



Science, Technology, Engineering Preparatory Academy

MN Charter School District 4200

ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2020

In Operation since Fall 2011

Ramsey County, Minnesota

Contents

STEP Academy Introduction	3
STEP Academy’s Mission and Vision	3
STEP Academy’s Distance Learning Plan.....	4
STEP Academy Enrollment and Student Attrition	5
Governance and Management	5
Staffing	6
STEP Academy Teaching Staff 2019-20.....	6
STEP Academy 2019-2020 School Management and Faculty Information	8
Director’s Professional Development Plan	10
Professional Development for Teaching Staff.....	11
Finances	12
Academic Performance	12
School / Student Performance Indicators: School ScoreCard for STEP Academy	13
3a. New Student Enrollment.....	13
3b. MCA Proficiency, K-8	13
3c. MCA Proficiency, comparison groups (internal).....	13
3d. MCA Growth (or comparable and appropriate nationally normed assessment)	13
3e. Graduation Rate (cohort defined).....	13
3f. MAP or Alternative Assessment for K-9.....	14
3g. Student Attendance	14
3h. Student Satisfaction.....	15
3i. Parent Satisfaction	16
3j. Teacher Satisfaction	16
3k. World’s Best Workforce	17
3l. Locally established measures consistent with school affidavit.....	18
STEP Academy Strategic Plan	18
Innovative Practices and Implementation	19
Future Plans	22

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 nine years of operation and is pleased to present this annual report on the 2019-20 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 three 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 six core values (see Mission and Vision below).

STEP Academy graduated 43 students in 2020; more than 80% of graduates are continuing in or going on to college.

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: *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.*

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: Laurie Schroeder – lschroeder@iqsmn.org; phone 651-234-0900). The 2019-20 school year was the first year of a second consecutive five-year charter contract between STEP Academy and IQS!

STEP Academy’s Distance Learning Plan

In response to Governor Walz’s order for Minnesota’s public schools to implement distance learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, STEP Academy established a distance learning plan which went into effect Monday, March 30, 2020, and continued through the last day of school on June 2.

Staff met for several days to establish a distance learning plan including numerous methods for keeping in touch with students and families, and continuing every student’s education through quality distance learning. Classroom teachers utilized Google Classroom and Google Meet as the primary online tools to teach and communicate with students. Google Classroom had already been implemented in many classrooms since the start of our school year. Teachers presented instruction via class meetings, videos, tutorials, assignments, and other online resources. Methods and requirements varied by teacher and by grade. In the secondary (grades 6-12) program, teachers set up individual Google Classrooms for each class including a distance learning syllabus, and every student was required to check their Synergy account on Mondays and Fridays.

Students’ parents and other caregivers were asked to provide support to elementary students to access Google Classroom and any videos or activities that will be posted by their teachers and encourage them to stay engaged in their learning activities to completion. Attendance continued to be recorded each day, with students required to be available to connect with their teachers in order to be marked present. In general, early elementary students had a scheduled online or phone call with their teacher each day, intermediate students had a live online meeting with their teacher, and secondary students had a check in with their first hour teacher in the morning. Students were issued with Chromebooks for online learning and assistance was provided for those who did not have Internet access at home.

In spite of the school closure, STEP Academy held an in-person graduation ceremony for its graduating seniors. STEP Academy’s 2020 High School Graduation Event was held on June 6, 2020 in the school gymnasium. Each student was assigned a ten-minute time slot to enter the school, cross the stage to receive their diploma, and participate in a photo booth. Each graduate was allowed to bring four guests to this event.

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
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%
2019-20	39	38	37	41	42	42	49	54	50	71	61	45	45	614	+30%

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 in 2017-18.

Governance and Management

The table below shows all the members of STEP Academy’s governing board during 2019-20. There was an election for Board members in the spring of 2020, when terms for members Rahima Ahmed (Parent), Deborah Bartlett (Teacher) and Sandra Olmsted (Community) expired. Ms. Ahmed ran for another term and continues on the Board, while Mr. Bartlett and Ms. Olmsted were replaced by new Teacher and Community members who joined the Board effective July 2020. In general, the Board meets the third Monday of the month, except in July. In 2019-20, there was no Board meeting in March, and in April the Board transitioned to meeting remotely, via Zoom.

¹ Based on percentage change from the previous fall.

