



# **VERMILION COUNTRY SCHOOL**

**PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL DISTRICT #4707**

**SCHOOL YEAR 2020-2021  
WORLD'S BEST WORKFORCE & ANNUAL REPORT**

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## 1. School Information

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### CONTACT INFORMATION

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### GRADES SERVED

Vermilion Country School (VCS) serves grades 7-12.

### YEAR OPENED

2013

### MISSION AND VISION

**Mission:** Developing successful adults with skills to enrich their communities and the environment.

**Vision:** Developing autonomy, fostering hope, building relationships, and becoming agents of change: enriching ourselves, our communities, and the world.

**Actions:** Collaborate, Discover, Reflect, Find Your Place

### AUTHORIZER INFORMATION

On February 6, 2018, the Osprey Wilds Charter School Division recommended the Osprey Wilds Board of Directors renew the charter contract of Vermilion Country School for a full term of five years (July 1, 2018-June 30, 2023), giving the school authority to provide instruction to students in grades 7-12 in the manner set forth in its Application for Charter Reauthorization, with a total enrollment of up to 55 students.

The authorizing mission of Osprey Wilds is to ensure quality academic and environmental literacy outcomes for students in Minnesota by conducting effective oversight and evaluation of its authorized schools, providing strategic support to schools, and making informed and merit-based decisions about its portfolio of charter schools.

The authorizing vision of Osprey Wilds is to authorize a portfolio of high performing charter schools that instill a connection and commitment to the environment in their school communities, while working towards a healthy planet where all people live in balance with the Earth.

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<https://ospreywilds.org/charter-school-division>

## 2. Implementation of Primary and Additional Statutory Purposes

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The primary purpose of Vermilion Country School is to improve all pupil learning and all student achievement. The school will report its implementation of this primary purpose in its annual report.

The educational program will be targeted, but comprehensive, focusing on state and national academic standards, and designed with flexibility to allow instructional decisions to be made expressly for individual students.

The program will be reviewed and refined on an ongoing basis.

The overall instructional program will incorporate the following major components:

**Standards** – The concepts, skills and information which allow focus and alignment of the instructional program across the grade levels.

**Assessment** - Multiple and varied measures through which students, staff, parents and the broader community are informed of student progress and achievement relative to the goals and standards for student learning.

- A comprehensive, standards-based assessment system
  - Formative assessments will be used to engage students in learning by setting goals, tracking their own progress and taking the necessary steps to move forward in their learning.
  - Growth goals will be set for all students, progress will be monitored, and the student progress data will be analyzed by the staff. The staff will use the information from the analysis of student progress data to plan next instructional steps for each student.
  - Student performance data from multiple measures will be used to:
    - Inform students, parents, and staff of individual student learning needs
    - Place students in appropriate groups and courses
    - Focus/refocus instruction to address the needs of individual students
    - Inform program refinement efforts, curriculum review, and professional development
  - Parents will be kept informed of their child's progress through clear and timely information from the school staff.
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- Small class size to promote a safe, nurturing environment and lower student-teacher ratio.
  - Small group work developing critical-thinking and problem-solving skills as students work together rather than compete against each other.
  - Honoring life skills, stewardship and leadership opportunities through a habit of community service which includes regular scheduled events that benefit many in our community, young and old as well as meeting state standards and college and career readiness.
  - Multi-grade 7-12 students use inquiry learning in a variety of collaborations with local agencies, community experts, volunteers and cross-curricular activities.
  - Cohesive staff team teaching and layering curricular concepts to meet all student levels
  - An advisor-to-student ratio of approximately 1:10 in most academic settings takes place in open classrooms. This ensures cultural responsiveness, positive behavior, and fair treatment of student-to-student, staff-to-student student-to-staff and staff-to-staff.
  - Technology – Students use their own school-issued laptop and VCS uses school wide Google platforms including docs, sheets, calendar, classroom, forms, sites, and email. Grades and attendance are available online through JMC for students and parents to access at their convenience.

- Weekly school-wide team-building activities to strengthen emotional security and interdependence resulting in ready-to-learn culture. Within classes, using the latest brain research techniques with common language shared from school-wide social skills work.
- Student-led activities and student-led academics are offered, allowing voice and choice, along with built-in opportunities to make a difference in our school climate and our wider community.

The additional purposes of Vermilion Country School are to:

- Increase learning opportunities for all pupils.
- Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.

The school will report its implementation of these additional purposes in its annual report.

### **1) INCREASING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL PUPILS**

VCS operates in an area with rich learning opportunities in environmental education and local economics in forestry/mining that haven't always been used to the full potential by the local school district. VCS staff will capitalize on these opportunities and design program elements to use these resources to the benefit of the students.

The 2020-2021 school year continued the "My Space" observations. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, field trips and professionals/community experts could not be utilized. Once the COVID-19 pandemic is passed, VCS will resume field trips which provide more real-world situations for students to see, thus increasing their understanding and learning opportunities as relates back to the classroom.

#### **▪ Learning through community service**

Community service is a key element in both the vision and the mission of VCS and the staff see almost limitless opportunity for expanding learning opportunities for students, particularly outside of the classroom, through community service. As part of our educational plan, we intend to incorporate community service into the students' individual learning plans and elements of environmental education to provide potential college and career opportunities that are available in this region. Our view is that giving back to the community is important, but it is also important for students to see careers beyond minimum wage retail options.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, community service in 2020-2021 consisted only of the highway cleanup project.

