

## Prairie Creek Authorizer Site Visit Report

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Daryl Kehler, ALC Director

Thursday, January 30, 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 30, 2025, the Superintendent and 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?

☰ World’s Best Workforce Plan / Authorizer Contractual Goals 2022-2026

Prairie Creek continues to outperform the Minnesota averages on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA).

Scores in %	2021	2022	2023	2024
PCCS Science	65.5	60	69	50
State Science	47.9	50	48.4	45
PCCS Math	51.9	56.2	60.7	62.9
State Math	44.2	44.8	46	45.5
PCCS Reading	72	73	73	65.9
State Reading	52.5	51.1	50.5	49.9

Prairie Creek Community School (PCCS) continues to focus on their mission, as all groups that were met with referenced the mission and the importance of staying true to it. The progressive education approach is very important to all the staff at PCCS, and it serves as the foundation for all decisions at the school. As evident by the standardized scores, PCCS has strong academic supports and strategies as they incorporate hands-on active learning with structured activities and differentiated lessons.

### 2. Is the organization efficient and well-run?

Visit notes summarized by ChatGPT:

“The program at PCCS appears to be well-run, with a strong focus on both academic and personal development, as well as a commitment to its mission of autonomy and progressive learning. The curriculum is diverse and engaging, incorporating project-based learning across various subjects like art, music, Spanish, and nature-based studies. Special education services are well-supported, with a strong team of staff and effective systems in place to meet the legal and instructional needs of students. Collaboration between general education and special education teachers is highlighted as a strength, with flexible, supportive leadership from both administrators and staff.

The program also fosters community and teamwork, as seen in events like the successful squirrel-a-thon fundraiser. Leadership is highly regarded for supporting new ideas and maintaining smooth day-to-day operations. The school has made efforts to balance new requirements, like the Read Act, with its mission, while continuing to provide students with enriching experiences, such as field trips and arts programs. Financially, the school is stable with a strong fund balance and a proactive approach to budgeting and planning for future needs. However, concerns around increasing enrollment and grant funding have been carefully considered to ensure alignment with the school's values. Overall, the program is well-structured, innovative, and supported by dedicated staff and a forward-looking leadership team.”

### **3. Is the school meeting its legal obligations?**

All the evidence supports that PCCS is meeting all its legal obligations. All special education due process items and legal requirements are being met. The Affiliated Building Company (ABC) is very close to final as the forms are completed and being reviewed by the program’s lawyer before being submitted. PCCS has met all the Minnesota Department of Education requirements, and the audit was completed on time. PCCS plans to have all staff trained on the University of Minnesota literacy training by Fall 2025.

Review of the director’s checklist for legal obligations [☰ Director Task Calendar](#)

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

Prairie Creek Community School’s (PCCS) director is thinking about succession and how to continue to move the mission forward. They have some key elements where succession planning is taking place, such as certain parts of the director role and finance roles as well. The staff attends the Progressive Education Network (PEN) conference every other year and present at the conference when it is attended. They feel this professional development gives them new ideas and best practices for progressive education. The director has also been seeking like-minded programs for thought partners as they explore progressive education ideas, strategies, and implementation.

Reviewed Strategic plan document [📄 PCCS Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026](#)

## **Summary**

Visit notes summarized by ChatGPT:

“The site visit showed evidence of the continued commitment to the mission of providing a child-centered and progressive educational model. Prairie Creek Community School (PCCS) remains deeply committed to its mission of progressive education, which informs all decisions and actions at the school. This dedication is reflected across all levels of the school, from academic strategies to day-to-day operations. The school provides a well-rounded, hands-on learning experience that includes structured and differentiated lessons, and it emphasizes active, project-based learning. PCCS

supports students' academic growth, as demonstrated by strong standardized test scores, while also fostering personal development through its unique and collaborative approach to education.

The school is efficient and well-run, with a stable financial outlook and proactive planning. The leadership team is highly regarded for fostering innovation, maintaining smooth operations, and adhering to legal requirements. Collaboration among staff, especially between general education and special education, is a key strength. The school is also focused on sustainability and future success, with strategies in place for succession planning and professional development. Overall, PCCS is on track for continued success and improvement in the years ahead.”

**Prairie Creek  
Authorizer Site Visit Schedule 1.30.25**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Location / Notes</b>
<b>8:15am</b>	Welcome / Coffee with the Director / Board Chair / CFO / Treasurer ~ schedule review	Simon's Office
<b>9:00am</b>	K-1s - Literacy <i>Doves: Amy Narveson</i> <i>Nuthatches: Amy Brown</i> <i>Chickadees: Amanda Solinger</i>	
<b>9:45am</b>	BREAK	
<b>10:15am</b>	Specialist Classes <i>Music: Olivia Moraczewski</i> <i>Visual Art: Liz Nelson</i> <i>Spanish: Trisha Christopherson</i>	
<b>11:15am</b>	Special Education / ADSIS	Simon's Office (Kelsey, Michelle B, Jesse, Cale, Atia, Tricia and Anna Lisa)
<b>11:45am</b>	Lunch with Faculty (classroom teachers and specialists)	Gym <i>Box Lunch provided for Dr. Hillmann, Daryl Kehler and faculty</i>
<b>12:15pm</b>	BREAK	
<b>12:30pm</b>	2-3s - Interdisciplinary Theme <i>Egrets: Molly McGovern Wills</i> <i>Cranes: Jakob Anderson</i> <i>Meadowlarks: Stacey Sandler</i>	
<b>1:10pm</b>	4-5s - Interdisciplinary Theme / Projects <i>Herons: Michelle Martin</i> <i>Kestrels: Ryan Kiesel</i> <i>Robins: Amy Haslett-Marroquin</i>	
<b>1:50pm -2:20pm</b>	Closing Conversation with Simon	Simon's Office