Name: Last, First	Affiliation	Date Appointed	Term Expiration	Contact
Ahmed, Rahima	Parent / Director	7/1/19	6/30/20	952 288-0012 rahmed@stepacademymn.com
Bartlett, Deborah	Teacher, / Secretary File Folder #461717	7/1/17	6/30/20	651-289-6120; dbartlett@stepacademymn.com
Mohamud, Amina	Community / Vice Chair	7/1/19	6/30/22	612-876-7145; amohamud@stepacademymn.com
Mursal, Abdulrazzaq	Community / Treasurer	7/1/19	6/30/22	612-281-073; abdulrazzaqmursal@stepacademymn.org
Olmsted, Sandra	Community / Chair	7/1/17	6/30/20	612-330-1079; solmsted@stepacademymn.com
Shuriye, Mohamed	Community	8/26/19	6/30/22	mshuriye@stepacademymn.org

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 required topics on two occasions during 2019-20:

- IQS Training for Board Members: six-hour training on July 24, 2019, covering Governance, Open Meeting Law, Data Privacy and Finance
- Minnesota School Boards Association Charter School Board Member Workshop: seven-hour training on January 15, 2020, covering all three state-required training components for charter school board members: (1) Board's Role and Responsibilities, (2) Financial Matters, and (3) Employment Matters.

Staffing

STEP Academy Teaching Staff 2019-20

Teacher	File folder #	Assignment	Left during 19/20?	Not returning 20/21?
Backus, Jessica	502724	ES Reading		X
Balagot, Ali	498408	MS Math		

Teacher	File folder #	Assignment	Left during 19/20?	Not returning 20/21?
Borghol, Marwa	446832	HS Arabic		
Chapman, Jessica	473968	MS/HS English Language Arts		
Chowdhury, Zinat	432535	MS Science		
Crawford, Megan	501211	Grade 5		
Currie, Malcolm	373280	MS English Language Arts		
Dahir, Nasra	511807	MS Social Studies		
Davis, Ed	440573	ES STEM		
Elmi, Mahdi	508897	MS/HS Math Intervention		
Feist, Carissa	505431	Grade 5		X
Fiqi, Omar	369215	MS/HS Math Intervention		
Fisher, Cara	503186	Grade 3		
Forberg, Daniel	515148	MS English Language Arts		X
Gavin, Mariah	440827	Special Education		
Greene, Maggie	324671	ES Reading		X
Hanson, Kara	503475	Grade 4		
Harbeck, Mitsy	302447	ES Special Education		
Heinzen, Noelle	494491	Kindergarten		
Hussein, Yasmin	1003596	Special Education		
Krug, Darlah	436867	ES Math Coordinator		
Maurer, Ginny	496154	ES Reading Coordinator		X
McDonald, Mari	514715	MS/HS Life Science		
Mohamed, Abdiqadir	1003792	Special Education		
Nelsen, Wayne	343848	HS ELL		
Norwick, Jacob	469575	Math Intervention		
Olson, Luke	485672	HS Mathematics		

Teacher	File folder #	Assignment	Left during 19/20?	Not returning 20/21?
Omar, Awil	511664	Special Education		
Rames, Jessica	1000795	Grade 1		
Ritchart, John	415920	HS Science		
Samuelson, Hannah	496105	HS Social Studies		
Sheikh-Ahmed, Rahima	453262	MS ELL		
Sheikhomar, Nawal	1006320	Grade 2		
Strand, Katie	502856	Grade 2		
Substad, Trent	513249	Grade 4		
Swenson, Kate	420161	ES ELL		X
Tholen, Andrew	462933	Asst Dean of Students		
Tholen, Keeley	463199	Asst Academic Dean		
Thompson, Ellyn	496863	MS/HS Reading Intervention		
Treptow, Hannah	504812	Grade 3		
Vales, Jude	466738	Asst Dean of Students		
Weess, Fran	514020	Grade 2		X
Wegner, Martin	513165	ES ELL		X
Weiss, Aleshia	506000	Kindergarten		
Welter, Chris	499931	MS/HS PE/Health		
Zeitz, Stephanie	485793	MS/HS STEM		X

Thirty-seven of 46 licensed teachers from 2019-20 returned for the 2020-21 school year, yielding a retention rate of 80%.

