



Science, Technology, Engineering Preparatory Academy

MN Charter School District 4200

ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2013

In Operation since Fall 2011

(Grades 6-12)

Dakota County, Minnesota

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STEP Academy: Introduction, Mission and Vision

STEP Academy 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.

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's Educational Philosophy

STEP Academy provides a small learning community for students in grades 6 – 12. The college preparation curriculum is 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.

Through partnerships with business, social, civic, and cultural 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.

School Enrollment and Student Attrition

STEP ACADEMY'S ENROLLMENT¹ BY GRADE, 2011-2013									
School Year	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL	Attrition²
2011-12	59	51	44	28	11	15	N/A	208	N/A
2012-13	27	38	39	23	12	7	6	152	-27 %
2013-14 (Projected)	35	38	35	31	14	12	5	170	+12%

Governance, Management, Board Training and Staffing

The table below shows all the members of STEP Academy's governing board during 2012-13.

Name: Last, First	Affiliation	Date Ap- pointed	Term Ex- piration	Contact
Ahmed, Abdullahi	Parent/Chair	8/16/11	8/15/14	952-393-7939; aabdullahi@hotmail.com
Allison Gothmann	Secretary/Teacher, File Folder #467730	2/19/13	2/18/16	612-229-9927; Allison@stepacademymn.com
Mohamed, Mukhtar	Communi- ty/Director	10/18/11	10/17/14	612-804-6856; habaariyaako@yahoo.com
Hassan, Abdirahman	Communi- ty/Director	2/1/12	1/31/15	612-384-6002; guled11@gmail.com
AbouAiad, Tamanny	Teacher/Director, File Folder #447125	2/5/12	2/4/15	651-289-6132; tamanny22@yahoo.com
Abdullah, Amena	Teacher/Director, File Folder #447116	10/1/11	9/30/14	651-332-6369; amena@stepacademymn.com
Hasan, Zahra	Parent/Director	3/19/13	June 2013 (left early)	Zahra@stepacademymn.com
Muse, Abdikarim	Parent/Treasurer	8/16/11	June 2013 (left early)	Muse_abdikarim@yahoo.com
Osman, Abdirahman	Communi- ty/Director	4/16/13	4/15/16	952-217-3983; abdirahman@stepacademymn.com
Olmsted, Sandra	Vice-Chair	9/25/12	9/24/15	612-330-1079; olmsteds@augsborg.edu
Mohamed Mohamoud	Communi- ty/Director	11/20/12	11/19/15	612- 558-4929; Mo-hamed.mohamoud4@gmail.com

¹ Based on October 1 student enrollment figures.

² Based on percentage change from the previous fall.

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.

Training was offered for Board members in the fall of 2012, and was attended by three members on October 6, 2012: Tamanny AbouAiad, Amena Abdullah, and Sandra Olmsted. This training was provided by Twin Cities law firm Booth and Lavorato, and covered the three required charter school board training areas of board's role and responsibilities, employment policies and practices, and financial management.

Initial charter school board training covering the three mandated topics was also scheduled during the summer of 2013, this time with the University of St. Thomas. Training at UST was carried out August 7, and was attended those who did not attend the October 2012 training.

STEP Academy 2012-2013 School Management and Faculty Information

Name	File Folder number	Assignment	Years employed by the school	Left during 12/13?	Not returning 13/14?
Mustafa Ibrahim		Executive Director	1		
Mohamed Abdurrahman		Assistant Director	2		
Erin Hassemer	426040	Academic Dean	1		X
Shannon Benalshaikh		Office Manager	2		
Aden, Fatima		Administrative Assistant	1		X

Director's Professional Development Plan

The Executive Director of STEP, Mustafa Ibrahim, undertakes regular professional development activities to increase his knowledge of charter schools and school leadership. During 2012-13 activities included:

June 30 – July 3, 2012: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools conference, in Washington DC.

September 24, 2012: Innovative Quality Schools' Conference on "Using Value-Added and Growth Models for Decision-Making"

April 29, 2013: Hamline University - St. Paul Campus - Anderson Center: Redesigning Schools and Schooling: Doing Tomorrow Today.

