



Notice of Charter Extended Review
(Intervention Level 4)

April 4, 2022

Board of Directors
Academia Cesar Chavez
1800 Ames Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55119

Dear Board of Directors and Executive Director Garces,

In June 2015, the University of St. Thomas issued a Notice of Concern (Level 1 Intervention) citing serious concerns regarding weakening student academic outcomes. These concerns were reaffirmed in 2017 with a Notice of Concern (Level 2 Intervention) following a sharp decrease in academic performance. (See Appendix One) In the renewal notice dated April 15, 2018, it was stated:

[St. Thomas] wants to be clear that should ACC's SY2018 academic performance not show marked improvement and continue on an upward trajectory in subsequent years, the school will be placed on an increased level of intervention and will be at risk of losing its charter. Failure to move decisively toward stable levels of performance in line with contract requirements could also place the school at risk of losing its charter prior to the end of the contract term.

This was followed with a Notice of Probationary Status (Level 3 Intervention) in December of 2019 (see Appendix Two) which stated:

After reviewing SY2019 student achievement data against contract goals it was determined that despite its commitment to improving student academic outcomes, the school has not demonstrated its ability to achieve academic performance levels in line with contract requirements and in some cases has lost ground, as shown in the tables above.

Given the length of time these concerns have persisted, their critical nature, and the limited amount of time available for their mitigation, St. Thomas is concerned that the school is in danger of losing its charter and thus is raising the school to Intervention Level Three: Notice of Probationary Status.

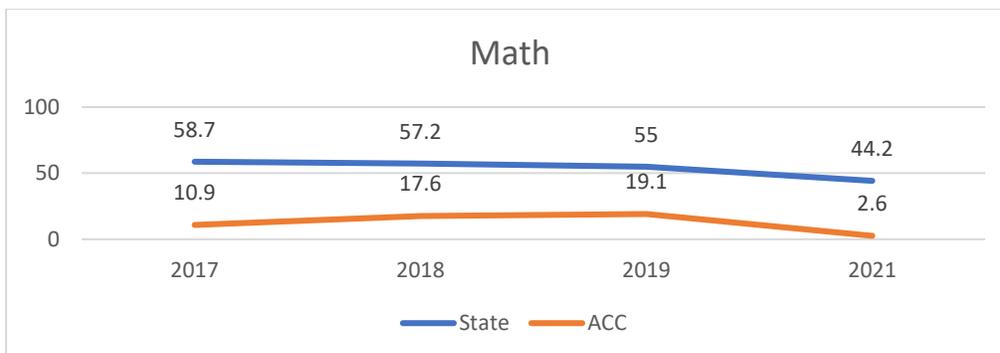
As the majority of areas of concern stated in the above notices have not been resolved and St. Thomas continues to be concerned about ACC's academic performance, as well as increasingly concerned about financial and operational

performance, we are issuing a Notice of Charter Extended Review (Intervention Level 4). We wish to be very clear that this signals a heightened level of concern, and that the issues need to be addressed by the Board with urgency and consistency of effort in order to avoid loss of the school’s charter.

The following is a summary of areas of immediate concern. The items below do not represent the full body of concerns, but rather represent key areas we believe the school can make headway in addressing before the end of SY2022. Please note that each area includes action items which are meant to help ACC make the changes necessary to succeed.

1. Academic Performance – Section 1 of the Performance Framework addresses the learning program at ACC. Of most significant concern are measures 1.5¹, 1.6², 1.7³ and 1.11⁴ of the charter contract.

- a. The overall academic performance at ACC has been an area of significant concern since the issue of the Notice of Concern in 2015 and this performance has continued in a downward trajectory. The trend data from the MCAIII is an indication of this trajectory:

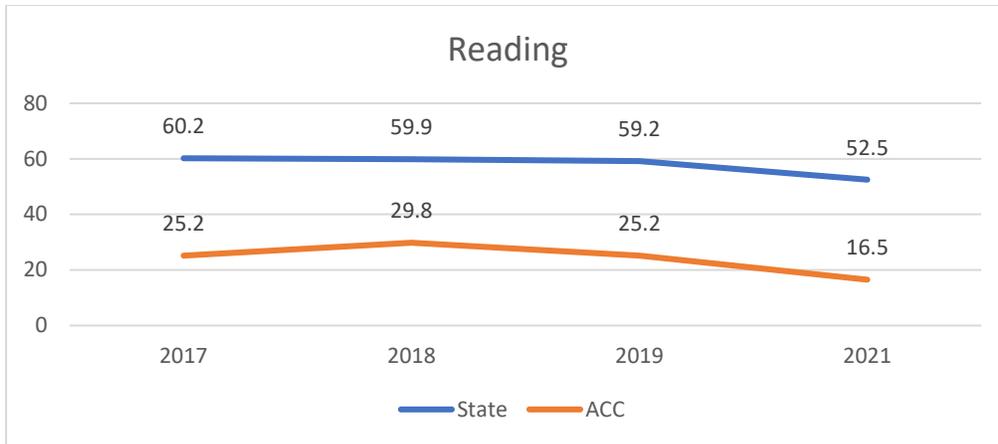


¹ Measure 1.5: Are students making expected growth compared to the State, the resident district and comparable district schools?

² Measure 1.6: Are students performing at or above target levels, as measured using the school’s selected standardized assessment?

³ Measure 1.7: Are students making substantial and adequate gains over time, as measured using the school’s selected standardized assessments?

⁴ Measure 1.11: Are students learning English performing at or above the State average for English Learners as measured by MCA proficiency?



In the most recent Quarterly Report (February 2022), student results from the school’s-selected assessment, SY22 Winter ENIL/IRLA administration were included. On the ENIL (Spanish Proficiency), for K – 2 67% of students fell in the Emergency category and 22% were At Risk. In grades 3 – 8, 85% of students were in the Emergency category and 12% At Risk. On the IRLA (English Proficiency) in grades 3 – 8, 51% of students scored in the Emergency level and 27% were At Risk.

In the school’s commentary surrounding the assessment results, it was reported that “the quality of instruction is poor and lacking rigor. The current program does not support the learning of the whole child, which is extremely off-mission.” (Quarter Two Report 2022 p.6)

As stated in the 2022 Quarter Two report (p.4), the current assessment system utilized by ACC (ENIL/IRLA) is curriculum-based assessments rather than nationally normed assessments, thus giving a limited view of student abilities in reading and math. In school-based conversations, it was mentioned that ACC was to be moving back to using the NWEA Map assessment, a decision we applaud. Please see the Action Plan below to report the current timeline for the move to the NWEA assessment.

In previous notices of intervention, it has been noted that the academic program lacks alignment and cohesion, and, in agreement with the assessment of current leadership, the current program does not fully embody the school’s dual-immersion mission. The areas on which ACC has been asked to focus include curriculum, professional development, and assessments. Per meetings with board members and leadership, St. Thomas is aware that the board and leadership desire the program to move toward a true dual-immersion model and discussions have indicated a potential desire to implement Literacy Squared. However, timelines and specifics have not been clear to either St. Thomas staff or staff/board members at the school per discussions during the SY2022. See the Action Plan Matrix for requested updates.

Per the Quarter Two report (February 2022), “before the onset of the pandemic, ACC was in the midst of reviewing its teacher evaluation process.” (p.15) In subsequent conversations with administration and teachers, it appears that there is currently no

teacher evaluation system in place. Per MN Statute 122A.414, as a school receiving Q-comp funding and in compliance with the MN State Statute, all schools must have an instructional framework or rubric that defines the criteria and qualities and establishes common language to develop the knowledge and skills of teaching over time. See the Action Plan Matrix for requested information regarding teacher evaluations and review.

2. Board Training Compliance – Section 3 of the Performance Framework pertains to the effectiveness of the Board of the organization. 3.1⁵ of the Performance Framework addresses ongoing training for all board members as does MN Statute 124.E.

- a. According to the board training matrix provided with the Quarter Two Report, it appears that the majority of the board members are out of compliance with regard to annual training mandated by MN Statute Sec 124.E:

Every charter school board member shall attend annual training throughout the member's term. All new board members shall attend initial training on the board's role and responsibilities, employment policies and practices, and financial management. A new board member who does not begin the required initial training within six months after being seated and complete that training within 12 months after being seated is automatically ineligible to continue to serve as a board member. The school shall include in its annual report the training each board member attended during the previous year.

This was cited as a concern in the 2016 and 2018 Final Evaluations as well. It may well be a matter of updating the current Board Training matrix, but it is essential that all board members are compliant with the Board Training Statute—particularly during this time of intense need.

3. Financial – Section 2 of the Performance Framework addresses the financial health of the organization. 2.4⁶ pertains to the annual financial audit of the school.

- a. According to the Quarter Two report, due to a lack of oversight, as well as misunderstandings and miscommunications, the compensatory revenue for the 2021-2022 school year is 85% lower than previous years—a potential loss of over \$900,000 of revenue.

