

FY 2020 Authorizer Annual Report

Authorizer Information

Name of Authorizing Organization: Student Achievement Minnesota

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Authorizer Summary:

Student Achievement Minnesota LLC (SAM), established in 2010, is a "single-purpose authorizer": by law, it conducts no activities other than authorizing public charter schools. SAM's mission is to improve student achievement through quality authorization of charter schools. SAM's vision is to authorize high-quality charter schools demonstrated to increase student achievement when measured against resident district or state average performance.

SAM authorized two charter schools in 2019-2020 serving approximately 900 students, kindergarten through twelfth grades. Math and Science Academy (MSA), a suburban school, located in Woodbury and Northeast College Prep (NECP), an inner-city school, located in Northeast Minneapolis.

Math and Science Academy

Math and Science Academy serves grades sixth through twelfth and has been in operation for twenty years. The school's mission is to provide accelerated curricula in all subjects with an emphasis on math and science. Student enrollment for 2019-2020 peaked at 533 with an increase in the high school grades. School demographics and diversity continue to grow. Fifty percent (50%) of students enrolled are non-white, 8% qualified for special education services and 5% qualified for free/reduced lunch. Attrition is low and school demand continues to increase; 445 students are on waiting list with the greatest demand for sixth grade. MSA participated in PSAT and Advanced Placement testing. Five students qualified for National Merit Scholarships with one student winning a national scholarship. Eighty-four percent (84%) percent of students who took AP tests scored a rating of 3 or higher and of those fifty-eight percent (58%) scored a rating of 4. The number exams taken by students increased 23%; 151 to 185. SY2020 ACT scores shows MSA a top performer in the state once again. MSA's four-year graduation rate averaged 95%. State assessments were not administered in 2019-2020 because of COVID 19. The school's financial status is exceptionally strong, and the fund balance continues to increase. MSA was the recipient of the MDE School Finance Award for the sixth consecutive year.

Northeast College Prep

Northeast College Prep serves grades kindergarten through eighth and in its sixth year of operation serving approximately 370 students. The school's mission is to ensure strong academic, social-emotional and talent development to empower student success. NECP is remarkably diverse with twelve different languages spoken in the homes of students. Eighty-five percent (85%) of students enrolled are non-white. Forty-one percent (41%) of students qualified for ELL, 15% received special education services, and 88% qualified for free/reduced lunch. The school added eighth grade in 2019-2020, achieving its growth trajectory of adding a grade each year. State assessments were not administered in 2019-2020 because of COVID19, but the school did administer FAST Reading and Math Assessments in the fall and winter. School reported data shows the average student grew one percentage point in reading and five percentage points in math when compared to their peers nationally over the same period. Parent satisfaction remains healthy. NECP established an Affiliated Building Company to manage facility lease costs which improved fiscal accountability and increased the fund balance. The fund balance percent grew from 7% to 15%. NECP was the recipient of the MN School Finance Award for the sixth consecutive year.

Authorizer Processes

New Charter School Applications in FY 2020 (B.1)

Did your organization review any new charter school applications?

Yes

If no, please provide an explanation:

Enter an explanation.

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
Sapalo Academy	Disapproval	N/A	Low External Reviewer Application Score/Rating	N/A
American Technical Academy	Disapproval	N/A	Low External Reviewer Application Score/Rating	N/A

New Charter School Openings in FY 2020 (B.2)

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

No

If no, please provide an explanation:

SAM approved no new schools, thus no ready-to-open activities required.

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

Name of Charter School	Projected	Did this	If No, Provide Reason(s) and Revised Projected Opening Date
Projected to Begin Serving	Opening	School Open	
Students in FY 2020	Date	as Planned?	
Name of Charter School Projected to Begin Serving Students	MM/DD/YYYY	Choose an item	Reason(s) for Not Opening as Planned, and Revised Projected Opening Date

Charter School Expansion Applications (to add primary enrollment sites or grades, including instructional prekindergarten or preschool programs) in FY 2020 (B.2)

Did your organization review any site and/or grade expansion applications (including instructional prekindergarten or preschool programs)?

