



Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Authorizer Annual Report

Enter responses where prompted. Enter an “x” in underlined space before “Yes” or “No” responses. Only provide information for one school in each table row. Add additional rows to tables, as needed.

Authorizer Information

Name of Authorizing Organization: Novation Education Opportunities (NEO)

Mailing Address: 3432 Denmark Ave #130 Eagan, MN 55123

Name and Title of Primary Authorizer Contact: Wendy Swanson Choi, Executive Director

Telephone of Primary Authorizer Contact: 612-889-2103

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Authorizing Mission: NEO’s mission is to authorize and oversee charter schools through consistent, ongoing, and robust evaluation to achieve significant and measurable student growth. NEO’s vision is to be a leading authorizer of innovative, diverse, and effective charter schools.

Authorizer Summary: In 2009, Minnesota passed revised charter school law effectively holding charter school authorizers to higher standards in overseeing the charter school performance in the areas of student achievement, governance, operations, and finance. Due to the revised charter school law, essentially all the 52 prior authorizers which included districts, colleges/universities, and large non-profit organizations, had to be reapproved by the state if they intended to continue to serve as an authorizer. In addition, the revised law called for a new category of authorizers, ‘single purpose authorizers’, whose sole mission is chartering schools to achieve the primary purpose of improving all student pupil learning and all student achievement.

At that time, primarily due to capacity issues, many authorizers did not resubmit their application, and some were denied. NEO was one of the first single-purpose authorizers approved and received approval to authorize 12 schools that transferred from authorizers that no longer continued. NEO has grown since then to serve as the authorizer of 29 schools in 2024.

NEO is governed by a Board of Directors which makes the final decision to approve or reject charter school applications in consideration of the recommendations of the NEO Advisors (contracted experts) and the NEO Executive Director. The Board of Directors also makes final decisions regarding charter renewals, terminations, and expansions, supervises and evaluates the Executive Director, and carries out all duties of a nonprofit governing board.

As a volunteer body, the NEO Board is assisted by the NEO Advisors and the NEO staff including the Executive Director who serves as the main charter school liaison. The NEO Advisors are independent contractors who have experience and expertise in charter school oversight, monitoring, and evaluation. The NEO Advisors evaluate new school and expansion applications, conduct board meeting observations to assist with oversight, provide authorized schools with technical assistance with compliance, facilitate sharing of effective practices and resources, and conduct fact finding in response to complaints.

The primary purpose of mission-driven charter schools is to improve the learning, achievement, and success of all students. The additional purposes of charter schools are to:

- (1) increase quality learning opportunities for all students;
- (2) encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
- (3) measure learning outcomes and create different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes;
- (4) establish new forms of accountability for schools; or
- (5) create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.

NEO and the schools that NEO authorize have demonstrated leadership in accountability by defining clear performance expectations in a shared performance framework that NEO and the schools keep updated and regularly monitor to track progress toward goals. The performance framework incorporates standard and innovative forms of measuring outcomes, providing families access to schools that offer different priorities from language immersion and classes in primary home language instruction, to International Baccalaureate, individualized learning, or classical education models.

Minnesota public schools are currently experiencing a human resource shortage of teachers, financial service providers including auditors, and transportation services sector wide, while at the same time having increased regulations, which is placing significant strain on public education and making it more difficult to meet the primary and additional purposes of chartering and performance framework goals.

At the same time, students, particularly those who did not have equitable access to home resources and who had to attend school by distance learning during the pandemic, are still working to catch up. In addition, post pandemic, there has been an increase statewide in student need for mental health services.

Therefore, it has been necessary for authorizers, school leaders, board members, and service providers to increase relationships, communications, oversight, monitoring, technical support, and sharing of information and resources.

In response to concerns about public education and charter school performance in particular sector wide, NEO continued to improve performance in the following ways.

1. Leverage charter board member training statutes to improve accessibility and effectiveness of training resources and oversight of completion of training. We continue to develop an accessible and effective training site www.mncharterboard.com to provide board members and school leaders with a free training resource and to facilitate sharing of resources.

2. Develop materials and oversight protocols for the new laws. We continue to systematize and improve oversight.
3. Continue work to advance the measurement of school performance beyond state standardized measures like the MCAs. We continue to systematize and improve school performance monitoring and evaluation.
4. Continue the work within an increasingly complex education system of inequity to reach under-resourced and under-served communities to ensure that they have access to quality education that meets their needs. We continue outreach to leaders who have the lived experience of and are vital links to communities that haven't been able to equitably access education options that meet their needs. Our outreach focuses on working with these leaders to identify and understand the student needs and start quality charter schools to meet them. By working together to prevent students from falling through the cracks of the system, we make an important contribution to the future of Minnesota.
5. Work cross sector to improve 'advance warning' performance dashboards. We continue to work with charter schools that we authorize to improve dashboards that provide status updates and advance notifications to improve preventive work to mitigate risk.

As an authorizer, the overarching ways that NEO works collaboratively with charter schools to support success with the primary and additional purposes and goals are generally by starting high quality charter schools to meet the needs of underserved students, supporting continuous improvement of operating charter schools, and promoting the replication and expansion of high-quality schools and effective practices.

More specifically, NEO works to ensure that schools it authorizes have the autonomy granted by statute, fulfill the purposes of a charter school, and be accountable to the agreed upon terms of the charter school contract to safeguard quality educational opportunities for students and maintain public trust and confidence as follows:

(1) NEO reviews applications for new schools, determines whether a new school is ready to open, reviews applications for grade and site expansions, reviews applications for change in authorizers, and determines whether to approve or deny an application based on approved criteria.

To meet these authorizer roles and responsibilities, NEO utilizes tools/strategies including but not limited to:

- Comprehensive new charter school application review processes (clear application questions and guidance, fair and transparent procedures, timelines, and rigorous criteria);
- Contracting with experts in charter school performance in the areas of academics, climate, operations, compliance, and facility and finance to serve as external evaluators and advisors;
- Training for evaluators;
- Readiness to open standards/criteria;
- Basecamp project management tool for monitoring and evaluating new school readiness to open;
- Enrollment trackers for monitoring and evaluating enrollment;
- Weekly staff progress-monitoring meetings;
- Document review and comment of financials and leases (limited to observations and related questions);
- Resource and information Google sites for external consultants and internal staff;

- Facilitation of sharing of information and resources via facilitated sessions;
- Board member training learning management system site: www.mncharterboard.com.

(2) NEO negotiates and executes the performance charter contracts with the schools it authorizes;

To meet these authorizer roles and responsibilities, NEO utilizes tools/strategies including but not limited to:

- Comprehensive charter school contract monitoring and evaluation processes (clear standards and guidance, fair and transparent procedures, timelines, and rigorous criteria);
- Updated performance frameworks and annual performance framework reviews with school leaders;
- Clear standards/expectations for academic, climate, operational, and financial performance;
- Basecamp project management tool for tracking progress with negotiation and execution of contracts;
- Weekly staff progress-monitoring meetings;
- Resources including contract guidance, from the Minnesota Department of Education.

(3) NEO conducts ongoing monitoring, oversight, and evaluation of the school's academic, operational, and financial performance during the term of the charter contract;

To meet these authorizer roles and responsibilities, NEO utilizes tools/strategies including but not limited to:

- Comprehensive charter school academic, operational, and financial performance monitoring, oversight and evaluation processes (clear standards and guidance, fair and transparent procedures, timelines, and rigorous criteria);
- Updated performance frameworks for monitoring, overseeing and evaluating academic, operational, and financial performance during the entire term of the charter contract;
- Charter school board meeting observations and feedback;
- Contracting with external experts in charter school performance in the areas of academics, climate, operations, compliance, facility and finance to serve as external evaluators and advisors;
- Training for evaluators;
- Clear performance standards/criteria for academic, operational, and financial performance to help ensure that charter schools achieve the primary purpose and other statutory requirements;
- Epicenter project management tool for monitoring progress with compliance;
- Finance trackers/dashboards for monitoring financial performance;
- Performance progress monitoring meetings with authorized school leaders;
- Weekly staff progress-monitoring meetings;
- Document review and comment of financials and leases (limited to observations and related questions);
- Resource and information Google sites for external consultants and staff;
- Facilitated learning walks at authorized schools;
- Annual compliance/formal site visits;
- Facilitation of sharing of information and resources via facilitated sessions;
- Preventative alerts as well as interventions including document review and expert feedback in the form of observations and questions, dashboards, and facilitation of sharing of information and resources;
- Clear contract amendment/revision process.

(4) NEO evaluates the academic, operational, and financial performance of the school as defined in the charter contract prior to the end of the contract to determine the renewal, nonrenewal, or termination of the contract;

To meet these authorizer roles and responsibilities, NEO utilizes tools/strategies including but not limited to:

- Comprehensive charter school contract evaluation processes (clear standards/criteria and guidance for performance in academics, climate, operations, compliance, and finance; fair and transparent procedures, timelines, and rigorous criteria);
- Updated performance frameworks;
- Epicenter project management tool for evaluation of compliance;
- Basecamp project management tool for monitoring completion of contract renewals;
- Weekly staff progress-monitoring meetings with evaluation;
- Comprehensive closure plans and processes with clear expectations, procedures, and timelines.

(5) NEO complies with authorizer requirements in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 124E, which governs charter schools and authorizers.

To meet these authorizer roles and responsibilities, NEO utilizes tools/strategies including but not limited to:

- NEO compliance calendar;
- Touchpoint dashboard for monitoring NEO progress with touchpoints including board meeting observations, learning walks, compliance site visits, performance framework and finance reviews;
- Contracting with experts in charter school performance in the areas of academics, climate, operations, compliance, and facility and finance to serve as advisors to NEO;
- Training for board, staff and external consultants;
- Basecamp project management tool for tracking progress with completion of contract evaluations;
- NEO budget finance tracker/dashboard organized by authorizer roles and responsibilities;
- Weekly staff progress-monitoring meetings;
- Regular authorizing organization board meetings;
- Resource and information Google sites for external consultants and staff;
- Facilitation of sharing of information and resources with other authorizers in Minnesota and nationally.
- Conflict of Interest and School Autonomy Policy and required disclosures at all board meetings;
- Data Sharing Agreements.

Authorizer Processes

New Charter School Applications in FY 2024 (B.1)

Did your organization review any new charter school applications?

☒ Yes

☐ No

If no, please provide an explanation:

N/A

If yes, complete the table below for each application.

Name of Charter School Applicant	Authorizer Approval or Disapproval	Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Approval or Disapproval	If Disapproved, Reason(s) for Disapproval	Application Withdrawn by Applicant
Enter name of charter school applicant	Enter: Approval, Disapproval, or N/A	Enter: Approval, Disapproval, or N/A	Enter reason(s) for disapproval or N/A	Enter: Yes, No, or N/A
Litsay Slavic Prep Academy	Disapproval	N/A	Application did not meet satisfactory criteria for approval	N/A
Knowledge STEM Academy	Disapproval	N/A	Application did not meet satisfactory criteria for approval	N/A
Aspire Nation Academy	Disapproval	N/A	Incomplete Application	N/A
Gateway to Success and Pathways in Education	Disapproval	N/A	Application did not meet satisfactory criteria for approval	N/A

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
Abraham Knowledge Academy	Disapproval	N/A	Application did not meet satisfactory criteria for approval	N/A
Freedom Academy of Leadership and Arts – formerly St. Cloud Mastery Academy	Approval	Approval	N/A	N/A
Sky High School	Disapproval	N/A	Application did not meet satisfactory criteria for approval	N/A
Ocean of Wisdom School	Approval	Approval	N/A	N/A
Gada Academy	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes
Creative Minds Academy	Disapproval	N/A	Application did not meet satisfactory criteria for approval	N/A
Future Tech IT Academy	Disapproval	N/A	Application did not meet satisfactory criteria for approval	N/A
MN Preparatory Academy	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes

New Charter School Openings in FY 2024 (B.2)

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

☒ Yes

☐ No

If no, please provide an explanation:

N/A

If yes, complete the table below for each application.

Name of Charter School Projected to Begin Serving Students in FY 2024	Projected Opening Date	Did this School Open as Planned?	If No, Provide Reason(s) and Revised Projected Opening Date
Enter name of charter school projected to begin serving students	Enter date in MM/DD/YYYY format	Enter: Yes, No, or N/A	Enter reason(s) for not opening as planned, and revised projected opening date in MM/DD/YYYY format
Enlighten Academy	09/05/2023	No	Could not secure facility in the location of the community to be served. Projected opening date is September 2, 2025.
Irrawaddy Academy	09/05/2023	No	School leader could no longer serve due to personal reasons; Recruitment of new school leader is in process.
Surad Academy	09/05/2023	Yes	N/A

Charter School Expansion Applications (to add primary enrollment sites or grades, including instructional prekindergarten or preschool programs) in FY 2024 (B.2)

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

☒ Yes

☐ No

If no, please provide an explanation:

N/A

If yes, complete the table below for each application.