⁵Measure 3.1 Do all board members meet the statutory requirements for initial and ongoing training on board roles and responsibilities, governance, finance, and employment practices?

⁶ Measure 2.4 Does the school have a clean audit with no major findings.

- FY22: \$157,707.42
- FY21: \$1,095,079.04
- FY20: \$1,401,261.73
- FY19: \$1,397,256.90
- FY18: \$1,301,411.70

- In the FY21 audit, ACC had two findings regarding internal controls. Internal controls were also findings in the FY15, FY16 and FY18 financial audits.
- At the close of the FY21 audit presentation, ACC board members expressed concern and surprise at the fact that, when compared against state peers, the school is underspending on students in several areas. As reported in the FY21 Financial Audit (p.21), spending has decreased in crucial student support areas and in some cases falls below average spending statewide. From FY20 to FY21, Elementary and Secondary Instruction spending decreased by \$339,819; Pupil Support spending decreased by \$243,813; and Special Education spending decreased by \$123,828 even as the number of students qualifying for services increased.

4. Student Safety

- In following up on two complaints regarding Sexual Harassment / Student Maltreatment, it is clear that ACC is out of compliance regarding Title IX protocols. This [document](#) outlines the necessary steps to become compliant with current Title IX legislation. However, the first step is to make sure that ACC has a Title IX Coordinator. According to the Office of Civil Rights:

Title IX rule requires every educational institution receiving federal funding to have a Title IX Coordinator. The contact information (name/title, office address, telephone number, email address) of the coordinator should be available both in your school's nondiscrimination notice, but also on the school website. Both victims and third parties should contact the coordinator to report incidents of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, or sexual violence.

The Title IX Coordinator ensures schools are compliant with Title IX, coordinates the investigation and disciplinary process, and looks for patterns or systematic problems with compliance to ensure schools fulfill all their federal obligations. The Title IX Coordinator must undergo training from a verified source to become certified to perform the duties necessary under Title IX legislation.

- b. As stated in the most recent Quarterly Report, “physical safety is a broader issue within the school as well, yet this coupled with how immensely understaffed the middle school is creates an alarming situation which cannot be overlooked.” (Quarter Two Report 2022, p.13)

St. Thomas appreciates the commitment the ACC Board and leadership team have shown throughout the challenges of the last two years and wish to communicate that we are still aligned in our commitment to and hope for the success of ACC. Our chief concern in raising these issues to such a level of urgency is the well-being of the students served by the school, a concern we know is shared by both board and administration.

This statement from the 2019 Letter of Probationary Status bears repeating: “The primary purpose of charter schools as articulated by State statute is ‘to improve all pupil learning and all student achievement’; we must continue to hold the school accountable for meeting the agreed-upon academic, financial and organizational indicators included in the performance framework.” (December 2, 2019) To this end, we have included the action plan matrix found below highlighting the concerns of utmost priority and the specific response required. It is our hope that this action plan will help to guide the Board and leadership team of ACC in some of the steps necessary to move ACC forward. Our team is committed to maintaining an open and positive communication. Should it be helpful for us to present this letter or provide clarifications during a board meeting or in 1:1 meetings, please do not hesitate to reach out.

The Action Item Matrix below provides as listing of areas where a response to the concerns above is required. Deadlines are provided for clarity.

Action Item Matrix

1. Student Performance

Action Items	
Request	Link / Response
<p>1. <u>Dual-immersion program</u> - Provide written, Board-approved statements clearly articulating the Board’s timeline for school adoption of a dual-immersion program and the specifics of the program to be adopted or timeline for specifics to be determined.</p> <p><u>Deadline: June 30, 2022</u></p>	
<p>2. <u>Professional Development</u> - The professional development matrix included with the Quarter Two report is through January 13, 2022. Update the professional development calendar with trainings to be offered through the end of the school year 2022. Include the name of the training, the presenter and those to be included in the training.</p> <p><u>Deadline: May 30, 2022</u></p>	
<p>3. <u>Dual Immersion Professional Development</u> - As stated in the Quarter Two report, “At this time, there is a significant misunderstanding of up-to-date best practices for a dual-immersion program. As such, the services rendered to our emerging bilingual students. Professional development opportunities to address this have been made available to all staff to grow in this area.” (Quarter Two Report 2022 p.8)</p> <p>Include a list of professional development opportunities offered to staff around the dual immersion program during SY2022 and those planned for SY2023.</p> <p><u>Deadline: May 30, 2022</u></p>	
<p>4. <u>Teacher evaluation program</u> – As a school receiving q-comp funding and following MN Statute 122A.414, all schools must have an instructional framework or rubric that defines the criteria and qualities and establishes common language to develop the knowledge and skills of teaching over time. (See Appendix Three for statutory requirements)</p> <p>Include the teacher evaluation rubric being used currently and any revisions to this rubric. Also include the schedule of when the evaluations are conducted and by whom.</p> <p><u>Deadline: May 30, 2022</u></p>	
<p>5. <u>Nationally-normed assessment</u> – As stated in the Quarter Two report, ACC will be utilizing the NWEA Map in the 2022 – 23 school year to measure growth in both reading and math.</p> <p>Create a timeline of NWEA acquisition and implementation</p>	