No

If no, please provide an explanation:

Northeast College Prep reached its grade enrollment goal (8th) in SY2020. The school purposely positioned itself the past years to accommodate growth and facility need.

Math and Science Academy added a fourth building, increasing its facility space per the school's initial MDE charter approval. The fourth building is adjacent to existing buildings.

If yes, complete the table below for each application:

Name of Charter School	Proposed Additional Grades to be Served (including prekindergarten and/or preschool) and/or Location of New Site	Authorizer Approval or Disapproval	MDE Approval or Disapproval	If Disapproved, Reason(s) for Disapproval	Application Withdrawn by Applicant
Name of Charter School	Proposed Additional Grades and/or Location of New Site	Choose an item	Choose an item	Reason(s) for Disapproval	Choose an item

Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening Requests in FY 2020 (B.2)

Did your organization review any requests for official early childhood health and developmental screening recognition?

No

If no, please provide an explanation:

SAM received no Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening Requests in FY2020.

If yes, complete the table below for each request:

Name of Charter School	Authorizer Approval or Disapproval	MDE Approval or Disapproval	If Disapproved, Reason(s) for Disapproval	Application Withdrawn by Applicant	
Name of Charter School	Choose an item	Choose an item	Reason(s) for Disapproval	Choose an item	

Charter School Change in Authorizer Requests in FY 2020 (B.2)

Did your organization review any change in authorizer requests?

No

If no, please provide an explanation:

SAM received no Change of Authorizer Requests in FY2020.

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
Name of Charter School	Name of Authorizer	Choose an item	Choose an item	Reason(s) for Disapproval	Choose an item

Charter Contract Renewals in FY 2020 (B.9)

Did your organization engage in charter renewal activities in FY 2020?

No

If no, please provide an explanation:

SAM engaged in no Charter Contract Renewals in FY2020. Math and Science Academy and Northeast College Prep charter contracts were renewed in FY2019.

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
Name of Charter School	Choose an item	MM/DD/YYYY- MM/DD/YYYY	Reason(s) for Nonrenewal

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.

SAM's FY2020 professional development focused on building staff capacity to improve authorizing practice to advance school performance and student achievement. Social issues and public discourse trainings were sought and attended to increase understanding of how best to support schools to ensure ALL students are successful. A greater understanding of race and educational equity remain a high priority.

In FY2020, SAM personnel attended:

Student Achievement Minnesota (SAM) Personnel PD Attendance

		_	Personnel tendance	Area Addressed			
Professional Development	Date	Staff	Leadership	Authorizer/ Practices Oversight	School Operations	Student Achievement	Purpose
Friends & Uncommon Schools Conference	8/5/19 8/6/19	✓	√			~	School Culture & Climate
MDE Authorizer Conference	9/9/19		✓	√	✓	✓	Authorizing Practices & Oversight

NACSA Annual Conference	10/21 thru 10/24/ 19	√	√	√	√	Authorizing Practices & Networking
MDE MAPES Meeting	1/8/20	✓	✓			Authorizer Quality Review
National Assoc. of Independent Schools (NAIS) Annual Conference	2/26 thru 2/28/ 20	√		√	√	Race & Equity School Closure Educational Trends

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.

Foremost, SAM's authorizing practices are aligned with MACSA and NACSA standards to ensure quality school oversight. SAM's capacity and practices are consistently reviewed to identify oversight deficiencies and needs to ensure authorizing effectiveness. This is accomplished via school performance evaluations, need assessments and school director feedback. When SAM's portfolio decreased in size staffing remained the same allowing for increased school oversight and attention confirming SAM's commitment to quality authorizing.

SAM received a "Commendable" rating for its FY2020 MAPES (MN Authorizer Performance Evaluation System (MAPES) review. The rating indicates authorizer and school oversight are being delivered and achieved at a high-level of quality and performance.

Authorizer High-Quality Authorizing Dissemination (A.10)

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

SAM remains an active member of MACSA (MN Association of Charter School Authorizers). SAM networks regularly with other school authorizers to share information, brainstorm, problem solve and advocate for high-quality authorizing practices.

