



**Science, Technology, Engineering Preparatory Academy**

MN Charter School District 4200

ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2018

In Operation since Fall 2011

Ramsey County, Minnesota

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## STEP Academy Introduction

STEP Academy, Minnesota Charter School District 4200, is a grades K-12 charter school with a Science, Technology, and Engineering focus. STEP Academy has now completed seven years of operation and is pleased to present this annual report on the 2017-18 school year. The school opened in Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota, in fall 2011, and moved to a new location in St. Paul, for the 2016-17 school year. STEP Academy opened as a grades 6-12 school; in 2016 it was granted a grade-level expansion to serve the elementary grades beginning in 2017-18 and has now completed its first year as a K-12 school.

STEP Academy provides students a STEM-focused learning experience emphasizing science, technology, computer literacy and mathematics. STEP Academy has built a solid record in terms of academic growth and diminishing the achievement gap by effectively educating all students. 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 eight core values (see Mission and Vision below).

STEP Academy graduated 37 students in 2018! Most graduates are going on to college, including two who have been accepted to Harvard University! Long-time charter school advocate and education author Joe Nathan spoke at STEP Academy's 2018 graduation. He commented favorably on the school, in particular on STEP Academy's PSEO program, comments which generated positive coverage in the local media, and on national Somali TV.

## STEP Academy Contact Information

STEP Academy is located at 835 5th Street East, St Paul, MN 55106. Main contact person is Mustafa Ibrahim, Executive Director (phone: 651 289-6120; email [Mustafa@stepacademy.com](mailto:Mustafa@stepacademy.com))

## STEP Academy's Mission and Vision

**Mission:** *STEP Academy will empower students to use their personal attributes and acquired knowledge to lead productive lives and become contributing members of the global community.*

**Vision / Core Values:** *STEP Academy will...*

- *Ensure a safe and nurturing learning environment where all members are valued.*
- *Recognize every learner as an individual with unique qualities.*
- *Motivate students to academic excellence in reading, writing, and math.*

- *Provide enriching experiences in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM).*
- *Prepare students with the skills and knowledge to take college classes prior to high school graduation and/or be successful in a variety of post-graduate options.*
- *Provide high quality individualized programs to ensure success of all students.*
- *Collaborate with families and other partners to develop shared ownership of the learning community.*
- *Promote the development of responsible and contributing members of a global society.*

STEP Academy’s authorizer is Innovative Quality Schools (contact: Milo Cutter – [mcutter@iqsmn.org](mailto:mcutter@iqsmn.org); phone 651-234-0900). The 2017-18 school year was the fourth year of a five-year charter contract.

## STEP Academy Enrollment and Student Attrition

<b>STEP ACADEMY’S ENROLLMENT<sup>1</sup> BY GRADE, 2014-2018</b>															
<b>School Year</b>	<b>K</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>Attrition<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>2014-15</b>							<b>33</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>+55%</b>
<b>2015-16</b>							<b>26</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>-12%</b>
<b>2016-17</b>							<b>24</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>+20%</b>
<b>2017-18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>+44%</b>
<b>2018-19</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>493</b>	<b>+23%</b>

Student enrollment figures from the past four years are shown, and initial student-enrollment figures for 2018-19 (as of the second week of October). As this table shows, STEP Academy has experienced substantial growth since moving to the new building in 2016, and especially since adding the elementary grades starting with the fall of 2017.

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

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

## Governance and Management

The table below shows all the members of STEP Academy’s governing board during 2017-18. There was an election for Board members in the spring of 2017. During the 2017-18 school year no members’ terms expired, and no one left the board; hence no election was needed.

<b>Name: Last, First</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Date Ap- pointed</b>	<b>Term Ex- piration</b>	<b>Contact</b>
AbouAiad, Ta- manny	Teacher / Secretary, File Folder #447125	7/1/17	6/30/20	651-289-6132; <a href="mailto:tamanny@stepacademymn.com">tamanny@stepacademymn.com</a>
Bartlett, Deborah	Teacher, / Secretary File Folder #461717	7/1/17	6/30/20	651-289-6120; <a href="mailto:dbartlett@stepacademymn.com">dbartlett@stepacademymn.com</a>
Hassan, Abdirah- man	Community / Direc- tor	7/1/16	6/30/19	612-384-6002; <a href="mailto:ahassan@stepacade-&lt;br/&gt;mymn.com">ahassan@stepacade- mymn.com</a>
Hurre, Mustafa	Parent / Director	7/1/17	6/30/20	952-288-0012; <a href="mailto:mhurre@stepacade-&lt;br/&gt;mymn.com">mhurre@stepacade- mymn.com</a>
Mohamud, Amina	Community / Vice Chair	7/1/16	6/30/19	612-876-7145; <a href="mailto:amohamud@ste-&lt;br/&gt;pacademymn.com">amohamud@ste- pacademymn.com</a>
Olmsted, Sandra	Community / Chair	7/1/17	6/30/20	612-330-1079; <a href="mailto:solmsted@stepacademymn.com">solmsted@stepacademymn.com</a>
Yassin, Khadar	Community / Treas- urer	7/1/16	6/30/19	612-281-0731; <a href="mailto:khadar@stepacade-&lt;br/&gt;mymn.com">khadar@stepacade- mymn.com</a>

STEP Academy’s Board of Director is responsible for setting goals, ensuring that the school’s goals are met, and approving or disapproving the major decisions made by the Executive Director. The Board reviews policies over a five-year cycle. STEP Academy’s Board also undertakes long-term strategic planning and oversees the finances to make sure the school is fiscally sound. Training for Board members, in Governance, Personnel and Finance, is provided by IQS and the University of St. Thomas.