<p>beginning no later than fall 2022. Include professional development that will be provided for teachers, staff.</p> <p><u>Deadline: June 30, 2022</u></p>	
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2. Board Member Training

Action Items	
Request	Link / Response
<p>1. <u>Board Training Matrix</u> – According to the Board Training Matrix included with the Quarter Two report, the majority of ACC board members last received training in 2019. Update the current matrix to include all recent training received by the board members. Include the presenter and topic. We recommend, though do not require, that the Board consider the topic of training needs during a meeting, retreat, or self-evaluation process.</p> <p><u>Deadline: May 30, 2022</u></p>	

3. Financial

Action Items	
Request	Link / Response
<p>1. <u>Compensatory Revenue Appeal</u> – St. Thomas was copied on a letter to Terri Yetter, Director of School Finance on February 24, 2022, from ACC asking for an appeal of Fall FY21 Compensatory Revenue data. Provide an update on the appeal.</p> <p><u>Deadline: May 30, 2022</u></p>	
<p>2. <u>Financial Statements</u> - In order to better ascertain a picture of the financial health of ACC, include detailed financial information in each board packet. See example below. Please ensure that financial statements meet or exceed the level of detail provided in the sample statements.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>Exhibit R_Financial Statement Template 8</p> <p><u>Deadline: June 30, 2022</u></p>	

4. Student Safety

Action Items	
Request	Link / Response
<p>1. <u>Title IX Compliance</u> - In following up on two complaints regarding Sexual Harassment / Student Maltreatment, it is clear that ACC is out of compliance regarding Title IX protocols. This document outlines the necessary steps to become compliant with current Title IX legislation. However, the first step is to make sure that ACC has a Title IX Coordinator. According to the Office of Civil Rights:</p> <p><i>Title IX rule requires every educational institution receiving federal funding to have a Title IX Coordinator. The contact information (name/title, office address, telephone number, email address) of the coordinator should be available both in your school's nondiscrimination notice, but also on the school website. Both victims and third parties should contact the coordinator to report incidents of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, or sexual violence.</i></p> <p><i>The Title IX Coordinator ensures schools are compliant with Title IX, coordinates the investigation and disciplinary process, and looks for patterns or systematic problems with compliance to ensure schools fulfill all their federal obligations. The Title IX Coordinator must undergo training from a verified source to become certified to perform the duties necessary under Title IX legislation. Determine who will act as Title IX Coordinator for ACC. Identify the necessary trainings for the Title IX Coordinator. Include the title of the training, presenter, and dates.</i></p> <p><u>Deadline: May 30, 2022</u></p>	
<p>2. <u>Middle School</u> – It was indicated in the Quarter Two report that a review of the budgets for the elementary and middle school was being conducted to review the distribution of resources amongst the two. Provide an update on this review and any insights this review has provided.</p> <p><u>Deadline: May 30, 2022</u></p>	

Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns regarding this notice or the action plan to tmoffatt@stthomas.edu or mmcgraw@stthomas.edu.

List of Appendices:

Appendix One: Notice of Concern (Intervention Level 1) June 25, 2015

Appendix Two: Notice of Deficiency (Intervention Level 2), September 26, 2017

Appendix Three: Notice of Probationary Status (Intervention Level 3), December 2, 2019

Appendix Four: Teacher Evaluation Practices Required by Statute

APPENDIX ONE

NOTICE OF CONCERN (Intervention Level 1)

June 25, 2015

Board of Directors
Academia Cesar Chavez
1800 Ames Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55119

Dear Board of Directors and Executive Director de Rosales,

In April of 2014, University of St. Thomas (UST) released its renewal evaluation of Academia Cesar Chavez (ACC), which covered school years 2010-2014. The evaluation noted that student academic outcomes appeared to have weakened in SY2013, the most recent year of data available at the time, but went on to state:

Given the drop in academic results is present only in a single year, it is impossible to determine whether this decline is indicative of a trend, or is simply a one-time occurrence ... however, the decline in performance against comparison schools coupled with a decline in the number of students experiencing rapid growth is potentially troubling.

