

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Provide a 1-2 page summary of the proposed charter school that includes:

- Proposed school's name
- Purpose (linked to defined need)
- Mission & vision
- Intended student population
- Age levels to be served & total population
- Proposed location
- Educational philosophy, methodology & instructional approach
- Professional organizational structure
- Key design elements
- Capacity to improve student learning & achievement compared to current schools serving the targeted population
- Student learning & achievement goals
- Capacity of leadership to enable goal achievement
- Unique features
- Proposed opening date (month and year)

The residents of Marine on St. Croix and the surrounding community resoundingly believe that their small town needs an elementary school which provides children with a solid foundation of learning, enriched by the talents of community members, the town's deep historic and cultural roots, and the natural surroundings of the St. Croix River Valley. Marine Area Community School will be located in the community of Marine on St. Croix, Minnesota. A small town of about 700 residents, Marine on St. Croix cultivates strong civic involvement and community support. The School will improve educational opportunities and student achievement by empowering teachers to design curricula that utilizes experiential learning and makes full use of the area's natural resources, artisan talents, historical opportunities, and other community assets.

### *Vision*

At Marine Area Community School, our community is our curriculum. Surrounded by William O'Brien State Park and the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, supported by a civically engaged, multi-generational community and inspired by local artists, craftsmen and community members, the School will provide its students with a strong foundation for civic engagement, responsible leadership and lifelong learning.

### *Mission*

The mission of the Marine Area Community School is to blend environmental stewardship, community awareness and the arts in a teacher-powered learning environment that is student-centered, designed by teachers, and reinforced and supported by the local

community. Marine Area Community School is where academics lead to grounded, resilient children and a stronger, healthier community.

The teacher-designers at the School will develop a meaningful and relevant curriculum that helps students engage in the natural and civic world around them. Students at the School will learn the origins of stewardship through civic involvement, the environment, leadership and governance. By learning a broad spectrum of opportunities for stewardship, the students will benefit socially, physically, and emotionally.

Marine Area Community School will open in August 2017 and will educate 175 students in kindergarten through sixth grade. The School will primarily serve the communities of Marine on St. Croix, May Township, Stillwater Township, Stillwater and Scandia, but it will welcome students from farther distances.

An administrator will oversee the daily operation of the School in its entirety. As a teacher-powered school, the teachers will have collective autonomy to make the decisions influencing the educational programming and success of the School. A board of directors will be authorized to organize and manage the affairs of the School. Defined advisory committees will make recommendations to the board of directors.

## **STATUTORY PURPOSE(S)**

**Provide a 1-2 page description, articulating which Minnesota statutory purpose(s) will be fulfilled as defined in law (124D.10):**

- 1. Increase learning opportunities for all pupils;**
- 2. Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;**
- 3. Measure learning outcomes and create different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes;**
- 4. Establish new forms of accountability for schools; or**
- 5. Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.**

### **Describe:**

- How the vision & mission of the school are connected to the purpose(s)**
- The rationale for selecting the educational program that will be used to fulfill the purpose(s)**
- How the school's design will differentiate it from other educational offerings**

Marine Area Community School will increase learning opportunities for all pupils by deeply integrating the area's environmental, historical, community and arts resources into the curriculum.

The School will utilize teaching best practices and encourage the use of unique and innovative teaching methods. Through evaluation, successful methods will be shared amongst staff and less successful methods will either be improved or abandoned. Each child will excel in a school setting that balances his or her educational essentials, physical, emotional and social needs, and aspirations. Our small school size, traditional classroom structure (which will encourage close interpersonal connections among students and between students and teacher), and community collaborations will provide an ideal environment for contextualized learning. Every student will participate in community service activities either within the School or as part of broader community experiences. This may include efforts to restore the School one-acre forest, care for our facility, help at events, participate on committees, engage in event programming at the Marine Village Hall, volunteer at the community library, and assist with other programmed events within the surrounding community, such as preservation of the historic Mill Site, and Stonehouse Museum, and help with the Fireman's Ball.

The School will create new professional opportunities for teachers by giving them the opportunity to be collectively responsible for the learning program at the school. Teachers will be the designers of our curriculum. In order to boost awareness of local curriculum opportunities, the definition of teacher preparation activities will be expansive and responsive to the civically engaged curriculum. Teachers will be supported to grow professionally to provide innovation and understanding of learning strategies. Teaching methods will utilize 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning best practices through civic-based contextualized learning activities that both incorporate the use of the latest technology and interact live with the authentic audience of the community. In keeping with best practices and the Literacy Standards of the English Language Arts, Science and Technology and History/Social Studies, writing will be a key component of the curriculum across all subject areas.

