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2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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MISSION:

The mission of Gateway STEM Academy is to be a K-8 Charter school that prepares a diverse community of students for academic success by providing an enriching and focused learning environment in science, technology, engineering and math. Our goal is to emphasize the use of technology and STEM learning for our students and to maximize individual potential to ensure students reach academic and career success. We will provide a high-quality academic environment in a 21st century school setting which creates and improves student learning, closes the achievement gap and partners directly with students and their families.

VISION

The vision is: Educating the children of today to become the global innovators and leaders of tomorrow.

The founders' vision is to create learning opportunities and bridge the gap for underprivileged students regardless of their socio-economic differences. Our ultimate objective is to produce students who are educated, prepared and who can contribute to American society and become global citizens. GSA will promote educational equity in Minnesota by providing an educational program that:

- Targets under-served populations, i.e. people of color, immigrants and low income families
- Provides these under-served populations with academically-rigorous STEM education through a No Excuses approach modeled on that of other successful charter school networks
- Supports students and their families through a Whole Child approach emphasizing health and wellness
- Provides expanded learning opportunities through a longer school day and year

Statutory purposes:

Gateway STEM Academy (GSA) will meet the primary purpose of charter schools, to improve all pupil learning and all student achievement, by creating an inclusive STEM school which will help its students build the skills they will need to succeed and excel in high school, college and careers. Quality will be assured by adoption of strategies that have proven successful in other “no excuses” charter schools serving similar demographics, and students’ social needs will be addressed through a whole child approach to education as advocated by ASCD in its Whole Child Initiative. GSA will also address the five additional purposes of charter schools:

- Increase learning opportunities for all pupils: GSA will increase learning opportunities and support educational equity by providing a high quality STEM education for currently under-served populations, in a part of the Twin Cities Metro that currently lacks educational alternatives. Moreover, GSA will increase learning opportunities by providing a longer than typical school year (180 days) and school day (seven hours).
- Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods: GSA teachers will regularly use flexible grouping, cooperative groups, hands-on experiences, problem solving, justification of thinking through science notebooks, academic choice activities and extracurricular electives that allow all students the opportunity to practice skills based on their cognitive styles, individual ability, and interests. Also, the STEM focus at the early grades is different from typical elementary school approaches, but we believe justified as part of an effort to engage children’s interest early on, in the STEM fields.
- Measure learning outcomes and create different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes: GSA will regularly measure students’ academic progress by collecting data through test scores, regular observations, walk through and formative and summative assessments. GSA will set SMART goals defining expected progress as a school for each year of operation. Potential SMART goals for the school are stated in section 2c, and ongoing assessments in core curricular areas are outlined in section 3.
- Establish new forms of accountability for schools: this will be accomplished through academic and other goals specified in GSA’s contract with its Authorizer.
- Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site: GSA will train, motivate and empower its teachers, as they are expected to be the primary source of students’ achievement. Teachers will enjoy professional opportunities including serving on GSA’s on leadership team and on school committees that plan for an effective learning environment for all students.

Authorizer:

Gateway STEM Academy is authorized by Pillsbury United Communities Office of Public Charter Schools, which is approved by the Minnesota Department of Education to authorize charter schools in the state of Minnesota.

All charter schools in Minnesota are required to have an authorizer. An authorizer grants the original charter allowing the school to open and operate and is responsible for providing compliance oversight and monitoring academic achievement, financial, governance, operational strength and performance goals for each of its schools.

The GSA founding team embraces the mission, vision and values of Pillsbury United Communities! In particular, GSA is founded on the principles of equity and inclusion; people and partnerships; and innovation and creativity. GSA is seeking the opportunity to prove our ability to succeed with students from low income backgrounds, whose first language is not English, and who are culturally and ethnically diverse.

