

Evaluation Rubric

The University of St. Thomas (St. Thomas) Accountability System, including the Evaluation Framework and Evaluation Rubric will be used on an annual basis to evaluate schools, and whenever formal decisions are made about the effectiveness of a charter school in meeting its stated mission and objectives as well as the expectations set forth in its contract.

The Accountability System will be used by authorizing program staff and by the St. Thomas Charter School Authorizing Board to assess authorized schools' suitability for Contract Renewal and to evaluate any charter school seeking Change of Authorizer Status.

Please note that the rubric below represents a template that will be modified to enable St. Thomas to appropriately evaluate each of its authorized schools.

Metro Deaf School

SECTION I – IS THE LEARNING PROGRAM A SUCCESS?

1.1 Are students meeting their individual academic goals in the area of reading?		
1 = Does not meet standard	Less than 50% meet their individual academic goals.	
2 = Approaching standard	50%-64% meet their individual academic goals.	
3 = Meets standard	65%-79% meet their individual academic goals.	
4 = Exceeds standard	More than 80% meet their individual academic goals.	
Tier 1:	3	
Tier 2:	3	
Tier 3:	4	
Tier 4:	3	
2026		
Rating (Averages of Tiers 1 – 4): 3.25		
Comments: The following are the percentages of students meeting their individuals goals for each tier in reading: Tier 1 – 75%; Tier 2 – 72%; Tier 3 – 86%; Tier 4 – 76%		
Tier 1:	4	
Tier 2:	4	
Tier 3:	2	
Tier 4:	4	
2025		
Rating (Averages of Tiers 1 – 4): 3.5		
Comments: The percentages of the students meeting their individual goals in each tier for reading are as follows: Tier 1 – 86%; Tier 2 – 81%; Tier 3 – 59%; Tier 4 – 83%.		

Source: St. Thomas site visits, Reference: special education investigation search on MDE website and special education training materials; Special education director interview; Statement of compliance sheet, Annual Report

1.2 Are students meeting their individual academic goals in the area of math?		
1 = Does not meet standard		Less than 50% meet their individual academic goals.
2 = Approaching standard		50%-64% meet their individual academic goals.
3 = Meets standard		65%-79% meet their individual academic goals.
4 = Exceeds standard		More than 80% meet their individual academic goals.
Tier 1:	4	
Tier 2:	4	
Tier 3:	4	
Tier 4:	3	
2026		
Rating (Average of Tiers 1 – 4): 3.75		
Comments: The percentages of students meeting their individual academic goals in math are as follows: Tier 1 – 83%; Tier 2 – 80%; Tier 3 – 86%; Tier 4 – 69%		
Tier 1:	4	
Tier 2:	3	
Tier 3:	3	
Tier 4:	3	
2025		
Rating (Average of Tiers 1 – 4): 3.25		
Comments: The percentages of the students meeting their individual goals in each tier for math are as follows: Tier 1 – 100%; Tier 2 – 79%; Tier 3 – 78%; Tier 4 – 75%.		
Source: St. Thomas site visits, Reference: special education investigation search on MDE website and special education training materials; Special education director interview; Statement of compliance sheet, Annual Report		

1.3 Are students meeting their individual language goals?		
1 = Does not meet standard	Less than 50% meet their individual academic goals.	
2 = Approaching standard	50%-64% meet their individual academic goals.	
3 = Meets standard	65%-79% meet their individual academic goals.	

4 = Exceeds standard

More than 80% meet their individual academic goals.

2026

Rating: 3

Comments: 70% of students met their individual language goals.

2025

Rating: 3

Comments: 72% of students met their individual academic goals.

Source: St. Thomas site visits, Monthly board packets, St. Thomas site visits, MN Stat. 124D.10, subd. 4(f); Statement of compliance sheet, Annual Report

1.4 Are students meeting their individual behavior goals?

Behavior Group 1: Students who are deaf/ hard of hearing only will be utilizing the Disciplinary Action Review Form (DARF).

Behavior Group 2: Students with secondary disabilities (i.e. autism, DCD, etc) individually set goals using DARF

Behavior Group 3: Students with Behavior Intervention Plans set individual goals using targeted behaviors from the DARF.

1 = Does not meet standard

Less than 50% meet their individual behavior goals.

2 = Approaching standard

50%-74% of students met all their individual behavior goals

3 = Meets standard

75%-85% of students met all their individual behavior goals

4 = Exceeds standard

More than 85% of students met all their individual behavior goals

2026

Rating: 3

Comments: 78% of students met their individual behavior goals.

2025

Rating: N/A

Comments: MDS has chosen not to keep data on individual behavior goals based on Tiers but rather are using a more wholistic system of data collection on behavior.

