

**Nerstrand
Elementary School
Independent Charter School District
#4055**



**2007-2008 Annual Report on Curriculum,
Instruction and Student Achievement
October, 2008**

Our Mission

Nerstrand Elementary School will empower students to be self-directed, lifelong learners by providing a nurturing, multiage environment that fosters cooperation and character development.

INTRODUCTION

This annual report is written to document academic and fiscal accountability, to assess the 2007-2008 goals and programs at Nerstrand Elementary School and to give an overview of programming for the 2008-2009 school year.

Nerstrand Elementary School is committed to providing a quality, child-focused educational program for all students. The staff collaboratively works to ensure that students receive a balanced education that includes academic achievement, physical growth, social education and character development.

Progress toward school goals has been measured and documented through formal and informal assessments, forums and surveys. Trends in scores of the Measures of Academic Progress tests and Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments will be summarized along with K-5 assessments used at Nerstrand Elementary School. Pertinent information from Nerstrand parents, students and staff members is also included in this report.

This document has been written in compliance with the annual report checklist provided by the Minnesota Department of Education. This annual report will be approved by the Nerstrand Board of Directors on Monday, October 13, 2008.

SPONSOR INFORMATION

Faribault Public Schools District 656 has been the Nerstrand Charter School sponsor since our inception in 1999. We have successfully completed nine years as a charter school and we are grateful for the support provided by the Administration and Board of Directors of the Faribault School District. The first year of sponsor contract with the Faribault Schools was in 1999-2000 and we renewed that contract in 2002-2003, 2005-2006 and again this past summer. Nerstrand Elementary School Personnel will give a presentation to the Independent School District #656 Board on October 20, 2008. Contact information for the sponsor is:

Bob Stepaniak, Superintendent
Faribault Public Schools District Office
P.O. Box 618
Faribault, Minnesota 55021

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GOALS, 2007-2008

The student achievement goals set for the 2007-2008 school year were collaboratively determined by the Nerstrand staff and were based on data from self-assessment surveys, test scores, ongoing informal assessments and input from parents and students. During the goal-setting discussions, the staff also planned instructional strategies and assessment measures that would support students in these specific areas.

ACADEMIC GOALS

1. Students will improve their writing skills

Indicators

- 80% of students in grades 2-5 will score at or above grade level on the language usage portion of the NWEA MAP assessments
- 80% of students in grades 1-5 will score a 3 or above on the writing rubric

Results

NWEA scores

- 2nd grade NWEA median score is 188, Nerstrand median is 188
- 3rd grade NWEA median score is 199, Nerstrand median is 204
- 4th grade NWEA median score is 206, Nerstrand median is 209
- 5th grade NWEA median score is 211, Nerstrand median is 217

Writing Rubric Scores

- 88% of fifth graders scored a 3 or above on the writing rubric
- 59% of fourth graders scored a 3 or above on the writing rubric
- 85% of third graders scored a 3 or above on the writing rubric
- 77% of second graders scored a 3 or above on the writing rubric
- 96% of first graders scored a 3 or above on the writing rubric

2. Students will develop higher level math skills.

Indicators

- 80% of students in grades 3-5 will score at or above level 3 (proficient) on the MCA II math tests.
- 80% of students in grades 2-5 will score at or above grade level according to the NWEA MAP math tests.
- 80% of students in grades 1-5 will score 80% or higher on the spring assessment

Results

- 70% of 5th graders scored at or above the proficient level on the MCA II tests
- 65% of 4th graders scored at or above the proficient level on the MCA II tests
- 84% of 3rd graders scored at or above the proficient level on the MCA II tests

