

Executive Director Self Evaluation

December 30, 2024

A. Governance and Board Relations

Code	Criteria	Rating and descriptor	Artifacts
A1	Policy Involvement	Rate = 4 Description: Is proactive in the determination of district needs and policy priorities; has a system in place to ensure timely administration of legislative policies.	1. HGA stays up to date with current legislative policies to ensure compliance and to support best practices in education. We have established a regular monthly meeting schedule for the policy committee to review existing policies and/or recommend new ones. Click on the links below for sample legislative policies: Artifacts Student Journalist Policy Equal Educational Access Policy 2. We have a monthly scheduled policy committee meeting. 3. Between FY24 and FY25 alone, we have reviewed existing policies and approved or implemented at least 10 new policies. 4. I have developed procedures for implementing board approved policies. Here is an example. Artifact Procedure for Parent Engagement

A2	Goal Development	Rate = 4 Description: Has a system in place for establishing, reporting on and monitoring goals. Budget practices help to ensure alignment of resources to goals.	1. We have established contractual academic and EE goals. The director is required to report about progress towards those goals at least four times each school year. This happened during each of the first four years of the current contract. Here are some artifacts. Artifacts Executive Director's Report - May 2024 Board minutes from April 2022 2. Budget alignment of resources to goals is a collaborative effort between Dustin and me. We discuss this frequently to ensure alignment and effectiveness.
A3	Information	Rate = 3 Description: Keeps all board members informed with appropriate information as needed so it may perform its responsibilities.	1. With the exception of one instance when some board members did not receive the board packet on time, we have consistently ensured that it is delivered on or before the Friday of the week preceding the board meeting. Artifacts: FY25 board observation feedback
A4	Material & Background	Rate = 2 Description: Meeting materials are incomplete, and don't include adequate background information or historical perspective.	1. The materials are complete. However, background information or historical perspectives are not included.
A5	Board Questions	Rate = 4 Description: Has a system in place for receiving and responding to board member questions in a timely and thorough manner.	1. The primary method of communication between the Executive Director and the Board members has been email. Artifacts: Artifact 1 Artifact 2 Artifact 3
A6	Board Development	Rate = 4 Description: Actively encourages board development by seeking and communicating opportunities. Ensures	1. During the current contract cycle, I arranged several board training opportunities to enhance the knowledge and skills of our board members. Some of those are: A. Special Education Finance with Brenda Kes;

		funding is aligned to the board development plan.	B. Data Privacy with Brenda Kes; C. Human Resources Management with Eugene Picolo; D. Open Meeting Law with Eugene Picolo; E. Understanding Charter School and Authorizer Relationship with Eugene Picolo; F. Home Run Leadership with Dr. Dave Web; and G. Others 2. Additionally, I shared with board members links to board training webinars provided by the authorizer, ensuring they had access to a broader range of educational resources. The following are examples of links provided to you: Open meeting law What boards need to know about charter school contract 3. I have scheduled a training for January 21, 2025.

B. Community and Parent Relations

Category	Criteria	Rating and descriptor	Artifact
B1	Enrollment	Rate – 4 Description: Makes enrollment a high priority. Has been successful in increasing enrollment numbers consistently, or maintaining maximum enrollment.	1. At a time when many schools and districts are grappling with enrollment declines, HGA continues to meet and exceed its enrollment targets. This success is attributed to the establishment of a dedicated marketing department that actively engages with diverse communities across the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metro area. Artifacts: FY25 Enrollment # - actual Vs target

			FY24 Enrollment - Actual vs target
B2	Parent Feedback	Rate – 4 Description: Actively seeks parental input, creates methods for parents to be actively involved in decision-making as well as setting and supporting school charter goals.	1. I actively seek input from parents through surveys to ensure their voices are heard and to strengthen our partnership in supporting student success. Artifacts. Sample parent survey 2. I collaborated with the policy committee to develop and secure approval for a parent involvement policy. Artifact Parent engagement policy 3. I hold district-wide parent meetings at least twice a year. In addition, I meet annually with special interest parent groups, such as those of students in the Title I program and the special education program.
B3	Communication with community	Rate – 3 Description: Actively seeks two-way communication with the community.	1. I initiated <i>HGA Update</i>, the school newsletter designed to share the story of Higher Ground Academy and provide the community with updates on relevant matters. Published quarterly, <i>HGA Update</i> features my perspectives while also serving as a platform for other members of the community to express their opinions on issues of shared concern. This inclusive approach fosters open dialogue and strengthens our sense of connection and shared purpose. Please click on the link below to view the most current edition of our newsletter. Artifact HGA Update 2. Parent meetings have proven to be an effective way of engaging with our families. I regularly meet with parents, either schoolwide or in smaller groups tailored to the needs of specific student populations. These meetings

