

New Heights School

Annual Charter School Report-FY 2019

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ANNUAL REPORT: NEW HEIGHTS SCHOOL, DISTRICT 4003

2018-2019

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to summarize the progress and achievements of New Heights School during the 2018-19 school year. Its contents are intended to be informational and factual and may occasionally offer some opinions on various matters. This annual report serves to meet the requirements of the Minnesota Department of Education as they pertain to charter schools, as well as those of New Heights School's contractual agreement with its authorizer; The Minnesota Guild for Charter Schools.

Board Approval & Availability

The Annual Report will be posted on the school's website once approved by the board of directors at the December 18th, 2019 monthly meeting. A copy of the report will be shared with The Minnesota Guild for Charter Schools once approved and will also be made available to all parents of students enrolled at the school once it is board approved. Formerly, when the report was required to be submitted to the Commissioner of Education and not the authorizer, the report was to be submitted by a deadline, but no such deadline exists. The suggestion is for the report to be submitted by December 1st, but that date is a generalization and New Heights strives to meet this guideline whenever possible. This report was completed well-ahead of December 18, but could not be approved until the board of directors meeting.

New Heights School's Mission Statement

The Mission of New Heights School is to inspire and challenge each individual to reach his or her full potential.

New Heights School was among the first schools in the state of Minnesota to be called a "charter school" or "chartered school." The school opened in 1993 and was established as a small community school created for the purpose of offering a smaller, relationship-based program for families and children wanting or needing a more personalized approach to public education. Although the vast majority of students attending New Heights have always been and continue to be from the Stillwater Area Schools district, many students enroll from surrounding Minnesota public districts; New Heights has served families from 13 MN public school districts. One of the primary and distinct benefits derived from attending New Heights School is the small size of the program, as well as the ability and willingness of the school's teachers to provide assistance to their students in the classroom with minimal wait time. At New Heights, the teachers strive to assist students at his or her ability-level, as opposed to having a common and unrealistic expectation that each student is equally capable and ready to attain the same arbitrary level of education within a stipulated time frame, or at an arbitrary pace regardless of individual differences and circumstances. Therefore, it is the ideal at New Heights to address the needs and aspirations of all students, each according to his or her ability, yet in accordance with state standards

School Governance

The board of directors of the school is responsible for the formation, adoption, and review of policy; creating and adopting the annual fiscal budget; monitoring the overall progress and health of the school; and for directing, supporting, and evaluating the administrative team in the overall management of the school and its programs.

The board of directors is compliant with charter school law-124E as it pertains to the “makeup” of the board; which no longer requires the teacher-based majority. The board holds an annual election in May of each year to elect candidates to serve two-year terms; the directors are not compensated financially. In the event a director resigns or is removed from the board, a new member may be appointed for the remainder of the term. The board of directors may, from time-to-time, increase or decrease the size of the board, but must continue to meet the legislated requirements pertaining to board member makeup. The increase in directors may occur either from an election or by appointment. The current board consists of 7 directors. The principal/director participates at board meetings as ex-officio, non-voting member. The board of directors typically schedules meetings to occur once per month, and all meetings are held at the school. The annual schedule of meetings is determined by each new board at the first meeting in July of each year.

The board of directors holds its Annual Meeting in May of each year. On the day of the Annual Meeting, members of the corporation are able to vote for candidates to serve as board members for two-year terms. The votes are tabulated and reported during the annual meeting. Other agenda items include designation of the school’s official depository; an annual financial report; and a year-ending administrative report; review and amendment of by-laws; the Annual Meeting is the only meeting of the year for the directors to make a change to the corporate by-laws.

Purposes of the Chartered School

New Heights first opened in 1993 as one of the original, pioneering charter schools. Although charter schools are still thought of as “alternatives” to the traditional education sector, some argue charters have lost much of the flexibility they were originally intended to have. However, The primary purposes of charter schools remain in effect; they include: improving all pupil learning; improving all student achievement; increasing learning opportunities for all pupils; encouraging the use of different and innovative teaching practices; 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. Throughout this document, evidence of each should be demonstrated. As one of the first charter schools in the nation, New Heights has been creatively meeting each of the aforementioned purposes, thus creating new opportunities for students and teachers to creatively and experimentally contribute to the advancement of the field of education.

2018-2019 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board Member	Role/Office	Date Seated	Length of Term
Lauren Adamic	Community Representative/Officer	May 2015	June – 2019
Samantha Taylor	Parent/Vice President	May 2016	June – 2020
Lorraine Busta	Parent/ Treasurer	May 2016	June – 2020
Christie Hogan	Teacher/Assistant Secretary	May 2018	June – 2020
Jill Eulberg	Teacher/President	May 2017	June – 2019
Carrie Andrews	Parent/President	May 2017	June – 2019
Michael Stahlmann	Community Representative/Secretary	July 1997	June – 2019

*BOARD OF DIRECTORS TRAINING Corresponding with Charter School Law:



***BOARD OF DIRECTORS TRAINING**

2018-2019

DIRECTOR NAME		Seated	Governance	Financial	Employment	Ongoing
Lauren	Adamic	7/2015	1/13/16	1/13/16	1/13/16	8/16/17
Lorraine	Busta	7/2016	8/9/16	8/9/16	8/9/16	8/15/18
Carrie	Andrews	7/2017	8/7/17	8/7/17	8/7/17	8/15/18
Jill	Eulberg	7/2017	8/7/17	8/7/17	8/7/17	8/15/18
Michael	Stahlmann	7/1997	9/25/10	10/2/10	10/2/10	8/15/18
Samantha	Taylor	7/2016	8/9/16	8/9/16	8/9/16	8/15/18
Christie	Hogan	7/2018	8/7/18	8/7/18	8/7/18	8/15/18

*Charter school board members who do not begin the required training within six months of being seated and complete it within 12 months of being seated will be ineligible to serve on the board. The three areas are 1) Financial Matters, 2) Board Governance and 3) Employment Matters.

