



**Science, Technology, Engineering Preparatory Academy**

MN Charter School District 4200

ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2022

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 eleven years of operation and is pleased to present this annual report on the 2021-22 school year. The school opened in Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota, in fall 2011, and moved to its current location in St. Paul in 2016. 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 five years as a K-12 school. After operating in distance learning mode throughout the 2020-21 school year, STEP Academy transitioned back to in-person learning for the fall of 2021, operating in-person throughout 2021-22 with the exception of a brief period return to distance learning from January 18 – February 11, 2022. In the fall of 2022 STEP Academy opened a second site, in Burnsville Minnesota.

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 its mission, vision, and six core values (see below). Post-Secondary Enrollment Options is a major focus for the school; students are encouraged to participate in PSEO before graduating, in order to earn college credits and launch their post-secondary educational career. In 2021-22, 73 of 123 juniors and seniors at STEP Academy participated in PSEO.

STEP Academy's main site 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:** *Our students will achieve our Vision as they explore Science, Technology, and Mathematics as well as other supporting coursework and critical thinking skills, as a vehicle for college success. Through faculty mentoring, innovative teaching and classroom technology, and participation in experiential learning, students will readily translate what they learn to real world environments.*

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

### 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, located at 6616 Brittany Road, Minneapolis, MN 55434 and online at [www.iqsmn.org](http://www.iqsmn.org). (contact: Laurie Schroeder – [lschroeder@iqsmn.org](mailto:lschroeder@iqsmn.org); phone 651-234-0900). The 2021-22 school year was the third year of a second consecutive five-year charter contract between STEP Academy and IQS!

## STEP Academy Enrollment and Student Attrition

STEP ACADEMY'S ENROLLMENT BY GRADE, 2017-2022															
School Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL	Attrition <sup>1</sup>
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%
2019-20	39	38	37	41	42	42	49	54	50	71	61	45	45	614	+30%
2020-21	40	43	43	44	39	50	45	51	52	52	71	63	50	643	+5%
2021-22	40	38	40	47	43	42	45	49	48	62	45	64	57	620	-4%

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<sup>1</sup> Based on percentage change from the previous fall.

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's student numbers have been stable the past three years after showing substantial growth from 2018-19 to 2019-20. The school is now at capacity in its present building, and operated during 2021-22 with waiting lists for many grades and limited if any room to expand.

## Governance and Management

The table below shows all the members of STEP Academy's governing board during 2021-22. The Board was stable for the school year, following an election for Board members in the spring of 2020 (the three members whose terms ran out in the spring of 2022 ran for another term and were re-elected as reported at the June 2022 board meeting). Board information including meeting Agendas and Minutes, is posted on the school website, at <https://stepacademymn.org/about-us/school-board/>. In general, the Board meets the third Monday of the month, except in July. The STEP Academy Board transitioned to meeting remotely, via Zoom in April 2020 and continued to meet remotely for a second year, in 2021-22.

Name: Last, First	Affiliation	Date Appointed	Term Expiration	Contact
Rahima Ahmed	Teacher / Director	7/1/2020	6/30/2023	952 288-0012 <a href="mailto:rahmed@stepacademymn.com">rahmed@stepacademymn.com</a>
Amina Mohamud	Parent / Vice Chair	7/1/2019	6/30/2022	612-876-7145; <a href="mailto:amohamud@stepacademymn.com">amohamud@stepacademymn.com</a>
Abdulrazzaq Mursal	Community / Chair	7/1/2019	6/30/2022	953-688-6705; <a href="mailto:abdulrazzaqmursal@stepacademymn.org">abdulrazzaqmursal@stepacademymn.org</a>
Abdiladif Sanbul	Community / Secretary	7/1/2020	6/30/2023	612-483-7686; <a href="mailto:asanbul@stepacademymn.org">asanbul@stepacademymn.org</a>
Mohamed Shuriye	Community	8/26/2019	6/30/2022	651-808-3578; <a href="mailto:mshuriye@stepacademymn.org">mshuriye@stepacademymn.org</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. Board members attended training on Finance, Governance, and HR matters, provided by IQS. Training was done remotely, via Zoom and was attended by all members.

