

Minnesota North Star Academy 2007-2008 Accountability Report

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Submitted to

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Readers' Guide: Minnesota Department of Education

Elements required by the Commissioner for Charter School Annual Reports can be found on the following pages:

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Note: While no longer required by the Department of Education, information on student demographics and participation are included in the report and can be found in Section I.

Note: The contents of this report are subject to approval by the school's Board of Directors at the October 2008 meeting.

Readers' Guide: Data Elements Required by Volunteers of America

In addition to elements required by the Commissioner, the school's sponsor, Volunteers of America, has established a list of core data elements for the annual report. The directory below provides page references for VOA requirements.

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Executive Summary

Minnesota North Star Academy (MNSA) is a Minnesota charter school located in Saint Paul, Minnesota that serves students in grades nine through twelve who are deaf, deafblind, or hard-of-hearing. The school completed its fourth year of operation in June 2008. Volunteers for America (VOA) originally sponsored the school in 2003 and renewed the school's charter in summer 2007. MNSA provides a bilingual education for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. All teachers at MNSA are certified and are fluent in American Sign Language and English. Though the school is located in Saint Paul, MNSA students live throughout the seven-county metropolitan area.

This report summarizes the school's success as per the school's 2007-2008 accountability plan. The accountability plan was developed over the first three years of the school's operation with input from major stakeholders and guidance from Lange Research and Evaluation. The plan is a working document that outlines the outcomes and indicators of success central to the school's mission. The major outcome areas include:

- Academic Achievement;
- Personal and Social Development;
- Responsibility;
- Citizenship;
- Communication/Language; and
- Student, Parent, and Staff Satisfaction.

Indicators outlining the current status toward reaching benchmarks in each of these areas are presented in this report.

This report also provides the data required for annual reporting purposes by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and the school sponsor, Volunteers of America. Information required by MDE and VOA for annual reporting is incorporated into the report where possible.

MNSA's fourth year of operation included many notable successes including increases in academic achievement, national recognition of several MNSA students for their academic accomplishments, and high levels of community service.

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Background Information

Minnesota North Star Academy (MNSA) is a Minnesota charter school located in Saint Paul, Minnesota that serves students in grades nine through twelve who are deaf, deafblind, or hard-of-hearing. The school completed its fourth year of operation in June 2008.

MNSA provides a bilingual education for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. All teachers at MNSA are certified and are fluent in American Sign Language and English. The day-school structure with a bilingual approach distinguishes MNSA from secondary boarding schools that often serve the deaf and hard-of-hearing high school population. Though the school is located in Saint Paul, MNSA students live throughout the seven-county metropolitan area.

This report summarizes the school's success as per the school's 2007-2008 accountability plan. This report also provides the data required for annual reporting purposes by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and the school sponsor, Volunteers of America. Information required by MDE and VOA for annual reporting is incorporated into the report where possible. Data elements required by VOA but not provided within the body of the report are presented in Appendix A.

Minnesota North Star Academy Mission, Vision, and Values

MNSA has a defined mission, vision, and values statement that guide its program. The school's mission reads:

The mission of Minnesota North Star Academy is to prepare students who communicate using American Sign Language (ASL) and English, primarily those who are deaf, deafblind and hard-of-hearing, to become successful and valued citizens of the world community.

The vision statement reads:

North Star provides a bilingual, student-centered curriculum for deaf, deafblind and hard-of-hearing high school students who communicate and learn using American Sign Language (ASL) and English. We provide an environment that allows students to maximize:

- *Decision-making skills*
- *Communication literacy in both American Sign Language and written English*
- *Planning for future academic and vocational education*

The school's core values are:

Sharing ideas. At MNSA, student and parent ideas are welcome. We value their perspective and listen to their input. Parents are an integral part in making our school successful.

Connections to family and community. The community becomes the classroom, with students learning from the rich urban environment and the wide variety of spaces, places, people, ideas, and visions that inhabit it. MNSA students commute from home, and with that closeness, they are able to develop strong ties with both family and community.

Communication. MNSA students learn the communication skills necessary to creating a challenging, disciplined and caring community, where every student matters and every student strives to achieve.

Awards and Recognition

Gallaudet University's Yes I Can Awards. Three MNSA students were honored as winners in this year's *Yes I Can* essay, art, and American Sign Language (ASL) contest sponsored by Gallaudet University. They were chosen from over 623 entries. Shannon Boelter won second place in the ASL category and received a scholarship for her accomplishment. Brienna Herold received the Judge's Choice recognition in the essay category and Cecilia Hahnikoski received the Judge's Choice recognition in the ASL category.

National Science Fair for Deaf and Hard of Hearing. In winter 2008 Deaf students from all over the United States sent science fair proposals to New York's Rochester Institute of Technology. In February it was announced that six students from MNSA were invited to attend the National Science Fair for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students at Rochester Institute of Technology in March 2008. MNSA sophomore, Jared Treichel, won third place in the high school division. Brienna Herold (10th grade) and Scott Symes (11th grade) also received honorable mention in the team division. Sveta Anderson, Jessica Oldfather, and Allison Porter also were chosen to represent MNSA in the team competition. More than 50 contestants representing 14 schools from ten states competed in the March fair. The MNSA projects were:

- Testing the Magnetic Field and Plasma Interactions—Jared Treichel
- Perception versus Reality—Brienna Herold and Scott Symes
- The Effects of Water and Air on Two Different Breeds of Dogs' Behavior—Sveta Anderson, Allison Porter, and Jessica Oldfather

Midwest Academic Bowl. Gallaudet University hosted the Midwest Regional Academic Bowl at the Indiana School for the Deaf in February 2008. Sixteen schools and programs for the Deaf participated in the competition. MNSA placed third in the competition. Sissi Hahnikoski, Brienna Herold, Philip Steinbruckner, Scott Symes, and Jared Treichel represented MNSA. Brienna Herold received the Most Outstanding Player Award.

Minnesota North Star Academy Sponsor Information

Sponsor Information. Minnesota North Star Academy is sponsored by Volunteers of America of Minnesota (VOA), a non-profit agency dedicated to organizing community volunteers to assist program participants in making a significant difference in the communities they serve (source: VOA mission statement). VOA is one of the oldest non-profit agencies in Minnesota serving communities for over 109 years. VOA and North Star entered into a three-year contract in 2003. The contract was renewed for one year in May 2006 and for three years in summer 2007. The sponsor contact is:

Justin Testerman
Volunteers of America of Minnesota
5905 Golden Valley Road, Suite 110
Minneapolis, MN, 55422
612-310-8949
Fax: 612-375-0800
Email: jtesterman@voamn.org

The relationship between MNSA and VOA is positive. The sponsor provides oversight and constructive advice with the ultimate goal being success for the school and its students. VOA provides regular feedback to the school and reviews student accountability, program, and organizational indicators of success on a regular basis.

Accountability Plan and the School's Charter. The academic and non-academic goals stated in the school's original charter contract served as a starting point in the development of an extensive accountability plan initially drafted during the 2004-2005 school year. The plan is a working document, intended to change as the school grows, meets its goals, and identifies new areas of need. It is a plan that is used not only for accountability reporting but also for continuous improvement for all stakeholders involved.

The most recent version of the accountability plan is embedded in the accountability section of this report with progress toward meeting the goals highlighted for each accountability area. In addition, the extent to which the school met or exceeded its expectations as per the charter contract is provided for each area.