STEP Academy Teaching Staff 2012-2013

Teacher	File folder #	Assignment	Left during 12/13?	Not returning 13/14?
Abdullah, Amena	447116	Arabic 6-12		
Abou Aiad, Tamany	447125	Math 7-12		
Borghol, Marwa	446832	Arabic 6-12		
Chowdhury, Zinat	432535	Science 7-12		
Hickman, Blake	446461	Phy. Education 6-12		
Schliz, Lana	283314	Special Education		X
Gothmann, Allison	467730	6 th Grade		
Spear, Teresa	455064	Language Arts 9-12		X
Hassemer, Erin	426040	Academic Dean		
Larson, Kathleen	451536	Language Arts 7-8		
Walsh, Nicholas	450616	Social Studies 7-12		
Nelsen, Wayne	343848	ELL		
Cole, Andrew	466612	Physics 9-12		X

STEP Academy staffing was stable during 2012-13, with no staff leaving during the school year.

Financial Information

The audit for FY 2013 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 the past two school years. The 2012-13 figures are un-audited but close to final. These figures show the school building a healthy positive fund balance: end-of-year fund balance stood at \$321,000 at the end of FY12, the school's first year of operation, and is projected to climb to \$494,000 at the end of FY13.

<u>Consolidated Financial Statement for STEP Academy: Two Year Period Ending 6/30/13</u>				
<u>Sources and Uses of Funds - General Fund Only</u>				
	Actual 11/12	% of Total 11/12	Actual 12/13	% of total 12/13
Local Sources				
Total Local Sources	\$1,827	0%	\$76,891	3%
State Sources				
General Education Aid	\$1,758,068	72%	\$1,745,086	73%
Special Education Aid	\$32,324	1%	\$67,581	3%
All Other State Aid	\$206,494	9%	\$262,015	11%
Total State Sources	\$1,996,886	82%	\$2,083,683	86%
Federal Sources				
Total Sources of Funds - General Fund	\$2,246,948	100%	\$2,431,430	100%
<u>Use of Funds</u>				
<u>Instruction, Support Services and School Level Administration</u>				
Salaries	\$518,754	24%	\$557,450	25%

Consolidated Financial Statement for STEP Academy: Two Year Period Ending 6/30/13				
Sources and Uses of Funds - General Fund Only				
Benefits and Payroll Taxes	\$127,180	6%	\$132,971	6%
All Other	\$169,981	8%	\$94,940	4%
Instructional and Pupil Support Services				
Salaries	\$87,649	4%	\$97,032	4%
Benefits and Payroll Taxes	\$40,934	2%	\$52,002	2%
All Other	\$65,458	3%	\$12,174	1%
School Level Administration				
Salaries	\$158,575	8%	\$226,712	10%
Benefits and Payroll Taxes	\$20,738	1%	\$40,751	2%
All Other	\$16,815	1%	\$3,745	0%
Facilities Operations & Maint.				
Salaries	\$30,291	1%	\$29,452	1%
Benefits and Payroll Taxes	\$9,147	0%	\$10,125	0%
All Other	\$453,071	22%	\$433,607	19%
Subtotal, School Level Ed. Services			1,690,964	76%
All Other	\$196,599	81%	\$229,965	10%
District Level Administration				
Salaries	\$37,515	2%	\$42,200	2%
Benefits and Payroll Taxes	\$16,663	1%	\$58,264	3%
All Other	\$118,895	6%	\$210,047	9%
Total Uses of Funds - General Fund	\$2,108,132	100%	\$2,231,440	100%
Sources Over (Under) Uses	\$318,815		\$199,990	
Net Transfers In (Out)	\$0		-\$6,656	
Net Changes in Funds	\$318,815		\$193,334	
Total Fund Balance				
Beginning of Year	\$1		\$318,816	
End of Year	\$318,816		\$512,151	

Consolidated Financial Statement for STEP Academy: Two Year Period Ending 6/30/13		
Sources and Uses of Funds – Summary for Both Funds		
General Fund	Actual 11/12	Actual 12/13
Total Sources	\$246,948	\$2,431,430
Total Uses	\$2,108,132	\$2,231,440