Following the release of SY2014 data, concerns regarding the academic success of ACC students intensified. These concerns were shared both verbally and through the site visit write-up dated February 20, 2015, which indicated that the academic program and student outcomes were not satisfactory and that the spring site visit would provide a critical check-point which could result in the school being placed on intervention.

After completion of the spring visit, and conferring with the UST Charter Accountability Board, it was determined that, although the school's administration is clearly committed to improving

student academic outcomes, serious concerns remain. As a result, we are placing ACC on Level 1 Intervention: Notice of Concern.

Level 1 Intervention means that UST will continue to actively monitor ACC's progress toward improvement through site visits, board meeting observations, and other authorizer activities. In addition, to ensure a clear understanding of ACC's strategy for improving academic outcomes, UST is requiring the school to share its plans for improving academic outcomes in written form (see follow-up requirements section).

APPENDIX TWO



2115 Summit Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105
Telephone: 651-962-5000
www.stthomas.edu

NOTICE OF DEFICIENCY (Intervention Level 2)

September 26, 2017

Board of Directors
Academia Cesar Chavez
1800 Ames Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55119

Dear Board of Directors and Executive Director Nyembwe,

In June of 2015, University of St. Thomas (UST) issued a Notice of Concern (Level 1 Intervention) to Academic Cesar Chavez (ACC). The letter cited serious concerns regarding weakening student academic outcomes. ACC responded to the intervention with urgency and a focus on improving learning. A new Executive Director was hired and focused plans were developed and put in motion including an increased focus on literacy, ongoing assessments and coaching for teachers. UST actively monitored ACC's progress through site visits, board meeting observations and other authorizer activities. *SY2016 results showed an increase in results for the first time in five years, and with it, the promise of future growth.*

In August 2017, the Minnesota Department of Education released academic results for SY2017. As compared to SY2016, ACC posted a marked drop in math proficiency rates (13.4 percentage points) as well as a drop in reading scores (4.1 percentage points). A breakdown of the data by grade levels indicates only 10.6% of third graders are proficient in math, which is the fifth lowest level in the state, and 9.3% of sixth graders are proficient in math, which is the ninth lowest in the state (out of 420 schools). The chart below shows the percentage of students meeting proficiency over the last seven years. The highlighted section shows scores since the onset of ACC's latest contract period.

	SY2011	SY2012	SY2013	SY2014	SY2015	SY2016	SY2017	Change From SY2015	Change From SY2011
Math Proficiency	49%	48.7%	43.5%	27.6%	20.4%	24.2%	10.8%	-9.6	-38.2
Reading Proficiency	44%	44%	37.5%	30%	28.6%	29.6%	25.5%	-3.1	-18.5

Growth rates also dropped significantly in SY2017 with only 13.8% of scholars “on track for success” in math (a one-year drop of 17.8 percentage points) and 25.5% in reading (a one-year drop 11 percentage points). The chart below shows the percentage of students meeting growth expectations since the start of ACC’s current contract.

	SY2015	SY2016	SY2017	Change From SY2015
Math On Track	26.2%	31.6%	13.8%	-13.6
Reading On Track	42.8%	36.5%	25.5%	-17.3

UST understands that while MCA results provide key information about student learning, they are not the only measure. NWEA data for SY2017 shows 71% of ACC scholars met their individual growth goal for reading and 69% for math (at least one year’s growth), but only 24% met the target (grade level) for reading and 12% for math. This data demonstrates that scholars are making progress, but currently not at rates to reach grade level. ACC also utilizes Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessments to track student reading levels. Year to year data shows that 32% of ACC scholars were reading at grade level in Spring 2017 compared to 19% in Spring 2016. Data also shows a drop in the percentage of students who are more than one year behind dropped from six percentage points (from 40% to 34%). Additionally, 53% of students met their individual growth goals of at least one year’s growth.

After reviewing SY2017 student achievement data, and conferring with the UST Charter Accountability Board, it was determined that, although the school’s board and administration is clearly committed to improving student academic outcomes, serious concerns remain. If ACC’s academic performance does not show marked improvement in the coming school year and then move decisively toward stable levels of performance in line with contract requirements, the school could be at risk of losing its charter. As a result, we are raising ACC’s Intervention Status to Level 2: Notice of Deficiency.

