



# Science, Technology, Engineering Preparatory Academy

*MN Charter School District 4200*

*ANNUAL REPORT*

*FY 2015*

In Operation since Fall 2011

(Grades 6-12)

Dakota County, Minnesota

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## **STEP Academy Identifying Information**

STEP Academy, Minnesota Charter School district #4200, is an innovative 6-12 grade Charter School with a Science, Technology, and Engineering focus. STEP Academy opened to grades 6-11 in Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota, in fall 2011, and now serves grades 6-12.

### **STEP Academy Contact Information**

STEP Academy is located at 4100 East 66<sup>th</sup> Street, Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota 55076  
Main contact person is Mustafa Ibrahim, Executive Director (phone: 651 289-6120; email Mustafa@stepacademy.com)

### **STEP Academy's Mission and Vision**

*Vision: MN STEP Academy is a 6-12 Charter School in Inver Grove Heights, MN. It is our vision to promote college-readiness by ensuring that all students are motivated to academic excellence, can qualify to obtain college credit while in high school, are fully prepared to enter college and graduate, with the critical knowledge and skills required for employment in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) careers. As a public school open to all students, it also reaches out to students who are underserved by traditional schools and are underrepresented within STEM fields.*

*Mission: At MN STEP Academy, our students will achieve our Vision as they explore Science, Technology, and Mathematics as well as other supporting coursework and critical thinking skills, as a vehicle for college success. Through faculty mentoring, innovative teaching and classroom technology, and participation in experiential learning, students will readily translate what they learn to real world environments. In collaboration with local community, state, and private colleges and universities, STEP Academy students will be encouraged to qualify for and take post-secondary educational courses.*

## STEP Academy Enrollment, 2012-2015

STEP ACADEMY'S ENROLLMENT <sup>1</sup> BY GRADE, 2011-2014									
School Year	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL	Attrition <sup>2</sup>
2012-13	27	38	39	23	12	7	6	152	-27%
2013-14	34	38	35	30	14	14	5	170	+12%
2014-15	33	51	52	52	40	20	16	264	+55%
2015-16 (Projected)	30	36	50	46	50	40	20	272	+3%

During 2014-15 STEP Academy's enrollment declined slightly after October 1, the date for the "snapshot" of enrollment figures reported above. The school concluded the year with Average Daily Membership of 246.17, which was still by far the highest since STEP Academy's inception (ADM for 2013-14 was 181.01).

## Authorizer Information

STEP Academy's authorizer is Innovative Quality Schools (contact: Milo Cutter – [mcutter@iqsmn.org](mailto:mcutter@iqsmn.org); phone 651-234-0900).

STEP Academy was authorized by Anoka Community/Technical College in 2010, and opened in the fall of 2011. In 2012, the College determined that it was not going to continue as an authorizer of chartered schools. At that time, the Board of STEP requested that IQS serve as their authorizer, which IQS agreed to do after a review of STEP. The school was initially granted a two-year contract, from July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2014; STEP Academy's contract with IQS was renewed in the spring of 2014 for a five-year term beginning July 1, 2014.

## Board of Directors Information

The table below shows all the members of STEP Academy's governing board during 2014-15.

Name: Last, First	Affiliation	Date Appointed	Term Expiration	Contact
Abdullah, Amena	Teacher/Director, File Folder #447116	7/1/14	6/30/17	651-332-6369; <a href="mailto:amena@stepacademymn.com">amena@stepacademymn.com</a>
AbouAiad, Tamany	Teacher/Secretary, File Folder #447125	7/1/14	6/30/17	651-289-6132; <a href="mailto:tamany22@yahoo.com">tamany22@yahoo.com</a>

<sup>1</sup> Based on October 1 student enrollment figures.

<sup>2</sup> Based on percentage change from the previous fall.

<b>Name: Last, First</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Date Ap- pointed</b>	<b>Term Expi- ration</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Ahmed, Abdullahi	Parent/Chair	7/1/14	6/30/17	952-393-7939; <a href="mailto:aabdul-lahi@hotmail.com">aabdul-lahi@hotmail.com</a>
Haji, Mohamed	Community/Director	7/1/14	6/30/16	612 804-6856; <a href="mailto:lslow02@yahoo.com">lslow02@yahoo.com</a>
Hassan, Abdirah- man	Parent/Director	7/1/14	6/30/16	612-384-6002; <a href="mailto:guled11@gmail.com">guled11@gmail.com</a>
Olmsted, Sandra	Community/Vice- Chair	7/1/14	6/30/17	612-330-1079; <a href="mailto:olmsteds@augzburg.edu">olmsteds@augzburg.edu</a>
Yassin, Khadar	Community/Treasurer	7/1/14	6/30/16	

STEP Academy's Board of Director are responsible for setting goals, ensuring that the school's goals are met, and approving or disapproving the major decisions made by the Executive Director. STEP Academy's Board also undertakes long-term strategic planning and oversees the finances to make sure the school is fiscally sound.

Charter school board training covering the three mandated topics was held April 18, 2014, with the University of St. Thomas. This training covered the mandatory topics. Training at UST in April was attended by four of the seven members; the other three will attend training at UST in August 2015.