Minnesota North Star Academy School Profile

Student Characteristics. MNSA enrollment has increased substantially each year of its operation. Though a small school by traditional standards, it has an enrollment similar to other high schools serving the deaf and hard-of-hearing population and is continuing to grow each year. The school has grown from an enrollment of 14 students during its first year of operation in 2004-2005 to 31 students in 2007-2008. The school anticipates enrollment of 34 in fall 2008.

Table 1 - MNSA Demographic Information

Minnesota North Star Academy Demographic Information*				
	Enrolled 2005-2006 n %	Enrolled 2006-2007 n %	Enrolled 2007-2008 n %	2007-2008 Demographics Saint Paul Public Schools*
Male	11 48%	12 43%	13 42%	Not available
Female	12 52%	16 57%	18 58%	Not available
Special Education	23 100%	28 100%	31 100%	16%
Black, Non-Hispanic	3 13%	3 7%	3 10%	30%
Hispanic	1 4%	1 4%	2 6%	13%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0 0%	1 4%	1 3%	30%
White, Non-Hispanic	17 74%	22 81%	25 81%	25%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1 4%	1 4%	0 0%	2%
Free/Reduced Lunch	9 39%	10 37%	12 39%	71%
LEP	0	0	0	37%

Source: Fall MARSS data *MDE Report Cards 2007-2008 Enrollment

Table 2 - MNSA Student Enrollment History

Minnesota North Star Academy Student Enrollment History and Projection*					
Grade	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	Projected 2008- 2009
9	9	5	7	11	8
10	3	10	5	9	10
11	2	3	10	3	8
12	0	4	6	8	8
Total	14	22	28	31	34

*Source: Fall Enrollments based on Oct 1 Report to State

Student Attendance and Mobility. MNSA had an average daily attendance rate of 93% for the 2007-2008 school year. Two students transferred from MNSA during the school year. One new student enrolled after October 1st. The mobility information is presented below.

Table 3 - 2007-2008 School Year Student Mobility

Minnesota North Star Academy 2007-2008 School Year Student Mobility*				
Grade	Enrolled Oct 1	Newly Enrolled After Oct 1	Transferred after Oct 1	Enrolled at End of School Year
9	11	1	1	11
10	9	0	1	8
11	3	0	0	3
12	8	0	0	8
Total	31	1	2	30

*Source: School Records

Staff Characteristics. MNSA teachers, all of which are proficient in American Sign Language, employed during 2007-2008 were licensed by the State of Minnesota. In addition to the teaching staff, full-time staff included one school director, one secretary, one educational assistant, and one intervener. Part-time staff included two educational assistants, one technology support, one athletic director, and a business manager. The school also contracted for speech therapy, social work, orientation and mobility specialist, vision specialist, and school psychology services.

Table 4 - 2007-2008 Licensed Teachers

Minnesota North Star Academy 2007-2008 Licensed Teachers*					
Name	File #	Years of experience	Highest Degree Attained	Assignment	Status for 08-09
Kristin Cuta	399277	6	MA + 39 credits	Science (FT)	Returning FT
Heidi Ernst	426534	1	BA	Language Arts (FT)	Returning FT
Ronda Jo Miller	413146	4	MA	Electives (FT)	Returning FT
Susan Outlaw	412599	9	MA +60 credits	0.5 Teacher (Language Arts) 0.5 Administration	Returning PT (0.6 administration)
Cheri Piemeisl	427399	0	BA	Social Studies (FT)	Returning FT
Anthony Ritz	421973	2	MA + 45	Math (FT)	Returning FT
Mark Schwartz	419274	4	MA	Technology (FT)	Left in December 2007

Teacher Turnover Rates. The following is the running turnover rate for MNSA since it opened. There was 0% turnover after the first year of operation, 33% turnover after the 2005-2006 school year, and 17% (one teacher) turnover rate in subsequent years. Staff retention is stable with the only departure for 2007-2008 being one due to a change in technology focus. All teachers are returning in fall 2008.

Curriculum and Educational Delivery Model. Minnesota North Star Academy provides a traditional high school curriculum to prepare students for a range of postsecondary options. Students take classes in the core academic areas of English, ASL, social sciences, math and science. Electives are offered in botany, zoology, psychology, sociology, current events, Deaf studies, mysteries of science, art, research and debate, theatre and drama, yearbook, and humanities. Graduation requirements those set forth by Minnesota Department of Education with some more rigorous recommendations proposed by the school.

*Graduation Credit Requirements by the
Minnesota Department of Education*

4.0- English
3.0- Math
3.0- Science
3.5- Social Science
1.0- Art
0.5 Health
6.0 Electives

*Graduation Credit Recommendations by
Minnesota North Star Academy*

4.0- English
3.0- Math
3.0- Science
4.0- Social Science
1.0- Art
0.5 Health
0.5 PE
2.0- ASL
4.0 Electives

MNSA provides a rigorous curriculum with high expectations for students. The only difference between MNSA and other college preparatory programs is the instruction is provided through bilingual methodology. This allows all content instruction to be fully accessible to students in a visual manner with teachers and educational assistants providing direct communication to students through American Sign Language (ASL) and written English. Minnesota North Star Academy challenges students with grade level expectations and all content is strongly aligned to Minnesota's Academic Standards. Because each learner is unique, curriculum is adapted to meet students' individual needs especially for students whose Individualized Education Program has curriculum adaptations or accommodations.

Language Arts

Students taking language arts at Minnesota North Star Academy receive 0.5 credits in ASL and 0.5 credits in English for this yearlong class. The curriculum focuses on the structure and pragmatics of English and ASL. Students learn the grammar of both languages and practice using written English and signed ASL for a variety of purposes. Students are encouraged to research both languages and to use the languages for social and academic situations. Students are required to plan, organize and compose narrative, expository, descriptive, persuasive, poetry, and research English writing and ASL presentations to address a specific audience and purpose. The course employs a variety of textbooks and DVDs for English grammar, English composition, and ASL linguistics.

Reading or Literature

Students taking reading at Minnesota North Star Academy receive 1.0 credit of English for a yearlong class. Literature classes are available to students who read at an 8.0 grade level or above. The literature classes are held for one semester each providing students with one-half credit in English for each semester. Literature classes such as European Literature, Shakespeare, American Literature, Contemporary Literature, and Science Fiction are some of the course options. Students are encouraged to analyze, interpret and evaluate the use of figurative language and imagery in literature selections, including symbolism, tone, irony and satire. They also analyze and evaluate the relationship between and among elements of literature: character, setting, plot, tone, symbolism, rising action, climax, falling action, point of view, theme, and conflict/resolution.

Social Sciences

All students take a yearlong social science class each year. They receive one credit for American History and 0.5 Geography and 0.5 World History I, and 0.5 Geography and 0.5 World History II. In addition to these yearlong courses, students are required to take a semester of Civics for 0.5 credit and a semester of economics for 0.5 credit. The social studies department also has a number of electives such as Current Events, Elections and Politics, Psychology, Sociology, Research, and Debate, and Deaf Studies. Each elective is one semester in duration and provides students with one-half credit in the social science area.

