



Science, Technology, Engineering Preparatory Academy

MN Charter School District 4200

ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2019

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 eight years of operation and is pleased to present this annual report on the 2018-19 school year. The school opened in Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota, in fall 2011, and moved to a new location in St. Paul beginning with 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 two years 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 39 students in 2019; most graduates are going on to college.

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).

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: *STEP Academy will foster innovative leaders and productive, engaged citizens.*

Core Values:

- **Kindness** – *Ensure a safe and nurturing learning environment where all members are valued and respected.*
- **Personalization** – *Provide high quality individualized programs to ensure success of all students.*

- **Excellence** – Motivate students to academic excellence and prepare them 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.
- **STEM-Focused** – Provide enriching experiences in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM).
- **Community Minded** – Collaborate with families and other partners to develop shared ownership of the learning community.
- **Global Vision** – Promote the development of global citizens who demonstrate integrity and personal responsibility.

STEP Academy’s authorizer is Innovative Quality Schools (contact: Milo Cutter – mcutter@iqsmn.org; phone 651-234-0900). The 2018-19 school year was the fifth year of a five-year charter contract. STEP Academy leadership was pleased to be notified that IQS has renewed the contract for another five-year term!

STEP Academy Enrollment and Student Attrition

STEP ACADEMY’S ENROLLMENT BY GRADE, 2014-2019															
School Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL	Attrition ¹
2014-15							33	51	52	52	40	20	16	264	+55%
2015-16							26	30	49	35	43	31	18	232	-12%
2016-17							24	50	37	50	44	39	34	278	+20%
2017-18	19	17	20	21	24	24	26	43	55	40	41	35	35	400	+44%
2018-19	33	22	19	24	26	25	40	46	45	64	44	47	38	473	+18%

Student enrollment figures from the past five years are shown. This data is based on October 1 student enrollment figures. 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.

¹ 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 2018-19. Community Member Abdulrazzaq Mursal was appointed to the Board in March, replacing Khadar Yassin who stepped down effective January 2019, to pursue continuing education. Effective June 2019, teacher member Tamanny AbouAiad and parent member Mustafa Hurreh resigned from the Board, and Abdirahman Hassan left upon the expiration of his term. There was an election for Board members in the spring of 2019; new members Rahima Ahmed (Parent), Shuriye Mohamed (Community) and Amina Mohamud (Community) were elected, and Abdulrazzaq Mursal was elected for a full term.

Name: Last, First	Affiliation	Date Appointed	Term Expiration	Contact
AbouAiad, Tamanny	Teacher / Secretary, File Folder #447125	7/1/17	6/20/19 (resigned)	651-289-6132; tamanny@stepacademymn.com
Bartlett, Deborah	Teacher, / Secretary File Folder #461717	7/1/17	6/30/20	651-289-6120; dbartlett@stepacademymn.com
Hassan, Abdirahman	Community / Director	7/1/16	6/30/19	612-384-6002; ahassan@stepacademymn.com
Hurre, Mustafa	Parent / Director	7/1/17	6/30/19 (resigned)	952-288-0012; mhurre@stepacademymn.com
Mursal, Abdulrazzaq	Community / Treasurer	3/11/19 (appointed)	6/30/22	
Olmsted, Sandra	Community / Chair	7/1/17	6/30/20	612-330-1079; solmsted@stepacademymn.com
Yassin, Khadar	Community / Treasurer	7/1/16	12/31/18 (resigned)	612-281-0731; khadar@stepacademymn.com

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 2018-2019

Teacher	File folder #	Assignment	Left during 18/19?	Not returning 19/20?
Abou-Aiad, Tamany	447125	Math Coord. / Math RTI		X
Ahmed, Zamzam	499299	MS English Language Arts, Social St.		X
Allen, Heidi	509748	Elementary	X	X
Artymiuk-Moe, Jacqueline	495533	AVID (HS)		X
Begum, Rejia	415343	Math RTI		X
Borghol, Marwa	446832	HS Arabic		
Chapman, Jessica	473968	MS/HS English Language Arts		
Chowdhury, Zinat	432535	MS Science		
Crawford, Megan	501211	Elementary		
Elmi, Mahdi	508897	Math RTI		
Elnahrawy, Mona	416352	Building Sub, Support		
Endert, Rebecca	496934	Special Ed.		X
Greene-DeLanghe, Matt	501802	MS/HS English Language Arts		
Gurney, Allison	498875	HS Science		X
Harbeck, Mitsy	302447	Elementary Special Ed.		
Hayden, Rani	361628	MS/HS Reading RTI		
Heinzen, Noelle	494491	Elementary		
Henley, Hannah	496105	HS Social Studies		
Hussein, Deeqa	426486	MS Special Ed.		X
Lentz, Jeena	492786	Elementary		X
Manning (Balagot), Ali	498408	MS Math		