A board election was held in April 2014, and members were elected, who will then seated in July. Terms are staggered, with some terms expiring June 2016 and some June 2017. The next elections to the STEP Academy board are to be held in the spring of 2016. The STEP Academy board consists of three community members, two parents and two teachers.

## **Staff Information**

### **STEP Academy Teaching Staff 2014-2015**

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>File folder #</b>	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Left during 14/15?</b>	<b>Not returning 15/16?</b>
Abdullah, Amena	447116	Arabic		
Abou-Aiad, Tamany	447125	Math		
Alford, Cory	482110	Language Arts, Electives		
Begum, Rejia	415343	Math		
Borghol, Marwa	446832	Arabic		
Benz, Diane	369051	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade		
Chapman, Molly	419827	Special Education		X
Chowdhury, Zinat	432535	Science		
Elnahrawy, Mona	416352	Building Sub		
Hickman, Blake	446461	Phy. Ed.		
Kenutis, Matthew	483419	Social Studies		

Teacher	File folder #	Assignment	Left during 14/15?	Not returning 15/16?
Kooiker, Merredith	452105	RTI		X
McGie, Jeffrey	477765	Language Arts		X
Nelsen, Wayne	343848	ELL		
Ritchart, John	415920	Science, Math		
Roddy, Lisa	332484	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade		
Schmetterer, Max	461549	Language Arts		X
Smit, Tim	476213	Social Studies		X
Welsh, Nicholas	450616	Social Studies		

### STEP Academy 2014-2015 School Management and Faculty Information

Name	File Folder number	Assignment	Years employed	Left during 14/15?	Not returning 15/16?
Mustafa Ibrahim		Executive Director	3		
Mohamed Abdurahman		Assistant Director	4		
Dawn Madland	346539	Academic Dean	2		
Shannon Benalshaikh		Office Manager	3	X	X

STEP Academy is led by a Leadership Team consisting of the Executive Director, Assistant Director, and Academic Dean. STEP Academy's management team as a whole, shown in the table above, was consistent throughout the 2014-15 school year, and all members of the team plan on returning for the next school year.

### Director's Professional Development Plan

Mustafa Ibrahim, director of STEP Academy, attended the following conferences and training events during 2014-15:

- July 29, 2014. 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Minnesota Charter School Conference hosted by Clifton Larson Allen, at the University of Minnesota.
- July 31, 2014. 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Charter School Law Conference at the University of St. Thomas, with ISES, Booth Lavorato and MN Association of Charter Schools.
- August 2014. Attended training sessions with staff in the two weeks before the start of school; sessions with outside speakers included:
  - Developing a Strong School Culture/Community with Michael Van Keulen of Open Path Resources
  - JMC Regional training
  - Technology Integration, with Scott Schwister of NE Metro district 916
  - Differentiation Strategies, with Jo Tate of the White Bear Lake Public Schools
  - Effective Behavior Management with Doug Anderson of Solutions and Strengths
- November 24, 2014. Annual meeting of schools authorized by IQS; featured discussion of how to evaluate schools.
- December 2014. Minnesota Middle School Association conference
- May 6, 2015. IQS Leadership Conference

- June/July 2015. National Charter Schools Conference in New Orleans; attended sessions relating to governance, teaching and operations.

## Charter School Purposes

STEP Academy is organized and operated to achieve its primary purpose of improving pupil learning and student achievement. STEP Academy seeks to do this by operating a college preparatory program centered on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). With an extended day of 7 hours, STEP Academy offers students an accelerated and integrated remediation approach that is intended to move them to proficient and advanced levels within core academic subjects. A range of social supports that reflects the social development needs of urban students are integrated into the educational experience. In addition, STEP Academy addressing four additional purposes of charter schools specified in the Minnesota Charter Law:

- To increase learning opportunities for pupils: STEP Academy does this by providing a STEM-focused, college preparatory program in a small learning community, creating a unique setting that is available for students who may not thrive in traditional high schools or otherwise be able to access this type of program.
- Use different and innovative teaching methods: Innovative teaching methods in place at STEP Academy include PSEO and the Inver Prep developmental English course offered through collaboration with Inver Hills Community College.
- Measure learning outcomes and create different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes: In addition to the usual range of academic assessments, progress of students at STEP Academy is measured through performance on the Accuplacer, and through ACT's 8<sup>th</sup> grade EXPLORE, and 10<sup>th</sup> grade PLAN assessments. A final measure of student learning is through graduating seniors' acceptance into post-secondary institutions, which STEP Academy tracks.
- Establish new forms of accountability for schools: Accountability is guaranteed through STEP Academy's contract with IQS, which provides for academic, non-academic and organizational goals, each with measures of success.

## Description of the School

STEP Academy provides a small learning community for students in grades 6 – 12. Through partnerships with other organizations, STEP Academy extends urban students' educational experiences into the broader community. Dedicated to the success of all students, the school's professional learning

community supports creative instructional methodologies that respond to students' specific learning styles. STEP Academy harnesses cutting edge technology to develop all students' skills proficiency, encourage innovative teaching and learning, and create robust educational support systems. Parental engagement through a robust Parent and Teacher Organization (PTO) ensures that STEP Academy is responsive to the needs of its students, families, and the community that it serves.