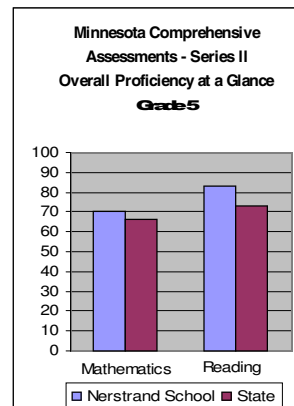
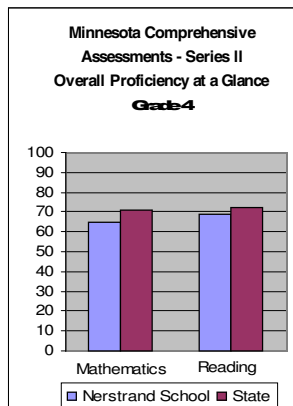
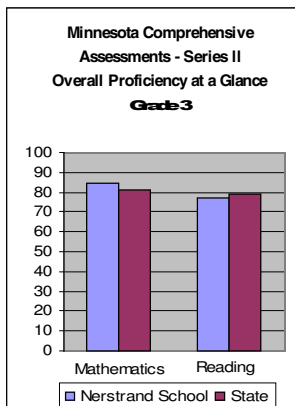
NWEA Scores

- 2nd grade NWEA median score is 186, Nerstrand median is 188
- 3rd grade NWEA median score is 199, Nerstrand median is 203
- 4th grade NWEA median score is 208, Nerstrand median is 210
- 5th grade NWEA median score is 216, Nerstrand median is 223

Math spring tests

- Grade 1 - 68% scored at 80% or higher
- Grade 2 - 58% scored at 80% or higher
- Grade 3 - 65% scored at 80% or higher
- Grade 4 - 58% scored at 80% or higher
- Grade 5 - 29% scored at 80% or higher

TESTING RESULTS



NON-ACADEMIC GOALS

1. Students will maintain and enhance the International Peace Garden and the Peace Site Theme.

Indicators

- Students will take care of the flowers and plants by watering them and weeding the garden areas
- Students will fly the Peace Garden Country flags when appropriate
- Students will continue to work on the Great Wall of China by building the wall tower
- Students will host International visitors

Results

- There was a summer Peace Garden group who took care of the garden.
- Peace Garden flags were flown during all special events
- Progress was made on the China guard tower and the brick foundation for the tower
- Nerstrand School hosted visitors from Japan

2. Students will continue to build and enhance a sense of community within the school.

Indicators

- Homeroom curriculum will focus on community building including making and distributing May Baskets to residents of Nerstrand
- Community building will be a focus during four Community Lunches, four Elder's Coffees and a Community Celebration in April

Results

- The students delivered May Day baskets and community members were invited into the school on numerous occasions

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GOALS, 2008-2009

ACADEMIC GOALS

1. Student's reading skills, fluency and comprehension will be enhanced by aligning continuous, direct reading instruction K-5.

Indicators

- 80% of students in grades 3-5 will score at or above level 3 (proficient) on the MCA reading test
- 80% of students in grades 2-5 will score at or above grade level according to the NWEA MAP tests
- 80% of students in grades 1-5 will read on grade level according to teacher administered Running Reading Records and scores on a reading rubric

2. Students will develop higher level math skills. We will continue this goal because of our updated Everyday Math Curriculum materials.

Indicators

- 80% of students in grades 3-5 will score at or above level 3 (proficient) on the MCA II tests
- 80% of students in grades 2-5 will score at or above grade level according to the NWEA MAP tests

NON-ACADEMIC GOALS

1. Students will build and enhance a greater appreciation for the Arts

Indicators

- Students will visit the Children's Theatre and the Art Institute
- Students have the opportunity to participate in the Prairie Fire Theatre Production
- Children will experience an Artist in Residency and display their work at an all-school art show

1. Students will build their social and communication skills along with learning more about friendship, self-esteem and respect

Indicators

- Students will participate in the WEB (Where Everyone Belongs) homeroom periodically throughout the year
- Students will participate in a homeroom curriculum focusing on character building education.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR 2008-2009

The new, Everyday Math program will be carried out and evaluated as the year moves along. Curriculum review will be an ongoing process and the science curriculum will be reviewed this year. Other staff development plans include: Gifted/Talented, Behavior Improvement Plans, and Response to Intervention.

ADDITIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

Fiscal Management

As a charter school, we are responsible for the education of children and to have a clear knowledge of business and fiscal responsibilities. For the past seven years, Keith Johnson has served as our business manager. While the Board of Directors will continue to guide the school by making sound fiscal decisions, we are pleased to have a business manager on site that has educated and advised us. We have been able to complete more of the fiscal responsibilities "in house" rather than hire an outside firm to do those tasks.

Payroll and insurance items are completed by EdVisions Cooperative. They also provide us with access to NWEA materials and staff development opportunities.

The audited Financial Statements for the year ending June 30, 2008, shows revenues totaling \$1,233,027.50 and expenses in the amount of \$1,202,670.01 resulting in a Net Income of \$30,357.49.

Satisfaction Surveys

Parents and students completed satisfaction surveys in the spring of 2008. The positive results indicate that Nerstrand Elementary School is meeting the needs of our stakeholders. However, the topics that had any amount of dissatisfaction are evaluated by the Nerstrand staff for program improvement.

Parent Survey

In the spring of 2008, 96% of the family opinion surveys were returned. Topics that rated highest in parent satisfaction were:

- My child likes his/her teacher. (100%)
- My child feels valued and respected by his/her teacher. (100%)
- My child appears to be progressing academically. (100%)
- My child's teachers listen to me, respect me as a parent (or guardian) and support us as a family. (100%)
- Families are informed frequently about school happenings through newsletters, notes, phone calls and the school website. (100%)

- I have been made aware of my child’s academic strengths and weaknesses. (100%)
- I feel my child is receiving a well-rounded education at Nerstrand Elementary School. (100%)
- My child is happy at Nerstrand School. (99%)
- My child feels safe at Nerstrand School. (99%)

Although the parent survey results were overwhelmingly positive, the staff pays attention to topics that have even a small percentage of parents who disagree with the statements on the survey. The following statements were among the few where parents indicated they disagreed.

- My child has made friends at Nerstrand School. (1% disagreed)
- My child feels safe at Nerstrand School. (1% disagreed)

ENROLLMENT DATA

In 2007-2008 there were 155 students enrolled at Nerstrand Elementary School who were distributed into multiage core classes as follows:

Prairie Kindergarten 24 students

	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Male	77	80	77	83
Female	77	73	80	72
Special Education	14	17	17	16
African American	3	1	0	0
Latino	0	0	2	2
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	1	0	0
White	150	151	155	153
American Indian	0	0	0	0
F/R Lunch	18	13	12	23
LEP	0	0	2	1

Savannah Woodlands Grades 1 - 3 80 students
 Grades 4 - 5 51 students

Grade Level Enrollment

Kindergarten	24 students	14 boys	10 girls
First Grade	28 students	11 boys	17 girls
Second Grade	26 students	17 boys	9 girls
Third Grade	26 students	14 boys	12 girls
Fourth Grade	26 students	14 boys	12 girls
<u>Fifth Grade</u>	<u>25 students</u>	<u>13 boys</u>	<u>12 girls</u>
Total	155 students	83 boys	72 girls

The following chart provides demographic trends at Nerstrand Elementary School.

SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Background Information

Nerstrand Elementary School has successfully completed nine years as an independent public charter school under the sponsorship of the Faribault Public Schools. Nerstrand Elementary School is located in the small rural community of Nerstrand, approximately twelve miles from Faribault. The enrollment in 2007-2008 was 155 students in Kindergarten through grade five. Nerstrand Elementary School has multiage classes, project based learning, a positive atmosphere that is conducive to learning, high behavioral expectations that enhance character development and a strong Service Learning component. The school also is host to many visitors who come to see what is going on at Nerstrand Elementary School. For those parents who need it, there is an after school childcare program called Regal Eagles Club.

Learning Environment

We believe that learning is enhanced when students feel valued and safe. At Nerstrand Elementary School there are high expectations for school-wide behaviors where all students respect themselves, others and property. Each staff member makes a concerted effort to connect with each student as a way to establish a genuinely positive climate where students can comfortably take risks and enjoy learning.

