

New Heights School

Annual Charter School Report-FY 2018

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to summarize the progress and achievements of New Heights School during the 2017-18 school year. Its contents are intended to be informational and factual. 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 January 16, 2019 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.

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 individuals 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 an 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.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2017-2018

DIRECTOR NAME	TITLE	POSITION	FILE FOLDER #	ELECTED	TERM EXPIRES	COMP
Lauren Adamic	Comm Rep	Asst. Sec	478847	May - 2017	June - 2019	0
Samantha Taylor	Parent	Vice President	N/A	May - 2016	June - 2018	0
Lorraine Busta	Parent	Treasurer	N/A	May - 2016	June - 2018	0
Carrie Andrews	Parent	Director	N/A	May - 2017	June - 2019	0
Jill Eulberg	Teacher	President	462154	May - 2017	June - 2019	0
Michael Stahlmann	Comm Rep	Secretary	237098	May - 2017	June - 2019	0
Kathy Vollmer	Teacher	Director	186203	May - 2016	June - 2018	0

*BOARD OF DIRECTORS TRAINING Corresponding with Charter School Law:



***BOARD OF DIRECTORS TRAINING**

2017-2018

DIRECTOR NAME		Seated	Governance	Financial	Employment
Lauren	Adamic	7/8/15	1/13/16	1/13/16	1/13/16
Lorraine	Busta	7/11/16	8/9/16	8/9/16	8/9/16
Carrie	Andrews	7/12/17	8/7/17	8/7/17	8/7/17
Jill	Eulberg	7/12/17	8/7/17	8/7/17	8/7/17
Michael	Stahlmann	7/9/97	9/25/10	10/2/10	10/2/10
Samantha	Taylor	7/11/16	8/9/16	8/9/16	8/9/16
Kathy	Vollmer	7/11/16	8/9/16	8/9/16	8/9/16

*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.

MISSION STATEMENT

To inspire and challenge each individual to reach his or her full potential.

*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 conflicts and more productivity amongst staff.

The principal is responsible for ensuring that each employee 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. 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. Recently, the state of Minnesota and changed legislation regarding teacher evaluations to now include 35% of the evaluation to be based on student 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, monthly, quarterly, or on an annual basis. The principal and office manager have worked effectively together for the past 24 years.

The school's guidance 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 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 set up; 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, 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 6 of the past 7 school years, and did receive the award again for 2017-18.

Sponsor/Authorizer Information

For more than 18 years Stillwater Area Schools, district 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 compatible. 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 contract with The Guild.

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 25-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. 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 2017-18 was 127.05; which is well within the normal range for the school.

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 since the school’s inception in 1993; most likely because these two subgroups perceive that they are not having their needs met or 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 para-professional 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.

Students in grades 2 thru 5 also attend school in two multi-age classrooms 2-3 and 4-5; 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. 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, and various members of the secondary teaching faculty; particularly those licensed in math, language arts and reading.

During the 2017-2018 school year, the K-5 elementary section of the school hosted approximately 45 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 grade 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. Students take such classes as math; language arts; physical education; social studies; science; career exploration; health; and some students may choose to take special 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 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, 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.

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 simply due to the sheer size of a district school. 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 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 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 to the same students term-after-term 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.

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. A tour through the school reveals 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 system; 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 chart illustrates MCA Proficiency data from New Heights School for the last 3 testing cycles. *Values rounded to the nearest whole number.

	Math	Reading
2015-2016	11%	24%
2016-2017	20%	34%
2017-2018	16%	23%

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; poor academic performance. These requisite skills, although often lacking, are paramount in developing the higher-order problem solving skills required 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 in 2018-19.

Below, you will find a comparison chart showing the recent trends of the school as compared to other local systems, as well as the state 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 might be desired. This change in population can

have 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 turned over by as much as 40% from one test cycle to the next. The staff is working hard to react to the data, but the data does represent a constant collection of students. The reaction/response to last year's scores may not be appropriate for this year's students.

An additional conclusion may be that reading scores are not growing as much as they could simply because there has been a stronger emphasis on improving upon the math scores; the lower of the two. Moving forward the staff is going to take a more equitable, balanced approach to both math and reading. The school is also looking into "motivation" as a key to improving scores.

For the past several years as a result of the poor testing performance on MCAs, New Heights has been working with the Center for School Excellence. The assigned advocates worked closely with the leadership team to conduct a needs assessment and react to the findings. Over the years, especially through the PLC process, the centers helped to find some evidence-based teaching practices that are known to generate improved academic progress. The strategies were presented to teachers and then teachers reported the outcomes of the strategies to PLC leaders. The scores vacillated up and down over time, but that could partially be attributed to changing population of students; however, the staff remains diligent in working toward improving on teaching practices with the ultimate goal of increasing the overall levels of academic progress of ALL students at New Heights.