Source: St. Thomas site visits, **Reference:** special education investigation search on MDE website and special education training materials; Special education director interview; Statement of compliance sheet, Annual Report

1.5 Are students meeting their individual academic transition goals?

1 = Does not meet standard	Less than 50% meet their individual transition goals.
2 = Approaching standard	50%-64% meet their individual transition goals.
3 = Meets standard	65%-79% meet their individual transition goals.
4 = Exceeds standard	More than 80% meet their individual transition goals.

2026

Rating: 3

Comments: 67% of students met their individual transition goals.

Rating: 4

2025

Comments: 100% of students met their individual transition goals.

Source: St. Thomas site visits, **Reference:** special education investigation search on MDE website and special education training materials; Special education director interview; Statement of compliance sheet, Annual Report

1.6 Are students meeting school established targets for graduation rate? (MDS students who graduate in accordance with the timeline noted in their IEP are included in this standard.)

1 = Does not meet standard	Less than 66.9% of students graduate in 4 years or matriculate into a transition program as determined by their IEP.
2 = Approaching standard	66.9-79.9%% of students graduate in 4 years or matriculate into a transition program as determined by their IEP.
3 = Meets standard	80-90% of students graduate in 4 years or matriculate into a transition program as determined by their IEP.
4 = Exceeds standard	90%-100% of students graduate in 4 years or matriculate into a transition program as determined by their IEP.

2026

Rating: 4

Comments: 100% of students met the school established target for graduation or matriculated into a transition program as determined by their IEP.

Rating:

2025

Comments: 100% of students met the school established target for graduation.

Source: Monthly board packets, St. Thomas site visits, MN Stat. 124D.10, subd. 4(f); Statement of compliance sheet, Annual Report

1.7 Is the school achieving a relatively high rate of attendance (Note: this overall attendance rate does not include students deemed as “medically complex”)

1 = Does not meet standard

Less than 50% meet the overall attendance rate

2 = Approaching standard

50%-64% meet the overall attendance rate

3 = Meets standard

65%-90% meet the overall attendance rate

4 = Exceeds standard

More than 91% of students meet the overall attendance rate

2026

Rating: 4

Comments: 91.17% of students met the overall attendance rate.

2025
Rating:

Comments: 91.5% of students met the overall attendance rate.

Source: St. Thomas site visits, Reference: special education investigation search on MDE website and special education training materials; Special education director interview; Statement of compliance sheet, Annual Report

1.8 Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with individual education plans (IEPs)? (i.e. The school has a TSES manual that is school-specific and board approved; has a special education director actively involved in working with special education staff and school leadership; effectively contracts with entities to provide services to students when necessary; completes annual IEP meetings on time; has been subject to no investigations related to special needs students; and has received a clean audit by MDE. The school ensures that staff have appropriate training and are familiar with current legislation and research related to best practices for serving students with IEPs.)

1 = Does not meet standard	The school is not fulfilling its legal obligations regarding students with special needs and requires substantial improvement
2 = Approaching standard	The school is fulfilling all of its legal obligations regarding students with special needs but requires some improvements
3 = Meets standard	The school is fulfilling its legal obligations regarding students with special needs and requires no considerable improvements
4 = Exceeds standard	NOT APPLICABLE

2026

Rating: 3

Comments: All staff at Metro Deaf School are working under special education. Most teachers hold a Deaf/Hard of Hearing license, one holds a Blind/Visually Impaired license and 16 staff are DeafBlind interveners. 3 additional staff are currently undergoing DeafBlind intervener training. MDS employs and on-site special education director and five staff carry out the duties of due process coordinators. For the first time, MDS has an in-house orientation and mobility teacher. The school contracts for a part-time school psychologist.

2025

Rating: 3

Comments: 100% of the students at MDS qualify for special education services. Most of the teachers hold a license in Deaf/Hard of Hearing and many have qualifications in more than one area. MDS has a full time special education director and 4 due process coordinators. The school contracts with Career Ventures Incorporated.

Source: St. Thomas site visits, **Reference:** special education investigation search on MDE website and special education training materials; Special education director interview

1.9 Does the school's learning program exemplify the mission and vision of the school?

1 = Does not meet standard	The learning program does not exemplify the mission and vision of the school in policy or practice, and school leadership and/or the Board do not recognize the need to synchronize the two.
2 = Approaching standard	The learning program does not exemplify the mission and vision of the school. School leadership and the Board recognize the need to synchronize the two.
3 = Meets standard	The learning program exemplifies the mission and vision of the school. Staff are able to articulate this through daily teaching.