Name of Charter School	Proposed Additional Grades to be Served (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
Enter name of charter school	Enter proposed additional grades and/or location of new site	Enter: Approval, Disapproval, or N/A	Enter: Approval, Disapproval, or N/A	Enter reason(s) for disapproval or N/A	Enter: Yes, No, or N/A
Great Oaks Academy	Serving current students matriculating and on waiting list in the Farmington area	Approval	Approval	N/A	No
TEAM Academy	Prekindergarten Instructional Program	Approval	Approval	N/A	No

Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening Requests in FY 2024 (B.2)

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

☐ Yes

☒ No

If no, please provide an explanation:

NEO did not receive any request or application regarding Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening.

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
Enter name of charter school	Enter: Approval, Disapproval, or N/A	Enter: Approval, Disapproval, or N/A	Enter reason(s) for disapproval or N/A	Enter: Yes, No, or N/A

Charter School Change in Authorizer Requests in FY 2024 (B.2)

Did your organization review any change in authorizer requests?

☐ Yes

☒ No

If no, please provide an explanation:

NEO did not receive any change in authorizer requests.

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
Enter name of charter school	Enter name of authorizer	Enter: Approval, Disapproval, or N/A	Enter: Approval, Disapproval, or N/A	Enter reason(s) for disapproval or N/A	Enter: Yes, No, or N/A

Charter Contract Renewals in FY 2024 (B.9)

Did your organization engage in charter renewal activities in FY 2024?

☒ Yes

☐ No

If no, please provide an explanation:

N/A

If yes, complete the table below for each school.

Name of Charter School	Was Contract Renewed?	If Yes, Term of Contract Renewal	If No, Reason(s) for Nonrenewal
Enter name of charter school	Enter: Yes, No, or N/A	Enter dates in MM/DD/YYYY-MM/DD/YYYY format	Enter reason(s) for nonrenewal or N/A
Avalon School	Yes	07/01/2024-06/30/29	N/A
Discovery Charter School	Yes	07/01/2024-06/30/29	N/A
SAGE Academy	Yes	07/01/2024-06/30/27	N/A
Saint Cloud Math and Science Academy	Yes	07/01/2024-06/30/29	N/A
Star of the North Academy	Yes	07/01/2024-06/30/27	N/A
Sejong Academy	Yes	07/01/2024-06/30/29	N/A
New City Academy	Yes	07/01/2024-06/30/27	N/A
Universal Academy	Yes	07/01/2024-06/30/29	N/A
Urban Academy	Yes	07/01/2024-06/30/29	N/A

Additional Authorizer Activities

Authorizer Organizational Goals (A.2)

Describe the progress your organization made on its organizational goals related to authorizing in FY 2024.

The goals of NEO align to the primary purpose of mission-driven charter schools which is to improve the learning, achievement, and success of all students, and to the additional purposes of increasing quality learning opportunities for all students, encouraging the use of different and innovative teaching methods, measuring learning outcomes and creating different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes, establishing new forms of accountability for schools, and creating new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.

Overview of NEO's 5-Yr Strategic Plan and Organization Goals

NEO monitors and evaluates progress toward three main organizational goal areas. The first goal area focuses on improvement in the percent of students in schools collectively authorized by NEO who meet and exceed grade-level standards in reading, math, and science. The second goal area focuses on improvement in the growth students in schools collectively authorized by NEO make in reading and math. The third goal area focuses on improvement in graduation rates of students in schools collectively authorized by NEO.

Goal 1. Collective Improvement in Achievement.

According to the state test data that MDE directly shared with NEO, collectively, the percent of students who scored proficient (meets or exceeds) as measured by state tests (Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments) for schools that NEO authorizes remained the same when comparing 2023 and 2024 reading results (36%), increased in math from 25% to 26%, and increased in science from 23% to 25% with the inclusion of a large, new transfer school.

NEO continues to serve a relatively high percentage of immigrant families and their children.

The percent of multilingual students served in English language proficiency programs assessed in schools authorized by NEO was about 35% in 2024 compared to about 10% statewide.

Charter schools that NEO authorizes offer supplemental instruction in many primary home languages to support language development and the preservation of heritage including Hmong, Somali, Arabic, Spanish, Karen dialects, and Oromo.

In terms of number of students scoring proficient (meets and exceeds), NEO met the goal that NEO set in 2020 for improvement from 2,472 to at least 3,000 students collectively scoring meets or exceeds in math, reading and science as measured by state assessments by 2025.

In 2024, 3,461 students collectively scored meets or exceeds as measured by state assessments in math, reading and science. When a growing number of students enter a school already performing below proficient levels as is the case for most schools that NEO authorizes, it impacts the overall percentage of students scoring proficient, as the influx of lower-performing students decreases the average achievement level.

However, despite this challenge, the schools that NEO authorizes have continued to outperform others, with 5 of the 17 identified by the Minnesota Department of Education as “High-Quality Charter Schools” in 2024, authorized by NEO, the most of any authorizer.

Goal 2. Collective Improvement in Growth.

NEO’s goal in the past had been to exceed 55% of students exceeding their Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) projected growth scores in reading and math.

However, MDE changed the way growth is reported and no longer provides information on projected growth scores for each student, so NEO can no longer report on progress with that goal.

Instead, MDE provides information on students advancing at least one full achievement level which is a more rigorous growth measure.

The growth results currently available from MDE as measured by the North Star Academic Progress system are available for grades 4 through 8. State reading and math assessments are administered in grades 3-8, 10, and 11 only, and therefore, the only grades with consecutive grade level scores from which growth can be measured are grades 4 through 8.

NEO analyzed the North Star Academic Progress results according to 1) students below grade level making high growth (students who did not score “Meets” or “Exceeds” the prior year who advanced at least one achievement level) and 2) students at or above grade level making medium or high growth (who scored “Meets” or “Exceeds” the prior year and who maintained or improved their achievement level).

Reading

In 2024, the results for students **below** grade level who made **high** growth in reading in schools collectively authorized by NEO was the same as the statewide results. 27% of students below grade level made high growth in reading compared to the statewide results of 27%.

In 2024, the results for students **at or above** grade level who made **medium or high** growth in reading in schools collectively authorized by NEO exceeded the statewide results by one percentage point. 76% of students at or above grade level made medium or high growth in reading compared to the statewide results of 75%.

Math

In 2024, the results for students **below** grade level who made **high** growth in math in schools collectively authorized by NEO was the same as the statewide results. 19% of students below grade level made high growth in math compared to the statewide results of 19%.

In 2024, the results for students **at or above** grade level who made **medium or high** growth in math in schools collectively authorized by NEO improved by 3 percentage points from 63% in 2023 to 66% in 2024.

Statewide, 71% of students at or above grade level made medium or high growth in math.

Math continues to be an area of focus for improvement for most of the schools that NEO authorizes.

Goal 3. Collective Improvement in Graduation.

NEO authorized eight high schools in 2023-2024 with MDE reported 4-year graduation results, and seven high schools with MDE reported 5, 6, and 7-year graduation results. MDE reported the following graduation rates for those schools that NEO authorized. Note that the results lag one year due to the data availability.

4-year Graduation Rate

Collectively the high schools had a 4-year graduation rate of 75% in 2023, an improvement from the prior year graduation rate of 64%.

5-year Graduation Rate

Collectively the high schools had a 5-year graduation rate of 84% in 2023, an improvement from the prior year graduation rate of 74%.

6-year Graduation Rate

Collectively the high schools had a 6-year graduation rate of 85% in 2023, an improvement from the prior year graduation rate of 75%.

7-year Graduation Rate

Collectively the high schools had a 7-year graduation rate of 87% in 2023, compared to the prior year graduation rate of 77%.

The high schools that NEO authorizes serve a high percentage of students in grades 9-12 who were not successful in a larger traditional school environment and who need to make up credits to be on track to graduate. Therefore, a focus of these schools has been on reengaging students in college and career plans.

The results show that the schools have been graduating a greater percentage of students as the students remain enrolled more than four years and make up the credits needed for graduation. Given an additional year or two beyond the traditional 4-year trajectory, many more students enrolled completed graduation requirements.

NEO had set a goal for the schools collectively authorized to exceed a combined 4, 5, and 6-year graduation rate of at least 75% by 2025. At the time the goal was set, MDE did not report 7-year graduation rates.

In 2022-2023 (the most recent year data is available), the schools collectively authorized by NEO exceeded the goal (based on most current graduation data available) by reaching at least 75% of students graduating in each of the 4, 5, 6, and 7-year graduation cohorts.

Strategies for Meeting Goals

Collectively, the NEO team includes NEO staff, contracted experts ("Advisors'), school leaders, school board members, and students and their families. NEO used several strategies to support school and student success in 2023-2024.

Generally, the work fell into supporting the authorized schools in three categories: 1) starting high quality schools, 2) improving the school performance of operational schools, and 3) expanding effective practices and high-quality programs.

More specifically, NEO worked to 1) prioritize, align, and clarify work and expectations, 2) provide high quality feedback, 3) facilitate sharing of effective practices, and 4) provide technical assistance with compliance through technical assistance sessions, document review-and-comment, board observations, site visits, data meetings, learning walks, and annual meetings of all school leaders and board members.

In addition, NEO continued to leverage technology to coordinate and streamline reporting to improve the rate of on-time and accurate submissions and reduce the amount of time schools must spend on meeting reporting requirements.

Most students who enroll in the schools that NEO authorizes were not experiencing success in their former education settings.

Collectively, the schools that NEO authorizes continue to reach more students each year with quality education choices so that all students can learn in a supportive and responsive learning environment that most effectively meets their needs. In the past 10 years, the schools that NEO authorizes have grown from serving 2,930 students to 8,788 students.

Enrollment Trends: Schools Authorized by NEO

	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	total	change
2014-15	NA	280	297	263	277	258	277	165	192	180	204	181	189	217	2930	
2015-16	NA	330	329	324	284	274	257	212	184	217	198	279	288	513	3689	+26%
2016-17	34	413	423	427	403	337	291	237	238	194	190	197	215	235	3834	+4%
2017-18	94	439	464	425	412	408	348	304	244	250	188	213	196	257	4242	+11%
2018-19	86	463	488	467	450	450	413	363	330	275	229	236	227	259	4739	+12%
2019-20	115	462	508	503	477	430	426	374	347	324	267	250	240	281	5013	+6%
2020-21	108	398	541	527	520	466	437	392	382	361	251	272	252	286	5196	+4%
2021-22	112	520	581	564	569	543	502	431	409	375	253	251	275	328	5713	+10%
2022-23	112	716	789	750	772	748	743	654	659	632	501	456	430	503	8465	+48%
2023-24	151	698	821	857	816	780	770	691	647	626	497	476	464	494	8788	+4%

Data Source: Minnesota Department of Education Data and Analytics

Authorizer Structure of Operations (A.3)

Describe changes, if any, to your organization's structure of operations related to authorizing in FY 2024 (for example, organizational changes, new positions, updated full-time equivalencies of authorizing positions, etc.).

NEO continued to maintain a ratio of at least 1 Full-time Equivalency (FTE) authorizing position to 7 authorized schools through a combination of staffing and contracting with independent contractors with expertise and experience as needed.

The Executive Director of NEO possesses day-to-day management responsibilities, and the NEO Board of Directors makes final new school, readiness to open, expansion, and contract renewal, termination, and amendment/revision decisions based on results of evaluations/analyses, and recommendations from the Executive Director.

The Executive Director reports to the NEO Board of Directors and manages the implementation of the strategies and progress monitoring, as well as implementation of the board-approved budget.

The Executive Director oversees the NEO Advisors, leveraging their experience and expertise in academics, operations, governance, and finance to ensure that NEO effectively and efficiently starts, oversees, monitors, and evaluates schools authorized by NEO as well as provides technical assistance with compliance as needed and facilitates sharing of effective practices.

The NEO Advisors are independent contractors that NEO engages as necessary for specific contracted work for their skills and expertise in support of NEO's mission and vision and organizational goals.

The specific work for which NEO contracted with NEO Advisors included 1) desktop review and evaluation of new, contract renewal, and expansion applications, 2) financial monitoring and evaluation reports, 3) conducting annual site visits as part of evaluation of compliance, 4) conducting fact finding and investigations in response to complaints, 5) facilitating sharing of effective school practices, and 6) providing technical assistance with compliance.