As a Minnesota public charter school, STEP Academy is committed to mobilizing the resources necessary to offer urban students a rigorous academic experience that prepares them for college, grounds them in civic responsibility, and positions them for successful careers in a competitive knowledge-based global economy. STEP Academy is committed to diversity as it is guided by the following core values:

- STEP Academy values diversity in all its forms included, but not limited to, ethnic, cultural, socio-economic, and religious diversity.
- STEP Academy values the assets and talents of each student.
- STEP Academy values the partnership of parents and community organizations in supporting urban students' leadership development and academic success.
- STEP Academy values a teaching and learning school community that sets a premium on professionalism and creativity.
- STEP Academy values critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, and the application of knowledge to real world challenges.
- STEP Academy values the application of technology in ways that stimulate learning, encourage innovation, and inspire creative solutions to social issues.
- STEP Academy attracts students from families throughout the greater Twin Cities. As a charter schools that effectively serves urban youth, STEP Academy promotes academic excellence and professional preparation that are consistent with the Federal No Child Left Behind Program.

STEP Academy offers the following to support student learning outside the regular school day and year:

- After-school clubs were offered for enrichment in the fall term, including topics such as chess, martial arts, and cooking.
- During the second semester tutoring was offered for middle school students one our per day after school, focusing on language arts and math.
- Credit recovery is offered for seniors through the APEX online learning system, which can help seniors who are missing credits to get back on a path to graduation.
- STEP Academy continued its relationship with Inver Hills Community College, with students from IHCC doing service learning at STEP.
- STEP Academy offers an extended day, running seven hours. During 2014-15 the school day was rearranged to have six periods instead of seven; the extended class periods (61 minutes) provide for more instructional time.



- Though STEP Academy does not offer a summer session, the school continues to support student learning during the summer months by sponsoring an at-home summer reading program for all students, and by providing the Grand Rapids Academic Summer Program (GRASP) for middle school students. The summer reading program was created by STEP's reading teachers, and asks students to track what they read, and to report back on this in the fall, when there will be prizes offered for summer readers. GRASP is a nine-week correspondence program designed to help students maintain reading and math skills while on summer break.
- Finally, during August STEP Academy offers an orientation to the school, for families of new students entering STEP. This was held the week prior to the beginning-of-the-year open house, which all students and families were encouraged to attend to meet teachers and get ready for the new school year.

## STEP Academy Highlights from 2014-15

STEP Academy's Academic Dean noted the following highlights from the 2014-15 school year:

- College exploration and visits continued- National College Fair, Hamline, Augsburg, Inver Hills, Career and College classes, Campus reps on visit
- Driver education classes with A+ drivers. 9 students completed
- RTI Success
- 8th graders participated in the NAEP (National Assessment of Education Progress)
- 25 11<sup>th</sup> graders take the ACT
- 24 students in Inver Prep
- 15 students participate in PSEO classes and earn college credit at 3 different colleges
- Numerous students core in the 90% and about on the NWEA MAP Test and 2 8<sup>th</sup> graders score in the 95% and above percentile on the ACT EXPLORE!
- 16 seniors graduated

## Performance Summary

STEP Academy's accountability plan is built upon outcome measures that focus on student achievement as a result of the school's programmatic and organizational practices. The academic goals address the major academic subjects as well as the requirements of the State of Minnesota Accountability Plan under No Child Left Behind; nonacademic goals reflect those additional outputs that STEP Academy deems important in measuring the effectiveness of the programmatic model; STEP Academy's organizational goals establish the benchmarks for effective management of financial, human, and physical resources.

**1. The school will make adequate yearly academic progress (AYP) as determined by the Department of Education.**

STEP Academy did meet AYP targets in Participation, with 100% of students testing in reading and 99.3% in math; and in Attendance, with an overall attendance rate of 91.7%.

Note: Under the state’s waiver of federal Title I requirements, the AYP system is being superseded by a Multiple Measurements Rating (MMR) system consisting of four measurements: Proficiency, Student Growth, Achievement Gap Reduction, and Graduation Rate. Proficiency is measured in terms of the proportion of students testing at the Meeting or Exceeding Expectations level on the spring MCA’s; Student Growth and Achievement Gap Reduction consider changes in MCA scores for students testing two consecutive years at a given school. In each are there are a total of 25 points possible. STEP Academy’s MMR’s for 2015 show the school earning 5.85 points in Proficiency, 16.46 points in Growth, and 18.16 points in Achievement Gap Reduction (no rating in Graduation Rate due to lack of data). These ratings result in STEP Academy being defined as a Celebration Eligible school in the MMR system, again this year.

**2. MCA Proficiency: Students will perform as well or better than comparable sites as measured by the MCA’s.**

Three comparable schools have been identified for purposes of comparing achievement data. There are two charter schools that serve a similar population to STEP Academy: Higher Ground and Dugsi Academy. The third comparison school is Harding High School, which is part of the St. Paul district. The table below shows results in terms of proportion of students proficient on spring 2015 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments, for STEP Academy and the comparison schools.

