

Arcadia Authorizer Site Visit Report

Daryl Kehler, ALC Director

Friday, January 31, 2025

Northfield is one of two school districts in the state that authorize charter schools. As part of this process, the authorizer ensures the charter schools meet the Minnesota Department of Education's requirements and state statutes. In addition to the reporting responsibilities as an authorizer, we make a site visit to the charter school at least once annually. During the visit, we gather data on these four key questions;

1. Is the educational program a success?
2. Is the organization efficient and well run?
3. Is the school meeting its legal obligations?
4. Are strategies in place for sustaining success and continuing to improve over the next charter term?

On January 31, 2025, the Charter School Authorizer Team Lead from Northfield Public Schools visited Arcadia Charter School for the annual authorizer site visit.

1. Is the educational program a success?

Arcadia continues to have test scores above the state in reading and science and slightly below the math average as measured by the MCA. They have a 26 average score on the ACT, compared to a 19.4 average nationally. They also had a 100% five-year graduation rate for the 24-25 school year.

2024 Science

Arcadia 51.7% State 39.2%

2024 Math

Arcadia 42.6% State 45.3%

2024 Reading

Arcadia 61.5% State 49.7%

In addition to the solid test scores, Arcadia demonstrated a strong connection between students and staff as all groups reported it was a positive and welcoming environment. Students appreciated the smaller class sizes as they felt a stronger connection with their teacher, and they could ask questions and get individualized instruction easier. They also felt the small size allowed them to make friends easier and the overall atmosphere was not judgemental.

2. Is the organization efficient and well-run?

Visit notes, summarized by ChatGPT:

"The program appears to be well-run, with a strong emphasis on student engagement, personalized attention, and a supportive, community-focused environment. Students are involved in interactive and project-based learning across subjects. Students also appreciate the smaller program and the benefits of being more connected to staff. Teachers are responsive to individual needs, create a positive environment, and build an inclusive atmosphere. Both middle and high school students appreciate the smaller class sizes, strong relationships with teachers, and the flexibility in learning. Parents also praise the communication, the social contract, and the focus on student empowerment. However, there are areas for improvement, such as funding, lunch options, and space limitations."

The school's financial stability is solid but felt by many stakeholders. The high school panel, parent panel, and staff discussed the program's finances. Many see the challenges with staffing and space needs, where people are wearing many hats to get the work done, and space is tight. Enrollment is stable. During a Northfield Public Schools School Board meeting on January 8, the director shared the unassigned fund balance was 33.95% or approximately \$744,906. The program uses a five-year projection model, and there are no significant expenses expected in the near future such as roof replacement, parking lot maintenance, etc. as those are all in good shape. Because the school is small, minor financial disruptions can have a dramatic and adverse impact.

3. Is the school meeting its legal obligations?

No data was available to suggest that Arcadia is not meeting its legal obligations. The board has a process to regularly review and update policies to keep up with the latest statutory implications. At the time of the site visit there were no due process issues and all special education legal requirements were also being met.

4. Are strategies in place for sustaining success and continuing to improve over the next charter term?

Yes, the school is committed to continuous improvement and analyzes student, staff, and family engagement throughout the year. Although there is a healthy fund balance currently, there is concern about deficit spending, and the school leadership is investigating options before this becomes too great an issue.

Summary

This year's site visit to Arcadia reinforced the program as an inclusive, welcoming school committed to providing a quality education. Students, parents, and staff all report a positive environment that acknowledges their individuality and accepts all into their community. The instruction combines structured lessons and individual exploration of learning through projects. Discussion and interaction between teachers and students were evident throughout the day and in all settings.

Arcadia Authorizer Site Visit Schedule

Friday, January 31, 2025

Time	Meeting	Location
8:05-8:25am	MS Morning Circles	MS Advisories
8:30-8:55am	MS PWT/Study Hall Algebra II US History	MS Advisories Lamarr Tubman
9:00-9:25am	MS Student Panel	Conference Room: Ajack, Teague, Ella E, Ella F Sadie, Kimmy, Ben Aria, Eli, Kaylee
9:30-9:55am	Arcadia Parent Panel	Conference Room: Jenny Kelly Amber Gebler Carly Born Aaron Rothmeyer Jo Swanson
10:00-10:15am	Break	Conference Room
10:20-10:45am	Social Studies 6 (ROR) Geometry (Lamarr) World History (Tubman) Language Arts 8 (Green) HS PWT	Sullivan Kelley Prichard DeShane Stelter (multiple)
10:50-11:15am	HS Student Panel	Conference Room: Elliott Fox-Deel Belinda Brosseau Darneshia Lebeaux Oliver Born Flynn Barkmeier Sammy Malecha
11:20-12:00pm	Science 6 (Goodall) Language Arts 7 (ROR) ACT Prep (Lamarr) Social Studies 8 (Tubman) Foundational Math (250)	Kasch-Flugum Grave Prichard DeShane Paulson
12:05-12:35pm	Lunch with staff in Tubman	Tubman (all staff welcome)

12:40-1:10pm	Basic Comp (Goodall) Pre-algebra (ROR) Algebra 1 (Lamarr) Social Studies Elective (Tubman) Math 6 (Purple)	Prichard Ades/Freiermuth Heidtke/Mitchell Sullivan Kelley Stelter
1:10-1:20pm	Break	Conference Room
1:25-1:45pm	Check-in with the Special Education team	Conference Room: Melissa Roth Taylor Freiermuth Cindy Graff Kori Ryan (virtual)
1:50-2:10pm	Check in with Arcadia's School Board	Conference Room: Katherine Simon Heidi Brosseau David Wolff Gabe Meerts
2:15-2:35pm	Finance Conversation	Conference Room: Kelly Rimpila (virtual) Adam Hewitt (virtual) Tammy Prichard Laura Stelter
2:40-3:00pm	Closing with Laura	Laura's Office