



Hawthorn Leadership School for Girls SY2021 Sponsor Review Report

To: Hawthorn Leadership School for Girls, Board of Directors
From: Washington University Charter Sponsor Team
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Date: March 28, 2022

Overview

Missouri charter legislation requires sponsors to annually review charter schools' compliance with statutory standards, and biennially review performance, management and operations jointly with school staff and the governing board. Hawthorn Leadership School for Girls had their baseline review by Washington University in SY2016, and this review provides an update of progress for their sixth year of operation in SY2021 (July 2020– June 2021).

SY2021 was exceptional beyond any measure. The global COVID-19 pandemic compelled Hawthorn's school buildings to temporarily close, and most students, families and school staff were challenged to function remotely within a new virtual education format. Hawthorn provided students and staff with essential technical equipment and training to ensure the necessary tools were in place to navigate remote online learning.

Hawthorn opened as an all-girls middle school in Fall 2015 with grades 6 and 7. During this sixth year of operation in SY2021, a total enrollment of 112 students included full grade expansion for middle school grades 6-8, and high school grades 9-12. Hawthorn HS graduated its first senior class in May 2021.

As Hawthorn's sponsor, Washington University is committed to supporting Hawthorn Leadership School for Girls in its efforts to deliver quality education to all students. The University is responsible for ensuring Hawthorn is in compliance with applicable State and Federal laws and regulations, and is meeting the performance benchmarks contained in the Charter Contract, the Performance Framework and the Performance Contract.

The *Charter School Performance Evaluation Program* presented in Appendix I was developed in SY2016 as a sponsor's tool to gather necessary data to provide review guidance with Hawthorn's staff and board. From this comprehensive body of evidence, Washington University annually conducts an ongoing coordinated evaluation of fundamental school performance measures. The supplemental evaluation tool is intended to be used as a resource in conjunction with this report. Data for the program is collected primarily from the following sources:

- ✓ Board Meeting Attendance (all meetings virtual for SY2021)
- ✓ School Site Visits (physical site visits suspended for SY2021, virtual visits only)
- ✓ Financial/Budget Monitoring
- ✓ State/Federal Reporting



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Oversight of Hawthorn includes evaluation of a core framework of expectations that focuses on three key areas:

- 1. Academic Performance**
- 2. Financial Health and Sustainability**
- 3. Organizational Effectiveness**

The pandemic had a profound impact in all areas for SY2021. Statewide performance results were complicated by various modes of instruction, chronic absenteeism, learning disruptions and disparate student engagement. This outcome evidence can be further reviewed in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) web application for the Statewide SY2021 Report Card on Preliminary Performance. This Report Card along with the Missouri Comprehensive Data System (MCDS) offer open public access to school data.

Academic Performance

The sponsor's primary measure of school quality remains academic performance. An amended WU/Hawthorn Performance Contract was approved by the Hawthorn Board in March 2021. As part of the charter renewal package, this document stipulates annual minimum academic achievement targets.

The University had placed Hawthorn on probation in May 2019 for the twenty-four month maximum allowed in response to lower than expected performance. A remedial plan was instituted for first year outcome requirements stating specific mandatory achievement measures. All required targets were met by Hawthorn to allow the University to move forward in recommending renewal of a 5-year charter contract. The State Board of Education approved the renewal in June 2020.

All charter students are required by State law to participate in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Missouri Assessment Program (MAP). For the second year of probation, the University charter team developed additional rigorous benchmarks for the school to attain. These targets included increased performance outcomes with MAP scores.

In response to the emerging pandemic, DESE announced in March 2020 that MAP assessments would not be administered for SY2020. With Hawthorn meeting all other stipulations in the second year remedial plan, the University released Hawthorn from probation in May 2021.