Mathematics

Students are encouraged to take four years of mathematics. Math course options range from Consumer Math to Trigonometry/Pre-Calculus. Students who are ready for calculus are encouraged to go to their local district high school with an interpreter. Freshmen are placed in a math class based on previous school and teacher recommendations as well as previous test scores. The math department focuses on number concepts, problem solving, data interpretation, evaluating algebraic equations, and applying math to everyday situations. In addition, students are taught to distinguish between linear and non-linear functions; use algebraic properties to evaluate expressions; evaluate geometric figures, lines, and angles; and recognize linear, quadratic, exponential, and other common math functions. Students in math courses use textbooks, graphing calculators, and various types of computer technology to assist in their lessons and homework.

Science

Freshmen begin their formal science instruction with one year of earth science/geology. Sophomores typically take a year of biology. Juniors and seniors have more options in science including yearlong courses in chemistry and physics and semester-long courses in botany, zoology, astronomy, and Mysteries of Science. Students are required to take a semester of health and freshmen are encouraged to take this class during the fall semester and physical education during the spring semester. As in other departments, each yearlong class provides students with 1.0 credit and each semester long class earns students one-half credit.

Professional Development. Professional development was offered to MNSA staff members throughout the year. The most rigorous of training involved the American Sign Language English Bilingual Professional Development (AEBPD) training for all staff. AEBPD involves 48 hours of training provided through specialists in this area. Staff members were trained in ASL and English strategies for two hours a week for 12 weeks. Teachers also attended the Minnesota State Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Conference. In addition to the AEBPD training and the conference, the following opportunities were provided.

- How to Give Woodcock Johnson Assessment – Marcy Doud (All staff)
- I Transition Program –PepNet (All staff)
- Due Process Training in collaboration with Metro Deaf School –MCSSEP (All staff)
- 6+1 Writing Traits Workshop (Heidi Ernst)
- Transition Workshop provided by MCSSEP (Anthony Ritz)
- AEBPD Mentor Training at Gallaudet University (Susan Outlaw)
- MN TOPS CSI/Forensics Workshop (Kristin Cuta)
- Biology Workshop (Kristin Cuta)
- "Making Geography Authentic!" (Cheri Piemeisl)

Governance. MNSA requires that the Board be comprised of members representing parents, members of the signing community, educators, and experts in finances, marketing, and fundraising. Elections are held each May. Terms consist of two or three years, depending on the person's position as a Board member or as a Board officer.

The board held two board retreats, one in September and one in October 2007 to discuss strategic planning. An outcome of the two retreats was consensus that the school needed more space. During the fall of 2007-2008 school year, the Metro Deaf board president approached the MNSA board president regarding collaboration with Metro Deaf School. A taskforce was formed in January of 2008 to explore future collaboration. The taskforce committees of the two schools met eight times (Jan. – June) to discuss a future partnership. The possibility of becoming one Pre-K through Grade 12 school was also explored with the boards voting for moving ahead with that option for the 2009-2010 school year. Other Board accomplishments included an updated website, creation of the taskforce, completion of a business plan, and the revision of by-laws.

During the 2007-2008 school year MNSA requested a waiver of the majority teacher board requirement set forth by the charter school law. The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) initially denied the request and teacher members were added to the board. MDE reviewed the request at a later date approving the MNSA proposal. The Board returned to its original membership once the waiver was approved. The board membership presented in Table 5 reflects the changes in membership due to MDE requirements.

Table 5 - Board Members 2007-2008

Minnesota North Start Academy Board Members 2007-2008							
Name	Board Position	Affiliation Skill Set	Date First Elected	Date Term Ends or Date Left Board	Attend. Rate at Board Meetings	Status	Contact Info.
Roberta Cordano	President	Legal Expert Member of Deaf Community	7/05	6/30/10	78%	Returned	651-659-9630
Kristin Cuta	Member	Teacher	11/07	6/30/08	100%	Returned	651-736-6073
Barb Boelter	Secretary	Parent	7/05	6/30/08	100%	Returned	651-688-0013
Matt Mikulski	Treasurer	Business/ Finance	1/06	6/30/10	100%	Returned	651-503-5228
Mary Zweber	Vice President	Business/ Finance/ Strategic Planning	1/06	6/30/09	89%	Returned	651-736-6073
Susan Outlaw	Member	Teacher	3/07	6/30/08	89%	Returned	651-771-2000
Allan Amis	Member	Parent Architect	7/05	6/30/07	89%	Returned	612-377-5621
Alex Zeibot	Member	Member Deaf Community	7/07	6/30/09	75%	Returned	Alexz@umn.edu
Cheri Piemeisl	Member	Teacher	12/07	2/08	50%	Left during year*	651-341-7760
Heidi Ernst	Member	Teacher	12/07	2/08	50%	Left during year*	651-485-3382
Ronda Jo Miller	Member	Teacher	12/07	2/08	50%	Left during year*	Rjo23@tmail.com
John Lee Clark	Member	Member Deaf Community	7/07	10/07	0%	Left during year	Johnlee.clark@comcast.net
Kim Kause	Ex-Officio member	Executive Director	8/07	Ongoing	89%	Returned	651-771-2000

*These members were teachers who joined the Board during the period when MDE require a teacher-majority on the Board.

Community and Family Involvement. There are several opportunities available for family and community involvement at MNSA. The Parent Teacher Group (PTG) meets throughout the year. They elected a new chair during the 2007-2008 school year and were responsible for a \$1,000.00 donation for the school's international trip that will be to France during the 2008-2009 school year.

There were several community partners involved with MNSA during the school year. These included:

- The College of Saint Catherine—Students volunteered at the school and two were assigned as interns to MNSA for one semester.
- Saint Paul College—Students volunteered at the school.
- North Central College—Students volunteered at the school.
- University of Minnesota—The University provided equipment for use during the academic bowl. They also provided volunteers and one intern. Susan Outlaw gave a presentation about bilingual education at the school. A career counselor conducted a workshop for students in spring 2008.
- Noodles and Co.—Provided food donations for the academic bowl and parent group.
- Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church—Provided the facility for a pancake breakfast.
- Sorenson—Provided videophones and booth set-up at many of the school's events.
- Communication Services for the Deaf (CSD)—A CSD representative presented four times on a variety of topics. They also provided interpreting services when requests cannot be filled with the school's list of interpreters.
- Kowlaski's—Donated \$25.00 for the pancake breakfast and packs of water and gift certificates for volunteers.
- PepNet—A representative gave a presentation to parents on high school transition.
- Metro Deaf School—Provided collaborative services in many of the school operation and instructional areas.
- Local High Schools—Provided access to site visits (White Bear Lake, Chaska, Somerset, WI).
- Macalester Plymouth United Church—MNSA did a fundraiser for them teaching a number of ASL classes to groups.

Parent-teacher conferences were held two times during the year in addition to the Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings that are required at least once each year. Additional IEP meetings were held as necessary. Attendance for the fall conferences was 61% and for the spring conferences, 53%. It should be noted that all parents attend IEP conferences in addition to the semester conferences. Attendance at IEP conferences is not included in this calculation.

Additional volunteer activities included:

- Academic Bowl Tournament hosted by MNSA with over 30 volunteers.
- Garage Sale for France—The event was fully hosted by parents with 23 volunteers and many others who donated to the sale.
- Family Fun Fundraiser—Nic Zapko and two volunteer interpreters organized a fundraiser for the school's sports program.
- Teen Night—Numerous volunteers from local colleges assisted with chaperoning the events. These occur monthly.
- Pancake Breakfast for France—There were over 27 volunteers.