Near the conclusion of the year, New Heights learned that it would likely not be continuing on with the same process of documenting through the Record of Continuous Improvement and would likely not have an advocate, or at least the same advocate moving forward. Near the beginning of the 2018-19 school year, New Heights was notified that it would definitely no longer be required to make submissions through the RoCI, but that the school was designated as a "World's Best Workforce" school. As we are now in January, and have met with the assigned advocate twice, we still do not fully understand the reasons the school has this new designation, or what the new requirements will be to demonstrate growth, so it will be difficult to state exactly where we are headed as a school. The work that was done will continue, as there has been a lot of time and effort expended, but we do expect some of the efforts and energy to shift. We are simply waiting to receive more explicit instruction for MDE and our advocate. It is expected to be forthcoming in the month of February.

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 at New Heights. 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. 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.

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 is in the middle to late stages of implementing an RtI system to provide the highest level of support to the students who need it most. As a first step, our staff implemented 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, and data recording and analysis, and reacting 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.

Five 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 the student time to work on assignments in class. Members from The Regional Center of Excellence worked with 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 that should improve 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 and connecting the significance of the work with successes earned outside of the classroom. Teachers are learning to help students set appropriate learning goals that are designed to help get and keep students engaged in the learning process. Students are proving to us 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.

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 blend of two systems; Responsive Classroom (RC), and Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies-(PBIS). The secondary is going to 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 has researched and has committed to a text, widely considered the “Bible” of classroom management strategies. Teachers are experimenting with aspects of the text and reporting the effectiveness of the strategies to PLC members on a weekly basis. This exploration and transformation is expected to last throughout the year and perhaps beyond.

A recent needs-assessment has concluded that the staff is interested in learning more about motivating students and gaining higher levels of student engagement. One way to get engagement levels to rise is to have students use daily planners. A committee was assembled for the purpose of exploring a variety of styles of student planners. A style was selected by the staff and a planner system will be utilized by the secondary staff in the 2018-19 school year. Throughout the year the staff will make discuss the effectiveness of the planners and will make adjustments as needed.

Teacher Staffing Information

New Heights School employed 21 personnel during the 2017-18 school year. Aside from the licensed teachers noted below, New Heights had five personnel in administration (Principal, Bookkeeper, Office Manager,) one PT Health Office Attendant, and a part-time food service employee.

Name	Licensed Area	Assignment	Status	FF#
Doris Beedle	K-12 EBD	Special Education 6-12	NR	418714
Emma Cotner	Mathematics 5-12	Math Instructor 5-12	R	470102
Adam Cutter	Science 5-8/Life Sciences 9-12	Science 6-12	R	467689
Annah Massmann	School Counselor	Guidance Counselor	N	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	N	493717
Kirk Nelson	K-12 P.E. 7-12 Health	Phy Ed, Health K-12	NR	378824
Dana Schmitt	K-6 Elem Education/K-12 LD	Elementary Special Ed	R	403231
Andrew Rakerd	5-12 Comm Arts/Lit	Language Arts 6-12	NR	466052
Jen Rea	1-6 Elementary Education	Elementary 4-5	NR	476528
Kathy Vollmer	K-6 Elementary Education	Reading Interventionist	NR	186203
Rochelle Gresafe	Family & Consumer Sciences	FACS Teacher	N	404944
Amanda Vorwald	Visual Arts	Art Teacher	R	495344
Zach Kruger	Mathematics 5-12	Math Instructor 5-12	NR	482776

*Return

*NR = Not Returning 2018-2019

*N = New 2017-2018

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 transfer-students of all ages from other programs and districts. One of the main reasons students make this transition is because they were enrolled in another program that probably serves large numbers 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 our students make progress when compared against the baseline data collected at the time of enrollment, it is not the type of progress that seems to satisfy unrealistic governmental expectations; which tend 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.

Other Features/Creative Practices

About a decade ago, a decision was made to change the way teachers delivered 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 clear majority of students in the program. 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.

Students at New Heights are 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. Students are expected to attend school at a minimum rate of 90%; an expectation established in No Child Left Behind legislation. In earlier years, attendance was deemed important, but was not considered substandard if students were attending at a building wide rate of 85% or higher. In many cases, students had made vast improvement when compared against their attendance rates of their former schools. However, NCLB determined that New Heights School was deficient in the attendance category several years ago, thus forcing New Heights into a school improvement plan. We are proud to say that over the past five years; New Heights has reached a school-wide rate of well over 91% each year. It is clear that having higher expectations for students in the area of attendance, the school and students have all benefited. This past year the rate of attendance was 91.68%, up a bit from last year. Each year it is evident that the clear majority of students attend at a rate of better than 90%, while a very small number of students have excessive absenteeism and pull the overall percentage down.