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Director

Office of Public Charter Schools

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School Board Governance:

Gateway STEM Academy board members came together through shared interest in providing excellent education for under-served students, particularly immigrants and students of color. They have examined and seen the need to establish a rigorous learning center that promotes a comprehensive and a high-quality education for all students regardless of their socio-economic, cultural and educational background. Their only objective is to make sure that all students get a high-quality education. Ultimately, this education will enable them to go to college, become good citizens, and contribute to the society that they live in and hopefully this way, the achievement gap can be closed.

Gateway STEM Academy also has advisory board members. The advisory board consists of supporters of the school who are able to lend guidance and expertise both on specific subjects of importance to the school, and overall operations. Advisory board members will be “go-to” people to whom school leadership turns for guidance regarding school structure, community partnerships, equity, and ensuring student success. At each board meeting, one or more of the

advisory board members will be invited to attend. The advisory board will help ensure the school remains true to the core principles upon which it was founded.

The nine-member governing board is currently in place and includes a depth of experience in K-12 education and school operations. Members' names and roles on the Board are as follows:

Board Member	Role	Term Expires
Abdirahman Mukhtar	President	7/1/2025
Brandon Haley	Teacher Representative	7/1/2025
Ally Jansons	Teacher Representative	7/1/2025
Omar Awil	Parent Representative	7/1/2026
Abdisalan Osman	Parent Representative	7/1/2024

School Management and Contracted Services:

Executive Director	Edward Fellows	Overall School leadership and supervision, organizational management, authorizer relationship, fiscal management, human resources, board of directors governance relations, food services and transportation programs
SPED Director	Deana Siekmann	Provide oversight and coordination of all SPED programs and services
IT Manager	Steve Widerski	Provide IT services and support
Curriculum and Instruction Director	Jenny Fellows	Instructional leadership, staff evaluation, daily school management , Coordinate student behavior, PBIS, parent education. ELL Coordinator

Finance Manager	Kyle Knudson	Finance and accounting services including school budget development and payroll
Facilities Manager	Chris Verwey	Facilities maintenance and oversee janitorial services

School Staffing:

The school recruited qualified and experienced staff despite the statewide teacher shortage. We hired licensed teachers with different experiences and qualifications. Our teaching faculty numbers increase the following year due to increased enrollment and the ability of the school to provide more coursework for students.

2021-2022 Licensed Staff	Assignment	File Folders
Jessica Domiano	Kindergarten	498184
Ally Jansons	Kindergarten	1003987
Anne Schleisman	First Grade	490514
Kaylie Klaers	First Grade	501244
Amelia Garay	Second Grade	1005677
Dalmar Jibril	Second Grade	518587
Lindsey Franzone	Third Grade	1011072
Savannah Hanley	Third Grade	1009171
Bradley Knowles	Fourth Grade	1010126
Kaylie Flynn	Math	1004097
Tyler Sieh	Science	1008574
Madison Wegner	ELA	1004786
Bernadette Furey	SPED	285791
Patrick Soberg	ELL	510361

School Enrollment:

Student enrollment projections

Gateway Stem Academy (GSA) is projecting enrollment increases over the next 3 years growing from 145 in FY19 to 225 ADM in FY23. In FY21, Gateway has 203 ADM projected which includes both an addition of 7th grade as well as additional students in each grade level over FY19. In FY23, the school will add 8th grades with 15 students in each grade in addition to adding 27 students in other grade levels to increase the number of classrooms being served. The school has been actively working with community leaders to increase awareness of GSA amongst families with school aged children and capitalizing on connections that leadership and board members have with their community.

K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39	33	25	35	23	19	16	15

Academic Performance:

2021 MCA Data

Subject	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Math	N/A	N/A	19.6%	N/A	10.2%
Reading	N/A	N/A	23.5%	N/A	16.8%
Science	N/A	N/A	CTSTR	N/A	10.5%

Finances:

During the 2021-2022 School year, the GSA board developed policies and guidelines that guided its budgeting and financial management practices. The board budget and finance committee met monthly with the accounting company and school leader to review monthly financial management and health of the school. The school has contracted with a reputable and well known accounting firm, TAG, as the school financial manager, accountant and payroll provider. The school board created a strong foundation for creating sound and prudent financial management policies and practices with the goal of having a school with healthy financial resources. The school received a clean audit for the year ending June 2020, and removed itself from Statutory Operating Debt.