## Staffing

### STEP Academy Teaching Staff 2021-22

Teacher	File folder #	Assignment	Left during 2021/22?	Not returning 2022/23
Balagot, Alissa	498408	MS Math		X
Borghol, Marwa	446832	Secondary Arabic		
Chapman, Jessica	473968	MS English Language Arts		X
Chowdhury, Zinat	432535	MS Science		
Clarke, Anna	469395	Reserve Teacher		
Crawford, Megan	501211	Grade 5		
Currie, Malcolm	373280	Grade 6 ELA / Social St.		
Dahir, Nasra	511807	MS Social Studies		X
Davis, Amelia	1004884	Grade 2		
Elmi, Mahdi	508897	MS/HS Math Intervention		
Fisher, Cara	503186	Grade 3		
Gavin, Mariah	440827	Special Education		X
Greene, Mary	324671	Academic Interventionist		X
Greene-DeLanghe, Matthew	501802	Secondary Language Arts		X
Hanson, Kara	503475	Grade 4		
Heinzen, Noelle	494491	Kindergarten		
Henley, Hanna	496105	Secondary Social Studies		
Hollis, Kelly	476803	Elementary Art and Science		
Hunt, Freedom	1006460	MS Social Studies		
Jones, Sydney	508855	MS Eng. Language Arts		
Juve, Nicole	1008954	Secondary Special Ed.		
Krug, Darlah	436867	ES Math Intervention		
McDonald, Mari	514715	HS Science		

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>File folder #</b>	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Left during 2021/22?</b>	<b>Not returning 2022/23</b>
Mortenson, Brandon	367781	Phys. Ed.		X
Nelsen, Wayne	343848	HS ELL		
Nelson, Maureen	511867	Grade 5		
Olson, Luke	485672	HS Mathematics		
Omar, Awil	511664	Special Education		
Potts, William	379505	Phys. Ed.		
Rames, Jessica	1000795	Grade 1		
Ritchie, Michael	498867	Art Teacher		
Ritchart, John	415920	HS Science		
Robinson, Maria	1005147	Grade 1		
Rose, Julia	502364	Elementary Math		
Salonek, Theodore	1010692	HS Language Arts		X
Sheikh-Ahmed, Rahima	453262	MS ELL		
Sheikhomar, Nawal	1006320	Grade 1		
Smith, Christina	513539	Grade 5		
Sooja, John	1011513	HS Language Arts		
Strand, Katie	502856	Grade 2		
Substad, Trent	513249	Grade 4		
Tesch, Brie	1010521	Elementary ELL		
Treptow, Hannah	504812	Grade 3		
Weiss, Aleshia	506000	Kindergarten		
Wu, Lora	472516	K-12 Special Ed.		

Thirty-seven of 45 licensed teachers from 2021-22 returned for the 2022-23 school year, yielding a retention rate of 82%.

## STEP Academy 2021-22 School Management and Faculty Information

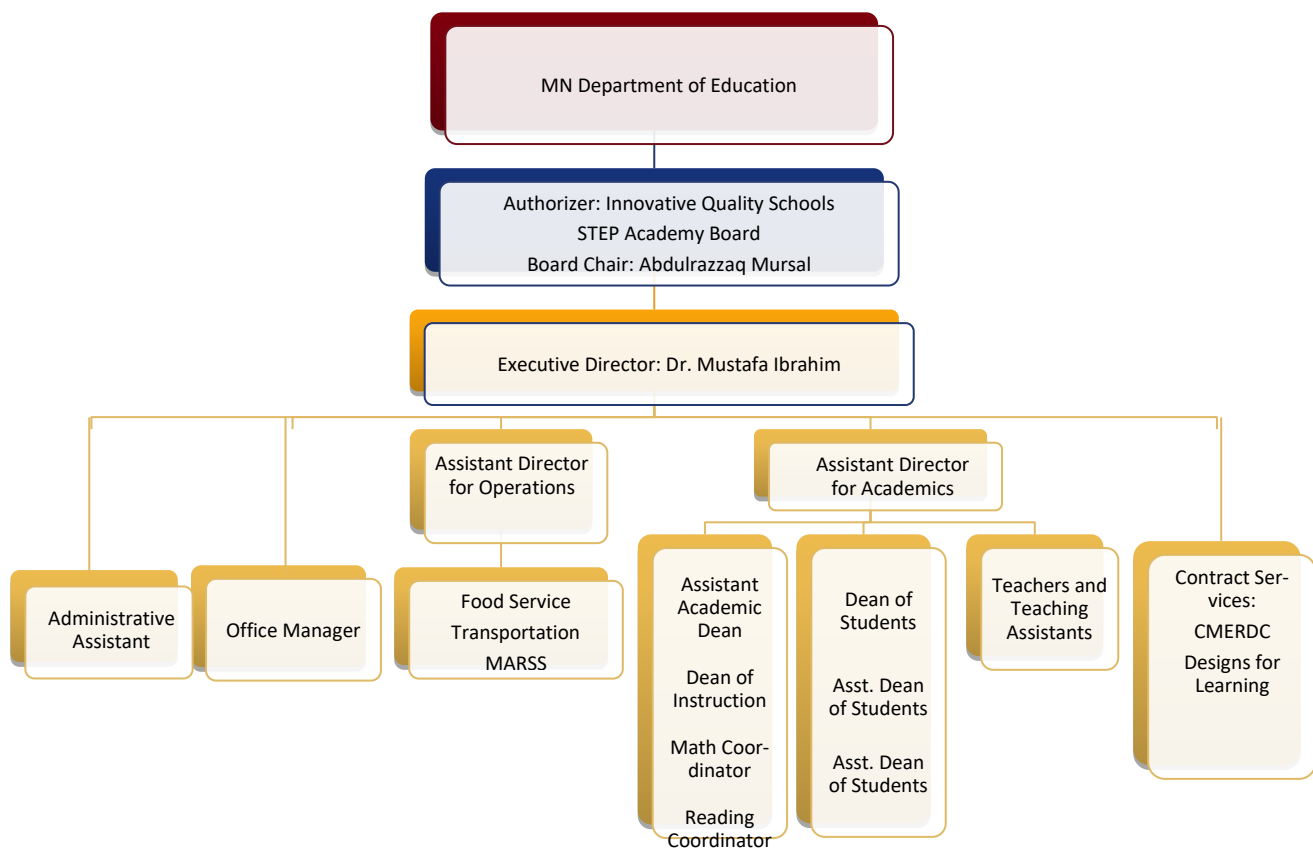
<b>Name</b>	<b>File Folder number</b>	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Years em- ployed</b>	<b>Left during 2021-22?</b>	<b>Not returning 2022-23?</b>