NEO contracted with 10 Advisors and employed 3 full-time staff to conduct the work of authorizing 30 charter schools in 2023-2024. In doing so, NEO maintained a ratio of 1 FTE to 6 authorized charter schools. To achieve the organizational goals, NEO will continue to maintain 1FTE per no more than 7 schools authorized.

Should an authorized school have transferred or closed, NEO would have had the flexibility to adjust work with independent contractors to maintain NEO's Fund Balance Policy end of year target of 30%, which NEO maintains in the event of unforeseen expenditures or loss.

Authorizing Staff Expertise (A.4)

Briefly describe the background and experience, in the areas of charter school academics, finance, operations, and law, of any authorizing staff, committee members, board members, consultants, etc. new to your organization in FY 2024.

During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, NEO was fortunate to add the charter school leadership experience and expertise of the recently retired leader of Lionsgate Academy, Dr. Diane Restorff, to the team of NEO Advisors.

Dr. Restorff led and directed Lionsgate Academy, a public charter school with 3 campuses and four programs specializing in teaching secondary students on the autism spectrum, for more than 10 years. She provided overall strategic direction to the growth and development of the school and oversaw the implementation of best-practices in instruction, therapeutic interventions, and transitions beginning in grade 7 and continuing through age 21. She ensured compliance with all federal and state educational mandates and led the school from one campus and an enrollment of 90 students to 3 campuses and an enrollment of 350 students. She received her Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from the University of Minnesota and her M.S. in Education and Human Development from The George Washington University.

In addition, NEO was fortunate to add Ted Anderson and Terri Anderson (no relation to each other) to our team of Advisors.

Ted Anderson is an accomplished educational leader. He has served as Executive Director, Associate Director and Principal of charter schools where he gained experience and expertise through providing leadership to a growing and vibrant school community through all phases of a \$7.4M facility expansion project, administering a \$7.5M annual budget and managing more than 80 employees. He gained experience and expertise in workplace initiatives and strengthening the recruitment and hiring system as well as formalizing and improving fundraising and development. He gained experience and expertise in collective bargaining with educator unions and with oversight of curriculum development and teacher evaluation and development. He planned staff development and coordinated building management and safety systems, served as the school's district assessment coordinator (DAC) and managed the student information system. He also has extensive experience and expertise gained through working as an educator abroad.

Terri Anderson completed her K-12 Superintendent and Principal Licensure through Bethel University and her Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from the College of St. Scholastica. She has gained charter school experience and expertise through serving as an Education Leadership Consultant for school leaders and an Independent Contractor for authorizers. She served as Superintendent and Principal for Naytahwaush Community Charter School for more than ten years and as Executive Director of the Naytahwaush Community Center Foundation. She was the start-up coordinator for the Naytahwaush Community Charter School.

She also served as the board member and chair of the Waubun-Ogema-White Earth School Board, as a school board trainer with the Minnesota School Board Association, as an evaluator of education programming, and in many other leadership roles in education.

We are fortunate to have added these three NEO Advisors to our team!

Knowledge and Skill Development of Authorizing Leadership and Staff (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.

- A. NEO staff attended the NACSA Leadership Conference from October 23 - 26, 2023, to learn nationally recognized effective authorizer practices from sessions and participants.
 1. Designing at the Margins: Using the Equity by Design Protocol
 2. Leadership in Action: Rethinking the New School Application with Communities at the Center
 3. Building Bridges: Strengthening Charter Authorizers' Relationships with Families and Communities
 4. Divorcing Community Engagement and Marrying Community Empowerment: Valuing Community Co-Design
 5. What Goes Around Comes Around: Navigating Short-Term Renewal Decisions
 6. Broadening Commitments: How Authorizers Can Share What We Know Beyond the Charter Sector
 7. Community Based Authorizing: Current and Evolving Strategies
 8. Responsive Authorizing: English/ Multilingual Learner Oversight
 9. Exploring Language Models and Getting Hands-On with Prompt Engineering
 10. Reducing the Burden of Data Management on Authorizers and Schools: NEO co-presented with other authorizers on the topic of using multiple measures to evaluate school performance and in the process further developed and solidified NEO's own process for using multiple measures to evaluate school success.
- B. NEO staff actively participated in the Minnesota Association of Charter School Authorizers (MACSA) as a member, and NEO served as a board member and served on the MACSA Effective Practices Committee to facilitate sharing of practices. NEO gained information, resources and ideas through planning and creating materials for, and engaging in, the Effective Practices Committee sessions.
 1. Effective Practices Committee In-Person Authorizer Professional Development Session
 - Applying the MACSA Principles and Standards: Performance-based Charter Contract
 - Increasing Understanding of CMO / EMO Oversight Among Authorizers
 - Focus on ABAR Impact in Authorizing Work
 - Review Proposed Legislative Changes
 2. Effective Practices Committee In-Person Authorizer Professional Development Session (9/8/2023)
 - Discussion about MDE contract reviews
 - Discussion about change in statutory language related to market need and demand study, including required AAP revisions
 - Discussion about authorizer oversight plans for some of the statutory changes that went into effect this year and how authorizers are gaining additional capacity and knowledge to oversee these requirements
 - Hot topics, including the Center for School Change's request for support to publish a charter school demographic report

3. Effective Practices Committee In-Person Authorizer Professional Development Session (12/1/2023)

- Increasing Data Transparency and Analysis Among Authorizers
- Developing an Anti-bias, Anti-racism (ABAR) Lens for Authorizing Work
- Applying the MACSA Principles and Standards: Renewal

4. Effective Practices Committee In-Person Authorizer Professional Development Session (3/1/2024)

- Applying the MACSA Principles and Standards: Performance-based Charter Contract
- Increasing Understanding of CMO / EMO Oversight Among Authorizers
- Focus on ABAR Impact in Authorizing Work
Review Proposed Legislative Changes

C. NEO is an active member of MACS and attended the MACS Policy Forum and Annual Meeting September 28, 2023, to help NEO remain current in knowledge related to charter schools and authorizing.

1. NEO learned about the Innovation Award recipients to facilitate sharing of their effective practices:
 - a. Duluth Edison Academy developed a program to have 4th and 5th graders provide reading coaching and support to their younger peers in kindergarten and first grade who have difficulties reading
 - b. TRIO Wolf Creek developed a data management process called the Data Timeline to collect, organize, manage, and share out quantitative data about its students to teachers, parents, board members, and other stakeholders

D. NEO staff participated in several MDE trainings and learning opportunities.

1. NEO staff attended the following “MDE Charter School Bootcamps” to obtain information and material that may be necessary for oversight and monitoring of charter schools that it authorizes. Additionally, by attending the bootcamps NEO seeks to gain information to facilitate sharing of information and resources with the schools, provide technical assistance where appropriate, and stay up to date on the various reporting requirements and programs.

12/20/23

- Compensatory Revenue
- Indoor Air Quality
- Teacher Development and Evaluation
- Charter School Lease Aid
- Special Education Programming
- Special Education Due Process

1/17/24

- Compensatory Revenue
- Indoor Air Quality
- Teacher Development and Evaluation
- Charter School Lease Aid
- Special Education Programming
- Special Education Due Process

2/21/24

- Compensatory Revenue
- Indoor Air Quality
- Teacher Development and Evaluation
- Charter School Lease Aid
- Special Education Programming
- Special Education Due Process

3/20/24

- Student Enrollment and the Relationship to General Education Funding
- Integrated Department of Education Aids System (IDEAS) State Aid Payments
- Licensure Guidance

5/15/24

- Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) and Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDs)
- Online and Digital Learning Opportunities
- School Accountability
- Annual Immunization Status Report
- Elements of English Learner (EL) Education, Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE), and Bilingual Seals and World Language Proficient Certificates

2. NEO staff also attended the following MDE sessions to learn about legislative changes that would affect school policy and compliance and to obtain information and materials that may be necessary for oversight and monitoring of charter schools that it authorizes. By attending these MDE sessions NEO seeks to gain information to facilitate sharing of information and resources with the schools, provide technical assistance where appropriate, and stay up to date on the various reporting requirements and programs.

- Working Through the Legal Framework of School Discipline (In-Person at SAGE Academy) (8/17/23)
- Working Through the Legal Framework of School Discipline (8/18/23)
- Working Through the Legal Framework of School Discipline (8/25/23)
- Understanding School Naloxone Requirements & Statewide Resources (MDH and MDE) (8/28/23)
- High-Quality Charter School Authorizer Engagement Meeting (1/24/24)
- Language Access 101 for School Leaders (1/24/24)
- Minnesota READ Act Open Office Hours (3/26/24)
- READ Act Local Literacy Plan Submission Overview (4/10/24)
- Nonexclusionary Discipline 101 (5/16/24)

- E. NEO Advisors are independent contractors with whom NEO contracts for expertise in various areas of oversight. NEO conducted the annual orientation and technical assistance session for NEO Advisors on September 26, 2023, to review NEO procedures, policies, and systems for preventing conflicts of interest, evaluating new school and expansion applications, conducting board meeting observations and school site visits, resolving complaints, and reviewing and commenting on key documents, as well as to gain feedback and ideas for continuous improvement from Advisors (independent contractors) for working with NEO.
- F. On January 5, 2024, NEO conducted a NEO Advisor (contracted experts) training to facilitate interrater-reliability training in preparation for new school application reviews.
- G. NEO board, staff and advisors participated in Authorizer Self-Evaluation by reviewing progress toward implementation of key authorized school touchpoints during the year utilizing a “touchpoint dashboard” weekly. The NEO board also reviewed the dashboard, the financial status and compliance with NEO’s fund balance policy, and adherence to the approved budget at board meetings throughout the year.
- H. NEO staff participated in the Minnesota Charter School Leadership Conference June 10-12, 2024 in Bemidji, Minnesota where NEO staff attended sessions on authorizer effective practices, Building School Culture, SEL and Outdoor Learning, Educational leadership, School Safety, Trauma-Informed School Information and Implementation, Legislative Update, STAR Reporting and Compliance, Classroom Management and Culture, Transforming untraditional learning environments, Special Education-Supporting Student Success, Rediscovering the lost tools of learning, Childhood trauma in schools: an introduction, 27 things extraordinary boards do, From chaos to clarity: getting your school board on track, Service learning: the evolution of service learning in three charter schools, “Extra” about extracurriculars: special education students and extracurriculars, and Section 504: the year in review.

NEO presented the strategy of ‘Preventive Intervention’ at the authorizer portion of the conference. Through developing the presentation and presenting, NEO further developed and solidified preventive intervention strategies for more effectively mitigating risk.

If not provided above, please document the annual successful completion of training of your organization’s staff members during the previous year relative to chartering and an authorizer’s role and responsibilities. [Minn. Stat. 124E.05, subd. 2](#) (2023) as amended by the [Laws of Minnesota 2024, chapter 109, article 6, section 5](#).

Note that the following trainings, including those previously noted, were department-approved training (either offered or approved by MDE) that NEO staff attended.

Charter School Boot Camps:

12/20/23

- Compensatory Revenue
- Indoor Air Quality
- Teacher Development and Evaluation
- Charter School Lease Aid
- Special Education Programming
- Special Education Due Process

1/17/24

- Compensatory Revenue
- Indoor Air Quality
- Teacher Development and Evaluation
- Charter School Lease Aid
- Special Education Programming
- Special Education Due Process

2/21/24

- Compensatory Revenue
- Indoor Air Quality
- Teacher Development and Evaluation
- Charter School Lease Aid
- Special Education Programming
- Special Education Due Process

3/20/24

- Student Enrollment and the Relationship to General Education Funding
- Integrated Department of Education Aids System (IDEAS) State Aid Payments
- Licensure Guidance

5/15/24

- Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) and Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDs)
- Online and Digital Learning Opportunities
- School Accountability
- Annual Immunization Status Report
- Elements of English Learner (EL) Education, Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE), and Bilingual Seals and World Language Proficient Certificates

Additional MDE Sessions:

- Working Through the Legal Framework of School Discipline (In-Person at SAGE Academy) (8/17/23)
- Working Through the Legal Framework of School Discipline (8/18/23)
- Working Through the Legal Framework of School Discipline (8/25/23)
- Understanding School Naloxone Requirements & Statewide Resources (MDH and MDE)
- MACSA School Finance Presentation (12/15/23)
- High-Quality Charter School Authorizer Engagement Meeting (1/24/24)
- Language Access 101 for School Leaders (1/24/24)
- Minnesota READ Act Open Office Hours (3/26/24)
- READ Act Local Literacy Plan Submission Overview (4/10/24)
- Nonexclusionary Discipline 101 (5/16/24)
- CSP Authorizer Training Grants Meeting (4/9/24)
- MDE Charter Lease-Aid Training (4/16/24)
- FY23 Expansion/Replication CSP Application Training (5/7/24)

Other Department-Approved Trainings:

- Financial Training Facilitated by Ron Berger (9/29/23)
- Coursera - AI, Business & the Future of Work (9/26/23)
- Coursera - AI For Everyone (9/27/23)
- Volunteers of America (VOA) Minnesota Charter School Leadership Conference (6/10/24 – 6/12/24)

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.

