



FAQ: 'Minneapolis School Finder – A Resource Guide for Parents'

Spring 2017

- **What is Minneapolis School Finder?**

It's the most thorough directory of all district, charter and independent schools in Minneapolis. In it, you'll find a profile of every school, from programs and features to objective, reliable information on academic performance. It also offers information about types of school options and enrollment processes, plus questions to ask when touring a school.

- **Where can I find Minneapolis School Finder?**

At MinneapolisSchoolFinder.org. Many community organizations have copies available on-site. For a hard copy, call our information line (612) 643-1305.

- **Who created Minneapolis School Finder, and why?**

The Community Engagement Team at MN Comeback is committed to making sure all families have objective, well-rounded information on the schools in our community. Last fall, the Community Engagement Team landed on a school resource guide and directory as a critical tool to supporting parents.

MN Comeback leads a broad coalition of 80 schools, community partners and funders coordinating around K-12 systems change so all students can access great schools.

Following parent events spanning two years, MSF responds to an expressed need: Parents want a simpler way to find critical information about a school – graduation rates, academic performance, demographics, etc.

- **Were parents and educators engaged in this project?**

Following parents requesting information on our city's schools, parents informed the elements of school profiles, gave guidance on the questions to ask when touring schools and have helped inform MSF's distribution.

Community organizations have also played instrumental roles in creating MSF – lending expertise to shape content and make it accessible for families.

- **What if the school I'm interested in is full?**

We recommend identifying a few schools that may be a good fit for your family, then applying to two-three schools so you have options and a back-up plan. You can also request that the school add your child to its wait list.

- **Where did school "Highlights" come from?**

We reviewed school websites and leaned on our partners to gather info (Minneapolis Public Schools' Davis Center for district schools, the Minnesota Independent School Forum for independent schools and authorizers for charter schools). We also called every school in an effort to verify information.

- **Why are you using the MCAs and ACT scores?**

Parents know there are many school options, but have struggled to access reliable information on schools (we've heard this message repeatedly through various parent forums spanning two years). This includes understanding a school's academic performance, and how well that school is preparing its students for college and career success. In Minnesota, our annual statewide test is the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA). This is one important indicator of achievement.

MSF reports MCA scores in two ways: proficiency and growth. Students who are considered "proficient" have met Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) standards set for their grade level. For growth, MDE measures how much a student's demonstrated learning has grown based on their previous year's test scores. In high-performing schools, students will demonstrate growth that is at or above expected levels. We're reporting both measures to provide a clear picture of a school's academic performance.

High school profiles also include the average ACT score; many parents look to the ACT as a measure of how well a school prepares its students for college and careers.

- **Why is there an academic rating and how is it determined?**

Parents want to understand how a school performs over time, and what the numbers mean. We created academic ratings to resolve their expressed frustrations. Our rating is determined by a school's proficiency and growth scores over a three-year period. For high schools, we also include ACT data and the five-year graduation rate. Our goal: Create an accessible rating for parents to use while also providing the context surrounding a school's academic performance.

- **Why are there schools outside of Minneapolis included in this guide?**

Students in Minneapolis often travel to attend schools outside of the city limits. To recognize this dynamic and support families in identifying the best schools serving Minneapolis students, we've included schools that are within one mile of the city limits, as well as schools where the majority of students are Minneapolis residents.

- **Is MN Comeback going to produce this guide in advance of every school year?**

We're hopeful that this tool is helpful for families. Should our partners on the Community Engagement Team continue to advocate for this resource, we'll continue to produce it. We're also committed to improving MSF each year. We'd love to hear your feedback: (612) 643-1305 or info@MinneapolisSchoolFinder.org.

- **Where can I learn more information about MN Comeback?**

For more information, including on our board, staff and funding partners, visit mncomeback.org.

- **Why is MN Comeback doing this rather than individual schools or the districts?**

Many groups – schools, the district, MDE – produce parent tools. We heard parents express interest in objective information on all schools, across sectors, from academic achievement to demographics, in a one-stop-shop format. We're responding to that request.