#### **▪ Utilization of community-based assets**

The work of the small rural school is no longer to emulate the urban or suburban school, but to design a learning environment that truly serves the needs of its community's young people by utilizing the multitude of learning assets and possibilities within the community. The Tower-Soudan area is home to many valuable educational assets that have not been well-utilized by the traditional public school but will be utilized extensively by VCS in order to increase learning opportunities. Such assets include the Department of Natural Resources area headquarters, located in Tower, which maintains staff across a wide range of natural resource disciplines, the new Lake Vermilion State Park, the Soudan Underground Mine State Park, the Bois Forte Heritage Center and Museum, the University of Minnesota's Underground Science Laboratory in Soudan, the Superior National Forest, Vermilion Community College as well as community residents with particular expertise. The school will take full advantage of all of these for students to develop an understanding of home; its social structure, its history, its economy, its music, its art, and its ecology.

## 2) CREATING NEW PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHERS, INCLUDING THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LEARNING PROGRAM AT THE SCHOOL SITE

Advisors will be responsible for the curriculum used in the various courses. Advisors continually collaborate with each other regarding cross-learning opportunities.

## 3. Student Enrollment & Demographics

### STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Enrollment continues to be a challenge for the school. Marketing efforts included additional Facebook advertising and monthly flyers in a local newspaper.

Number of Students Enrolled	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22 (est.)
7th Grade	1	5	2
8th Grade	4	2	4
9th Grade	5	5	2
10th Grade	7	6	5
11th Grade	9	8	5
12th Grade	5	12	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Total ADM (Average Daily Membership) for year</b>	<b>31.41</b>	<b>30.88</b>	

### STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Vermilion Country School has students from multiple communities in the region. The region features small towns with mostly white and American Indian populations. The demographic is mostly lower socioeconomic, and our school population has a slightly higher than average special education makeup due to the alternative nature of the school.

Demographic Trends	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22 (est.)
Total Enrollment	31	38	25
Male	13	17	10
Female	18	21	15
Special Education	8	10	5
English Learners	0	0	0
Free/Reduced Priced Lunch	24	29	25
Black, not of Hispanic Origin	0	0	0
Hispanic/Latino	0	0	0
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0	0
American Indian/Alaskan Native	7	11	7
White, not of Hispanic Origin	24	27	18

## 4. Student Attendance, Attrition & Mobility

### STUDENT ATTENDANCE

The coronavirus pandemic caused VCS to shift its learning model multiple times throughout the school year. Initially, VCS started full days, in-person, however, due to either county infection rates, or staff exposure, VCS had to switch to full-distance learning. By late February/early March, VCS was operating in a hybrid mode (some days in-person, some days distance). Student attendance on distance learning days was poor.

Consistent Attendance is a measure of students who attend school on a regular basis and are not frequently absent. A student is considered consistently attending if they attend more than 90 percent of the time the student is enrolled during the year.

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
<b>Consistent Attendance Percentage</b>	36.1%	38.7%	16.7%

### STUDENT ATTRITION

Student attrition rates were higher than our goal of 65%. In the upcoming years, we anticipate a 70% attrition rate based on the number of students that are on track to graduate and the academic, culture, and discipline team's efforts to work with students, parents, and the community to increase student retention.

<b>Percentage of students who were continuously enrolled between October 1 of the 2019-2020 school year and October 1 of the 2020-21 school year.</b>	82%
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<b>Percentage of students who continued enrollment in the school from Spring 2020 to October 1, 2020.</b>	82%
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### STUDENT MOBILITY

	Summer Transfers In	Number of students *	Mid-year Transfers In	Mid-year Transfers Out	Total Mid-year Transfers	Mobility Index **
<b>2017-18</b>		57	0	7	7	12%
<b>2018-19</b>		54	13	16	29	53%
<b>2019-20</b>		39	8	11	19	49%
<b>2020-21</b>		38	10	5	15	40%

\* As of October 1

\*\* Total mid-year transfers divided by number of students on October 1.

<b>Percentage of students who were enrolled for 95% or more of the 2020-21 school year.</b>	71%
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## 5. Educational Approach & Curriculum

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At Vermilion Country School, we encourage students to articulate their passions, while we leverage their interests to fit curriculum content. This is particularly important for students who have had negative experiences in school and are turned off traditional learning. When students' curiosity is activated, teaching and learning flow naturally and become fun! Fun environments increase opening student's mind up to trying new things and making new connections. As educators, our role is to tap into this natural drive and help direct it towards healthy and positive paths.

At Vermilion Country School, equal attention is paid to a balance of priorities: intellectual, physical, emotional, and social. Students today are graduating into a turbulent world, where a hurricane of change, shock and disruption is now the norm. In addition to overcoming academic challenges, we also strive to help students engage and develop their strengths to lead, and really live and enjoy, a well-lived life.

Students have opportunities to build their resources, develop new skills, and discover their talents. These experiences encourage self-reflective behavior and strengthen relationships to family and the wider community. Living these principles inspires hope and leads to promising futures rich with dignity, purpose, and life & career options.

Special Education in the 2020-21 school consisted of two special education teachers sharing the responsibility and three paraprofessionals. There were 8 special education students for most of the year.

VCS has no English Learner program or students needing services.

VCS requires 24 credits for high school graduation including:

- 3 credits Math
- 4 credits Language Arts
- 3 credits Science
- 3.5 credits Social Studies
- 1 credit in Fine Arts
- 1 credit in PE/Health
- 1 credit in Environmental Education
- 7.5 credits in Electives

## 6. Innovative Practices & Implementation

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### ADVISORY MODEL

William Butler Yeats once said, "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." This spark of curiosity is at the heart of our approach at Vermilion Country School. Studies show that children learn best when they feel personally engaged and find their work interesting and meaningful. This state of 'optimal experience' – or, 'Flow' – occurs when children's skills/talents match the challenge at hand. We work to help each student find their own unique 'sweet spot', where they're leveraging their talents & strengths and learning becomes fun.