The second pillar represents the ideal that students will arrive at school each day with a cooperative attitude and demonstrate that by completing their assigned daily work. It is expected that students will arrive to class on time and prepared to participate. If they do not understand the work assigned, they are expected to ask for assistance. In the case that students are anxious or nervous about asking for help, teachers are expected to recognize this and approach students who appear to be lagging behind or those who appear to need assistance. The inherent benefit of a smaller school setting is that the students wanting or needing assistance are assured of getting it.

The third pillar represents the fact that students are responsible taking tests and exams at school. It is well known that many students do not perform well on exams for a variety of reasons. However, it is our expectation that students apply effort to the unit exams given to them by their teachers, but also to the exams required by the state of Minnesota such as the MCAs. At New Heights School, teachers analyze and react to tests, quizzes and exams for the sole purpose of assessing the learning occurring in the classroom. Therefore, all students are expected to attend school regularly and prepare to take exams to the best of their ability. In order to determine the amount of individual student growth from one year to the next, students participate in NWEA testing in the fall and spring of each year. These tests are valuable because they authentically measure the rate of growth of the student as opposed to

standardized tests that have an arbitrary score for students to achieve against arbitrary, fixed standards. NWEA testing has shown that students at New Heights are able to achieve annually at a rate greater than they had in their prior school environments. We believe this increase is largely due to students finding a school where teachers are able to take the time to assist them authentically and to be available to them on a more consistent basis year-after-year.

The fourth and final pillar represents a student code of conduct. Students enrolled at New Heights are expected to exhibit kind and courteous attitudes to their teachers and to fellow students. They are also expected to behave in a manner conducive to learning, implying being engaged. They are expected to arrive to school and be to class on time, well prepared, and they are to engage in class discussions, activities, assignments and projects to the best of their abilities. It is understood that students will make mistakes, but when redirected, students are expected to attempt to display an appropriate level of conduct and make reparations for any damages they may have caused as a result of their indiscretions or poor choices.

The Four Pillars have helped to shape the school culture at New Heights over the past several years. Students seem to be improving in their overall behavior and they also seem to be taking their classes more seriously than in the earliest years of the school. We have also seen a nice improvement in attendance rates since the early years, as well. This improvement in attendance may have a direct correlation to improvement in standardized tests scores for many of our students. Although we have made great strides in the attendance category, it appears that we will have some work to do in other categories as our former "Focus School" designation implies. We are strongly committed to improving the academic performance of our students collectively in the area of mathematics and reading/writing in the upcoming years.

BALANCE SHEET

3frbud12.p NEW HEIGHTS CHARTER SCHOOLS, INC. 9:59 AM 01/11/19
 05.16.10.00.06-11.7-010169 Initial Balance Sheet Report (Date: 6/2018) PAGE: 1