The State MAP assessments were reinstated for SY2021, as DESE concluded implementation in the Spring assessment window would be essential to establish a controlled data set, even though results would not be used for accountability. The University specified in their revised Hawthorn Performance Contract that outcomes in SY2021 would be used for targeted support, diagnostic and research purposes only. The following disaggregated data tables are provided as graphic evidence informing outcomes for further critical analysis. Prior year academic results are not comparable.

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SY2021 Mode of Instruction Performance – Statewide Comparison including Hawthorn

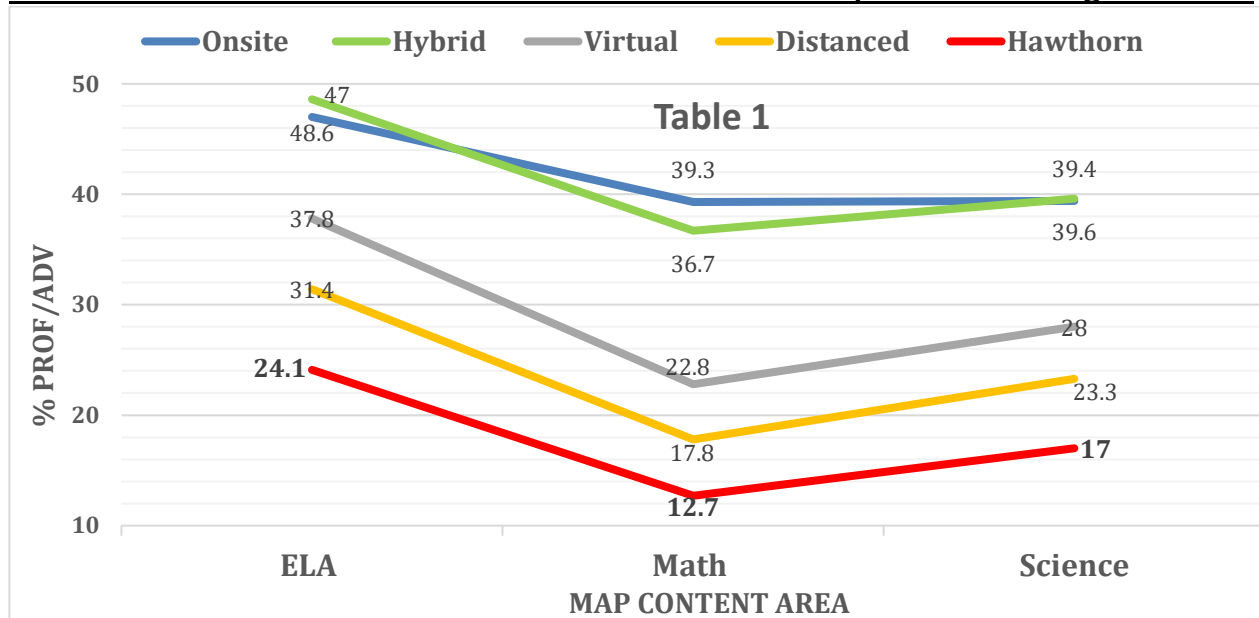


Table 1 indicates statewide MAP performance outcomes by subject within the various modes of learning available to schools in SY2021. For comparison, Hawthorn was engaged predominantly in virtual education for the school year.

