



## Hawthorn Leadership School for Girls SY2019 Sponsor Review Report

**To:** Hawthorn Leadership School for Girls, Board of Directors  
**From:** Washington University Charter Sponsor Team  
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Lori Sommer, Associate Director, Charter School Compliance  
**Date:** April 16, 2020

### Overview

Missouri charter legislation requires sponsors to annually review charter schools' compliance with statutory standards, and biennially review performance, management and operations jointly with school staff and the governing board, starting with the first year of operation. Hawthorn Leadership School for Girls had their baseline review by Washington University in SY2016, and this annual review provides an update of progress for their fourth year of operation in SY2019 (July 2018– June 2019).

Hawthorn opened as an all-girls middle school in Fall 2015 with grades 6 and 7. In its fourth year of operation for SY2019, a total enrollment of 173 students included middle school grades 6, 7, 8, and high school grades 9 and 10. With plans to expand one grade level each year through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, Hawthorn will have its first senior graduating class in SY2021.

As Hawthorn's sponsor, Washington University is committed to supporting Hawthorn Leadership School for Girls in its efforts to deliver quality education to its students. The University is charged with ensuring Hawthorn is in compliance with applicable State and Federal laws and regulations, along with accountability for the performance benchmarks contained in the Charter Contract and the Performance Contract. Developed with stakeholder engagement and approved by the Hawthorn Board of Directors in the Fall of 2015, the Performance Contract stipulates annual minimum achievement targets.

The *Charter School Performance Framework* presented in Appendix I was developed as a sponsor's tool to gather data providing review guidance to Hawthorn's staff and board. From this comprehensive body of evidence, Washington University will annually conduct an ongoing coordinated evaluation of fundamental school performance measures. This supplemental evaluation tool is intended to be used as a resource in conjunction with this report. Data will be collected primarily from the following sources:

- ✓ Board Meeting Attendance
- ✓ School Site Visits
- ✓ Financial/Budget Monitoring
- ✓ State/Federal Reporting

Oversight of Hawthorn involves the evaluation of a core framework of expectations that focuses on three key areas:

- 1. Academic Performance**
- 2. Financial Health and Sustainability**
- 3. Organizational Effectiveness**



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### **Academic Performance**

A sponsor's primary measure of quality for accountability is academic performance. Hawthorn's overall scores for Math and Science in 2017, as well as Math in 2018, were below expected outcomes, and the University advised Hawthorn (through their annual evaluations) that improvement would be required going forward.

In response to lower than expected performance, the University placed Hawthorn on probation in May 2019 for twenty-four months, (which is the maximum allowed in statute), and instituted a remedial plan. First year outcome requirements for the 2019/2020 remedial plan were presented to Hawthorn with specific achievement measures (Appendix II). All targets were required to be met by the school in order for the University to consider moving forward with renewal of Hawthorn's charter contract. These outcomes included:

- Academic goals demonstrating improvement on the 2019 State tests for ELA, Math and Science
- Performance targets for overall attendance measures
- Operational benchmarks (i.e. assignment of new school leadership, qualified teaching staff, compliance reporting adherence, Comprehensive Plan submission, financial stability and new curriculum development).

These goals were met by Hawthorn. During the second year of probation for SY2020/2021, the University charter team will develop additional rigorous benchmarks for the school to attain.