- NEO board members conducted board meetings throughout the year to review and monitor capacity, infrastructure, processes, and practices including implementation of NEO's Business Plan and the allocation of resources for overseeing the portfolio of charter schools and school performance. For example, the NEO board regularly reviewed, monitored, and approved monthly financials in comparison to the approved annual budget. The NEO board regularly reviewed and monitored progress toward implementation of NEO authorizer strategies for supporting authorized school success via a Touchpoint Dashboard.
- The NEO board treasurer and contracted financial service provider (EdFin) regularly reviewed and monitored the authorizer fee collection, independent contractor invoicing and payment, and reimbursement processes, and thereby served as an important financial internal control as part of NEO's internal control system.
- NEO engaged NACSA to conduct an external evaluation of its ability to effectively authorize charter schools in 2014-15 to gain feedback to improve the organization, and then again in 2018-2019. NEO continued to use the feedback in 2022-23 in its continuous improvement in authorizing. MDE also evaluated NEO in 2015 and in 2020 and NEO continued to utilize the feedback from the Minnesota Authorizer Performance Evaluation System (MAPES) in 2023-24. Evidence of NEO's continuous improvement is the improvement from the Satisfactory level of performance as measured through MAPES in 2015, to the Commendable level of performance as measured through MAPES in 2020.
- NEO staff continued to recruit and engage NEO Advisors who are independent contractors that serve as external experts with the capacity (knowledge and skill) to provide high quality observations and questions related to overseeing, monitoring, and evaluating authorized charter schools. The NEO Advisors were contracted for specific services and paid specific amounts for those services in the areas of academic, organizational, governance, and financial oversight, monitoring, and evaluation. The NEO Advisors provided feedback on NEO processes and procedures including new charter school applications, school site visits, school document review, school board meeting observations, and school expansions. NEO staff regularly reviewed and used the feedback in continuous improvement.
- At the NEO Celebrations of Leading and Learning NEO staff surveyed school leaders and board members about ways to improve the authorizing work and NEO staff used the feedback to improve the work. NEO received feedback that facilitated sessions with PELSB and regarding changes in requirements related to discipline were helpful.

NEO staff made it a point to regularly ask authorized school board members and school leaders about how NEO could best support the school success, within the role of the authorizer (while remaining within the authorizer lane) and used that feedback to improve the work.

F. NEO staff met weekly throughout 2023-24 for the purpose of authorizer self-evaluation.

1. NEO staff regularly evaluated progress with implementation of the strategies that NEO utilizes to support school success using the NEO Touchpoint Dashboard. The NEO Touchpoint Dashboard was developed to monitor and evaluate progress during the year with completing scheduled meetings with authorized schools including board meeting observations, formal site visits, informal learning walks, data meetings to examine progress toward contract goals, finance meetings to examine current financial status compared to budgeted and projected, and readiness to open site visits. The Touchpoint Dashboard informs NEO staff and board if completion of the meetings is keeping pace with the percent of the year passed, when the meetings have been scheduled so NEO staff can follow up as needed to schedule them, and when the meetings are completed and for which schools.
2. NEO staff continued to update systems and associated resources to remain current and improve our work in response to feedback from NEO Advisors, staff, authorized school leadership, and external organizations including but not limited to MDE, NACSA, MACSA, and MACS. For example, in the past authorizer evaluation (MAPES), NEO received a relatively lower score in “self-evaluation”. NEO had engaged the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to evaluate NEO to gain feedback that NEO used to improve our work. MDE took the position that NACSA conducted an external evaluation and therefore, the evaluation was not a self-evaluation. NEO has continued to be intentional about self-evaluation and document the self-evaluation in which the NEO board and staff regularly engage.
3. NEO staff regularly reviewed and improved systems for how NEO facilitates sharing of effective practices. For example, NEO continued to improve the process for facilitating sharing of effective charter school practices at the NEO Celebration of Leading and Learning by continuing to refine associated templates, resources, and trackers. In addition, for example, NEO continued to refine associated templates, resources, and process for managing sessions with MDE officials to facilitate sharing of information in response to authorized school needs.
4. NEO staff regularly reviewed and improved how NEO provides oversight, monitoring and evaluation of authorized schools’ on-time and accurate submissions. For example, NEO continued to refine and improve associated templates, resources, and process for facilitation of sharing of information to support on-time and accurate submission rates. NEO developed and refined trackers to support the verification of on-time and accurate reporting and other time-sensitive requirements. In addition, NEO staff continued to refine and improve associated templates, resources, and process with authorized schools to monitor and evaluate progress toward contract goals to support clarity and a shared understanding of the progress and next steps.

5. NEO continued to improve workflow by improving access to templates, tools, and trackers to oversee and monitor the work. For example, NEO staff continued to review and improve how NEO coordinates work with independent contractors and with NEO staff utilizing Google sheets to house, allocate appropriate permissions, and update authorized school Performance Frameworks. NEO staff continued to review and improve how NEO coordinates work with independent contractors and with NEO staff utilizing Google sites, a NEO workflow calendar, and NEO Touchpoint Dashboard.

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.

- A. NEO staff served on the Minnesota Association of Charter School Authorizer (MACSA) Effective Practices Committees to help plan and implement the agendas and facilitating the sharing of statewide charter school data with MACSA after making a data request to MDE for the dataset, so that MACSA could monitor and evaluate the performance of the sector.
- B. NEO presented on the topic of using multiple measures to evaluate school success to authorizers and at the NACSA Leadership Conference on October 25, 2023.
- C. NEO participated in the Minnesota Charter School Leadership Conference June 10-12 in Bemidji, Minnesota where we shared 'preventive intervention' authorizer practices with other authorizing staff.
- D. NEO continued to share ideas for improving communication and collaboration with authorizers and MDE for improving school/student success. Some of the MDE divisions/centers and officials provided timely and valuable information to charter school leaders at facilitated meetings in response. We look forward to continued progress with other items.
 1. [Facilitate Meetings between School Leaders and MDE Officials](#) from different divisions/centers based on school needs.
 2. Make the 'High-Quality Charter School Eligibility List for Expansion and Replication' criteria spreadsheet more transparent. Schools and authorizers should be able to understand why schools were or were not identified as high-quality by MDE. In the process of making the criteria more transparent, NEO found that an irregularity in data management resulted in at least one school from being excluded from eligibility and NEO continues to investigate the root cause.
 3. Identify the submissions required for the 'High-Quality Eligibility List for Expansion and Replication' in the 'Reporting Calendar' for charter schools.
 4. Provide notifications of critical authorizer and charter school submissions including those required for the 'High-Quality Eligibility List for Expansion and Replication'.
 5. Survey authorizers and charter school leaders, including leaders of new charter schools, for ways to improve service.

6. Provide a guide for schools with clear charter school Start-up Grant (CSP) guidelines informed by other states such as Washington and Michigan that have excellent guides.
 7. Make statewide charter school performance data more accessible, for example, via the Report Card website (include all charter school data in the drop-down menus regarding performance).
 8. Copy Authorizers on timely MDE communications to schools if communication is compliance related because authorizers are an interested party. Develop and use a system to alert charter schools and authorizers if MDE payments exceed reported average daily membership (ADM). NEO observed that the delay in notification of overpayment from MDE to charter schools due to discrepancies in actual pupil units upon which aid is allocated, caused cash flow challenges statewide. NEO continued to increase oversight of charter school finance by monitoring actual pupil units, budgeted pupil units, and the pupil units that MDE uses to calculate the school aid.
 9. Alert the legislature of the statewide auditor shortage, update information available regarding available auditors, and work with the legislature and other agencies to address the issue. NEO compiled a list of auditing services available. Of the 44 auditors that provided auditing services to charter schools, only 1 indicated that they could serve an additional client. The main reason cited for the capacity issue was human resource shortage in the auditing field. Given the human resource shortage in the fields of auditing and financial services, NEO continued to increase oversight of charter school finance by investing additional resources in review of charter school financials.
- E. NEO also provided and continues to disseminate practices to individual authorizers upon their request.
- F. NEO applied for and received a continuation of a federal grant administered by the Minnesota Department of Education for the purpose of disseminating information about charter school board roles and responsibilities to charter school board members and school leaders to support the sustainability of charter schools. NEO provided the opportunity for authorizers to engage in the project to assist in disseminating information to the charter schools that they authorize. NEO continued to work during the 2023-24 year to integrate feedback into the modules to target charter school issues and needs. NEO continues to develop ways to further leverage the training site to support school success.

To date, the charter board training website has engaged charter schools including those authorized by Friends of Education, Innovation Quality Schools, Volunteers of America, Chisago Lakes Public Schools, Minnesota Guild of Public Charter Schools, Minnesota Office of Charter Authorizing (MOChA), Northfield Public School District, Osprey Wilds, Pillsbury United Communities, Student Achievement Minnesota LLC (SAM), University of St. Thomas and Novation Education Opportunities (NEO).

The total courses completed by the end of the fiscal year 2024 is about 7,457. This represents a 25.8% increase in the total number of courses that had been completed since the end of fiscal year 2023.

With roughly 802 users having completed a course and with an estimate of 1,400 board members and school leaders across the state, about 57% of all individuals who were a school leader or board member since the official release of the site in March of 2023 have completed at least one course.

The average number of unique users in October 2023 to 96 in October 2024, with an average of increased from 44 to 47 users per month in the 23-24 year.

Many charter boards have added training to their regular board meeting agenda and are taking courses together as a board at their board meetings as part of their charter board training and development plan.

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.

NEO's mission is to authorize and oversee charter schools through consistent, ongoing, and robust evaluation to achieve significant and measurable student growth.

To operationalize the mission, NEO:

- A. Provided consistent, ongoing, and robust feedback to the schools that NEO authorizes. NEO conducted board meeting observations and site visits, reviewed key documents such as annual budgets, audits and annual reports, and reviewed the school’s contract goals as articulated in each school’s unique School Performance Framework, as well as communicated with the school leaders and board chairs throughout the year. NEO allocated resources to ensure that the feedback and evaluation that the schools received was the highest quality by contracting only with proven experts in the areas of charter school academic performance, compliance, governance, and financial oversight.
- B. Facilitated the exchange of successful practices among the authorized schools. NEO hosted the Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 Celebration of Leading and Learning to 1) clarify expectations and provide school leaders an opportunity to review the school status relative to those expectations, 2) facilitate sharing of successful practices, 3) provide technical support in areas of need, and 4) recognize schools for their successes.
- C. Provided technical support to authorized schools.

Following are examples of technical assistance sessions that NEO facilitated by engaging the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) in presentations to address charter school questions, areas of confusion, and areas where more information was needed to meet regulations.

NEO is grateful for the support from those who have provided it at MDE and PELSB!

Date	Facilitated Technical Support	MDE/PELSB Experts
8/10/2023	Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) Updates Q&A Session	June Reineke
8/16/2023	School Meals Update and Information Session	Nicole Barron
11/07/2023	5 Teacher Licensure Tips	Kat Anthony-Wigle
11/28/2023	New Funding Sources and UFARS Codes to Maximize Reimbursements Session	MDE Finance Team
11/29/2023	READ Act Information Session	Julie Novak

1/16/2024	North Star / Stage Indicator Report Information Session	Michael Diedrich
3/21/2024	READ Act Information Session - Updates Q&A	Julie Novak
05/21/2024	Navigating Challenging Student Behavior While Meeting Discipline Policy Requirements	Rachel Saetre Kim Cooper
05/21/2024	New and Exciting Resources from PELSB to Help Meet Staffing and Licensure Needs	Kat Anthony-Wigle Caren Custer

- D. Maintained the Performance Framework of each authorized school. Each school has a unique Performance Framework that articulates the school’s goals for the term of the contract. Each school’s Performance Framework is maintained in a Google Sheet and shared with the board members and school leadership of the school so that the school and NEO have transparent, ongoing access to shared information about the school’s progress toward contract goals. Each year, NEO meets with each authorized school leader, the board chair, board members and in some cases, the staff of the school, to review the school’s current performance status and provide school support, development, and technical assistance with using the Performance Framework to monitor and evaluate progress toward contract renewal goals.
- E. Applied for and received continuation of a federal grant administered by the MDE for charter school support, development, and technical assistance. The Charter Board Training and Development Grant continued to support the work of disseminating information, ideas, and resources on the topics of the charter board’s role and responsibilities, financial management, and employment policies and practices to charter school board members and school leaders to support the sustainability of charter schools. NEO continued to develop and update the training and development site and make it available to charter board members, school leaders, and other interested persons to improve knowledge and skill and support school success.