Other noteworthy community events included:

- Graduation—Over 60 people attended the graduation of the four seniors.
- Awards Night—Over 80 people attended the sports and academic award night.
- Open Houses—Held in November and March with many attendees.

SECTION II: 2007-2008 GOALS AND RESULTS

Overview

The MNSA accountability plan is a working document that builds upon new knowledge of the students and the educational strategies employed by the school. Results from the spring 2008 data collection effort as per the accountability plan are presented in this section. Please note that the academic and non-academic goals listed in the charter contract are embedded within the MNSA accountability plan. This is the second year of the two-year goal cycle.

Outcome Area 1: Student Achievement

Outcomes, Indicators, Data Sources, Goals	Level of performance 2007-2008			
	Exceeded	Met	Approaching	Not Met
<p>Be Competent in reading, mathematics, and writing</p> <p>Percent of students who score at eighth grade or above or reach state-level proficiency <i>MAP; BST (for those who qualify)</i></p> <p><u>Two-year Goal:</u> 80% or more of 12th grade students will be at or above the 8th-grade level in reading math, and writing.</p>	>80%	80%	70-80%	<70%
				X
<p>Meet MN Academic Standards in reading, mathematics, writing, science, and social studies</p> <p>Percent of un-exempt students meeting or partially meeting Minnesota Academic Standards and/or MNSA standards in reading, math, writing, science, and social studies</p> <p><i>Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments II; MNSA Standards' Assessments; MNSA Writing Asses.</i></p> <p><u>Two-year Goal:</u> Percent reaching proficiency will be within five percentage points of state average. (Note: Benchmark changed in '08)</p>	>State Average	Within 5 Percentage Points of State Av.	6-10 Percentage Points of State Av.	<10 Percentage Points of State Av.
				X
<p>Meet individual transition and individual IGP goals (including content area goals)</p> <p>Percent of students that meet their transition and IGP goals <i>Transition Plan and IGP</i></p> <p><u>Two-year Goal:</u> 90% of 12th grade students will meet their transition and IGP goals.</p>	>95%	90%	85-90%	<85%
				X
<p>Graduate</p> <p>Percent of 12th graders who graduate within the timeline indicated on their IEP. <i>Transition Plan and IGP</i></p> <p><u>Two-year Goal:</u> 90% of 12th graders will graduate within the timeline indicated on their IEP.</p>	>95%	90%	75-90%	<75%
	X			
	75% graduated and 25% are attending IEP-approved transition program			

NWEA MAP Tests. All un-exempt students completed the reading, mathematics, and language usage subtests of the Northwest Evaluation Association's *Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)* in spring 2008. Scores from previous testing, either at MNSA or their former school, were used to determine growth. The test was also used to determine whether students are at or above the eighth-grade competency level.

The *MAP* customizes tests to individual students. Each student receives a unique test, which is developed via computer for him or her as the test is being administered. Each test question presented to a student provides some information about the trait that is being measured. The closer each item is in difficulty to the student's actual level of functioning, the more information it provides for that student (Source: NWEA). Scores were recorded using a RIT (Rasch Interval Unit). The RIT scores provide teachers with a record of each student's level of functioning that corresponds with a specific scope and sequence of skills for reading and math.

Only students who have not reached the test's ceiling score of 10th grade-ninth month are tested. Once a student has met the ceiling they are included in the percent of students who have met their target goal or have reached competency.

Reading scores were available for 28 students and math scores for 29 students for the 2007-2008 school year. The other students were exempt from testing due to instructions on their Individual Education Programs.

- Twenty-nine percent scored at or above mean grade level (end of tenth grade is the ceiling) in reading compared to 17% in spring 2007.
- Forty-one percent scored at or above mean grade level (end of tenth grade is the ceiling) in mathematics compared to 33% in spring 2007.

It should be noted that decoding skills are testing on the reading subtest that are not appropriate for testing deaf and hard-of-hearing students. It was not possible to remove those items from the test.

Another indicator of progress is the percent of students who progress from the previous test period and those that reach their target goal as defined by NWEA. Baseline testing occurred for new students in early December 2007. Results from spring 2007 were compared for returning students. For the students where historical data were available:

- Eighty-two percent (n=23) of students were at the ceiling score or made progress from the spring 2007 testing period to spring 2008 in reading.
- Fifty-four percent (n=13) were at the ceiling score or reached their target goal in reading.
- Eighty-three percent of students (n=24) were at the ceiling score or made progress from the spring 2007 testing period to spring 2008 in mathematics.
- Fifty-two percent (n=13) were at the ceiling score or reached their target goal in mathematics.

One of the benchmarks used for success is the percent of seniors who are reading and doing math at the 8th grade level. This benchmark was chosen because academic results for deaf and hard of hearing students nationally indicate that many do not perform beyond the elementary level. If MNSA students can reach proficiency at the 8th grade level, they will be prepared to continue their postsecondary training and will function independently within the community. In addition, the results will surpass those for deaf and hard of hearing students nationally. When the entire school's *MAP* results are reviewed (students in grades 9-12), the findings indicate that 41% are at or above the mean score for 8th grade in mathematics compared to 38% in spring 2007. Twenty-nine percent are at or above the mean score for 8th grade in reading compared to 21% in spring 2007. Caution should be taken when interpreting these results for a school as small as MNSA. Student demographics, especially in areas relating to mitigating disabilities such as visual impairment, severe learning disabilities, and other issues may affect the results and the amount of time needed to reach the 8th grade competency level. In addition, caution should be taken when interpreting the reading results due to the high number of items associated with decoding skills.

GRAD Test. Passage of the Minnesota GRAD or Basic Standards Tests (BST) in reading, mathematics, and writing is a high school graduation requirement for most students. However, some students may meet high school graduation requirements without passing the GRAD test of BSTs if they meet alternate requirements as listed on the Individual Education Programs. Ninth grade students are now required to take the GRAD Writing test under the new state testing requirements. Nine students took the test. Results will be reported in aggregate for the school once all students are on the same testing regimen. All graduating seniors either met the GRAD/BST requirement or met the requirements as per their IEP.

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments II. The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA IIs) measure student progress toward meeting the state's high academic standards. Tenth grade students are assessed in reading and eleventh grade in mathematics. Reading results for students in tenth grade indicate that 50% exceeded, met, or partially met the standards. The average score for MNSA students was 1045 compared to 1056 for the entire state. Eleventh grade students took the mathematics MCA. The percent passing is not reported due to student data privacy rules. The average score for the MNSA students taking the math test was 1130 compared to an 1141 state average.

Individual Graduation Plans/Transition Plan. All students attending MNSA are required by law to have a transition plan. These plans have been developed for all MNSA students. The school developed additional document in summer 2007 entitled "Individual Graduation Plans" (IGP) that will further assist students in postsecondary planning. The intent is that, in combination, these two documents will provide a comprehensive plan resulting in successful transition following high school. The IGP was implemented in fall 2007.

Graduation Rates. Four students were eligible for graduation in spring 2008. One was an exchange student from Finland and one was part-time at MNSA. Three of the students received their diplomas (either at MNSA or the other high school) in accordance with their IEPs. One student is transitioning to another program and received a certificate of attendance. It should be noted that more students were listed as twelfth graders on the enrollment rolls, some of these students are opting for a thirteenth year at MNSA according to their IEP and will be eligible to graduate in spring 2009. One graduate is scheduled to enroll in a four-year colleges or universities, one is attending a vocational rehabilitation program, and one is

attending a transition program. The foreign exchange student is returning to her secondary school to complete her diploma requirements in Finland.