## Staffing

### STEP Academy Teaching Staff 2017-2018

Teacher	File folder #	Assignment	Left during 17/18?	Not returning 18/19?
Abou-Aiad, Tamany	447125	Math Coord. / Math RTI		
Bartlett, Deborah	461717	Special Ed. Coord. / Elementary Sp. Ed.		
Begum, Rejia	415343	Elementary Math		
Borghol, Marwa	446832	Arabic, HS		
Benz, Diane	369051	Math, Elementary		NR
Chapman, Jessica	473968	MS English Language Arts		
Chowdhury, Zinat	432535	MS Science		
Crawford, Megan	501211	Elementary ELA, STEM		
DeHerder, Anna	494686	Elementary		NR
Elnahrawy, Mona	416352	Elementary		
Greene-DeLanghe, Matt	501802	MS/HS Reading		
Gurney, Allison	498875	HS Science		
Harbeck, Mitsy	302447	Elementary Special Ed.		
Heinzen, Noelle	494491	Elementary		
Henley, Hannah	496105	HS Social Studies		
Hussein, Deeqa	426486	HS Reading RTI		
Jensen, Valkyrie	488223	Elementary		NR
Ji, Guanping	N/A	HS Chinese		NR – 1-year special assignment
Lentz, Jeena	492786	Elementary		
Manning, Ali	498408	MS Math		
McGuire, Molly	405691	Elementary		

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>File folder #</b>	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Left during 17/18?</b>	<b>Not returning 18/19?</b>
Merrill, Allisen	494341	HS English Lang. Arts		
Nelsen, Wayne	343848	HS ELL		
Nupen, Matthew	425244	STEM Coord. / STEM		
Olson, Luke	485672	HS Math		
Ritchart, John	415920	HS Science		
Sheikh-Ahmed, Rahima	453262	Building Sub, ELL		
Ryan, Claire	501828	Elementary Math RTI		
Spreeman, Sally	287959	Elementary Reading RTI		
Straub, Frank	472359	Elementary		
Swenson, Kate	313358	Elementary ELL		
Tholen, Keeley	463199	AVID (and Asst. Academic Dean, DAC)		
Welsh, Nicholas	450616	MS Social Studies		
Welter, Chris	499931	HS Phys. Ed.		

All but three of STEP Academy's 33 licensed teachers from 2017-18 returned for the 2018-19 school year, yielding a retention rate of 91%.

### STEP Academy 2017-2018 School Management and Faculty Information

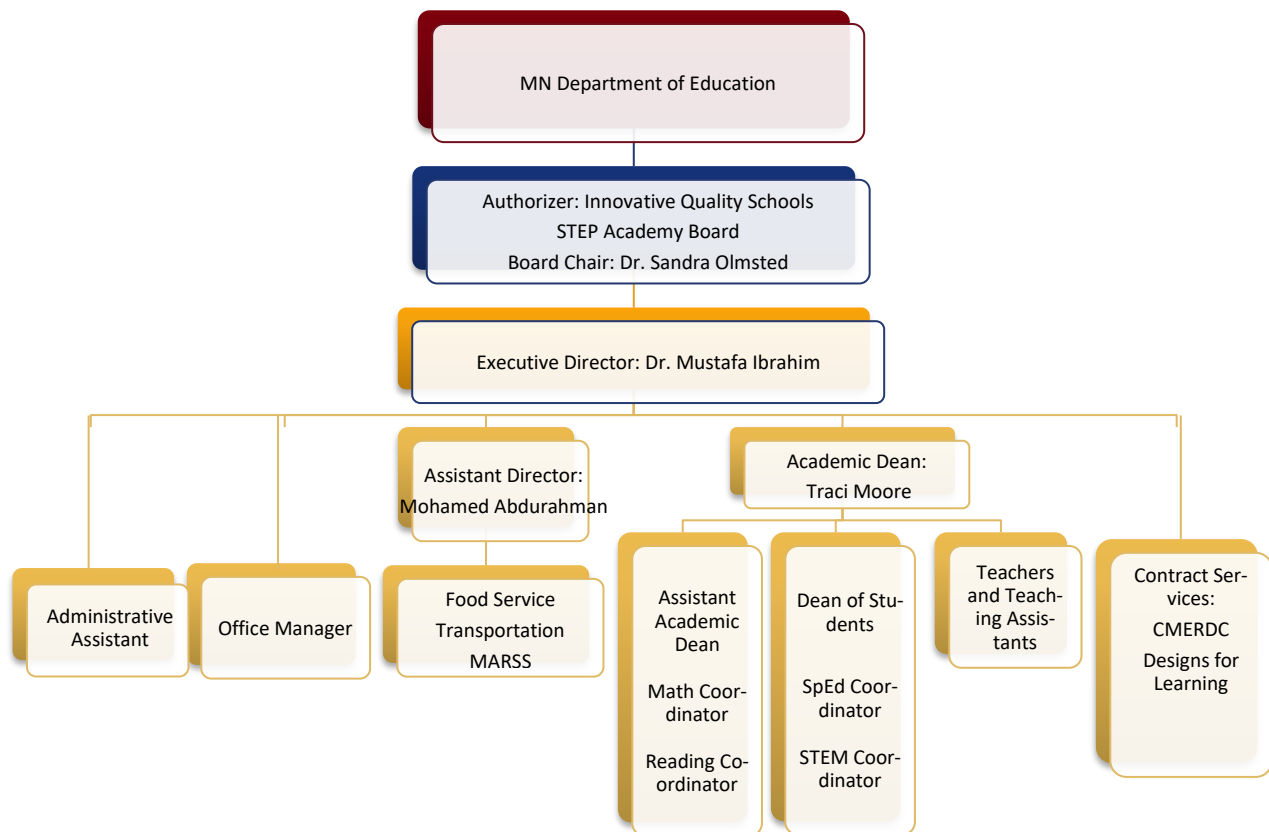
<b>Name</b>	<b>File Folder number</b>	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Years employed</b>	<b>Left during 17/18?</b>	<b>Not returning 18/19?</b>
Mustafa Ibrahim		Executive Director	6		
Mohamed Abdu-rahman		Assistant Director	7		
Traci Moore	362417	Academic Dean	2		
Matthew Kenutis	483419	Dean of Students	3		NR