Gateway STEM Academy had a healthy fund balance of 22%

Budget Development and Financial Management Process

Student enrollment projections: Gateway Stem Academy (GSA) is projecting enrollment increases over the next 3 years growing from 185 in FY20 to 265 ADM in FY23. In FY21, GSA has 201 ADM projected which includes both an addition of 7th grade as well as additional students in each grade level. In FY23, the school will add an 8th grade with 15 students in each grade in addition to adding 27 students in other grade levels to increase the number of classrooms being served. The school has been actively working with community leaders to increase awareness of GSA amongst families with school aged children and capitalizing on connections that leadership and board members have with their community.

Unrestricted Revenue Projections: GSA has provided its financial consultant with access to their MARSS data submission to prevent any potential miscommunications or errors regarding ADM for GSA. The financial contractor views enrollment data monthly and includes in its financial reporting to the GSA board. Further, the school is constantly monitoring its special education program to make sure that revenues are accurately represented in comparison to the funding formula available to the public schools in Minnesota. Projections are updated in the monthly financial packet for revenues based on projected ADM count for the 20-21 school year.

In the subsequent years, the financial contractor assumes a 1.5% funding increase to the general education formula. While changes are coming to the way that special education is funded in Minnesota for charter schools, the financial contractor has been assured that a safe harbor will be funded for at least 5 years (barring any legislative change) to accommodate for the lower special education funding formula. Assumptions are that the lease aid formula, amongst other statutorily required formulas.

Restricted Revenue Projections: As federal revenue formulas are not made available it can be difficult to project exactly what Title and Federal Special Education revenue will be for outgoing years. That said, with increases in enrollment and assuming similar free/reduced and special education percentages, we have provided for modest increases in federal revenues. The CSP grant will be concluded during the FY21 fiscal year and is not included in years beyond.

Staffing Projections: For the FY22 school year there is a 20:1 student to general education teacher ratio. Clearly, the school has put a premium on providing students with a quality education, even while dealing with the current financial situation. This also provides opportunity for budget cuts, should they be necessary, due to decreased enrollment. In the subsequent years, the school is increasing enrollment and thus would increase staffing. As middle school requires additional staffing we anticipate our student to teacher ratio would decrease and our budgets in the years FY21-FY23 support the additional grade levels.

We also increased our ELL offerings for staff from 1.5 FTE in FY20 to 3.0 FTE in FY22. Further our Title staff grows adding some paraprofessional staff and with anticipated equivalent percentage of special education we grow from 4 to 7 FTE special education staff.

Expenditure Projections for Unrestricted Expenditures: Most of the unrestricted expenses are calculated by allowing for a 3% increase for inflation for all vendor related services. As the

school has a multi-year contract in place with key vendors and costs are relatively known, most vendors are on a year-to-year basis and are negotiated each year. Transportation costs have been a large part of the GSA budget. The vendor has been willing to negotiate reduced costs but may not go forward. Transportation is based on the current billing structure. Expenses related to supplies and materials are calculated on a per student average based on finance vendor history working with schools with Gateway Stem materials factored in to meet the needs of Gateway programming. The school anticipates minimal equipment cost as most all needed items would have been purchased using CSP funds in the first couple of years of operation. However, some funds have been identified to replace technology as it is unable to be repaired and to increase desk/tables/chairs as the school grows.