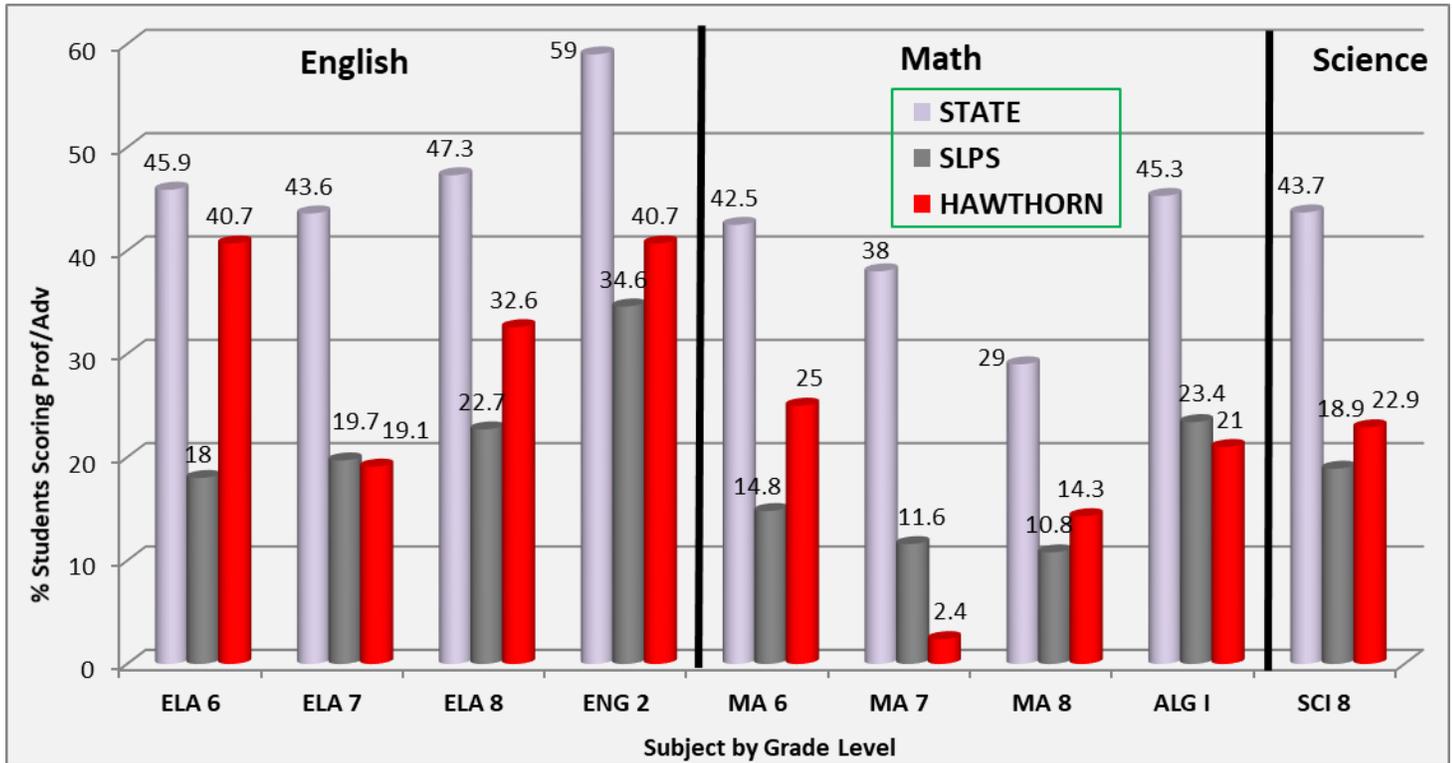
### **Hawthorn SY2019 Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) Scores**

All charter students are required by State law to participate each year in the Department of Elementary and Secondary (DESE) Missouri Assessment Program (MAP). While these assessments provide only a snapshot of students' academic performance, they nonetheless present consistent measures of comparison within an annual aligned accountability system.

Performance Contract achievement targets require Hawthorn students to annually demonstrate academic performance which exceeds local district averages and show progress to attain or exceed state averages. In the fourth year of MAP assessments, these SY2019 Hawthorn scores indicate an overall trend in meeting these goals.

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**SY2019 Hawthorn Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) Scores % Proficient/Advanced  
Compared with State and District by Appropriate Grade Level**



**English** exhibits significant progress for Grades 6 and 8 in SY2019. Hawthorn has consistently demonstrated ELA as the school’s strongest subject.

**Math** for Grade 7 suggests an anomaly with a notably low score, and will be monitored in the upcoming school year for performance rectification. Though generally outperforming the district, substantial improvement is yet required at all grade levels. Hawthorn is instituting a new Math curriculum for SY2020 as a requisite of an outcome requirement target.

**Science** was not assessed by DESE for Grade 8 in SY2018, and a new test version was subsequently administered by the State for SY2019. This subject will be observed for future comparison with school progress.