School Management and Operations

New Heights School has a traditional hierarchy of management beginning with the school's superintendent/principal. Thomas Kearney has been with New Heights since August of 1995 but began his administration as an interim leader as the school's lead administrator in September of 1996. He holds a Superintendent of Schools license, as well as a K-12 Principal's license in the state of Minnesota. The principal is primarily responsible for ensuring that the teachers and students have the appropriate materials and environment needed to ensure a safe and successful school experience. The principal, in conjunction with the approval of the board of directors, is responsible for all staffing at the school. This is beneficial in the sense that all staff members deciding to accept employment offers from the principal have some level of shared vision with the leader of the school, as the vision is discussed in great detail throughout the hiring process. This shared vision should ideally result in fewer professional conflicts and more harmony/productivity amongst staff.

The principal is responsible for ensuring that each employee understands and meets the expectations of each respective position. This is done, in part, through frequent observation, participation in professional learning committees, and, in part, through two-way communication between the principal and each teacher/employee. Each employee meets frequently/periodically with the principal to discuss key aspects of his or her position and areas of responsibility, and also to develop a plan, if necessary, for the employee to improve or correct behaviors/practices that will ultimately lead to optimal performance/production of the employee. A few years ago, the state of Minnesota changed legislation regarding teacher evaluations to include 35% of the evaluation to be based on student academic performance data. The school has developed a comprehensive teacher evaluation plan and uses a very specific rubric when evaluating teachers for effectiveness.

The principal works closely with the board of directors to ensure that the school has appropriate policies in place. It is the joint responsibility of the principal and the board to ensure effective dissemination of school policies to families and staff members, and to ensure that all members of the school are aware of and adhere to the school's policies.

The principal is responsible for ensuring the general maintenance of the school facility. The school building is a leased property, but as the tenant, the principal must make sure that all essential utilities and systems are operating safely. The principal communicates frequently with the school's landlord on all issues that need attention and ensures that the facility meets governmental compliance expectations.

The school's principal works with various staff members who also serve as members of the administrative team. This includes the office manager, who also serves as the primary reporter on matters such as student enrollment (MARSS), staff (STARS), assurances of various types, and other such elements of reporting required by the MDE. The principal and the office manager work closely together on issues such as forecasting future enrollment; policy development; writing, revising and disseminating staff and student handbooks; communication between school and home; creating an annual calendar to present to the board of directors for adoption; and other issues that occur on either daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, or on an annual basis. The principal and office manager have worked effectively together for the past 25 years.

The school's guidance counselor/school counselor works closely with the principal in establishing criteria for graduation; ensuring that all students meet the requirements for graduation as established by both the school and by the MDE; and establishing a class

schedule for the students to follow each year. The guidance counselor is also responsible for monitoring the academic progress of each student enrolled at the school, and for assisting students to obtain the necessary components/credit that may be needed to graduate. The guidance counselor also assists students and families in making post-secondary plans and may even assist in the college or technical school application process upon request.

The District Area Test Coordinator, or DAC, is responsible for the administration of all standardized testing that occurs throughout the year. This includes test setup; arranging a schedule of tests; ensuring that all required elements are in place to properly administer the tests; and ensuring that all staff members are aware of the standards required for students at all levels. The DAC works closely with the principal and the guidance counselor to ensure that all testing is administered properly, and that the results of the testing are appropriately reviewed and analyzed. The DAC compiles and organizes all data so that the school's leadership team and affected staff can make informed decisions regarding improving levels of academic achievement.

The bookkeeper is a member of the school's administrative team. The bookkeeper is responsible for working closely with the principal and the board of directors to prepare and monitor an appropriate annual budget. The bookkeeper is responsible for the accounting of the school's financial matters. The bookkeeper must make available all relevant information pertaining to the school's financial health to anyone who may inquire about it, but especially to the principal and the board of directors so that together they may make sound financial decisions on behalf of the school.

The bookkeeper must account for all funds received and held by the school.

The bookkeeper must reconcile all accounts (monthly) held by the school.

The bookkeeper works to assist in preparing the school's annual financial audit.

The bookkeeper monitors the school's assets and cash flow on an ongoing basis and makes recommendations to the school principal and to the board of directors.

New Heights holds a contract with an independent entity which serves as the special education director for the school. This position is required because the school serves students who have disabilities and IEPs, but the size of the school only requires a part-time staff/director to meet compliance. The special education director ensures that all aspects relevant to meeting the needs of special education students are in place. The special education director works closely with the principal and special education team to ensure that the school is compliant with all laws regulating special education and ensures that due process procedures are followed.

A majority of the school's administrative team has worked closely with one another for many years. This longevity allows for the school's business to flow smoothly with few obstacles in the way of providing families with a solid educational experience. The administrative team has developed an excellent reputation in the realm of charter schools as being compliant, professional and efficient.

*New Heights has been a recipient of The School Finance Award for 7 of the past 8 school years and did receive the award again for 2018-19.

Sponsor/Authorizer Information

For more than 18 years, Stillwater Area Schools (ISD 834) served as the sponsor of New Heights School. The Stillwater district was actually the first public school district to sponsor a charter school in the state of Minnesota and was thusly the first in the United States, as charter schools were first legislated in the great state of Minnesota. However, the relationship came to a sad and abrupt end as a result of the change in legislation requiring charters to transition from “sponsors” to “authorizers;” which significantly raised the rigor and accountability of the charter school accountability-partners in the state of Minnesota. In April of 2012, New Heights’s application requesting a change in authorizers was approved, and so began a new relationship with Innovative Quality Schools; a single purpose authorizer. In October of 2014, New Heights submitted a new request for a change of authorizer to the commissioner of education after realizing the school and IQS were not working harmoniously. In the spring of 2015, the school’s request was approved, and New Heights began its relationship with The Minnesota Guild for Charter Schools; another “single purpose authorizer.” Single purpose authorizers are simply that; organizations whose sole purpose is to support and authorize charter schools and to ensure and report on matters of compliance. New Heights is nearing the end of its first 5-year contract with The Guild in 2020.