FD	T	ORG	PRG	CRS	FIN	GLN	SB	Beginning Balance	2017-18 FY Activity	Ending Balance
01	A		101	00		CASH	CASH	98,834.09	171,894.26	268,728.35
01	A		102	00		PETTY C	PETTY C	100.00		100.00
01	A		115	00		A/R	A/R	334.44	2,265.26	2,599.70
01	A		121	00		FR SDE	GENAID	115,317.49	-56,717.24	58,600.25
01	A		121	04		FR SDE	SPECLED	99,261.00	-90,317.00	8,944.00
01	A		121	06		FR SDE	LEASE	18,266.05	-11,841.88	6,424.17
01	A		122	01		FROMFED	TITLE I	1,794.61	15,724.07	17,518.68
01	A		122	02		FROMFED	TITLEII	134.00	659.91	793.91
01	A		122	09		FROMFED	FEDSPED	40,629.79	-14,907.22	25,722.57
01	A		131	00		PPONGNG	PREPAID	15,660.31	-11,423.59	4,236.72
01	A		131	20		PPONGNG	Unknown			
01	L		201	00		SAL PAY	SAL PAY	-124,323.46	9,329.93	-114,993.53
01	L		206	00		A/P	A/P	-7,464.76	3,204.58	-4,260.18
01	L		210	02		DU-MN-D	OTHERAP	-11,356.68	-9,928.76	-21,285.44
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	-8,998.17	514.40	-8,483.77
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	-72.92	72.92	
01	L		215	15		PAY DED	AFLAC deduction			
01	L		215	17		PAY DED	PERA	-290.05	-2.70	-292.75
01	L		215	18		PAY DED	TRA	-8,918.47	698.33	-8,220.14
01	L		215	19		PAY DED	HLTHFLX			
01	L		215	20		PAY DED	DVCRFLX			
01	L		215	31		PAY DED	MED INX			
01	L		230	00		DEF REV	DEF REV	-753.00	753.00	
01	Q		422	00		UNAPPRO	UNAPPRO	-78,463.00	-21,391.27	-99,854.27
01	Q		460	00		NonSpendable		-15,659.94	11,423.00	-4,236.94
01	Q		519	00		RS UNAP	RS UNAP			
01	Q		539	00		XS UNAP	XS UNAP			
02	A		101	00		CASH	FOODSER	15,387.09	1,102.54	16,489.63
02	A		115	00		A/R	A/R	2,097.78	-2,097.78	
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	-77.32	77.32	
02	L		230	00		DEF REV	DEF REV	-461.71	-64.84	-526.55
02	Q		422	00		UNAPPRO	FUND BL			
02	Q		464	00		Restricted fund		-16,945.84	-3,596.52	-20,542.36
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								477,194.15	8,920.61	486,114.76
Grand Liability Totals								-366,115.37	4,644.18	-361,471.19
Grand Equity Totals								-111,066.78	-13,564.79	-124,631.57
Grand Totals										

**NEW HEIGHTS SCHOOL
Statement of Activities
FY 17-18 Approved Budget**

Fund 1

		<u>136 ADM</u>
		<u>FY17-18</u>
Revenue:	By Object # :	<u>Approved</u>
General State Aid	211	1,060,328
State Supported Programs	300s	190,000
Bldg Lease Aid	348	202,955
Federal Funding (General)	400-599	64,000
Graduation Fees	069	4,025
Activity Fees	058-059	5,000
Fund Raising and Donations	090	2,575
Total Revenue:		<u>1,528,883</u>

Expenditures:	By Program # :	
Board of Directors	010	2,050
Administration Personnel	050-110	205,869
Administrative Costs	050-110	122,680
Title I and II Programs	204-207	32,000
Elementary Instruction	201-203	150,170
Secondary Instruction	211-299	355,055
Special Education	401-420	289,671
Non Academic Student Activities	790	5,100
Pupil Support	710/720/791	50,420
Bldg Expense	810-811	65,372
Operations & Maintenance (Gas)	810	15,000
Bldg Lease	850	202,955
Interest/Insurance	920-940	15,455
Total Expenditures		<u>1,511,796</u>
Net Revenue minus Expenses		<u>17,088</u>

Fund 2 - Lunch Program

Revenue	53,750
Expenditures	53,233
Net Revenue minus Expenses	<u>517</u>

NEW HEIGHTS SCHOOL
Statement of Activities
FY 17-18 Summary of Revenue & Expenditures

Fund 1

		<u>FY17-18</u>
		<u>Year End</u>
Revenue:	By Object # :	
General State Aid	211	1,039,383
State Supported Programs	300s	248,542
Bldg Lease Aid	348	186,430
Federal Funding (General)	400-599	70,082
Graduation Fees	069	2,371
Activity Fees	050-059	3,832
Fund Raising and Donations	090	7,429
Total Revenue:		<u>1,558,069</u>

Expenditures:	By Program # :	
Board of Directors	010	2,545
Administration Personnel	050-110	191,185
Administrative Costs	050-110	116,322
Title I and II Programs	204-207	34,432
Elementary Instruction	201-203	163,617
Secondary Instruction	211-299	379,355
Special Education	401-420	276,727
Non Academic Student Activities	790	2,204
Pupil Support	710/720/791	49,836
Bldg Expense	810-811	73,473
Operations & Maintenance (Gas)	810	11,868
Bldg Lease	850	231,852
Interest/Insurance	920-940	14,684

Total Expenditures	<u>1,548,101</u>
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Net Revenue minus Expenses	<u>9,968</u>
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Fund 2 - Lunch Program

Revenue	61,550
Expenditures	57,953

Net Revenue minus Expenses	<u>3,597</u>
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Financial Summary

For most of its existence, New Heights has shown to be very fiscally responsible; 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 increase the enrolled population over the next several years. At the time of the writing of this report, the year's enrollment goals are lower than projected, but in strong analysis of this trend, school leaders are confident it is not a 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 increasing, and there is reason to believe that while 2018-19 will likely end up 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:

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