<b>MCA Results, 2015</b>		
	<b>Proportion Proficient<sup>3</sup> – Reading</b>	<b>Proportion Proficient – Math</b>
<b>STEP Academy</b>	<b>36% (53/149 students)</b>	<b>39% (51/130)</b>
Higher Ground Academy	50%	59%
Dugsi Academy	22%	12%
Harding High School	18%	26%
Average for comparison schools	30.0%	32.3%

MCA Proficiency performance is rated per the following four-point rubric:

<sup>3</sup> Results shown are for students enrolled October 1 only.

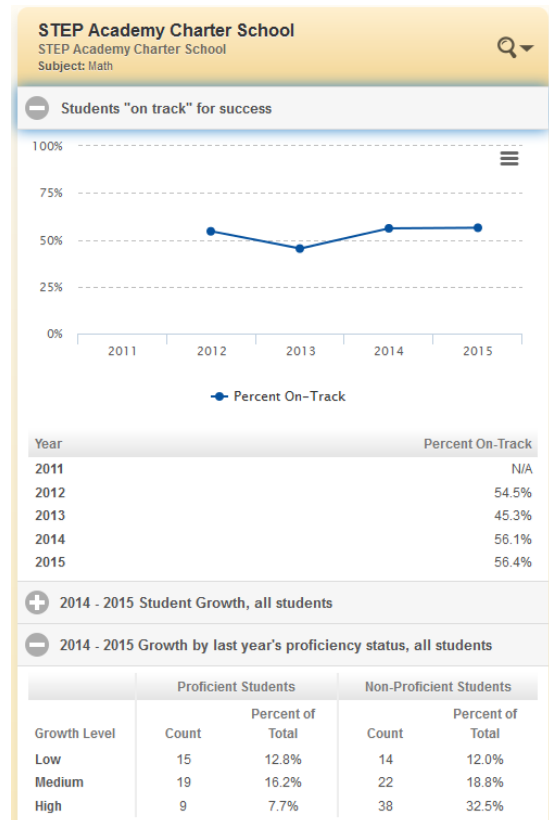
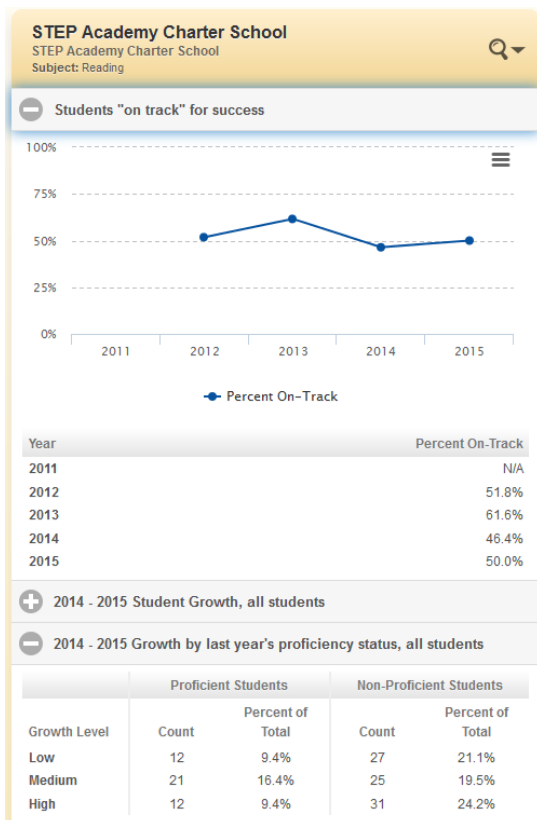
- (a) Does not meet expectations: >10 percentage points below comparable sites
- (b) Approaching expectations: between 5.1 and 9.9 percentage points below comparable sites
- (c) Meets expectations: within 5 percentage points of comparison groups
- (d) Exceeds expectations: exceeds comparison sites by more than 5 percentage points

Based on this rubric, STEP Academy exceeds expectations in both subjects, with the proportion of students testing proficient more than five percentage points above the average of the comparison schools.

Compared to 2014, the proportion of students who tested proficient in Reading is slightly higher (36% compared to 32% last year), but the proportion testing proficient in Math was somewhat lower (39% compared to 46%).

### 3. MCA Growth: Students who are continuously enrolled for 3 years are making growth as measured by the MCA.

The charts below show STEP Academy's Growth data from 2015, from MDE's Minnesota Report Card webpage. The intent would be for most students, particularly those who are non-proficient, to have High growth. The left chart is Reading data, and the right is Math. This data is based on a comparison of two years' results on the MCA's, i.e. 2014 and 2015.



**4. MCA Growth Comparison Groups: Students who are continuously enrolled for 3 or more years are making greater growth than comparison groups.**

The table below shows publicly-available MCA Growth data for STEP Academy and the three comparison schools. For this measure, STEP out-performed the average each of the three comparison schools, in both subjects.