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

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

NEO planned and promoted the replication and dissemination of successful high-quality school practices in the following ways:

- A. In 2023-2024, 5 of the 17 charter schools identified by the Minnesota Department of Education as “High-Quality” for the purpose of eligibility of the Charter School Program Expansion and Replication Grant, were schools that NEO authorized, the most of any Minnesota charter school authorizer. They were Rochester STEM Academy, Sejong Academy, Saint Cloud Math and Science Academy, Universal Academy, and Urban Academy. NEO continued to disseminate information about effective practices of these high-quality charter schools.

B. NEO continued to disseminate information about and promote expansion and replication of high-quality charter school programs as well. Great Oaks Academy is a high-quality charter school as measured by the school's performance framework exemplary performance rating. NEO disseminated information to Great Oaks Academy about applying for an expansion. Great Oaks Academy received approval to expand to high school and to an additional site.

C. To facilitate exchange of effective practices among authorized schools for the purpose of each school's continuous improvement NEO held fall and spring Celebrations of Leading and Learning:

Fall 2023 Celebration of Leading and Learning Presentations, November 7th, 2023

1. PELSB; Katherine Anthony-Wigle – Effective and Efficient Ways to Oversee Staff Licensure, Get Staff Licensed, and Leverage Paraprofessionals
2. Lori Ryan (Lorignite) and David Bjorkland (BlueSky Online School) – Streamlining Education: ChatGPT for Paperwork Reduction

Spring 2024 Celebration of Leading and Learning Presentations, May 21st, 2024

1. MDE; Rachel Saetre and Kimberly Cooper – Navigating Challenging Student Behavior While Meeting Discipline Policy Requirements
2. PELSB; Katherine Anthony-Wigle and Caren Custer – New and Exciting Resources from PELSB to Help Meet Staffing and Licensure Needs
3. Avalon School; Carrie Bakken and Tim Quealy – Managing Unique Measures of School Performance
4. New Century Academy; Jason Becker, Kelsey Dolge, and several New Century Academy students – Empowering Students through Community Engagement
5. Urban Academy; Mongsher Ly – Secrets to Successful Budgets and Audits

D. NEO also shared effective practices and useful resources identified during learning walks, site visits, and board observations, with authorized schools.

E. NEO facilitated informal site visits (learning walks) focused on the school's current needs or priorities, with the goals of supporting a shared vision of the use of effective schoolwide strategies and of identifying successful practices and resources that were shared with other schools.

F. NEO provided a project management system (Basecamp) and shared resources to pre-operational schools working to meet readiness to open indicators.

G. NEO identified and recognized schools that demonstrated exemplary performance, through awards such as the NEO Stewardship Award in Finance and Academic Achievement Awards, to recognize, promote, and share successful practices.

H. NEO continued to procure resources and ideas from charter school board members about effective practices and useful resources to share through the www.mncharterboard.com charter board training and development site. NEO continued to inform charter schools of the site, maintained the site, and facilitated access to the site to facilitate sharing of effective practices and resources that charter schools have found useful.

Portfolio Information

General Charter School Portfolio Data (as of June 30, 2024)

Preoperational Charter Schools in Authorizer's Portfolio

Name of Charter School	Charter School Local Educational Agency (LEA) Number (if assigned)	Charter Schools Program (CSP) Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Approved to Serve	Projected Enrollment when Fully Enrolled	Proposed Location	Proposed Opening Date
Enter name of charter school	Enter LEA number	Enter: Yes or No	Enter grade levels approved	Enter projected enrollment number	Enter proposed location	Enter proposed opening date in MM/DD/YYYY format
Enlighten Academy	4281	Yes	PK-5	276 (year 8), opening with 90	St. Paul	09/03/2025
Irrawaddy Academy	4304	No- MDE did not administer the grant.	PK-12	520 (year 13), opening with 120	St. Paul	09/03/2025

Operational Charter Schools in Authorizer's Portfolio

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2024	Location
Enter name of charter school	Enter LEA number	Enter: Yes or No	Enter grade levels served	Enter location of school site(s)
Achieve Language Academy	4018	Yes	PK-8	2169 Stillwater Avenue E, Saint Paul, MN 55119

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2024	Location
Agamim Classical Academy	4220	Yes	KG-8	5300 France Avenue S, Edina, MN 55410
Aspire Academy	4280	Yes	KG-8	1210 Shakopee Town Square, Shakopee, MN 55379
Avalon School	4075-010	Yes	6-12	700 Glendale Street, Saint Paul, MN 55114
Avalon Middle School	4075-020	Yes	6-8	700 Glendale Street, Saint Paul, MN 55114
Bultum Academy	4295	Yes	PK-6	1555 40 th Ave NE, Columbia Heights, MN 55421
Discovery Charter School	4221	Yes	KG-8	4100 East 66th Street Ste 2, Inver Grove Heights, MN 55076
Escuela Exitos	4283	Yes	KG-8	4741 Zealand Ave N, New Hope, MN 55428
Great Oaks Academy – School of Grammar	4268	Yes	K-5	6300 212TH ST W, Farmington, MN 55024
Great Oaks Academy – School of Logic	4268-020	Yes	6-7	6300 212TH ST W, Farmington, MN 55024
Great River Elementary School	4105-020	Yes	1-6	1326 Energy Park Dr, Saint Paul, MN 55108

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2024	Location
Great River School	4105-010	Yes	7-12	1326 Energy Park Dr, Saint Paul, MN 55108
Hmong College Preparatory Academy ES	4103-01	Yes	K-5	1515 Brewster St, Saint Paul, MN 55108
Hmong College Preparatory Academy MS	4103-02	Yes	6-8	1515 Brewster St, Saint Paul, MN 55108
Hmong College Preparatory Academy HS	4103-03	Yes	9-12	1515 Brewster St, Saint Paul, MN 55108
Innovation Science and Technology Academy Elementary	4282-01	Yes	PK-5	3397 Coon Rapids Blvd, Coon Rapids, MN 55433
Innovation Science and Technology Academy Middle School	4282-02	Yes	6-7	3397 Coon Rapids Blvd, Coon Rapids, MN 55433
Kato Public Charter School	4066	Yes	6-12	110 N 6th St, Mankato, MN 56001
Lionsgate Academy - Minnetonka	4183-010	Yes	7-12	5605 Green Circle Drive, Minnetonka, MN 55343
Lionsgate Academy-Shoreview	4183-010	Yes	7-12	599 Cardigan Road, Shoreview, MN 55126

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2024	Location
Lionsgate Academy – Lynx Program	4183-050	Yes	7-12	599 Cardigan Road, Shoreview, MN 55126
Lionsgate Academy – Aim Program	4183-030	Yes	12	2342 Helen Street, North Saint Paul, MN 55109
Nerstrand Charter School	4055	Yes	KG-5	205 S 2nd St, Nerstrand, MN 55053
New Century Academy	4093	Yes	6-12	950 School Road SW, Hutchinson, MN 55350
New City School	4089	Yes	KG-8	1500 6th St NE, Minneapolis, MN, 55413
North Metro Flex Academy	4243	Yes	KG-6	2350 Helen Street, North Saint Paul, MN 55109
North Metro Flex Middle School			7-8	
Quantum STEAM Academy Elementary School	4269	Yes	K-4	497 Humboldt Ave, Saint Paul, MN 55107
Quantum STEAM Academy Middle School	4269-02	Yes	5-8	497 Humboldt Ave, Saint Paul, MN 55107
Rochester STEM Academy	4204	Yes	9-12	415 16th St SW, Rochester, MN 55902
SAGE Academy Charter School	4087	Yes	9-12	3900 85th Ave N, Brooklyn Park, MN 55443

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	CSP Grant Recipient	Grade Levels Served in FY 2024	Location
Saint Cloud Math and Science Academy Charter School	4223	Yes	KG-8	1025 18th St N, Saint Cloud, MN 56303
Sejong Academy of Minnesota	4215-010	Yes	PK-6	1885 University Ave W, Saint Paul, MN 55104
Sejong Academy of Minnesota High School	4215-020	Yes	7-12	1885 University Ave W, Saint Paul, MN 55104
Star of the North Academy Charter School	4224	Yes	KG-8	1562 Viking Blvd, East Bethel, MN 55011
STEAM Academy	4270	Yes	KG-6	4100 66 th St E, Inver Grove Heights, MN 55076
Surad Academy	4301	No – MDE did not administer the grant.	K-5	128 8 th Ave NW, Faribault, MN 55021
TEAM Academy	4127	Yes	KG-6	220 17th Avenue NE, Waseca, MN 56093
Universal Academy Elementary	4225	Yes	PK-6	2919 26th Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55406
Universal Academy Middle/High	4225	Yes	7-10	2919 26th Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55406
Urban Academy	4088	Yes	PK-8	1668 Montreal Ave, Saint Paul, MN 55116

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 three through five	Officially Recognized Instructional Prekindergarten Program for four-year-olds to prepare children for entry into kindergarten the following year
Enter name of charter school	Enter: Yes, No, or N/A	Enter: Yes, No, or N/A	Enter: Yes, No, or N/A
Achieve Language Academy	Yes	No	Yes
Sejong Academy	No	No	Yes
Universal Academy	No	No	Yes
Urban Academy	No	No	Yes
Innovation Academy	No	No	Yes
Bultum Academy	No	No	Yes
TEAM Academy*	No	No	Yes
Quantum STEAM Academy*	No	No	Yes
STEAM Academy*	No	No	Yes
Aspire Academy*	No	No	Yes
Surad Academy*	No	No	Yes
*PK Instructional Program was not yet operational.			

Charter School Portfolio Activity in FY 2024

Did any charter schools leave your organization's portfolio and transfer to another authorizer during or at the end of the year?

☐ Yes

☒ 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
Enter name of charter school	Enter LEA number	Enter new authorizing organization	Enter date of transfer in MM/DD/YYYY format

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

☐ Yes

☒ No

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

Name of Charter School	Charter School LEA Number	Reason(s) for Contract Termination	Effective Date of Contract Termination
Enter name of charter school	Enter LEA number	Enter reason(s) for contract termination	Enter effective date of contract termination in MM/DD/YYYY format

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

☐ Yes

☒ 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
Enter name of charter school	Enter LEA number	Enter reason(s) for closure	Enter effective date of closure in MM/DD/YYYY format

Continued on next page.

Charter School Portfolio Performance

Academic Performance

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

The vision of NEO is to be a leading Minnesota Authorizer of innovative, diverse, and effective charter schools. NEO monitors the collective enrollment and demographic information of the schools authorized by NEO to ensure that NEO continues to reach out to diverse communities that are currently underserved by the statewide education system as evident by large academic and opportunity gaps statewide.

The schools that NEO authorized in 2023-2024 continue to serve increasingly diverse families and students with innovative programs.

For example, the percent of English learners collectively served by schools authorized by NEO who took state assessments increased from 18% in 2015 to 37% in 2024.

In third grade, the percent of English learners collectively served by schools authorized by NEO who took state assessments increased from 28% in 2015 to 50% in 2024.

For reference, the percent of all English learners statewide who took state tests in 2024 was only 10%.

Student Population: Percent of All Students Tested in Schools Authorized by NEO

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
English Learners	18%	24%	26%	31%	29%	NA	34%	29%	32%	37%
Students Receiving Special Education Services	17%	17%	17%	18%	20%	NA	20%	19%	19%	18%
Students Meeting State Guidelines for Free/Reduced Meals	53%	54%	56%	54%	55%	NA	58%	55%	64%	70%

Student Population: Percent of All Students Tested in All MN Public Schools

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
English Learners	8%	8%	8%	9%	8%	NA	7%	9%	9%	10%
Students Receiving Special Education Services	13%	14%	15%	14%	15%	NA	15%	17%	16%	17%
Students Meeting State Guidelines for Free/Reduced Meals	39%	38%	38%	37%	38%	NA	32%	32%	43%	43%

Data Source: Minnesota Department of Education School Report Card

The schools authorized by NEO continue to serve families and students with diverse needs and diverse ancestry and ethnic origins as broadly categorized by the Minnesota Department of Education. They offer innovative and specialized programming including quality programming for students on the autism spectrum and heritage programming to support the preservation of language and culture.