We facilitate this experience by either adjusting the challenge or boosting the skills. We offer a number of adaptations for students depending on individual need.

Our Advisory Model provides students an opportunity to learn and explore what their talents are, what interests they may have, along with providing them a curriculum of overcoming obstacles.

### PERSONAL LEARNING PLANS

Each student at VCS sets goals for themselves to achieve over the course of the school year. These goals are



reinforced by their Advisor and their classroom teachers. Others may also be a part of this team depending on the student's need; paras who work closely with the student, special education teachers, or grandparents have been a part of student's teams.

To ensure plans reflect the student as a whole and best help a team set goals and develop a plan to achieve them PLP's expectations have been expanded to include Reading Plans, Writing Plans, short- and long-term goals, testing results (NWEA, MCA) with plans to address areas of strength and weaknesses, and fitness plans.

## **7. Academic Performance: Goals & Benchmarks**

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Examining goals based solely on numbers when VCS is such a small school, it is very difficult to extract any sort of useful conclusions from the data. When a testing group is under 20 students, even a single student can vastly shift the overall scoring of the whole school. So, when reading this section, it is wise to keep that in mind that only the most general conclusions can be drawn. Changes are constantly being put into place to address some of these findings.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, standardized testing was suspended as the entire state switched to distance learning in early March and stayed in that learning mode through the end of the school year. Accountability data from ACCESS, MCA, and MTAS was disrupted in FY21 due to COVID-19 related school closures, switching between in-person instruction and distance learning. As a result, data routinely required in the school's annual report will be unavailable.

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) does not support widely comparing 2021 state assessment results to previous years or trend data without the appropriate context and considerations, and it is reasonable to expect statewide assessment performance to be different than previous years.

### **PROGRESS ON ACNW CONTRACTUAL ACADEMIC GOALS & WBWF ALIGNMENT**

#### **▪ Educational Approach and Curriculum**

The educational program will be targeted, but comprehensive, focusing on state and national academic standards, and designed with flexibility to allow instructional decisions to be made expressly for individual students.

#### **▪ Reading, Writing, and Math**

We strive to engage in math skills in projects wherever possible but also address math through coursework in teacher-led math courses. Students are assessed when they begin the program, and the program continuously adjusts to ensure they are learning at their level. Each student is placed in their grade-level class, with adjustments made as needed. Students' progress is monitored by their advisor on a regular basis. Students are expected to meet end-of-year progress goals, which are pegged to mastering a significant portion of the required standards. Students who excel can progress to the next level of math once they meet their goals, and students who need extra assistance are given personal attention.

Our intervention teachers provide services in both reading and math. Reading and writing are incorporated into all VCS Projects. Students learn strategies to read non-fiction pieces through research and advisory activities. Since student research is an integral part of the project-based learning process, students are exposed to a wide variety of reading materials. Students were required to use a variety of sources for their research, both traditionally published sources and on-line materials. As the school builds its own library resources, student interest and needs are the driving forces behind our book-purchasing decisions. Each student has a reading plan developed with his or her academic team that determines goals for growth and materials that will be read. Every student also develops a writing plan throughout the year that addresses areas for growth.

### **WORLD'S BEST WORKFORCE (WBWF) GOAL AREAS**

- **Achievement Gap Closure [AGC]:** All racial and economic achievement gaps between students are closed.
- **Career and College Ready [CCR]:** All students are career- and college-ready before graduating from high school.
- **Graduate from High School [GRAD]:** All students graduate from high school.

#### ♦ INDICATOR 1: MISSION RELATED OUTCOMES

**Goal:** Students at VCS will demonstrate personal growth through the successful completion of an ILP that includes credit tracking, attendance, community service, environmental education, and social-emotional learning.

**WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal:** Career and College Ready

##### **Key Measures & Results for this Goal:**

Measure 1.1 [CCR] - the aggregate percentage of students that successfully meet their Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) goals in the year will be at least 80%.

**FY21 Results:** 100% of students demonstrated personal growth through their ILP.

#### ♦ INDICATOR 2: ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

VCS does not have any English Language Learner students enrolled.

#### ♦ INDICATOR 3: READING GROWTH

**Goal:** Students at VCS will demonstrate growth in reading as measured by state accountability tests and nationally normed assessments.

**WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal:** Career and College Ready

##### **Key Measures & Results for this Goal:**

Measure 3.1 [CCR] - the average growth z-score for students grades 7 and 8 on state accountability tests will be equal to or greater than 0.00.

**FY21 Results:** Due to COVID-19, 2020-2021 Accountability data is not available.

Measure 3.2 [CCR] - the aggregate percentage of students grades 7 and 8 who achieve a positive z-score on state accountability tests will be greater than 50.0%.

**FY21 Results:** Due to COVID-19, 2020-2021 Accountability data is not available.

Measure 3.3 [CCR] - the aggregate percentage of students in grades 7-11 who meet their fall to spring NWEA RIT expected growth target will be at least 50%.

**FY21 Results:** Due to COVID-19, 2020-2021 Accountability data is not available.

#### ♦ INDICATOR 4: MATH GROWTH

**Goal:** Students at VCS will demonstrate growth in math as measured by state accountability tests and nationally normed assessments.

**WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal:** Career and College Ready

##### **Key Measures & Results for this Goal:**

Measure 4.1 [CCR] - the average growth z-score for students grades 7 and 8 on state accountability tests will be equal to or greater than 0.00.

**FY21 Results:** Due to COVID-19, 2020-2021 Accountability data is not available.

Measure 4.2 [CCR] - the aggregate percentage of students grades 7 and 8 who achieve a positive z-score on state

accountability tests will be greater than 50.0%.

