



**Charter School Authorizing Program
Volunteers of America - Minnesota
9220 Bass Lake Road, Suite 255
New Hope, MN 55428**

February 11, 2025

Nicole Danielsen, Board Chair
Shana Ford, Chief Executive Officer
KIPP: Minnesota
5034 N Oliver Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55430

TRANSMITTED VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Dear Ms. Danielsen and Ms. Ford:

In a letter dated January 17, 2024, Authorizer VOA-MN notified KIPP North Star Academy (KNSA) that VOA-MN was placing KNSA in Intervention Level I – Notice of Concern. As a normal course of our authorizer oversight of the school, VOAMN has several concerns that continue to need to be addressed by the Board and Administration of the School. As a result, VOA-MN is placing KNSA in Intervention Level II – Notice of Deficiency.

<p>INTERVENTION LEVEL TWO</p> <p>Notice of Deficiency</p>	<p>Signs of further weakening performance identified through routine monitoring; through implementation, compliance, or performance reviews; or by other means.</p> <p>Failure to meet multiple contractual performance standards/expectations; or repeated failure to meet a single performance standard/expectation.</p> <p>Significant failure to comply with applicable law or the conditions of the charter contract.</p> <p>Continued evidence of poor financial health or management.</p>	<p>Letter from Authorizer to charter school Board of Directors detailing areas of deficiency and action required to address the deficiency.</p> <p><i>and</i></p> <p>Authorizer may require charter school Board of Directors to approve a remediation plan containing specific improvement objectives, technical assistance requirements, and schedule for remedial actions to be approved by the Authorizer.</p>
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CONCERN ONE - STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE. The school has low academic performance.

VOA-MN Academic Performance Standard 1 - Students are performing well on state examinations in comparison to students at schools they might otherwise attend (with similar demographics) as evidence of meeting their primary statutory purpose of improving all pupil learning and all student achievement.

KNSA DOES NOT MEET STANDARD

For 2022, KIPP math and reading proficiency rates were below those of the comparison school.

For 2023, KIPP math, reading and science proficiency rates were below those of the comparison school.

For 2024, KIPP math, reading and science proficiency rates were below those of the comparison school (Jenny Lind Elementary and Olson Middle School).

VOA-MN Academic Performance Standard 2 - Over the term of the contract, the school will maintain an average state-determined minimum achievement level of (Increased + Maintained) as evidence of meeting their primary statutory purpose of improving all pupil learning and all student achievement.

KNSA DOES NOT MEET STANDARD

For 2022, the school's academic achievement level (improved + maintained) was 11.9% for math and 21.6% for reading, for a score of "does not meet" on standard 2. The school's combined score was only **16.8%**. To earn a "meets standard" the school's achievement level of "increased and maintained" must be 61.6% or higher.

For 2023, the school's academic achievement level (improved + maintained) was 8.8% for math and 22.3% for reading, for a score of "does not meet" on standard 2. The school's combined score was only **15.6%**. To earn a "meets standard" the school's achievement level of "increased and maintained" must be 58.2% or higher.

For 2024, the school's academic achievement level (improved + maintained) was 7.5% for math and 18.0% for reading. A score of does not meet was awarded because the school's combined score was only 12.8%. To earn a "meets standard" the school's achievement level of "increased and maintained" must be 58.2% or higher.

VOA-MN Academic Performance Standard 3 - The difference between the "all-students" proficiency rate in the school and any reportable student group proficiency rate will be reduced over the term of the contract in both reading and math using state examination data as evidence of the school meeting their primary statutory purpose of improving all pupil learning and all student achievement.

KNSA PARTIALLY MEETS STANDARD

For 2022, a score of "partially meets" was given because the school reduced the achievement gap in two out the four possible areas. The achievement gap between the "All Students" group and the "Special Education" subgroup in both math and reading from 2021 to 2022.

For 2023, a score of "partially meets" was given because the achievement gap was reduced or non-existent in three of four possible areas. The achievement gap between the Special Education group and the "All Students" group in both math and reading is currently positive. The gap between the Free and Reduced population and the "All Students" group in reading was reduced to 0.2%. The gap between the Free and Reduced population and the "All Students" group in math increased from 2022 to 2023.

For 2024, a score of "partially meets" was given because the achievement gap was non-existent in three of four possible areas. The achievement gaps between the Special Education group and the "all students" group in both math and reading are currently positive. A score of partially meets was awarded because although the gap between the Free and Reduced population and the "all students" group in reading remained unchanged from 2023 to 2024, it was not reduced.