SAM meets with Friends of Education (charter school authorizer) on a regular basis to discuss authorizing standards, successes, challenges, opportunities, and areas in need of attention to improve school performance and authorizing oversight. COVID 19's impact on schools and how best to support schools was an ongoing topic of discussion.

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.

SAM believes leadership capacity contributes greatly to school success. Thus, an investment in the school's development and the providing of technical assistance is highly supported. Technical assistance is subject to school requests/needs, school performance, and authorizer observations. SAM in partnership with Friends of Education provided the following professional development training to all schools.

Uncommon Schools: 2019 August 5th and 6th – School Culture and Climate

Technical assistance and development opportunities are free of charge and not mandated by the authorizer.

School leader development is of special interest because of limited "peer" engagement. SAM provided support by holding school director meetings, so directors had an opportunity to network, share leadership challenges, problem solve and communicate lessons learned. Discussions included topics like COVID 19 issues, race and educational equity. COVID 19 significantly interrupted SAM's ability to interact with schools at the level it has in past years.

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

Describe how your organization planned and promoted model replication and dissemination of best practices of high-quality charters schools over the past year.

Authorizer and school leader interaction provides an excellent opportunity to disseminate information and encourage the replication of best practices. Meeting with school directors individually and as a cohort is a highly valued best practice. The meetings allowed for the dissemination of proven practices and strategies that offered solutions and/or improve performance. Individual school director meetings allowed SAM to focus on the school specific performances per measures like the Annual & WBWF Report, assessment data, school challenges, and authorizer identified issues. An education resource/material's depository is provided on SAM's portal as added support.

Portfolio Information

General Charter School Portfolio Data (as of June 30, 2020)

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
N/A	Local educational agency (LEA) Number	Choose an item	Grade Levels Approved	Projected Enrollment	Proposed Location	MM/DD/YYYY

Operational Charter Schools in Authorizer's Portfolio:

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2020	Location	Charter School's World's Best Workforce Report
Math and Science Academy	4043	No	6-12	8430 Woodbury Crossing Woodbury, MN 55125	Hyperlink to MSA's WBWF Report
Northeast College Prep	4219	Yes	K-8	300 Industrial Blvd. NE Minneapolis, MN 55107	Hyperlink to NECP's WBWF Report

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
N/A	Choose an item	Choose an item	Choose an item

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	Name of Management Organization	Management EIN	Street address including street address, city, state, ZIP code and ZIP code +4.	Mailing address including mailing address, city, state, ZIP code and ZIP code +4.	Choose an item

Charter School Portfolio Activity in FY 2020

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
Name of Charter School	LEA Number	New Authorizing Organization	MM/DD/YYYY

Did your organization terminate or revoke the charter contract for any charter school before the end of the contract term?

Nο

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
Name of Charter School	LEA Number	Reason(s) for Contract Termination	MM/DD/YYYY

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

No

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

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	Reason(s) for Closure	Effective Date of Closure
Name of Charter School	LEA Number	Reason(s) for Closure	MM/DD/YYYY

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.

WBWF goals are incorporated in all charter contract agreements. Goals per school input include Closing the Achievement Gap; 3rd Grade Reading Level; College Readiness/ACT; and/or Graduation Rate. The monitoring of WBWF goal progress and proficiency are embedded in the authorizing oversight process. State assessments, school designated assessments and external testing are used to determine WBWF progress and goal achievement. WBWF goal achievement provide added insight into whether schools are increasing student achievement because of the rigorous standards and benchmarks.

The review of monthly board meeting minutes, school's annual report, site visits and testing data are measures used to monitor and track WBWF progress and outcomes. SAM meets with the school director when warranted

to address academic concerns and areas in need of attention. How frequently the board is briefed on student achievement and charter contract goal attainment is also monitored. School website audits are conducted to ensure compliance, school accountability and the dissemination of information to the public. The FY2020 WBWF Report excludes state assessment data because of COVID 19.