<b>MCA Growth Comparison Results, 2015</b>		
	<b>Proportion Making High / Low Growth – Reading</b>	<b>Proportion Making High / Low Growth – Math</b>
<b>STEP Academy</b>	<b>34% / 31%</b>	<b>40% / 25%</b>
Higher Ground Academy	41% / 23%	37% / 25%
Dugsi Academy	33% / 25%	15% / 44%
Harding High School	15% / 34%	16% / 18%
Average for comparison schools	29.7% / 27.3%	22.7% / 29.0%

**5. Continuously enrolled students will perform at or above the national median on the MAP assessment.**

STEP Academy students took Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests twice during the year, in the fall and spring. The table below shows results from the spring in Mathematics and Reading (some students also took the Language Usage and General Science MAPs, but not a representative group). Results are listed for all students who tested in the spring of 2015, then students who had been enrolled at last two years as of spring 2015, and finally, results for only students who had been enrolled at least three years. Results here clearly indicate benefits to students who remain at STEP Academy consistently: in both subjects, although fewer than half of all students who tested scored above the median, more than half of those who had been at STEP for two years scored above the median, and the proportion above the median was significantly greater when narrowing the group to students enrolled three years or more.

<b>STEP Measures of Academic Progress Results, Spring 2015</b>			
Subject	At or Above median – all students tested <sup>4</sup>	At or above median – enrolled 2+ years	At or above median – enrolled 3+ years
Mathematics	40% (93 of 233 students)	58% (70 of 120 students)	69% (36 of 52 students)

<sup>4</sup> Except seniors – they are not included as MAP norms do not provide percentile ranks for 12<sup>th</sup> graders.

	(2014 result: 49%; 91 of 184 students)	(2014 result: 64%; 54 of 84 students)	(2014 result: 67% (26 of 39 students)
Reading	41% (97 of 238 students) (2014 result: 44%; 91 of 183 students)	52% (61 of 117 students) (2014 result: 54%; 45 of 84 students)	58% (29 of 50 students) (2014 result: 72% (28 of 39 students)

## 6. Other Academic Measures

In addition to the above measures based on test results, there are three additional academic measures defined in the authorizer’s Student Performance Indicators:

- *Each high school student prior to graduation will successfully complete some type of postsecondary credits.*

STEP Academy opened serving grades 6-11 its first year and during 2012-13, the second year of operation, there was only one senior who met graduation criteria. The student body remains heavily weighted toward the earlier grades, as is apparent from the Enrollment by Grade table above, and during 2014 there were five graduates, only one of whom had completed post-secondary credits. STEP Academy leadership is seeking to change this Performance Indicator for the next term of the charter, as not all graduates will be able to complete postsecondary credits before high school graduation. For instance, English Learner students may be behind in credits and face a major challenge to graduate on-time, without also seeking postsecondary credits.

STEP is building relationships with postsecondary institutions and putting in place programming to support students enrolling in Post-secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO). During 2014-15, fifteen juniors and seniors enrolled in PSEO, earning a total of 313 PSEO credits. Beginning in 2013-14, a developmental English course was offered via concurrent enrollment in STEP Academy and Inver Hills Community College. Students take the Accuplacer exam in the spring, and are able to begin attending the class in the fall if they qualify based on scores. This course, known as Inver Prep, was offered on-site at STEP. Inver Prep was designed to help students transition to college by ensuring they have the English skills to write at a college level. Twenty-six students qualified and enrolled in Inver Prep during 2014-15, up from 15 last year. Sixteen students successfully completed all three trimesters, up from ten last year (others moved away, dropped out, or were unable to maintain the required GPA to remain in the course).

- *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Assessment*

The EXPLORE and PLAN assessments were given again during 2014-15, to 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders respectively. Forty-nine 8<sup>th</sup> graders took the EXPLORE, and 39 sophomores took the PLAN. Eleven of the 49

8<sup>th</sup> graders who took the EXPLORE scored above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally; and seven of the 39 10<sup>th</sup> graders who took the PLAN scored about the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile. These students' results on this test will be compared with results in future years.

- *Graduation with five or fewer years of high school*

As noted, only five students graduated from STEP Academy in 2013-14. Of the five 2014 graduates, only one was a fifth-year senior, the others graduating after four years. As the school continues to operate, students' time enrolled will be tracked, and STEP expects to continue to graduate virtually all students who remain continuously enrolled in grades 9-12, in fewer than five years. In June of 2015, 16 students earned their high school diploma.

## **7. Additional School Performance Indicators**

In addition to the Academic Performance indicators (items 1-6 above), STEP Academy's Accountability Plan includes the following elements.

### C. Student/family responsibility

1. *Student attendance* (percentage of students who attend 90% of the time)

Review of attendance data in June shows that, of the 212 students who attended at least part of the year, 154 or 73% attended at least 90% of the days enrolled. This is a small improvement over 2012-13, when the proportion of students attending at last 90% was 70% (based on 143 of 204

2. *Students will indicate the level of satisfaction with the school in the areas of safety, acceptance and learning.*

In the 2015-16 school year, STEP Academy students will participate in the Minnesota Student Survey and the Hope Survey.

### D. Parents will report a positive school climate and challenging academic program

STEP Academy is exploring the most feasible method to obtain this information from parents. The parent survey given the previous year did not have very many participants. This may be due to culture and language differences.