The School will have unique assets not found in other existing schools in the area. The School will provide for a single-class-per-grade configuration, which is unique in the area. The district of Stillwater Area Public Schools plans to embrace a multi-grade approach in all of its elementary schools by fall 2017. The maximum population of the Marine Area Community School is 175 students at capacity. This is half the size of the nearest elementary school (Scandia Elementary School), and about one-third the size of other elementary schools in the Stillwater School District. The applicant team recently took an informal survey in order to elicit feedback from parents about pursuing a different educational model for elementary education in Marine on St. Croix. The survey results showed that 90 percent of Marine Elementary School parents felt that the school's strongest asset is the small school environment.

Marine on St. Croix and the proposed School's location have immense access to natural resources. The school currently has a DNR-designated School Forest, is approximately a quarter mile from both William O'Brien State Park and the Old Mill Stream (a DNR-designated trout stream), and the town of Marine on St. Croix is within a National Park: the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. In addition, the school grounds provide a large grassed area for exercise, exploration and play.

Through non-profit funding and volunteers, the community currently provides opportunities for School and student interaction in the areas of arts, sciences, language arts, and wellness. Many of these opportunities are currently offered outside of the curriculum. The School intends to deeply integrate these offerings into the curriculum. These opportunities include an artist- and author- residence programs, a partnership with Warner Nature Center, a girls running program and a winter sports program, an arts, science and academic fair, and musical and theatrical opportunities.

In addition, a substantial portion of the city is listed as a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places and by the state of Minnesota, offering exemplary opportunities to dive into Minnesota's history and our place in historically shaping the national economy.

## **MISSION & VISION**

**Provide a 4-5 page description of the vision and mission statements of the proposed school, beginning with a statement of need.**

### **Statement of Need:**

- **Describe evidence of the need for the school**
- **Describe demand for the school in the location identified**
- **Describe evidence of community support for a school in this area**
- **Describe existing school offerings in the intended community**

### **Vision**

- **Describe clearly and succinctly what the school plans to be (its purpose)**
- **State characteristics that can be measured/tested for fulfillment**
- **Select aspirations that are compelling**

### **Mission:**

- **Describe what the school will do to achieve its vision**
- **Identify the target stakeholder(s)**
- **Identify to what degree the school will achieve its goals and purpose**
- **Reference how the school will achieve its goals**

### ***Statement of Need***

The residents of Marine on St. Croix recognize the importance of a successful, stable, community-based elementary school in their small town. A school gives a small town a sense of pride. It is the heartbeat of a community. It entices young families to a move into a community, keeping property values high. New families keep the community vibrant.

As just one example, for nearly 45 years, the sixth-grade students have put on a play at the Marine Village Hall at the end of the school year. It is one of the highlights of the year, bringing residents of all ages together for several sold-out performances. In fact, many school alumni return each year to attend the event and see old classmates. It is this type of school-community interaction that makes this charter school such an exciting opportunity.

As a school benefits from the community, the community benefits from a school. According to Realtor.com, consumers are willing to sacrifice certain things to live in the right school area. Some of Realtor.com's survey results were surprising: One out of five buyers

would give up a bedroom or a garage for a better school. One out of three would buy a smaller home. A full 51 percent would give up shopping opportunities for schools. All of these factors are relevant to the available housing stock and choices made by existing and prospective homeowners in the small community of Marine on St. Croix. In addition, according to Realtor.com, buyers are also willing to pay above their budget for the right school. A good school provides stability for a community, which is good for the property values of everyone who lives nearby, and residents of Marine on St. Croix recognize this symbiotic relationship.

The population in the area has responded favorably to differing school models, including other charter schools. Twenty-nine percent of Marine on St. Croix families with school-aged children chose an alternative to the current school option provided by the Stillwater Area Public Schools.. Consistent with this enrollment number, 28 percent of students within the Stillwater district boundary are choose an alternative to District options. The level of support for a charter school in the Marine on St. Croix area is strong from current parents of preschool and elementary-aged children enrolled and not enrolled currently at the current Marine Elementary. Recent survey results rank the school and local community, access to nature, and small school environment as key factors in school choice. Parents and guardians have demonstrated their support in the small school educational setting as the current Marine Elementary School draws 43 percent of the pupil population as open or alternately enrolled.