Expenditure Projections for Restricted Expenditures: The school will staff the federal programs to match the revenues available. Just as we projected modest revenue increases due to increased student enrollment, so we also have projected moderate increases to the Title programs. We do increase our number of full-time equivalent staff in Title programming as the revenues increase and students need increases but never beyond the revenues provided through federal funding. Likewise, the school utilizes all federal special education funding and pays those funds first, almost entirely to pay for the required special education director. As those revenues increase over the years more funding becomes available to pay for other contracted services or non-instructional supplies. The school always spends the federal special education revenue first and then the balance of the special education expenses is spent from state special education funds.

Contingency Budgeting: While the school hopes to be able to fully staff as we noted above, there is some staffing wiggle room to make cuts to reduce expenditures should unexpected expenses arise, or funding levels don't meet that which is assumed. Further, there are several vendors which could be eliminated, and services provided internally. This puts additional strain on staff but can be used as a place to make cuts. Finally, GSA employees a director, operations manager, office manager and administrative assistant. Overhead costs in staffing can be reduced to make a budget manageable should funding not keep pace with anticipated structure.

School Board vs Administration Role in Budget: The school board reviews and questions proposed budgets/revisions. The school admin team (Director and Operations) develop their program based on the funding available. In conjunction with the outside financial consultant, a budget is developed which the school can afford and reflects the values and programming desired by the school community. In cases where the school doesn't have the funding to pursue programming the decision is made to eliminate expenses from other areas or provide a scaled down version of the desired program. Sometimes, the school is forced to remove the programming altogether. Once the school leadership and financial consultant have a version that is deemed financially preferable and meets the needs of the desired programming the budget is communicated to the board ahead of the scheduled meeting. At regularly scheduled board meetings, the board can question the budget and make suggestions. If the budget is agreeable, the board moves forward with the vote to approve. If the vote fails, suggestions are received by the administration team and an updated version is presented at the following board meeting. If the administration were to miss the mark with the updated version after receiving feedback from the board the process of updating begins again. In short, the administrative team builds the budget based on values of the school and seeks approval from the board, adjusting along the way based on board feedback.

Mid-year Revisions to Budget and Approval Process: GSA adjusts a working budget as part of monthly financials. However, this working budget is largely based on actual year to date and projecting through the final month in the fiscal year. GSA admin meets with fiscal contractors monthly to discuss changes to staff, vendors. If the budgeted ADM and enrolled ADM are within 5-10% of each other on October 1, generally no revised budget is brought to the board, but the administration operates accordingly in their spending. The next benchmark is after winter break as families will use this as a good break to enroll in a new school. If enrollment is within 5-10% of budgeted ADM no revision is brought to the board. In general, at the completion of April a revised budget is developed and brought to the board to home in on an exact ADM and truer costs that the school anticipates it will have through the end of June. This leaves limited time for any true changes to the budget at this point but with monthly review there are usually no surprises to the budget.

Ongoing Financial Monitoring Processes and Procedures:

Budgeting to ensure that each year the unrestricted and restricted expenditures do not exceed the available unrestricted and restricted revenues, while building positive fund balances.

GSA will ensure that they are building their fund balance for budgeting 5-10% fewer ADM than is anticipated to be sure that the school operates at a level that allows for room to grow fund balance each year.

Providing the school board ongoing financial information comparing actual data with budgeted data for revenues and expenditures. Indicate the frequency of such reporting to the board and provide copies of any such reports.

GSA board is provided monthly financials that include the following:

- Balance sheet
- Income statement (summary)
- Revenue Detail
- Expenses Detail
- Cash Flow
- Payment Register
- Deposit Detail
- Adjusting Journal Entries

On both the Summary Income Statement and Revenue/Expense Detail the year to date information is shown as a comparison of the working budget (projected budget) compared to year to date with accrued expenses included. This provides both an overall and line item detail for the year to date spent as a percentage of the working or projected budget at year end. This provides the board with information both about categories that may be over/under budget and

specific spending category status. While the school receives the paper financial packet a representative of the financial consultant is available for presentation and to answer any questions that may arise as result of the review of the packet.