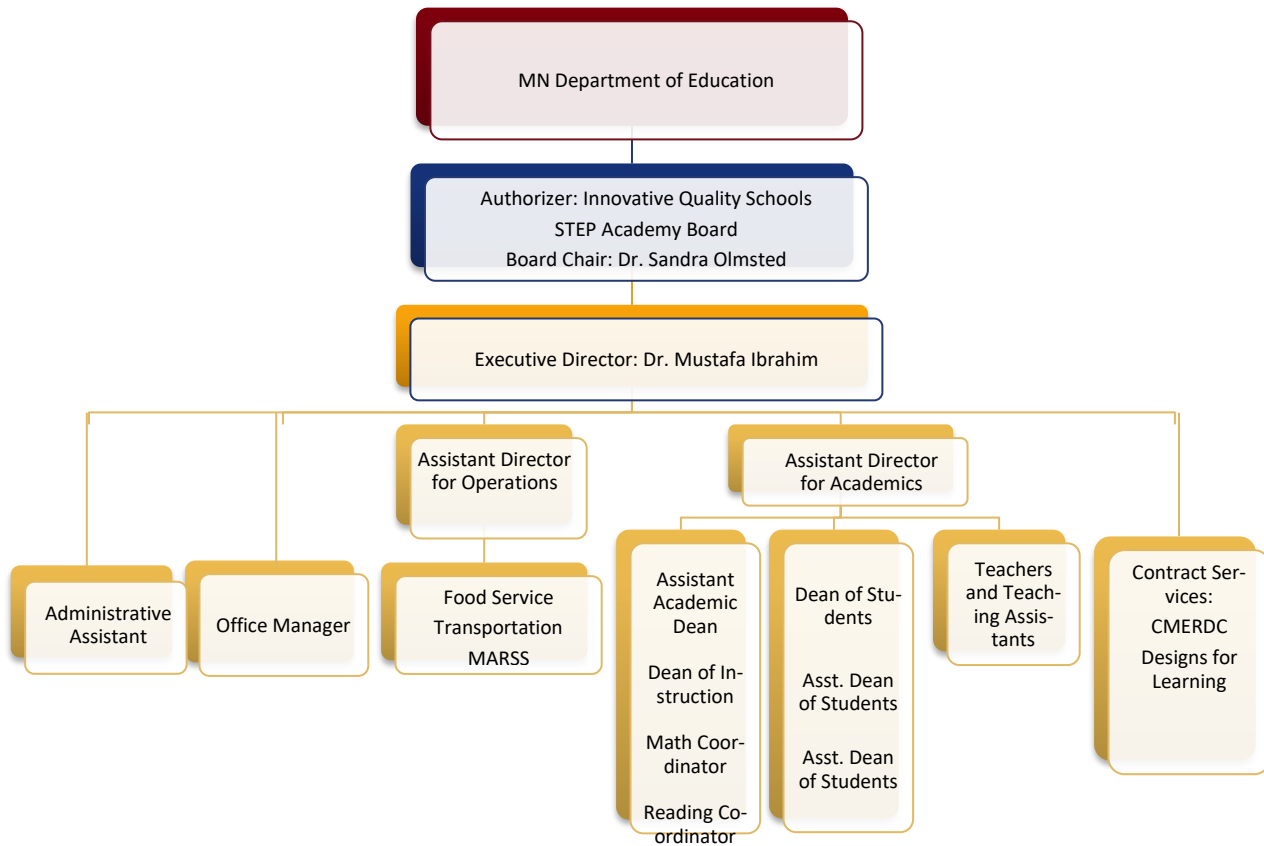
STEP Academy 2019-2020 School Management and Faculty Information

Name	File Folder number	Assignment	Years employed	Left during 19/20?	Not returning 20/21?
Mustafa Ibrahim	513361	Executive Director	8		
Traci Moore	362417	Asst. Director for Academics	4		

Name	File Folder number	Assignment	Years employed	Left during 19/20?	Not returning 20/21?
Ahmed Mursal		Asst. Director for Operations	3		
Mohamed Mohamoud	513236	Family Liaison	4		
Keeley Tholen	463199	Academic Coord., Acad. Leadership Team	5		
Rani Hayden	361628	Dean of Instruction/EL Coordinator	2		
Deborah Bartlett	461717	Special Ed. Coord., Academic Leadership Team	5		X
Kathryn Martin	495707	Dean of Students, Acad. Leadership Team	1		
Andy Tholen	462933	Asst. Dean of Students	2		
Jude Vales	466738	Asst. Dean of Students	1		
Ginny Maurer	496154	Reading Coord., Academic Leadership Team	3		X
Darlah Krug	436867	Math Coord., Academic Leadership Team	1		

STEP Academy is led by a Leadership Team consisting of the Executive Director, Assistant Director for Academics, and Assistant Director for Operations. STEP Academy’s management team as a whole, shown in the table above, was consistent throughout the 2019-20 school year. 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.

