

Sounding Board

A publication of Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center Charter School Division



Disseminating Information About the School

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Minnesota charter school law requires that charter schools must disseminate information about the school's offerings and enrollment procedures to families that reflect the diversity of Minnesota's population and targeted groups. ([MN Stat. §124E.17](#)) This requirement has been in place since at least 2009. ([2009 MN Stat. §124D.10 Subd. 19](#))

In 2024, the legislature added two additional requirements related to this law:

1. The school must document its dissemination activities in its annual report.
2. The school's dissemination activities must be a component of the authorizer's performance review of the school.

As a result, OW updated its Operations Performance Evaluation Framework to include this requirement in Performance Indicator Area 4: Student Rights. OW will also update the 2024-25 Annual Report template. Look for it in July 2025! Below is additional guidance to help your school consider how it is fulfilling this statutory requirement.

To "disseminate information about the school's offerings and enrollment procedures to families that reflect the diversity of Minnesota's population and targeted groups" means that schools must actively and intentionally share details about what they offer (such as academics, extracurricular activities, and support services) and how to enroll in ways that ensure all families, especially those from underrepresented or underserved communities, can access this information.

- **Offerings:** Highlight programs, activities, and resources the school provides that support diverse needs, such as bilingual education, special education, or cultural competency initiatives.
- **Enrollment Procedures:** Explain how to apply, key dates, required documents, and support available during the process, using simple and clear language.

To ensure that you are "disseminating" information (rather than only providing access on the website for interested families to find), you should consider how your school's messaging does the following:

- **Reaches Diverse Audiences:** The information must be shared in ways that ensure it reaches families of different cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds, including those who may not traditionally engage with schools.
- **Provides Equitable Access:** The dissemination process must account for barriers such as language differences, lack of internet access, or unfamiliarity with the education system, making the information accessible to the broadest range of families possible.
- **Makes a Proactive Effort:** It is not enough to publish information passively (e.g., on a website). Schools must take active steps to engage with communities and ensure that their materials reach the targeted groups, including low-income families, students of color, and others identified by law as at-risk or underrepresented.

- **Embraces Representation:** The materials and outreach methods should reflect the diversity of the community and demonstrate that the school values and welcomes all families in accordance with statute. (As a reminder, by law charter schools may not limit admission to pupils on the basis of intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, athletic ability, or any other criteria not provided in statute. ([MN Stat. §124E.11 \(e\)](#)))

Minnesota lawmakers have clearly defined what is meant by “targeted groups” in statute. Targeted groups include low-income families and communities, students of color, students at risk of academic failure, and students underrepresented in the school's student body relative to Minnesota's population. Even if your school is located in a community where members of a “targeted group” do not live, the school is still responsible for meeting the requirement to “disseminate information...to families that reflect the diversity of Minnesota's population and targeted groups.” Consider how you can leverage proactive and inclusive outreach, use statewide platforms, and demonstrate your school’s welcoming and affirming environment. The goal is not just to reflect the local community but to ensure that the school is accessible and welcoming to all families, including those from groups underrepresented in the school's student body or the community at large.

As noted above, the school must document its dissemination activities in its annual report. Schools should document their outreach efforts to show compliance with the law. This includes maintaining records of where and how you shared information (e.g., events attended, partnerships formed, advertisements placed).

Because state law is clear that charter schools must disseminate information to “families that reflect the diversity of Minnesota’s population and targeted groups,” it is not enough to focus primarily on passive efforts (e.g. updating the website, sharing stories with the local newspaper or local-access television channel). Below are some examples your school may consider as you seek to improve dissemination efforts.

- Multilingual and Multicultural Communication
 - Translated Materials: Provide flyers, brochures, and digital content in multiple languages (e.g., Spanish, Hmong, Somali), focusing on languages spoken in your community.
 - Culturally Relevant Messaging: Highlight how the school supports academic success, cultural representation, and inclusivity in its materials.
 - Interpreters and Bilingual Staff: Use interpreters or bilingual staff at open houses, enrollment fairs, and community events to assist families with limited English proficiency.
- Community and Family Engagement
 - Local Partnerships: Collaborate with organizations serving low-income families, such as county agencies, housing assistance programs, and local nonprofits, to distribute school information.
 - Outreach to Faith-Based Groups: Share materials through churches, mosques, temples, and other community faith organizations that serve targeted populations.
 - Information Hubs: Place flyers and enrollment guides in accessible locations like libraries, laundromats, community centers, and clinics.
- Inclusive Marketing and Messaging
 - Representation in Media: Advertise in diverse media outlets, including newspapers, radio stations, and social media groups read or visited by targeted populations.
 - Family-Centered Content: Use testimonials or success stories from families and students of similar backgrounds to build trust and interest.
 - Highlight Support Programs: Emphasize programs that address specific needs, such as free/reduced-price lunch, tutoring, special education services, or cultural support staff.

- Accessible Enrollment Support
 - Enrollment Workshops: Host sessions in community locations where families can learn about offerings and get help with applications, particularly for families with limited access to technology.
 - Mobile Assistance: Create a mobile team to help families complete enrollment forms and answer questions on-site in their neighborhoods.
 - Flexible Hours: Offer enrollment support during evenings or weekends to accommodate families with demanding schedules.
- Support for At-Risk and Underrepresented Students
 - Academic Outreach: Partner with afterschool programs and mentoring organizations to promote how the school supports students at risk of academic failure.
 - Transportation Information: Clearly communicate transportation options, especially for families facing geographic or financial barriers.
 - Parent Ambassadors: Recruit parents from underrepresented groups to share their experiences and advocate for the school in their communities.
- Intentional Partnerships
 - Nonprofit Collaboration: Work with organizations like Big Brothers Big Sisters, the YMCA, and community education groups to connect with at-risk students.
 - Workforce Outreach: Share information through employers of low-wage workers, such as local factories, farms, or service industries.

In conclusion, effectively disseminating information about a charter school's offerings and enrollment procedures is more than a statutory obligation—it is a critical component of fostering equity and inclusion. Schools must go beyond passive measures to actively engage and connect with families from Minnesota's diverse population and targeted groups. By adopting proactive, inclusive, and strategic outreach efforts, schools can ensure that all families, particularly those from underrepresented or underserved communities, have access to the opportunities and support they need. Remember to document these efforts in the annual report and align dissemination activities with authorizer evaluations. This work not only fulfills legal requirements but also strengthens the school's commitment to build trust, break down barriers to access, and ensure equitable representation in their student body.