**FY21 Results:** Due to COVID-19, 2020-2021 Accountability data is not available.

Measure 4.3 [CCR] - the aggregate percentage of students in grades 7-11 who meet their fall to spring NWEA RIT expected growth target will be at least 50%.

**FY21 Results:** Due to COVID-19, 2020-2021 Accountability data is not available.

#### ♦ INDICATOR 5: READING PROFICIENCY

**Goal:** Students at VCS will demonstrate proficiency in reading as measured by state accountability tests.

**WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal:** Achievement Gap Closure, Career and College Ready

##### **Key Measures & Results for this Goal:**

Measure 5.1 [CCR] - the school's aggregate proficiency index score will increase by at least 5.0 points from the baseline proficiency index score (FY15-FY17 baseline score – 55.8) OR be equal to or greater than that of the state for the same grades (7-8, 10).

**FY21 Results:** 44.4

Measure 5.2 [CCR] - the school's aggregate proficiency index score will be equal to or greater than that of the St. Louis County School District (ISD 2142) for the same grades (7-8, 10).

**FY21 Results:** Data not available.

Measure 5.3 [AGC] - the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the FRP subgroup will increase by at least 5.0 points from the baseline proficiency index score (FY15-FY17 baseline score – 51.0) OR be equal to or greater than that of the state for the same subgroup and the same grades (7-8, 10).

**FY21 Results:** 37.5

Measure 5.4 [AGC] - the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the FRP subgroup will be equal to or greater than that of the St. Louis County School District (ISD 2142) for the same subgroup and the same grades (7-8, 10).

**FY21 Results:** Data not available.

Measure 5.5 [AGC] - the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the Special Education subgroup will be equal to or greater than that of the state for the same subgroup and the same grades (7-8, 10).

**FY21 Results:** 50

Measure 5.6 [AGC] - the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the Special Education subgroup will be equal to or greater than that of the St. Louis County School District (ISD 2142) for the same subgroup and the same grades (7-8, 10).

**FY21 Results:** Data not available.

#### ♦ INDICATOR 6: MATH PROFICIENCY

**Goal:** Students at VCS will demonstrate proficiency in math as measured by state accountability tests.

**WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal:** Achievement Gap Closure, Career and College Ready

##### **Key Measures & Results for this Goal:**

Measure 6.1 [CCR] - the school's aggregate proficiency index score will increase by at least 8.0 points from the baseline proficiency index score (FY15-FY17 baseline score – 27.6) OR be equal to or greater than that of the state for the same grades (7-8, 11).

**FY21 Results:** 10

Measure 6.2 [CCR] - the school's aggregate proficiency index score will be equal to or greater than that of the St.

Louis County School District (ISD 2142) the same grades (7-8, 11).

**FY21 Results:** Data not available.

Measure 6.3 [AGC] - the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the FRP subgroup will increase by at least 8.0 points from the baseline proficiency index score (FY15-FY17 baseline score – 24.3) OR be equal to or greater than that of the state for the same subgroup and the same grades (7-8, 11).

**FY21 Results:** 0

Measure 6.4 [AGC] - the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the FRP subgroup will be equal to or greater than that of the St. Louis County School District (ISD 2142) for the same subgroup and the same grades (7-8, 11).

**FY21 Results:** Data not available.

Measure 6.5 [AGC] - the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the Special Education subgroup will be equal to or greater than that of the state for the same subgroup and the same grades (7-8, 11).

**FY21 Results:** 0

Measure 6.6 [AGC] - the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the Special Education subgroup will be equal to or greater than that of the St. Louis County School District (ISD 2142) for the same subgroup and the same grades (7-8, 11).

**FY21 Results:** Data not available.

#### ♦ INDICATOR 7: SCIENCE PROFICIENCY (AND GROWTH)

**Goal:** Students at VCS will demonstrate proficiency in science as measured by state accountability tests.

**WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal:** Achievement Gap Closure, Career and College Ready

##### **Key Measures & Results for this Goal:**

Measure 7.1 [CCR] - the school's aggregate proficiency index score will increase by at least 6.0 points from the baseline proficiency index score (FY15-FY17 baseline score – 41.0) OR be equal to or greater than that of the state for the same grades (7-8, 11).

**FY21 Results:** 57.1

Measure 7.2 [CCR] - the school's aggregate proficiency index score will be equal to or greater than that of the St. Louis County School District (ISD 2142) for the same grades (8, High School).

**FY21 Results:** Data not available.

Measure 7.3 [AGC] - the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the FRP subgroup will increase by at least 8.0 points from the baseline proficiency index score (FY15-FY17 baseline score – 27.6) OR be equal to or greater than that of the state for the same subgroup and the same grades (8, High School).

**FY21 Results:** 58.3

Measure 7.4 [AGC] - the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the FRP subgroup will be equal to or greater than that of the St. Louis County School District (ISD 2142) for the same subgroup and the same grades (8, High School).

**FY21 Results:** Data not available.

Measure 7.5 [AGC] - the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the Special Education subgroup will be equal to or greater than that of the state for the same subgroup and the same grades (8, High School).

**FY21 Results:** 75.

Measure 7.6 [AGC] - the school's aggregate proficiency index score for the Special Education subgroup will be equal to or greater than that of the St. Louis County School District (ISD 2142) for the same subgroup and the same grades (8, High School).

**FY21 Results:** Data not available.

♦ **INDICATOR 8: PROFICIENCY OR GROWTH IN OTHER CURRICULAR AREAS OR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

VCS does not have a contractual goal in this optional indicator area.