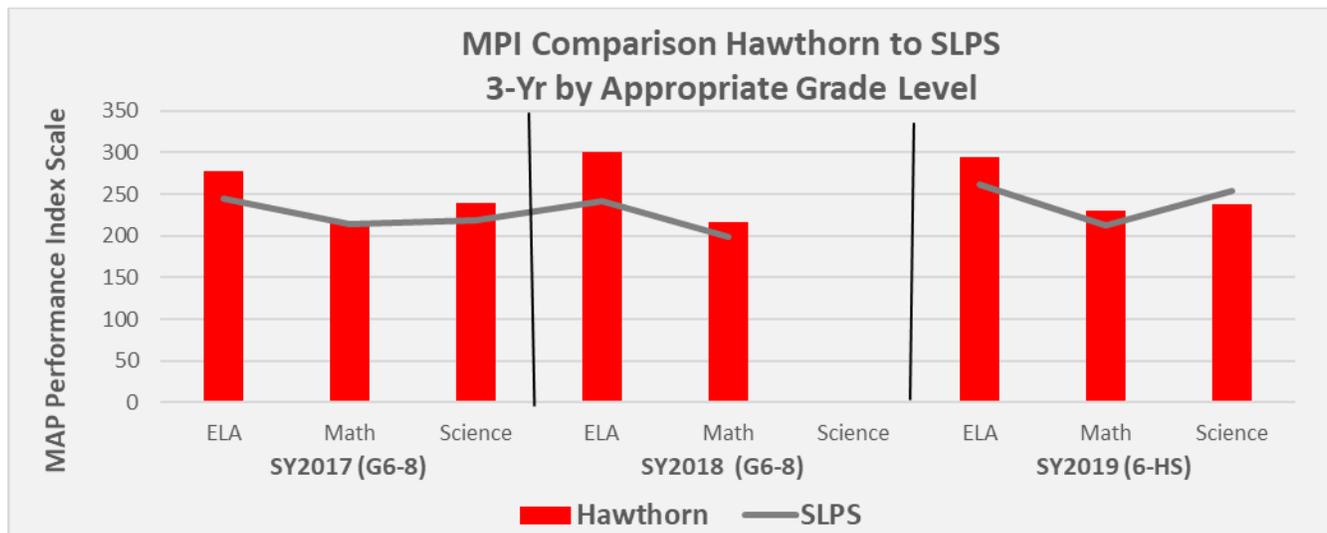
Ongoing data suggests students entering Hawthorn are typically performing below grade level, and will likely require multiple years of growth to attain proficiency. The University will be closely monitoring performance progress by reviewing the school’s interim assessments in the academic year ahead.

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**Hawthorn SY2019 Map Performance Index (MPI)**

The MAP Performance Index (MPI) is used by DESE to determine whether Missouri schools are meeting academic achievement targets in English language arts (ELA), Math and Science with the State assessments, along with measuring annual progress. This metric holds schools accountable for continuous improvement by quantifying movement of students through all MAP achievement levels.

A comprehensive case for schools is presented with MPI in that the focus remains on *all* students in the four MAP achievement levels: Below Basic, Basic, Proficient and Advanced, and not just those performing in the top tiers. The MPI is a single composite number represented by totaling the points awarded to each student to depict a trend to proficiency.



Results in the graph above indicate that Hawthorn is showing Schoolwide progress above the local district in **English Language Arts** and **Math**. Continued progress for Hawthorn is demonstrated with ELA for SY2019. A slight improvement is observed for SY2019 Math MPI performance. **Science** in SY2019 exhibits an MPI lower than SLPS. This outcome results from lower Biology end-of-course (EOC) scores, while recognizing that Grade 8 Science scores trended higher than the local district from the previous MAP chart. (Note there was no Science assessed in SY2018; the assessment administered by DESE in SY2019 introduced a new test version.)

A typical benchmark goal for MO schools is attainment of an MPI total score of 300 points or greater in each subject area. The University will be reviewing these targets for ELA and Math for Annual Performance Report (APR) Progress comparison as the State enters its third year of consistent MAP assessments in these subjects for SY2020.

