

Annual IQS Review  
MN Excellence in Learning Academy  
FY'20

To: MN Excellence in Learning Academy School Board  
From: Rochel Manders, IQS Cadre Leadership Team Member  
Date: September 1, 2020

Section 5.1 of the contract between Innovative Quality Schools (IQS) and MN Excellence in Learning Academy

Charter School outlines the criteria for the annual school review. In part, it states that IQS will evaluate whether the:

- a) school has been faithful to the terms of the agreement regarding the implementation of the school's design and the learning standards of the Commissioner. (Mission/Program Model)
- b) Board is performing its governance responsibilities. (Governance)
- c) performance of the students and the school meet the expectations as provided in the contract. (Student and School Performance)
- d) school is using its resources in compliance with the law and is planning for the future. (Finance)
- e) school is meeting the administrative requirements of the law relating to charter schools. (Operations)

In carrying out this responsibility, members of the IQS Management Leadership Team (MLT) held several meetings with members of the school leadership team to discuss issues and concerns related to school operations. Members of the IQS Cadre conducted six (6) site visits and several virtual reviews of school records. IQS also sponsored two (2) teacher/leadership conferences, one (1) board training conference and numerous professional development regarding best practice in a distance learning structure; all designed to provide the school with opportunities to grow professionally in support of the school program. Below is a summary of Cadre and MLT findings in each of the above noted performance areas based upon observations and direct interactions with the school.

<b>Mission/Program Model</b>	
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ At the 4.16.20 Board meeting, student growth data on the NWEA were reported from fall to winter. The overall growth exceeded expectations, and there was disappointment by the director that the spring testing could not happen to reflect this student progress. During distance learning, teachers took an active role and school administrators worked diligently to provide all students with access to technology to meet the new learning format. Teachers and students adapted quickly to this new reality and adjusted curriculum to meet the students academic needs. MELA's ability to adapt with all staff</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities for Improvement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ MELA is encouraged to continue efforts to survey school stakeholders in an effective way so results can be used to measure satisfaction and progress.</li> <li>➤ The schools mission and vision are not clearly stated and accessible on the schools website.</li> </ul>

<p>collaborating to put students first is chartering at its best.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The school used the University of Chicago survey to assess satisfaction of teachers, parents, and students. Only a small number of parents participated, despite multiple attempts, so these surveys will not be used.</li> <li>➤ Staff development continues to be targeted to program goals around literacy, where the school saw consistent and strong gains in this area for students in the fall to spring NWEA results.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Governance</b></p>	
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The board developed a policy for ongoing review and adoption of policies at the April Board meeting. Every board meeting will have policy reviews beginning in June 2020</li> <li>➤ Initial work on the schools strategic plan began in FY20, with Big River assisting the school with development back in July 2019 and an expected completion in FY21. In addition, the school utilized a University of Chicago survey to help in this and received the results in late April. The survey included questions on school culture, academics, relationships, and family to school communications.</li> <li>➤ The Board Chair is exceptionally experienced and runs an efficient, informed, and thoughtful board meeting. All members participate and professionally execute board duties.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities for Improvement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The school has addressed and completed all six recommendations noted in the mid-year report and deserves commendation on this.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Performance</b></p>	
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The school was very proactive in developing it's distance learning plan, even prior to the governor's order. They had piloted online learning with staff and families and on the first Monday they had school and sent students home with online learning packets that day. They also offered technology device pick-up and delivery. Multilingual staff helped families set up for the new system.</li> <li>➤ The school does not have students with 504 plans or in a GT program. Special ed students are still getting service minutes per IEP's using virtual minutes. The school has a lot of 3rd</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities for Improvement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There were no observed opportunities for improvement at this time.</li> </ul>

<p>grade students with special needs. Assessment of needs is ongoing. The EL teacher has been working a lot with students and families-going into their homes to help provide resources and local government assistance contacts. Most native languages are Spanish and African American languages and the EL teachers are educating parents/guardians as well as students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ During distance learning, the school continued to offer professional development every Wednesday through it's Multi Tiered Support System and Professional Learning Communities. Beginning in April, a literary specialist came in for an hour per week due to the school's focus this year of literacy. They also have a contract with Groves that includes training on dyslexia per the MDE requirement.</li> </ul>	
<b>Finance</b>	
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The school has used a working budget since the fall and approved a revised budget at the June 2020 board meeting with a surplus of \$510. The current projection is an ending General Fund Balance above 10%.</li> <li>➤ The school's long-range budget plan covers five years and was approved at the April 2020 board meeting.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities for Improvement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Upon review of the school website, it is not apparent if the schools Annual Reports have been posted as required by state statute 124E.16 Subd.2 (a).</li> <li>➤ The school is encouraged to post the last three financial audit reports on the school website.</li> <li>➤ The school is encouraged to post the last three fiscal year budgets on the schools website.</li> </ul>
<b>Operations</b>	
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There have been no updated observations and/or reports for this area since the mid-year report.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities for Improvement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There were no observed opportunities for improvement at this time.</li> </ul>

**ScoreCard Annual Composite Score(s)**

Below are the ratings received in each of the performance categories. School Improvement opportunities identified through the oversight process are described below. The highest rating that can be achieved is a 4.0.

Section 1: School Model	3.0
School Improvement Opportunities:	

Section 2: Governance	3.0
School Improvement Opportunities:	
Section 3: Performance	3.0
School Improvement Opportunities:	
Section 4: Finance	3.5
School Improvement Opportunities:	
Section 5: Operations	3.7
School Improvement Opportunities:	
Composite Score	3.2

Performance Summary:

MELA continues to make progress on internal processes in the mission and governance area, where the combined eight recommendations, as noted in the IQS mid-year report, have been addressed and completed. The school continues to meet targeted benchmarks and has built up a General Fund Balance of over 10%. It has been a pleasure to work with Danielle this year and I look forward to continuing the relationship into next year.