♦ **INDICATOR 9: POST SECONDARY READINESS**

**Goal:** Students at VCS will demonstrate readiness for post-secondary success.

**WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal:** Career and College Ready, Graduate from High School

**Key Measures & Results for this Goal:**

Measure 9.1 [GRAD] - the school's aggregate 7-year graduation rate will be at least 67.0%.

**FY21 Results:** Data not available.

Measure 9.2 [CCR] - the aggregate percentage of graduates that earn at least one college credit prior to graduation will be at least 20%.

**FY21 Results:** 38%.

Measure 9.3 [CCR] - the aggregate percentage of graduates that are accepted into at least one post-secondary option (college/university, military, apprenticeship, post-secondary training program) prior to graduation will be at least 65%.

**FY21 Results:** Data not available.

Measure 9.4 [CCR] - the aggregate percentage of graduating students who earn a score of college or career ready or needing no more than one semester of remediation on one of three assessments (ACT, Accuplacer, and ASVAB) will be at least 50%.

**FY21 Results:** Data not available.

♦ **INDICATOR 10: ATTENDANCE**

**Goal:** Students at VCS will attend the school at high rates.

**WBWF Goal Areas Addressed by this Goal:** none

**Key Measures & Results for this Goal:**

Measure 10.1 - the average of the school's annual attendance rates will be at least 88.0%.

**FY21 Results:** The average attendance for the school year was 63.9%

Measure 10.2 - on average, 75% of students will have an annual attendance rate of 90% or higher.

**FY21 Results:** The percentage of students with an annual attendance rate of 90% or higher was 23.6%.

## 8. Educational Effectiveness: Assessment & Evaluation

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The goal of educational effectiveness is to measure how well the school is performing on a range of measures including: high quality instruction, rigorous curriculum, use of instructional technology, and an effective collaborative professional culture. VCS is currently working on all these areas and making significant strides to providing a strong academic program.

Instructional technology continued this past year through a Blandin Grant which provided a new piano lab, a new computer lab, and SmartBoards for all teachers. In addition, the upgraded gigabit internet connection provided enhanced stability for both students and staff.

The coronavirus pandemic changed the assessment/evaluation focus dramatically. Both students and teachers had to adapt to a new way of learning and teaching. In the prior school year, regular classroom learning was interrupted which resulted in learning loss in all subject areas. The focus for the year was to address any learning loss from the prior year while covering the core essentials in each subject area.

**Teacher Equity Data:** Address the school's process for examining the equitable distribution of experienced and qualified teachers across the district and within school sites using data, including how the school uses this data to set forth strategies to ensure low-income and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, ineffective, or out-of-field teachers.

- Due to our small size, all students are taught by all teachers throughout the school day.
- Percentage of experienced educators (more than three years of teacher experience): 100%
- Percentage of licensed educators teaching in the area(s) in which they are licensed: 100%
- Percentage of educators with advanced degrees (a master's degree or more): 0%

Describe the school's strategies to increase equitable access to effective and diverse teachers.

When a position becomes available, it is posted on our website, advertised in the local newspaper, and posted on a state-wide job search website. We encourage all our current employees to get the word out among their family and friends. We also strive for displaying the diversity of our student population within our Facebook page and news articles.

## 9. Student & Parent Satisfaction

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Due to the coronavirus pandemic, we did not issue an end-of-school year survey asking for overall feedback. Instead, we consistently surveyed our students throughout the year to meet their needs and ensure they had what they needed to be successful. In our communication with parents, we did request they contact us if they felt they had concerns or issues. Staff responded to any inquiry as best as we could.

## 10. Environmental Education

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The mission of Vermilion Country School's authorizer, Osprey Wilds, is to instill a connection and commitment to the environment in people of all communities through experiential learning. Osprey Wilds defines environmental education as the implementation of values and strategies that foster learning and create environmentally literate citizens who engage in creating healthy outcomes for individuals, communities, and the Earth. The overarching goal of environmental education is an environmentally literate citizenry. The test of environmental literacy is the capacity of an individual to work individually and collectively toward sustaining a healthy natural environment. This requires sufficient awareness, knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order to create a healthy planet where all people live in balance with the Earth.

As part of our contract with our authorizer, we have agreed to the following environmental education goal:

Staff, students and parents at Vermilion Country School will increase their environmental literacy, and develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to support a sustainable, healthy environment.

To meet the above goal, Vermilion Country School has agreed to provide opportunities to instill a connection and commitment to the environment through experiential learning.

### **INDICATOR AREA 1: AWARENESS**

Students demonstrate an awareness of the relationship between the environment and human life and the diversity of life that shares the earth with humans.

**Goal:** Students and staff at VCS have the awareness or are increasing their awareness of the relationship between the environment and human life.

#### **Strategy 1.1**

- VCS weekly EE topics are implemented into school curriculum.
- A Pre/Post quiz on general environmental awareness will be administered.

#### **Evaluation method 1.1**

- At least 80% of all VCS students grades 7-12 will be able to correctly identify at least 80% of environmental awareness issues on pre vs posttest survey in the year.

### **INDICATOR AREA 2: KNOWLEDGE**

Students have knowledge of how natural systems function and how human systems interact with and depend on them.

**Goal:** Students and staff at VCS have the knowledge, or are increasing their knowledge, of human and natural systems and processes.

#### **Strategy 2.1**

- Schoolwide common language development and experiences that are EE standard centered, developing an academic scientific language related to EE terms.

#### **Evaluation method 2.1**

- At least 80% of all VCS students grades 7-12 will be able to correctly identify at least 80% of species by scientific terminology of 'their place' in pre-observation vs post-observation during the year.