Consolidated Financial Statement for STEP Academy: Two Year Period Ending 6/30/13		
Sources and Uses of Funds – Summary for Both Funds		
Other Financing Sources	\$0	-\$6,656
Net Change in Funds	\$318,815	\$193,334
Ending Fund Balance	\$318,816	\$512,151
Other Funds		
Food Service		
Total Sources	\$109,613	\$100,229
Total Uses	\$107,383	\$109,114
Other Financing Sources	\$0	\$6,656
Net Change in Funds	\$2,230	-\$2,229
Ending Fund Balance	\$2,230	\$0
Total		
Total Sources	\$2,536,561	\$2,531,660
Total Uses	\$2,215,515	\$2,340,555
Other Financing Sources	\$0	\$0
Net Change in Funds	\$321,045	\$191,105
Ending Fund Balance	\$321,046	\$512,152

Academic Performance

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. This section addresses academic performance during the 2012-13 school year, in the six areas identified in the authorizer’s provisions regarding Evaluation of School/Student Performance Indicators.

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

STEP Academy did not make adequate yearly progress in Proficiency based on spring 2013 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) results. In Math, STEP Academy's Blended Index Target was 63.61 and actual Index Rate was 53.93. In Reading, the Blended Index Target was 59.31, and actual Index Rate was 46.28.

STEP Academy did meet AYP targets in Participation, with 100% of students testing; and in Attendance, with an overall attendance rate of 95.31%.

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 2013 show the school earning 9.19 points in Proficiency, 12.53 points in Growth, and 17.3 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.

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 2013 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments, for STEP Academy and the comparison schools.

MCA Results, 2013		
	Proportion Proficient ³ – Reading	Proportion Proficient – Math
STEP Academy	36%	32%
Higher Ground Academy	38%	58%
Dugsi Academy	21%	17%
Harding High School	30%	36%
Average for comparison schools	30%	37%

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

- (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 meets expectations in Math, with the proportion of students testing proficient 5 percentage points below the average of the comparison schools; and exceeds expectations in Reading, with the proportion of students testing proficient 6 percentage points above the average of the comparison schools.

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

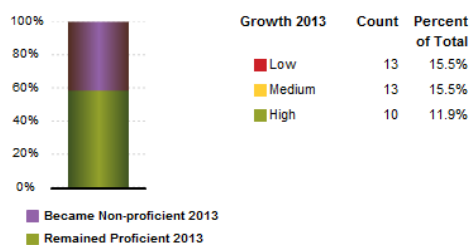
The charts below show STEP Academy’s Growth data from 2013, from MDE’s Data for Parents and Educators webpage. The intent would be for most students, particularly those who are non-proficient, to have High growth. The left chart is Reading data⁴, and the right is Math. This data is

³ Results shown are for students enrolled October 1 only.

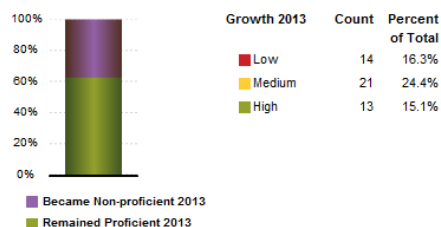
⁴ Note that the 2012 and 2013 MCA’s are not comparable, due to the change from MCA-II to MCA-III. In fact, in a letter sent to Superintendents and charter school directors on May 30, 2013, Commissioner Cassellius advised against comparing the MCA Reading results from the two years. In this letter the Commissioner stated: “New academic standards have required the use of new state assessments for students to demonstrate success in meeting the more challenging standards. ... I want to make it very clear that comparing last year’s reading scores to this year’s reading scores is not appropriate: last year’s tests and this year’s tests are measuring two different standards of expectation. Instead, this year’s test scores should be considered a new starting point for performance.”

based on a comparison of two years' results on the MCA's, i.e. 2012 and 2013.