Multiage Benefits

The multiage setting positively impacts the overall climate of the school by enhancing positive social interaction, reducing interfering behaviors, and strengthening a strong sense of community. The benefits of multiage education for student growth and development are many:

- Increased time on task
- Greater student self-direction
- Emergence of peer leadership
- Active participation of students
- Greater student ownership
- Enhanced learning through teaching others
- Increased willingness to take risks
- Enhanced self-discipline and self-confidence

The role of the teacher in a multiage setting changes to one of coaching students and facilitating growth rather than being the “show in the center ring”. This role change enables staff to focus more on students as learners than on the curriculum that needs to be taught.

Integrated Curriculum

Many areas of the curriculum at Nerstrand Elementary School are thematic. Social studies, Science and Health are tied with literature-based reading, writing assignments, art and music. There is a focus on project-based learning and technology is used in a variety of ways. Throughout the school year and into the summer, staff members collaborate to develop and refine curriculum.

Service Learning

We define Service Learning as “a form of experiential learning whereby students apply content knowledge, critical thinking and good judgment to address genuine community needs”. More simply it is the “blending of both service and learning in such ways that both occur and are enriched by each other”. Through Service Learning projects, interpersonal skills such as collaboration, civic engagement, and problem solving are developed while students’ academic skills in reading, writing, science, art, math and social studies are enhanced through reflection and the projects themselves. The successful school-wide implementation of service learning for the past eleven years has enabled students, parents, and staff to engage in extensive service projects that benefit the school, the community and areas as far away as Guatemala.

The opportunities for service learning at school are varied. Each day begins with student members of the "Early Bird Crew" who work together to prepare the building for the day by collecting paper to be recycled, emptying trash, cleaning boards and erasers, and washing classroom tables. Students also have opportunities to serve during the school day by helping with lunch clean up. Students also have leadership opportunities by serving on a variety of committees including:

- Peace Garden Committee
- Learn and Serve Steering Committee
- Ambassador Task Force
- School Spirit Task Force
- Behavior Plan/Playground Committee

Many of the established projects have become traditions at Nerstrand. Favorite projects include the Community Celebration, sandwich making for the Simpson Homeless Shelter, the Holiday Sharing Project that enables students to contribute to worthy causes instead of purchasing gifts for school friends, and community clean up days.

Service Learning projects that benefit community members include Community Lunches, Elders' Coffees, Birthday Cards for Elders, Community Clean-up and Downtown Beautification.

Other Service Learning projects have an environmental focus. For a number of years, Nerstrand School has worked in partnerships with both the Nerstrand Big Woods State Park and Rice County's Caron Park where reforestation, landscaping, and prairie restoration efforts have been carried out with the help of community volunteer, Larry Richie.

Visitors

Nerstrand School has become well known throughout Minnesota and beyond as being a "model" charter school. In 2007-2008 we enjoyed 15 school visitors from Japan. We continue to open up our doors to visitors from Minnesota as well as other states and countries.

Regal Eagles

The Regal Eagles Club is an after school child care program. Children are given the opportunity to explore their own interests, participate in crafts, games, science, and nature projects and socialize with their friends. Time is also made available to do homework.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Nerstrand School again met AYP requirements for reading, math and attendance in 2008. MCA II results were given earlier in this report.

Nerstrand Elementary School programs that reflect best teaching practices include: project-based multiage classes, integrated thematic curriculum based on best teaching practices, and Service Learning projects, which were previously mentioned. Another area that indicates positive school performance is a strong partnership with parents and communities.

A Strong Partnership with Parents and Community

Nerstrand Elementary School staff is committed to maintaining a strong partnership with parents and community members. The areas we are committed to are optimal communication, volunteer opportunities, an "Open Door" policy for school visits and reciprocal support through Service Learning programs.