World Best Workforce Goal: All Third Graders Can Read at Grade Level

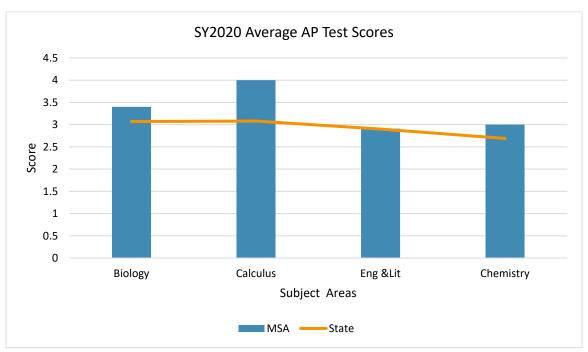
Northeast College Prep

NECP did not achieve the "All Third Graders Can Read at Grade Level" goal per school internal assessment reports. Reading by third grade remains a continuous struggle for the school which is why the SY20 4-Year Continuous Improvement Plan identifies 3rd grade reading proficiency as a priority. SAM is encouraged by the establishment and engagement of the school's academic committee. NECP made huge strides this year collecting, interpreting and responding to academic data. A significant accomplishment included comprehensive academic reporting at board meetings.

World Best Workforce Goal: Graduation Rate and College Readiness

Math and Science Academy

MSA's WBWF goals focused on college readiness and high school graduation. Students graduated at a high rate and ready to tackle college level coursework. SY2020 ACT results show MSA students outperformed the state average in all subject areas. The ACT composite score of 28.3 significantly surpassed the state composite score of 19.9. Eighty-four percent (84%) of students who took advanced placement tests achieved a score of 3 or higher compared to the state average of 66%. MSA's four-year graduation rate averaged by 95%.



MSA consistently outperformed the state average in all subject areas.

World Best Workforce Goal: All Achievement Gaps Between Students Are Closed

Northeast College Prep and Math and Science Academy

NECP and MSA reported minimal gains in closing the achievement gap. Schools reported COVID 19 exacerbated the achievement gap concern. NECP with its diverse enrollment and distance learning delivery complications presented numerous challenges. Overall, MSA does an exceptional job preparing students for the future, but not all students reach their capacity. The school lags in closing the achievement gap. Decreasing the achievement gap and educational equity remain a topic of discussion among schools, parents and authorizer.

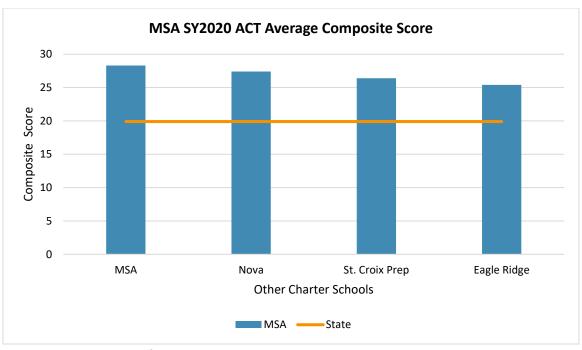
Academic Performance

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.

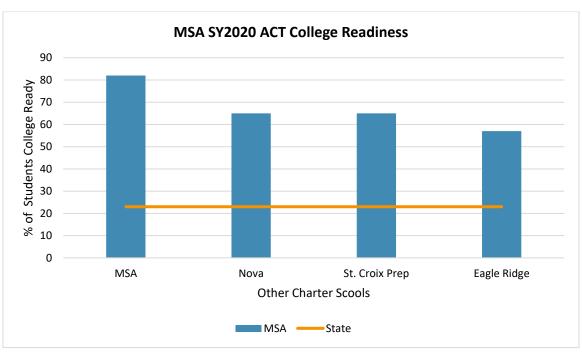
State assessments are weighed heavily in the evaluation of the school's academic performance. COVID 19 interrupted state testing thus no SY2020 MCA data, but schools did participate in other internal and external testing to determine student achievement. Comparable data like demographics, district and state average is minimal and put schools at a disadvantage when evaluating academic achievement in a comprehensive manner.