Therefore, the racial composition and ethnicity of students in the schools authorized by NEO continues to remain diverse.

Students Served by Schools NEO Authorizes

Year	American Indian/Alaskan Native	Asian/Pacific Islander	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Black, not of Hispanic origin	Two or More Races	White, not of Hispanic origin
2015	0.3%	15%	NA	9%	25%	NA	49%
2016	1%	13%	NA	8%	25%	NA	45%
2017	1%	14%	NA	10%	24%	NA	46%
2018	1%	17%	NA	10%	27%	3%	42%
2019	1%	16%	NA	11%	27%	4%	41%
2020	1%	17%	0.2%	11%	26%	5%	40%
2021	1%	18%	0.2%	11%	28%	5%	38%
2022	1%	18%	0.1%	11%	28%	5%	37%
2023	1%	39%	0	8%	23%	4%	25%
2024	1%	38%	0.05%	8%	25%	4%	25%

Data Source: Minnesota Department of Education Data and Analytics

Academic Performance Indicator: All children are ready for school.

A key academic performance indicator that NEO has monitored is that all children are ready for school.

Schools that are authorized by NEO continued to implement a Prekindergarten Instructional Program that have the capacity and resources to provide high quality Prekindergarten instruction. The schools continued to work with NEO to gain approval from the Minnesota Department of Education and successfully implement a Prekindergarten Instructional Program to help ensure that all children are ready for school.

In 2023-24, 14 of the 24 elementary schools authorized by NEO (Achieve Language Academy, Sejong Academy of Minnesota, Universal Academy, Urban Academy Charter School, Bultum Academy, Innovation Academy, Quantum STEAM Academy, STEAM Academy, Great Oaks Academy, Aspire Academy, Surad Academy, Enlighten Academy, TEAM Academy, and Irrawaddy Academy) were authorized to provide a Prekindergarten Instructional Program.

Of those authorized to have a Prekindergarten Instructional Program, 6 schools provided one.

NEO facilitated sharing of ideas and resources among Prekindergarten Instructional Programs through learning walks and verified compliance with laws and regulations at site visits.

The number of schools authorized by NEO with a Prekindergarten Instructional Program continued to increase.

Years	NEO Authorized Schools Adding Prekindergarten Instructional Programs
2014	Achieve Language Academy
2015	Lafayette Charter School (closed)
2016	Sejong Academy of Minnesota
2017	Universal Academy, Urban Academy Charter School
2018	Quantum STEAM Academy, STEAM Academy, Great Oaks Academy
2019	Innovation Academy, Enlighten Academy, Aspire Academy
2022	Bultum Academy
2023	Surad Academy
2024	Irrawaddy Academy, TEAM Academy
2014-2024	14 Total Schools Authorized to Provide Prekindergarten Instructional Programs

NEO continued to contract with an expert in program oversight and early childhood education to assist with the oversight of schools that have Prekindergarten Instructional Programs. NEO developed a Prekindergarten Instructional Program evaluation tool that can be used by school leadership and NEO to evaluate the Prekindergarten Instructional Program to identify successful practices and facilitate sharing of them.

Academic Performance Indicator 2: All racial and economic achievement gaps between students are closed.

NEO evaluated the academic performance of Focus Groups including “Special Education” (students receiving special education services), “English Learner” (multilingual learners learning English language), and “Free/Reduced-Price Meals” (students from households with an income that meets guidelines for free and reduced school meals) in terms of progress in closing economic and other opportunity/achievement gaps. The goals are to exceed the statewide and resident district averages and/or improve as measured by state tests.

READING

The percent of students by Focus Group who scored proficient on All State Reading Accountability Assessments exceeded the state in all years for the Focus Group ‘Multilingual English Learners’ (multi-lingual learners learning English language).

The results decreased in 2024 with the inclusion of the results of a large school that transferred to NEO as measured by the percent of students who scored proficient in the Focus Group, ‘Special Education’ and in the Focus Group ‘Free/Reduced Price Meals’. Though the transfer decreased the overall results, the newly transferred school has improved reading results for the Focus Groups and overall, since transferring to NEO.

Note that due to the pandemic, there are no results for 2019-20. In the 2021 school year, the student assessment results decreased as measured by the percent scoring proficient, due in part to the limitations of distance learning when students could not attend school in person.

State Accountability Reading Test Results (Percent Proficient)

Year	Focus Group: Multilingual English Learner		Focus Group: Special Education		Focus Group: Free/Reduced-Price Meals	
	NEO Authorized Schools	STATE	NEO Authorized Schools	STATE	NEO Authorized Schools	STATE
2015-2019	28%	15%	32%	29%	41%	40%
2020	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2021	15%	9%	23%	26%	27%	32%
2022	22%	12%	27%	26%	33%	32%
2023	20%	12%	28%	26%	33%	34%
2024	18% (15% with inclusion of large transfer school)	10%	27% (23% with inclusion of large transfer school)	26%	34% (30% with inclusion of large transfer school)	33%
Analysis	<u>English Learner Focus Group</u> In all years measured, schools authorized by NEO collectively outperformed the state with the inclusion of the results of a large school that transferred to NEO as measured by the percent of students who scored proficient in the Focus Group, 'English Learner'.					
	<u>Special Education Focus Group</u> The results decreased in 2024 with the inclusion of the results of a large school that transferred to NEO as measured by the percent of students who scored proficient in the Focus Group, 'Special Education'.					
	<u>Free/Reduced-Price Meals Focus Group</u> The results decreased in 2024 with the inclusion of the results of a large school that transferred to NEO as measured by the percent of students who scored proficient in the Focus Group, 'Free/Reduced-Price Meals'.					

Data Source: MDE de-identified, student-level data.

Each school that NEO authorizes has a Performance Framework that includes measures for proficiency of Focus Groups in reading.

NEO met with the leaders of authorized schools to examine the school performance and identify successful practices as well as learn ways that the school is working to improve results.

NEO connected school leaders based on areas of strengths and needs to help facilitate sharing of successful practices.

NEO followed up with the schools as available to plan for ways to facilitate sharing of the successful practices.

Several schools that NEO authorizes significantly improved the reading scores of different Focus Groups and/or significantly outperformed the statewide average for the respective Focus Groups in 2024, as measured by the percent of students meeting grade level standards (scoring meets or exceeds on the state reading assessments).

For example,

- Agamim Classical Academy achieved 44% of students in the focus group of students receiving special education services scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 26%, post pandemic.
- Avalon School achieved 41% of students in the focus group of students receiving special education services scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 26%, post pandemic.
- Bultum Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language from 28% to 33%, outperforming the statewide average of 12%, post pandemic.
- Discovery Charter School achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students from low-income households from 33% to 44%, outperforming the statewide average of 33%, post pandemic.
- Great Oaks Academy achieved 36% of students in the focus group of students receiving special education services scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 26%, post pandemic.
- Great Oaks Academy achieved 50% of students in the focus group of students from low-income households scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 33%, post pandemic.
- Great River School achieved 35% of students in the focus group of students receiving special education services scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 26%, post pandemic.
- Great River School achieved 56% of students in the focus group of students from low-income households scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 33%, post pandemic.
- Lionsgate Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students receiving special education services from 32% to 36% to 39%, post pandemic, outperforming the statewide average of 26%.
- Lionsgate Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students from low-income households from 39% to 47%, post pandemic, outperforming the statewide average of 33%.
- Quantum STEAM Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language from 20% to 23% to 31%, outperforming the statewide average of 12%, post pandemic.
- Quantum STEAM Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students from low-income households from 27% to 29% to 39%, outperforming the statewide average of 33%, post pandemic.
- Saint Cloud Math and Science Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students from low-income households from 27% to 37% to 38%, outperforming the statewide average of 33%, post pandemic.
- Sejong Academy achieved 21% of students in the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language outperforming the statewide average of 12%, post pandemic.
- Saint Cloud Math and Science Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students receiving special education services from 8% to 14% to 19%, post pandemic.

- Surad Academy, in its first year, achieved 23% of students in the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 12%, post pandemic.
- Universal Academy achieved 29% of students in the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language outperforming the statewide average of 12%, post pandemic.
- Universal Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students from low-income households from 41% to 53%, post pandemic, outperforming the statewide average of 33%.
- Urban Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language from 17% to 26%, outperforming the statewide average of 12%, post pandemic.
- Urban Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students receiving special education services from 6% to 16% to 17%, post pandemic.
- Urban Academy achieved an increase in reading proficiency for the focus group of students from low-income households from 29% to 37%, outperforming the statewide average of 33%, post pandemic.

Some of the leaders from these schools shared effective practices during 2023-2024, including at the 2023 Fall and 2024 Spring Celebration of Leading and Learning, depending on their availability.

MATHEMATICS

The percent of students by Focus Group who scored proficient on All State Math Accountability Assessments met or exceeded the state in all years except for 2021 for the Focus Group, ‘Multilingual English Learners’.

The results decreased in 2024 with the inclusion of the results of a large school that transferred to NEO as measured by the percent of students who scored proficient in the Focus Group, ‘Special Education’ and in the Focus Group ‘Free/Reduced Price Meals’. Though the transfer decreased the overall results, the newly transferred school has improved math results for the Focus Groups and overall, since transferring to NEO.

Note that due to the pandemic, there are no results for 2019-20. In the 2021 school year, the student assessment results decreased as measured by the percent scoring proficient, due in part to the limitations of distance learning when students could not attend school in person.

MCA Math Results (Percent Proficient)

Year	Focus Group: Multilingual English Learner		Focus Group: Special Education		Focus Group: Free/Reduced-Price Meals	
	NEO Authorized Schools	STATE	NEO Authorized Schools	STATE	NEO Authorized Schools	STATE
2015-2019	29%	18%	21%	29%	34%	38%
2020	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2021	8%	9%	12%	23%	15%	23%
2022	13%	12%	16%	24%	19%	24%
2023	15%	13%	17%	25%	22%	27%
2024	16% (13% with addition of large new transfer)	13%	17% (15% with addition of large new transfer)	25%	23% (21% with addition of large new transfer)	28%
Analysis	<u>English Learner Focus Group</u> The results decreased in 2024 with the inclusion of the results of a large school that transferred to NEO as measured by the percent of students who scored proficient in the Focus Group, ‘English Learner’.					
	<u>Special Education Focus Group</u> The results decreased in 2024 with the inclusion of the results of a large school that transferred to NEO as measured by the percent of students who scored proficient in the Focus Group, ‘Special Education’.					
	<u>Free/Reduced Price Meals Focus Group</u> The results decreased in 2024 with the inclusion of the results of a large school that transferred to NEO as measured by the percent of students who scored proficient in the Focus Group, ‘Free/Reduced-Price Meals’.					

Data Sources: MDE de-identified, student-level data.

Each school that NEO authorizes has a Performance Framework that includes measures for proficiency of Focus Groups in math.

NEO met with the leaders of authorized schools to examine the school performance and identify successful practices as well as learn ways that the school is working to improve results.

NEO connected school leaders based on areas of strengths and needs to help facilitate sharing of successful practices.

Several schools improved the math scores of different Focus Groups by at least 10 percentage points and/or significantly outperformed the statewide average for the respective Focus Groups (comparisons between the school and state results are for the same grade levels).

NEO followed up with these schools based on their availability to plan for ways to facilitate sharing of the successful practices.

For example,

- Agamim Classical Academy achieved 39% of students in the focus group of students receiving special education services scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 25%, post pandemic.
- Bultum Academy achieved 25% of students in the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 13%, post pandemic.
- Great Oaks Academy achieved 33% of students in the focus group of students receiving special education services scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 25%, post pandemic.
- Great Oaks Academy achieved 51% in the focus group of students from low-income households, outperforming the statewide average of 26%, post pandemic.
- Lionsgate Academy achieved an increase in math proficiency for the focus group of students receiving special education services from 17% to 19% to 23%, post pandemic.
- Lionsgate Academy achieved an increase in math proficiency for the focus group of students from low-income households from 16% to 21% to 34%, outperforming the statewide average of 26%, post pandemic.
- Nerstrand Elementary School achieved an increase in math proficiency for the focus group of students from low-income households from 33% to 40%, outperforming the statewide average of 26%, post pandemic.
- Quantum STEAM Academy achieved an increase in math proficiency for the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language from 10% to 19% to 21%, outperforming the statewide average of 13%, post pandemic.
- Quantum STEAM Academy achieved an increase in math proficiency for the focus group of students from low-income households from 12% to 18% to 24%, post pandemic.
- Sejong Academy achieved an increase in math proficiency for the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language from 15% to 18% to 19%, outperforming the statewide average of 13%, post pandemic.