Teacher	File folder #	Assignment	Left during 18/19?	Not returning 19/20?
McGuire, Molly	405691	Elementary		
Merrill, Allisen	494341	HS English Lang. Arts		X
Mohamoud, Mohamed	513236	HS Special Ed.		
Nelsen, Wayne	343848	HS ELL		
Nupen, Matthew	425244	STEM Coord. / STEM	X	X
Olson, Luke	485672	HS Math		
Omar, Awil	511664	HS Special Ed.		
Qingmei, Bao	N/A	HS Chinese		X – 1-year special assignment
Ritchart, John	415920	HS Science		
Sheikh-Ahmed, Rahima	453262	MS ELL		
Ryan, Claire	501828	ES Math RTI		X
Spreeman, Sally	287959	ES Reading RTI	X	X
Straub, Frank	472359	Elementary		X
Swenson, Kate	313358	ES ELL		
Thompson, Catie	306400	HS Phy. Ed.		X
Weiss, Aleshia	506000	Elementary		
Welsh, Nicholas	450616	MS Social Studies		X

Twenty out of 38 licensed teachers from 2018-19 returned for the 2019-20 school year, yielding a retention rate of 53%.

STEP Academy 2018-2019 School Management and Faculty Information

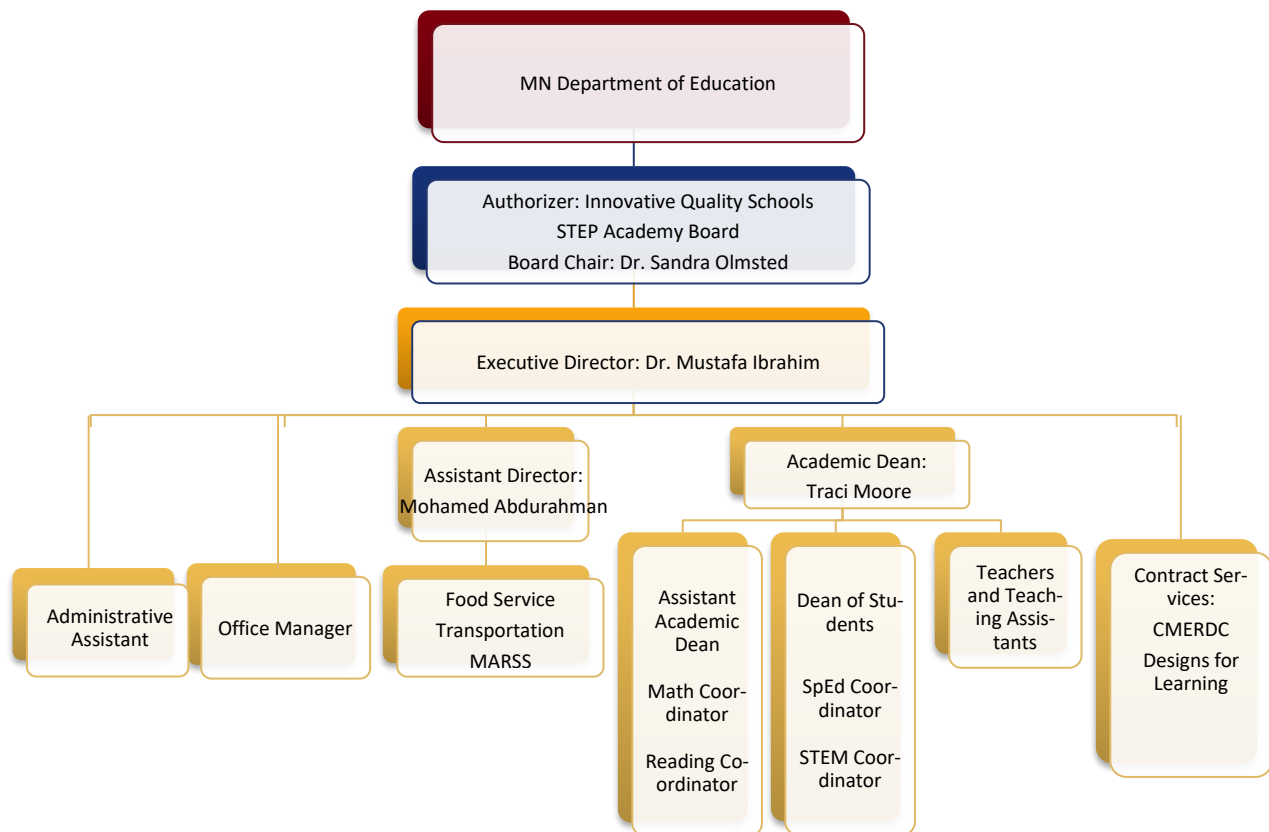
Name	File Folder number	Assignment	Years employed	Left during 18/19?	Not returning 19/20?
Mustafa Ibrahim	513361	Executive Director	7		
Mohamed Abdu-rahman		Assistant Director	8	X	X
Traci Moore	362417	Academic Dean	3		