Administrative Review of Expenditures

All expenditures must be reviewed and approved by the Director of Operations. The office administrator gathers all received invoices and completes a cover sheet which lists all invoices/invoice numbers, invoice date, amount and which finance code to which the invoice should be assigned. Any notes about payment are provided and the document is signed by the Director of Operations after review and verification of budget adherence. Office administrator submits to the financial consultant for processing and payment. Financial consultant enters and provides a prepayment report for approval by the Executive Director prior to cutting checks for payment.

Board Review of Expenditures

All expenditures, whether paid electronically or by check, are included in the detailed payment register monthly and presented as part of the financial packet to the board. The board approves all expenditures as part of their approval of the financial packet. The board provides any questions they have regarding the payment register at the board meeting for clear transparency of expenditures prior to vote.

Parent Engagement and Admission processes:

GSA will continue to conduct an open admissions process which will follow MDE instructions regarding application format. GSA will not discriminate against any applicant on any basis, although as law allows, we will give preference to siblings of current students and children of teachers. GSA will give preference for enrollment to a sibling of an enrolled pupil and to children of school staff before accepting other pupils by lot. GSA will not limit admission to pupils on the basis of intellectual ability, measure of achievement or aptitude, or athletic ability per Minnesota Statute.

Strong, positive engagement with students' families is essential to the school-family partnership. GSA will continue to provide this through the following:

- Workshops for parents. Many parents are unaware of their children's learning and relationships and may be equally unaware of the programs that are available for them. GSA will offer a Parent Academy to educate parents about the school, its program and how they can most effectively support their student's success. This is in response to input from parents consulted by the GSA founding group during its planning phase: many parents did not feel welcome in the existing public schools, and wanted a school that would actively support them and welcome partnership with all parents.
- Community leaders and activists will be invited to come and talk to the parents in school

events, including parent-teacher conferences; and talk about connections to community resources. Community leaders will be invited to attend teacher meetings and assist teaching staff in understanding family situations that may impact students' interactions and learning.

- Prevention and Intervention Services to support students' families will be made available through community partnerships and outreach. According to the U.S. Department of Education, positive school climates require a focus on prevention, using evidence-based strategies focusing on students' individual needs. GSA will pay attention to the unique needs of children and families. Elements of the prevention and intervention approach will include:

- Social Curriculum will be integrated into the weekly classroom curriculum to promote pro-social behavior.
- Social Support Groups will be offered as preventive interventions to help students build necessary social skills. These groups may be held after school; GSA will seek to recruit community supporters as volunteers to lead these groups, building connections with the community while supporting students in their social/emotional growth.

GSA will continue to welcome parents as key partners supporting their children's education, and will seek parents as volunteers to support the program. Once the school begins operation, a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) will be established to which all parents are invited. The PTO will meet weekly and will provide a venue for parents to meet with school staff and jointly plan activities in support of the school. Parents will be invited to volunteer at the school, and GSA will recruit parents for positions at the school as they become available, depending on

Future Plans:

Staffing: Goal is to retain 90% of staff and continue to recruit diverse staff. Additional staff may include the following: 7th Grade Teacher, 8th grade teacher, SPED, Social Worker

Curriculum: Continue the development of a vertically aligned standards-based curriculum that will be measured through teacher-developed assessments. Continued use of iReady to determine growth in reading and math throughout the school year.

Professional Development - weekly PLCs will continue to be implemented using student work and academic performance to guide individual teacher coaching and development. School-wide use of responsive classrooms in conjunction with PBIS will be a focus. There will also be at least two professional developments delivered each month to address creating student-centered classrooms with an emphasis on authentic learning displayed through the use of journals, technology, and student presentations.

School Culture - monthly school-wide assemblies will be conducted to recognize student academic achievement, citizenship, and focus on monthly citizenship qualities that are emphasized in the Responsive Classroom framework. There will also be SEL support through the use of Second-Step curriculum in all classrooms as well as individual support with a social worker.