Outcome Area 2: Personal and Social Development

Outcomes, Indicators, Data Sources, Goals	Level of performance 2007-2008			
	Exceeded	Met	Approaching	Not Met
<p>Demonstrate age-appropriate social skills</p> <p>Percent of students who are rated in the average or above average range for social skills <i>Social Skills Rating Scale or similar scale</i></p> <p><u>Two-year Goal:</u> Teacher ratings of social skills will match the national distribution as per the SSRS.</p>	<p>≤16% below average</p> <p>X 10%</p>	<p>16% below average</p>	<p>16-20% below average</p>	<p>>20% below average</p>
<p>Demonstrate basic leadership skills</p> <p>Percent of 12th grade students who have taken a leadership role in at least one activity during their high school years <i>IGP</i></p> <p><u>Two-year Goal:</u> 90% of students will take a leadership role in at least one activity during high school years.</p>	<p>>90%</p>	<p>90%</p>	<p>70-90%</p> <p>X 75% of students</p>	<p><70%</p>
<p>Be able to attend to their emotional needs</p> <p>Percent of students who are rated in the average or below average range for problem behaviors <i>Social Skills Rating Scale or similar scale</i></p> <p><u>Two-year Goal:</u> Teacher ratings of problem behaviors will match the national distribution as per the SSRS.</p>	<p>≤16% in high problem group</p>	<p>16% in high problem group</p>	<p>16-20% in high problem group</p> <p>X 19%</p>	<p>>20% in high problem group</p>
<p>Demonstrate cultural awareness in Deaf and hearing cultures</p> <p>Percent of students who teachers rate as demonstrating these behaviors at least 85% of the time <i>Teacher Checklist</i></p> <p><u>Two-year Goal:</u> 90% of students will be rated as demonstrating Personal and Social behaviors at least 80% of the time.</p>	<p>>90%</p>	<p>90%</p>	<p>70-90%</p>	<p><70%</p> <p>No longer assessed. See transition checklist in responsibility area.</p>

Social Skills Rating Scale. Staff members met in winter 2008 to discuss the various instruments used to assess MNSA outcomes. There was consensus that the SSRS should only be used to track the progress of the students for whom teachers have behavior and social concerns. There is an historic record of SSRS results from the previous school for many of the students indicating that they have average or above average social skills and fewer than average problem behaviors. Thus, staff members felt it was important to gauge success for those students who are demonstrating issues with this outcome area. It was agreed that the SSRS would be completed only for students recommended by a staff member or for whom no record of the SSRS was available.

It was agreed that the results would be recorded in two ways. First, all students who were *not* recommended would be assumed to be in the average to above average range and the scores from spring 2008 would be aggregated with that assumption. Second, the progress would be monitored for all students who were not in the average or above average range in spring 2009 using the spring 2008 results as baseline. Staff members recommended that the SSRS be completed for twelve students. Results below are for the thirty-one students enrolled in spring 2008 using the analysis methodology noted above.

- Ninety percent of students demonstrated average or above average social skills for their grade level compared to 84% nationally.
- Eighty-one percent of students demonstrated average or below average problem behaviors for their grade level compared to 84% nationally.

Outcome Area 3: Responsibility

Outcomes, Indicators, Data Sources, Goals	Level of performance 2007-2008			
	Exceeded	Met	Approaching	Not Met
<p>Be present in school The school's average daily attendance <i>MARSS data from end of year</i></p> <p><u>Two-year Goal:</u> Daily attendance rates will be at or above the state average for high schools.</p>	>93%	93%	90%-93%	<90%
		X 93%		
<p>Percent of students who attend school a minimum of 94% of the days they are enrolled <i>School's attendance records for individual students</i></p> <p><u>Two-year Goal:</u> Less than 15% of students will miss 6% or more of school.</p>	High <10%		Average 11-15%	Low >15%
				X 39%
<p>Understand and practice skills of self-advocacy Percent of students who meet Transition/Advocacy Outcomes <i>Transition Checklist (new 2008)</i></p> <p><u>Two-year Goal:</u> 90% of students will meet their transition outcomes.</p>	>90%	90%	85-90%	<85%
	Baseline data collected in spring 2008			
<p>Develop an understanding of postsecondary education and career choices and know how to pursue them</p> <p>Percent of students who have completed the steps necessary to pursue their postsecondary education and career choices <i>IGP</i></p> <p><u>Two-year Goal:</u> 100% of students will have an appropriate postsecondary plan</p>	NA	100%	90%-99%	<90%
				X 35% Baseline

Attendance Records. Attendance rates were calculated using the average daily attendance records submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education. MNSA's average daily attendance rate was 93%. However, a more stringent indicator of attendance is also used at MNSA. The percentage of days each student is absent during the school year is calculated. The expectation is that no more than 15% of students will be absent 6% or more of the days they are enrolled (or they will be in attendance a minimum of 94% of days enrolled). The school met its average daily attendance goal, but did not meet the more stringent goal. Notably, the percent absent six percent or more of days enrolled increased in 2007-2008.

Transition Checklist. A school-designed checklist was the data source used to assess responsibility and personal and social development over the past few years. It was decided that the transition checklist aligned with the Minnesota Department of Education transition standards and aligned with MNSA's Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) was a better instrument for measuring the outcomes in this area. Using the MDE standards as a guide, the checklist was developed during the 2007-2008 school year. The checklist assesses skills in three areas: 1) Postsecondary, 2) Employment, and 3) Advocacy. Each student's case manager completed the

checklist in spring 2008. The results serve as baseline for future goal setting and are incorporated into each student’s IGP. The checklist has four rating levels.

- Proficient—90% of the skills complete
- Near Proficient—80% of skills the complete
- Developing Proficiency—60% of the skills complete
- Emerging Proficiency—Below 60% of the skills complete

The indicator for success will be set for each student based upon the spring 2008 results. Baseline results indicate that:

- Sixty-three percent of seniors and 33% of juniors were proficient or near proficient in the postsecondary skill area.
- All of the seniors and 66% of juniors were proficient or near proficient in the Employment Skills area.
- Seventy-six percent seniors and 66% of juniors were proficient or near proficient in the Advocacy Skill area.

Outcome Area 4: Citizenship

Outcomes, Indicators, Data Sources, Goals	Level of performance 2007-2008			
	Exceeded	Met	Approaching	Not Met
<p>Contribute to the community</p> <p>Percent of students engaged in a community-service project during each school year <i>Service Report</i></p> <p><u>Two-year Goal:</u> 100% of students will be engaged in a community project each year.</p>	NA	100%	90-99%	<90%
		X 100%		
<p>Demonstrate understanding of democratic process</p> <p>Percent of students who are eligible to vote who are registered and voted during the last election <i>Teacher Checklist</i></p> <p><u>Two-year Goal:</u> 100% of students eligible to vote will be registered and will vote in the last election.</p>	NA	100%	90-99%	<90%
	Was not reported for 2007-2008			
<p>Understand their rights (as both a citizen and as deaf, deaf-blind, or hard-of-hearing person)</p> <p>Percent of students who can articulate their rights in the most important areas related to being a US citizen and being a deaf or hard-of-hearing citizen <i>Transition Checklist</i></p> <p><u>Two-year Goal:</u> 95% of students can articulate their rights.</p>	>95%	95%	85-94%	<85%
				X 36% Baseline

Service Project Reports. All students took part in a service learning class during the 2007-2008 school year. There were two school-wide projects. Students collected “children” band-aids for Children’s Hospital of Saint Paul. The students also worked with the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Department in a beautification project. The students worked together to improve the condition of the community through planting flowers in the park and creating a garden around Harriet Park.