STEP Academy’s organization chart, effective during 2019-20, was as shown 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 became effective in February, 2019, and Mr. Ibrahim is now working toward a Superintendent’s licensure, at the University of Minnesota.

Though not mandatory for a licensed administrator serving as a school director, we are choosing to include this summary of the director’s most recent evaluation, which was completed in January 2021. STEP Academy board chair Abdulrazzaq Mursal provided the below summary:

On January 25, 2021, the board of directors of STEP Academy charter school has completed the annual evaluation of Executive Director Dr. Mustafa Ibrahim for 2020-2021. Four board members have served on the board for at least one full year and have been able to observe and be a part of the successes achieved this year. The evaluation focused on 1) OVERALL STEP ACADEMY PERFORMANCE, 2) COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP, 3) ADMINISTRATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES and 4) FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND MISSION IMPACT. Regarding the four professional standards, we determined that Dr. Ibrahim’s performance was exemplary in the areas of overall STEP Academy Performance and Community Leadership the board felt his performance was strong.

Instructional leadership and improvement, inclusive school culture, effective organization and contract management, and ethics and professional norms all received a rating of exceeds. The board determined that Dr. Ibrahim has done an outstanding job of attaining the goal set by the board in June of last year (2020) to update and align learning during the global COVID pandemic. His success at achieving the goal of improving staff morale and retaining professional staff was rated good.

The board chose to distribute a targeted feedback survey to members of the staff and community for feedback on his performance. The results of this survey were one source of data in the consideration of the performance of the executive director. We have received the results of that feedback, which reflects that staff morale has improved but Dr. Ibrahim needs to improve on planning timelines for requirements and being thoroughly prepared was a recommendation made by one of the feedbacks.

Dr. Ibrahim is working well with the Board. He recognizes that authority rests with the Board as a whole. He is carrying out the schools' goals and policies as described in his job description. Dr. Ibrahim attends all Board meetings, reports on the school progress, answers questions of the Board members and carry out the duties described in his job description.

Dr. Ibrahim also shared with us his desire to further improve staff morale and focus on bringing the community together in support of the school. Personal goals for Dr. Ibrahim for the upcoming school year include, attending a minimum of two professional conferences locally, participating in three trainings provided by the Minnesota Department of Education, authorizer, or other professional organizations and visiting a minimum of five schools to learn best practices from other high performing charters and school districts.

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 2019-20 STEP Academy leadership established three staff development goals, which were addressed as described in the table below. None of these goals were met to completion due to the shift in priority of professional development to distance learning in the early spring; however, partial work occurred through professional learning community work and trainings up to that time.

Goal	Goal Progress
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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Embedded guidance and learning activities occurred at the PLC level. 2) PLCs spent time examining data and using it to make instructional decisions.
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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The curriculum map vocabulary project was partially completed during the 2019-2020 school year.

Goal	Goal Progress
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.	1) Training on Tier 2 interventions was provided. 2) Teachers participated in collaborative problem-solving related to specific, individualized student interventions.

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 FY2020 shows a surplus of Revenues over Expenditures of \$112,243, resulting in an ending Fund Balance as of 6/30/20, of \$1,271,631. The total amount of the school’s Fund Balance has continued to increase over the past three 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 the past few fiscal years. See the table below.

STEP Academy Financial Summary, 2016-2020				
	Total Rev.	Total Exp.	Ending F.B.	F.B. - % of Exp.
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%
FY 2020	\$7,417,971	\$7,305,728	\$1,271,631	17.4%

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. While data is not available for several areas, due to the transition to distance-learning in March 2020 and cancellation of spring testing, the 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

STEP Academy has a thorough new student enrollment process that includes administration of universal screeners in ELL, reading, and math. Assessments are given right away 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 ELL services. In addition, assessment information is available to content area teachers to provide initial instructional baselines.