The current authorizer liaison to New Heights is:

Minnesota Guild for Charter Schools

Lynn Nordgren

323 Washington Ave N Minneapolis MN 55401

email: executivedirectormnguild@gmail.com

School Admissions, Enrollment and Attrition

The enrollment at New Heights has proven to be quite stable throughout the school’s 26-year history; experiencing only a few years of “low” enrollment numbers. New Heights typically enrolls approximately 140-155 students per year, and typically generates approximately 125-140 ADM. It may appear that the school has a high level of transience/mobility. This activity could be resulting from the number of special-needs children enrolling at the school, or it could also be relative to the number of impoverished children enrolled. The ADM for the 2019 school year was 105.41; which is below the normal range for the school. An opinion is not offered regarding the enrollment decline from FY2018.

The demographics at New Heights are not typical of the aggregate population in the Stillwater area in two key categories; students with learning or behavioral disabilities/disorders, and students eligible for free or reduced-price meals. New Heights has tended to serve significantly higher percentages of students in those two subgroups as compared against the district since the school’s inception in 1993; most likely because these two subgroups perceive that they are not having their needs met or perceive that they are not being “heard” within a district setting. Although there are several underlying factors, the high concentration of students with disabilities and students living in poverty tends to have a profound impact on the school’s overall levels of academic achievement; which will be addressed later in the report.

Program Successes and Best Practices

During the charter school's twenty-six-year history, New Heights has initiated many program changes to properly meet the needs of the ever-changing student population. Currently, New Heights serves students in all grades K-12. The elementary section serves students in grades K-5 in multi-age classrooms; primarily due to the small population and need to combine grades for fiscal reasons. The K-1 classroom hosts up to 20 students, and, depending on the class size, may also occasionally utilize a paraprofessional or a high-level volunteer to offer more support to students who need it. The teacher makes use of a 2-year rotating curriculum, which is standards-based, so that students enrolled at New Heights may learn all of the same core skills and concepts that would be offered and required at any Minnesota public school over the same 2-year span. The teachers of all grades and levels make use of differentiation strategies to accommodate for individual differences of the students in the classes. For some reason, we have been paying particular attention over the past few years to the fact that the majority of our students entering kindergarten did not attend preschool, making it an additional challenge for the teacher to help the students' progress through the state-prescribed standards.

Students in grades 2-5 also attend school in two multi-age classrooms 2-3 and 4-5 respectively; class sizes are capped at 25. They also experience a 2-year rotating curriculum, and they too learn in accordance with the Minnesota state standards designated for students in each respective grade. In addition to home-class, these students are offered small-group reading and math instruction based on ability rather than arbitrarily by age/grade as districts tend to do. They also receive physical education every day; technology and keyboarding enrichment for 4th and 5th graders; special education for all students meeting eligibility criteria; and speech and language services for eligible students. Enrichment opportunities are offered to all K-5 grade students. Offerings include enrichment-based learning opportunities which occur on a rotating basis in music, art, character education and social curriculum, and Yoga Calm.

For students in all grades K-5 qualifying/eligible for additional support, a special education teacher/case manager serves as a member of the elementary team, as well as a speech and language pathologist, physical education teacher, school counselor, and various members of the secondary teaching faculty; particularly those licensed in math, language arts and reading.

During the 2018-2019 school year, the K-5 elementary section of the school hosted approximately 38 students. This number allowed for small class sizes and flexibility in meeting the individual and collective needs of all students.

The 6-12 grade section (secondary) follows a traditional schedule. There are seven class periods per day, each meeting for 48 minutes. Students are provided with a schedule of courses designed to meet or exceed the state standards in each required discipline. Class sizes are limited to 25, but there were no classes at capacity during the year, although the 6th and 7th grades continued to grow and a higher rate than the other classes.

Teachers are challenged to provide differentiation of instruction in each class they teach due to the wide range of abilities and needs within any given class; especially given the structure of the school, which typically groups the students by grade. Students take such classes as math; language arts; physical education; social studies; science; career exploration; health; FACS; and some students may choose to take specialty on-line classes when appropriate. Students eligible for special education services are assigned a case manager and have access to a resource room; may have assignments modified; and may be eligible to receive a variety of

other modifications to the school day as determined by the IEP team and documented in Individualized Education Plans.

A new program was implemented during the 2016-17 school year called Math Boost (MB). MB was an experiment and an investment in the largest class of the school; the 6th grade. MB served several purposes. First, MB removed one of the 7 traditional classes from the 6th grade schedule and redefined the instructional time as an opportunity for 6th graders to receive more guidance to learn what it means to transition to secondary school life. For the first time in their school lives, these students would be transitioning to a different class each hour and would have 7 different classes/teachers per day. The staff assumes that some of the students may be ready for this experience, but others aren't as ready.

Part of the class time was spent simply helping the students to make the adjustment, teaching and modeling expectations. Expectations were explained, and questions were answered. Another portion of the time was allocated to the students to complete or make up any outstanding work. In a sense, this portion of the period served as a study hall, but with lots of support. Sometimes the MB instructor would be able to assist the students with their questions, while other occasions may require the assistance of the actual teacher who issued the work. The students could seek the assistance of the actual teacher when requested.

