/2019	Ways Your Board Can Get in Trouble Without Even Trying	Charter School Board University
Shannon Zozgornik	12/17/2019	Ways Your Board Can Get in Trouble Without Even Trying	Charter School Board University

Aimee Love	12/17/2019	Ways Your Board Can Get in Trouble Without Even Trying	Charter School Board University
	8/1/2020	Embracing Resiliency Amidst Disruption	Osprey Wilds
	8/4/2020	Understanding the Authorizer-School Relationship	Osprey Wilds
	8/4/2020	Charter School Employment: Policies and Practices	Osprey Wilds
	8/4/2020	Open Meeting Law and You	Osprey Wilds
	9/1/2020	Charter School Board Members COVID Conversation	Osprey Wilds

MANAGEMENT

Northern Lights Community School is a member of EdVisions Cooperative. For a fee, EdVisions provides payroll services, human resource oversight, HR training, teacher re-licensure, and includes NLCS in an insurance program. Faculty members may also participate in staff development activities such as conversation days that are sponsored by the cooperative.

A five-member personnel team meets as needed to interview potential employees and make recommendations to the board. Members in 2019-2020 included Karen Fleming (board and staff member), Henry Chung (technology coordinator), Josie Pitts-Lobe (SPED coordinator), Mike Hamernick (director), and Becky McCauley (business manager).

The school also has a four-member finance committee that meets to review spending and budgets and prepare recommendations for the board. Finance committee members during 2019-2020 included Mike Hamernick (director), Todd Netzke (financial consultant), Becky McCauley (business manager), and Josie Pitts (board treasurer).

Day-to-day operation of the school is the responsibility of the licensed teaching staff (NLCS is a teacher-led program) with oversight from the school director. The director takes direction from, and is evaluated by, the school board.

The 2019-20 school year saw very low turnover in staffing. Three employees, including one of the licensed teaching staff, left at the end of the year. Although it was inconvenient to have staff leave, it did open the opportunity to make some budget-related decisions to improve the teaching and learning for 2020-21.

LIST OF ADMINISTRATORS/QUALIFICATIONS

Director – Mike D. Hamernick

Mike Hamernick spent the first sixteen years of his career in education as a high school English teacher at the Area Learning Center in the White Bear Lake School District. He has a Masters in Education through Saint Mary’s University and holds a Minnesota K-12 Principal’s license. Mike successfully completed the two-year University of Minnesota Principals Leadership Academy program in June of 2019.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR: Mike D. Hamernick, Director

Mike Hamernick joined the Northern Lights Community School staff as director in August of 2016. The following section details work on personal development goals he set in fall 2019.

Professional Development Goals/Areas of Focus for 2019-20:

1. Continue to work with the Itasca Area School Collaborative (IASC) to better support NLCS initiatives.
2. Implement an effective, school-wide reading program
3. Create opportunities for the Leadership Team to discuss academic level issues rather than housekeeping items
4. Find ways to bring Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) on board
5. Assess and improve math instruction

Activities Completed/Progress/Results for 2019-20:

1. Mike attended most of the monthly IASC Administrative Committee meetings. NLCS will continue to maintain relationships with local districts
2. Accelerated Reader (Renaissance) was used school-wide. Staff development on AR occurred twice during the year.
3. The Leadership Team created a monthly agenda that highlighted academic items vs housekeeping, with an emphasis on focusing on academic discussions as much as possible
4. A grant for SEL instruction was awarded to NLCS by the MN Dept. of Human Services.
5. Changes were made to better accommodate math instruction and movement from one level to another by students.

Professional Development Goals/Areas of Focus for 2020-21:

1. Develop, advocate for, and enact a shared vision for high student achievement supported by a culture of high expectations and family engagement
2. Provide instructional leadership for high student academic performance
3. Develop and maintain a high-quality, effective staff
4. Demonstrate ethical personal leadership through relationship building, effective communication, and self-reflection
6. Strategically manage and monitor school systems and operations
7. Create opportunities for staff to collaborate and evaluate each other as teachers
8. Keep the focus on academic improvement and data
9. Add elements of Social and Emotional Learning to our offerings
10. Make the current reading program to be more robust and less dependent on a software program

12. Staffing

Most of the advisors and project managers for the 2019-2020 school year were Northern Lights Community School veterans. One of the advisors, who was a key planner in the years leading up to opening the school, has been part of the teaching staff since NLCS began operating in 2005.

Because total student enrollment is only 105, the school maintains a small teaching staff. As a result, all teachers spend part of each day teaching or advising outside their area of licensure, and the school annually applies for and receives waivers from the Minnesota Board of Teaching to “facilitate delivery of an innovative program.” A list of licensed teachers follows.