Outcome Area 5: Communication/Language

Outcomes, Indicators, Data Sources, Goals	Level of performance 2007-2008			
	Exceeded	Met	Approaching	Not Met
<p>Be proficient in ASL and English</p> <p>Percent of students who meet their individual goals for ASL <i>MNSA ASL Rubrics Assessment (Annually); Transition Assessment (Annually, beginning in 07)</i></p> <p><u>Two-year Goal:</u> 90% of students will reach their individual goals on the ASL Rubrics Assessment.</p> <p>Percent of 12th grade students who reach proficiency in ASL</p> <p><u>Two-year Goal:</u> 90% of 12th grade students will reach their individual goals on the ASL Rubrics Assessment.</p>	>90%	90%	75-89%	<75%
				<p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <p style="text-align: center;">37% Academic ASL</p> <p style="text-align: center;">74% Conversation ASL</p>
	>90%	90%	75-89%	<75%
	Baseline not available for the graduating 12 th grade students			

Proficiency in the Communication/Language outcome area is defined as:

- Demonstrating an understanding of appropriate sign choices, register, and prosody for various audiences;
- Using a variety of methods of communication and understand the appropriate settings for each; and
- Being able to translate between ASL and English.

MNSA took the lead in developing an ASL instrument to assess these outcomes even though there is not an affordable assessment available at this time. It was fully implemented in spring 2007. Nearly all students (n=27) were individually assessed in spring 2008. Rather than a comparison between individual goals and achievement, students were rated on their level of proficiency in spring 2008. Proficiency in ASL, both academic and conversational was assessed with mastery defined as meeting 90% of the specific items for each of the two assessments. Students were considered “approaching mastery” if they mastered 75% to 89% of the items and students were in the “developing” category if they mastered 60% to 74% of the items. Each assessment contained 55 items.

Results indicate that overall the majority of students’ social ASL results were very high which is consistent with the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 results. As in years past, students who had attended a bilingual elementary and middle school demonstrated extremely high social and

above average academic ASL skills. Nearly three-quarters of students assessed met mastery in conversational ASL with 19% “approaching mastery.” Thirty-seven percent of students were considered in the mastery group for academic ASL with 52% in the “approaching mastery” group. As a whole, the students who scored lower in social ASL demonstrated a need for improvement in appropriate use of classifiers, non-manual markers, and conceptually accurate signs. Based on this data it is recommended that students be screened in the fall and if they have a high level of proficiency in social ASL, they not be assessed further in this area. Students who demonstrate a need for improved social ASL will continue to be assessed in this area.

As expected, students’ academic ASL scores varied greatly. As in the previous year, students demonstrated the most skill in the areas of:

- Describing concrete actions, events, or concepts;
- Fingerspelling; and
- ASL syntax; and
- Conceptually accurate signs.

These skills are found in social ASL as well and can then be more easily applied to academic language use. The areas of academic ASL that emerge as needing more instruction are:

- Describing abstract actions, events, or concepts;
- ASL syntax;
- Explaining cause and affect relationships; and
- Expressing opinions and providing facts, details, or examples to support opinions.

Based on the continual need for academic ASL instruction, MNSA changed its language arts curriculum with all students taking two language arts classes in 2007-2008. One class focuses on reading and vocabulary course and the second class addresses expressive language use in both ASL and English. Initial data results support the change of instructional delivery. The school will continue to monitor progress to determine if additional interventions are needed.

School leaders believe it is critical for students to have strong academic language skills in their first language to transfer skills to their second language. Minnesota North Star Academy recognizes in order for high school students to be successful they need to be able to use both academic ASL and English in all their classes. They are committed to teaching and assessing students academic ASL and written English. One of the program goals for 2007-2008 was to design an assessment tool in written English. Given the school’s focus on transition-related instrument development, the written English assessment was not completed. It is a high program priority for 2008-2009.

Outcome Area 6: Student, Parent, Staff Satisfaction—

The extent to which students, families, and staff are satisfied with the North Star school experience

Outcomes, Indicators, Data Sources, and Goals	Level of performance 2007-2008			
	Exceeded	Met	Approaching	Not Met
Students, parents, and staff will be satisfied with various aspects of MNSA	>90%	90%	70%-89%	<70%
Percent of parents who indicate satisfaction with various aspects of school <i>Student Satisfaction Survey; Student Focus Groups</i> <u>Two-year Goal:</u> New Goal: 90% or more of students will be satisfied with their overall learning experience at MNSA.			X 69% report they like their school. 24% are neutral on survey. Focus group results indicate satisfaction.	
Percent of students who indicate satisfaction with various aspects of school <i>Parent Satisfaction Survey; Parent Focus Groups</i> <u>Two-year Goal:</u> New Goal: 90% or more of family respondents will be satisfied with their child's overall learning experience at MNSA.	>90%	90%	75%-89%	<75%
			X 75% of family respondents report satisfaction*	
Percent of staff who indicate satisfaction with various aspects of school <i>Staff Satisfaction Survey</i> <u>Two-year Goal:</u> 85% of staff members indicate they are happy working at the school.	>85%	85%	75%-84%	<75%
		X		

*This finding is based on response from 16/30 parents.

A new instrument was used to assess school satisfaction and a positive school climate in spring 2008. The previous instrument had been administered for several years and there was concern that respondents were too familiar with the instrument, thus, affecting its reliability. Two new instruments developed through the North Central Regional Education Laboratory were administered to students and staff in spring 2008. The survey items focused on several aspects of the school. Staff members at MNSA developed the parent survey. In most cases, the most general item was used for determining whether the school is meeting its benchmarks in this area or a review of the percent agreeing with most items. Since this was the first year administering these surveys, there is no baseline data. However, benchmarks were set upon discussions with the leadership team.

Parent/Family Satisfaction Survey. Approximately half (53%) of the families completed the satisfaction survey. Parent/Guardians were given the option of completing an online or paper and pencil survey. The majority of respondents had children who had attended MNSA for one to two years (81%). Parents were asked about their level of satisfaction with various aspects of the school. Parents could choose from satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, dissatisfied, and other. The items with the highest percentage of respondents reporting being satisfied were:

- American Sign Language instruction (88%);
- English instruction (81%);
- Availability of technology (81%);
- School's director (88%);
- School's secretary (81%); and the
- Overall learning experience at MNSA (75%).

The items with the highest percentage of respondents reporting being satisfied *or* somewhat satisfied were:

- Rigor (Challenge) of the curriculum (94%);
- Opportunities for student leadership (94%);
- School's climate or atmosphere (94%)
- The school's curriculum (93%);
- English instruction (93%);
- School's teachers (92%);
- American Sign Language instruction (88%);
- School's director (88%);
- School's discipline policies (88%);
- Parent resources/activities (88%);
- Availability of technology (87%);
- School's secretary (87%);
- The IEP/Case Manager system (87%)
- The individual academic planning for my child (87%)
- Extracurricular activities (87%)
- Availability of technology (87%)
- Overall learning experience at MNSA (87%).
- Communication with parents (80%)

Transition planning, the school's location, and communication with parents were the only items where 20% or more of respondents indicated being dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied.