The third and final reason for Math Boost was to offer more instruction and support in math (the boost), thus making a higher-level investment in the students at the earliest stages of secondary school. A portion of the period was allocated to build upon the concepts that the students are working on in math class. Sometimes certain students needed more support, while others simply needed more time. By all accounts, Math Boost was a success in the first year and was expanded to offer the same level of support to the 6th and 7th grades in 2017-18, and again for 2018-19. The program's architect, a former math teacher who is no longer with New Heights, poured a lot of creative energy in ensuring that Math Boost was successful. Since that teacher left the school, the program hasn't been as beneficial. We are currently reevaluating the effectiveness of Math Boost for subsequent years. That said, if Math Boost is discontinued, other creative programs will take its place as engineered by the current staff in place.

Why Choose New Heights?

Students choose to enroll at New Heights School for many reasons. At the time of exploration, children often express an interest in finding a smaller, more personalized program designed to focus on individual needs as compared to a larger school system, which may not be able to offer such personalization simply due to the sheer size of some district schools. Students may also express a desire to have closer relationships with their teachers, which can make it more likely for them to ask for assistance when needed. At New Heights, students typically attend classes with the same staff year-after-year. This has proven to be a huge benefit since the students are able to learn the classroom expectations/norms of each of their teachers early in their experience, and then know exactly what is expected of them year-after-year. These perennial relationships are also a benefit to the teachers, as they are better able to design lessons and create programming more authentically for their students based on their longitudinal knowledge of individual abilities, tendencies, and learning styles of each of their students. This is especially true with special education students who are eligible to receive various modifications and accommodations to the regular curriculum. Obviously, most teachers of large district schools would probably admit that they would benefit from the level of baseline knowledge about their students that New Heights' teachers have. Teaching the same students term-after-term and year-after-year provides the teachers with the maximum opportunity to

measure growth and impact to their students over a longer period of time because lessons can be tailored and adjusted to meet the true needs of individual students in class at any given time. Teachers in larger systems simply can't do that because they lack the longitudinal data needed to do it. At New Heights, teachers can see the true impact they have made with their students over time; teachers don't teach to the curriculum, they teach to the students' needs.

Recently, we have come to understand that some students today have a new need; a need for a smaller and calmer school. New Heights is the smallest and arguably the calmest school in the area. Students who have battled the overcrowded hallways and classrooms of local district schools have expressed a desire to enroll in and attend a smaller, less hectic version of the public system; New Heights. At informational meetings, typically held during an actual school day, families can't help but notice how much calmer and structured New Heights seems compared to the schools they may be currently attending. As families tour through the school they note that students are in the classrooms while hallways are quiet and free of unnecessary noise and distractions prevalent in larger schools. It is clear that the smaller environment offers a potentially less stressful and less hectic day for the majority of students who enroll. The calmer environment allows students to focus more of their energy on learning and problem solving, and less on the social issues which are so prevalent in the larger school systems; including fitting in the social schema. For those seeking a smaller, calmer school, they often look no further than New Heights.

Academic Performance

Formerly in this area we reported recent years' MMR, but with the change to ESSA, MMR is no longer a set of statistics. We will work with The Guild to report on academic performance in a more useful manner moving forward.

The following charts illustrate MCA Proficiency data from New Heights School for the last 4 testing cycles. *Values rounded to the nearest whole number.

MCA Reading	Proficiency
2016	23%
2017	30%
2018	23%
2019	31%

MCA Math	Proficiency
2016	8%
2017	19%
2018	16%
2019	24%

The administration and teaching staff at New Heights have long recognized the need to make continuous improvement to rates of academic achievement and rates of proficiency of our students on the MCA tests. Historically, there have been several factors consistently contributing to the sub-standard proficiency data, including the small cell sizes inherent at the school, which allows for inflated highs and lows in any given year; the disproportionate number of transient students who enroll at the school; the high percentage of enrolled students who have diagnosed learning disabilities; as well as the effect of negative and stressful school experiences had by our students in schools prior to enrolling at New Heights, which contributes to negative attitudes about school for some students. Also, a high percentage of students who enroll at New Heights tend to lack the basic and requisite skills in reading and mathematics typically expected of students of respective ages, which is likely a reason some of them change schools in the first place; poor academic performance. These requisite skills, although often lacking, are paramount in developing the higher-order problem solving skills considered rudimentary and necessary in successfully navigating the MCA exams. The teaching staff and administration are analyzing the most recent MCA results and are working to make significant improvement in both math and reading again in 2019-20.

When comparing recent trends of the school to other local systems, as well as to the state average in reading and math performance, you can see math continues to be a perennial struggle, despite many changes to pedagogy, curriculum, staffing, support, data analysis, and classroom management strategies. This lack of “improvement” could possibly be rooted in the fact that the student population tends to fluctuate more than is desired. This constantly fluctuating population likely has an impact on momentum, as some students who have been making improvement may leave the school and new, struggling learners take their place. Test scores from one year to the next may not be a good comparison, as the student population may have changed by as much as 40% from one test cycle to the next. Additionally, some of our most struggling students have deficits which are hard to overcome, especially in the short span of one year. This past year we did have more students reaching expected growth levels than we did in recent years; the reasons for this growth are under exploration.

For the past several years, as a result of the poor testing performance on MCAs, New Heights had been working with the Regional Centers for School Excellence, but that work has been discontinued as the state has migrated to the new North Star System of Accountability. Now that we are no longer working with The Regional Centers for Excellence, we are rethinking our work. It seems the state is putting more of its marbles in the bag of The World’s Best Workforce plan. Our plans have a lot of overlap, but the flavor-of-the-day programs, of which there have been many over the years, aren’t the solution. These changes actually cause schools to discontinue the work and potential momentum they have been doing and gaining over the years and jump through other, new hoops with legislated hopes of the new plan being the silver bullet that will fix it all. At present, we are not seeing how the North Star System of Accountability is that bullet; it has actually left us without an appropriate advocate. An advocate was assigned, but she lacked what we felt the school needed. She was unable to provide answers to any of our questions, indicating that the state rolled out this new plan without proper thought or training to the advocates.

