



August 19, 2026

Community of Peace Academy
471 Magnolia Avenue East
St. Paul, MN 55130

Dear Board of Directors and Executive Director McGowan,

This letter provides a summary of the SY2026 Annual Evaluation for Community of Peace Academy (CPA). A central component of the University of St. Thomas's (St. Thomas) oversight process is the completion of an annual evaluation. The evaluation is based on the agreed-upon rubric contained in the school's contract. Attached you will find the University of St. Thomas' annual evaluation of CPA's performance. The scores issued in the evaluation report are calculated using data collected in the school's annual report and audit, authorizer site visits, financial statements, board packets, board observations, and other documentation provided by the school and the Minnesota Department of Education throughout the year.

While St. Thomas strives to use the most accurate and up-to-date information available to construct these evaluations, we recognize that the practices of each school are constantly evolving and changing. To this end, we hope that this document serves not only to provide feedback to the school's board and leadership, but also to open a dialogue that may deepen our understanding of the school's operations.

To assess the performance of the school, St. Thomas rates indicators in three major categories: Academic Performance, Financial Viability, and Organizational Aptitude. We have developed several key questions in each area and use an assessment system to determine the extent to which the school is meeting the expectations enumerated in its charter contract. The assessment system uses the following four-point scale:

- 4 = Exceeds standard
- 3 = Meets standard
- 2 = Approaching standard
- 1 = Does not meet standard

Below is a summary of the school's performance in each of the three categories. Detailed feedback on the school's performance is included in the attached rubric. Keep in mind that St. Thomas expects its schools to achieve scores of 3, Meets Standard, in all areas and that achieving an overall score of 4, Exceeds Standard, is not possible because some compliance-based measures are only eligible for 3 points.

Community of Peace Academy continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to its mission, stable financial stewardship, sound governance, and a welcoming community for students and families. The evaluation reflects meaningful strengths in graduation, early learning, college and career preparation, teacher retention, family engagement, and mission alignment, while also identifying continued opportunities to strengthen academic proficiency, growth, attendance, and post-secondary readiness outcomes.

Academic Performance - Is the learning program a success?

Overall Score: 2.32

Community of Peace Academy continues to exemplify its mission of educating the whole person and fostering academic excellence, relationships, character, and peace. Site visits documented a strong relational culture, student engagement, character education, and consistent mission alignment among staff, families, leadership, and the Board. The school's learning program earned an Exceeds Standard rating for mission alignment, reflecting a community in which the mission is visible in both daily practice and organizational decision-making.

The evaluation also identifies several encouraging academic outcomes. CPA's four-year graduation rate increased to 86.4%, exceeding the statewide rate of 84.9%. Early learning outcomes remain especially strong: 83% of PreK students were in the low-risk benchmark category for early reading and 81% for early math, with 85% and 86%, respectively, demonstrating typical-to-aggressive growth. In addition, 100% of high school students who applied to post-secondary programs were accepted, and 28.1% of high school students participated in PSEO.

There are also signs of progress within the school's broader academic program. Reading and mathematics proficiency both exceeded the school's demographic comparison group, and elementary proficiency improved from the prior year. In mathematics, the percentage of students improving achievement levels was higher than the statewide rate. Special education proficiency increased in both reading and mathematics, and several student demographic groups showed gains. CPA continues to support improvement through weekly PLCs, instructional coaching, a dedicated data coach, FastBridge progress monitoring, READ Act implementation, and targeted intervention systems.

At the same time, academic proficiency and growth remain the clearest areas for continued attention. MCA reading and mathematics results remain below statewide averages, and FastBridge end-of-year growth results show that many students are not yet meeting expected goals, particularly in mathematics. ACT readiness also remains below the rubric target. Continued focus on rigorous core instruction, targeted interventions, progress monitoring, and consistent implementation across grade levels will be important to translating CPA's strong culture and support systems into stronger academic outcomes.

Overall, CPA has a mission-aligned learning program with notable strengths in early learning, graduation, college access, student support, and school culture. The school's improvement infrastructure is well established, and the evaluation shows several areas of positive movement. Sustained attention to proficiency, growth, attendance, and college-readiness measures will be central to ensuring that academic outcomes more consistently reflect the strength of CPA's broader program.