### **INDICATOR AREA 3: ATTITUDES**

Students demonstrate respect and concern for the earth's health and the motivation to participate in environmental stewardship.

**Goal:** Students and faculty at VCS establish a baseline attitude to develop and positively increase, appreciate and show concern for the environment.

#### **Strategy 3.1**

- Students and staff will develop an EE philosophy in line with the EE standards.

#### **Evaluation method 3.1**

- At least 80% of all VCS students grades 7-12 will be able to correctly demonstrate an understanding of how 'their place' could be impacted environmentally and describe why humans should be concerned about those

impacts through reflection entries as part of their journal of 'their place' through the year by scoring at least a 3 out of 4 on the project rubric.

#### **INDICATOR AREA 4: SKILLS**

Students possess the skills needed to identify and critically analyze environmental issues, and to contribute to resolving the root of environmental challenges.

**Goal:** Students and faculty at VCS have or are increasing their problem solving and critical thinking skills as it relates to the environment and human life.

##### **Strategy 4.1**

- Identify a problem within an EE topic and find possible solutions utilizing data collection/organization

##### **Evaluation method 4.1**

- At least 80% of all VCS students grades 7-12 will be able to correctly demonstrate data collection, analyzing, and reporting skills of an environmental issue as related to 'their place' during the year by scoring at least a 3 out of 4 on the project rubric.

#### **INDICATOR AREA 5: ACTION**

Students have the capacity or are increasing their capacity to perceive and interpret the health of environmental and social systems and take appropriate action to maintain, restore, or improve the health of those systems.

**Goal:** Students and staff at VCS demonstrate the capacity, or are increasing their capacity, to work individually and collectively toward sustaining a healthy natural environment.

##### **Strategy 5.1**

- Over the course of the year, VCS students will incorporate at least one EE related CS activity that is tied to the completion their Expo Day project.

##### **Evaluation method 5.1**

- At least 80% of all VCS students grades 7-12 will be able to correctly implement an EE related CS activity related to an aspect of 'their place' and successfully incorporate the results of that activity into their year-end expo day project, scoring at least a 3 out of 4 as determined by the project rubric.

## **11. Governance & Management**

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**Includes Annual Board Training & Administrator Professional Development Report(s)**

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

During the 2020-2021 school year, the board consisted of three community members, two teachers, and one parent.

The board is a non-majority board, which means the board retains a balance between the three types of board members, and no single type can hold a majority of seats. The board operates on a consensus model. The board elections are held at the annual meeting in February. The board has been starting to look at longer term issues of policy and staffing to create a sustainable organization.



Member Name	Board Position	Affiliation	Date Elected	Date Seated	Term End Date
Jodi Summit vcs.charter@gmail.com	Chair	Community Member	2/23/17	1/1/13	3/30/23
Karin Schmidt kschmidt@vermilioncountry.org	Secretary	Teacher	2/24/16	3/23/16	3/30/22
Paula Herbranson pherbranson@vermilioncountry.org	Member	Teacher	Appointed	12/20/18	3/30/21
Richard Larmouth sisuyski@msn.com	Treasurer	Community Member	2/28/19	3/30/19	3/30/22
Kristin Krings	Member	Parent			
Marit Kringstad marit@nordic-home.com	Community	Community Member	2/28/19	3/30/19	3/30/21
Pam Zahn pzahn@vermilioncountry.org	Ex-Officio	Business Manager	NA	NA	NA
Frank Zobitz fzobitz@vermilioncountry.org	Ex-Officio	School Leader	NA	NA	NA

### BOARD TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Vermilion Country School board members have all attended the required initial board member training. The school subscribes to an online board training system, CharterSource, which means our board members do not need to travel to the Twin Cities for the required initial training. CharterSource is now also offering some advanced training, which we are looking at for annual training needs.

Initial Training				
Board Member Name	Original Date Seated	Board's Role & Responsibilities	Employment Policies & Practices	Financial Management
Jodi Summit	1/1/13	10/26/13 MSBA	10/26/13 MSBA	10/26/13 MSBA
Karin Schmidt	3/23/16	4/23/16 St Thomas	4/23/16 St Thomas	4/23/16 St Thomas
Paula Herbranson	12/20/18	4/25/19 CharterSource	4/25/19 CharterSource	4/25/19 CharterSource
Dick Larmouth	3/30/18	4/25/19 CharterSource	4/25/19 CharterSource	4/25/19 CharterSource
Marit Kringstad	3/30/18	1/15/20 CharterSource	1/15/20 CharterSource	1/15/20 CharterSource

Board Member Name	
Jodi Summit	
Karin Schmidt	
Richard Larmouth	
Marit Kringstad	
Paula Herbranson	
Kristin Krings	

## MANAGEMENT

Vermilion Country School worked on a hybrid teacher/staff led management structure, based on the model of the Edvisions Cooperative, of which we are a member. Our entire staff meets weekly, on Wednesday afternoons, to discuss day-to-day operations, address concerns, and conduct trainings.