3b. MCA Proficiency, K-8

Not applicable for 2019-20, due to cancellation of spring 2020 MCA testing

3c. MCA Proficiency, comparison groups (internal)

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)

Not applicable for 2019-20, due to cancellation of spring 2020 MCA testing

3e. Graduation Rate (cohort defined)

The statewide goal for 2020 is that 90% of students graduate within four years with no student group below 85%. Most-current-available data is for the 2018-19 school year, and this shows STEP Academy out-performing the state:

- STEP Academy overall four-year grad rate: 90.7% (based on 39 of 43 students graduating; statewide average was 83.7%)
- Black or African-American four-year grad rate: 90.7% (statewide average for this group was 69.9%)
- Free or Reduced price meals-eligible: 90.7% (statewide average was 71.0%)
- English Learners four-year grad rate: 80.0% (statewide average was 67.2%)

3f. MAP or Alternative Assessment for K-9

Benchmark: 75% of continuously enrolled students will perform at or above the national median on the MAP or alternative.

During 2019-20 STEP Academy continued to utilize the Formative Assessment System for Teachers or FAST as its assessment of student growth in reading and math. FAST assessments were given for all grades in the fall and winter, though canceled in the spring due to the shift to distance learning. A review of fall and winter FAST results in reading and mathematics for grades K-9 shows the following:

- In Reading, 41.7% of students scored at or above the national median in the fall (185 of 444 students)
- In Reading, 42.9% of students scored at or above the national median in the winter (188 of 438 students)
- In Math, 32.7% of students scored at or above the national median in the fall (145 of 444 students)
- In Math, 38.1% of students scored at or above the national median in the winter (169 of 44 students)

These results come with two caveats: First, results reported are for *all* students tested in each season, i.e. not limited to students who were continuously-enrolled. Second, although the ambitious 75%-above-the-median target was not met, the fraction of students scoring above the median increased from fall to winter, with a small increase in reading and a larger one in math². This shows that on average students improved from fall to winter, somewhat more than the national average for schools using the FAST, a trend which may well have continued through spring in a normal school year.

3g. Student Attendance

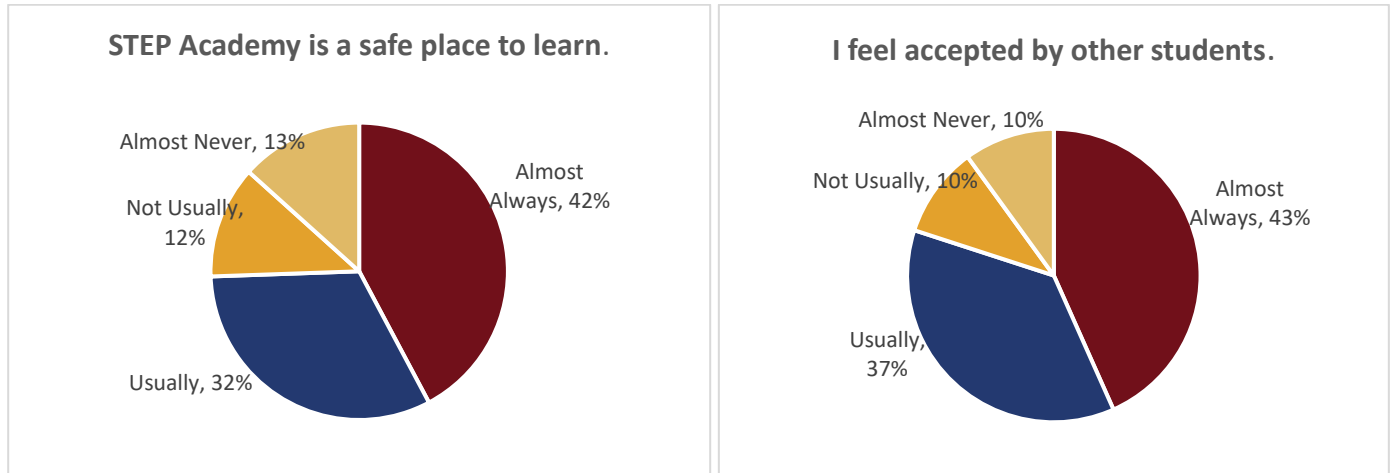
Student Attendance results for 2019-20 show STEP Academy exceeding the Target Benchmark of 90%: attendance data shows average percent-of-attendance for all students for the 2019-20 school year at 96.0%.