4 = Exceeds standard	The learning program exemplifies the mission and vision of the school. Staff are able to articulate this through daily teaching. Board, academic, and operational decisions are made with the school's mission in mind.
2026 Rating: 4 Comments: Metro Deaf School continues to live its mission and vision in every aspect of the organization. This commitment is readily evident during site visits and is reinforced through board documents, quarterly reports, and ongoing communication with school leadership and board members. The school's mission is clearly reflected in governance, academic, and operational decision-making, demonstrating that strategic choices are consistently guided by the school's core purpose. During classroom observations, students are actively engaged in learning, feel supported, and benefit from an environment that reflects the school's commitment to excellence.	
2025 Rating: 4 Comments: Metro Deaf School is living its mission and vision. This is clearly observed during site visits. Board documents, communication with school leaders and board members and quarterly reports reflect the school's commitment towards the mission and vision. When visiting the school, the commitment of students, teachers, staff and leadership is observable and reinforced in discussions with students, teachers, leadership and parents. Classroom observations show students engaged and feeling supported. Metro Deaf School continues to provide a peaceful, caring and committed community and is truly dedicated to offering a high-quality education that prepares all students for success. The school was nominated for and received the Governor's Champion of Change Award which was highly deserved.	
Source: Site visits, ongoing correspondence, strategic plan or other documentation	

1.10 Are students learning English (English Learners/EL students) performing at or above the state average for English Learners as measured by MCA proficiency? Note that for schools with greater than 70% of students qualifying for FRL, demographic categories will also be filtered by FRL status.

1.11 a: Reading

1.11b: Math

1 = Does not meet standard	More than 10 percentage points below state EL performance.
2 = Approaching standard	6-10 percentage points below state EL performance.
3 = Meets standard	Within 5 percentage points of state EL performance.
4 = Exceeds standard	Exceeds state EL performance by more than 5 percentage points.

2026

1.10a: N/A

1.10b: N/A

Overall Rating: N/A

Comments: MDS continues to work with MDE regarding EL service.

2025

1.10a: Reading: N/A

1.10b: Math: N/A

Overall Rating: N/A

Comments: Given the population of students at MDS, students with language needs are met in ways other than EL services.

Source: MDE website

1.11 Does students' performance on post-secondary readiness assessments and percentage of graduating seniors meeting transition objectives reflect college and career readiness?

(a) Post- secondary Readiness Assessments: MDS students will score at or above the national average for the ACT

(b) Transition Objectives: MDS Students will have their IEP transition objection goals met at or above 66%

1 = Does not meet standard	(a) On average MDS students score less than a 11 on the ACT (b) Less than 50% of students have their transition goals met at or above 66%.
2 = Approaching standard	(a) On average MDS students score between 11 and 16 on the ACT (b) 50 – 75% of students have their transition goals met at or above 66%.

3 = Meets standard	(a) On average MDS students score between 16 and 21 on the ACT (b) 75%-85% of students have their transition goals met at or above 66% .
4 = Exceeds standard	(a) On average MDS students score over 21 on the ACT (b) More than 85% of students have their transition goals met at or above 66%

2026

1.11a: N/A

1.11b: 2

Comments: 67% of students met their transition goals. The number of students taking the ACT in SY25 was too small to report.

2025

1.11a Rating: N/A

1.11b Rating: 4

Comments: The number of students taking the ACT in SY24 was too small to report. 87% of students met their transition goals.

Source: Annual report

SECTION 2: FINANCIAL VIABILITY – DOES THE SCHOOL EXHIBIT STRONG FISCAL HEALTH?

2.1 Does the school have an active finance committee that meets regularly and reports to the full board?

1 = Does not meet standard	The school has no active finance committee
2 = Approaching standard	The school's finance committee meets only as needed and only to review financials and/or the finance committee does not report its findings to the full board.
3 = Meets standard	The finance committee meets monthly, examines financial statements, and provides a thorough report of its findings to the full board.
4 = Exceeds standard	The finance committee meets at least monthly and examines financial statements, as well as short and long-range financial issues. Thorough reports of findings are provided to the board.

2026

Rating: 4

Comments: The finance committee at MDS meets monthly and reviews all financial materials and addresses financial issues. With the ongoing building project, the finance committee often meets more often to ensure the budget is accurate. Financial reports are delivered to the board on a monthly basis.

2025

Rating: 4

Comments: MDS has a finance committee who meet at least monthly. The committee reports to the board each month and shares all of the necessary documents.

Source: Monthly board packets; Site visits

2.2 Does the board have a fund balance policy that includes fund balance goals over time?

1 = Does not meet standard	The school board does not have a fund balance policy
2 = Approaching standard	The school board has a fund balance policy but it does not include established goals over time
3 = Meets standard	The school board has a fund balance policy including goals over time
4 = Exceeds standard	NOT APPLICABLE.

2026

Rating: 3

Comments: The school has a fund balance policy that allows for contingencies with state funding and issues that may arise.

2025

Rating: 3

Comments: The school has a fund balance policy which includes contingencies for a fund balance that exceeds or is lower than anticipated.

Source: Monthly board packets; Board policy manual

2.3 Has the school successfully completed an annual audit?

1 = Does not meet standard	Audit is not completed or submitted on time to St. Thomas and the state
2 = Approaching standard	NOT APPLICABLE
3 = Meets standard	Audit is completed on time and submitted to St. Thomas and the state
4 = Exceeds standard	NOT APPLICABLE

2026

Rating: 3

Comments: The financial audit for MDS was completed on time and submitted to St. Thomas as well as the state.