2019-20 Staffing

2019-20 Licensed Teaching Staff				
Name	File #	License and Assignment (subject/grades)	2020-21 Status*	Comments
Molly Bartel	510172	5-12 Agricultural Ed.	R	Advisor with waiver
LaDonna Hanson-Kaasa	393851	K-12 PE K-12 Adapted PE	R	Advisor with waiver
Karen Howell	404331	5-12 Comm. Arts/Lit.	R	Advisor with waiver
Donald Vidal	335136	K-12 Band 5-12 Classroom Music	R	
Thomas Massich	421831	K-6 Elementary Ed. 5-8 Comm. Arts/Lit.	NR	SPED support with waiver
Vangie Mattfield	373053	7-12 Mathematics	R	Math Teacher/Title I Math
Amanda Hakala	504135	5-8 Science 9-12 Life Sciences 5-12 Social Studies (ALL)	R	Advisor with waiver
Josie Pitts-Lobe	458734	SPED Coordinator/ Case Manager	R	
Lori Hutchins	261154	SPED Case Manager	R	
Katherine Christel Rowe	288183	SPED Case Manager	R	
Ryan Melhus	1001945	SPED Case Manager	R	
Jill Hawk	285762	Project Manager	R	.50 FTE SPED Teacher

* R = Returning, NR = Not Returning

2019-20 Teacher Professional Development Activities:

Professional development is a priority at NLCS. A professional development plan is created each school year based on teacher surveys, student data, and input from the director. One Monday each month, teachers participate in a practical training that covers a topic identified by the staff. Teachers and other staff members have opportunities to play lead roles in the trainings and workshops, and continuing education credits are awarded for participation.

Each teacher at NLCS is required to have a professional learning plan that contains at least four goals — two of which address the areas of math and reading. Teachers are evaluated twice a year on the following items: performance, lesson observation, and progress on their professional learning plans. Each teacher also has a teaching portfolio created around requirements established by the leadership team.

Specific professional development activities during the 2019-2020 school year included the following:

- Staff members attended the annual Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs conference in Duluth, MN.
- Staff attended virtual leadership conferences Sponsored by Osprey Wilds

- Staff attended a Project-Based Learning conference in Henderson, MN.*
- Staff attended several environmental education related conferences throughout the state.*
- Staff members attended a variety of other professional development activities based on their individual interests and needs.*

*Due to the COVID -19 pandemic, many of the conferences that were scheduled to be held in person, were ultimately held virtually.

Teacher Retention:

Northern Lights Community School has historically had a high retention rate for licensed teaching and Special Education staff. The most turnover tends to occur at the paraprofessional level as needs change frequently depending on student enrollment. The 2019-20 School year saw a below average attrition rate.

Percentage of Licensed Teachers from 2019-20 not returning in 2020-21	6%
------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

2019-20 Other Licensed (non-teaching) Staff				
Name	File #	License and Assignment	2020-21 Status*	Comments
Mike D. Hamernick	365871	Director	R	
Tamera Pulver	412668	SPED Director	R	
Aimee Love	477317	Social Worker	R	
Janice Lippitt	413046	School Psychologist	R	Contracted
Gail Otteson	298752	Substitute Teacher	R	

* R = Returning, NR = Not Returning

2019-20 Non-Licensed Staff			
Name	Assignment	2020-21 Status*	Comments
Kelly Broberg	Paraprofessional	R	
Heather Bunes	Paraprofessional	R	
Amie Hulbert	Paraprofessional	R	
Emily Norton	Paraprofessional	R	
Ben Muchler	Head Cook	R	
Henry Chung	Technology	R	
Loretta Hamm	Project Manager	R	
Benita Hassell	Project Manager	R	
Victoria Kepler	Project Manager	R	
C.J. McConahy	Project Manager	R	
Becky McCauley	Business Manager	NR	
Cynthia Schroeder	Office Manager	R	
Chuck Burress	Custodian	NR	

* R = Returning, NR = Not Returning

CURRENT YEAR - 2020-21 Staffing

2020-21 Licensed Teaching Staff			
Name	File #	License and Assignment (subject/grades)	Comments
Molly Bartell	510172	5-12 Agricultural Ed.	Advisor
LaDonna Hanson	393851	K-12 PE K-12 Adapted PE	Advisor with waiver
Amanda Hakala	504135	5-8 Science 9-12 Life Sciences 5-12 Social Studies (ALL)	Advisor with waiver
Karen Howell	404331	5-12 Comm. Arts/Lit.	Advisor with waiver
Donald Vidal	335136	K-12 Band 5-12 Classroom Music	
Vangie Mattfield	373053	7-12 Mathematics	Math Teacher/Title I Math
Tobi Taylor	474009	5-12 Mathematics K-12 Library Media Spec.	Part-Time Online Math Support
Josie Pitts-Lobe	458734	SPED Coordinator/ Case Manager	
Lori Hutchins	261154	SPED Case Manager	
Katherine Christel Rowe	288783	SPED Case Manager	
Ryan Melhus	1001945	SPED Case Manager	
Jill Hawk	285762	Project Manager	.50 FTE Teacher