Recent survey results showed that 85 percent of respondents supported considering a different programming model (such as a charter school) and over 90 percent stated that they would consider sending their children to an elementary school in Marine on St. Croix if a different programming model were implemented. The attendees of a community forum held on December 5, 2015 at the Marine Village Hall were generally supportive of a charter school model as well. Community discussions continue to occur through community social media and parent email lists regarding the importance of providing a strong, local elementary education for area students.

The Marine on St. Croix community has a tradition of commitment to a community elementary school and is very supportive of programming that integrates the community and local resources. Many long-time residents and Marine Elementary Alumni believe that forming a charter school in our community is long overdue. There has been a desire for many years to provide elementary education in the community that deeply integrates the area's environmental, historical, community and arts resources into the curriculum. Representative of this sentiment, the Founding Board includes the town mayor, Glen Mills, who is a long-time resident, alumnus of the current school, and parent of former Marine Elementary students.

The School will be the only small learning community (~175 students) with a single-class-per-grade format in the District and area. The School will function in a highly personalized setting, where every student is known and treated as an individual. The small school size will promote participation. An “embrace of all” will promote confidence. Positive, caring relationships will be fostered in a setting where respect, responsibility and leadership is modeled and practiced. The School will be a place where parents and the broader community actively engage with students to support learning. It will be a place where students experience the value of citizenship as they contribute to the greater community.

The current Marine Elementary School, as part of the Stillwater Area Public Schools, currently serves area elementary students. Scandia Elementary School, part of the Forest Lake Area Schools, is 5.5 miles away. Withrow Elementary School and Stonebridge Elementary School, both part of the Stillwater School District, are each 12.5 miles from Marine on St. Croix. The families and community members of the Marine on St. Croix area prefer to send their elementary aged school children to a school in their community, where they can learn from and about their community, alongside friends and mentors who live there.

The planning for a chartered school in Marine on St. Croix began many months ago with strategic planning and community input opportunities. Coincidentally, less than one month ago the Stillwater Area Public Schools district administration proposed the closure of the current Marine Elementary School and two other elementary schools in the district. The Stillwater School Board will take their final vote on the school closures at the February 11, 2016, meeting. If the proposal to close the current Marine Elementary School moves forward, the need for elementary education in the community will increase dramatically.

### *Vision*

At the School, our community is our curriculum. Surrounded by William O’Brien State Park and the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, supported by a civically engaged, multi-generational community and inspired by local artists, craftsmen and community members, the School will provide its students with a strong foundation for civic engagement, responsible leadership and lifelong learning.

Guiding educational philosophy/belief statements of the School:

- We believe that children learn best in a school setting that balances their educational, physical, emotional and social needs.

- We believe that all students have the right to a quality education appropriate to their individual learning styles.
- We believe that all students learn in different ways, and that they should be taught using the method best suited to their individual learning style.
- We believe that children learn best in a school setting that balances their educational, physical, emotional and social needs.
- We believe that education is a cooperative effort between the students, school staff, parents, and the community.
- We believe that change is constant, and that the school community must embrace opportunities to creatively lead and adapt to change.
- We believe that in the school environment, our teachers understand their students' needs best. We believe that giving teachers the collective authority and accountability to make decisions influencing curriculum and school success motivates teachers to adapt and innovate according to students' needs.
- We believe that the local, outdoor environment is an extension of the indoor classroom. Educating in the outdoor classroom has a positive impact on student and teacher health, and increases environmental literacy among students.
- We believe that creative expression through the arts is integral to student learning and a necessary part of a lifelong educational experience.
- We believe that by providing children with the necessary tools, they will embrace leadership opportunities within themselves and their community and become engaged global citizens.

### *Mission*

The proposed mission of the School is to blend environmental stewardship, community awareness and the arts in a teacher-powered learning environment that is student-centered, designed by teachers, and reinforced and supported by the local community. The School is where academics lead to grounded, resilient children and a stronger, healthier community.

## TEACHING/LEARNING PROGRAM

Provide a 8-9 page description of the school's teaching/learning program model (or philosophy) that includes the supporting rationale and research-based evidence.