Level 2 Intervention means that UST will continue to actively monitor ACC’s progress toward improvement through site visits, board meeting observations, and other authorizer activities. In addition, to ensure a clear understanding of ACC’s strategy for improving academic outcomes, UST is requiring the school to share its plans for improving academic outcomes in written form (see follow-up requirements section). *UST wants to acknowledge and thank Executive Director Nyembwe for proactively reaching out to the authorizing office to discuss the MCA results as well as for sharing a thorough analysis of what led to these outcomes. Executive Director Nyembwe and his team have demonstrated an urgency to significantly improve scholars’ learning and a commitment to academic performance as the school’s number one priority. UST also wants to note that prior to this notice, Executive Director Nyembwe had already developed and began implementing a focused plan and central strategies for SY2018.* As highlighted in

the SY2017 annual evaluation, ACC has many strengths that will serve the school well as it continues to address the needed improvements in the area of academic performance, including (1) a renewed board focus on academics; (2) an Executive Director with strong personal responsibility, high expectations for all students, a turnaround mindset, and vision and clear plans for how to improve student learning; and (3) hard-working, committed teachers and staff.

To assist UST in understanding the school's strategy for improving student academic outcomes, please provide a narrative description, and any useful attachments pertaining to:

- The school's plan for improving student academic outcomes in the areas of reading and mathematics including:
 - Key interventions/supports/practices/etc. that will be put in place for students;
 - Key resources/practices/development opportunities/etc. that will be put in place to support teachers;
 - How plans for improvement encompass the implementation of a dual-language model;
 - How ACC intends to engage families in supporting their children's learning;
 - What steps ACC has taken to effectively implement its 7-8th grade program; and
 - Any additional information germane to ACC's academic improvement efforts.

We ask that you keep the narrative to 5 pages or less, there is no page limit for attachments. **Please submit a final copy of the narrative and attachments to UST electronically no later than October 15, 2017.**

Do not hesitate to contact us with questions or requests for clarification at dana.peterson@stthomas.edu or (651) 962-4415. UST continues to believe in the great potential of ACC. We wish you much success in your educational mission.

Sincerely,



Dana Peterson
Assistant Director of Charter School Authorizing
University of St. Thomas

Cc: Molly McGraw Healy, Director of Charter School Authorizing

NOTICE OF PROBATIONARY STATUS

(Intervention Level 3)

December 2, 2019

Board of Directors

Academia Cesar Chavez

1800 Ames Avenue

St. Paul, MN 5511

Dear Board of Directors,

In June of 2015, University of St. Thomas (St. Thomas) issued a Notice of Concern (Level 1 Intervention) to Academic Cesar Chavez (ACC). The letter cited serious concerns regarding weakening student academic outcomes. St. Thomas reaffirmed its concerns in SY2017 following a sharp decrease in academic performance. ACC's renewal notice, dated April 5, 2018 stated:

[St. Thomas] wants to be clear that should ACC's SY2018 academic performance not show marked improvement and continue on an upward trajectory in subsequent years, the school will be placed on an increased level of intervention and will be at risk of losing its charter. Failure to move decisively toward stable levels of performance in line with contract requirements could also place the school at risk of losing its charter prior to the end of the contract term.

Although the school realized slight gains in math during SY2019, the school experienced a 4.7 percentage point decrease in its reading proficiency. Further analysis of results show that the school has performed below its resident district as well as demographically comparable schools in the area of math for the last 3 years. Moreover, in the area of reading proficiency the school has performed lower than the resident district the last three years and lower than comparable schools in SY2019. A breakdown of growth data shows additional concerns, with the levels of math low growth increasing from 28.1% in SY2018 to 40.5% in SY2019. A similar trend is also seen in the low growth percentage for reading with 20.6% of students making low growth in SY2018 and 37.9% of students making low growth in SY2019. The percentage of students making high growth decreased during this time period as well.