Name	File Folder number	Assignment	Years employed	Left during 18/19?	Not returning 19/20?
Keeley Tholen	463199	Academic Coord., Acad. Leadership Team	4		
Deborah Bartlett	461717	Special Ed. Coord., Academic Leadership Team	4		
Chris Welter	499931	Dean of Students, Acad. Leadership Team	2		
Ahmed Mursal		Family Liaison (PT)	2		
Tamany Abou-Aiad	447125	Math Coord. / Math RTI	7		X
Ginny Maurer	496154	Reading Coord., Academic Leadership Team	2		
Matt Nupen	425244	STEM Coord. (PT)	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 during the 2018-19 school year with the exception of the departure of Assistant Director Mohamed Abdurahman in November, a position which was not replaced and. STEP Academy's Leadership Team meets regularly and each member takes responsibility for continuous improvement in their respective areas of management. 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.

A number of changes are being implemented for 2019-20: The Academic Dean position has changed to Assistant Director for Academics, with Traci Moore continuing to serve, in that capacity, while the former part time Family Liaison, Ahmed Mursal, has become a full time Assistant Director for Operations, and another staff person is taking on the family liaison position.

STEP Academy's organization chart, effective during 2018-19, is below.



Director’s Professional Development Plan

STEP Academy’s director, Mustafa Ibrahim, became a licensed school administrator, completing his administrative license as a K-12 principal, through the University of Minnesota’s administrative licensure program. The license is effective as of February 20, 2019. Mr. Ibrahim’s professional development activities during 2018-19 included the following:

- STEP Academy’s Board of Directors Retreat (Saturday, July 7, 2018)
- IQS Multiple Measures Conference (Tuesday, July 17, 2018)
- IQS School Leaders Meeting August 7th, 2018
- IQS School Leader Fall Conference November 7th 2018.
- 2019 AERA Annual Meeting: April 5-9, 2019. Toronto, Canada
- IQS School Leader Spring Conference May 1, 2019
- 2019. National Convening: School Leaders Collaborative meeting. May 10-11th, 2019 Oakland, CA

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 2018-19 STEP Academy leadership established four staff development goals, which were addressed as described in the table below.

Goal	Documented Actions
STEP Academy will strengthen the Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (PBIS) program by increasing staff capacity to deal with student behavior issues according to PBIS methodology. (MDE Performance Standards D2Bi, D2Bii)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Support) group completed the last year in training for PBIS cohort. 2) Internal trainings on PBIS strategies were provided to teachers and staff throughout the year. 3) Behavior staff provided coaching with specific teachers.
STEP Academy will increase the use of research-based assessment practices in order to better understand student growth and proficiency related to state and local standards. (MDE Performance Standards D1Ci, D3Ci)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Assessment trainings, discussions, and reflection 2) Time for teachers to modify current assessments and try new practices. 3) Strategic planning related to Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment preparation. 4) FAST test data reviews
STEP Academy will increase the integration and direct instruction of vocabulary words in each grade and subject area. (MDE Performance Standards D2Bi)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Professional Learning Community studies related to Marzano's Six Step Vocabulary Process 2) Implementation practice, discussion, and reflection
STEP Academy will increase classroom teacher directed academic and behavior interventions. (MDE Performance Standards D1Cii)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Professional Learning Community studies related to classroom intervention techniques including accommodating for Special Education 2) Internal trainings by Student Success Team 3) Case study planning, supporting, and reflecting