² Scores in each season are calibrated such that a student needs to improve their score to remain at the same percentile-rank: thus the increase in numbers at or above the median represents progress over-and-above keeping up with the norming group.

3h. Student Satisfaction

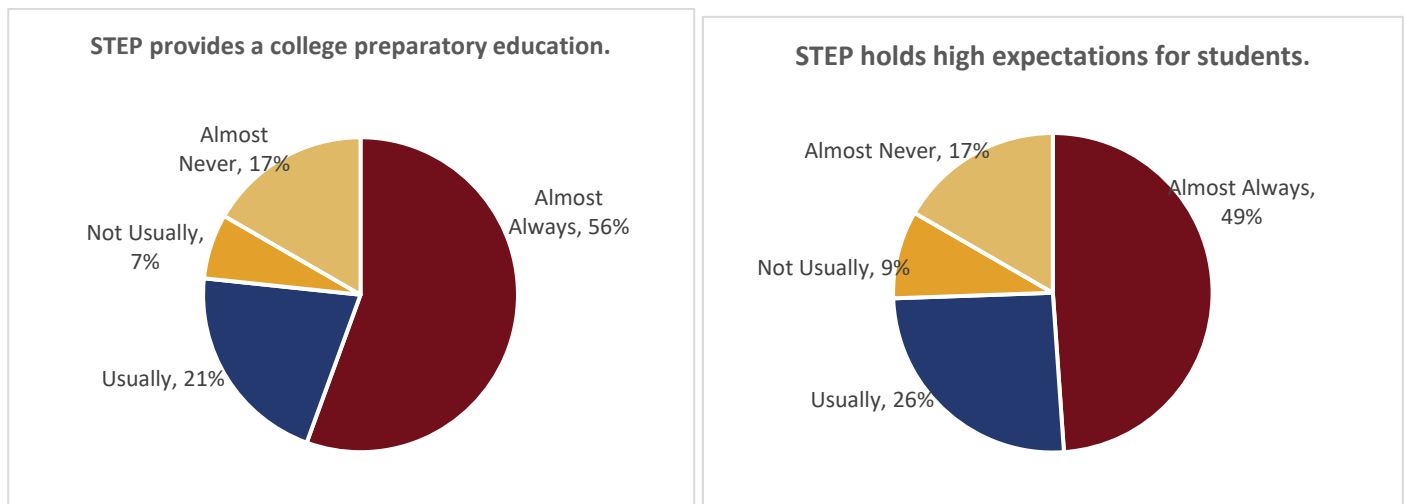
The Target Benchmark for this goal was, “Students’ satisfaction with their school in the areas of safety, acceptance, and learning is greater than or equal to 90%.”

While students were not surveyed during the 2019-20 school year, there was a satisfaction survey of students at the very end of the previous school year, in May 2019, to which 90 students in the upper grades responded. Selected results from this survey are reported below.



These results show that a large majority of survey respondents are satisfied with STEP Academy in the areas of safety and acceptance, though the totals do not reach the 90% Target Benchmark:

- Safety – 74% agree that *STEP Academy is a safe place to learn*, Almost Always or Usually
- Acceptance: 80% agree that *I feel accepted by other students*, Almost Always or Usually