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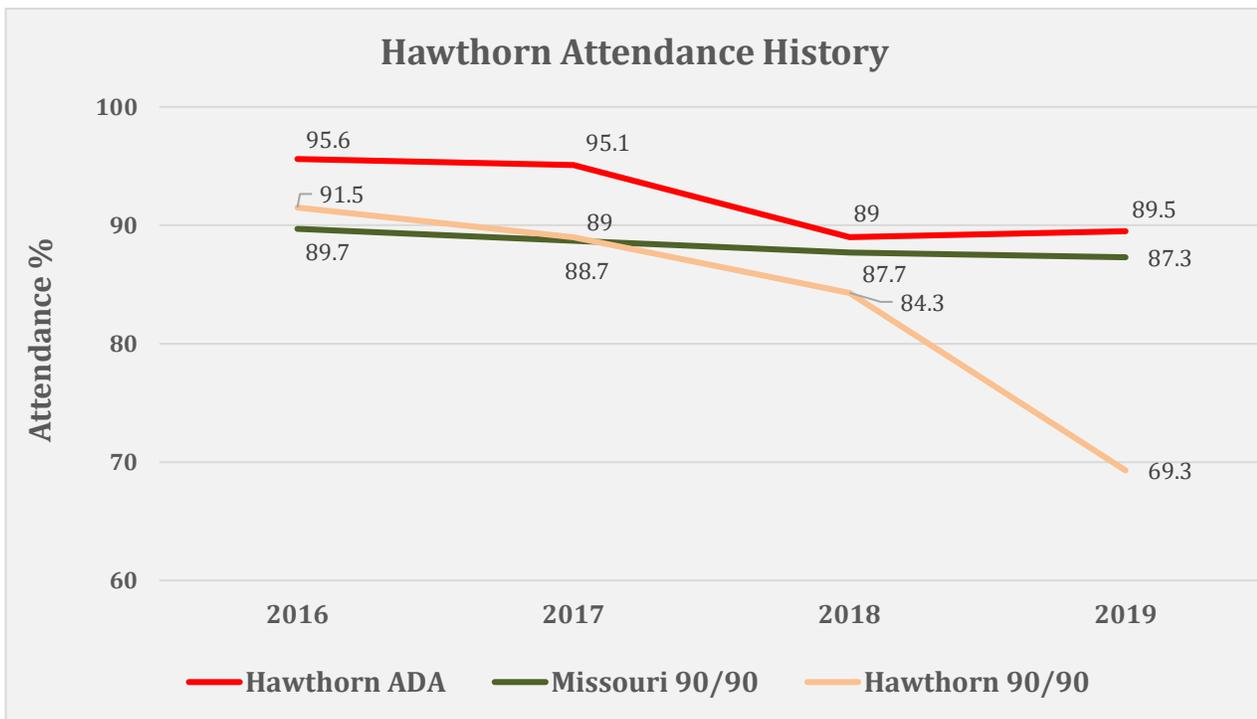
**Federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Identification**

In SY2018, Hawthorn’s middle school was placed on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s Comprehensive list which identifies the 5% lowest performing schools in the state for ELA and Math per federal ESSA requirement. To exit the list, Hawthorn will be required to demonstrate defined and measurable improvement in these subjects within three years.

For SY2019, DESE reported Hawthorn as **Met Improvement** requirements for **Math** with a gain of 20.7 points. Hawthorn **did not meet** the threshold for **ELA**. Calculations reveal that the middle school missed the ELA exit target by underperforming .4% with MAP % Proficient/Advanced. Continued improvement will be compulsory in SY2020 for both Math and ELA.

**Attendance**

The overall SY2019 attendance rate for Hawthorn was 89.5%. This number approaches the Performance Contract minimum of 90%, even as student attendance goals continue to challenge Hawthorn. The State’s APR contains a 90/90 attendance standard, setting the expectation that 90% of the students are in school 90% of the time. The SY2019 90/90 score of 69.3% shows a decline from previous years, indicating Hawthorn must continue to employ strategies to increase student attendance.



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**Annual Performance Report (APR)**

As of SY2019, DESE will no longer calculate a single percent APR score for Missouri Districts and LEAs. Instead they now offer standards along with performance measures that allow districts and charters to tell their own “data story.” These metrics include academic achievement performance categories for:

- Status = absolute achievement level students are currently performing
- Growth = achievement gains of individual students over time
- Progress = improvements the school system is making over prior years

All charters coming up for State renewal in SY2020 were required to request the SY2019 DESE determination of their APR percent score for public presentation. Hawthorn’s score was calculated at 82.5%, placing them in a range consistent with DESE’s district classification of accredited.

Based on the 2019 data provided by DESE, Hawthorn is Approaching Status in ELA, with Growth and Progress both Exceeding. Math is at Floor Status, though On Track for Growth and Exceeding in Progress. Science is Approaching in Status, and indicates Progress is Exceeding.

Overall Growth and Progress show a positive trend for the school. The University will be closely monitoring performance with rigorous benchmarks for additional advancement.