- **VOA-MN Outreach to the School:** The authorizer publishes a "Scorecard" annually which includes school progress meeting VOA-MN performance standards that are contained in the charter contract. Upon request, the VOA-MN Academic Performance Analyst is available to explain or provide technical assistance on meeting VOA-MN performance standards.
- **Improvement Expectation and Timeline:** The school must improve academic performance. To that end, the school must revise and send to VOA-MN a long-term school academic improvement plan. The plan must focus on improving student learning, performance, and student success in reading, math, and science. Given that there was no improvement meeting VOA-MN standard from FY22-FY24, the plan must incorporate data-driven determinations identifying the specific areas of weakness and targeted academic improvement the school plans to focus on in the current and coming school years; the standards-based, growth-oriented performance goals the school wants teachers and students to achieve; and how the school plans to collaboratively meet these goals. The plan must incorporate measures for academic growth (individual, grade, and schoolwide), student climate, accountability, family and faculty engagement, and overall school performance. Finally, the plan must incorporate an analysis of the extent to which the school budget is aligned to ensure the success of the school academic improvement plan.

CONCERN TWO – ENROLLMENT. The school continues to experience declining enrollment.

VOA-MN Management & Operations Standard 9 – The school could provide evidence that it is meeting its annual student enrollment goals. **KNSA DOES NOT MEET STANDARD**

The school's current FY25 working budget is 232 ADM (average daily membership). The stretch goal is 250-270 ADMs. The school has experienced declining enrollment while trying to continue serving students well and have strong financial

performance. The building capacity is 609 ADMs to max out lease aid in a stable enrollment environment. The highest enrollment was 658 ADM in two locations in 2019-2020 (FY20). Enrollment has sharply declined over the past five years:

Number of students (ADM) in 2020-2021: 657
Number of students (ADM) in 2021-2022: 563
Number of students (ADM) in 2022-2023: 379
Number of students (ADM) in 2023-2024: 263
Number of students (ADM) in 2024-2025 estimate: 232

The authorizer is aware the school is dependent on donations to sustain financial health on paper. In the FY25 working budget, KNSA reports \$1,082,000 in local revenue from the KIPP Foundation and Private Fundraising resulting in net income of \$46,000. Without these donations the budget would project a deficit of \$1,036,000 for the year and cut into the school's \$4,938,000 General Fund balance ending June 30, 2024. We appreciate the fundraising ability of KNSA and the generosity of the school's donors. This trajectory without donations would be dire for KNSA.

- **VOA-MN Outreach to the School:** VOA-MN last visited the school on November 7, 2024, during which time the authorizer representative voiced concern about the school's enrollment compared to the projection and the school's dependence on donations. Authorizer VOA-MN has observed several KNSA school board and finance committee meetings in FY24 and FY25 and is available to take questions.
- **Improvement Expectation and Timeline:** In October 2025 KNSA leadership indicated that the school has contracted with an outside firm to model possible enrollment and corresponding financial scenarios for the next five years. VOA-MN suggested that this project be included in future board meeting agendas as an update, so progress is neatly tracked. As of February 10, 2025, KNSA has not reported the outcome of the enrollment modeling to VOA-MN. The school must also continue active student recruitment efforts and consider ways to further reduce non-instructional costs.

The VOA-MN Authorizing Program requests that this letter be an item of discussion during the next regular school board meeting. The revised, board-approved School Academic Improvement Plan should be submitted to solsen@voamn.org by **April 4, 2025**, unless otherwise negotiated by VOA-MN and the school. Regarding Concern Two (enrollment and fiscal health), the authorizer will monitor improvement through monthly school board packets. Academic improvement and enrollment will also be items of discussion during the VOA-MN spring informal school site visit.

In addition, authorizer VOA-MN anticipates that KNSA will actively participate and fully utilize the quality professional development and relationship-building available through participation in the Annual Minnesota Charter School Leadership Conference June 9-11, 2025, in Bemidji, Minnesota. Participation in the annual VOA-MN school leadership meeting and conference is free to VOA-MN authorized schools, and attendance is a charter contract requirement. It was nice to have a sizable KNSA delegation participating last year.

On January 31, 2025, VOA-MN sent KNSA its 2025 Scorecard. The school's cumulative performance is at **79%**, which is just below the percentage needed to earn a five-year charter renewal contract. The deficiencies articulated in this letter are also contained in the 2025 Scorecard and will be taken into consideration when determining the length of the next KNSA charter contract.

As always, please contact me or any member of the VOA-MN Charter School Authorizing Program Team with questions or for technical assistance.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Olsen, Manager
Charter School Authorizing Program
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