<b>Name</b>	<b>File Folder number</b>	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Years employed</b>	<b>Left during 2021-22?</b>	<b>Not returning 2022-23?</b>
Mustafa Ibrahim	513361	Executive Director	10		
Traci Moore	362417	Asst. Director for Academics	6		
Ahmed Mursal		Asst. Director for Operations	5		
Drew Baillargeon	454627	Dean of Students	1		
Kathryn Martin	495707	Dean of Students	1		X
Mohamed Mohamoud	513236	Community & Parent Coord.	6		
Olson, Emma	1009507	Special Ed. Coordinator	2		X
Keeley Tholen	463199	Asst. Academic Dean	7		
Rani Hayden	361628	Dean of Instruction/EL Coordinator	4		
Andy Tholen	462933	Asst. Dean of Students, Secondary	3		
Anthony Garnett	400959	Asst. Dean of Students, Middle School	1		X
Chris Welter	499931	Asst. Dean of Students, Elementary	5		
Janaki Vivekananda	509452	School Social Worker	1		

STEP Academy is led by a Leadership Team consisting of the Executive Director, Assistant Director for Academics, Assistant Director for Operations, Family Liaison, Dean of Students, and Special Education Coordinator. STEP Academy's Leadership Team meets weekly 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.

STEP Academy's organization chart, effective during 2021-22, was as shown below.





## Director's Professional Development Plan

STEP Academy's director, Mustafa Ibrahim, is a licensed school administrator, having completed his administrative license as a K-12 principal through the University of Minnesota's administrative licensure program in 2019. Mr. Ibrahim is now licensed as a school superintendent as well, having completed this degree at the University of Minnesota in the spring of 2022. In addition to completing graduate school work toward the Superintendent licensure during 2021-22, Dr. Ibrahim also attended trainings offered by IQS during 2021-22.

## Professional Development for Teaching Staff

STEP Academy's Assistant Director for Academics provided this summary of professional development that was provided for teachers during 2021-22:

The 2021-2022 school year centered on a transition in programming from a STEM focused school to a college prep model. Professional development for the year centered on a deep dive into school and student data resulting in strategic planning including professional development priorities alignment. Secondary teachers participated in trainings in instructional strategies for student engagement and independent PLC studies in best practices in their content areas. Elementary continued training in instructional strategies for math and behavior and classroom management.

## Finances

STEP Academy has maintained good financial health over the past several years, its ending Fund Balance increasing each of the past several years, as the overall size of the school budget has increased with the school's expansion of student enrollment. STEP Academy's Audited Financial Statement for FY2022 shows a surplus of Revenues over Expenditures of \$215,086, resulting in an ending Fund Balance as of 6/30/22, of \$2,832,458. The total amount of the school's Fund Balance has continued to increase over the past three fiscal years though it declined slightly from FY2021 to FY2022 as a percentage of total expenditures, due to continuing growth in the overall size of STEP Academy's budget. See the table below.