Math and Science Academy

MSA's academic performance remains high performing and demonstrates a strong academic performance. PSAT SY2020 results show 92% of 11th graders met the ERW Benchmark and 81% met the Math Benchmark; 91% of tenth grade students met the ERW Benchmark suggesting college readiness. Five students qualified for National Merit Scholarships. ACT results show MSA ranked #1 (avg composite) amongst other charter schools and the state. The four-year high school graduation rate remained high at 95%. The U.S. News & World Report (2020) Education Report ranked MSA as the #1 high school in the state.



MSA outperformed other charter schools and the state average on the ACTs.

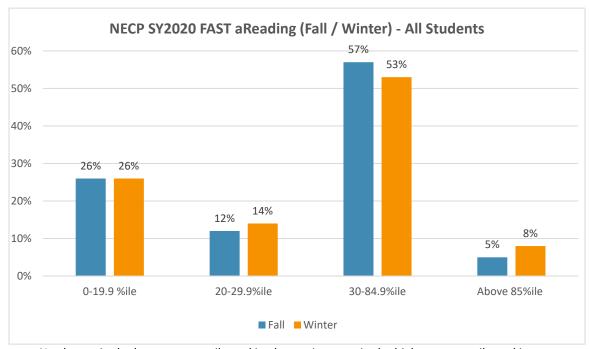


MSA students are highly qualified for college course work compared to peers.

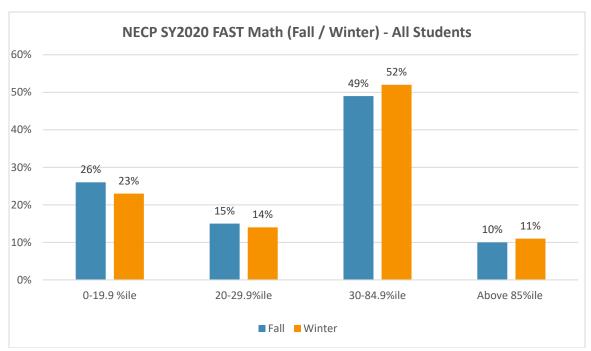
Northeast College Prep

COVID 19 challenges/complications hindered NECP's ability to test students with efficiency and reliability. FAST reading and math assessments were administered in fall and winter, but not spring because of COVID 19. FAST fall and winter assessment results show small gains and suggest the school is headed the right direction. SAM is

optimistic that Northeast College Prep's newly created Academic Committee will foster an improved academic performance.



No change in the lowest percentile ranking but an increase in the highest percentile ranking.



The lowest percentile ranking decreased and the highest percentile ranking increased.

As previously noted, closing the achievement gap is a challenge and needs improvement. SAM will continue to work with schools to accomplish this goal.

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.

Academic achievement, fiscal management, regulation compliance and policy development are key performance indicators used to evaluate school performance. SAM monitors these indicators via the review of board meeting minutes, attending board meetings, annual reports, authorizer required reporting and MDE communications. The monthly review of board meeting minutes provides SAM valuable insight into school operations as it pertained to board member meeting attendance, academic achievement, school policy, professional development, school finances and open meeting compliance all elements key to school success. SAM responds to the findings accordingly.

Academic Achievement

Academic achievement was monitored via assessment results/reporting and the review of board meeting minutes. Board meeting minutes indicate academic discussions are not always informative and at times lack substance. SAM continues to advocate for increased academic discussion at board meetings, so board members are acutely informed about student learning.

Governance

Typically, board meetings were held monthly and complied with the open meeting law. SAM observed an increase in the use of board committees to enhance board efficiency and effectiveness. Boards participated in board trainings/professional development per mandate. Annual board elections were held per school protocol.

Compliance

School compliance is monitored via SAM's reporting portal which promotes efficiency and accuracy. The portal identifies report types and due dates. Colors are used to track the timeliness of report submissions. Report completeness and timeliness are factored in school evaluation. Website, finance, and Annual Report/WBWF audits are conducted to verify compliance. SAM met with school administration to discuss findings and to identify items in need of immediate attention and/or improvement. Schools are acknowledged for responding in a timely manner to authorizer concerns/inquiries.