2025

Rating: 3

Comments: MDS completed an audit as it was submitted on time to St. Thomas as well as the state.

Source: Annual financial audit and MDE report (Program Finance)

2.4 Does the school have a clean audit with no major findings?

1 = Does not meet standard	The audit is not “clean” OR has at least one of the following: (1) a material weakness on internal controls, (2) a finding on compliance with state law, or (3) three or more other findings
2 = Approaching standard	The audit has two findings, other than internal controls or compliance, but is considered “clean”
3 = Meets standard	The audit is “clean” and has one finding, other than internal controls or compliance
4 = Exceeds standard	The audit has no findings and is “clean”

2026

Rating: 4

Comments: The audit was completed by LB Carlson and MDS received an unmodified opinion with no findings found.

2025

Rating: 4

Comment: MDS has a clean audit with no findings.

Source: Annual financial audit

2.5 Does the school establish and maintain a balanced budget?

- Budget is approved and provided to St. Thomas before June 30;
- Includes a cash flow projection for the year showing positive cash flow;
- Is adjusted in a timely fashion when needed;
- Meets established fund balance policy goals; and
- Does not require major* program cuts)?

***Major program cuts are defined as cuts that impact a school's ability to deliver its core programming to students in a way that negatively impacts student experience.**

1 = Does not meet standard	A budget is not approved by June 30; the budget is not adequately detailed; no cash flow projection is established; lower than expected enrollment requires major budget adjustments; or the budget does not meet the fund balance policy goals set forth by the board.
2 = Approaching standard	A detailed budget is approved before June 30 but may not include a cash flow projection for the year; established budget may require adjustment due to lower than expected enrollment; budget meets the fund balance policy goals set forth by the board.
3 = Meets standard	The detailed budget is approved before June 30 and includes a cash flow projection for the year; established budget is based on realistic enrollment; and is adjusted if needed. The budget meets the fund balance policy goals set forth by the board and allows for maintenance of core programming.
4 = Exceeds standard	NOT APPLICABLE

2026

Rating: 3

Comments: The budget is drafted by the finance committee, executive director and the school's financial management organization. Enrollment, contractor costs, staffing, benefits, facilities, student needs and curriculum needs are all taken into consideration when drafting the budget. The committee presents the draft budget to the full board in April and final budget recommendations are presented and approved by the board in May.

2025

Rating: 3

Comments: MDS completes a budget in January which is then approved by the board. If revisions need to be made, these are conducted within the finance committee and then discussed as a board.

Source: Monthly board packets, St. Thomas site visits, St. Thomas meetings with business manager(s)

2.6 Budgeted Enrollment Realization: Does the school's target ADM (as established by initial board-approved budget) match its actual ADM? (Calculated as actual ADM divided by budgeted ADM.)

1 = Does not meet standard	Enrollment realization is 90% or less.
2 = Approaching standard	Enrollment realization is 90-95%.
3 = Meets standard	Enrollment realization is greater than 95%.
4 = Exceeds standard	NOT APPLICABLE

2026

Rating: 3

Comments: The initial budgeted enrollment was 173 and the actual ADM was 180.

2025

Rating: 3

Comments: The initial budget was approved with an enrollment of 163. The actual enrollment was 172.

Source: Monthly board packets, St. Thomas site visits, St. Thomas meetings with business manager(s)

2.7 Does the school have sufficient cash on hand to meet its near-term obligations?

1 = Does not meet standard	The school has fewer than 30 days cash on hand.
2 = Approaching standard	The school maintains 30-59 days cash on hand.
3 = Meets standard	The school maintains a minimum of 60 days cash on hand or is meeting the cash on hand requirements of its bond covenants, whichever is greater.
4 = Exceeds standard	NOT APPLICABLE

2026

Rating: 3

Comments: MDS continues to maintain a minimum of 45 days cash on hand in order to meet bond covenants.

2025

Rating: 2

Comments: MDS maintains a minimum of 45 days cash on hand, which is stipulated by the bond covenants.

Source: Annual Report, Auditor Report, Financial Statements, Board policies

2.8 For established schools (in operation for at least 4 years) does the school have a sufficient fund balance?

1 = Does not meet standard	The school's fund balance is less than 10% of annual expenditures.
2 = Approaching standard	The school's fund balance is between 10-15% of annual expenditures.
3 = Meets standard	The school's fund balance is more than 15% of annual expenditures.
4 = Exceeds standard	The school's fund balance is more than 20% of annual expenditures AND overall academic outcomes fall within the 'meets standard' range.

2026

Rating: 4

Comments: The school's fund balance is more than 20% of annual expenditures. As the overall academic outcomes fall within the meets standard range, the school exceeds the standard on this benchmark.