Finances

STEP Academy has been located since the 2016-17 school year at 835 E. 6th St., St. Paul, Minnesota. This location, at a previous parochial school building, provides for classroom space, science labs, a media center, and elementary recess space. The 2018-19 year was the third year of STEP Academy's ten year lease with the building owners to occupy this 53,382 square foot building which is now fully utilized. The Audited Financial Statement for FY2019 shows a surplus of Revenues over Expenditures of \$106,870. The total amount of the school's Fund Balance has continued to increase over the past two fiscal years; however, it has declined slightly as a percentage of total expenditures, due to significant growth in the overall size of STEP Academy's budget in both Fiscal 2018 and Fiscal 2019. See the table below.

STEP Academy Financial Summary, 2015-2019				
	Total Rev.	Total Exp.	Ending F.B.	F.B. - % of Exp.
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	\$5,655,076	\$5,425,501	\$1,052,519	19.4%
FY 2019	\$6,264,752	\$6,157,882	\$1,159,388	18.8%

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 law².
- 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.

² During 2016-17 Minnesota continued to operate under its federally-approved waiver of NCLB requirements.

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).

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 9th grade. For students beginning at STEP after 9th 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. In 2018-19, the school had a graduating class of 39 with twelve students having earned more than 45 college credits. The school supported 53% of its grade 11 and 12 students in PSEO classes. Some of these students are English Learners. Almost all of them come from families living below the poverty line. As of November 2019, there were 55 students, 30 seniors and 25 juniors, enrolled in PSEO the fall semester.

STEP Academy students are challenging the markers that identify them as being affected by the achievement gap. They are crushing the barriers placed on them by statistics that say they cannot gain college entrance and pursue a degree before their aged peers. This commitment to providing opportunity is a piece that is sorely missing in other local public and charter schools.

- 2) Attendance: % of all students attending 90%: Of a total of 488 students enrolled for any part of the year, 450 or 92.2% 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%
Actual	57.4	92.0%	89.6%	93.7%	92.2%

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.
- 2018-19: Of a total of 488 students enrolled, 450 or 92.2% were in attendance 90% or more of the days enrolled.

3) Academic performance (Cross-cohorts)

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
(a) School-wide MCA Reading - % proficient, target	42%	48%	54%	60%	66%
Actual	35.6%	48.8%	39.0%	47.1% (54.1%)	45.6% (51.2%)
(b) School-wide MCA Math - % proficient, target	55%	60%	65%	69%	73%
Actual³	39.2%	45.7%	41.4%	41.3% (44.0%)	35.1% (32.3%)
(c) School-wide MCA Science - % proficient, target	50%	56%	62%	68%	74%
Actual	22.7%	40.0%	49.5%	30.4% (33.0%)	39.4% (42.9%)

Proportion of students proficient in Reading remained essentially unchanged from spring 2018 to spring 2019, while proportion proficient in Math declined and the proportion proficient in Science increased. STEP Leadership carried out a Root Cause Analysis to identify causes for the 2019 MCA results; this is how the Academic Dean described the conclusions:

- Reading: Root Cause Analysis: For the 2018-2019 school year, STEP Academy focused on increasing students' independent reading requirements in grades 4-10 with the addition of the Action 100 reading program from American Reading Company. This program paired diagnostic reading conferencing

³ 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. All figures are for Oct. 1-enrolled students only.

with daily required independent reading for all students. The school also focused on improving targeted, diagnostic reading instruction by formalizing, coaching, and documenting instructional strategies. While this addition provided promising increases, personnel changes and increased student behaviors impacted reading results negatively. Due to a series of unforeseen circumstances, STEP Academy lost two reading intervention teachers mid-year leaving unfilled vacancies (despite advertising for the positions, the school was unable to replace the teachers). Therefore, students who would ordinarily receive RtI services, lost that opportunity. In addition, STEP Academy had a rise in behavior referrals causing the initiation of a school-wide strategic behavior plan.