			provide valuable opportunities to share information, address concerns, and strengthen the partnership between families and the school. 3. I maintain a strong relationship with our neighbors on Marshall Avenue and am actively working to build a similar rapport with the management of the rental property adjacent to our building on Brewster Street. The management has raised concerns about the behavior of some of our students in the neighborhood. I have been addressing these concerns and striving to improve our relationship with them. While progress has been made, I recognize that this is still a work in progress and have deducted a point in my assessment as a result.
B4	Approachability	Rate – 4 Description: Is consistently visible at a variety of events and has developed methods of being approachable to members of the community and parents.	1. With regards to parents, I make it a point to be in the hallways every morning, greeting students as they arrive. This practice has allowed me to connect with many parents who personally transport their children to school. Additionally, I am highly visible during our "Open House" events and parent-teacher conference days, further strengthening my engagement with families. 2. I maintain an open-door policy, allowing parents and staff to meet with me without a pre-arranged appointment, provided I am not engaged in another meeting.
B5	Legal	Rate - 3 Description: Handles difficult situations. Makes appropriate decisions. Communicates adequately and has knowledge of the law. Keeps the Board informed.	1. Employees - During my tenure as Director of HGA i.e. the last 7 years, two allegations of wrongful dismissal were brought against the school. Both cases were resolved and dismissed before reaching the courts. (See artifact below for details.) Artifact Dismissal of Emilia's claim Dismissal of Over's case

			2. Parents - There was one lawsuit filed against the school regarding a school bus incident, which was dismissed. (See attached letter for details.) Artifact Rameden V HGA There were no other lawsuits. In fact, yearly parent surveys consistently show a strong level of satisfaction with the school. Artifact (See the section about “Parent Survey in this report) Executive Director's Report 3. Larger community - There have been no lawsuits brought against the school by individuals outside the school, including third-party service providers and vendors, during the past six and a half school years.
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C. Community and Parent Relations

Category	Criteria	Rating and descriptor	Artifact
C1	Staff feedback	Rate – 4 Description: Actively seeks staff input and creates methods for staff to be actively involved in decision-making as well as developing and supporting school-wide goals.	1. Staff feedback is regularly solicited via confidential surveys. See artifacts below. Artifact. Staff survey in this report
C2	Personnel affairs	Rate – 4 Description: A system is in place for handling personnel matters that is proactive, consistent, fair, discrete, and impartial.	1. Yes, process and procedures are in place. See attached artifact below. Artifact Employee handbook

C3	Delegation of duties	Rate – 4 Description: Delegates responsibility to staff that will foster professional growth, leadership and decision-making skills.	1. This has been completed. Please refer to HGA's organizational structure on page 15 of the FY24 Annual Report using the link below. Artifact Organizational structure
C4	Visibility at schools	Rate – 4 Description: Conducts regular and purposeful visits to buildings and classrooms. Consistently attends special events and activities.	1. My time is divided between the two buildings, where I visit classrooms, attend staff meetings, inspect buildings, oversee functions, services, and programs, and engage with staff. (See a sample weekly calendar for a week in November below.) Artifact Samuel's calendar

D. Community and Parent Relations

Category	Criteria	Rating and descriptor	Artifact
D1	Budget development and management	Rate = 4 Description: Budget actions are proactive and consider both current and long-range information and data. A balance is sought to meet the current and future needs of students and remain fiscally responsible to the schools. Relationship with the Business Administrator and communications are excellent.	1. I work very closely with Dustin and Brenda Kes, our account manager before Dustin, to monitor our financial activities. My relationship with both has been positive. 2. We have consistently maintained a positive fund balance every school year since I assumed the role of Executive Director. 3. During my tenure as Executive Director, our fund balance has doubled, and staff salaries have increased by an average of over 3% annually. Additionally, we have consistently ensured that our students have access to all necessary learning resources and that our teachers have the tools they need for effective instruction.