SY2021 State MAP Student Group Performance by Content Area

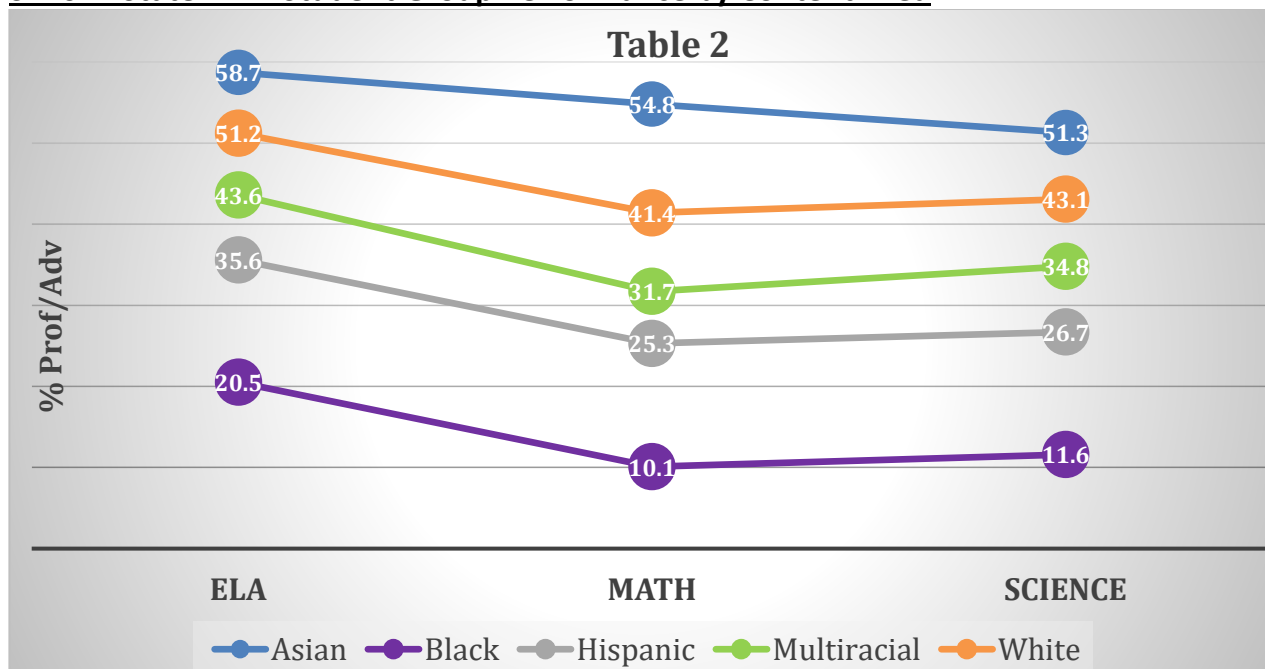


Table 2 exhibits assessed performance outcomes by subject as grouped by the State for similar student demographics. In SY2021, the overall Hawthorn student body identified as 89.3% Black and 5.4% Multiracial.

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SY2021 Hawthorn Missouri MAP Scores - Comparison with State and Local District Performance