Respondents were also asked to provide open-ended comments about the "best thing about your child attending MNSA." Fourteen of sixteen respondents answered the question. The response categories are noted below with examples of some of the comments provided.

Bilingual education/ASL

- *"He is able to learn in a bilingual atmosphere."*
- *"She is being taught in her native language."*
- *"Being taught in ASL and having deaf peers to interact with."*

Academic Challenge and Learning

- *“She is being challenged and is making progress to reach her full potential.”*
- *“Expectations are higher.”*
- *“The teachers are striving to make the students work to their potential by not allowing them to ‘get by’.”*
- *“My child’s language has improved by leaps and bounds. Also, my child has become more independent and responsible.”*

Opportunities

- *“My child can have as ‘normal’ a high school environment as possible, including leadership, extracurriculars, and access to everything to reach her full potential.”*
- *“The opportunities she has had.”*

Student Satisfaction Survey. Twenty-nine students completed the Student School Satisfaction Survey. The survey consisted of 22 items with students asked whether they agreed, strongly agreed, were neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the statement. Those items with the highest percentage of students agreeing or strong agreeing were:

- *I feel like I belong in this school. (80%)*
- *I like to learn. (86%)*
- *Doing well in school makes me feel good about myself. (79%)*
- *I am doing my best in school. (86%)*
- *I feel safe in this school. (73%)*
- *I think this is a good school. (72%)*
- *I like the students at this school. (72%)*

Although only 69% of students reported they “liked the school”, there were few items where more than 15% of students reported dissatisfaction. Rather, there was a high percentage of students who were neutral about several of the items. One reason may be because the survey did not address some of the more pertinent issues for high school students. It is recommended a different version be administered in spring 2009 that will align better with the high school experience.

Students were also asked two open-ended questions about what they liked about the school and what they wished could be different. Twenty-nine students provided comments about what they liked or wished were different. They could provide comments in any area. The highest number of comments in the “like” area fell into these areas:

- Academics (n=12);
- Teachers and or Teachers’ ASL (n=7);
- Social Aspects of School (n=6); and
- Small size (n=6).

The comments about what they wished was different were more diverse and fell into the following categories.

- Sports-related issues (e.g., more sports, better gym, better locker rooms) (n=9)
- Less focus on rules (n=5)

- More challenging work (n=4)
- Different instructional model (n=4)
- More students (n=3)

Student Focus Groups. Focus groups were conducted with two different groups in spring 2008 to get a better understanding of the students and their opinions about the school. One group consisted of seven students in the 9th and 10th grades. The other group consisted of five students from grades 11 and 12. The students were chosen because of their teachers believed they would provide thoughtful and honest answers to the focus group questions. The facilitator was from the Deaf community, but not associated with MNSA.

Results—Underclassmen

The results from the focus group indicate that most of these students chose MNSA so they could stay near their family and still be with predominately deaf or hard-of-hearing students. They discussed how MNSA is different than their previous school (most were from Metro Deaf School), but did not discuss many differences between MNSA and other high schools. Generally, the weaknesses discussed in the focus group were typical of younger high school students. They did not like the food, wanted more sports, and desired more space. The positive aspects discussed centered on their getting a good education, open communication, and ASL. All are returning to MNSA in fall 2008.

Results—Upperclassmen

The older students gave several reasons for choosing MNSA. The reasons discussed ranged from the school's small size to the quality of education received. Many also mentioned reasons relating to communication such as there being no need for an interpreter, easier to socialize, access to communication, and technology specific to a deaf student's needs.

When asked what makes MNSA special, students discussed the academic extracurricular activities such as the Academic Bowl. They also discussed the school bringing them to many different places. When discussing what is different than expected, students discussed the facility and the deaf teachers.

The older students were asked if the school had met their expectations and met their needs. Generally, the expectations had been met. Although, several wished there were more opportunities for sports. Students' needs also appear to have been met for most with some discussing the need for more transition preparation and life skills courses. There was consensus that the school was providing adequate information about postsecondary choices, but would like to visit more colleges.

Students were asked several questions about their preparation. When asked if they were prepared for the hearing world, most believed they were prepared, but some indicated they needed more assistance in using interpreters. When asked about the school's strengths, they agreed that the school's educational quality was an asset.

When asked about what needed to be improved, most had specific issues with teachers and some wanted more sports or after school activities. These students have high expectations for after graduation with most indicating they want to attend a postsecondary school upon graduation.

Senior Exit Survey. For the second year graduating seniors were asked to take an exit survey. Three of the four seniors completed the survey. Results were shared with the staff and used for continuous improvement.

Staff Satisfaction Survey. Sixteen staff members completed the staff satisfaction survey. The survey for staff is quite extensive and includes over 60 separate items. Staff members are asked whether they strongly agree, agree, are neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree to the statements provided. NCREL does not give any clustering tool, thus it is difficult to generalize all items into one metric. For purposes of the benchmark, items were reviewed to determine if satisfaction was reported by 85% of respondents for nearly all items. Of the 61 survey items, that there were no items where more than 15% of the staff disagreed or strongly disagreed. Generally, there was agreement among the respondents with the highest satisfaction being reported by the teaching staff with a higher proportion of non-certified staff reporting some dissatisfaction or higher neutral responses. A complete copy of the survey results is available from the director.

SECTION III: PROGRAM SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

Successes and challenges for Minnesota North Star Academy's fourth year of operation are noted below.

Successes

Basic Academic Achievement. Basic reading and math proficiency was one of several focus areas at MNSA for 2007-2008. A reading class was added for those students in need of additional assistance. Results indicated a substantial increase in the percentage of students meeting target goals and increase in the percent of students scoring at or above the 8th grade and 11th grade levels. The results were also more positive for mathematics than in past years.

As noted in previous reports, context and comparison with other deaf and hard of hearing students must be taken into consideration when reviewing the results for MNSA students. The National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS)¹, a federally funded study of America's students with disabilities finds that 79% of students in the study who are deaf or hard of hearing score *below* the 8th grade level at their last reading assessment (47% score below the 4th grade level). Likewise, the NLTS data indicate that 81% of the students in their study scored below the 8th grade level in mathematics in their last assessment (48% scored below the 4th grade level). When the data are reviewed within this context, MNSA is outperforming many other educational settings. However, the school's goal is not to meet the low bar set by the national statistics, but to meet a high bar that has been articulated through its accountability plan. Although they have not met their goals, there has been substantial improvement in many academic areas.

The school will continue with the reading program in 2008-2009 adding additional literature instructors to continue to strengthen the school's language arts program. The Individual Graduation Plan and the Individual Education Program will continue to be utilized to individualize instruction in both reading and mathematics.

High Standards Achievement. Although there is considerably attention paid to student progress in reading and math, one of the areas in which MNSA excels is student achievement in the other high school content areas. The results from the various national academic contests in which students competed in 2007-2008 are an indicator of the high level of achievement for MNSA students in high school mathematics, social studies, English literature and science. As noted in the introduction to this report, several students received awards at the national level for their academic endeavors. Of particular note is that some of the team competitions included students who may not have met the reading and mathematics goals, but when given the opportunity to communicate their knowledge through presentations are recognized for their high level of content knowledge. In other cases, students received awards for high levels of achievement in essay writing or science projects.