Optimal Communication

The staff and administration are committed to clear communication with families and community members. The revised Web site provides another way for us to disseminate information. Ongoing communication strategies include sending Weekly Peeks from classroom teachers and Family Updates from the Nerstrand office, which inform parents about important school information, enabling them to be supportive and involved. Other information is communicated through the school newspaper, "The Eagle's Nest", invitations to events, posters and personal calls.

Opportunities to Volunteer

Parents and Community members are encouraged to volunteer often at the school. Volunteering takes many different forms. While some parents volunteer at the school at a specific time and day each week, others find their schedules more conducive to participation in special events that occur at varying times throughout the year. In whatever form it may take, the staff welcomes volunteer support.

PTO is another organization that contributes in a significant way to Nerstrand Elementary School. Through their fundraising efforts, special programs and opportunities are made available to all students. One example of their commitment to the Nerstrand students is the rotation of field trips to Minneapolis Children's Theatre, The Historical Museum and the Science Museum. Traditional fundraisers include the Wreath and Swag Sale in December, Plant Sale and the Carnival/Silent Auction in the spring. The "Eagle Open" golf tournament that takes place in June is another fundraiser that provides fun for family and community members while raising money for the school.

Ongoing Invitations to Visit

There are many opportunities for parents and community members to visit Nerstrand School including Elders' Coffees, Community Lunches, Flu-Shot Clinic, Community Celebration, and Service Learning projects such as Community Clean-up days. Parents are always welcome to visit in classrooms, eat lunch with students, and observe special events such as "Student Spotlights".

Reciprocal Support

We appreciate the ongoing support we receive from the townspeople of Nerstrand who have made our school the "heart of their community". Community members support the school in a variety of ways including partnerships in Learn and Serve projects, volunteering at the school, and donating items for fund-raisers such as the Carnival's Silent Auction.

Community volunteers add a unique dimension to the programs at Nerstrand Elementary School. Elders volunteer in classrooms during the school day, while others help with special projects such as sandwich making.

The Nerstrand Women's Club donates mittens, scarves, hats, socks, sweatpants, and underwear so that we have a supply for students who need them. We so appreciate their help.

GOVERNANCE

Nerstrand Elementary School Board of Directors
Established in May, 1999

The Board of Directors focuses on all dimensions of the school's operation, including, but not limited to:

1. School philosophy, goals and objectives
2. School policy
3. Budget
4. Curriculum and instructional direction
5. Staffing
6. Long range planning
7. Communication (home, community, sponsor)
8. School enrollment and organization

The Nerstrand Elementary School Board of Directors consists of the following voting members:

1. Four teacher representatives, elected by teachers
2. Three parent representatives, elected by parents
3. One Ex Officio member: building administrator
4. Seven members total.

The members serve a three-year renewable term

1. Every year, one (1) of the three- (3) parent terms expire and board elections are held in May.
2. Every third year, two (2) teacher's terms expire; in each of the two years prior to the third year, one (1) teacher's term expires.
3. A representative may serve two consecutive terms, after which there must be a one-year hiatus before serving on the Board of Directors again.

The Board of Directors meets the second Monday of the month. Scheduled and special meeting days and times are determined by the Board of Directors and announced to parents, staff, and community.

2007-2008 Board of Directors

Chairperson: Maggie Kiley, teacher
708 4th Street East
Northfield, MN 55057
H 507-664-0970
W 507-333-6865

Jan Boudreau, teacher
1931 16th Street N. W.
Faribault, MN 55021
H 507-332-2801
W 507-333-6858

Kristin Hofstad, parent
612 5th Ave. S.W.
Faribault, MN 55021
H 507-331-1966

Mindy Ray, parent
1000 Shumway Avenue
Faribault, MN 55021
H 507-334-1786

Clerk: Tara Graber, teacher
1601 Armstrong Road
Northfield, MN 55057
H 507-202-9950
W 507-333-6864

Carmen Bonde, parent
16751 Kane Avenue
Nerstrand, MN 55053
H 507-334-4012
W 507-333-6850