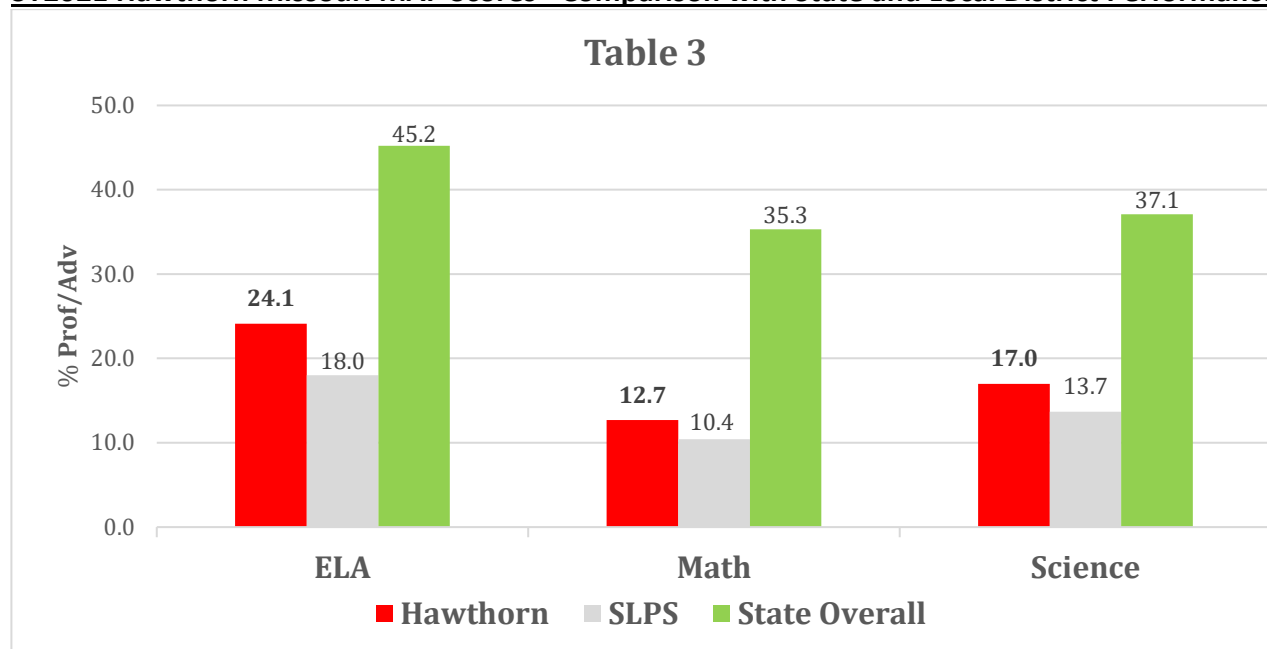


Table 3 displays SY2021 Hawthorn overall LEA State MAP assessment performance outcomes by subject, relative to Saint Louis Public Schools (SLPS) district and the State overall. This chart includes total Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) assessed students within all modes of learning.

SY2021 Hawthorn MAP Proficiency by Achievement Category

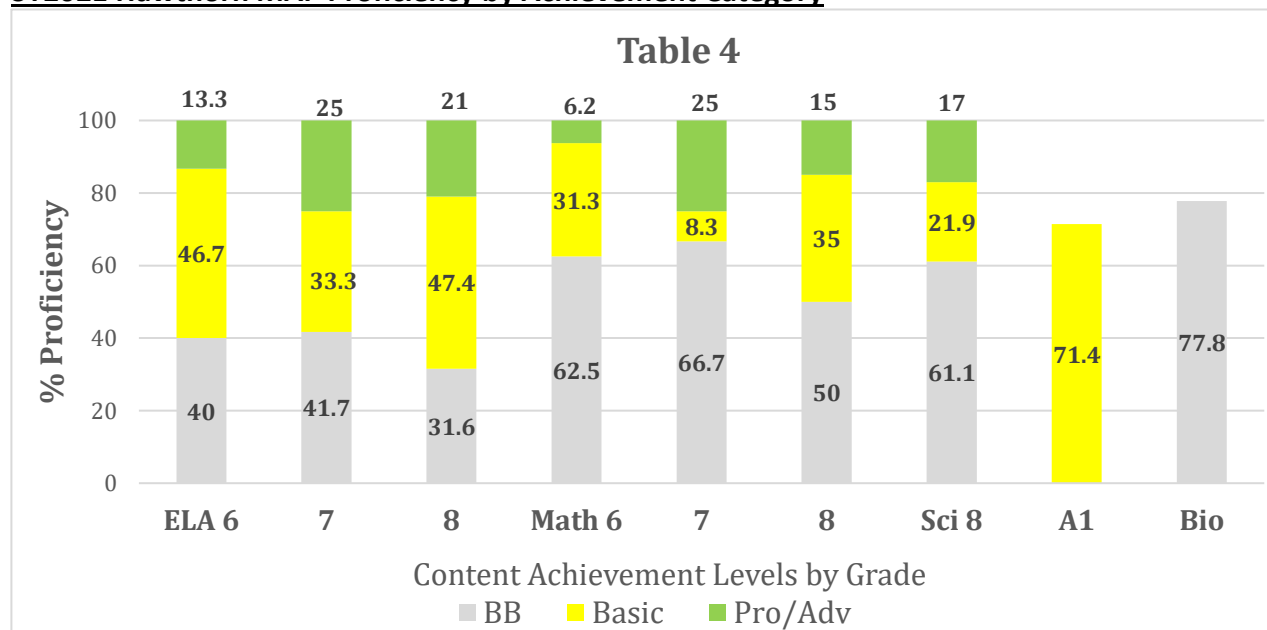


Table 4 designates the LEA's grade level proportional proficiencies by content within MAP's achievement categories. This includes performance with the middle school assessments as well as the high school end-of-course (EOC) exams.