## LIST OF ADMINISTRATORS/QUALIFICATIONS

Frank Zobitz, Director

**Role/Responsibilities:** Provides day-to-day program management, ensures compliance with Minnesota Department of Education and our authorizer requirements, ensures that the school is working towards achieving our stated goals, works with the teaching/staff team, assists the board chair, updates our website to comply with state requirements, oversees the facility, works on student recruitment, supervises program assistants, helps develop the school budget, ensures that funds received are properly accounted for, works with our school business manager, and helps coordinate the annual audit.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR FRANK ZOBITZ, DIRECTOR

Frank Zobitz has experience leading groups and people through his various roles as an IT Project Manager and as an Adjunct Professor. He has experience in all aspects of education (K-12 and post-secondary). His experience with school leadership has been serving in a supporting role to administration. Frank needs to learn the roles and responsibilities of serving in the director position.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS/AREAS OF FOCUS FOR 2020-21:

- The vision and mission of the school are effectively communicated to staff, parents, students, and community members.
- The core beliefs of the school vision are modeled for all stakeholders.
- Barriers to achieving the vision are identified, clarified, and addressed.
- Needed resources are sought and obtained to support the implementation of the school mission and goals.
- Operational procedures are designed and managed to maximize opportunities for successful learning.
- Potential problems and opportunities are identified.
- Effective problem-framing and problem-solving skills are used.
- Effective group-process and consensus-building skills are used.
- Available community resources are secured to help the school solve problems and achieve goals.

## ACTIVITIES COMPLETED/PROGRESS/RESULTS FOR 2020-21:

Professional Development Work completed this school year:

### MN Dept of Ed Charter School Boot Camp

October 7, 2020

October 21, 2020

November 18, 2020

December 16, 2020

January 20, 2021  
 February 17, 2021  
 March 17, 2021

Each session was roughly 4 hours in length

**Emerging and Novice Charter School Leaders Network**

Program put on by Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU)

February 12, 2021  
 March 12, 2021  
 April 9, 2021  
 May 14, 2021

Each session was 4 hours in length.

**12. Staffing**

**2020-21 LICENSED TEACHING STAFF**

Name	File #	License and Assignment	2021-22 Status*	Comments
Al White	361622	7-12 Math	R	
Paula Herbranson	351797	7-12 Life Sciences	R	
Karin Schmidt	343434	Title I B.S. El. Ed; Music Minor; Reading Specialist K-12	R	
Brad Neyens	480853	5-12 Social Studies  OFP Emotional Behavior Disorders, Learning Disabilities	NR	.50 Special Ed / .50 Teacher

\* R = Returning, NR = Not Returning

**2020-21 TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

Name	File #	Professional Development Attended
Al White	361622	Osprey Wilds 2020-2021 EE workshop: Building racial equity and inclusion in EE Edvisions Spring Conversation Day March 12, 2021 Best Practices for Covid 19 Prevention in Schools – MDE – 9/3/2021
Paula Herbranson	351797	Osprey Wilds 2020-2021 EE workshop: Building racial equity and inclusion in EE National Agriculture in the Classroom: 2021 Conference "Field of Dreams", June 29-July 1, 2021 Edvisions Spring Conversation Day March 12, 2021

		<p>MN Agriculture in the Classroom: From the Farm to the Plate:Wheat ,June 15 2021</p> <p>MN Agriculture in the Classroom: Agriculture :Global to Local June 22, 2021</p> <p>MN Agriculture in the Classroom: 'Sota Grown : July 13, 2021</p> <p>MN Agriculture in the Classroom: Soils Fuels Success July 20, 2021</p>
Karin Schmidt	343434	<p>Keeping Kids Safe March 11 2021 1 hour</p> <p>Speak Up at School June 30<sup>th</sup>,2021 1 hour</p> <p>How to Teach online for classroom teacher March 21,2021 5 hours</p> <p>Future of Education Spring 2021 1 hour</p> <p>Osprey EE Teacher Workshop June 21, 2021 6 hours</p> <p>The Urgency of Awareness June 22, 2021 1 CEU credit</p>

**TEACHER RETENTION**

<b>Percentage of Licensed Teachers from 2020-21 not returning in 2021-22 (non-returning teachers/total teachers from 2020-21 x 100)</b>	0%
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**2020-21 NON-LICENSED STAFF**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>2021-22 Status*</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Mandy Northrup	Special Education Paraprofessional	NR	
Michele Maki	Special Education Paraprofessional Indian Education	R	
Amy Heglin	Special Education Paraprofessional	R	
Jolene Herberg	Office Manager	R	
Cindy Pettinelli	Food Service Manager	NR	
Mike Joint	Special Education Paraprofessional	NR	

\* R = Returning, NR = Not Returning

**13. Operational Performance**

Vermilion Country School has a wide range of operational areas to attend to everyday. Osprey Wilds as the school’s authorizer evaluates the school in several areas to ensure all tasks are complying and meet MDE requirements. So far, the school has materially complied with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract relating to:

- Relevant compliance and reporting requirements to the authorizer, state education agency, and/or federal authorities, including but not limited to:
  - state reporting and applications, including but not limited to: MARSS, STARS, UFARS, EDRS, Q Comp, DIRS, lease aid
  - TRA/PERA
- School website is compliant with statutory and authorizer expectations
- Insurance coverage; the school facilities, grounds and transportation, including but not limited to:
  - Fire inspections and related records
  - Viable certificate of occupancy or other required building use authorization
- Physical space provides a safe, positive learning environment for students
- Appropriate and safe student transportation practices
- Health and safety, including but not limited to:
  - nursing services and dispensing of pharmaceuticals
- Food service
- Emergency management plan;
  - admission and enrollment rights of students, including but not limited to policies and practices related to admissions, lottery, waiting lists, fair and open recruitment

Due process and privacy rights of students, including but not limited to:

- Due process protections, privacy, civil rights and students’ liberties requirements, including First Amendment protections and the Establishment Clause restrictions prohibiting public schools from engaging in religious instruction
- Conduct of discipline pursuant to the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act
- Maintain the security of and provide access to students records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and other applicable authorities
- Transfer of student records
- Employment including transparent hiring, evaluation and dismissal policies and practices
- Required background checks for all school employees

VCS leases their building from the City of Tower and in keeping with the non-traditional education program, the building is a former light industrial building. The main portion of the building is open with four advisory areas separated by short walls, the cafeteria, and library with dividing walls. Additional rooms in the building include a gym, woodworking shop, music room, science room, and office spaces. The kitchen next to the cafeteria provides both breakfast and lunch for approximately 40 people daily. All kitchen, bathroom, and public spaces are cleaned daily and the kitchen is passed for inspection by the local health dept. Transportation is provided daily for students, VCS currently has four vans and one small bus available for the various routes to Virginia, Ely, Bois Forte, Embarrass, and Tower-Soudan. The vehicles also double up as transportation for events, field trips, and activities.