2025

Rating: 4

Comments: The fund balance is more than 37% of expenditures.

Source: Annual Report, Auditor Report, Financial Statements, Board policies

2.9 Cash Flow: Indicates a school's change in cash balance from one period to another.

Multi-year cash flow = Year 3 Total Cash – Year 1 Total Cash;

One-year cash flow = Year 2 Total Cash – Year 1 Total Cash

APPLICABLE ONLY IF FUND BALANCE FALLS BELOW 10%

1 = Does not meet standard	Multi-year cash flow is negative
2 = Approaching standard	Multi-year cash flow is positive, but trend does not meet standard
3 = Meets standard	Multi-year cumulative cash flow is positive and cash flow is

positive each year

4 = Exceeds standard	Not applicable
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2026

Rating: N/A

Comments: Fund balance is not below 10%.

2025

Rating: N/A

Comments: This is not applicable as the fund balance is not below 10%.

Source: Three most recent years' audited balance sheets

2.10 Current Ratio: Measures school's ability to pay its obligations over next 12 months.

Current Ratio = Current Assets divided by Current Liabilities

APPLICABLE ONLY IF FUND BALANCE FALLS BELOW 10%

1 = Does not meet standard	Current ratio is less than or equal to 0.9
2 = Approaching standard	Current ratio is greater than 0.9 but less than 1.1
3 = Meets standard	Current ratio is greater than or equal to 1.1
4 = Exceeds standard	Not applicable

2026

Rating: N/A

Comments: Fund balance is not below 10%.

2025

Rating: N/A

Comments: This is not applicable as the fund balance is not below 10%.

Source: Annual Report, Auditor Report (audited balance sheet), Financial Statements, Board policies

SECTION 3: IS THE ORGANIZATION EFFECTIVE AND WELL RUN?

3.1 Do all board members meet the statutory requirements for initial and ongoing training on board roles and responsibilities, governance, finance and employment practices?

1 = Does not meet standard	Three or more board members are/have been out of compliance during the school year.
2 = Approaching standard	Two or fewer board members are/have been out of compliance during the school year.
3 = Meets standard	All board members meet training requirements
4 = Exceeds standard	NOT APPLICABLE.

2026

Rating: 3

Comments: Per the annual report and updated quarterly reports, all board members are compliant with board training requirements.

2025

Rating: 3

Comments: All board members are included and compliant with training requirements.

Source: Monthly board packets, St. Thomas site visits, Statement of compliance sheet

3.2 Does the board meet its governance model requirements as laid out in its bylaws and as required by Minnesota Statute?

1 = Does not meet standard	The governance model is not clear in the bylaws, the governance model does not meet the requirements laid out in the Charter School Law, or the board does not meet its governance model as laid out in the bylaws.
2 = Approaching standard	The governance model is clearly outlined in the school's bylaws and meets the requirements of the Charter School Law but the board has struggled to recruit members to fill all required seats.
3 = Meets standard	The governance model is clearly outlined in the school's bylaws and meets the requirements of the Charter School Law. The board's recruitment system has resulted in adequate membership which consistently meets all requirements of the Charter Law.
4 = Exceeds standard	NOT APPLICABLE.

2026

Rating: 3

Comments: The governance model is clearly outlined in the bylaws and stipulates that the board will consist of at least 1 currently employed teacher, at least one parent with a student currently enrolled at the school and at least one community member. This governance model is being followed and the board membership is compliant with the bylaws and Charter Law.

2025

Rating: 3

Comments: The governance of the school is outlined in the bylaws and these are kept up to date.

Source: Board bylaws, MN Stat. 124E, Board minutes or interviews with board members

3.3 Does the school board have a board-approved professional development plan for the director (if applicable as required by *Minnesota Statutes 2016, 124E.12, subd. 2(b)*)?

1 = Does not meet standard	The board does not have an approved professional development plan for its school leader.
2 = Approaching standard	The board has a professional development plan for its school leader, but the plan is not comprehensive or effectively utilized.
3 = Meets standard	The board has a professional development plan for its school leader that is updated annually based on the director evaluation.
4 = Exceeds standard	The board has a professional development plan for its school leader that is updated annually based on the director evaluation. The plan is comprehensive and effectively utilized.

2026

Rating: N/A

Comments: This is not required as the director has an administrative license. However, the board does maintain a comprehensive professional development plan for the school leader.

2025

Rating: N/A

Comments: This is not required as the director has an administrative license.

Source: Board professional development plan, board minutes, director evaluation

3.4 Does the board understand and comply with the Open Meeting Law and maintain orderly records including its bylaws, policies, board/committee minutes, and board packets?