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SY2021 Hawthorn MAP Scores by Grade Level - Comparison to State and Local District

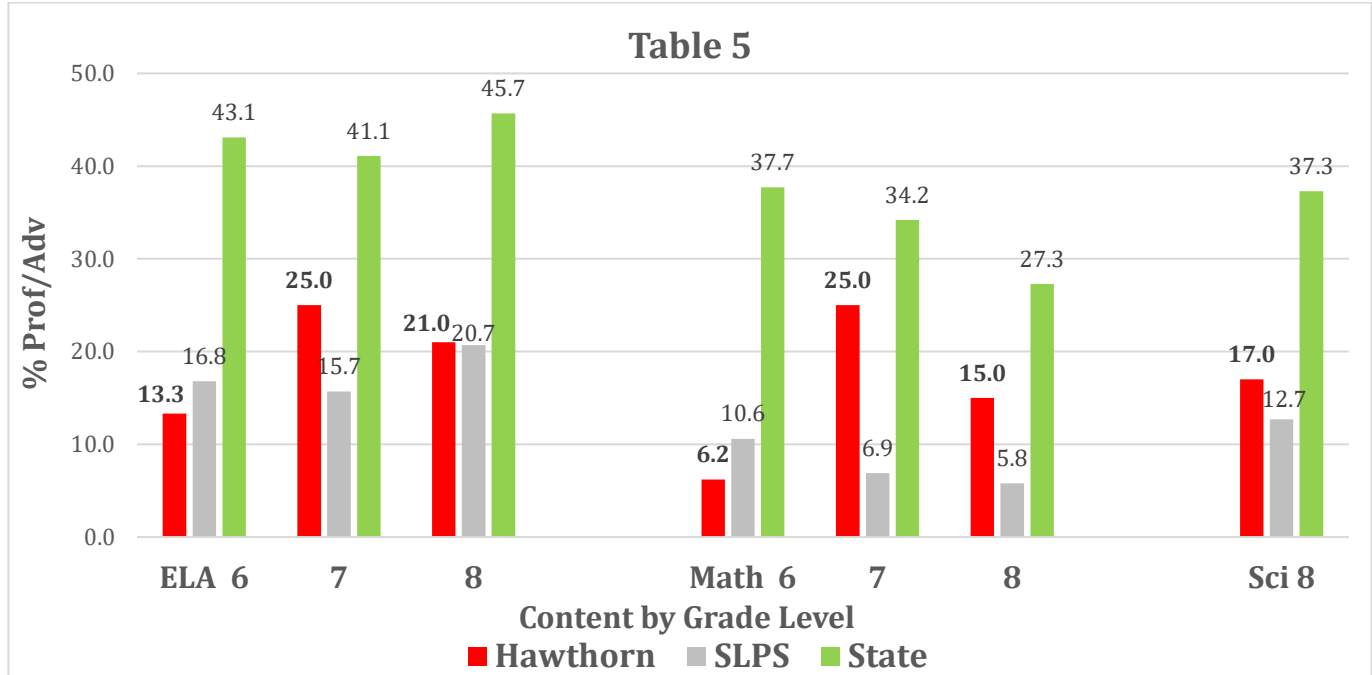


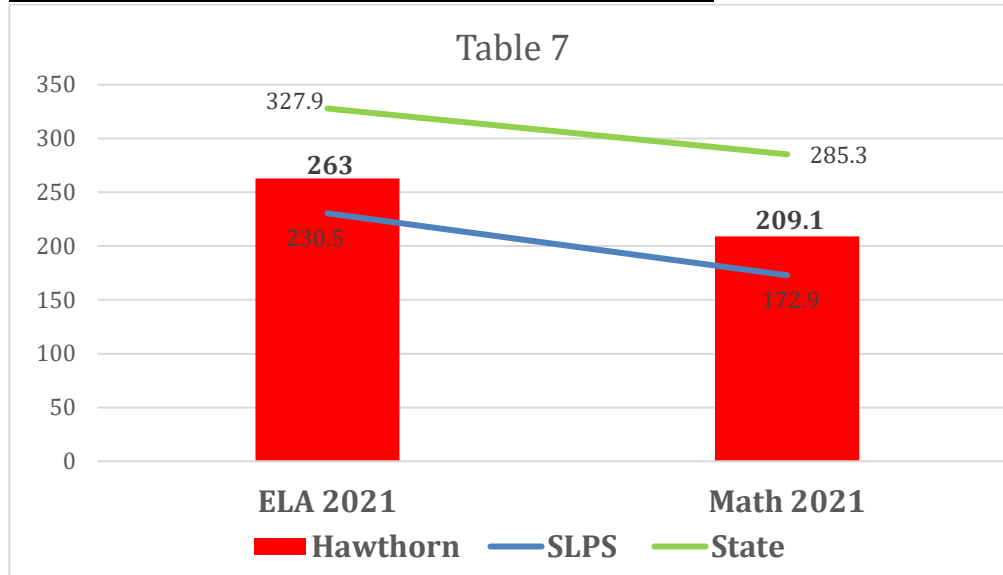
Table 5 displays Hawthorn's SY2021 middle school grade level MAP performance relative to Saint Louis Public Schools (SLPS) and the State overall. Significant variation in grade level performance is noted, while acknowledging students typically enter Hawthorn in Grade 6.

2021 Normed Curve Equivalency (NCE) Growth		
Table 6	ELA	Math
Hawthorn	51.1/S	55.1/S
SLPS	49.8/S	48.9/S
State	50.0/S	50.0/S
Exceeding	On Track	Below

The Missouri Growth Model uses the Normed Curve Equivalency (NCE) scale in **Table 6** to compare an Individual student's score in grades 3-8 to their predicted grade level score for English Language Arts (ELA) and Math. These student-level growth metrics are then averaged for the overall charter (or district) to report school growth measures. This formula sets the State average at 50, indicating an *On Track* predicted score to determine if buildings overall met, exceeded or fell behind in growth with statistical significance.

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SY2021 Hawthorn MAP Performance Index (MPI)



The MAP Performance Index (MPI) displayed in **Table 7** is used by DESE to determine whether Missouri schools are meeting academic achievement targets in ELA, Math and Science with the State assessments by measuring annual progress. This metric holds schools accountable for continuous improvement by quantifying movement of students through all MAP achievement levels.

An inclusive case for schools is presented in that the focus remains on *all* students for the four MAP achievement levels: Below Basic, Basic, Proficient and Advanced, and not just those performing in the top tiers. The MPI is a single composite number represented by totaling the points awarded to each individual student to depict a trend to proficiency.

A benchmark goal for Missouri schools is attainment of an MPI total of 300 points or greater in each subject area. The University will be reviewing progress to attain these targets for ELA, Math and Science in upcoming years.

American College Test (ACT) Comparison

2021 AVERAGE ACT COMPOSITE TABLE 8	
Hawthorn	14.0
SLPS	16.1
State	20.9

The American College Test (ACT) entrance exam is one measure used by colleges and universities to make admissions decisions. Missouri overall average composite scores have trended around 20 for the past several years, which is generally considered to be in the 50th percentile nationwide.

The ACT is typically taken by students in their junior year of high school.