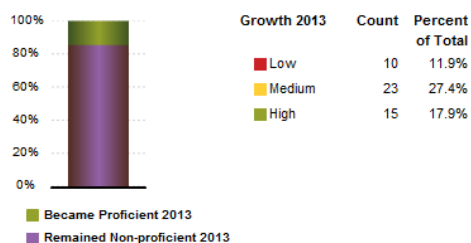
All Students proficient on prior assessment



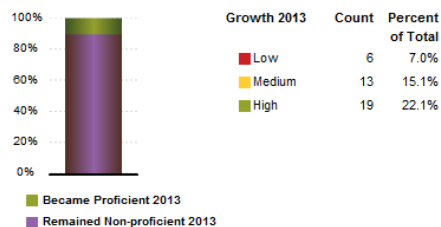
All Students proficient on prior assessment



All Students non-proficient on prior assessment



All Students non-proficient on prior assessment



STEP ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL

STEP ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL

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 for the three comparison schools in Reading, though not in Math.

MCA Growth Comparison Results, 2013		
	Proportion Making High / Low Growth – Reading	Proportion Making High / Low Growth – Math
STEP Academy	37% / 23%	30% / 27%
Higher Ground Academy	34% / 31%	39% / 17%
Dugsi Academy	17% / 49%	16% / 57%
Harding High School	22% / 31%	54% / 13%
Average for comparison schools	24% / 37%	36% / 29%

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 three times during the year, in the fall, winter, and spring. The table below shows results from the spring in the five topics tested. Results are listed for all students who tested in the spring of 2013, then students who had been enrolled for the full 2012-13 school year, and finally, results for only students who had been enrolled both years. Results here clearly indicate benefits to students who remain at STEP Academy consistently: on all five test subjects, over half the students who had been at the school for two years scored above the median.

STEP Measures of Academic Progress Results, Spring 2013			
Subject	At or Above median – all students tested	At or above median – enrolled 1 year	At or above median – enrolled 2 years
Mathematics	50% (77 of 154 students)	49% (47/95)	73% (33/45)
Reading	45% (69 of 155 students)	47% (45/95)	64% (29/45)
Language Usage	44% (67 of 152 students)	44% (41/93)	60% (26/43)
Concepts & Processes (MN Science Part 1)	36% (52 of 144 students)	39% (35/90)	56% (23/41)
General Science (MN Science Part 2)	45% (65 of 144 students)	47% (42/90)	66% (27/41)

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 post-secondary 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. STEP is building relationships with postsecondary institutions and putting in place programming to support

students enrolling in Post-secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) beginning in 2013-14. Planning was also carried out to begin offering concurrent enrollment for STEP Academy students in an Inver Hills Community College course, on Developmental English, to be offered on-site at STEP Academy. Students took the Accuplacer exam in the spring of 2013, and were able to begin attending the class in the fall of 2013.

- *21st Century Skills Assessment*

Assessments measuring twenty-first century skills were not administered by STEP Academy during 2012-13, but the EXPLORE and PLAN assessments are being given during 2013-14, to 8th and 10th graders respectively. Results from these assessments will be included in the 2013-14 annual report.

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

As noted, only one student at STEP Academy was eligible to graduate in 2012-13. As the school continues to operate, students' time enrolled will be tracked, and STEP expects to graduate virtually all students who remain continuously enrolled in grades 9-12, in fewer than five years.

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)*

Analysis of STEP Academy student attendance data from 2012-13 showed that of the 204 students who attended at least part of the school year, 143 or 70% were in attendance at least 90% of the days enrolled.

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

STEP Academy did not administer student satisfaction surveys during 2012-13, but will do so in 2013-14, and will report results on the 2013-14 annual report.

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

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

STEP Academy did not administer parent or teacher satisfaction surveys during 2012-13, but will do so in 2013-14, and will report results on the 2013-14 annual report

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 only a few seniors enrolled during 2012-13. Just one senior graduated at the end of the 2012-13 school year; out of respect for this individual's privacy we will not report status in terms of acceptance into a post-secondary institution.

However, school leadership is able to report that STEP Academy is encouraging and assisting 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. Seniors are also encouraged to take the Accuplacer and ACT.