Future Plans/Innovative Practices

Any future plans of a school or district should obviously include the addition of programming designed to enhance the “best” of what is currently available. Although there are many features of New Heights that are worthy of recognition and praise, there are also areas that simply need to be improved upon, and those are the areas everyone seems to be focused on. We assume some of our future plans will come from the work to be completed regarding the new World’s Best Workforce designation, but that work is still unclear as we have had only two brief meetings with the assigned advocate and the direction is still unclear. It was so unclear that we decided to discontinue meeting with advocate until a time when more clarity could be provided. Even she was uncertain as to her true role in all of this. At the present time, we have not received any feedback from MDE regarding last year’s WBWF submissions. To a large degree, it’s hard to improve upon a plan when there is no feedback regarding the plan.

Regardless of meeting a compliance checklist, one way the school plans to continue to improve upon levels of student achievement is by providing a system for the school’s lowest performing students to make progress; therefore, New Heights continues to work together as a staff through our professional learning committees (PLC’s). These PLC’s were created for the purpose of providing teachers with an opportunity to learn, share and collaborate with one another on improving in all areas of lesson planning, classroom instruction, standards alignment, classroom management, and data recording and analysis, as well as learning to effectively react to the data. The PLC’s have focused on data collection and analysis with the goal of learning more about what students in the classroom are actually learning and how effectively teachers are teaching. In order to understand more about what is actually being learned in the classroom by students, teachers have been working on the formation and widespread use of formative assessments and summative assessments (FAs and SAs); tools designed to show exactly what lessons students are learning, as well as which areas students are struggling in. Once teachers began to fully understand how to create and make the best use of FAs and SAs, they became better at assessing how and when to adjust classroom practices so that all students are able to demonstrate growth. The use of FAs and SAs is now common practice among all teaching staff members.

Several years ago, teachers started to learn about The Gradual Release of Responsibility strategy-GRR. This strategy promotes the concept of the teacher spending less time in direct instruction while providing students with more time to work on assignments in class. Members from The Regional Centers of Excellence supported our staff by providing professional development sessions to the entire teaching team. All teachers are currently working on improving classroom management and behavior strategies intended to provide the students with a greater level of structure with the intent of improving upon their academic achievement. Teachers are able to discuss their experiences on a weekly basis through the collaborative PLC’s. The professional development will be ongoing throughout the year and in subsequent years.

Additionally, teachers understand the power of goal setting with students. The staff has come to understand that students may be willing to do the work in class, but they often struggle with connecting the significance of the work with successes earned outside of the classroom. Teachers are learning to help students set appropriate learning goals designed to help get and keep students engaged in the learning process. Students are demonstrating that, when included in the process of establishing meaningful learning goals, they are much more engaged and interested in the process from beginning to end. Goal setting has been a major

point of emphasis since the 2015-16 school year and will be even more instrumental in the 2019-20 school year through a newly designed Advisory program in the 6-12 grades.

Additionally, the staff understands that the school needs to demonstrate that students are learning, but at higher levels than recent trends have indicated. The staff is seeking out professional development opportunities that can assist in understanding more about how to reach and impact the types of students served at New Heights. The staff is learning more about different mindsets that students may have, which may actually restrict learning. Knowing that these mindsets exist and understanding how to help students develop a growth-mindset may be instrumental in raising the achievement levels of all of our students over time. The staff is truly united in school-wide improvement efforts, and we are optimistic and determined to help our students improve.

Finally, the elementary and secondary staff have embarked on a journey to improve upon the levels of behavior and compliance with classroom and school-wide expectations. The K-5 teachers are using a blended version of two systems; Responsive Classroom (RC) and Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies-(PBIS). The secondary team is going back to basics by refreshing its understanding of effective classroom management strategies. This work will largely take place during weekly PLCs. The K-5 has received formal training for the strategies it employs, while the secondary researched and has committed to a text, widely considered the “Bible” of classroom management strategies. Teachers continue to experiment with aspects of the text’s suggestions and methods and report the effectiveness of the implemented strategies to PLC members on a weekly basis. This exploration and transformation is expected to last throughout the year and perhaps beyond.

Two years ago, a needs-assessment concluded that the staff was interested in learning more about motivating students and gaining higher levels of student engagement. It was further determined that one way to get engagement levels to rise is to have students use daily planners. A committee was assembled last year for the purpose of exploring/vetting various types of student planners. A style was selected by the staff and a planner system was put in place by the secondary staff in the 2018-19 school year. Throughout the year the staff incorporated these planners into a daily expectation, but the effectiveness of the planners was not as high as the staff hoped it would be; some staff weren’t consistent, and many students refused to use them. The team is currently involved in discussion about how to improve upon the use of these planners for the current and subsequent year.

Teacher Staffing Information

New Heights School employed 21 personnel during the 2018-19 school year. Aside from the licensed teachers noted below, New Heights had five personnel in administration and support staff including: Principal, Bookkeeper, Office Manager, part-time seasonal Health Office Attendant, part-time seasonal boiler/maintenance and part-time seasonal food service.