<b>Name</b>	<b>File Folder number</b>	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Years employed</b>	<b>Left during 17/18?</b>	<b>Not returning 18/19?</b>
Fahmo Osman		Admin. Assistant	3		NR
Ahmed Mursal		Security / Family Li- aision (PT)	1		
Keeley Tholen	463199	Asst. Academic Dean, DAC (PT)	3		
Tamany Abou-Aiad	447125	Math Coord. (PT)	6		
Ginny Maurer	496154	Literacy Coord. (PT)	1		
Deborah Bartlett	461717	Special Ed. Coord. (PT)	3		
Matt Nupen	425244	STEM Coord. (PT)	2		

STEP Academy is led by a Leadership Team consisting of the Executive Director and two Assistant Directors. STEP Academy's management team as a whole, shown in the table above, was consistent throughout the 2017-18 school year. STEP Academy's Leadership Team meets regularly and each member takes responsibility for continuous improvement in their respective areas of management: the director manages board activities, mission and vision reviews, and the financial health of the school; the assistant director manages operational growth including food service, transportation, and facilities; and the academic dean manages development in the areas of curriculum, student achievement and data, teacher professional development, and instructional programming. Through the creation and monitoring of goals and action steps in each management area, the school continues to identify areas in need of attention and pathways to success.

STEP Academy's organization chart for the expanded school, effective beginning fall 2018, is below.





## Director’s Professional Development Plan

STEP Academy’s director, Mustafa Ibrahim, is not a licensed school administrator, though he is enrolled in the University of Minnesota’s administrative licensure program for K-12 principals. Mr. Ibrahim’s professional development activities during 2017-18 included the following:

- IQS Charter School Board Training (Monday, July 26, 2017)
- IQS Leadership Conference: Preparations for the 2017-2018 School Year and School Networking (August 10, 2017)
- IQS Fall Leadership Meeting (Thursday, November 9, 2017)
- Employment Law for Charter Schools (Friday, November 17, 2017)
- IQS Spring School Leader Conference (Monday, May 1, 2018)
- 2018 National Charter Schools Conference, Austin, TX (June 17-19, 2018)
- STEP Academy’s Board of Directors Retreat (Saturday, July 7, 2018)
- IQS Multiple Measures Conference (Tuesday, July 17, 2018)

## Professional Development for Teaching Staff

STEP Academy teaching staff receive training throughout the year to build their capacity to succeed in this school's unique learning environment. For 2017-18 STEP Academy leadership established four staff development goals, which were addressed as described in the table below.

Goal	Documented Actions
STEP Academy will increase staff capacity to handle student behavior issues (All Staff Goal)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Three-Day ENVoY Training for all staff.. This program helped educators establish respectful relationships with students, focusing on influencing behavior through non-verbal cues.</li> <li>2) STEP Academy became a PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Support) school by being accepted into a Cohort program financed by MDE. A core group attended trainings, made changes to STEP Academy's school wide and classroom behavior programming, and provided support and training to teachers and staff.</li> </ol>
STEP Academy teachers will have built curriculum documents for all classes that include Minnesota Standards Placement, Content Units, Materials, and Assessments. (Teachers)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Curriculum Document Training</li> <li>2) ELA Curriculum Work Sessions</li> <li>3) Math Work Sessions</li> <li>4) Curriculum Work Sessions</li> </ol>
STEP Academy teachers will increase teachers personal technology understanding and their understanding and comfort with using a variety of technology tools for instruction. (Teachers)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Trainings on Technology Tools</li> <li>2) Application Opportunities During Professional Development</li> <li>3) One-on-One Support and Team Teaching</li> </ol>
STEP Academy secondary teachers will increase their understanding of assessment and grading leading to a more consistent, researched-based system of assessment. (7-12 Teachers)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Assessment Trainings, Discussions, and Reflection</li> <li>2) Time for Teachers to Modify Current Assessments and Try New Practices</li> <li>3) Use of Guiding Principles for Assessment</li> </ol>
STEP Academy elementary teachers will learn the curriculum and instructional practices related to adopted curriculum (Core Knowledge English Language Arts/Social Studies, Envisions Math, and Interactive Science). (K-5 Teachers)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Numerous trainings on the curriculum.</li> <li>2) Math and Reading Coordinators support through meetings and coaching sessions</li> <li>3) Collaborative working sessions</li> <li>4) Communication with other schools and publishers</li> </ol>

## Finances

STEP Academy relocated for the 2016-17 school year to a new location, at 835 E. 6th St., St. Paul, Minnesota. The new location, at a previous parochial school building, provides for expanded classroom space, science labs, a media center, and elementary recess space. Also, this move allowed the school to expand without the need for build-out. The school entered a ten year lease with the building owners to occupy the 53,382 square feet building from the landlord. While the move and expenditures related to the move did cause the academy to dip slightly into their fund balance in FY 2017, the new location allows for expanded classroom space, science labs, a media center, and elementary recess space. STEP Academy has now completed its second year in its new location, and its first year as a K-12 school. Preliminary financial figures for FY 2018 show a return to a surplus: after two years of small deficits, STEP Academy's Fund Balance grew again last year.