1 = Does not meet standard	The board does not understand the requirements of the Open Meeting Law and has been out of compliance more than once in the last year and/or the board does not maintain its records in an orderly fashion
2 = Approaching standard	The board exhibits working knowledge of the requirements of the Open Meeting Law and has been out of compliance no more than once in the last year and maintains its records properly, with minor exceptions.
3 = Meets standard	The board understands and meets the requirements of the Open Meeting Law and maintains its records in an orderly fashion.
4 = Exceeds standard	NOT APPLICABLE

2026 Rating: 3 Comments: Records are maintained in an orderly fashion and the board has a good working knowledge of Open Meeting Law.
2025 Rating: 3 Comments: MDS is aware of and complies with Open Meeting Law. Board packets are complete and submitted on time.
Source: Board minutes, ongoing correspondence, St. Thomas site visits

3.5 Are all the school’s educational staff appropriately licensed?	
1 = Does not meet standard	At least one educational staff is not appropriately licensed or does not hold appropriate and current waivers or variances.
2 = Approaching standard	At least one educational staff has been on a waiver or variance for more than one year.
3 = Meets standard	All educational staff are appropriately licensed.
4 = Exceeds standard	NOT APPLICABLE
2026 Rating: 3 Comments: All staff are appropriately licensed. The license compliance check has included all staff members listed in the annual report as well as staff on the school website. The staff on the school website were crosschecked with the annual report and any staff using a name other than their given name were noted and verified with the school, the annual report and the STAR report.	
2025 Rating: 3 Comments: All staff are appropriately licensed.	
Source: MDE STAR Discrepancy Reports (self-reported data, crosscheck with licensure file checks) D-1	

3.6 Does the school follow the admission policies and procedures outlined in law?

1 = Does not meet standard	The school does not follow the admission policies and procedures outlined in law.
2 = Approaching standard	NOT APPLICABLE
3 = Meets standard	The school follows the admission policies and procedures outlined in law.
4 = Exceeds standard	NOT APPLICABLE

2026

Rating: 3

Comments: This benchmark is a much disputed item for MDE which has yet to be clarified. Per a letter sent to MDE by St. Thomas in March 2026, the school follows the admission policies and procedures outlined in law and in Minnesota Statute 124E.11(h)(i). While MDE has yet to respond to the letter, St. Thomas asserts that MDS is in compliance with admission policies and procedures.

2025

Rating: 3

Comments: The school follows admissions policies and procedures per MN statute.

Source: Annual report, authorizer observation

3.7 Does the school complete criminal background checks in accordance with MN Statute and St. Thomas expectations?

1 = Does not meet standard	The school cannot certify that it completes criminal background checks of staff and the board.
2 = Approaching standard	The school certifies that it completes criminal background checks of the staff but not the board.
3 = Meets standard	The school certifies that it completes criminal background checks of staff and the board, as required by school policy.
4 = Exceeds standard	NOT APPLICABLE

2026

Rating: 3

Comments: The school has a background check policy and completed background checks that are compliant with Minnesota Statute.

2025

Rating: 3

Comments: MDS completes background checks for staff, board members and volunteers when necessary.

Source: St. Thomas site visit, board chair interview, background check policy

3.8 Is the school compliant with other applicable law?

1 = Does not meet standard	The school is not in compliance with other applicable law.
2 = Approaching standard	NOT APPLICABLE
3 = Meets standard	The school is in compliance with other applicable law.
4 = Exceeds standard	NOT APPLICABLE

2026

Rating: 3

Comments: MDS is in compliance with all applicable laws and statutes. The governance committee keeps a close eye on legislative updates and ensures that the school maintains compliance.

2025

Rating: 3

Comments: MDS is in compliance with all applicable laws and statutes.

Source: St. Thomas site visit, board chair interview, background check policy

3.9 Do all board members exhibit understanding of the role of the board and utilize nonprofit governance best practices including:

- Understanding of board and school leader roles (governance vs. management)
- Annual board self-evaluation
- Annual school-leader evaluation
- Annual evaluation of Educational Service Provider (CMO/EMO) if applicable
- Orientation process for new members
- Regular Strategic planning (at least once every five years)

1 = Does not meet standard	At least some board members do not understand the role of the board and the role of the school leader. Board policies and practices are not transparent or not present. Board meetings often address issues not central to the role of the board and/or fail to address core functions such as leader evaluation and school financial/academic health.
2 = Approaching standard	Some board members, but not all, exhibit understanding of their roles as board members and the role of the school leader. Board policies and practices are not always transparent and/or are not fully developed. The board inconsistently addresses issues central to its role such as leader evaluation and school financial/academic health.
3 = Meets standard	The Board exhibits understanding of its role and the role of the school leader. The board policies and practices are generally transparent and systems are in place to maximize effectiveness of the board, including an orientation process for new members, annual board self-evaluation, annual school leader (and EMO/CMO if applicable) evaluation, and a plan for conducting and tracking initial and ongoing training. The board engages in regular strategic planning. The board is able to adequately sustain its membership through recruitment efforts.
4 = Exceeds standard	NOT APPLICABLE

2026

Rating: 3

Comments: Through focus group interviews with the Board Chair and board members, it is clear that there is a good understanding of the role of the Board and the school leader. New members meet with the board chair and the school director prior to assuming their role on the board for orientation. A board self-evaluation is completed annually and informs topics to be explored. Per the most recent board self-evaluation, areas of need include financial oversight, legislative updates and advocacy. The annual school leader evaluation includes feedback from staff as well as the board and also includes a self-evaluation.