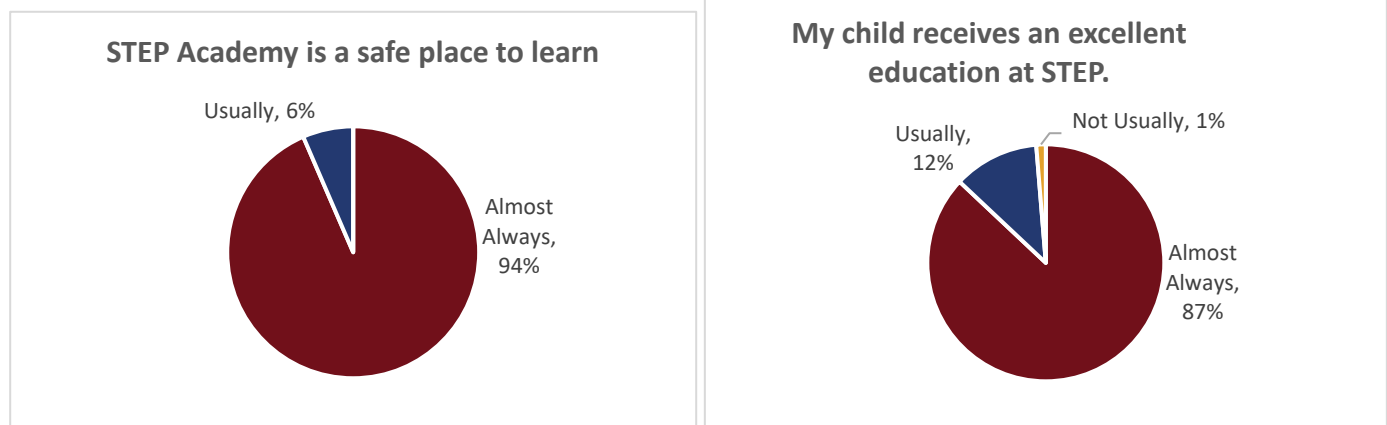


The above two questions were the survey items most directly related to student satisfaction with learning at STEP Academy. About three-quarters of the survey respondents are satisfied that STEP Academy provides a college preparatory education (77% Almost Always or Usually), and that it holds high expectations of students (75% Almost Always or Usually). Again, while this does not meet the 90% Target Benchmark, these are strongly positive survey results, particularly for an audience of adolescents.

3i. Parent Satisfaction

The Target Benchmark for this goal was, “Parents’ level of satisfaction with their school in the areas of safety, acceptance, and learning is greater than or equal to 90%.”

STEP Academy parents were surveyed in March 2020, regarding their level of satisfaction with the school; 77 parents responded. Results from two of the survey questions are shown below.

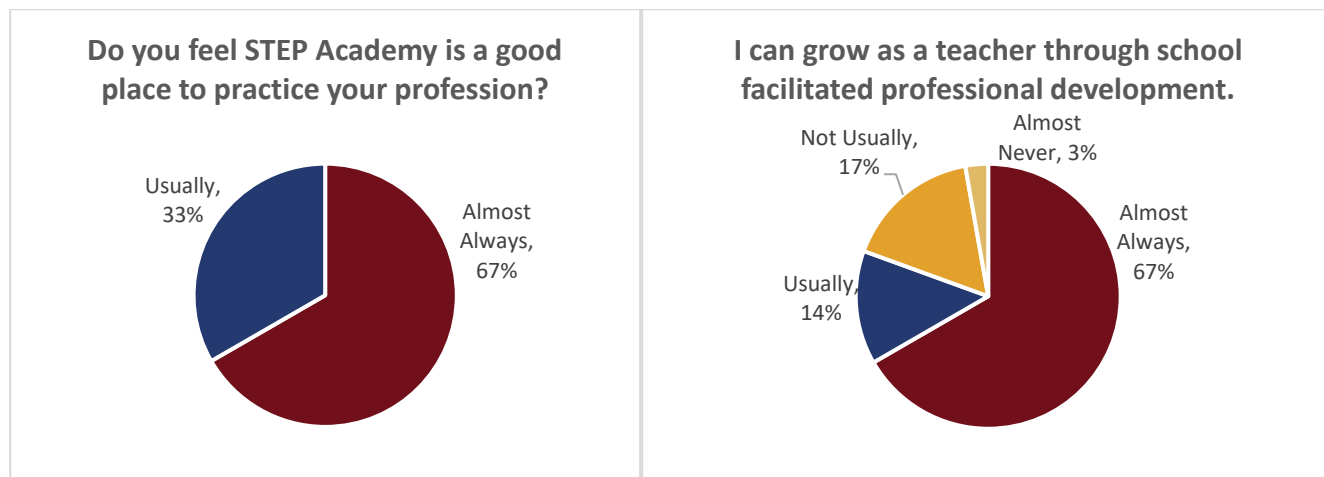


These results show that survey respondents are satisfied that STEP Academy is a safe place for their students (94% Almost Always) and that their child receives an excellent education (87% Almost Always; 12% Usually). There were similar responses to the survey item stating, *My child is accepted at STEP Academy*: 91% of parent respondents selected Almost Always.

3j. Teacher Satisfaction

The Target Benchmark for this goal was, “Teachers’ level of satisfaction with the school and with their roles, responsibility and professional development is greater than or equal to 90%.”