***Performance Considerations Requiring Response***

1. *Hawthorn is going into its second year of the Federal Comprehensive Program with the State, as well as continued probationary status with the University. What measures are being taken for Comprehensive exit status in SY2020, with particular emphasis in English?*

***Hawthorn Response:***

*Hawthorn will continue to use high quality curriculum for middle school girls all content areas. All girls will receive a “double dose” of English and Math in their daily schedule. After our beginning-of-year formative assessments are completed, girls with the highest need will be placed in a reading class as part of their daily schedule. During summer professional development, teachers will receive training on incorporating high-leverage strategies to ensure that students are receiving high quality instruction. Regular classroom walk-throughs, teacher coaching and feedback will be part of teacher expectations. Regular data dives will be incorporated to ensure progress is being made, and appropriate shifts will be made as needed. Hawthorn is planning for summer school to extend learning and lessen identified gaps that exist for our girls.*

2. *The University would like to see additional progress focused on Math for the upcoming year. What steps will Hawthorn be taking in SY2020 to increase student performance in this subject?*

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***Hawthorn Response:***

*Hawthorn will be receiving coaching and continued implementation support from Achievement First. Achievement First has developed a high-quality math curriculum that has yielded high quality results for children in their network. Hawthorn's participation in their Navigator program will further support our continued efforts to ensure that we are closing gaps in Math with a curriculum that has proven results. Hawthorn will be hiring a Math Coach to provide feedback, coaching and professional development for math teachers. Hawthorn girls will continue to have a "double dose" of Math during the school day. Hawthorn is also planning for summer school to extend learning and lessen the academic gaps that exist in the area of Math.*

- 3. Overall attendance above 90% is a requirement of the current Performance Contract. The APR's 90/90 attendance still necessitates improvement. What processes are in place to increase results?*

***Hawthorn Response:***

*Hawthorn has an attendance policy that outlines action steps that the attendance team follows when students are not in attendance. Increased home visits and parent conferences have been incorporated to better understand student needs. Where the school has been able to provide support (e.g. transportation, late pick up), the school has worked with families to meet the need. The staff has also made an increased effort to provide student incentives and rewards for 90/90 attendance. The incentives been more frequent in an effort to meet the APR goal.*

**Financial Health and Sustainability**

The financial stability of charter schools is essential, as national statistics indicate over half of charter school closures are the result of poor financial performance. In addition to monitoring for compliance with state and federal law, the sponsor ensures that its schools are currently financially strong and positioned for future fiscal health.

A review of financial records substantiates that Hawthorn financial controls are in place, and evidence is recorded in the *Charter School Performance Framework*. Submission of mandatory reports to DESE has been timely, including their SY2019 Final Expenditure Report (FER) and Annual Secretary of the Board Report (ASBR). Hawthorn maintained a fund balance of 10.23% for SY2019, above the 3% requirement by State statute.

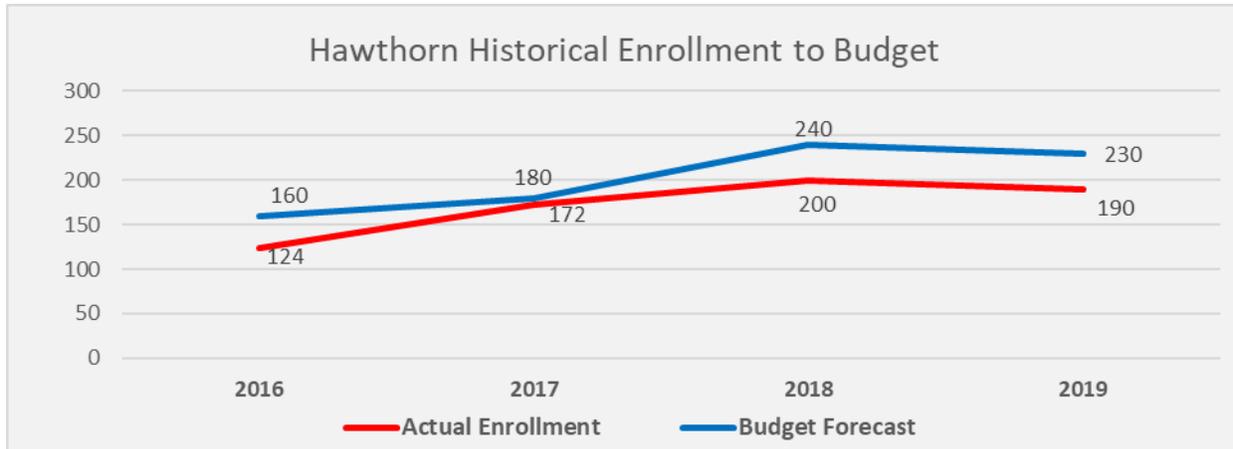
An independent audit, as required annually, was completed by Kerber, Eck & Braeckel LLP (KEB). The returned audit opinion, while qualified, was free of any significant findings or areas of concern. Following Board approval at the December 2019 meeting, the audit was submitted by the school to DESE to meet the year-end deadline, and published in a local newspaper as required by charter law.