<b>STEP Academy Financial Summary, 2014-2018</b>				
	<b>Total Rev.</b>	<b>Total Exp.</b>	<b>Ending F.B.</b>	<b>F.B. - % of Exp.</b>
FY 2014	\$2,255,199	\$ 2,186,780	\$580,570	26.5%
FY 2015	\$2,855,960	\$2,510,436	\$926,094	36.9%
FY 2016	\$2,986,618	\$3,045,391	\$867,393	28.5%
FY 2017	\$ 3,397,640	\$3,441,918	\$ 822,944	23.9%
FY 2018	\$5,380,855	\$5,151,280	\$1,052,519	20.4%

## Academic Performance

This report on STEP Academy's Academic Performance data is organized around Appendix No. 1 of STEP Academy's contract with its authorizer, Innovative Quality Schools. In particular, it addresses item 3 of Appendix No. 1, Evaluation of School/Student Performance Indicators. For each element of the Performance Indicators, currently available data is summarized.

### School / Student Performance Indicators: Authorizer Contract, Appendix 1

#### **A. General Provisions:**

- 1) The school has a process for determining the student's academic levels of performance when they enter school in order to establish a baseline from which improvement can be determined. "Enter school" means at any time, not just at the beginning of the year.
- 2) Performance is assessed against the expectations in the contract.

- 3) NCLB expectations provisions are addressed as required by current federal law<sup>3</sup>.
- 4) NCLB expectations provisions are addressed as required by current state and federal law or waivers provided to Minnesota.
- 5) A growth model or value added growth model method of data analysis will be used. The key cohort used to make contract renewal decisions will be the group of students that have been enrolled at the school for three or more years. While the performance of all students will be included in the analysis, it is the “three year cohort” on which the school will be judged for contract renewal purposes.

The General Provisions elements are being addressed at STEP Academy. It is worth noting, with reference to items 3-4, that the No Child Left Behind Act was superseded by a waiver system under which Minnesota continued to operate through 2016-17 (the Multiple Measurements Rating or MMR system which the state adopted starting in 2012); and now by the Northstar accountability system under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) starting 2017-18.

## **B. Academic Performance:**

- 1) Every Graduate will meet one or more of the following requirements:
  - (a) A career plan will be developed not later than 9<sup>th</sup> grade. For students beginning at STEP after 9<sup>th</sup> grade, they will develop their plan within their first year at STEP. Students may modify their career plans at any time.
  - (b) Meet the requirements of the School for graduation; and,
  - (c) Complete a successful work experience; and/or
  - (d) Complete two or more post-secondary classes successfully; and/or
  - (e) Complete a one-year certificate program and pass the test for that career; and/or
  - (f) Complete one year of post-secondary education; and/or
  - (g) Complete an AA degree or more.

These requirements for graduation are being addressed. Preparing students for college, including giving them opportunities to earn college credits before completing high school, is a key innovation which is 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). Thirty-two students enrolled in PSEO during 2017-18, an increase from twenty-nine the previous year. These juniors and seniors attended several area colleges and universities and earned PSEO credits. For the 2018-19 school year, there were 45 juniors and seniors signed up for PSEO, as of late July.

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<sup>3</sup> During 2016-17 Minnesota continued to operate under its federally-approved waiver of NCLB requirements.

- 2) Attendance: % of all students attending 90%: Of a total of 439 students enrolled for any part of the year, 412 or 93.8% attended at least 90% of the days enrolled.

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Metric (target)	90%	90%	91%	93%	95%
<b>Actual</b>	<b>57.4</b>	<b>92.0%</b>	<b>89.6%</b>	<b>93.8%</b>	

Review of the past four years' attendance data showed:

- 2014-15: Of a total of 296 students who were enrolled for any part of the school year, 170 or 57.4% were in attendance 90% or more of the days enrolled
- 2015-16: Of a total of 274 students enrolled, 252 or 92.0%, were in attendance 90% or more of the days enrolled.
- 2016-17: Of a total of 308 students enrolled, 276 or 89.6% were in attendance 90% or more of the days enrolled.
- 2017-18: Of a total of 443 students enrolled, 415 or 93.7% were in attendance 90% or more of the days enrolled.

3) Academic performance (Cross-cohorts)

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18 <sup>4</sup>	2018-19
(a) School-wide MCA Reading - % proficient, target <sup>5</sup>	42%	48%	54%	60%	66%
<b>Actual</b>	<b>35.6%</b>	<b>48.8%</b>	<b>39.0%</b>	<b>47.1%</b> <b>(54.1%)</b>	
(b) School-wide MCA Math - % proficient, target	55%	60%	65%	69%	73%
<b>Actual</b>	<b>39.2%</b>	<b>45.7%</b>	<b>41.4%</b>	<b>41.3%</b> <b>(44.0%)</b>	
(c) School-wide MCA Science - % proficient, target	50%	56%	62%	68%	74%
<b>Actual</b>	<b>22.7%</b>	<b>40.0%</b>	<b>49.5%</b>	<b>30.4%</b> <b>(33.0%)</b>	

<sup>4</sup> The first figure is for all students; figures in parentheses are for grades 6 and higher only, the figure that would be comparable to previous years.

<sup>5</sup> All results are for October 1-enrolled students.