- Sejong Academy achieved an increase in math proficiency for the focus group of students from low-income households from 20% to 28%, outperforming the statewide average of 26%, post pandemic.
- Saint Cloud Math and Science Academy achieved 17% in the focus group of multilingual learners learning English language, outperforming the statewide average of 13%, post pandemic.
- Saint Cloud Math and Science Academy achieved an increase in math proficiency for the focus group of students receiving special education services from 8% to 19% to 24%, post pandemic.

Some of the leaders from these schools shared effective practices during 2023-2024, including at the 2023 Fall and 2024 Spring Celebration of Leading and Learning, depending on their availability.

Academic Performance Indicator: All students are ready for career and college.

Based on the statewide assessment results, the mandated distance learning during the pandemic had a more severe negative impact in math and for Focus Groups that include students receiving special education services, students from low-income households, and students who are multilingual learners learning English language.

NEO also examined the percent of all students in schools that NEO authorizes that score proficient in reading and math, with the goal of exceeding the statewide and resident district proficiency rates.

	All Students: Reading Percent Proficient		All Students: Math Percent Proficient	
	NEO Authorized Schools	STATE	NEO Authorized Schools	STATE
2014	51%	60%	42%	61%
2015	54%	61%	43%	62%
2016	55%	61%	42%	62%
2017	53%	61%	40%	61%
2018	52%	61%	44%	60%
2019	48%	60%	40%	56%
2020	NA	NA	NA	NA
2021	37%	53%	23%	44%
2022	45%	52%	28%	46%
2023	44% (excluding large transfer school) 37% (including large transfer school)	50%	30% (excluding large transfer school) 25% (including large transfer school)	46%
2024	42% (excluding large transfer school) 36% (including large transfer school)	50%	30% (excluding large transfer school) 26% (including large transfer school)	46%
Analysis	Schools authorized by NEO did not yet collectively outperform the state as measured by the percent of students who scored proficient in reading and math.			

Data Sources: MDE de-identified, student-level data.

Each school that NEO authorizes has a Performance Framework that includes the charter contract goals and measures for reading proficiency.

NEO met with the leaders of authorized schools to examine the school performance and identify successful practices as well as learn ways that the school is working to improve results.

NEO connected school leaders based on areas of strengths and needs to help facilitate sharing of successful practices.

NEO followed up with the schools based on their availability to plan for ways to facilitate sharing of the successful practices.

Several schools that NEO authorizes outperformed the statewide average and/or improved reading proficiency by at least 10 percentage points as measured by the percent of students who scored “meets” or “exceeds” on the state reading assessments.

For example,

- Agamim Classical Academy achieved 55% of students scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 51%, post pandemic.
- Avalon Charter School achieved 55% of students scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 51%, post pandemic.
- Great Oaks Academy achieved 59% of students scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 51%, post pandemic.
- Great River School achieved 64% of students scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 51%, post pandemic.
- Nerstrand Elementary School achieved 55% of students scoring proficient in reading, outperforming the statewide average of 51%, post pandemic.

In addition, several schools that NEO authorizes outperformed the statewide average and/or improved math proficiency by at least 10 percentage points as measured by the percent of students who scored “meets” or “exceeds” on the state math assessments.

For example,

- Agamim Classical Academy achieved 54% of student scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 46%, post pandemic.
- Great Oaks Academy achieved 62% of student scoring proficient in math, outperforming the statewide average of 46%, post pandemic.
- Nerstrand Elementary School achieved an increase in math proficiency from 51% to 57% to 76%, outperforming the statewide average of 46%, post pandemic.
- Quantum STEAM Academy achieved an increase in math proficiency from 11% to 18% to 24%, post pandemic.
- Sejong Academy achieved an increase in math proficiency from 20% to 21% to 30%, post pandemic.
- Urban Academy achieved an increase in math proficiency from 14% to 25% to 31%, post pandemic.

NEO followed up with these schools based on their availability to facilitate sharing of the successful practices.

Academic Performance Indicator: Students below grade level make high growth in reading.

In addition to regularly overseeing and evaluating student progress toward career and college readiness by overseeing and evaluating progress toward grade level proficiency, NEO and the schools authorized by NEO monitor and evaluate the percent of students below grade level making high growth in reading.

If students below grade level are making high growth, they are making the 'catch up' growth they need to make to be on track for a successful transition to career and college, and if students who are at or above grade level make medium or high growth, they will remain on track for a successful transition to career and college.

The percent of students below grade level making high growth in reading as measured by the state assessments in grades 4 - 8 and high school demonstrate that collectively, the schools that NEO authorizes meet or exceed the state in reading growth. Due to the pandemic and state reporting limitations for 2020 and 2021, results are not available for those years.

Percent of Students Scoring “Does not Meet” or “Partially Meets” the Prior Year Advancing a Proficiency Level

Year	Schools Authorized by NEO	State
2016	33%	31%
2017	33%	31%
2018	35%	30%
2019	29%	29%
2020	NA	NA
2021	NA	NA
2022	37%	31%
2023	33%	27%
2024	27%	27%
Analysis	Schools authorized by NEO for at least two consecutive years collectively outperformed the state in 2023 as measured by the percent of students below grade level making high growth in reading. Due to the pandemic and state reporting limitations for 2019-2020 and for 2020-21, there are not results available for these years.	

Data Sources: MDE de-identified, student-level data.

Academic Performance Indicator: Students at or above grade level make medium and high growth in reading.

NEO and the schools authorized by NEO also monitor and evaluate the percent of students at or above grade level making medium or high growth in reading.

Collectively the schools that NEO authorizes have not yet consistently exceeded the statewide average in the percent of students above grade level making medium and high growth in reading as measured by the state assessments in grades 4 – 8 and high school.

Due to the pandemic and state reporting limitations for 2020 and 2021, results were not available for those years.

Percent of Students Scoring “Meets” or “Exceeds” the Prior Year Maintaining or Advancing a Proficiency Level

Year	Schools Authorized by NEO	State
2016	71%	73%
2017	72%	74%
2018	75%	75%
2019	73%	73%
2020	NA	NA
2021	NA	NA
2022	79%	76%
2023	77%	74%
2024	76%	75%
Analysis:	Schools authorized by NEO collectively outperformed the statewide average in 2024 as measured by the percent of students at or above grade level making medium or high growth in reading. Due to the pandemic and state reporting limitations for 2019-2020 and for 2020-21, results were not available for those years.	

Data Sources: MDE de-identified, student-level data.

Academic Performance Indicator: Students below grade level make high growth in math.

The percent of students below grade level making high growth in math as measured by the state assessments in grades 4 - 8 and high school, demonstrate that collectively, the schools that NEO authorizes performed about the same or exceeded the statewide average in math growth in most years.

Due to the pandemic and state reporting limitations for 2020 and 2021, results were not available for those years.

Percent of Students Scoring “Does not Meet” or “Partially Meets” the Prior Year Advancing a Proficiency Level

Year	Schools Authorized by NEO	State
2016	29%	26%
2017	22%	25%
2018	29%	24%
2019	25%	22%
2020	NA	NA
2021	NA	NA
2022	20%	24%
2023	20%	20%
2024	19%	19%
Analysis:	Schools authorized by NEO performed about the same as the state as measured by the percent of students below grade level making high growth in math in 2024. Due to the pandemic and state reporting limitations for 2019-2020 and for 2020-21, there are not results available for these years.	

Data Source: MDE de-identified, student-level data.

Academic Performance Indicator: Students at or above grade level make medium and high growth in math.

Collectively the schools that NEO authorizes have not yet exceeded the statewide average in the percent of students above grade level making medium and high growth in math as measured by the state assessments in grades 4 – 8 and high school. However, the results improved by 3 percentage points in 2024.

Due to the pandemic and state reporting limitations for 2020 and 2021, results were not available for those years.

Percent of Students Scoring “Meets” or “Exceeds” the Prior Year Maintaining or Advancing a Proficiency Level

Year	Schools Authorized by NEO	State
2016	71%	74%
2017	60%	74%
2018	66%	73%
2019	64%	71%
2020	NA	NA
2021	NA	NA
2022	64%	75%
2023	63%	72%
2024	66%	71%
Analysis:	Schools authorized by NEO did not outperform the state as measured by the percent of students at or above grade level making medium or high growth in math in 2024. Due to the pandemic and state reporting limitations for 2019-2020 and for 2020-21, results were not available for those years.	

Data Source: MDE de-identified, student-level data.

Each school that NEO authorizes has a Performance Framework that includes measures for growth of students below grade level making high growth and students at or above grade level making medium or high growth.

NEO met with the leaders of authorized schools to examine the school performance and identify successful practices as well as learn ways that the school is working to improve results.

NEO connected school leaders based on areas of strengths and needs to help facilitate sharing of successful practices.

NEO followed up with the schools to plan for ways to facilitate sharing of the successful practices.

Academic Performance Indicator: All students graduate from high school.

Schools authorized by NEO have collectively demonstrated improvement in graduation rates since the baseline year of 2013. All graduation cohorts met the goal of a 75% graduation rate set by NEO for 2025.

4-year Graduation Rate (Due to state reporting, graduation data lags one year)

Year	School Authorized by NEO	State
Baseline 2013	40%	80%
2014	43%	81%
2015	46%	82%
2016	53%	83%
2017	47%	83%
2018	62%	83%
2019	59%	84%
2020	63%	84%
2021	59%	83%
2022	64%	84%
2023	75%	83%
Analysis:	From the baseline year rate of 40% in 2013, the 4-year graduation rate increased in 2023 to 75%. Schools authorized by NEO are not yet exceeding the statewide average 4-year graduation rate.	

5-year Graduation Rate (Due to state reporting, graduation data lags one year)

Year	School Authorized by NEO	State
Baseline 2013	45%	82%
2014	48%	84%
2015	51%	84%
2016	53%	85%
2017	60%	86%
2018	67%	86%
2019	75%	86%
2020	68%	87%
2021	69%	87%
2022	74%	87%
2023	84%	86%
Analysis:	From the baseline year rate of 45% in 2013, the 5-year graduation rate increased in 2023 to 84%. Schools authorized by NEO are not yet exceeding the statewide average 5-year graduation rate.	

6-Year Cohort (Due to state reporting, graduation data lags one year)

Year	School Authorized by NEO	State
2013	49%	82%
2014	52%	83%
2015	52%	85%
2016	56%	86%
2017	59%	86%
2018	78%	87%
2019	70%	87%
2020	77%	88%
2021	72%	88%
2022	75%	88%
2023	85%	88%
Analysis:	From the baseline year rate of 49% in 2013, the 6-year graduation rate increased in 2023 to 85%. Schools authorized by NEO are not yet exceeding the statewide average 6-year graduation rate.	

7-Year Cohort (Due to state reporting, graduation data lags one year)

Year	School Authorized by NEO	State
2019	81%	88%
2020	74%	88%
2021	80%	89%
2022	77%	89%
2023	87%	89%
Analysis:	MDE began calculating 7-year graduation rates in 2020. From the baseline year rate of 2019, the 7-year graduation rate increased in 2023 to 87%. Schools authorized by NEO are not yet exceeding the statewide 7-year graduation rate.	

Data Source: Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Report Card

Each high school that NEO authorizes has a Performance Framework that includes measures for graduation. Schools that did not meet the satisfactory level of results at any point during the contract term, met more often with NEO to examine the school performance and actions that the school has been taking to improve the results. NEO also identified areas where schools met the exemplary level of results. NEO connected school leaders based on areas of strengths and relative weakness to help facilitate sharing of successful practices and support school success.

Operational Performance

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

Climate Performance Indicator: Attendance Rates.

Due to the state reporting timeline, attendance data lags one year so data from 2024 is not yet available.

Percent of Students Attending More than 90% of the Time Enrolled in Schools Authorized by NEO

Group	Year	Attendance Rate
All	2015	83%
All	2016	85%
All	2017	85%
All	2018	85%
All	2019	86%
All	2020	89%
All	2021	NA
All	2022	76%
All	2023	77% (72% including large transfer school)

Data Source: Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Report Card

Results. Note that attendance data reported by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) lags one year. Therefore, data for 2023 is the most current available data.

Collectively, the schools authorized by NEO improved the attendance rate from 2015 to 2020, but post-pandemic the attendance rate has decreased to 77% in 2023 following the trend statewide, and to 72% with the inclusion of the newly transferred school.

Statewide, the attendance rate fell from 85% in 2020 to 75% in 2023 post pandemic.

The consistent attendance rate is calculated by MDE as the percent of students who attend at least 90% of the total days enrolled. MDE did not report attendance results for 2021 due to the pandemic conditions.