The Hawthorn Board meets monthly to review the financial reports and check register. Sound financial practices are in place utilizing policies and procedures from the *Missouri Financial Accounting Manual*. Hawthorn employs EdOps in Kansas City for bookkeeping & accounting services, a group well-versed in charter financials. EdOps works closely with Hawthorn's Financial Committee which includes board members with strong backgrounds in financial management.

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**Enrollment Variance**

The University charter team routinely reviews interim fiscal reports from the school to confirm trends for financial viability. It has been noted with some concern that SY2019 experienced an enrollment variance of 75%. This percentage designates the ratio of actual annual student enrollment compared to budgeted projections. A healthy financial forecast is considered to maintain a variance goal to exceed 95%. The University will continue to monitor this measure for sustainability.



**Financial Considerations Requiring Response**

*Student enrollment indicates a trending decline even as the LEA adds additional grade levels, substantially impacting budget forecasts. Describe the actions being taken by Hawthorn to increase enrollment and strengthen the budget projections going forward.*

**Hawthorn Response:**

*There are several action steps that have been implemented in order to not only maintain but increase enrollment. Hawthorn has an eye to ensuring that there is a focus on the retention of students. Hawthorn has implemented a strong curriculum, quality instruction and school culture. Further, Hawthorn has made a commitment to ensure students have additional academic supports by providing extended hour support as needed. Hawthorn also worked with external partners to provide extracurricular programs to students. Hawthorn has various initiatives to share the special opportunities available to prospective families. Recruitment and cultivation of new families are not only through social media, but are on site, as well as connecting with various external partners and community organizations.*

*Hawthorn is utilizing a balanced approach for budgeting. Hawthorn is taking special care to be conservative in both spending, staffing and revenue projections. Hawthorn regularly monitors expenses and makes appropriate adjustments throughout the school year. Fiscal health is a priority for Hawthorn.*



## Hawthorn Leadership School for Girls SY2019 Sponsor Review Report (cont.)

### **Organizational Effectiveness**

Whereas academic and financial frameworks are mandated by outcomes, organizational effectiveness is measured by process, ensuring the rights of students, families, staff and the public. The University holds Hawthorn accountable for *how* it operates within minimum standards of conduct, while the autonomy for process decisions remains the responsibility of Hawthorn's leadership and their board.

The structure for accountability is outlined in the *Charter School Performance Framework*. These requirements define a multitude of operational indicators for compliance that include:

1. Educational program compliance
2. Financial management
3. Board governance adherence with laws and policy
4. Reporting requirements to responsible entities
5. Student and employee rights and requirements
6. School environment for health, safety and services

### ***Organizational Considerations Requiring Response***

*Hawthorn continues its development of school culture and curriculum while becoming more proficient with all aspects of operational compliance. The University finds Hawthorn's leadership and board to be diligent in assimilating new processes and requirements, as well as meeting all critical deadlines. There are no concerns requiring response for this section.*

### **Required Actions**

Washington University requests response to the considerations noted in this report before April 20, 2020 for inclusion in the final record. This document will be presented to the Hawthorn Board of Directors for their April meeting.

### **Conclusion**

The University concludes Hawthorn Leadership School for Girls is in substantial compliance with legal, statutory, regulatory and contractual charter requirements. Their overall financial and organizational performance for SY2019 meets expectations, while academic performance continues to require close monitoring going forward. Hawthorn remains forthcoming and transparent in providing requested data and information, greatly facilitating the oversight process. Washington University is confident of Hawthorn's sincere commitment to their mission of creating a high performing school for their students, and looks forward to a continued partnership.

### **Appendix I: Hawthorn SY2019 Charter School Performance Framework**

### **Appendix II: Outcome Requirements for SY2019/2020**