Proportion of students proficient in Reading increased somewhat from spring 2017 to spring 2018; proportion proficient in Math was essentially unchanged, and there was a significant decline in Science. STEP Leadership carried out a Root Cause Analysis to identify causes for the 2018 MCA results; this is how the Academic Dean described the conclusions:

- **Reading: Root Cause Analysis:** After noting the decline in reading scores in 2017, the school hired a part time reading coordinator to aid in leadership and planning for the school's literacy program. At seventh and eighth grades, an additional period of reading was added to all student schedules. Tenth graders reading below grade level participated in an online diagnostic program in their English Language Arts class. Finally, teachers taught a nine-week reading and test taking strategies small group class to all students taking the MCA tests this year.
- **Math: Root Cause Analysis:** After noting a decline in math scores in 2017, the school hired a part time math coordinator to aid in leadership and planning for the school's math program. Curriculum was reviewed this year and teachers worked to increase students' problem solving abilities. Seventh and eighth grade students had one quarter of an additional period of math instruction prior to MCA testing. This class strengthened students' foundational math skills and taught math test taking strategies. To continue progress in this area in 2018-19, STEP Academy leadership has identified new strategies for the middle and high school level. Strategies for the current school year include making more and better use of formative assessments (FA), and using assessment data to target instruction more effectively. For instance, math instructors will utilize FA data beginning with students' initial FAST results but continuing with weekly in-class assessments, of the specific skills taught that week. There will be more use of small groups and individual instruction, with students placed appropriately based on their ongoing FA results.
- **Science: Root Cause Analysis:** The most profound change this year for science was the new biology teacher. This teacher was new to Minnesota and new to Minnesota Science Standards; however, this teacher has shown a commitment to incorporating regular science labs and hand-on experiences for students. So, while MCA test scores do not show an increase in the number of students scoring proficient, it is the belief of STEP Academy administration that our students received a rich, immersive science experience in their biology class in 2017-2018. In order to increase proficiency, our biology teacher has been given time to study the standards and instructional resources available in Minnesota and she will be attending the Minnesota Science Teachers Association convention in order to further strengthen her knowledge and understanding of the Science Standards.

### **C. Individualized Student Performance (Same Cohorts)**

- 1) Three-year student growth as measured by the MCA-III

(a) Growth z-score (0 = 50%ile of all schools in MN)	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Target	.10	.15	.15	.15	.15
<b>Actual</b>	<b>0.0785</b>	<b>0.1971</b>	<b>-0.1125</b>	<b>0.1188</b>	

These results are based on MCA growth in Reading and Mathematics for students who take the test two consecutive years at the school; a z-score greater than zero means the student improved more than the state average on the MCA from one year to the next. MCA Growth results show that STEP Academy has maintained a positive Growth z-score based on MCA results in Reading and Math for three of the four years of the contract so far. In 2018, the overall-average z-score was positive due to stronger performance on the MCA in Reading, while the average Math z-score was slightly below 0. See the “Root Cause Analysis” discussion in the section immediately above.

- 2) Students making one or more years of progress as measured by MAP or FAST; see table below. Beginning in the 2017-18 school year, STEP Academy switched from the MAP to the Formative Assessment System for Teachers or FAST as its assessment of student growth in reading and math. Students took the FAST three times during the year, in the Fall, Winter and Spring. The FAST provides a suite of assessments, addressing behavior as well as academic performance, and provides more information at the individual-student level. Hence it works better than the MAP to inform teachers about student progress for diagnostic purposes. However, FAST results are not reported the same way as results on the MAP; in particular, FAST results do not provide a way to define “1.2 years of growth;” hence 2017-18 results are not split out on that basis. FAST assessments in reading and math do provide national percentile ranks; for the analysis here, it was assumed that if a student’s national percentile rank in the spring was equal to or higher than in the fall, they made at least 1.0 years of growth.

<b>STEP Academy MAP and FAST results, 2014-2018</b>					
(a) MAP / FAST: % students who met proficiency targets the prior year will make at least 1.0 years of growth the following year	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18 (All Students)	2018-19
Target	60	63	65	66	67
<b>Actual</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>60%</b>	

<b>STEP Academy MAP and FAST results, 2014-2018</b>					
(b) MAP: % students who did not meet proficiency targets the prior year will make at least 1.2 years of growth the following years until they meet the proficiency targets (this is “closing the gap” indicator)					
Target	55	59	62	63	64
<b>Actual</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>N/A</b>	

Analysis of the past three years of MAP test results, and 2017-18 results on the FAST, yields the results shown below (the below summary breaks the results out by subject, whereas the summary in the above table combines Reading and Math results):

2014-15:

- Math total: 134/189 met / exceeded projected growth (71%). .
- Reading total: 127 / 192 met / exceeded projected growth (66%).

2015-16:

- Math total: 102/150 met / exceeded projected growth (68%).
- Reading total: 84/149 met / exceeded projected growth (56%).

2016-17:

- Math total: 84/134 met / exceeded projected growth (63%).
- Reading total: 73/127 met / exceeded projected growth (57%).

2017-18:

- Math total: 180 / 291 made at least one year's progress (62%)
- Reading total: 191 / 326 made at least one year's progress (59%)

#### **D. Performance in comparison with other comparable sites (Cross-Cohorts)**

<b>MCA Results in Reading Grades 6-8: Proportion Proficient, STEP Academy and Comparable Sites</b>				
<b>School</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018<sup>6</sup></b>
<b>STEP Academy</b>	<b>35.4%</b>	<b>49.4%</b>	<b>40.6%</b>	<b>51.6%</b>

<sup>6</sup> Minnesota Report Card data for 2018 does not display STEP Academy’s Proficiency data for 6<sup>th</sup> graders; hence results reported here are based on grades 7 and 8 only.