### E. Teachers will report their level of satisfaction with the school and with their professional roles with the school

A survey asking teachers about various aspects of school culture at STEP Academy was administered in October 2014, to which twenty teachers responded. Response options were on a five-point Likert scale: strongly disagree; disagree; undecided; agree; and strongly agree. There were 35 questions in all, a number of which addressed aspects of teachers' level of satisfaction with the school and their professional roles. Results from several such questions are summarized below, with strongly disa-

gree/disagree/undecided responses combined, for comparison with agree/strongly agree responses. These responses indicate that most teachers are satisfied with the school and their roles there, although several teachers have reservations.

<b>STEP Academy School Culture Survey Question</b>	<b>Disagree / Undecided</b>	<b>Agree</b>
Leaders value teachers' ideas	3	16
Teachers trust each other	1	11
Leaders in the school trust the professional judgment of the teachers	5	15
Leaders take time to praise teachers who perform well	5	14
Teacher involvement in policy or decision making is taken seriously.	6	13
Leaders support risk taking and innovative teaching.	5	15
Disagreements over instructional practice are voiced openly and discussed.	4	14
Teachers are encouraged to share ideas.	1	18

**F. Student follow-up (acceptance into post-secondary institutions, by the time they graduate or later)**

As is shown in STEP Academy's School Enrollment table earlier in this report, the student population has been heavily weighted toward the younger grades; the school opened serving grades 6-11 its first year, and there were still only a few seniors in 2013-14, and only five graduates. Of the five graduates, STEP had been notified as of October 2014, that two were accepted into post-secondary programs for 2014-15.

STEP Academy continues to encourage and assist seniors in their efforts to be accepted into post-secondary schools, by providing college tours, taking students to college fairs, and helping them with the application process to colleges and universities, including financial aid applications. In September 2014 STEP took students to the Minnesota National College Fair, at the Minneapolis Convention Center. All juniors took the ACT during April 2015, and some Juniors and Seniors took the Accuplacer (this was taken by all 9<sup>th</sup> graders, and was a prerequisite for the Inver Prep course).

**G. Innovation areas (completion of high school standards in middle school helps to access post-secondary learning in high school; extensive internships, after school learning and other opportunities allow students to meet**

high school standards independently; cost benefit analysis of students completing post-secondary credits)

See the “Innovative Practices” section of this report. STEP Academy helps students access post-secondary learning, and offers extended days, and an extended year for select students, as described there.

## Innovative Practices

Innovative practices being implemented at STEP Academy include:

- Preparing students for college, including giving them opportunities to earn college credits before completing high school, is a key innovation being put in place at STEP Academy. STEP is building relationships with postsecondary institutions and has put in place programming to support students enrolling in Post-secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) Fifteen students enrolled in PSEO during 2014-15, earning a total of 313 PSEO credits. Also during 2014-15, STEP offered the Inver Prep course in developmental English for the second year, through collaboration with Inver Hills Community College, as described above in the section on “Other Academic Measures.” Students took the Accuplacer exam in the spring, and were able to begin attending the class in the fall if they qualified via Accuplacer scores.
- STEP Academy is implementing the Response to Intervention (RTI) approach, to identify and serve students in need of additional support. RTI was first implemented during 2013-14, and continued throughout 2014-15 with added staff and increased services. A total of 72 students in grades 6-9 were served in the RTI program during 2014-15. During initial implementation, the RTI program focused primarily on students in need of intervention in Reading; this expanded to include math interventions to a greater extent during 2014-15. The Year-End Report on STEP Academy’s RTI program noted the following:
  - The program began in October with one Reading Interventionist; this was expanded in November to include a second Reading Interventionist and a Mathematics Interventionist. Students who were identified for RTI support in reading received fifteen-to-twenty-minute intervention sessions four times per week, with a focus on improving Reading Fluency. Students who were identified in math received thirty-minute intervention sessions three times per week, using the IXL online math program. Students in both subject areas were chosen to receive services based on a combination of MCA, NWEA, and AIMSWEB benchmark scores, and these scores were also used to select appropriate interventions for students.. The majority of students served scored significantly below grade level, and would be classified as “Tier 3” students. In all, there were 29 Tier 2 students and 43 in Tier 3. Students were progress monitored using AIMSWEB Progress Monitor Probes. Reading students were monitored using the R-CBM fluency measure, and mathematics students were monitored using the M-CAP measure.
  - Based on student progress shown via AIMSWEB results, STEP Academy’s Reading RTI program can be judged to be very effective. Eight-one percent of participating students served showed im-



provement in reading fluency scores, with 72% making very significant gains. This is up from 76% and 68% respectively, in 2013-14. In mathematics, 88% of students showed improvement, and 64% made significant gains. Eighty-eight percent of students in the program made progress toward grade level goals; 52% of the mathematics students met their goals and were able to exit the program.