These numbers depict the average scores of graduates who have taken the test.



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Federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Identification

In SY2018, Hawthorn's middle school was placed on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Comprehensive list which identifies the 5% lowest performing schools in the state for ELA and Math per federal ESSA requirement. To exit the list, Hawthorn would be required to demonstrate defined and measurable improvement in these subjects within the next three years.

For SY2019, DESE reported Hawthorn as **Met Improvement** requirements for **Math** with a gain of 20.7 points. Hawthorn **did not meet** the threshold for **ELA**. However, without Spring 2020 MAP assessment data, DESE announced previously identified comprehensive and targeted schools would continue in the second year of identification during the SY2021 school year.

SY2021 Hawthorn NWEA Fall-to-Spring Growth

Hawthorn utilizes the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) nationally normed assessments, measuring academic progress to determine if students are achieving sufficient growth within a reasonable time frame. Administering the interim tests students in grades 6-12 during the Fall and Spring allows comparisons of growth for Reading and Math within the school year. According to requirements of Hawthorn's Performance Contract, a minimum of 50% of total assessed students are expected to meet target/typical growth during this evaluation period. Outcomes for SY2021 NWEA are not accountable.

General results obtained for review with Hawthorn's SY2021 scores for both middle and high school students presented some amount of growth. However, the overall participation rate was not sufficient to determine schoolwide impact.

Academic Summary

Low academic performance results in SY2021 had been anticipated as a consequence of circumstances dictated by the pandemic. The University will be closely monitoring the upcoming school year as Hawthorn students and staff are able to return onsite for learning recovery.



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Financial Health and Sustainability

The financial stability of charter schools is essential, as national statistics indicate over half of charter school closures are the result of poor financial performance. In addition to monitoring for compliance with state and federal law, the sponsor ensures that its schools are currently financially strong and positioned for future fiscal health.

A review of financial records substantiates that Hawthorn financial controls are in place, with additional evidence recorded in the *Charter School Performance Framework*. Submission of mandatory reports to DESE has been timely, including their SY2021 Final Expenditure Report (FER) and Annual Secretary of the Board Report (ASBR). Hawthorn maintained a fund balance of 12.6% for SY2021, above the 3% requirement by State statute.

An independent audit, as required annually, was completed by Kerber, Eck & Braeckel LLP (KEB). The returned audit opinion was free of any significant findings or areas of concern. Following Board approval at the December 2021 meeting, the audit was submitted by the school to DESE to meet the year-end deadline as required by charter law.

The Hawthorn Board meets monthly to review and approve the financial reports and check register. Sound financial practices are in place utilizing policies and procedures from the *Missouri Financial Accounting Manual*. Hawthorn employs EdOps in Kansas City for bookkeeping & accounting services, a group well-versed in charter financials. EdOps works closely with Hawthorn's Finance Committee which includes board members with strong backgrounds in financial management.

An infusion of federal coronavirus awards through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) – Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) has contributed significantly to the financial well-being of schools. Additional ESSER III preliminary allocations will likely begin appropriation in SY2022.

Enrollment Variance

The University charter team routinely reviews interim fiscal reports from the school to confirm trends for financial viability. It has been noted with some concern that SY2021 experienced an enrollment variance of 75%. This percentage designates the ratio of actual annual student enrollment compared to original budgeted projections. A healthy financial forecast is considered to maintain a variance goal exceeding 95%. The University will continue to monitor this measure for sustainability.

Financial Summary

The University finds Hawthorn meets the standards for fiscal health in SY2021.