Paula Shroyer, teacher
401 3rd Street
Nerstrand, MN 55053
H 507-334-3369
W 507-333-6862

Director: Lauren Satrom
1708 Red Iron Lane
St. Peter, MN 56082
H 507-934-9381
W 507-333-6854

Admin. Asst.: Barb Grote
11492 East 200th Street
Kenyon, MN 55946
H 507-789-5369
W 507-333-6856

Business Manager: Keith Johnson
8705 Bagley Avenue
Northfield, MN 55057
H 507-645-2870
W 507-333-6859

TEACHING STAFF

Staff Members for the School Year 2007-08

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>File Folder</u>
Alexander, Janelle	Gr. 1-3 Classroom Teacher	#343759
Boudreau, Jan	.75 Special Education Teacher	#249690
Gare, Brenda	Music Teacher	#376204
Graber, Tara	Gr. 1-3 Classroom Teacher	#408258
Hertle, Wayne	Speech/Lang. Clinician	#177708
Kiley, Margaret	Gr. 4-5 Classroom Teacher	#308466
*Olson, David	School Psychologist	#260873
Paulson, Ellen	Gr. 4-5 Classroom Teacher	#328639
Satrom, Lauren	Physical Ed. Teacher	#313359
Shroyer, Paula	Gr. 1-3 Classroom Teacher	#332268
Stensrud, Sarah	Kindergarten Teacher	#289550

NON-CERTIFIED STAFF

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>
Amy, Lori	Paraprofessional
Bonde, Carmen	Special Education Paraprofessional
*Erickson, Mike	Custodian
*Eul, Brenda	Head Cook
Grote, Barb	Administrative Assistant
Isaacson, Margaret	Media Paraprofessional
Ivers, Karin	Paraprofessional
* Jandro, Joan	Cook's Assistant
Tralle, Pamela	Paraprofessional
Voge, Betty	Paraprofessional

*These individuals are employed by either the Faribault School District, Kenyon-Wanamingo School District or Sodexo Food Service. Their services come to Nerstrand School as a result of agreements between the Boards of Directors of the respective schools.

Licensed teacher percentage turnover rate:

2007-2008=0%

NERSTRAND SCHOOL CHALLENGES

Large Class Sizes

The average number of students in a grade 1-5 classroom is 26. We limit the kindergarten enrollment to 24, yet that number is more than we would like to have at that grade level. However, we need enrollment numbers of at least 154 so that we have revenue to support programs. The positive behaviors at Nerstrand Elementary School enable us to provide optimal learning experiences for our students, yet we will continue to look for alternative funding so that we can provide necessary programs without having large class sizes.

Lack of Space

A major challenge at Nerstrand Elementary School continues to be a lack of space. Our classrooms are small and our classes average 26 students each. In addition, the instructional program at Nerstrand focuses on students working in smaller groups. This requires space outside of the classroom. The music annex has enabled a resource room that is used for flexible instruction and we are appreciative of that change. However, we often have times when there is not a space available for a small

group. There is also a huge problem with lack of storage space. We would like to build an addition to Nerstrand Elementary School in the future.

Time/Small Staff

One of the ongoing challenges at Nerstrand School is the small staff that works extra hours to provide students with an excellent education. We want to stay current on best teaching practices, to meet the ever-changing needs of students, to align curriculum with assessments, to provide an optimum learning climate and to maintain existing programs and/or to establish new ones. The commitment to excellence takes time and energy.

Salary Concerns

When the staff unanimously voted to charter in 1999, the salary schedule matched our sponsoring district. While we are very fortunate to have an experienced staff, we have not been able to stay current with salary increases. The staff is to be congratulated on working for less than they would be receiving had they remained with the Faribault School District.

Professional Development of Staff

It is vital that all staff members working with Nerstrand students receive professional development based on best teaching practices. Time and funding are at a premium at the school, but we have a strong commitment to training all staff, licensed and non-licensed, in all academic areas as well as character development of students. We will continue to apply for grants and to use the model of presentations to staff by people who attend conferences and workshops.