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 and Implementation" section below. STEP Academy does help students access post-secondary learning, and offers extended days, and an extended year for select students, as described there.

H. Specific provisions addressed in the IQS Transfer Request of STEP Academy and approved by MDE.

These specific provisions have been addressed or are being addressed, as documented in the *2012-13 IQS Oversight Final Report of STEP implementation of Appendix 1-A to the STEP/IQS Contract Report*, dated October 20, 2013

Innovative Practices and Implementation

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 putting in place programming to support students enrolling in Post-secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) beginning in 2013-14. Planning was also carried out during 2012-13 to begin offering concurrent enrollment for STEP Academy students in an Inver Hills Community College course, on Developmental English, to be offered on-site at STEP Academy. Students took the Accuplacer exam in the spring of 2013, and were able to begin attending the class in the fall of 2013 if they qualified via Accuplacer scores. Approximately 15 students are enrolled in the course for the fall 2013 term.
- STEP Academy offers an extended day, running seven hours.
- STEP Academy is implementing the Response to Intervention (RTI) approach, to identify students in need of additional support. Planning for RTI implementation was begun in the spring of 2013, and is in place as of fall 2013. Grades 6-7 students take AIMSweb computer-based assessments to determine whether additional support is needed, and teachers form study teams to consider data and decide what interventions to use with lower-performing students.
- STEP Academy secured the services of Cheryl Reed, an IQS cadre member with expertise in RTI, to assist the school. Cheryl is working with STEP to provide training and coaching in implementing RTI, starting fall 2013.
- To engage parents and help them understand how to help their students succeed in the American school system, STEP Academy has contracted with the Network for the Devel-

opment of Children of African Descent to provide “Parent Power” workshops (see www.ndcad.org/parent.html).

- STEP Academy has a weekly staff session, after school on Wednesdays, for review and analysis of student data, and discussion of how to adjust instruction to meet student needs.
- Finally, STEP Academy provides extended year learning opportunities for 8th graders – this was done in the summer of 2013 via a summer session, extending for 20 days in July. The summer session provided intensive intervention in language arts and mathematics, taught by two STEP teachers. It was offered to all students, and was attended by approximately 15 students. For summer 2014, the focus will be on 9th graders.

Future Plans

STEP Academy’s plans for the future include:

- STEP Academy plans to extend the concurrent enrollment model, to include a course in math beginning 2014-15.
- STEP plans to expand PSEO offerings to more institutions – to this end, school leadership has been in contact with St. Paul College and with Normandale Community College.
- STEP is planning to implement AVID, Advancement Via Individual Determination, at the school in order to enhance the college preparatory elements of the program. AVID, according to the program’s developers, is “a college readiness system for elementary through higher education that is designed to increase schoolwide learning and performance (see www.avid.org/abo_whatisavid.html). The 2013-14 school year is to be STEP Academy’s planning year for AVID, which will be implemented in 2014-15.
- STEP is utilizing Project Lead the Way as a resource to support the STEM aspects of the program. One of STEP’s math teachers received extensive training in the Project Lead the Way approach, and there was a training for all staff in August 2013. Initial implementation of Projects Lead the Way courses is planned for the spring 2014 semester.
- STEP Academy plans to make greater use of local experts in enhancing educational programming and leadership. For instance, during 2013-14 STEP will utilize Lesa Clarkson of the University of Minnesota for staff development to enhance the math program. Dr. Clarkson is an expert on curriculum design for urban learners and in particular in strategies for engaging students in math. Also during 2013-14, the principal of Higher Ground Academy,

a high-performing charter school in St. Paul, will be training the STEP Academy leadership team.

- STEP Academy plans to encourage more students to take PSEO courses. There are two students enrolled in PSEO as of September 2013, and several more are interested in doing so. The 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.
- 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 was added to programming this year.
- STEP Academy plans to offer campus tours of local colleges and universities, starting 2013-14. In September 2013 STEP took students to the Minnesota National College Fair, at the Minneapolis Convention Center.
- Finally, STEP Academy made plans to start after-school extra-curricular activities, fall 2013 (underway as of October, 2013).