Name	Licensed Area	Assignment	Status	FF#
Mary J Carlson	K-12 EBD	Special Education 6-12	N	412661
Emma Cotner	Mathematics 5-12	Math Instructor 5-12	R	470102
Annah Massmann	School Counselor	Guidance Counselor	R	502314
Jill Eulberg	K-12 LD	Special Education 6-12	R	443391
Christie Hogan	K-6 Elementary Education	Elementary K-1	R	455906
Erin Kost	Elementary K-6/Communication Arts/Literature 5-8	Elementary 2-3	R	426850
Curtis Mattson	Social Studies	Social Studies 6-12	R	493717
Kirk Nelson	K-12 P.E. 7-12 Health	Phy Ed, Health K-12	R	378824
Dana Schmitt	K-6 Elem Education/K-12 LD	Elementary Special Ed	R	403231
Jennifer Geil	K-6 Elementary Education	Elementary 4-5	N	492522
Andrew Ek-Pangerl	5-8 Science 9-12 Life Sciences 9-12 Chemistry	6-12 Science	N	509744
Zoe Mazis	5-12 Communication Arts/Literature	6-12 English	N	505558
Rochelle Gresafe	Family & Consumer Sciences	FACS Teacher	R	404944
Amanda Vorwald	Visual Arts	Art Teacher	R	495344
Kathleen Chamberland	K-6 Elementary Education 5-8 Mathematics	5-8 Math Elementary Reading	N	508060

*Return

*NR = Not Returning

*N = New 2018-2019

Program Challenges

One of the biggest challenges we are recognizing is that many of our students are enrolling at the school without adequate preparation to do grade-level work, regardless of age or grade. The vast majority of our students are openly enrolled students of all ages and who got their start in other programs and districts. One of the main reasons students make this transition is because they were enrolled in another program that most commonly serves a larger number of students without enough support in terms of individualized instruction or assistance. This occurs even at the kindergarten level; New Heights tends to enroll students who did not attend preschool and are not technically kindergarten-ready. This can obviously have a large impact on standardized testing outcomes. While our efforts can demonstrate that most of our students make progress when compared against the baseline data collected at the time of enrollment or from one year to the next, it is not the type of progress that seems to satisfy unrealistic governmental expectations; which tends to employ a one-size-fits-all approach/mentality. We are currently in the process of trying to determine how best to adjust for the wide gap in abilities of our typical student population, as well as what type of remediation and what level of support is best given the current and changing population. Since the school's inception, the typical student who enrolls has demonstrated some level of school-related difficulty over the course of his or her lifetime.

Other Features/Creative Practices

About a decade ago, a decision was made to change the way teachers deliver reading instruction to elementary-aged students. Operating a small school allows for flexibility in areas such as the allocation of resources, and also in scheduling students according to needs. So, the decision was made to experiment with how reading groups were configured. Instructors from various departments of the building were pulled together, all of whom were elementary teachers, special education teachers, or language arts teachers with a background and experience in teaching reading. In all, six reading groups were configured; each designed to accommodate approximately 5-10 students. The groups were leveled according to ability. A 30-minute time block was originally scheduled for elementary reading instruction every day. Initially, several strategies were utilized; however, the instruction was originally centered on two programs called *Reading A-Z*, and *Read Naturally*. After a 3-month segment of instruction coupled with an evaluation, we were pleased to discover that, on average, our students experienced growth by 4 levels; the expected annual growth in a normal 9-month period. This improvement is documented and has verified what was initially believed to be true for many years; students at New Heights School can benefit from small group instruction and from the commitment on the school's part to allocate resources where needed, regardless of hardship or expense. Students of challenged demographics are more than capable of learning at high rates when appropriate resources are coupled with solid instruction and structure.

A similar structure was applied to elementary math groups during the 2010-11 school year. Most of the morning for elementary students was scheduled to be in small, ability-based groups in the two core areas of math and reading. Although we had not seen a dramatic jump in MCA scores in the first few years, recent MCA scores as well as our local MAP scores verifies that our system was overwhelmingly successful for the majority of students in the program; at least in certain years. Frequent measurements of student progress indicate that small group instruction yields larger gains for the vast majority of students in both reading and mathematics. Our data shows that the vast majority of our students are making forward progress despite what appears to be poor performance in the high stakes MCA testing required of all Minnesota public school students. In recent years, New Heights School was invited to

apply to be a school in “Celebration” status as a result of the outstanding gains made by New Heights’ students in closing the achievement gap, and once held the highest spot of any “Focus” designated school in the state for FY 2014 MCA scores. Ever since Minnesota’s commissioner obtained the NCLB waiver in 2011, staff members at New Heights have been working very hard to close the achievement gap and show improvement in the overall scores of our students. This achievement, given our population, shows that the efforts put forth by the various committees and team members is on track and capable of generating improvement. We had another very successful year in mathematics again in the 2015 MCA, only to see some drops in 2016, and we saw increases again in 2017, but declines again in 2018. We are constantly analyzing and adjusting our methods and systems to ensure maximum gains in reading and math to an ever-changing population of students. Our teachers are employing enhanced, research-based and evidence-based methods of instruction, while learning how to more effectively collect and interpret classroom and MAP achievement data for the purpose of driving instructional practices. We are optimistic and confident that test data will again reflect that substantial academic progress is being made by our students, regardless of whether they demonstrate “proficiency” or not.

Over the decades, students at New Heights have been expected to observe what has become known as the Four Pillars of the school. The Four Pillars represent the basic expectations placed upon students enrolled at the school. The first pillar is attendance; the second is to cooperate and do their work; the third to try to do their best on tests and exams; and the fourth is to treat all people at the school with courtesy and respect. These four pillars are at the core of what we are trying to promote in educating the “whole student,” but we recognize that sometimes the way we do things needs to be freshened up, so we have decided to move the bar from the four pillars to to 4 B’s, hoping it would resonate better with the staff and students.

The 4 B’s represent the things that we expect all of our students to “be” or become. Whereas they are similar to the four pillars, we feel the 4 B’s are simpler for the students to understand and are a more direct approach toward guiding our students to “be” what we hope for them to be.