2020-21 Other Licensed (non-teaching) Staff			
Name	File #	Assignment	Comments
Mike D. Hamernick	365871	Director	
Tamera Pulver	412668	SPED Director	Contracted
Aimee Love	477317	Social Worker	
Janice Lippitt	413046	School Psychologist	Contracted
Gail Otteson	298752	Substitute	

2020-21 Non-Licensed Staff		
Name	Assignment	Comments
Kelly Broberg	Paraprofessional	
Heather Bunes	Paraprofessional	
Amie Hulbert	Paraprofessional	
Emily Norton	Paraprofessional	
Kaitlyn Kessler	Paraprofessional	
Taylor Shepard	Paraprofessional	
Madison Shepard	Paraprofessional	
Ben Muchler	Head Cook	
Henry Chung	Technology Coordinator	
Loretta Hamm	Project Manager	

Benita Hassell	Project Manager	
Victoria Kepler	Project Manager	
C.J. McConahy	Project Manager	
Cynthia Schroeder	Office Manager	
Vernon Schroeder	Custodian	

13. Operational Performance

Northern Lights Community School complies with all applicable laws and meets required deadlines for submitting required reports to the Minnesota Department of Education, Osprey Wilds, and to other government and nonprofit agencies with which it works. The school posts board minutes, authorizer information, application materials, and other informative material on its website – www.nlcschool.org.

Comprehensive information for students and parents is included in the Northern Lights Community School Student and Parent Handbook which is available online or in the school office. The handbook includes the school calendar, contact information, graduation requirements, and short descriptions of policies that affect students and staff members. The board of directors reviews and updates policies throughout the year to ensure that they are compliant with state and federal requirements, and the policy manual covers all required areas including (but not limited to) health and safety at the school, student discipline, nondiscrimination, employee rights, hazing prohibition, and Internet use.

Northern Lights Community School meets state requirements for operation of the school food program which includes breakfasts and lunches. Meal counts are recorded on a daily basis, and the kitchen manager follows National School Lunch and Minnesota Department of Education Food and Nutrition Service program guidelines. Because of the high percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals, NLCS participates in the Community Eligibility Provision, a federal program that facilitates providing free breakfasts and lunches to all students within a school.

During the 2019-2020 school year, the majority of daily student transportation was arranged through an agreement with the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA). Additional routes were managed using school vehicles and school staff members as drivers.

The school building and grounds provide a safe and positive learning environment for students, and students’ survey responses indicate that they feel comfortable at NLCS. The campus includes a greenhouse and garden in addition to classrooms, a gym, and meeting space. The Northern Lights Building Company, a separate entity, oversees long-term maintenance of the building.

NLCS uses a fair hiring process that includes postings of job openings and interviews of prospective staff members, and the school has a standing personnel committee. The school requires background checks for all staff and board members as well as volunteers.

Parents are involved in conferences and are welcomed to the school for special events during the year as well as at any time they arrange to speak with staff members. Parents and community members are encouraged to volunteer at the school, and many become resources as students develop projects.

Students enroll during an annual spring registration period as well as during the school year as long as openings are available. NLCS has a lottery protocol in place should spring applications outnumber capacity for students.

A complete set of policies — all approved by the board of directors and designed to meet state and federal requirements — is in place to cover school operation. The policies include the process for dealing with student discipline.

14. Finances

The Northern Lights Community School Board of Directors reviews financial material at the beginning of each monthly meeting, approves payment of bills, and makes adjustments to the budget as needed. Todd Netzke of School Management Services provided accounting services for the school and attended board meetings via telephone or videoconference in order to discuss financial matters with board members.

For questions regarding school finances and for complete financials for 2019-20 and/or an organizational budget for 2020-21, contact:

Name: Mike D. Hamernick
Position: Director
Phone: (218) 492-4400
Email: Mike.Hamernick@nlcschool.org

Information presented below is derived from preliminary audit figures. The full financial audit will be completed and presented to the Minnesota Department of Education and Osprey Wilds no later than December 31, 2020. Todd Netzke of School Management Services provides accounting and consulting services to the board of directors of Northern Lights Community School and is not independent with respect to Northern Lights Community School. The following information was not audited by School Management Services, and, accordingly, School Management Services does not express an opinion regarding this information.