D2	Budget reports	Rate = 3 Description: Is fully aware of all budget and financial status on a regular basis and meets with the Finance Committee and with the Business Manager on a regular basis. Is able to answer all financial questions in the absence of a Business Manager to ensure accountability.	1. I maintain frequent communication with Dustin to stay fully informed about our budget situation. I attend all finance committee meetings and am prepared to answer any financial questions.. 2. I deducted a point from myself regarding the lack of a system for monitoring and reporting all budgetary and financial information to the board. However, since this responsibility is already managed by Dustin, I am uncertain if it is necessary for me to duplicate his work.
D3	Financial Controls	Rate = 4 Description: No audit findings. Is proactive with internal controls. Fully compliant with state and federal accounting procedures.	See exhibit below FY24 Audit report
D4	Resource allocation	Rate = 4 Description: Resources are distributed consistently based upon school goals/needs and seek to meet both immediate and long-range objectives.	1. In a March 2024 survey, HGA teachers were asked if they felt they had adequate resources to perform their jobs effectively. The results were overwhelmingly positive. Click the link below to view the survey findings. Artifact Survey Item 2. I hired a marketing director with the primary goal of reaching out to diverse communities, particularly new immigrant communities, in response to the demographic changes occurring in Minnesota. The two main objectives were to meet our enrollment targets and strengthen engagement with these communities. Both goals are being successfully achieved. 3. I implemented the following measures to improve teacher retention and increase staff morale:

			A. Salary Increases – When I began my tenure as Executive Director, the starting salary for a newly hired teacher was \$38,000. Today, it is \$45,000. Additionally, teachers and other staff have received an average salary increase of over 3% annually for the past seven years. B. Enhanced Benefits – Short-term and long-term disability benefits have been added to our staff benefits plan. C. Insurance Premium Support – While insurance premiums have risen significantly over the last seven years, the school has absorbed much of the cost to minimize the financial burden on staff. D. Extracurricular Activities – Although our academic program has always been strong, the lack of extracurricular activities was a significant weakness. To address this, I initiated an athletic program
D5	Ethical Behavior	Rate = 4 Description: Practices ethical behavior all of the time and holds staff to high ethical standards. Is transparent with all finances. Trustworthy, makes wise decisions, and actively works to establish best practices.	1. I believe I have carried out my responsibilities faithfully and ethically. I have consistently advised staff to adhere to the rules and policies. Furthermore, I actively seek the board's guidance by involving it in policy development. Ultimately, however, the final judgment on this rests with you, the board members. 2. There have been no findings of wrongdoing by auditors, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Osprey Wilds, or any other oversight bodies.
D6	Legal Practices	Rate = 4 Description: Is well informed of law related to finance and consistently seeks new knowledge. Actively works to establish best practices. Has a collaborative relationship with the	1. I have taken university courses on school finance, the most recent of which was in the summer of 2023. 2. I have participated in finance training provided by Osprey Wilds, with the most recent session held on November 12, 2024.

		Business Administrator for assurances. Proactively identifies ways to protect HGA from legal matters and is constantly working to improve.	3. I have established procedures for purchasing, handling invoices, making bank deposits, and other financial processes in a manner that ensures there is always a system of checks and balances. Please click the link below to view some of these procedures. Artifacts Procedures for Handling Invoices Purchasing Process and Procedures Procurement Form
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E. Instructional Leadership

Category	Criteria	Rating and Descriptor	Explanation and Artifacts
E1	Performance Evaluation system for administration/ staff	Rate:4 Descriptor - Performance evaluation system has been established that is in compliance with state law, provides opportunities for growth to instructional staff, and is applied consistently across the schools with consistent results.	1. HGA uses a system that is compliant with state standards. The instructional staff is evaluated twice a year and given prompt feedback. Artifact Sample teacher observation and feedback