As with the four pillars the first “B” is to *Be Present*, simply meaning to be at school on time, to attend each class on time, to actively listen to the teacher and to each other in class, to be mindful to keep cell phones and other unnecessary distractions stowed during class, to focus on the lesson or assignment each class period, and to remain alert and awake at all times during school. Being present is more than just attending school in the sense that being present requires a conscientious effort to be present in the lesson each hour and every day. To Be Present is to actively participate.

Next is to *Be Engaged*. To be engaged means to arrive at each class on time with necessary materials; to be an active, attentive listener during instruction; to participate in lessons when necessary, such as by asking for what you need when you need it, which makes you an active member of the group; and to use class time for the class in which a student is currently in as opposed to the practice some students engage in which is to work on class work for another class and to not be engaged in the class they are currently attending. Again, being engaged requires a conscientious effort on the side of the student to not only be in the class, but to actively to get involved.

The third “B” is to *Be Responsible*. Being responsible means having class materials prepared before class starts and to be organized for the class they are going to. Being responsible also means to ask for help when a student doesn’t understand, or to meet with your teachers after

each absence to obtain missing work, or to understand what was missed during a recent absence. Being responsible means to use class time wisely and complete work in a timely manner, or to possibly attempt to negotiate a new timeline with the teachers if extra time is needed. Being responsible means to be an involved group member and participate in the work with the group as opposed to relying on the group or letting the group do the work for you. And finally, being responsible means to follow all expectations and routines that each teacher sets each day in his or her classroom. Once again, being responsible requires a conscientious effort on the part of the student as opposed to simply attending class and expecting the teacher or group members to do all the work for you.

Finally, the last “B” is to *Be Respectful*. We believe that being respectful is an important attribute of all people in all situations. Being respectful means using kind words, being friendly, having respect for yourself and for others, and to be courteous to all people at all times. Being respectful means to clean up after yourself at the end of each class period and not leaving a mess in the classroom for the next class, for the teacher, or for anyone else who might occupy the space you just occupied. Being respectful means to treat all school materials such as textbooks, desks, computers, or any other learning material or area with care. Being respectful means to maintain personal boundaries with your voice and with your body, especially when it comes to working with others in close proximity. Being respectful means to attempt to answer questions honestly and appropriately, and to try to do your best work before signing your name to it. And finally, being respectful means to represent yourself and the school positively, both while on campus and off. When comparing the four pillars to the 4 B’s, it is not difficult to see that more thought has gone into the 4 B’s. We now understand that in order to get students to act and behave in a certain way, they need to be guided and taught how to do it. Teachers and students seem to understand the 4 B’s at a higher level than the Four Pillars, but it is too early to tell whether or not the 4 B’s are successful. Regardless, New Heights School strives to promote and maintain a positive culture and climate and the 4 B’s are definitely moving the school in the right direction.

Student Attrition:

Prior to the start of the year, New Heights had 17 new students enroll and start as students on the first day of the new year. Throughout the school year, 17 additional students enrolled for a grand total of 34 new students enrolling for the 2018-19 school year. After the first day, as typically occurs, a few students began a pattern of not attending and eventually withdrew from the school within the first month. This occurs because some families didn’t gather enough information about the program prior to enrolling, or the school did not seem to match the student’s expectation for one reason or another. 6 of the newly enrolled students withdrew prior to October 1st, and a total of 15 students withdrew throughout the year for various reasons. The most common reason is that the students simply enrolled in other programs (12). 1 student moved out of the area, and 2 siblings were enrolled in another program because of daycare issues. 1 student left because of treatment center care needs.

To conclude, the enrollment totals are fairly typical, but perhaps a bit light compared to “normal” years. The number of students who withdrew is slightly higher than typical, but if there is good news in the reasoning behind the withdrawals, no families stated dissatisfaction with New Heights or its programs at the time of withdrawal or at exit interviews. In all, New Heights enrolled 34 new students and withdrew 15, for a net gain of 19 students.

Balance Sheet

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NEW HEIGHTS CHARTER SCHOOLS, INC.
Initial Balance Sheet Report (Date: 6/2019)