<b>STEP Academy Financial Summary, 2018-2022</b>				
	<b>Total Rev.</b>	<b>Total Exp.</b>	<b>Ending F.B.</b>	<b>F.B. - % of Exp.</b>
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%
FY 2020	\$8,509,629	\$7,487,043	\$2,181,974	29.1%
FY 2021	\$8,242,666	\$7,807,268	\$2,617,372	33.5%
FY 2022	\$9,989,210	\$9,774,124	\$2,832,458	28.9%

## Academic Performance

This report on STEP Academy's Academic Performance data is organized around the IQS School ScoreCard, Addendum No. 1 to STEP Academy's contract with its authorizer. Specifically, we address Area 3 of the ScoreCard, Evaluation of School / Student Performance Indicators. School and Student indicators are all listed below, and information is included to the extent it is available.

## School / Student Performance Indicators: School ScoreCard for STEP Academy

### 3a. New Student Enrollment

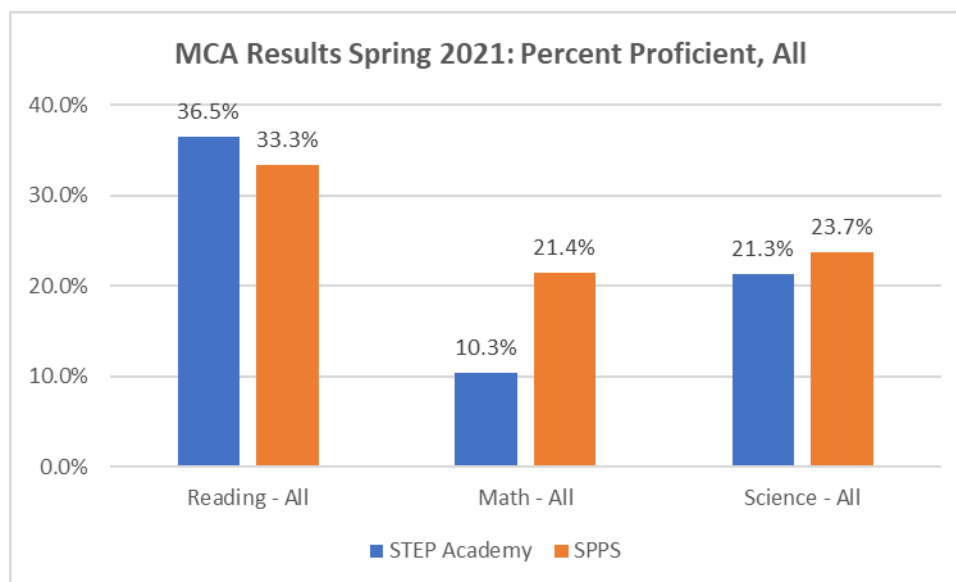
Benchmark to exceed target: *The school uses its evaluation process to develop an individual learning plan designed to assist teacher, parents, and student with academic growth and success.*

STEP Academy has a thorough new student enrollment process that includes administration of universal screeners in ELL, reading, and math. Assessments are given promptly when a new student enrolls, and the results used to inform initial class placement and to indicate if further assessment is needed to determine intervention or EL services. In addition, assessment information is available to content area teachers to provide initial instructional baselines.

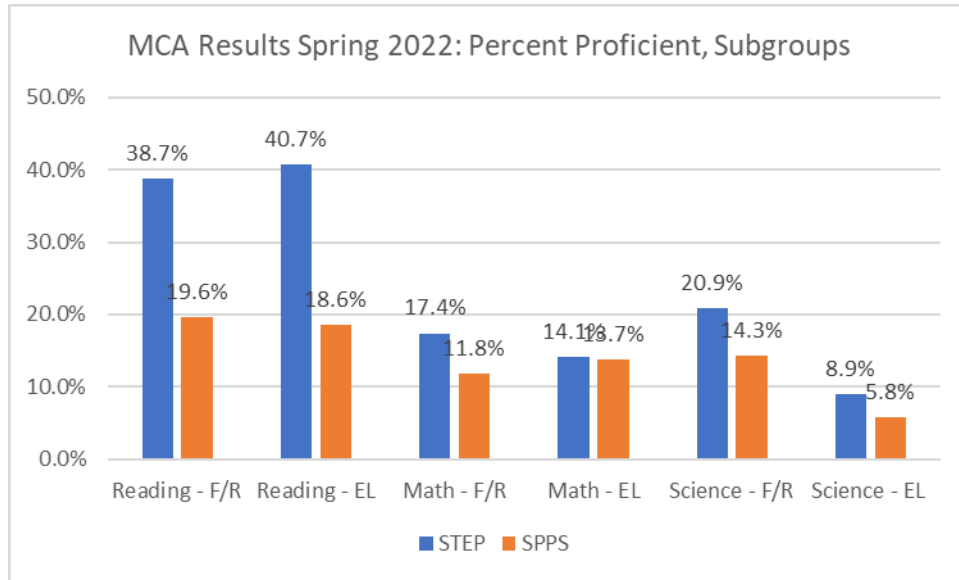
### 3b. MCA Proficiency, K-8

Benchmark to exceed target: *The school has exceeded their performance goals: Performing better than low income and EL student demographic groups in resident district.*

The graph below reports STEP Academy's MCA results from the spring of 2022, comparing the percent of students testing as proficient with those of the resident district, the St. Paul Public Schools. Overall, STEP Academy students performed comparably to the district in Reading and Science, and not as well in Math.



