

IQS Annual Review FY'25

School Name: Minnesota New Country School

Report Date: July 21, 2025

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The contract between Innovative Quality Schools (IQS) and the school outlines the criteria for the annual school review. In part, it states that IQS will evaluate whether the:

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

Members of the IQS Cadre conducted numerous site visits and several virtual reviews of school records. IQS also provided support by sponsoring three school conferences and two board training workshops.

Cumulative Scorecard

This review provides a summary of findings in each of the above-noted performance areas based upon observations and direct interactions with the school. Additional information can be found in the [school's Cumulative Scorecard](#), which documents performance on every contracted measure on an annual basis. Please note that this document has one tab for each of the five performance areas outlined above as well as tabs for data and graphs.

Continuous Improvement Expectations

The charter contract requires that all schools engage in continuous improvement efforts by developing an annual improvement plan, referred to as the School Continuous Improvement Plan. These plans must include action steps for *each measure* for which the school is *not yet meeting the target benchmark* (e.g. scoring below a 3.0).

Summary of Performance

Category 1: Mission/Program Model

Rating: 3.6

Observed Areas of Positive Performance

- **STATUTORY PURPOSE OF CHARTERS: Increases learning opportunities for all:** The school's PBL program is flexible and creates unique learning opportunities for students.
Encourage use of innovative teaching methods: If a student has a special interest, the

school's leaders look for contacts and connections that may be new for the school so that the student's needs may be met. **Measure learning outcomes and create different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes:** Students' projects are carefully monitored, and teachers work with students to suggest activities that meet the Minnesota standards. **Create new professional opportunities for teachers:** Increasing use of technology and AI, as well as software that the school contracts for, all require a learning curve, and staff are up for the challenge.

- CURRICULUM: The school has a variety of curriculum options available for students to meet the Minnesota standards. They have a greenhouse and fish tank, a new kitchen, a ceramics and pottery area, a welding center, and a recording studio for both video and vocals. Students can use these tools to reach their curriculum goals and also feel a strong sense of accomplishment when projects are completed. Opportunities for Improvement
- Surveys measuring student and parent satisfaction levels are incredibly high.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Teacher Satisfaction rates have dropped this year, specifically in the area of professional development. Consider addressing these concerns and finding ways to support the Teacher Powered model.

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| Scorecard Measures Not Meeting the Target Benchmark: |
| ➤ 1i: Teacher Satisfaction |

Category 2: Governance

Rating: 3.7

Observed Areas of Positive Performance

- The process of replacing a Board member has been executed twice this year. A new member was approved at the May 19th meeting, but he was not seated as he had not completed all the trainings. These are scheduled for June. There was an election at the end of the year, and balloting occurred between May 27 and May 29, with new members completing required board training on June 13, 2025.
- The Board received an updated list of Board bylaws at the May 19 meeting. These included a highlighted form that showed recently approved changes that were approved both by the Board and by IQS leadership. These had previously been sent to the Board members for review. MNCS complies with IQS guidelines and MN statutes for charter school board bylaws.
- There was an extensive review of the school's finances at several board meetings, including robust questions and discussion. The school's budgeted student number (ADM) and the actual number of students are within one student, in favor of the school's finances.

Opportunities for Improvement

- IQS commends the school for successfully meeting the target benchmark across all measures in this category. To explore potential opportunities for further improvement, please refer to the cumulative scorecard.

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| Scorecard Measures Not Meeting the Target Benchmark: |
| ➤ No scorecard measures below 3.0 |

Category 3: Student Performance

Rating: 2.8

Observed Areas of Positive Performance

- 14/14 elementary students met their IEP academic goals, and 15/17 high school students met their IEP academic goals, totaling 94% overall.
- 100 % of 9th graders demonstrated grade-level competency for college and career readiness on their career inventories as measured by the Future Planning Rubric. All 9th graders utilized multiple career inventory exploration tools to identify career clusters, to then research three potential future career opportunities. All 9th graders attended two career exploration opportunities. The first being the 9th-grade career exploration retreat. The second was a career exploration experience in an area of interest where they then provided a written reflection. Future plans are to continue to provide 10-15 career and college exploration experiences in all career clusters per year for incoming 9th graders through their senior year. This provides several years of college and career exploration before graduation.
- ADA is 90.7% (196.53 ADA/216.74 ADM per JMC Attendance Report). MNCS assessment team noted that nine students had serious medical and mental health issues. Faculty are aware of why students are gone, and even when they are unable to come to school, staff meet with students virtually so students can stay engaged in their education. Further, attendance data is reviewed at the board level.