FY20 Finances	Fund 1	Fund 2
Total Revenues	\$1,974,299.00	\$92,275.00
Total Expenditures	\$1,886,431.00	\$91,255.00
Net Income	\$87,868.00	\$1,020.00
Total Fund Balance	\$457,871.00	\$2,451.00

Overview

The school's financial position is sound. The actual average daily membership (ADM) during 2019-2020 was 94.33, slightly higher than the budgeted ADM of 92. The higher than budgeted ADM allowed for some additional revenue that helped keep the fund balance reserve above 20%.

Revenues

The bulk of the school's revenue, 94%, comes from the State of Minnesota. Most is in the form of *General Education Aid* that is the basic per pupil unit allowance paid to each school district. In addition, the school receives *Lease Aid*, a source of state funding that provides assistance to charter schools by paying a percentage of rent for school buildings.

Expenses

Roughly 38% of the school's expenses are related to the special education program. Northern Lights Community School has provided a quality educational experience for students with special needs since its opening in 2005. The bulk of the remaining expenses are spent in the classrooms, primarily for the salaries and fringe benefits of advisors and project managers.

Net Surplus or Deficit and Fund Balance

The fund balance is currently above 20% of total expenditures. The goal of the board of directors is to maintain a fund balance equal to or greater than 20% of total expenditures. The fund balance reserve acts as a hedge against unforeseen circumstances and is a source of financing for future capital expenses.

World's Best Workforce Annual Budget

Northern Lights Community School's school improvement initiatives correlate with World's Best Workforce goals. There was no separate WBWF budget during the 2019-2020 school year.

Additional financial information is available through the school's director, Mike Hamernick.

15. Future Plans

There are no plans for growth or expansion of the program. As part of the school's mission to create a safe and small learning community, the board of directors established a 105-student enrollment cap several years ago. Directors feel class sizes are appropriate, and they prefer to maintain the enrollment cap.

In the year ahead, the school's board of directors hopes to continue to work toward improved rigor and academic performance.

16. Distance Learning Plan Description and Reflection on Implementation

NLCS closed its school building to students in March of 2020 due to the COVID-19 outbreak and the Governor's Emergency Executive Order 20-02, issued March 15, 2020. For the 4th quarter, students engaged in Distance Learning only.

During the planning period prior to starting the Distance Learning model, NLCS staff met to assess technology needs of students, need for meal deliveries, teacher lesson planning, and staff development in areas of need such as technology use.

Due to the limited time involved, and the rush for technology devices, NLCS decided to deliver Chromebooks to students who had access to the internet and to provide paper/pencil lessons to students without. There was no way at the time to purchase hot spots nor pay for local providers to hook up homes to the internet – they didn't exist and the backlog on work orders was too long.

Those students who had access to the internet worked at their own pace and on their own time schedule on lessons that advisors put together in order to meet their credit needs. Those without internet were delivered materials via bus to their homes and completed work was picked up daily. Staff contacted students at least once a day to check on with them either via Zoom or the phone.

We all recognize that the delivery of instruction wasn't ideal, but given the circumstances the staff rallied and produced a workable quarter of instruction that met the needs of each student. The staff pulled together in a crisis, came up with a good plan, and executed it well.

In all, some students most definitely lost out on a portion of their educational development and we will be spending extra time and effort to re-gain those losses. Formative and summative assessments will be crucial in the near future to determining gains and losses.

On July 30th, 2020, the MN Dept. of Education and MN Dept. of Health released guidance that allowed for schools in Itasca County to return to school full-time due to low infection rates in the area. This was only a recommendation and individual school districts were allowed to choose a more restrictive scenario (hybrid or distance learning) if the school board decided it was necessary to ensure the safe operation of the school.

On August 6th, the NLCS school board met in a special session and made the decision to return to school on August 24th in Distance Learning mode, with the goal of working towards getting students back in the building by November.

Due to lessons learned from Distance Learning from March to June, and from feedback from parents and students, NLCS decided to teach live classes via Zoom instead of allowing students to complete work on their own time schedules.

NLCS purchased 100 new Chromebooks, 15 hotspots, and paid for five home internet hookups in order to provide 100% internet access for all students. Students and teachers are live, following hourly schedules, from 8:45 am to 2:55 pm Monday through Friday.

Meals and any materials needed to be passed between teachers and students are delivered daily via AEOA buses.

Students with IEPs, who require additional support, are transported to and from school using school vehicles according to schedules created by their Special Education teams.

The original plan was to keep track of the county infection rates and make plans to re-introduce students into the building in a hybrid mode starting quarter two. Unfortunately, that plan has been sidelined by a county-wide outbreak. Itasca County's 14-day COVID rate is in the 50s and rising right now and the MDH/MDE guidance recommends Distance Learning.

The director will continue to monitor the county rates and will make a recommendation to move towards hybrid mode when the number falls below 30 and shows a downward trend. The director will give progress reports to the board monthly.