However, when the comparison is limited to the Free/Reduced meals-eligible and English Learners, STEP Academy students performed better than the district in all three subjects. The difference between STEP Academy and the resident district was particularly striking in the Reading results.



### 3c. MCA Proficiency, comparison groups (internal)

Benchmark to exceed target: *The school has reduced overall student performance gaps when comparing its sub-groups and student groups exceeded performance goals.*

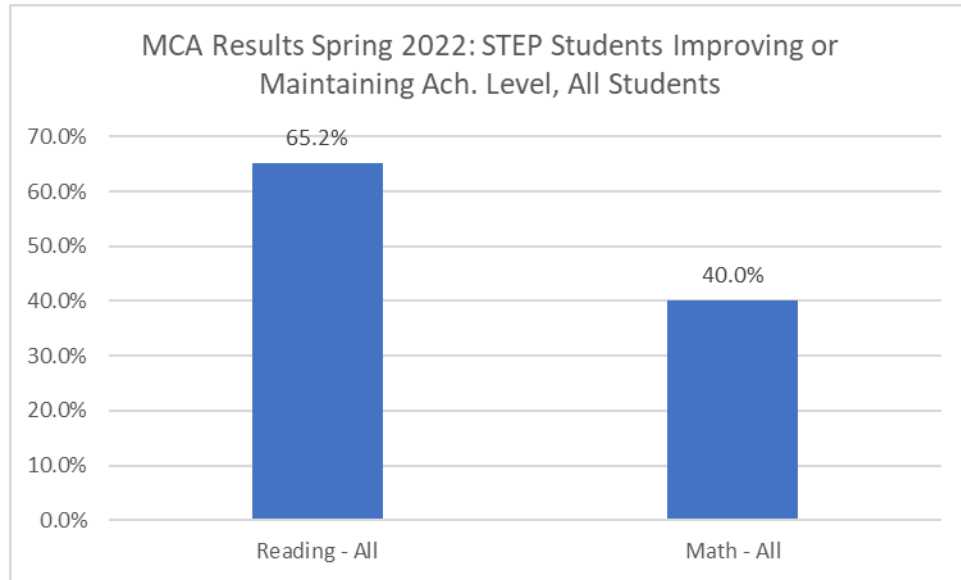
Not applicable. STEP Academy has a homogenous student population, with the great majority of the students free and reduced-meals eligible, and categorized as Black or African American.

### 3d. MCA Growth (or comparable and appropriate nationally normed assessment)

Benchmark to exceed target: *Students are making annual growth that exceeds 1 year as measured by the assessment*

MCA Academic Progress data reported in the online Minnesota Report Card shows the proportion of students whose achievement level improved, was maintained, and those whose achievement level on the MCA decreased or stayed "does not meet standards."

The fraction of students at STEP Academy who improved or remained the same in 2022 was 65% in Reading, and 40% in Mathematics. This is comparable to St. Paul Public Schools results in Math, and significantly better than the local district in Reading (at SPPS, the fraction of students improving or remaining the same in spring 2022 was 49.5% in Reading and 41.2% in Math).



### 3e. Graduation Rate (cohort defined)

Benchmark to exceed target: *The school exceeds the graduation rates as established by the state and ESSA not including students who have a form on file indicating that they are moving out of the country.*

The statewide goal for is that 90% of students graduate within four years with no student group below 85%. Data on this measure lags a year (2021-22 data is not yet available, as of January 2023). Minnesota Report Card data for 2020-21 shows STEP Academy continued to easily out-perform the state:

- STEP Academy overall four-year grad rate: 94.1% (based on 48 of 51 students graduating; statewide average was 83.3%)
- Black or African-American four-year grad rate: 94.0% (statewide average for this group was 70.4%)
- Free or Reduced price meals-eligible: 94.0% (statewide average was 70.3%)
- English Learners four-year grad rate: 94.7% (statewide average was 64.7%)

### 3f. MAP or Alternative Assessment for K-9

STEP Academy's Performance Indicator for 3f is split into three Benchmarks.