Financial Viability - Does the school exhibit strong financial health?

Overall Score: 3.25

CPA continues to demonstrate strong and stable financial management. The Finance Committee meets regularly with the financial manager and provides financial reporting to the full Board. The school maintains a fund balance policy requiring a 20-30% reserve, approves its budget prior to June 30, uses conservative enrollment assumptions, and incorporates long-range planning while preserving core programming.

The school's fiscal position remains healthy. CPA's FY25 audit was clean and contained no findings. The audited fund balance was approximately \$8.28 million, or 53.3% of annual expenditures, and the school remained well above its minimum cash-on-hand requirement, reporting more than 180 days of cash on hand during the year. Enrollment realization remained above the rubric threshold, and CPA continues to meet all applicable bond covenants.

Overall, CPA exhibits strong fiscal health supported by prudent budgeting, substantial reserves, strong liquidity, realistic enrollment planning, a clean audit, and consistent Board oversight. These practices position the school well to sustain programming and respond thoughtfully to future needs.

Organizational Aptitude - Is the organization effective and well run?

Overall Score: 3.0

CPA continues to demonstrate that it is a well-run, mission-focused organization with established governance and compliance systems. Board members meet statutory training requirements, comply with Open Meeting Law, maintain orderly records, review policies and bylaws regularly, and submit complete board packets on time. The Board demonstrates a clear understanding of governance and management roles and engages in leader evaluation, board self-review, succession planning, and strategic planning.

The school fulfills its legal obligations related to English Learner, special education, and PreK services and maintains substantial staffing and support systems for students. CPA's professional development program is aligned with academic, behavioral, compliance, and mission-related priorities and includes weekly PLCs, instructional coaching, EL and special education training, data analysis, Responsive Classroom, Developmental Designs, and character education. Teacher retention is a notable strength, with 89% of staff returning and retention remaining consistently above the rubric's 85% threshold over multiple years.

Family and community engagement are additional strengths. More than 90% of surveyed parents reported timely school communication and 94.2% reported feeling welcomed and valued. Family Engagement Specialists, interpreters, translated communications, home-school outreach, and parent-teacher conferences help make engagement accessible across the school's diverse community. CPA also maintains a safe, well-maintained physical plant that supports its PreK-12 program, and student retention remained strong at 94%.

Several areas merit continued attention. Consistent attendance remains below expectations despite improvement from the prior year, and the school should continue its intensive work to reduce chronic absenteeism and strengthen daily participation. The parent survey reflected strong satisfaction, but the response rate was 9.7%, creating an opportunity to broaden participation so that survey feedback is more representative of the full school community.

CPA should also continue to maintain current public-facing compliance materials and documentation. The evaluation indicates that statutory requirements are being met, and continued attention to documentation, transparency, and timely submission will support the school's strong governance and compliance practices.

Overall, CPA is a stable and effective organization with engaged governance, strong staff continuity, sound operations, deep mission alignment, and a demonstrated commitment to students and families. The school is well positioned to build on these strengths while continuing to improve attendance and academic outcomes.

Closing and Follow-up Requests

The detailed rubric accompanying this letter provides scoring and additional commentary on each measure embedded in the school's contract with St. Thomas and represents our current assessment of the school's performance as related to its accountability plan. It is important to note that, while this assessment is formative, it will be part of the school's summative evaluation and thus should be as accurate as possible. Please feel free to provide additional information or ask questions at your convenience. No additional follow-up is requested of the school at this time.

The University of St. Thomas is pleased to authorize Community of Peace Academy and commends the school's continued commitment to educating the whole person, building a peaceful community, and supporting students from PreK through graduation. It is a pleasure serving as CPA's liaison, and I look forward to continuing a positive and productive relationship with the school for many years to come.

Sincerely,

Sean P. Sonderman

Sean Sonderman

Program Manager I, Charter School Authorizing

University of St. Thomas

C.C.: Terry Moffatt, Director of St. Thomas Charter School Authorizing