2025

Rating: 3

Comments: The board members understand the role of the board and work to be accessible and transparent to the school community.

Source: Site visits, ongoing correspondence, board minutes, interview with board chair

3.10 Does the board regularly review, update, and approve its bylaws and policies such that they maintain compliance with state law and current best practices?

1 = Does not meet standard	Board policies and/or bylaws are outdated and not reviewed regularly.
2 = Approaching standard	Board policies and/or bylaws are reviewed and approved as needed, but are not comprehensively reviewed on a regularly scheduled basis.
3 = Meets standard	Board policies and bylaws are reviewed for content and legal compliance, updated, and approved on a regularly scheduled basis, no less than once every three years.
4 = Exceeds standard	NOT APPLICABLE

2026

Rating: 3

Comments: The governance committee ensures that the bylaws and policies are updated regularly and that all policies remain compliant with state law. The current bylaws were reviewed and updated in the 24-25 school year.

2025

Rating: 3

Comments: Board policies and bylaws are reviewed and approved on a regular basis.

Source: Board minutes, board policies, Governance binder, St. Thomas site visit

3.11 Does the board submit a complete board packet (including agenda, minutes, director report, other relevant documents, check register, cash flow sheet, enrollment report, balance sheet and income and expense report), to be received by all members of the board, school leadership, and St. Thomas at least three days prior to all board meetings?

1 = Does not meet standard	Board packets are not submitted on time AND are incomplete
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2 = Approaching standard	Board packets are submitted on time (more than 75 percent of the time) but incomplete OR not submitted on time (less than 75 percent of the time) but complete
3 = Meets standard	Board packets are submitted on time (more than 75 percent of the time) and complete
4 = Exceeds standard	NOT APPLICABLE
2026	
Rating: 3	
Comments: Board packets are complete and are consistently submitted on time.	
2025	
Rating: 3	
Comments: Board packets are submitted on time and are complete.	
Source: St. Thomas site visits, Reference EL Packet, Formalized complaints at MDE, or Critical Elements review (SP-1)	

3.12 Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to English Learners (ELs)? This includes maintaining an established EL program with a written plan for service at all grade and proficiency levels, securing appropriate staffing, supplying relevant professional development to all staff, ensuring that information on student EL status is available to all classroom teachers, and following MN Standardized Statewide EL Procedures for identification, entrance, and exit. The school ensures that staff have appropriate training, hold appropriate licenses, and are familiar with current legislation and research related to best practices for serving EL students.

1 = Does not meet standard	The school is <u>not</u> fulfilling its legal obligations regarding ELs and requires substantial improvement
2 = Approaching standard	The school is fulfilling all of its legal obligations regarding ELs but requires some improvements
3 = Meets standard	The school is fulfilling its legal obligations regarding ELs and requires no considerable improvements
4 = Exceeds standard	NOT APPLICABLE

2026

Rating: N/A

Comments: MDS is working with MDE on the best way to fulfill EL services for their students.

2025

Rating: N/A

Comments: Given the nature of the program, MDS does not provide EL services.

Source: St. Thomas site visits, Reference EL Packet, Formalized complaints at MDE, or Critical Elements review (SP-1)

3.13 Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with individual education plans (IEPs)? (i.e. The school has a TSES manual that is school-specific and board-approved; has a special education director actively involved in working with special education staff and school leadership; effectively contracts with entities to provide services to students when necessary; completes annual IEP meetings on time; has been subject to no investigations related to special needs students; and has received a clean audit by MDE in the last audited school year. The school ensures that staff have appropriate training and are familiar with current legislation and research related to best practices for serving students with IEPs.)

1 = Does not meet standard	The school is not fulfilling its legal obligations regarding students with special needs and requires substantial improvement
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2 = Approaching standard	The school is fulfilling all of its legal obligations regarding students with special needs but requires some improvements
3 = Meets standard	The school is fulfilling its legal obligations regarding students with special needs and requires no considerable improvements
4 = Exceeds standard	NOT APPLICABLE
2026	
Rating: 3	
Comments: The school is fulfilling all legal requirements for students. No complaints have been filed against MDS concerning special education services.	
2025	
Rating: 3	
Comments: No complaints have been lodged against MDS with regard to special education services. With 100% of the students at MDS receiving special education services, all of the legal obligations are being followed and are in place.	
Source: St. Thomas site visits, Reference: special education investigation search on MDE website and special education training materials; Special education director interview	