VCS has procedures in place to ensure the health and safety of staff and students while on site. There are first aid kits and fire extinguishers located around the building. Staff has been trained on emergency procedures and drills are conducted on schedule and duly recorded. Administration and office staff have procedures in place for records and ensuring compliance with state and federal laws including discipline data, background checks, hiring procedures, and due process.

Engagement with parents and community is handled on several fronts depending on the event or area of need. The staff offers multiple opportunities for parents and community members to be involved including an online volunteer form, in building sign-ups, and contact through various mediums.

## 14. Finances

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For questions regarding school finances and for complete financials for 2020-21 and/or an organizational budget for 2021-22, contact:

**Name:** Jodi Summit  
**Position:** Board Chair  
**Phone:** 218-753-1246  
**Email:** jsummit@vermilioncountry.org

Pam Zahn (Business Manager) and Region1 (a nonprofit regional cooperative) provided accounting services for VCS for the 2020-21 school year.

Abdo, Eick, & Meyers LLP provide auditing services for the school.

Information presented below is derived from preliminary audit figures. The full financial audit will be completed and presented to the Minnesota Department of Education and Osprey Wilds no later than December 31, 2020.

FY21 Finances	Fund 1	Fund 2
Total Revenues	\$632,265	\$15,380
Total Expenditures	\$686,598	\$38,439
Net Income		
Total Fund Balance	\$2,935 (negative)	\$23,059 (negative)

## **Overview**

School financials are substantially influenced by enrollment and as VCS transitions from a startup school to an established school the focus on financials is shifting from getting the primary capital in place to a sustainability model for the long term.

## **Revenues**

Most of the funding for VCS came from state and federal sources. The CSP implementation grant provided much of the startup funding while state aid made up most of the operational funds to run the school. Regarding Fund 2 - Food Service, food programs at schools always run a deficit so funds were transferred from Fund 1 - General to Fund 2 - Food Service as needed to make up the difference.

For FY21, the financial team revised the budget several times, as changing conditions prompted the reallocation of resources and while the final audit hasn't occurred at the time of this report, estimates indicated the school ended up with a slight deficit.

## **Expenses**

Expenses at VCS were driven by student needs and so were re-projected during the year as necessary.

## **Net Surplus or Deficit and Fund Balance**

VCS incurred additional expenditures during the COVID 19 Pandemic due to increased transportation, food service and janitorial expenditures to continue to serve our students at the caliber they are accustomed to while also ensuring a safe learning experience. COVID 19 has impacted our fund balance due to a loss of revenue from our budgeted Food Program revenue which will require a fund transfer to cover the shortages. VCS strives to increase our Fund 01 balance to adequately cover a two-month expenditure cycle.

## **World's Best Workforce Annual Budget**

No funds were specifically allocated to implementing WBWF in the 2020-21 school year as programs related to WBWF areas were already in place in some form and so are already accounted for in the budget. We don't foresee this changing in the near future unless requirements change.

# **15. Future Plans**

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## **Academic Program**

VCS evaluated the academic program at the end of the 2020-2021 school year and determined that students are becoming familiar with the project process and anticipate they will respond well to consistently increasing rigor. The proposed action items are as follows:

### **Attendance**

Attendance was identified as a key issue at the end of the year with a significant number of students missing more than ten days of school. PBIS efforts will be redirected toward meeting this need.

### **Literacy**

Reading scores are continuing to improve year over year, so we will be looking at regular language arts offerings in addition to intervention options within the MTSS/ADSI framework.

### **Math**

Math scores are starting to improve, so we will be looking at regular math offerings in addition to intervention options within the MTSS/ADSI framework.

## **Leadership**

- VCS currently uses a teacher-led school model and will continue to refine this process until an effective balance is reached for school operations.

## **Facilities**

- Long term planning is to look at constructing a purpose-built facility for the educational needs of the students and the school's unique program.

## **16. Safe Learning Plan Description and Reflection on Implementation**

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VCS staff evaluated the distance learning plan at the end of the school year. First and foremost, the majority of our students dislike distance learning and chose to come to VCS for its small class sizes and hands-on learning. Students receive one-on-one attention when they are present in-person. Providing that same level of attention in a remote learning setting was difficult. From an educational/course work viewpoint, initially we had students attend virtual classes much like they would attend their in-person class. This was a challenge as not all students have the appropriate internet connection or computer skills to navigate a digital classroom. Once the initial period passed and it appeared we would be doing distance learning for an extended period of time, daily check-ins were still required but not the requirement of having students sit in front of their computer all day.

Throughout the distance learning period we dropped off meals, learning packets and materials, and picked up completed work from students twice per week. This provided an opportunity to connect with students in person to assess their mental well-being and give them an opportunity to express any issues they may be having.

As a staff we continued to meet to discuss students who were not only succeeding, but also not participating like they should. We continually brainstormed ways to reach students who were not responding.

All staff and students should be commended for how well they adjusted given the circumstances. There are many areas of improvement which could have been done, however, given the financial resources, the limitations faced, and the uncertainty, we did the best job we could. At the end of the year, all students received food and meals and felt that we still cared about them.