The statewide consistent attendance rate was 75% for the 2022-2023 school year, thus, for the 2022-2023 school year, the average consistent attendance rate of the schools that NEO authorizes was 3 percentage points lower than the state average with the inclusion of the newly transferred school.

Operational Performance Indicator: Compliance with MDE Submissions.

1. 28 of 28, or 100% of operational charter schools that NEO authorizes submitted the Annual Charter School Assurances on time and accurately.
2. 28 of 28, or 100% of operational charter schools that NEO authorizes submitted the Assurance of Compliance report on time and accurately.
3. 27 of 27, or 100% of operational charter schools that NEO authorizes that were in operation the prior year submitted the WBWF Report to MDE on time and accurately.
4. 28 of 28, or 100% of operational charter schools that NEO authorizes submitted the STAR Report on time and accurately.
5. 28 of 28, or 100% of operational charter schools that NEO authorizes submitted the four quarterly Seclusion Reports on time and accurately.
6. 28 of 28, or 100% of operational charter schools that NEO authorizes submitted the Physical Holding report on time and accurately.
7. 27 of 28, or 96.43% of operational charter schools that NEO authorizes submitted the Local Literacy Plan Submission on time and accurately.

Operational Performance Indicator: Compliance with Charter Contract and Applicable Laws.

NEO verified that schools met key compliance indicators through site visits, board meeting observations, and website and document reviews in 2023-2024.

Statutory infractions were documented in 2023-2024, and if a school was unable to correct each infraction within the period for corrective action, the school's Performance Framework rating for the indicator for Compliance/Operational Performance was adjusted at the end of the year when the Performance Framework was updated.

This may have resulted for example, in a school achieving a three-year contract term status instead of a five-year contract term status, or even the potential of a nonrenewal.

89% (24/27) were in full compliance in FY24. The 11% (3/27) that were not in compliance came into compliance after being notified at the formal site visit.

NEO has developed a series of minicourses to provide technical assistance to charter board members and school leaders with compliance.

NEO requested that the board members and school leaders complete training in areas of any documented infraction.

NEO monitored and evaluated compliance with applicable laws and Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) regulations and contractual requirements through site visits and school reporting, including but not limited to the following areas.

Board Member Composition and Background Checks

- NEO verified compliant board composition and background checks during an annual formal site visit.
- The schools authorized by NEO were able to provide evidence of compliant board member composition and up-to-date background checks.

Board Training (new and ongoing)

- The schools authorized by NEO were able to provide evidence of meeting charter board training requirements.

School Leadership Evaluation and Professional Development Plan (as applicable)

- The schools authorized by NEO were able to provide evidence of meeting requirements for leadership evaluation and professional development.

Staff and Volunteer Background Checks

- The schools authorized by NEO were able to provide evidence of staff and volunteer background checks.

Teacher Licensure

- The schools authorized by NEO were compliant with licensure requirements.

Teacher Evaluation and Peer Review Process

- The schools authorized by NEO completed a teacher evaluation and peer review process.

Alignment of Education Program to MN Academic Standards

- The schools authorized by NEO showed evidence of the processes to align curriculum of the academics to MN Academic Standards.

Nonsectarian School Facilities and Program

- The schools authorized by NEO met requirements related to nonsectarian facilities and programming.

Current Certifications/Inspections (Certificate of Occupancy, Food and Nutrition Program)

- The schools authorized by NEO met requirements for completing and posting certifications and inspections.

Safety and Security

- The schools authorized by NEO were able to provide evidence of meeting requirements related to safety and security.

NEO monitored and evaluated compliance with applicable laws and contractual requirements through board meeting observations, including but not limited to the following areas:

- Compliance with Minnesota Open Meeting Laws
- Compliance with School Bylaws

NEO monitored and evaluated compliance with applicable laws and MDE regulations and contractual requirements through website reviews, including but not limited to the following areas:

- Current Board Roster
 - The schools authorized by NEO kept their board roster updated on their websites.
- Website Requirements as Specified by MN Statutes and MDE Requirements
 - The schools authorized by NEO were compliant with website requirements.
- On-time and Accurate Submissions
 - The schools submitted documents via Epicenter, a document collection and storage system, to NEO and to MDE, on-time and accurately to assist NEO with monitoring compliance and to meet statutory requirements.

NEO monitored and evaluated compliance with applicable laws and MDE regulations and contractual requirements through document reviews, including but not limited to the following areas:

- Required Policies and Assurances
- Certificates of Insurance
- School Calendars (Instructional Days and Assessments)
- Board-approved Annual Budgets and Revisions
- Required Reports (Audit, Charter School Annual Report, World's Best Workforce Plan, Report and Summary)
- Board Meeting Materials (Including Recorded Votes, Financials and Policy Review Cycle)

NEO has developed a series of minicourses that include compliance with applicable laws and requirements. NEO recommended that schools complete training based on their compliance issue(s).

Operational Performance Indicator: Mobility.

NEO had been monitoring the state reported student mobility rates to understand the mobility of students enrolling and unenrolling. Mobility rates included percent of students who transfer into the school after October 1, and the percent of students who transfer out of the school after October 1. In the 2023-2024 school year, 95% of students remained enrolled from October 1 to the end of the school year in the schools that NEO authorizes collectively, with only 5% transferring out during the school year, compared to 95% remaining enrolled from October 1 to the end of the 2022-2023 school year.

Based on available data from MDE, MDE reports that enrollment in schools authorized by NEO has increased steadily over the past nine years from 2,930 to 8,788.

Enrollment Trends by Year and Grade: Schools Authorized by NEO

	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	total	change
2014-15	NA	28	29	26	27	25	27	16	19	18	20	181	189	217	2930	
2015-16	NA	33	32	32	28	27	25	21	18	21	19	279	288	513	3689	+26%
2016-17	34	41	42	42	40	33	29	23	23	19	19	197	215	235	3834	+4%
2017-18	94	43	46	42	41	40	34	30	24	25	18	213	196	257	4242	+11%
2018-19	86	46	48	46	45	45	41	36	33	27	22	236	227	259	4739	+12%
2019-20	115	46	50	50	47	43	42	37	34	32	26	250	240	281	5013	+6%
2020-21	108	39	54	52	52	46	43	39	38	36	25	272	252	286	5196	+4%
2021-22	112	52	58	56	56	54	50	43	40	37	25	251	275	328	5713	+10%
2022-23	112	71	78	75	77	74	74	65	65	63	50	456	430	503	8465	+48%
2023-24	151	69	82	85	81	78	77	69	64	62	49	476	464	494	8788	+4%

Data Source: Minnesota Department of Education Data and Analytics

Financial Performance

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

NEO analyzed 14 indicators to evaluate financial sustainability and to determine finance awards. They included:

Operational Performance Indicator: Statutory Reporting Deadlines.

1. Preliminary UFARS data was submitted to MDE by September 15.
2. Final UFARS data was submitted to MDE by November 30.
3. The current year audit was submitted to MDE and the authorizer by December 31.
4. Preliminary budgets are approved prior to July 1 of a new fiscal year.

Operational Performance Indicator: Reporting and Oversight Quality.

5. UFARS and Audit data agree (compliance table from MDE).
6. The audit is free from material and significant deficiencies—no findings in audit.
7. Financial Reports are submitted to the NEO EpiCenter in a timely manner.
8. The board conducts financial oversight (reviews a quality set of financials) at each regular meeting.

Operational Performance Indicator: Financial Sustainability.

9. A fund balance policy is used in oversight.
10. The general fund unreserved balance is at least 20% unless SPED population is 75% or greater.
11. Fund Two (2) unreserved balance is zero or positive.
12. Fund Four (4) unreserved balance is zero or positive.
13. The organization has a positive current ratio (assets to liabilities).

Operational Performance Indicator: Use of Public Funds.

14. The school properly used public funds.

NEO also used the analysis to provide feedback to schools, personalize technical assistance, and share successful practices.

Operational Performance Indicator: End of Year Fund Balances.

The end-of-year school fund balance was one of the indicators of school sustainability.

Average Fund Balance of Schools that NEO Authorizes

Year	Average Fund Balance
2015	29%
2016	32%
2017	33%
2018	31%
2019	32%
2020	28%
2021	29%
2022	30%
2023	37%
2024	38%

Data Sources: Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Data and Analytics

Results. The average fund balance for schools that NEO authorized in 2023-24 was 38% compared to 37% in 2022-23.

All operational schools that NEO authorizes had a positive fund balance except for one school. 13 out of 27 (48%) schools that NEO authorized with financial activity had a fund balance as a percentage of annual expenditures of at least 20% in 2023-2024 compared to 16 out of 29 in 2022-2023.

NEO has developed a series of courses on financial oversight and recommended that all board members and school leaders from schools with a fund balance less than 10% complete training on adopting the budget and monitoring pupil units, cash flow, and fund balance.

Operational Performance Indicator: Audit Findings.

17 out of 27 (63%) of schools authorized by NEO that were required to complete an audit in 2023-24 for the Fiscal Year ending June 2024 (FY24) had clean audits (no findings) which is the same as the prior year.

NEO has developed a series of courses on preventing audit findings and recommended that all board members and school leaders from schools with audit findings complete training related to the findings.

Operational Performance Indicator: Finance Awards.

21 out of 27 (63%) of the operational schools authorized by NEO that were eligible to earn the School Finance Award, earned the School Finance Award for 2024 based on 2023-2024 financials which was the same as 2022-2023. MDE no longer awards School Finance Awards so NEO tracks the key indicators and continues to administer the awards using the consistent criteria from prior years.

NEO has developed a course on earning the MDE School Finance Award and recommended that all board members and school leaders from schools that did not earn the School Finance Award complete training related to meeting the standards for earning the School Finance Award.

Overview of Strengths and Areas of Improvement in Financial Performance Through FY2024

Financial Indicators	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	'24
Total Number of Schools Including Pre-operational	15	15	19	21	23	21	26	26	28	30	31	29
Eligible Operational Schools Earning the MDE School Finance Award	13/15	14/15	13/18	17/19	20/21	19/21	19/20	16/20	17/21	16/23	21/27	21/27
Operating Schools in Statutory Operating Debt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	2	1
Percent w/No Audit Finding	53%	53%	50%	68%	76%	71%	76%	59%	65%	68%	63%	63%

Financial Indicators	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	'24
Total Number of Schools with Financial Activity	15	15	19	21	23	21	21	21	22	27	29	27
Fund Balance is less than 0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
Fund Balance 0 to 9.99%	4	2	4	4	5	3	4	2	2	3	6	4
Fund Balance 10 to 19.99	2	4	3	5	5	7	2	4	4	7	8	9
Fund Balance 20 to 29.99%	1	2	3	3	2	1	4	5	5	4	2	4
Fund Balance 30% or Greater	8	7	9	9	10	9	9	8	9	11	11	9

Data Sources: Minnesota Department of Education Data and Analytics and charter school audited financials.

Operational Performance Indicator: NEO Stewardship Award in Finance.

NEO awarded schools that achieve exemplary financial performance with the NEO Stewardship Award in Finance. Most criteria for the NEO Stewardship Award in Finance are taken directly from the NEO Contract and/or Minnesota Statutes. The criteria that separated out many of the schools that reach higher levels of achievement are:

1. The Board of Directors demonstrates consistent financial oversight through use of quality financials including balance sheet, transaction register, budget vs. actual revenues and expenses including budgeted and current projected enrollment (ADM) assumptions, and cash flow projections.
2. Schools must be free from all audit findings (significant and material).
3. The general fund unreserved balance was at or above 20%.
4. The Board of Directors demonstrates consistent financial oversight through use of a fund balance policy.

9 of 27 eligible schools met the criteria for earning the NEO Stewardship Award in Finance in 2023-2024 based on 2023-2024 financials compared to 9 in 2022-2023. The 9 schools that earned the NEO Stewardship Award in Finance for 2023-2024 were Achieve Language Academy, Avalon Charter School, Great Oaks Academy, Hmong College Prep Academy, Nerstrand Elementary, Quantum STEAM Academy, Saint Cloud Math and Science Academy, STEAM Academy, and Urban Academy.

Other Performance (if applicable)

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

Gratitude

We express our gratitude to the boards, leaders, business managers, and other staff, as well as the families and students that make up the community of each authorized school for the privilege to work with you to support school success and improve student learning!

In addition, we express our gratitude to the Advisors (independent contractors), who work as part of the team to support school success and improve student learning with their experience and expertise!

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), the Minnesota Association of Charter School Authorizers (MACSA), the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACS), the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB), and the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) for the support you continued to provide this past year!

With Gratitude,

*Wendy Swanson Choi on behalf of
Novation Education Opportunities (NEO)*