11:33 AM 11/26/19
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FD	T	ORG	PRG	CRS	FIN	GLN	SB	Beginning Balance	2018-19 FY Activity	Ending Balance
01	A		101	00		CASH	CASH	265,728.35	-44,418.55	221,309.80
01	A		102	00		PETTY C	PETTY C	100.00		100.00
01	A		115	00		A/R	A/R	2,599.70	24,204.96	26,804.66
01	A		121	00		FR SDE	GENAID	58,600.25	14,428.53	73,028.78
01	A		121	04		FR SDE	SPECLEED	8,944.00	25,440.76	34,384.76
01	A		121	06		FR SDE	LEASE	6,424.17	1,704.54	8,128.71
01	A		122	01		FROMFED	TITLE I	17,518.68	-17,518.68	
01	A		122	02		FROMFED	TITLEII	793.91	-793.91	
01	A		122	09		FROMFED	FEDSPED	25,722.57	-25,722.57	
01	A		131	00		PPONGNG	PREPAID	4,236.72	6,345.40	10,582.12
01	A		131	20		PPONGNG	Unknown			
01	L		201	00		SAL PAY	SAL PAY	-114,993.53	-20,863.14	-135,856.67
01	L		206	00		A/P	A/P	-4,260.18	-3,223.71	-7,483.89
01	L		210	02		DU-MN-D	OTHERAP	-21,295.44	-741.58	-22,037.02
01	L		210	03		DU-MN-D	In Kind Owed	-127,851.64		-127,851.64
01	L		215	00		PAY DED	NET PAY	-1,179.69		-1,179.69
01	L		215	10		PAY DED	FICAMED	-8,483.77	-1,519.87	-10,003.64
01	L		215	11		PAY DED	FED TAX			
01	L		215	12		PAY DED	AutoIns			
01	L		215	13		PAY DED	MN TAX			
01	L		215	14		PAY DED	Colonial Ins		-145.08	-145.08
01	L		215	15		PAY DED	AFLAC deduction			
01	L		215	17		PAY DED	PERA	-292.75	6.81	-285.94
01	L		215	18		PAY DED	TRA	-8,220.14	-2,237.81	-10,457.95
01	L		215	19		PAY DED	HLTHFLX			
01	L		215	31		PAY DED	MED INX			
01	L		230	00		DEF REV	DEF REV		-401.00	-401.00
01	Q		422	00		UNAPPRO	UNAPPRO	-99,854.27	51,799.90	-48,054.37
01	Q		460	00		NonSpendable		-4,236.94	-6,345.00	-10,581.94
01	Q		519	00		RS UNAP	RS UNAP			
01	Q		539	00		XS UNAP	XS UNAP			
02	A		101	00		CASH	FOODSER	16,489.63	-3,516.74	12,972.89
02	A		115	00		A/R	A/R		6,365.40	6,365.40
02	A		121	00		FR SDE	Due From State	208.79	-208.79	
02	A		122	00		FROMFED	FEDAID	733.91	-733.91	
02	A		122	01		FROMFED	REGLNCH	579.54	-579.54	
02	A		122	02		FROMFED	F/RED	3,057.04	-3,057.04	
02	L		206	00		A/P	ACC PAY		-44.56	-44.56
02	L		230	00		DEF REV	DEF REV	-526.55	127.35	-399.20
02	Q		422	00		UNAPPRO	FUND BL			
02	Q		464	00		Restricted fund		-20,542.36	1,647.83	-18,894.53
02	Q		519	00		RS UNAP	REV SUM			
02	Q		539	00		XS UNAP	EXP SUM			
99	A		162	00		ACCRUED LEAVE		74,367.50		74,367.50
99	L		262	00		LEAS PA		-74,367.50		-74,367.50
Grand Asset Totals								486,104.76	-18,060.14	468,044.62
Grand Liability Totals								-361,471.19	-29,042.59	-390,513.78
Grand Equity Totals								-124,633.57	47,102.73	-77,530.84
Grand Totals										

NEW HEIGHTS SCHOOL
Statement of Activities
FY 18-19 Approved Budget

Fund 1

		<u>130 ADM</u>
		<u>FY18-19</u>
Revenue:	By Object # :	
General State Aid	211	1,090,017
State Supported Programs	300s	313,800
Bldg Lease Aid	348	208,663
Federal Funding (General)	400-599	68,500
Graduation Fees	069	4,025
Activity Fees	058-059	5,000
Fund Raising and Donations	090	9,075
Total Revenue:		<u>1,699,080</u>

Expenditures:	By Program # :	
Board of Directors	010	2,050
Administration Personnel	050-110	208,584
Administrative Costs	050-110	134,730
Title I and II Programs	204-207	38,002
Elementary Instruction	201-203	163,073
Secondary Instruction	211-299	388,133
Special Education	401-420	354,210
Non Academic Student Activities	790	4,300
Pupil Support	710/720/791	54,900
Bldg Expense	810-811	68,690
Operations & Maintenance (Gas)	810	13,000
Bldg Lease	850	231,848
Interest/Insurance	920-940	14,955
Total Expenditures		<u>1,676,475</u>
Net Revenue minus Expenses		<u>22,605</u>

Fund 2 - Lunch Program

Revenue	67,165
Expenditures	63,584
Net Revenue minus Expenses	<u>3,581</u>

NEW HEIGHTS SCHOOL
Statement of Activities
2018-2019 Year End Summary Report

Fund 1

		<u>129 ADM</u>
		<u>FY18-19</u>
Revenue:	By Object # :	<u>Year End</u>
General State Aid	211	934,957
State Supported Programs	300s	374,897
Bldg Lease Aid	348	154,145
Federal Funding (General)	400-599	69,783
Graduation Fees	069	2,337
Activity Fees	058-059	3,715
Fund Raising and Donations	090	16,959
Total Revenue:		<u>1,556,794</u>

Expenditures:	By Program # :	
Board of Directors	010	2,375
Administration Personnel	050-110	200,918
Administrative Costs	050-110	117,063
Title I and II Programs	204-207	43,982
Elementary Instruction	201-203	153,565
Secondary Instruction	211-299	384,610
Special Education	401-420	339,728
Non Academic Student Activities	790	4,869
Pupil Support	710/720/791	28,721
Bldg Expense	810-811	94,392
Operations & Maintenance (Gas)	810	13,359
Bldg Lease	850	207,389
Interest/Insurance	920-940	11,277
Total Expenditures		<u>1,602,247</u>
Net Revenue minus Expenses		<u>-45,453</u>

Fund 2 - Lunch Program

Revenue	59,666
Expenditures	61,314
Net Revenue minus Expenses	<u>-1,648</u>

Financial Summary

For most of its existence, New Heights has shown to be very fiscally responsible as evidenced by each of the official annual audit reports; particularly in years with lower than expected enrollment. Although the school has had some lean funding years, it was able to avoid exceeding the SOD limits with a few exceptions and remain a school in good financial standing. There was a brief trend beginning in 2010 that proved to be difficult because several families left the school as a result of the lack of jobs and affordable housing in this area, thus forcing them to relocate. Marketing efforts have been under way focused on increasing the enrolled population over the next several years. At the time of the writing of this report, the year's enrollment goals are slightly lower than projected, but in strong analysis of this trend, school leaders are confident it is not a long-range trend, but is more of an issue of circumstance; meaning only a few larger families made other choices for the 2018-19 school year. Enrollment requests and requests for information meetings are steady if not increasing, and there is reason to believe that while 2018-19 ended below projections, the subsequent year will be back on track.

Any comments, questions, or concerns about the contents of this report should be directed to the school's principal, Thomas Kearney, at:

New Heights School

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