<b>MCA Results in Reading Grades 6-8: Proportion Proficient, STEP Academy and Comparable Sites</b>				
<b>School</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018<sup>6</sup></b>
Higher Ground Acad.	46.7%	58.1%	60.4%	64.0%
Dugsi Academy	28.4%	13.9%	15.1%	16.3%
Parkway Montessori	32.4%	34.0%	29.8%	30.9%
<b>Average for comp. sites<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>35.2%</b>	<b>38.0%</b>	<b>34.9%</b>	<b>36.9%</b>

<b>MCA Results in Mathematics Grades 6-8: Proportion Proficient, STEP Academy and Comparable Sites</b>				
<b>School</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>
<b>STEP Academy</b>	<b>42.5%</b>	<b>52.3%</b>	<b>46.9%</b>	<b>50.5%</b>
Higher Ground Acad.	53.9%	45.6%	44.0%	45.1%
Dugsi Academy	8.1%	5.6%	5.8%	8.8%
Parkway Montessori	24.5%	26.0%	24.9%	22.8%
<b>Average for comp. sites</b>	<b>29.3%</b>	<b>28.8%</b>	<b>26.9%</b>	<b>26.5%</b>

<b>STEP Academy Performance Compared with Comparable Sites, Grades 6-8 MCA</b>				
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Target	0	+3%	+6%	+8%
<b>Actual: Reading</b>	<b>+0.2%</b>	<b>+11.4%</b>	<b>+5.7%</b>	<b>+14.7%</b>
<b>Actual: Math</b>	<b>+13.2%</b>	<b>+23.5%</b>	<b>+20.0%</b>	<b>+24.0%</b>

These results show STEP Academy easily out-performing the comparison schools' average in terms of proportion of students proficient in reading and math, for 2018 as it has in the previous three school years.

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<sup>7</sup> Weighted based on number of students in grades 6-8 at the three comparison schools.

### **E. Multiple Measurement Rating (MMR)**

With Minnesota's transition from its ESEA Flexibility waiver under No Child Left Behind to the Every Student Succeeds Act during 2016-17, the Multiple Measurement Ratings have not been computed the past two school years; hence this measure is no longer applicable.

### **F. World Language Acquisition**

- 1) Students proficient in four or more world languages
- 2) Students proficient in three world languages
- 3) Students proficient in two world languages
- 4) Students who receive the world language Proficiency recognition at graduation

STEP Academy offers Arabic, in all grades 6-12, for all students; and most are proficient or approaching proficiency by grade 12. This is an important, and popular aspect of the STEP Academy program. In 2017-18, while the Arabic program continued, STEP Academy was also able to begin offering Chinese, as a second world language, in the expanded school. STEP Academy was awarded a Teachers of Critical Languages Program (TCLP) grant for the first time in 2017-18. This is a program of the U.S. State Department, promoting the teaching of "critical languages" in the public schools. The TCLP grant covers accommodations as well as salary, and allowed STEP to provide for a teacher from China to move to the Twin Cities and teach her language at the school. Approximately 40 high school students studied Chinese during 2017-18. For 2018-19, the grant is being renewed, and the program will be offered to third graders as well as continuing with high school students.

### **G. Student/Family/Teacher Measures**

- 1) Students, based on annual survey data, will report they feel safe at STEP, are respected, their views are valued and they are receiving an excellent education
- 2) Students who are continually enrolled for two or more years will report an improvement in engagement and hopefulness based on the Hope Analysis Survey. Engagement levels of 3.00 meet expectations. Annual growth of .75 per student meets expectations.

The Hope Analysis Survey was not utilized during 2017-18 but graduating seniors were surveyed in the spring. There were 25 responses in all. Survey results included the following:

- All 25 respondents agreed that STEP Academy is "almost always" (76%) or "usually" (24%) a safe place to learn
- All 25 respondents agreed that that they "almost always" (60%) or "usually" (40%) felt respected by STEP Academy teachers
- Almost all respondents agreed that they "almost always" (60%) or "usually" (36%) felt respected by their fellow students

- All 25 respondents agreed that they “almost always” (72%) or “usually” (28%) received an excellent education at STEP.

### **H. Post-secondary (all STEP grads)**

- 1) Students meeting their career plan at graduation as provided in B (1) above and be accepted in post-secondary ed.
- 2) Students meeting their career plan at graduation with a STEM career plan and be accepted in a post-secondary school.
- 3) Students with a STEM career plan will be accepted into a postsecondary STEM major at some point in postsecondary.

A survey given to graduating seniors in the spring of 2018 asked about their plans for next year; all 25 of the survey respondents indicated they plan to attend either a four-year college (48%) or a technical/community college (52%). Also, the majority of graduates indicated they plan to pursue a STEM career. When asked what field they planned to major in, 68% of respondents chose STEM fields, e.g. Nursing, IT, Biology or Pre-Med.

### **I. Innovation**

This element of the Student/School Performance Indicators calls for an evaluation to test the hypothesis that *(1) Because of the seven hour day and the rigor of the learning experience, students will be able to move through the curriculum both in middle school and in high school at a more rapid pace than is usually the case. As a result, some students will complete some high school standards and all high school students will complete some secondary work. (2) Because of the digital platform, internships available to students and other learning options outside of school, students will be able to meet some learning standards and have STEP validate that learning.*

The envisioned research effort to evaluate the hypothesis has not been carried out; however, evidence from the program such as STEP Academy students’ academic performance and ability to earn PSEO credits, suggests that the school is succeeding in these aspects.

## **STEP Academy Strategic Plan**

STEP Academy is a school with an accelerated vision. The administration and Board believe in remaining in a perpetual state of growth. This school pushes the boundaries to consistently challenge every student, teacher, staff, leader, and Board member to continue to explore a consistent vision for what is next in an on-going upward trajectory towards excellence.