E2	Building-Level Leadership	Rate: 4 Descriptor - Principals are provided defined autonomy consistently with accountability. Clear, non-negotiable goals for learning and instruction have been established that provide school leadership teams with the responsibility and authority for determining how to meet those goals.	1. Autonomy: Principals are granted authority within a clearly defined set of responsibilities. (See the attached Job Description.) Artifact Principal Job Description 2. Accountability: Principals develop yearly SMART Goals in collaboration with the Executive Director. (See the attached sample.) Artifact Elementary Principal's SMART Goals 3. Evaluation: Principals are formally evaluated three times per school year—in the fall, winter, and spring. (See the attached sample end-of-year principal review from FY24. Artifact Principal Evaluation
E3	Staff Development	Rate:3 Descriptor - Staff development programs are offered based upon available opportunities that are targeted toward staff growth and increasing student achievement.	We schedule staff development days in our calendar and plan these opportunities based on the overall needs of our schools. Our staff development initiatives are specifically aligned with our district's goals and are designed to support increased student achievement. However, what is currently missing is a focus on individualized staff development programs tailored to the unique needs of each educator.
E4	Curriculum	Rate: 4	Teachers are provided with the appropriate resources for the

		Descriptor - Curriculum is in place aligned across grade levels and in compliance with state standards	subjects and grade levels they teach. Furthermore, elementary teachers receive guides that align state standards with the relevant content from the school's adopted curriculum. See samples below. Mathematics, alignment of resources with state standards (Sample) Science: alignment of instructional resources with state standards
E5	Instruction	Rate:2 Descriptor - Effort is made to accommodate diverse learning styles, needs and levels of readiness. Some effort is made to incorporate technology into learning.	On this measure, I rate myself as 2. I am confident that we have technology equipment that meets current industry standards. All of our teachers are utilizing technology to enhance their instruction. However, in some cases, they are not fully leveraging all the capabilities of the technology available to them. I believe this can be addressed through targeted staff development. Additionally, I recognize the need for improvement in accommodating diverse learning styles, which I also believe can be resolved through focused staff development initiatives.
E6	Student Enrollment	Rate: 4 Descriptor - Attendance is an area of focus. Individual student attendance problems are addressed early and supports are put into place. Attendance rates are being maintained at a high level.	Overall, our attendance rate is strong when compared to other schools and the state average. Attendance is monitored daily, and when students are absent, their parents receive a same-day call from one of our family liaisons. For repeated absences, follow-up calls are made by one of our social workers. These efforts have allowed us to consistently maintain a solid attendance rate over the years.
E7	Support for students	Rate: 4 Descriptor - Coherent systems of academic and social support are in place to meet the needs of all students. Maintains a safe, caring and healthy learning environment.	1. Academic support: We provide English Language Learner (ELL) and Special Education programs for eligible students. Additionally, we offer Title I services and after-school tutorials for academically struggling students who do not qualify for ELL or Special Education programs. Furthermore, we have a dedicated Reading Specialist who works with elementary students facing significant challenges in reading Artifact A power Point Presentation of Our Reading Intervention Program

			2. Social-Emotional Services: HGA has made significant investments in addressing the social and emotional needs of our students. The school partners with the Dreamline Foundation to recruit trained mentors and coaches (four per building). Additionally, we have four social workers who provide support to students with serious social and emotional needs. For more details on how our social-emotional support program operates, please see the link below.. Artifact Behavior support plan
E8	Academic performance	Rate: 4 Descriptor - The district is on track to meet 75% or more of its contractual academic and Environmental Education goals.	HGA is achieving more than 75% of its contractual academic goals. For detailed information, please refer to pages 20–53 of the FY24 Annual Report. Click on the link below to access the report." Artifact FY24 Annual Report
E9	Professional knowledge	Rate: 4 Descriptor -Demonstrates knowledge with comfort explaining current instructional programs. Participates actively in professional groups and organizations for the benefit of the school and personal, professional growth. Holds and maintains appropriate director/superintendent certification.	I actively keep myself informed about the latest developments in education through the following methods: ● Reading: I regularly read books and articles on various educational topics. ● Professional Memberships: I am a member of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). While I haven't attended their workshops recently, I subscribe to and read their publications. I recognize the need to join additional professional associations in the future. ● University-Level Teaching: I taught at the university level for many years, though I have not done so since becoming the Executive Director. ● Workshops and Professional Development: I participate in

			workshops provided by MDE, Osprey Wilds, and MACS. In the past, I also attended workshops from organizations such as the Advanced Placement Institute, though I have not done so recently. I plan to re-engage with these opportunities moving forward. ● Educational Podcasts and Blogs: I regularly listen to blogs and podcasts from prominent educators. ● Advanced Education: I completed the Minnesota Superintendent Licensure program through the University of Minnesota. Through these efforts, I believe I have developed a strong and comprehensive understanding of the field of education.
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