Math Proficiency

	SY2011	SY2012	SY2013	SY2014	SY2015	SY2016	SY2017	SY2018	SY2019
ACC	36.8%	47.0%	31.6%	24.0%	20.0%	23.3%	9.4%	17.2%	19.1%
Comparison Schools	23.4%	32.9%	34.2%	36.4%	31.5%	20.7%	14.1%	23.57%	29.8%
St. Paul Public Schools	44.8%	46.0%	46.6%	43.9%	41.3%	39.2%	36.8%	33.2%	32.7%

Reading Proficiency

	SY2011	SY2012	SY2013	SY2014	SY2015	SY2016	SY2017	SY2018	SY2019
ACC	53.4%	54%	34.2%	32.00%	28.3%	29.2%	25.5%	29.0%	25.2%
Comparison Schools	36.5%	38.6%	21.4%	24.1%	24.5%	16.9%	14.9%	22.6%	29.9%
St. Paul Public Schools	59.7%	59.9%	39.4%	40.0%	39.9%	39.2%	38.4%	38.32%	38.6%

Math Growth

	SY2015	SY2016	SY2017	SY2018	SY2019
Low Growth	41.3%	33.8%	63.8%	28.1%	40.5%
High Growth	18.3%	16.6%	3.9%	29.6%	16.3%

Reading Growth

	SY2015	SY2016	SY2017	SY2018	SY2019
Low Growth	25.8%	35.1%	49.0%	20.6%	37.9%
High Growth	36.3%	26.1%	13.1%	26.6%	21.6%

Additionally, students at ACC performed lower than Latinx students in the same grade bands on average statewide, with the state average for math being 32.8% (vs. 19.1% for ACC) and the state average for reading being 38.1% (vs. 25.2% for ACC).

After reviewing SY2019 student achievement data against contract goals it was determined that despite its commitment to improving student academic outcomes, the school has not demonstrated its ability to achieve academic performance levels in line with contract requirements and in some cases has lost ground, as shown in the tables above.

Given the length of time these concerns have persisted, their critical nature, and the limited amount of time available for their mitigation, St. Thomas is concerned that the school is in danger of losing its charter and thus is raising the school to Intervention Level Three: Notice of Probationary Status.

Level 3 Intervention means that St. Thomas will continue to actively monitor ACC's progress toward improvement through site visits, board meeting observations, and other authorizer activities. In addition, to ensure a clear understanding of ACC's strategy for improving academic outcomes, St. Thomas is requiring the school to put its plans into writing. This measure will enable us to better understand and assess the work being done to move students forward, and to follow key benchmark data as they become available.

Our intent is not for the school to invest significant time in developing a 'special plan' for the authorizer, but rather, to closely communicate the work that is occurring and provide an opportunity for the ACC staff and leadership team to put plans into a written format that may generate further discussion, clarity, and reflection.

While our concerns about student outcomes are urgent and serious, it is important to note that St. Thomas does not question the positive intentions of ACC's Board and leadership, nor fail to recognize the efforts that have been put forth to date. We also recognize that many assets are present at ACC—the school provides a safe, caring, and culturally affirming environment for its students. It is clear from conversations with students and families that the school is a welcoming place where families feel respected and students feel seen as individuals. These accomplishments are not insignificant, and they form a firm foundation for future success.

However, because St. Thomas shares the Board and school leaders' vision of a school that, "combines academic excellence and a holistic approach to family well-being," and honors the primary purpose of charters schools as articulated by state statute, "to improve all pupil learning and all student achievement," we must continue to hold the school accountable for meeting the agreed-upon academic, financial, and organizational indicators included in the performance framework.

While it is not the role of the authorizer to dictate how a school achieves its academic results, one recommendation we would provide is to carefully examine the number and breadth of initiatives being undertaken to ensure that improvement efforts: 1) fit together as part of a cohesive strategy, 2) are adequately resourced (time, materials, training) to generate full implementation, 3) are clearly communicated to all relevant parties, 4) include high quality, substantive training for all staff members that are expected to implement the initiative, 5) include follow up monitoring/coaching to ensure implementation is complete and effective.

As an example of the need for fully backing selected initiatives, during a recent site visit we heard from both school leadership and teachers that not everyone has received professional development related to co-teaching, however there is still an expectation that co-teaching is implemented in classrooms. Co-teaching is certainly a promising practice, but it requires significant training and investment to implement with fidelity. In our experience, interventions implemented with high fidelity as a part of a clear and cohesive strategy tend to be more effective than those ‘added on’ to other ongoing initiatives without investments in training, coaching, and implementation monitoring.

Follow-up Requirements

We hope the guiding questions below provide an opportunity to consider current plans and ensure that they are aligned, cohesive, and likely to improve student learning. We request that the information below be provided in the order listed and begin with an overall narrative description of the efforts being/to be undertaken, how they form a cohesive strategy, and why the administrative team believes the selected efforts are the right ‘levers’ for improving student outcomes.