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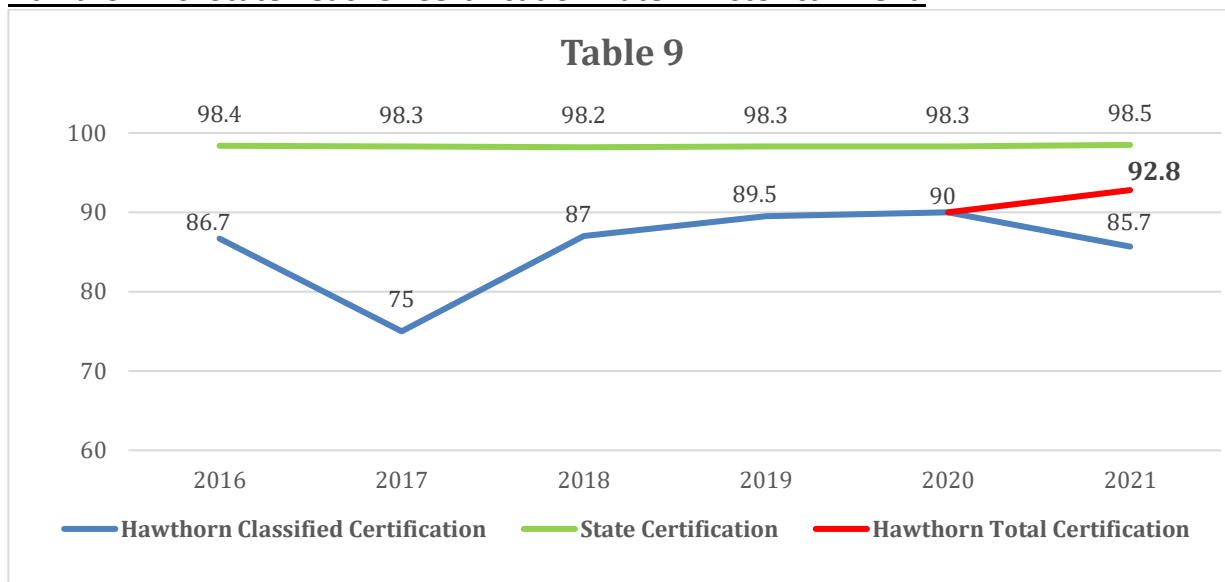
Organizational Effectiveness

Whereas academic and financial frameworks are mandated by outcomes, organizational effectiveness is measured by process, ensuring the rights of students, families, staff and the public. The University holds Hawthorn accountable for *how* it operates within minimum standards of conduct, while the autonomy for process decisions remains the responsibility of Hawthorn’s leadership and their board.

The structure for accountability is outlined in the *Charter School Performance Framework*. These requirements define a multitude of operational indicators for compliance that include:

1. Educational program compliance
2. Financial management
3. Board governance adherence with laws and policy
4. Reporting requirements to responsible entities
5. Student and employee rights and requirements
6. School environment for health, safety and services

Hawthorn vs. State Teacher Certification Rate – Historical Trend



The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) mandates all teachers meet “applicable State certification and licensure requirements”. Provision in MO charter school law requires that no more than twenty percent of instructional staff positions are filled with non-certificated personnel. Per DESE, a substitute certificate meets the requirement of certification when the employee is functioning as a substitute teacher in the absence of the teacher-of-record, or is employed as the teacher-of-record. Including substitute certificates as part of the certification total in **Table 9**, Hawthorn meets this State threshold for SY2021.



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Organizational Summary

The University finds Hawthorn meets the standards for organizational effectiveness in SY2021.

Conclusion

The University concludes Hawthorn Leadership School for Girls is in substantial compliance with legal, statutory, regulatory and contractual charter requirements. Their overall academic, financial and organizational performance for SY2021 meets expectations. Hawthorn remains forthcoming and transparent in providing requested data and information, greatly facilitating the oversight process. Washington University is confident of Hawthorn's sincere commitment to their mission of creating a high performing school for their students. The University remains optimistic that Hawthorn has the capacity to meet the extraordinary challenges ahead, and looks forward to a continued partnership.

Appendix I: Hawthorn 2021 Charter School Performance Framework

Amended Hawthorn Charter Performance Contract SY2021-2025