STEP Academy teachers were surveyed in November 2019, regarding their thoughts about a number of aspects of the school and their degree of satisfaction. Thirty-six teachers of the 46 teachers at STEP Academy responded, a response rate of 78%. Results from selected survey items are reported below.



Two additional survey items addressing aspects of teachers’ job satisfaction showed the following:

- *Overall, the school is a happy place for staff.* 92% selected Almost Always or Usually, while the rest (8% or three individuals) selected Not Usually.
- *Do you enjoy coming to work each day?* 66% selected Almost Always, and the rest Usually.

These results show that most of the teachers responding to the survey are happy with their roles and responsibility overall – 100% agreed that STEP Academy is a good place to practice their profession, and that they enjoy coming to work each day, Almost Always or Usually – while there was some degree of dissatisfaction with professional development. Eighty-one per cent of survey respondents agreed that *I can grow as a teacher through school facilitated professional development*, Almost Always or Usually; however, 17% (six teachers) selected Not Usually, and 3% (one teacher) selected Almost Never.

3k. World’s Best Workforce

STEP Academy’s World’s Best Workforce 2019-20 summary report, submitted to MDE December 11, 2020, shows the school meeting WBWF criteria with the exception of the “All students graduate” goal which calls for 100% of 12th graders to graduate within four years. As noted in 3e above, STEP Academy’s graduation rate, while exceeding that of the state, is below 100%.

STEP Academy met its “All students college- and career ready by graduation” goal which called for at least 50% of 11th and 12th grade students to attend PSEO: 56% of juniors and seniors attended PSEO classes during 2019-20. Due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, STEP was unable to report on the other three WBWF goals.

3I. Locally established measures consistent with school affidavit

There were no further locally established measures.

STEP Academy Strategic Plan

STEP Academy has a strategic plan which 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. The Goals and Objectives are shown below, along with the available data regarding achievement of the Objectives during 2019-20:

FOCUS	GOALS	OBJECTIVES
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	1. On an annual basis, we will achieve the goals of the World's Best Workforce 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. <p><i>**See WBWF report listed above.</i></p>
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. <p><i>**See PD section above.</i></p>

FOCUS	GOALS	OBJECTIVES
STUDENT SUPPORT	<p>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.</p>	<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. <i>**Accomplished: EL Coordinator and worked to improve program as stated.</i> • 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. <i>**See PD section above.</i>
PARENT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	<p>4. By fall 2020, we will provide timely, accurate, and relevant information to actively engage students, parents, and the community as partners in education.</p>	<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. <i>**Met</i> • 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. <i>**Not met; website improvements remain in process</i>

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. 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. 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 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 (since the 2018-19 school year) for diagnostic assessment and instruction
 - Action 100 from American Reading Company has been utilized for grades 4-10 the past two school years 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 9th and 10th graders are enrolled in. In past years STEP Academy implemented the Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) program, but found that this program was overly prescriptive, with elements not well-suited to the school's specific population. Establishing a course unique to the school allows for customized solutions, 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 freshman 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, a total of 51 participated
 - And in 2019-20 there were a total of 63, 34 juniors and 29 seniors, who participated in PSEO and earned credits.
- 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 during 2017-18 and 2018-2019 but was discontinued in 2019-20 when the grant program that supported it ended.
- 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 (administered in the fall and winter of 2019; spring testing was canceled due the COVID-19 shutdown). 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. In January 2020 STEP Academy adopted a schoolwide theme of "Blast into Outer Space...Out of This World Reading" and the reading team did a skit for the students to promote interest in reading. 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. The PTO stopped meeting in the spring of 2020 due to the COVID pandemic, but resumed in the fall of 2020 (at the school, with social distancing procedures in place). 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 participation in PSEO; Digital Design course work offering engineering, technology, design and coding; the College and Career Course which supports students building key academic skills as well as planning for PSEO and career readiness; 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 43 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 2019-20, its third year as a K-12 program. Additional space at the school site was reconfigured and spaces renovated to accommodate the growing program. The school was at capacity throughout most of the 2019-20 school year, with waiting lists for some grades.
- 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 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.
- Finally, STEP Academy hopes to return to full time in-person learning! For fall 2020 the school remains in distance learning mode, with an A/B block schedule for the upper grades (there is a possibility of switching to a hybrid model second semester though this would likely only be for the elementary grades).