3f(1): Fastbridge Assessment – Reading (grades 6-12). Benchmark to exceed target: *90% or more of STEP Academy students are making annual growth that meets or exceeds 1 year as measured by the assessment.*

STEP Academy administered the Fastbridge assessment three times during 2021-22, in the fall, winter and spring. Fastbridge assessment results do not provide a direct measure of expected annual growth, but percentile ranks are reported. For purposes of addressing this measure, we are defining meeting or exceeding one year's growth as, Percentile at Nation rank

remaining the same or increasing from fall to spring. Results for grades 6-12 show that of 262 students who tested in both fall 2021 and spring 2022, 161 or 61% increased or retained the same percentile rank from fall to spring. This is a much better result for this group than the previous year, when only 33% of students in this group made annual growth as measured by this target.

3f(2): Benchmark Reading Assessment – Reading (grades K-5). Benchmark to exceed target: *90% or more of STEP Academy students are making annual growth that meets or exceeds 1 year as measured by the assessment.*

For 2021-22 we are reporting Fastbridge assessment results for the elementary grades as well as for the upper grades. Grades 1-5 students took the Fastbridge reading assessment in the fall, winter and spring (Kindergarten students tested only in the spring). Results for grades 1-5 show that of 182 students who tested in both fall and spring, 98 or 54% increased or retained the same percentile rank. This shows STEP Academy students beating the odds by this measure, with over half improving their percentile rank, though falling short of the 90% target.

3f(3): Fastbridge Assessment – Math. Benchmark to exceed target: *90% or more of STEP Academy students are making annual growth that meets or exceeds 1 year as measured by the assessment.*

As noted above, STEP Academy administered the Fastbridge assessments in the fall of 2021 and spring of 2022. Comparison of fall to spring results in math for all tested grades 1-12 shows that of 442 students tested both seasons, 241 or 55% increased their Percentile at Nation rank (or kept the same rank) from fall to spring. This is a much better result for this group than the previous year, when only 29% of students in grades K-12 made annual growth as measured by this target.

### **3g. Student Attendance**

Benchmark to exceed target: *The school's consistent attendance rate is greater than or equal to 90%.*

Student Attendance results for 2021-22 show STEP Academy exceeding the Target Benchmark of 90%: attendance data shows average percent-of-attendance for all students for the 2021-22 school year at 95.84%.

### **3h. Student Satisfaction**

Benchmark to exceed target: *Students' level of satisfaction with their school in the areas of distance learning success, acceptance, and quality of education is greater than or equal to 90%.*

Students in grades 3 and up were surveyed again during 2021-22. Survey results showed the following percentages with positive responses to questions in three areas covered on the survey:

Survey Topic	Responses
Safety	96%
Acceptance	77%
Learning	90%

Overall, total average was calculated at 87%.

### 3i. Parent Satisfaction

Benchmark to exceed target: *Parents' level of satisfaction with their school in the areas of distance learning success, acceptance, and quality of education is greater than or equal to 90%.*

STEP Academy parents were also surveyed during 2021-22, regarding their level of satisfaction with the school; the proportion with positive responses in the three key areas of Safety, Acceptance and Learning were as shown below.

Survey Topic	Responses
Safety	100%
Acceptance	100%
Learning	100%

### 3j. Teacher Satisfaction

Benchmark to exceed target: *Teachers' level of satisfaction with the school and with the distance learning program, their professional roles, responsibilities and professional development is greater than or equal to 90%.*

STEP Academy teachers were surveyed during 2021-22 as well. Survey results showed the following percentages with positive responses to questions in three areas covered on the survey:

Overall satisfaction with the school	97%
Professional roles and responsibilities	91%
Professional development	76%

Overall, total average was calculated at 88%.

### **3k. World's Best Workforce**

Benchmark to exceed target: *The school has demonstrated that it exceeds expectations outlined in the World's Best Workforce requirements of the MDE.*

STEP Academy met four of its five World's Best Workforce SMART goals for 2021-22, all but the *All Students in Third Grade Achieving Grade-Level Literacy* goal. The five goals and results were as noted below:

- *All Students Ready for School*: STEP Academy's SMART goal was, *The number of kindergarten students starting school with Early Childhood Screenings will increase by 5% from the beginning of 2020 to the beginning of the 2021 school year.* Goal met: 44% of kindergarteners had early childhood screenings in 2021, up from 38% in 2020.
- *All Students in Third Grade Achieving Grade-Level Literacy*: STEP Academy's SMART goal was, *The percent of students in grades 1-3 scoring in the green (30-84.99%) on the FastBridge aReading test will increase by 5-8% from Fall to Spring annually.* Not on track: STEP Academy students in grades 1-3 scoring in the green on the aReading test increase by 3%.
- *Close the Achievement Gap(s) Between Student Groups*: STEP Academy's SMART goal was, *Grade six through twelve Special Education students' class failure rate will be lower than general education peers for the 2021-22 school year.* Goal met: Grades 6-12 Special Education students' class failure rate was 1.38% while general education population's failure rate was 7.42%.
- *All Students Career- and College-Ready by Graduation*: STEP Academy's SMART goal was, *The percent of juniors and seniors participating in the PSEO program will meet or exceed 40% in 2021-22.* Goal met: 59% of juniors and seniors participated in PSEO during the 2021-22 school year.
- *All Students Graduate*: STEP Academy's SMART goal was, *100% of twelfth graders will graduate in four years (not including students who are confirmed as moving out of the country).* Goal met: 100% of students graduated in 2021-22.