Information on the following strands should also be included and attachments may be provided as you see fit:

- Communication
 - How will (or has) the cohesive strategy for improving student outcomes been communicated to all teachers and staff?
 - What are the key pieces of the strategy all staff should be able to articulate?
- Curriculum
 - Are any changes planned to the curriculum currently in use?
 - Based on the school’s annual report, it appears that a number of different curricula are in use. Are these curricula aligned across grade levels? If not aligned, what is the rationale behind using different curricula throughout the school and how are teachers identifying and bridging any ‘gaps’ that may occur?
 - What is the leadership team’s assessment of curriculum resources?
 - To what degree are curricula aligned with MN State Standards?
- Professional Development Opportunities for Teachers
 - What (if any) specific training is taking place on *teaching* mathematics and language arts this year? Next year?
 - What (if any) specific training is taking place on mathematics or language arts *curriculum* this year? Next year?
 - What (if any) specific training is taking place on supporting bilingual learners and bilingual education this year? Next year?
 - Please provide the full professional development calendar for the year. For all professional development please include:
 - Purpose
 - Date of training
 - Duration of training (number of sessions, hours per session)

- Which staff will be required to attend (which departments, all licensed teachers, all staff including paraprofessionals, etc.)?
 - How will the school ensure that all required staff (see previous bullet) will undergo the required training?
 - Who will lead each training?
 - Who will ensure concepts trained on are implemented with fidelity?
 - How does the training fits into the overall strategy for improvement?
- Assessment
 - How will you track progress (tools, information gathered, etc.)?
 - Who will be in charge of gathering, analyzing, and acting on the information?
 - What benchmarks will you look for to ensure strategy is working? On what timeline?
 - Will the information gathered from the assessments be communicated with/to stakeholders (teachers, staff, administrative team)? How/when?
- Follow-up timelines
 - How frequently will the overall plan for improving student outcomes be revisited to determine whether appropriate progress is being made?
- Scheduling support for plan
 - How will the schedules of individual teachers/administrators allow for the strategy to be implemented?

Additionally, because we want the school to be focusing its attention to improving outcomes for students, St. Thomas would like to meet with school leadership by December 18th, 2019, to develop goals and benchmarks that can be reported on during the course this school year up until reauthorization.

Please submit a final copy of the requested plan for improving student outcomes to St. Thomas no later than December 23, 2019.

Conclusion

Our hope is that this feedback will assist the Board and school leadership in improving the school and providing every ACC student with an excellent education in addition to the positive environment, individual and cultural affirmation that is already present. As always, we seek to keep the lines of communication open and encourage the school to contact us with questions at mmcgraw@stthomas.edu or (651) 962-4372.

Sincerely,




Molly McGraw Healy

Director of Charter School Authorizing

University of St. Thomas

Aaliyah Hodge

Program Coordinator

University of St. Thomas

Cc: Dr. Kathlene Holmes Campbell, Dean of the School of Education, University of St. Thomas

APPENDIX FOUR

Teacher Evaluation Practices Required by Statute:

Q Comp plans must meet the following requirements:

- Q Comp plans are designed to develop, improve, and support qualified teachers and effective teaching practices and improve student learning and success.
- The Q Comp evaluation program and activities are the same as the teacher development and evaluation practices and measures.
 - There should be one instructional framework or rubric for the district/charter. It is allowable for that framework or rubric to be differentiated for specific licensed, non-instructional positions (e.g., school psychologist, guidance counselor, nurse) and for other licensed positions that are not classroom based (e.g., media specialist, some special education positions, teachers on special assignment).
 - Rubrics must align to the teaching standards in rule (MN Rule 8710.2000). [Note: Well researched and published rubrics—such as but not limited to Danielson, Marzano, Marshall— meet this requirement]
 - The rubric is also used to clearly articulate a standard of performance.
 - For TDE, the distinction between “meeting” and “not meeting” professional teaching standards is particularly important, as those teachers not meeting standards must receive support to improve through a teacher improvement process.
 - For Q Comp, participating programs must establish a standard of performance that must be met to receive performance pay. This Q Comp performance pay standard must be an equal standard or higher standard that is used to identify teachers for an improvement process for TDE.
 - the method for measuring student growth and literacy for performance pay in Q Comp should be the same method used to determine at least 35% of a teacher’s summative evaluation for TDE. For more on performance pay, see next core component.
 - Summative evaluators are qualified and trained to perform summative evaluations. • Summative evaluations occur at least every three years.
- Peer review occurs in years without summative evaluation by trained peers (exception: cities of the first class).
- An individual growth and development plan is included in the evaluation process that focuses on teacher growth.