- The RTI program will continue for 2015-16, operating in a similar fashion in most respects. Staffing will be maintained or increased – in particular, STEP will have a Minnesota Math Corps tutor working with Tier 2 students, so it should be possible for the other Mathematics Interventionist to focus on providing services to Tier 3 students. Additional changes may include improving the involvement of multiple stakeholders, especially classroom teachers and parents. Reading interventions may be expanded to address comprehension as well as fluency.
- STEP Academy utilized local experts to enhance educational programming and leadership. For instance, during 2014/15, Doug Anderson came to the school three times to provide training in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system for STEP Academy staff. There are two full weeks of training for teaching staff before school starts. This training was held from August 18-29, 2014; internal and external experts provided training on topics including school culture, JMC (system for student data tracking), technology integration, differentiation strategies, Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), Classroom Reading Strategies, and STEP’s new teacher development and evaluation system.
- STEP Academy continues its efforts to engage parents and help them understand how to help their students succeed in the American school system. There is a new family orientation night at the beginning of the school year, and there were two Family Fun Nights in the spring. STEP Academy’s Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meets once a month. Starting during 2014/15, support staff were given designated worktime to contact parents, to check in regarding students or encourage parents to attend conferences.
- STEP Academy has a weekly staff meeting after school on Mondays, and on Tuesdays there is a student support team meeting (part of RTI). On Wednesdays there is a professional learning community (PLC) session after school, for review and analysis of student data, and discussion of how to adjust instruction to meet student needs.

## Financial Performance

STEP Academy is in a strong position financially, having steadily built a positive fund balance over its first three years of operation. This section first summarizes the school’s financial performance over the past three years; then there is a summary of school finances for 2013-14.

<b>STEP Academy Financial Summary, 2011-2014</b>				
	<b>Total Rev.</b>	<b>Total Exp.</b>	<b>Ending F.B.</b>	<b>F.B. - % of Exp.</b>
FY 2012	\$2,536,561	\$2,215,515	\$321,045	14.5%
FY 2013	\$2,531,660	\$2,340,555	\$512,152	21.9%
FY 2014	\$ 2,379,707	\$ 2,297,529	\$594,330	25.9%
FY 2015 (estimated)	\$2,838,902	\$2,589,104	\$844,128	32.6%

The audit for FY 2015 is underway. The school director had overall responsibility for the management of the finances and worked with the Board of Directors to monitor finances, report financial information to the school board monthly, and establish, monitor and revise the annual budget.

The school director was assisted by a business office assistant, and by cmERDC, the accounting agent STEP Academy contracts with to help ensure that proper classification of all transactions were kept and reported to the MDE on a timely basis. The School board adopts revisions to the budget as needed during the school year, if there are significant revenue or expenditure changes. Like other schools, STEP Academy is dealing with the state hold-back each year and we have established an operating line of credit with a local bank to help ease cash flow issues.

The tables below show STEP Academy’s budget for 2014-15: the original budget as approved by the Board prior to the beginning of the school year, and the final-revised budget. The Revised figures are un-audited but expected to be close to final. These figures show the school building a healthy positive fund balance: end-of-year total fund balance stood at \$321,000 at the end of FY12, the school’s first year of operation, climbed to \$594,330 at the end of FY14 and is projected to climb to \$844,129 at the end of FY15. This is 32.6% of projected expenditures.

<b>Step Academy Budget, 2014-2015</b>		
	<b>Original</b>	<b>Revised</b>
<b>General Education - Fund 01</b>		
<b>REVENUE</b>		
<u><b>Local Sources</b></u>		
Fees From Patrons	4,500	4,500
Interest Earnings	25	35
Endowment fund apportion	0	2,669
<u><b>State Sources</b></u>		
General Education Aid	1,926,799	2,323,010
Lease Aid	228,000	248,400
Spec Education Aid	24,055	24,961
<u><b>Federal Sources</b></u>		
Title I Program Aid	78,026	66,115
Title II Program Aid	20,380	19,161
Federal Special Education Aid	21,657	16,925
Early Intervening	0	4,961
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>2,279,387</b>	<b>2,685,776</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>		
Authorizer fee	17,496	22,741
Community Relations	1,500	1,500

<b>Step Academy Budget, 2014-2015</b>		
	<b>Original</b>	<b>Revised</b>
Supplies & Materials, non-instructional	25,075	35,825
Supplies & Materials, instructional	26,000	40,000
Consulting / fees for services	31,980	71,500
Salary & Benefits, office support	119,586	106,456
Salary & Benefits, admin.	303,773	255,599
Salary & Benefits, elementary ed.	80,751	82,099
Salary & Benefits, licensed instr. support	17,275	16,697
Salary & Benefits, non-licensed secondary instr.	61,907	112,124
Paraprof. / personal Care Assist.	68,940	31,690
Salary & Benefits, licensed instr.	630,063	778,475
Salary & Benefits, behavior support	45,149	46,894
Salary & Benefits, maintenance	37,959	37,959
Postage & Parcel svc.	1,200	1,200
Dues, memberships, & lic. fees	300	2,300
Transportation contracts	243,000	246,000
Insurance	8,395	8,395
Travel / conventions / conference	5,500	8,839
Operating Rentals & Leases	283,350	283,350
Fees to non-ed. Agency	10,500	10,500
Food	3,000	3,500
Equipment purchased	25,000	45,000
Federal Sub Award	13,850	15,350
Athletics program	5,150	5,303
School Psychologist	3,000	2,000
Staff Tuition Reimb.	5,000	5,000
Communications Svcs	9,600	33,600
Utility Svcs	81,600	81,600
Repair & Maintenance Svcs	42,000	62,000
Fuels	100	100
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>2,207,999</b>	<b>2,461,557</b>
<b>FUND 01 REVENUE LESS EXPENDITURES</b>		
<b>FOOD SERVICE - FUND 02</b>		
<b>REVENUE</b>		
<b><u>Local Sources</u></b>		
Food Sales To Pupils	500	500
Food Sales To Adults	2,152	2,151
<b><u>State Sources</u></b>		
Lunch	3,451	3,451
Breakfast	283	283
<b><u>Federal Sources</u></b>		
Lunch	8,134	8,134
Free/Reduced Lunch	78,948	78,948
Breakfast	34,698	34,698