- **Math: Root Cause Analysis:** After the decline in math scores in 2018-2019, STEP Academy examined its core and intervention math program. Results of this review lead to a complete redesign of the intervention program and minor adjustments to the core math program. In grades K-5, all math teachers are conducting pre-assessments. Instead of identifying students in need of intervention and providing support on general areas of deficit, intervention teachers are now supporting students who score poorly on the pre-assessments and providing support with deficit prerequisite skills as they impact students' building math competency. At the secondary level, core and intervention teachers are working closely to identify specific student gaps and strategically supporting students as those specific skills are needed to access grade level standards.
- **Science: Root Cause Analysis:** STEP Academy experienced a rise in science achievement due to teachers being more experienced in delivering the science standards. Teachers were sent to the Minnesota Science Teachers Association Conference and on-going professional development in aligning curriculum maps with standards contributed to the gains.

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
Actual	0.0785	0.1971	-0.1125	0.1188	0.0106

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. Averaged MCA Growth results show that STEP Academy maintained a positive average Growth z-score based on MCA results in Reading and Math for four of the five years of the contract. In both 2018 and 2019, 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 for likely causes of changes in performance levels on the MCA’s.

- 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.

STEP Academy MAP and FAST results, 2014-2018					
(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 (All Students)
Target	60	63	65	66	67
Actual	69%	65%	56%	60%	49%
(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)	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Target	55	59	62	63	64
Actual	62%	51%	59%	N/A	N/A

Analysis of the past five years of test results, for the MAP and then 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%)

2018-19:

- Math total: 70 / 129 made at least one year's progress (54% - note, due to a miscommunication regarding testing, not all students were given the Math FAST)
- Reading total: 163 / 348 made at least one year's progress (47% - see "Root Cause Analysis" comment above for likely reasons why some students struggled in Reading. Also, the median percentile-at-nation score for spring 2019, 46%, was actually slightly higher than the previous spring, so part of the explanation could be that with higher beginning scores it's more difficult to make progress fall-to-spring.)

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

MCA Results in Reading Grades 6-8: Proportion Proficient, STEP Academy and Comparable Sites					
School	2015	2016	2017	2018⁴	2019⁵
STEP Academy	35.4%	49.4%	40.6%	51.6%	38.5%
Higher Ground Acad.	46.7%	58.1%	60.4%	64.0%	55.5%
Dugsi Academy	28.4%	13.9%	15.1%	16.3%	19.6%

⁴ Minnesota Report Card data for 2018 did not display STEP Academy's Proficiency data for 6th graders; hence results reported here are based on grades 7 and 8 only.

⁵ Due to changes in how Minnesota Report Card data is reported, it is no longer possible to split-out MCA results grade-by-grade for smaller schools; hence results reported here for STEP Academy are for all secondary grades; and for Dugsi Academy for all grades served, i.e. 3-8.

MCA Results in Reading Grades 6-8: Proportion Proficient, STEP Academy and Comparable Sites					
School	2015	2016	2017	2018⁴	2019⁵
Parkway Montessori	32.4%	34.0%	29.8%	30.9%	29.6%
Average for comp. sites⁶	35.2%	38.0%	34.9%	36.9%	38.4%

MCA Results in Mathematics Grades 6-8: Proportion Proficient, STEP Academy and Comparable Sites					
School	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
STEP Academy	42.5%	52.3%	46.9%	50.5%	30.1%
Higher Ground Acad.	53.9%	45.6%	44.0%	45.1%	53.4%
Dugsi Academy	8.1%	5.6%	5.8%	8.8%	17.5%
Parkway Montessori	24.5%	26.0%	24.9%	22.8%	19.2%
Average for comp. sites	29.3%	28.8%	26.9%	26.5%	33.1%

STEP Academy Performance Compared with Comparable Sites, Grades 6-8 MCA					
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Target	0	+3%	+6%	+8%	+10%
Actual: Reading	+0.2%	+11.4%	+5.7%	+14.7%	+0.1%
Actual: Math	+13.2%	+23.5%	+20.0%	+24.0%	-3.0%

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.