Opportunities for Improvement

- MNCS MCA district reading proficiency from 2024 assessments: 27%. This is a decline from 2023, when the number was 32%. The written goal is for the percentage of DNM in reading to decrease from year to year. For 2023, the percentage of DNM was 50.7%. For 2024, the percentage of DNM was 68.4%.
- MNCA MCA math testing from 2024: Math proficiency was 12%. This is a decline from 2023 when the number was 15%. The written goal is to decrease the percentage of students who do not meet in math from year to year. In 2023, testing the % of DNM was 70%. For 2024, the % of DNM is 74%.
- 66% of students K-3 (including students with IEPs) demonstrated grade-level proficiency with high-frequency word recognition by the end of the year. K - 3/8, 1st - 9/13, 2nd - 7/10, 3rd - 7/10. This is less than the 70% benchmark goal.
- MNCS needs a clearer way to identify who is included in the projected graduation class by October 1st of the previous year. This can be challenging in a project-based school as faculty must take into account credits and completion of state standards. In December, 26 students were included and reported in this list, either being in their 4th year of high school with MNCS or having the credits to complete a senior year. From the discussion, three withdrew (it is unclear if they enrolled somewhere else), one elected to drop out to work towards GED, one completed all requirements but will do a transition program next year (should be included), and one has not yet finished and unclear if they will graduate by the beginning of next school year. Depending on who they officially count

as part of their senior class should be clear to both the authorizer and the school. IQS reports 21/26 (81%).

- At the end of the year, 67 out of 130 (51.5%) students scored "consistently" on each of the two self-advocacy skills measured via the rubric in the MEIRS data collection. MNCS did a better job of collecting this data and may consider collaborating throughout the year on how advisors are finding success in supporting students in developing these skills. MNCS should aim for at least 60% meeting this benchmark.
- 63.8% of students in grades 9 through 12 earned 3.0 in the 24-25 school year. The assessment team voiced concerns about their project-based learning data. Experience with projects often varies by maturity and understanding of the MNCS program. How can advisors assist younger students to engage earlier in student-led projects? This is easy for a 12th grader to earn, as they have a 3-credit capstone standing in the way of their graduation. It is harder for a 9th and 10th grader who may have yet to be introduced to larger project work.

Scorecard Measures Not Meeting the Target Benchmark:

- 3C MCA Reading Proficiency (Grades 3 through 8)
- 3D MCA Math Proficiency (Grades 3 through 8)
- 3F Read Act
- 3H Graduation Rate
- 3K Social Emotional Learning (Grades 7-12)
- 3L Project-Based Learning

Category 4: Finance

Rating: 3.6

Observed Areas of Positive Performance

- Budget reviewed and approved at the June Board meeting. Reviewed throughout the year in board meetings and updated based on strong ADM. MNCS has sound financial practices.
- The Finance Team, along with an independent contractor Designs for Learning, manages and reviews all revenues and expenditures before the board meetings. This includes multiple check signers who review all bills/invoices before signing checks for payment/bills. Each month, all of the monthly checks/expenses are signed manually by two designated check signers. Thus, they are gone over in detail by two people, and then all expenses are also reviewed by the school board each month.
- The MNCS finance team prepares the budget with input from the staff and the Site Based Management (operations and management teams) and Professional Development (curriculum and school culture-focused teams). The Site Based Management/Professional Development teams have annual goals that are aligned to the mission and vision. Funding requests are based on team goals as well as the general day-to-day operational needs of the school.

Opportunities for Improvement

- IQS commends the school for successfully meeting the target benchmark across all measures in this category. To explore potential opportunities for further improvement, please refer to the cumulative scorecard.

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| Scorecard Measures Not Meeting the Target Benchmark: |
| ➤ No scorecard measures below 3.0 |

Category 5: School Operations

Rating: 3.6

Observed Areas of Positive Performance

- The school conducts background checks for volunteers, independent contractors, and employees, based on state and federal requirements.
- The complaint and resolution procedures are established and on the website, including several policies such as Title IV policy and the bullying policy.
- The school has insurance in place that aligns with MN statute. The certificate of liability is available.
- The immunization policy is included in the enrollment process. The school has a full-time nurse who is taking care of the immunization records, contacting parents as needed, and keeping all health records in accordance with HIPAA.

Opportunities for Improvement

- The Lease Aid application was not submitted by Oct. 1st. IQS leadership team recommended submitting the lease aid application as early as July 1.

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| Scorecard Measures Not Meeting the Target Benchmark: |
| ➤ 5n Lease Provisions and Lease Aid Application |

Overall Performance Summary

Minnesota New Country School continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to its mission and innovative educational model, particularly through its flexible, student-centered project-based learning (PBL) approach, diverse curriculum resources, and emphasis on college and career readiness. The school's governance and financial practices remain solid, with board oversight and financial management practices exceeding expectations. Operational systems are largely compliant with state and federal requirements, contributing to a well-organized school environment.

While there are clear strengths, opportunities for growth remain—particularly in student academic performance, where recent declines in MCA reading and math scores, as well as challenges with graduation rate tracking and early project engagement among younger students, signal areas for targeted intervention. Additionally, a drop in teacher satisfaction related to professional development suggests a need for more robust support systems within the Teacher Powered model. Timely submission of administrative requirements, such as the lease aid application, is another area for process improvement.

Despite these challenges, the school is well-positioned to make meaningful progress through its continuous improvement planning. With a strong foundation in governance, finance, and innovative learning, MNCS is poised to enhance student outcomes and teacher support while continuing to provide an engaging and unique educational experience.