In 2016-2017, STEP Academy embarked on a process of strategic planning by calling on all stakeholders to share strengths and challenges. This information was key to finding the school's baseline for improvement. However, after examining this baseline information, the school's strategic plan was left embarking on strategic planning from the current baseline level, not setting a high bar. This vantage point did not track a path to the ambitious goals of the school.

STEP leadership recognized the deficiency in the strategic planning for 2017-2018, and decided to purposefully re-align priorities in strategic plan goal setting for 2018-2019. The challenges identified in the strategic planning for 2017 will still be addressed, but the prioritization of those goals will be adjusted and goals will be set for a path of growth and excellence for students and families.

2016-2017 Identified Challenges & 2017-2018 Progress:

- **Attracting and retaining quality teachers:** STEP Academy had hired for all vacancies prior to the start of the 2017-2018 school year. All teachers received employment renewal notification by March 1 and offered employment agreements by April 15. The administration put together a staff retention plan.
- **Establishing competitive salaries:** All salaries were reviewed for equitable and progressive increases in 2017-2018.
- **The wide range of student abilities:** STEP Academy acknowledges this challenge, and has worked to strengthen avenues to achievement for struggling students and acceleration options.
- **Providing an increased number of electives for high school students:** STEP Academy has a growth plan in place that includes providing electives that serve our students' academic needs and STEM interests.
- **Establishing extra-curricular afterschool programs, intramural sports and other activities:** STEP Academy put together a committee of staff to create an extra-curricular program proposal that was brought to the Board in the spring of 2018 and will be implemented in 2018-2019.
- **Increased development of the STEM curriculum and instruction; more labs and equipment:** STEP Academy has implemented two science labs and a makerspace, including outfitting these spaces with supplies. The school now offers STEM to elementary classes, technology class for ninth graders, as well as multiple electives at the high school level.
- **Increased emphasis on student centered, project based teaching and learning:** In 2017-2018 teachers received PD on student centered learning and worked together to begin increasing student centered strategies.
- **English language proficiency level of parents; tends to inhibit teacher and parent communication:** STEP Academy has increased the modes of communication with parents including multiple English and Somali methods.

- **Creating viable school community partnerships:** In 2017-2018, STEP Academy partnered with Inver Hills Community College, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, a farm from Montrose, Minnesota, and Best Prep programs.
- **The tendency to say “yes to too much, too quickly”:** STEP Academy acknowledges that the school ambitiously reaches forward and that there are issues that arise because of these choices. The school seeks to be purposeful in identifying and addressing these challenges as the school develops.

The academic leadership team and the Board will be finalizing the 2018-2019 Strategic Goals along with a longer term 2018-2021 Three Year Strategic Plan this fall. This plan will include goals in the areas of: Student Achievement, Student Support, Finance, Facilities, Communication, and STEM.

## Innovative Practices and Implementation

Innovative practices being implemented at STEP Academy include:

- STEP Academy begins preparing students for post secondary success from the moment they enter the school. Beginning in Kindergarten, students see and hear the message that they are preparing for early college entrance. This message creates a motivating sense of belonging to an educational journey special to STEP Academy. Beginning in third grade, teachers instill study habits and processes that students practice in middle school and ultimately fully apply in the AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) program that begins in ninth grade.
- STEP Academy offers students an accelerated and integrated remediation approach that aims to move them to proficient and advanced levels within core academic subjects that begins with a universal assessment administered prior to school beginning for elementary students and the second day of classes for middle and high school. With that early information, interventions begin the second week of school. In addition, a range of social supports that reflects the social development needs of urban students are integrated into the educational experience. Response to Intervention (RTI) was first implemented during 2013-14, and has continued since with added staff and increased services. It was incorporated into the elementary program beginning fall 2017. Implementation of STEP Academy’s RTI program changed during 2017-18, returning to a pull-out / push-in model rather than providing separate classes. Use of diagnostic assessments was solidified with the use of the FAST suite of assessments, to ensure effective monitoring of student progress and adjustment of instruction, especially in grades K-6. Students identified for RTI support in reading receive fifteen-to-twenty-minute intervention sessions four times per week, with a focus on improving Reading Fluency. Students identified in

math receive thirty-minute intervention sessions three times per week, using the IXL online math program.

- STEP Academy remains a school with a dual focus on STEM and college readiness. However, many of its students need a boost in their literacy skills, in order to be able to take advantage of these aspects. Therefore, the school focuses intensively on literacy. Staffing includes half-time Reading and Math Coordinators to track data, provide instructional coaching, monitor student improvement, and provide visionary strategic planning. Strategies for strengthened literacy include:
  - An innovative blend of reading curriculum at grades K-3 that includes both Core Knowledge based curriculum for foundational knowledge and skill development, as well as Fountas and Pinnell Guided Reading curriculum (beginning 2018-19) for diagnostic assessment and instruction
  - Action 100 from American Reading Company will be utilized for grades 4-10 beginning fall 2018 as a supplemental reading/ELA curriculum supporting independent reading, and diagnostics. In response to STEP Academy's large population of English Learners, the reading program needs to retain the diagnostic element through middle school.
  - Engage New York for novel-based deep reading strategies in middle school
  - A writing-coaching program in grades 9-12
  - An additional daily reading class period for grade seven and eight students to help them prepare for college-ready reading.
- A new intervention in math was established for middle school students during 2017-18: during the third quarter, these students' Arabic class was replaced with math, so that concepts can be reviewed and reinforced as needed, a review that is integrated with test-taking strategies in advance of spring testing.
- 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, encourage innovative teaching and learning, and create robust educational support systems.
- 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. As a college-prep program, STEP Academy supports students to this end through the Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) program, World's Best Workforce Plan, and supports in place to help students enroll in college courses via Post-Secondary Enrollment Options, beginning with informational sessions and including individual and family counseling. STEP Academy's AVID program, established during 2015-16, has grown into an integral part of STEP Academy's strategy to provide students the skills

and abilities to be successful. The AVID program helps students find their personal strengths and set their sights on an appropriate college and career path. The course teaches students how to apply study skills and planning strategies to their course work in order to find heightened academic success.