### **3l. Locally established measures consistent with school affidavit**

#### **1l. Special Education, MTSS, & Child Find**

Benchmark to exceed target: *SpEd referrals are being received with 100% timeline adherence and fully documented pre-referral interventions.*



STEP Academy's Student Success (Child Find) team met weekly throughout the year to assess students who were being considered for special education referrals. The Student Success team documented pre-referral interventions and assured adherence to proper timelines.

## **12. English Language Learning**

Benchmark to exceed target: *K-12 EL students at WIDA Level 4 or higher will increase by 2% or more from 2020 results to 2021 results.*

Comparison of ACCESS for ELLs Composite test results from 2021 and 2022 show STEP Academy met this target: In 2021, of a total of 126 students tested, 25 or 19.8% scored at Level 4 or higher (24 at Level 4, and one at Level 5). In the spring of 2022, of a total of 223 students tested, 54 or 24.2% scored at Level 4 or higher (48 at Level 4, and six at Level 5), an increase of 4.6%.

## **13. PSEO Participation**

Benchmark to exceed target: *The percent of juniors and seniors participating in the PSEO program meets or exceeds 40%.*

STEP Academy exceeded this target in 2021-22 with 59% of juniors and seniors, participating in PSEO.

## **14. Locally established measures consistent with school affidavit**

Benchmark to exceed target: *The school has achieved more than 80% of measures.*

There were a total of 15 Benchmarks in STEP Academy's Scorecard that were applicable for 2021-22; STEP Academy met or exceeded targets on eight of the 15 or 53%, while partially meeting four of the targets. The table below shows all of the benchmarks and their status for 2021-22.

<b>STEP Academy Benchmarks and Status, 2021-22</b>	
A – New Student Enrollment	Met Benchmark – STEP Academy continues to use its evaluation process to develop an individual learning plan
B – MCA Proficiency, K-8	Met benchmark – results for subgroups (Free/Reduced; EL students) exceeded those of the local District in all three tested subjects
C – MCA Proficiency, comparison groups	Not applicable due to STEP Academy’s homogeneous student population
D – MCA Growth	Partially met benchmark; 65% of STEP Academy students improved or remained the same on the MCA in Reading, as did 40% in Mathematics.
E – Graduation Rate	Met benchmark – STEP Academy overall four-year grad rate was 94.1%, exceeding statewide target of 90%
F1 – Fastbridge Assessment – Reading 6-12	Not met – FAST (benchmark of 90% or more students making at least one year’s progress for measures F1, F2 and F3)
F2 – Alternative Assessment – Benchmark Reading, K-5	Not met – FAST
F3 – Fastbridge Assessment – Math K-12	Not met – FAST
G – Student Attendance	Met benchmark - average percent-of-attendance for all students was 95.84%
H – Student Satisfaction	Partially met benchmark – 90% or more positive rating on 2 of 3 areas on student surveys
I – Parent Satisfaction	Met benchmark – 100% positive ratings
J – Teacher Satisfaction	Partially met benchmark – 90% or more positive rating on 2 of 3 areas on student surveys
K – World’s Best Workforce	Partially met benchmark – 4 of 5 WBWF targets met
L1 – Sped., MTSS, & Child Find	Met benchmark – sped. referrals received and interventions documented
L2 – English Language Learning	Met benchmark – proportion of EL students at WIDA Level 4 or higher increased by 4.6% from previous year
L3 – PSEO Participation	Met benchmark – percent of juniors and seniors participating in the PSEO program was 59%

## STEP Academy Strategic Plan

STEP Academy has a strategic plan which addresses 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. The Goals are shown below, along with the Objectives that were identified for the 2022-23 school year:

FOCUS	GOALS	OBJECTIVES
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	On an annual basis, STEP Academy will meet its goals targeting the principles of the World's Best Workforce report: 1. All students are kindergarten ready 2. All students are reading at grade level by third grade 3. Closing the achievement gap for identified student groups 4. All students graduating college and career ready 5. All students graduating on time	1. Increase early childhood screening of students entering kindergarten 2. Increase the percent of students in grades 1-3 scoring in the green (30-84.99%) on the FastBridge aReading test by 1-4% from Fall to Spring annually 3. 40% or more juniors and seniors will participate in PSEO (college) 4. 100% of seniors will graduate in 4 years
	Increase the academic achievement of all students through regular attendance, effective instruction, a challenging curriculum, and aligned assessments.	1. Increase instructional knowledge for elementary teachers in the area of writing and reading using the Self Regulated Strategy Development method. 2. Increase the understanding of formative assessment and opportunities for student agency at the secondary level through the Student Assessment in Learning process. This implementation will be a two-year process.
STUDENT SUPPORT	Ensure that there is a sustainable and well-defined support system in place for all learners at all levels.	1. Maintain a lower class failure rate for special education than general education 2. Prepare STEP Academy to be an early adopter for the new Minnesota Department of Education MTSS framework for qualifying special education students. 3. Align Burnsville location support systems with STEP Academy protocols for ELL, SPED, and MTSS.
PARENT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	Provide timely, accurate, and relevant information to actively engage students, parents, and the community as partners in education.	1. Provide regular and complete communication to Burnsville families as the new site is completed and functional. 2. Update the STEP Academy website to include the Burnsville site. 3. Support seniors in designing and documenting STEP Academy student council practices.
	Secure a permanent building in Burnsville City in order to start a new STEP Branch in that area	Provide regular and complete communication to Burnsville families as the new site is completed and functional.

## 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. Be-

ginning in third grade, teachers instill study habits and processes that students practice in middle school and ultimately fully apply in the College and Career Readiness program that begins in ninth grade.

- STEP Academy offers students an accelerated and integrated remediation approach that aims to move students toward proficient and advanced levels within core academic subjects. The academic program 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. Response to Intervention (RTI) has been in place for several years, and continues to be refined. 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. In addition, a range of social supports that reflects the social development needs of urban students are integrated into the educational experience.
- STEP Academy remains a school with a dual focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and college readiness. However, many of our 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 Reading and Math Coordinator positions 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 for diagnostic assessment and instruction
  - Action 100 from American Reading Company is utilized 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 at STEP Academy. As a college-prep program, STEP Academy supports students to this end through a Career and College Readiness course which all 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders are enrolled in. This course is unique to STEP Academy providing customized solutions for our student population, and is supported by meetings between the middle school teachers and the Career and College Readiness staff, to plan for appropriately customizing the course for the incoming freshmen in the fall. Through the Career and College Readiness course, STEP Academy continues to teach 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. 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. The College and Career Readiness course is important in supporting students' readiness for PSEO. Numbers of students participating and earning credits via PSEO has increased over the past three years:
  - During 2017-18, a total of 32 juniors and seniors participated
  - During 2018-19, 51 juniors and seniors participated in PSEO, out of a total of 86 (59% participation)
  - During 2019-20 63 juniors and seniors participated in PSEO, out of a total of 92 (68% participation).
  - During 2020-21 72 juniors and seniors participated in PSEO, out of a total of 110 (65% participation).
  - During 2021-22 73 juniors and seniors participated in PSEO, out of a total of 123 (59% participation)
- STEP Academy provides Arabic language instruction in the elementary, middle school, and high school, a world language that is in increasing demand nationally.
- 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. An 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 is organized and operated to achieve Minnesota charter schools' primary purpose of improving pupil learning and student achievement. STEP Academy is committed to educating all students, and seeks improved learning and achievement by operating a college preparatory program with effective supports such that English Learners and students from low income backgrounds are able to not only access but to thrive in college. For students who are behind academically, STEP Academy offers students an accelerated and integrated remediation approach beginning in Kindergarten, that is intended to move them to proficient and advanced levels within core academic subjects by the high school years. A range of social supports that reflects the social development needs of urban students is integrated into the educational experience. In addition, STEP Academy is addressing four additional purposes of charter schools specified in the Minnesota Charter Law:

- *Increase learning opportunities for pupils:* STEP Academy does this by providing a college preparatory program in a small learning community, creating a unique setting that is available for students who may not thrive in traditional public 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; a College and Career Readiness program which serves all students beginning in 9<sup>th</sup> grade; 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.
- *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

In response to demand from its parents and community, STEP Academy has for several years been in the process of planning a school expansion, to serve students at a second site. An expansion application was submitted to IQS in 2021, to request approval to establish a second school site. This was approved; planning continued during 2021-22 and in the fall of 2022 , STEP Academy's second site opened, serving K-5 students in Burnsville. Also in 2022-23 STEP Academy completed its re-branding process, with a shift from STEM to an explicitly college-prep focus.

For the future, STEP Academy plans to continue and strengthen successful elements of the program while continuing to innovate in response to students' needs. The school website will be updated to include the Burnsville site, and all functions at the new site optimized including effective communication with Burnsville families.