• Policies and Practices

School policies (adoptions and revisions) are monitored via the review of board meeting minutes. MSA's and NECP's adopted processes appear effective because polices are reviewed, revised and adopted in a consistent and comprehensive manner per board meeting minutes.

SAM's current protocols and practices satisfy its ability to provide effective and quality school oversight.

#SAM Schools Achieving Indicators / #SAM Schools with Reportable Results

		2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Operation Indicators						
	Educational program contained in charter implemented	2/2	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Instruction/assessment aligned to standards, emphasizes student achievement	2/2	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
	Complies with ALL applicable laws and reporting requirements	2/2	1/3	1/3	1/3	1/3

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.

Financial reporting, financial audits, student enrollment, fund balance, state awards are key performance indicators used to monitor the fiscal management and to evaluate school performance.

Required Financial Reporting

SAM reviewed school finance reports monthly. School leaders and/or business managers are contacted with immediacy if there are questions or clarification is needed. Critical elements of the review include student enrollment, revenue, expenditure, credit card itemization, cash flow, and entries that warrant explanation. The charter agreement requires school to maintain a 25% fund balance. Granted a MDE Finance Award provides added assurance that schools are managed in a fiscally responsible manner. MSA and NECP were recipients of the SY2020 MDE School Finance Award once again.

Financial Reviews and Audits

MSA and NECP were compliant in submitting monthly finance reports. FY2020 annual financial audits were completed and submitted by the due date. Both schools were cited "clean" audits with no material weaknesses. MSA's fund balance continued to increase, exceeding the fund balance requirement of 25%. NECP's deteriorating fund balance increased by 8%; 7% to 15%. The school formed an Affiliated Building Company (ABC) in FY2020 to increase fiscal stability.

• Student Enrollment

SAM monitors student enrollment closely because of its impact on school finances. How schools responded to enrollment fluctuation and budget impact was scrutinized. MSA's enrollment remained stable and the school's waiting list continued to grow. NECP did not achieve its long-term enrollment targets but responded to the short coming appropriately. COVID 19's impact on student enrollment and school finances will remain a priority in school oversight to mitigate problems.

SAM Schools Achieving Indicators /

	# SAM Schools with Reportable Results				
	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Finance Indicators					
Compliance w/ financial audit reporting due date	2/2	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
External Audit: No material weaknesses or significant deficiencies	2/2	3/3	3/3	3/3	3/3
Fund Balance Greater > 25%	1/2	1/3	1/3	1/3	1/3
State Finance Award	2/2	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3

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.

School performance (academic achievement) and charter contract compliance are foremost in the evaluation of SAM's portfolio. Other performance measures include things such as parent satisfaction, the attainment of school goals, MDE honors/recognition, external school quality reviews and public ratings.

Academic Performance

Charter contract academic goals are weighed heavily in evaluating school evaluation. COVID 19 provided challenges for academic testing but schools were able to participate in some type of testing to gauge student learning. Other performance measures included daily student attendance, graduation rate, and the implementation and effectiveness of the school's distance learning plan per parent satisfaction. When schools open fully, schools will need to focus aggressively on remediation initiatives and educational equity to offset COVID 19 disruption and setbacks.

Parent Satisfaction/School Surveys

MSA and NECP administered parent surveys to evaluate overall school and Distance Learning Plan satisfaction. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of MSA parents responding to the survey stated they were satisfied "overall" with the school. Eighty-six percent (86%) reported satisfaction with the Distance Learning Plan and its implementation. Seventy-four percent (74%) of NECP parents who responded stated that they were satisfied with teacher lesson quality and the availability of family support, but teacher communication needed some improvement.

Awards/Recognition

MSA received U.S. News & World Report and NICHE accolades. The U.S. News & World Report (2020) / Education Report ranked MSA as the #1 high school in Minnesota. The MN NICHE ranking reported the middle school number one (#1) and the high school number two (#2). NECP received a second year of Minnesota Comeback (Great MN Schools) funding to continue its efforts in improving school quality and performance. MN Comeback invites schools to apply for this grant based on school performance.