- STEP continues to build relationships with postsecondary institutions and maintains programming to support students enrolling in PSEO. A total of 29 students were enrolled in PSEO during 2016-17, 15 Juniors and 14 Seniors, all of whom earned college as well as high school credits from their PSEO courses. During the 2017-18 school year, a total of 32 juniors and seniors participated in the PSEO program and earned college credits. For the current upcoming 2018-19 school year, there are a total of 23 juniors and 22 seniors enrolled in a PSEO program starting this fall, with more who are looking to enroll for the spring semester. All 10th grade students get an introduction to the PSEO program in the early fall and then are assisted in applying for PSEO after winter break.
- STEP Academy provides Arabic language instruction in the elementary, middle school, and high school, a world language that is in increasing demand nationally. A second world language, Chinese, was offered beginning 2017-18, and continues in 2018-2019 via the TCLP Grant Program.
- Instruction at STEP Academy continues to be driven by data. Focused instruction is informed by nationally-normed assessments, the Measures of the Academic Progress in previous years and now the Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST) which includes progress monitoring. The FAST provides a primary-grades assessment and incorporates curriculum based measures (CBM) type assessments. The use of the universal screening mode of EasyCBM helps RTI coordinators identify particular gaps in reading and math to make sure that intervention efforts are specific and modified as needed to ensure student growth. Assessment of reading fluency and comprehension for the elementary grades also utilizes the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark assessments of reading levels.
- STEP Academy employs a number of strategies to engage parents and help them understand how to help their students succeed in the American school system. The school offers a new family orientation night and an open house at the beginning of the school year, and multiple Family Fun Nights during the year. For instance, at one family night STEP Academy celebrated the kick off to reading month that culminated in the director kissing a calf because students met their reading goals for the month. Another annual fall gathering includes information on PSEO for tenth grade students and parents so they have the entire year to plan and prepare to apply to a college for their eleventh grade school year. STEP Academy's Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meets once a month, welcoming all families to gather to share ideas and hear first-hand what has been going on at school. STEP Academy also maintains a Parent Portal through which parents can monitor their students' attendance, grades, academic progress, and missing assignments.
- Finally, STEP Academy's innovative practices are demonstrated through the strategies it uses to address four of the additional purposes of charter schools specified in the Minnesota Charter Law:



- *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 secondary schools or otherwise be able to access this type of program. In addition, STEP Academy’s purposeful encouragement of students to take advantage of the state’s PSEO program in eleventh and twelfth grade increases students’ abilities to save money on their college education, have support through the often confusing college entrance and first year processes, and enter the working world two years prior to their peers. This practice is having an impact on bringing STEP Academy families out of poverty.
- *Use different and innovative teaching methods:* Innovative teaching methods in place at STEP Academy include a supportive and encouraging PSEO program; Digital Design course work offering engineering, technology, design and coding; an AVID program (Advancement Via Individual Determination – STEP Academy was the first Minnesota charter school to offer this); a hybrid diagnostic and core literacy curriculum at the elementary level; and multiple community/business partnerships.
- *Measure learning outcomes and create different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes:* STEP Academy administers elementary universal assessments in August, prior to the first day of classes in order to maintain instructional time during the first month of school. Other grade levels’ universal assessments take place the second and third day of school. 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 Aspire assessments. A final measure of STEP Academy’s success as a college-prep program is through graduating seniors’ acceptance into post-secondary institutions, which STEP Academy tracks. All 37 2018 STEP Academy graduates had been accepted to a college or technical program prior to graduation.
- *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.

## Future Plans

STEP Academy’s plans for the future include the following:

- STEP Academy was essentially at capacity during 2017-18, its first year serving grades K-5! Additional space at the school site was reconfigured to accommodate three additional classrooms. Demand continues to be high; the program continued fully-subscribed and with a substantial waiting list as of early fall 2018 (approximately 300 students on the waitlist as of October 2018).



- STEP Academy’s elementary program was established and run as planned during 2017-18. In 2018-19, year two of the elementary program, staff’s efforts will shift to incorporate more attention on gathering and utilizing diagnostic data to adjust the program on an ongoing basis.
- STEP Academy’s schedule was revised for 2017-18 to provide two hours of English Language Arts instruction for the whole middle school; this will continue for 2018-19.
- Next year STEP Academy will schedule a second section of Kindergarten, a second section of 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and a third section of 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Teacher-prep spaces will be used to make this possible given the lack of additional space for classrooms. However, for 2019-20 the school expects to be able to add six more classrooms, due to renovations that have been planned.
- The primary reason for undertaking the original grade-level expansion was demand from families: many families with students at STEP wanted to send their younger children to the school as well. Further expansion is planned, to extend the benefits of the program to preschoolers, and to establish a second site. STEP Academy made plans to apply in the fall of 2018 to begin a preschool and to open a second site beginning the fall of 2019 (application submitted to the Authorizer September 2018).
- Adjustments to the English/Language Arts program will continue, as described in the Innovative Practices section above. In particular, for 2018-19 Fountas & Pinnell’s Guided Reading program is being added for grades K-2, Action 100 from American Reading Company as a supplementary resource for grades 4-10, and Engage New York for deep reading strategies. In the math program, STEP will begin utilizing formative assessments at least once per week, with weekly re-teaching to small groups as needed to ensure mastery of content.