3.14 Is the school able to maintain a high percentage of teacher retention?	
1 = Does not meet standard	Fewer than 70 percent of teachers remained at the school last year (excluding retirements).
2 = Approaching standard	Between 70 and 84 percent of teachers remained at the school last year (excluding retirements).
3 = Meets standard	More than 85 percent of teachers remained at the school last year (excluding retirements).
4 = Exceeds standard	Over the course of the contract (or at least 3 years) teacher retention has consistently remained high (>85 percent)
2026	
Rating: 3	
Comments: Teacher retention for the current year was 92%.	
2025	
Rating: 3	
Comments: The teacher retention rate for the current year was 82%,	

Source: Annual report

3.15 Does the school generally retain its students from October 1st through the close of the school year?

1 = Does not meet standard	Student retention rates are more than 10% below the school's agreed-upon target rates.
2 = Approaching standard	Student retention rates are 5-10% below the school's agreed-upon target rates.
3 = Meets standard	The school is consistently fully enrolled. Student retention rates are within 5% or above the school's agreed-upon target rates
4 = Exceeds standard	NOT APPLICABLE

2026

Rating: 3

Comment: Per the annual report, 150 students were enrolled by October 1 and 162 were enrolled at the end of the school year.

2025

Rating: 3

Comment: The school is consistently fully enrolled and student retention rates remain high.

Source: Annual report

3.16 Does the school exhibit a high level of parent satisfaction?

1 = Does not meet standard	Less than 75% of parents surveyed indicate they are satisfied with the school OR the school failed to achieve a response rate greater than 25%.
2 = Approaching standard	More than 75% but less than 85% of parents surveyed indicate they are satisfied with the school and the school achieved a response rate greater than 25%.
3 = Meets standard	More than 85% but less than 95% of parents surveyed indicate they are satisfied with the school and the school achieved a response rate greater than 25%.
4 = Exceeds standard	At least 95% of parents surveyed indicate they are satisfied with the school and the school achieved a response rate greater than 25%.

2026

Rating: N/A

Comment: Surveys were conducted during parent teacher conferences and parents continue to indicate a high rate of satisfaction with the school and community. This was also the message from the parents in interviews conducted at the site visits.

2025

Rating: N/A

Comment: MDS has taken to conducting parent surveys and questionnaires at various school functions throughout the school year rather than through one survey. Thus, parent feedback is being solicited, but not in the way it can be scored. Through these informal surveys and in interviews with the authorizer, it is clear that parents are satisfied with the school and appreciate the experience for their children.

Source: Annual report, School parent satisfaction survey--overall satisfaction indicator

3.17 Is the school's physical plant safe and conducive to learning?

1 = Does not meet standard	The facility requires much improvement in order to provide a safe environment that is conducive to learning. Significant health and safety requirements have not been met OR the school lacks many conditions such as the following: a) a design well-suited to meet the curricular and social needs of its students, faculty, and community members; b) a size appropriate for the enrollment and student-teacher ratios in each class; c) adequate maintenance and security; d) well-maintained equipment and
	furniture that match the educational needs of the students; e) accessibility to all students.
2 = Approaching standard	Significant health and safety requirements are being met, but the facility needs some improvement in order to provide a safe environment that is conducive to learning. It partially – but not fully – provides conditions such as the following: a) a design well-suited to meet the curricular and social needs of its students, faculty, and community members; b) a size appropriate for the enrollment and student-teacher ratios in each class; c) adequate maintenance and security; d) well-maintained equipment and furniture that match the educational needs of the students; e) accessibility to all students.
3 = Meets standard	Significant health and safety code requirements are being met AND the facility generally provides a safe environment that is conducive to learning, based on conditions such as: a) a design well-suited to meet the curricular and social needs of its students, faculty, and community members; b) a size appropriate for the enrollment and student-teacher ratios in each class; c) adequate maintenance and security; d) well-maintained equipment and furniture that match the educational needs of the students; e) accessibility to all students.
4 = Exceeds standard	All health and safety code requirements are being met AND the facility generally provides a safe environment that is conducive to learning, based on conditions such as: a) a design well-suited to meet the curricular and social needs of its students, faculty, and community members; b) a size appropriate for the enrollment and student-teacher ratios in each class; c) adequate maintenance and security; d) well-maintained equipment and furniture that match the educational needs of the students; e) accessibility to all students. Additionally, the facility meets the mission of the school.
2026 Rating:4 Comments: The school provides a facility that supports students learning and student needs. The addition of the new classrooms, offices and gymnasium will add a great deal to the school and the community is very much looking forward to the completion of this building project. The facility is well maintained and effectively supports the educational program.	
2025 Rating: 4 Comments: MDS has made necessary changes to the facility over the last couple of years which have	

helped with the lack of space and increase in enrollment. All health and safety codes are upheld and the school is a safe environment suited to the varying needs of the students. A new gym is set to be constructed soon which will be a very welcome addition to the school and entire community!

Source: Authorizer observation