Student Enrollment. MNSA's student enrollment grows each year. Though the numbers are small, the percentage of growth is substantial with an enrollment growth of 20% between fall

¹ Wagner, M., Newman, L., Cameto, R., Levine, P, and Garza, N. (2006). *An Overview of Findings From Wave 2 of the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2)*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International. Available at www.nlts2.org/reports/2006_08/nlts2_report_2006_08_complete.pdf.

2005 and fall 2006 and another 10% growth in fall 2007. The school anticipates enrollment to increase another ten percent in fall 2008-2009.

Staff Retention. Teacher retention continues to be high with all teachers returning for 2008-2009.

Stable Board Membership. The school continues to have a stable and committed board that governs and school and oversees its progress. It works well with the sponsor and has established policies and procedures that assist in making MNSA a healthy organization.

Challenges

Array of Programming. One of the biggest challenges facing Minnesota North Star Academy is providing instruction in basic mathematics and reading and also providing instruction for the college-bound student. They are succeeding in meeting this challenge, but it continues to be one that they must address each year as they review programming and staffing decisions.

Attendance. A challenge that emerged from a review of the 2007-2008 data is in the area of student attendance. The results will be reviewed in fall 2008 with an intervention plan developed for students with attendance issues.

Transition Planning. Transition planning is an area that staff members are focusing on for 2008-2009. A transition coordinator has been hired to assist in this area, as it is so critical to postsecondary success for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. The work already completed on the Transition Checklist and the IGP will be incorporated into her work.

Minnesota Department of Education Goal Requirement

Minnesota North Star Academy uses its entire Accountability Plan to assess its success and progress. Thus, benchmarks are set for all areas and meet the MDE requirement of setting a minimum of four goals each year.

Summary

Minnesota North Star Academy's fourth year of operation was successful with the school meeting or approaching the benchmarks for most of its accountability goals. The school continues to use the accountability process for continuous improvement and is becoming a data-driven school. The small number of students can often mask the gains made as many data elements cannot be reported in a public document due to privacy laws; but those who do have access to those data see continuous improvement and an impressive academic, social, and communication record with the students.

APPENDICES

**APPENDIX A:
Additional Data Elements Required by School Sponsor**

Additional Required Data Elements: School Leader Review

VOA Requirement: Describe the process and schedule the Board has adopted for evaluating the school leader

The school's director assumed her duties in August 2007. The board chair is responsible for the director's evaluation. An evaluation that summarizes the director's duties is completed by the board (by consensus) and by two outside professionals familiar with the director's work. The results are tallied and discussed with the director. In addition, the director at Metro Deaf School served as an administrative mentor to the MNSA director throughout the school year meeting every other week to discuss issues and solutions.

Additional Required Data Elements: Board Operations—Board Meeting Schedule and Committee Assignments

VOA Requirement: Provide a Board meeting schedule. Provide a list of committee assignments.

Board meetings were held on the following dates during the 2007-2008 financial year:

June 2007	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan. 2008	Feb	March	April	May	June
6/18	7/16	8/20	9/17	10/15	11/19	12/17	1/23	2/20	3/17	4/21	5/19	6/16

Committee Assignments (chaired by a Board member with positions filled by both Board and non-Board members) for the 2007-2008 school year were as follows:

Finance

- Matt Mikulski (Chair)
- Robert Hobyan
- Esther Thorpe
- Mary Zweber
- Jo Gascoigne
- Kimberly Kause

Facilities

- Allan Amis (Chair)
- Barb Boelter
- Kimberly Kause

Personnel

- Bobbi Cordano (Chair)
- Russ Havir
- Susan Outlaw
- Kimberly Kause

Additional Required Data Elements: Recruiting Efforts to Various Communities

VOA Requirement: Provide evidence of recruiting efforts to various communities. Provide information on school waiting list, if applicable.

Minnesota North Star Academy continues to be a part of the charter school catalog. It also launched a new website in 2007-2008, participated in the Saint Paul Schools fair, held two open houses. In addition, the school held five Teen Nights to encourage Deaf and hard-of-hearing teenagers to visit the school and meet MNSA students. Students also volunteered at Metro Deaf School and presented at the school.

Additional Required Data Elements: Student Participation

VOA Requirement: Provide attendance and retention information disaggregated by race, socio-economic status, special education status, and English Language Learner status.

The following tables present attendance information disaggregated by race and socio-economic status (free-reduced price lunch status). All students at MNSA are identified for special education services and none of the students are considered English Language Learners.

Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnic Category	n	Percent Attendance 2007-2008
African American	4	81%
Caucasian	25	96%
Latino	2	82%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2	93%
Finnish Exchange Student	1	92%
Total School	33	93%

* Source: MNSA School Records

Free-Reduced Price Lunch Status (SES)

Free/Reduced Lunch	n	Percent Attendance 2007-2008
Yes	13	90%
No	20	94%
Total School	33	93%

Mobility (Retention)

Two students left the school mid year. One student is Caucasian and one is African American. One student qualified for the free reduced meal plan.

Additional Required Data Elements: Statement of Revenues and Expenditures

VOA Requirement: Provide a statement of revenues and expenditures as compared to budget for the reporting year.

The statement of expenditures and revenues is available from the school's director and has been shared with the sponsor.

APPENDIX B: MNSA School Report Card

The electronic version of the state report card can be found at:
http://education.state.mn.us/ReportCard2005/schoolDistrictInfo.do?SCHOOL_NUM=010&DISTRICT_NUM=4101&DISTRICT_TYPE

APPENDIX C: MNSA Non-profit Status

The school's non-profit status is available from
www.ag.state.mn.us/Charities/CharitySearch.asp

Minnesota North Star Academy has an "Active" designation. The following information was copied from the site.

Organization Name	MINNESOTA NORTH STAR ACADEMY
Organization Type	TRUST
Contact Person	ATTN KIMBERLY KAUSE
Address	1669 N ARCADE ST
City	ST PAUL
State	MN
Zip Code	55106
IRS Code 501(c)	03
Purpose or Description	Minnesota North Star Academy provides high school level education for hearing impaired students.
Phone Number	(651) 771-2000
Status	ACTIVE

**APPENDIX D:
MNSA Enrollment Form**



MINNESOTA NORTH STAR ACADEMY

Preparing students who communicate in ASL and English to become successful and valued world citizens

STUDENT PRE-ENROLLMENT FORM

Date: _____

Please return this form to address listed at the bottom.

STUDENT INFORMATION

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Home Address _____ Apartment _____

City _____ Zip code _____ Home Phone (v/tty) _____

Last school attended _____ Grade _____ Male Female

Student's Birth date ____/____/____

Do you have any special needs (health, learning, or behavioral), that we will need to address?
Did your child have any special help in your previous school? If yes, please explain.

PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION

Mother/Guardian (please print) _____ Daytime Phone Number _____

Father/Guardian (please print) _____ Daytime Phone Number _____

Home address _____

Email address _____

Minnesota North Star Academy places strong emphasis on parent involvement in school projects and activities. Are you interested in participating with school enrichment, community service or related activities? Yes ___ No ___

St. Paul Star Schools.