⁶ Weighted based on number of students in grades 6-8 at the three comparison schools.

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 addition, in beginning in 2017-18, STEP Academy was also able to begin offering Chinese, as a second world language. This was supported by a Teachers of Critical Languages Program (TCLP) grant for the first time in 2017-18. TCLP 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 was renewed, and the program was offered to third graders as well as continuing with high school students. However, the TCLP grant did not continue for 2019-20, and STEP Academy has not been able to continue its Chinese language program.

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.

Students were not surveyed during 2018-19, except for the survey of seniors described below; but a survey is being carried out in the current (2019-20) school year.

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 2019 asked about their plans for next year; all 24 of the survey respondents indicated they plan to attend either a four-year college (57%) or a technical/community

college (43%). Also, when asked what field they planned to major in, 100% 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 has a strategic plan for 2019-20. The plan identifies three focus areas in support of the school mission, vision and core values. The focus areas are Student Achievement, Student Support, and Parent and Community Engagement; each has one or more Goals and multiple Objectives, as shown below:

FOCUS	GOALS	OBJECTIVES
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> On an annual basis, we will achieve the goals of the World’s Best Work-force for all students in the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students are kindergarten ready; All students are reading at grade level by third grade; Closing the achievement gap for identified student groups; All students graduating college and career ready; and All students graduating on time.

FOCUS	GOALS	OBJECTIVES
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	2. By spring 2020, we will increase the academic achievement of all students through regular attendance, effective instruction, a challenging curriculum, and aligned assessments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By the spring of 2020, teachers will have received professional development on standards aligned data practices and will have spent a minimum of 20 hours in Professional Learning Communities and individually working on implementation of these practices. • By the spring of 2020, teachers of grades 4-12 will add “must know”, “may know”, and “nice to know” vocabulary to curriculum maps for each unit of study and integrate tiered vocabulary instruction and assessment.
STUDENT SUPPORT	3. By spring 2020, we will ensure that there is a sustainable and well-defined support system in place for all learners at all levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By the start of the 2019-2020 school year, provide funding and resources to hire an English Learner Coordinator who will review program effectiveness, adherence to state requirements and best practices, and begin implementation of improvements during the 2019-2020 school year. • By spring of 2020, STEP Academy will increase the quality and fidelity of class wide and Tier 2 academic and behavior interventions in the areas of reading, math, and behaviors.
PARENT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	4. By fall 2020, we will provide timely, accurate, and relevant information to actively engage students, parents, and the community as partners in education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, increase, improve, and streamline communications from STEP Academy to families, the Board, and the community. • By the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, identify and implement plans to improve the content and regular updates to the STEP Academy website.

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) has been in place for several years. Implementation of STEP Academy’s RTI program utilizes a pull-out / push-in model rather than providing separate classes. Use of diagnostic assessments has been 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 thirty-minute intervention sessions four times per week, with a focus on improving reading skills as diagnosed through FAST and other assessments. Students identified in math receive thirty-minute intervention sessions two to four times per week, under the guidance of a math intervention teacher, focusing on skills in identified areas of need.
- 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 grades six, seven, and eight students to help them prepare for college-ready reading.

- 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. During the 2017-18 school year, a total of 32 juniors and seniors participated in the PSEO program and earned college credits. During the 2018-19 school year, 51 juniors and seniors participated in PSEO (this figure will be higher in 2019-20: as of December 2019, 56 students were enrolled in PSEO). 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 continued 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 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 39 2019 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 continued to expand its enrollment during 2018-19, its second year as a K-12 program. Additional space at the school site was reconfigured and spaces renovated to accommodate the growing program. As of November 2019, the school is at capacity for the 2019-20 year, with waiting lists for some grades.
- STEP Academy is conducting an internal review of its English Language Learning program in order to maximize its effectiveness (underway, fall 2019).
- STEP Academy hopes to establish a second site in the future.
- STEP Academy plans to expand the RTI program to serve more students.
- STEP Academy is exploring the possibility of implementing the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, beginning with the IB Primary Years program at the elementary school.
- STEP Academy is exploring the possibility of transitioning its secondary program to a four block schedule due to the potential academic benefits.
- STEP Academy hopes to hire a full time social worker and school nurse.