<b>Step Academy Budget, 2014-2015</b>		
	<b>Original</b>	<b>Revised</b>
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>128,166</b>	<b>128,165</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>		
Salary & Benefits, food program	39,067	39,067
Repair & Maintenance	1,500	2,500
Operating Rental & Leases	1,758	1,758
NonInstr Supplies/Materials	4,370	7,500
Fuels	350	750
Food – school lunch program	39,777	45,000
Milk – school lunch program	5,910	6,500
Food – school breakfast program	19,581	19,581
Milk – school breakfast program	3,654	3,654
Dues/Membership, Fees	901	901
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>117,228</b>	<b>127,547</b>
<b>FUND 02 REVENUE LESS EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>10,938</b>	<b>618</b>
<b>ALL FUNDS REVENUE</b>	<b>2,431,608</b>	<b>2,828,902</b>
<b>ALL FUNDS EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>2,325,227</b>	<b>2,589,104</b>
<b>ALL FUNDS REVENUE LESS EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>106,381</b>	<b>239,798</b>
<b>Beginning Fund 01 Fund Balance 07/01/2014</b>	<b>594,330</b>	<b>594,330</b>
<b>Estimated Ending Fund 01 Fund Balance 06/30/2015</b>	<b>700,711</b>	<b>834,798</b>

<b>STEP Academy Financial Summary, 2011-2014</b>				
	<b>Total Rev.</b>	<b>Total Exp.</b>	<b>Ending F.B.</b>	<b>F.B. - % of Exp.</b>
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FY 2014	\$ 2,379,707	\$ 2,297,529	\$594,330	25.9%
FY 2015 (estimated)	\$2,828,902	\$2,589,104	\$834,128	32.2%

## **Future Plans**

STEP Academy's plans for the future include:

- STEP Academy will continue to encourage students to take PSEO courses. More students took PSEO courses during 2014-15 compared to 2013-14 but the total number was still small. School leadership has sought to build relationships with St. Paul College and with Normandale Community College. Normandale and Inver Hills Community College sent representatives to STEP for parent teacher night, and St. Paul College sent information. STEP Academy's long-term plan is for the majority of students to take some college classes by the junior year, either via PSEO or at STEP, through concurrent enrollment.
- Continuation of Inver Prep – 37 9<sup>th</sup> graders qualified via the Accuplacer

- RTI was expanded during 2014-15 and will continue to be enhanced in 2015-16 (see more-detailed description above, under Innovative Practices).
- STEP Academy is seeking resources to add a science lab to its facility; expanding the capacity for science learning is an important part of the school mission and vision.
- Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training will be provided to facilitate serving ELL's; and training in the PBIS model will continue with STEP's *Community, Academics, Respect and Excellence* approach.
- STEP Academy applied to the Minnesota Math and Reading Corps and was approved to have a Math Corps teacher for 2015-16. This position will provide support for Tier 2 middle school students.
- STEP Academy will be an AVID site starting in 2015-16! AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) is a college-readiness support system that helps middle- and high-school learners build the academic skills and behaviors they will need to succeed in college. A staff person is being sought for the AVID program.
- Finally, STEP Academy plans to continue increasing its integration of technology into the program as a way of engaging students. For instance, STEP makes extensive use of SmartBoards and Nooks in classrooms. A course on technology and digital citizenship is offered, and offerings in technology were enhanced for 2014-15 with the addition of a technology integration specialist to the school staff. STEP Academy made increased use of Document cameras and laptops. STEP became a google apps school. Teachers are creating Digital learning platforms.
- Math Corp to provide additional support to students performing below grade level in math
- Middle School Gifted and Talented program

## School Improvement Plan

While STEP Academy does not have a formal school improvement plan, the Leadership Team meets weekly to analyze data and plan for improvement. The Leadership Team also gathers input from staff during staff meetings, and from parents during PTO meetings, to inform ongoing planning and decision-making for school improvement. In addition to the elements noted in Future Plans and elsewhere in this report, notable improvement planning elements for 2014-15 included applying for Celebration School status, and beginning to utilize APEX Learning system for credit-recovery.

## Annual Report Approval

This report has been approved by the IQS Board on October 19, is posted on the school website and is being distributed to all staff and parents of students enrolled at STEP.