- Describe the educational program model with supporting research evidence showing how it will improve student achievement for the proposed student population in a way that supports the vision/mission

Students will be taught with a foundation of curriculum that is enriched with civic-based contextualized learning that utilizes assets in areas of environment, arts, civics, and history.

The educational program model of the school will focus on high standards, the consistent use of effective instructional strategies and the use of formative and summative assessments to ensure progress. The content knowledge students will be expected to know and skills they will be expected to demonstrate as they progress through the grades will be guided by the Minnesota State Standards. Specific curriculum will be sought to match and support the instruction of state standards.

The instructional design used across the school will be based on the Meta Analysis Database of Marzano Research, [www.marzanoresearch.com](http://www.marzanoresearch.com). These are strategies which have been shown via multiple research studies to have the greatest positive impact on student achievement and engagement. Marzano's research analysis has indicated 22 strategies with high positive impact on student learning. Strategies such as *Complex Cognitive Tasks, Cooperative Learning, Engagement Strategies, Feedback, Setting Goals and Objectives, Summarizing, and Tracking Student Progress and Scoring Scales* will directly support the mission/vision of the school.

Professional development will be provided for teachers to learn, understand the impact, and use these strategies across all grade levels.

Believing that good assessment practices augment good curriculum and instruction to promote learning, the school will use diagnostic (to determine student needs), formative (to guide teachers in improving learning) and summative (to evaluate and report learning) assessments.

The school will prepare its students academically for success in middle school. This will be achieved by implementing a curriculum that allows for a smooth transition to Stillwater Area Public Schools future middle and high school.

The foundational curriculum will be as described below, or comparable curriculum that meets state standards. As the School is a teacher-designed curriculum delivery model, once hired the teachers will affirm the foundational curriculum.

Literacy: Harcourt Journey's K-5; Holt 5th and 6th grade

Math: Houghton Mifflin Math Expressions K-5; Holt 5th and 6th grade

Science: FOSS and EIE K-6

Social Studies: Teacher-selected curriculum resource K-5; Northern Lights 6th grade

Some students will be able to move academically more quickly; and opportunities will exist for this deeper dive into subject areas and accelerated learning. With this, some of our fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students will be completing middle school standards.

### Community

From research from Princeton University and the Brookings Institution:

*“Young people are most likely to become civically engaged when they are in settings where they become knowledgeable about issues and about how to take action on them, where they are asked by someone to join an organization or attend a meeting, or where normative pressures encourage them to participate in civic affairs.”*

Consistent with our mission, students of the proposed charter will have a strong foundation of community engagement through access to the many community assets and leadership opportunities available to them and integrated into curricular and daily school activities.

A DNR-designated School Forest is located on the School grounds. The forest will be used as an outdoor classroom, playground, and as an opportunity for community service. The forest features a human foosball court, Gaga pit, whale tail, 9 square-in-the-air, and an outdoor classroom. Students and their families will be encouraged both during school and outside of school hours to perform community service in the form of tree plantings, buckthorn removal, and path clearing and improvement.

A partnership will be sought with Big River Farms Community Supported Agriculture or another nearby farm to teach the importance of food choices and farming, and how those choices affect health, environment and community.

A mentorship program will be utilized throughout the School, where sixth- and fifth-grade students will be paired with kindergarten and first- grade students, respectively. This mentorship program will teach leadership skills to the older students and give younger students a sense of belonging and familiarity. This mentor-mentee program also allows for younger students to participate in activities with the assistance of older students. For example, outdoor winter programs including skiing, snowshoeing and ice skating, and building quihnzees (hollowed out snow mounds). The city maintains a community ice rink, created and kept up by volunteer fire fighters, as the weather allows. The school, through parent-initiated grant requests and donations, has skis, snowshoes and ice skates for the K-6 student population to experience out-of-door activities in the winter. The buddy program allows for the assistance necessary to help all children experience these activities.

The fifth- and sixth- grade classes will participate in an overnight YMCA, or similar, camp every other year. The goal of this camp is to encourage team-building concepts and skills through experiences in a wilderness setting.

A student-led board will be responsible for identifying and coordinating service learning projects for the student population.

A selected group of student ambassadors will be responsible for attending the monthly Marine on St. Croix city council meetings and presenting a report on the School.

The City of Marine on St. Croix is a GreenStep City. Through Metro CERTS (Clean Energy Resource Teams) and the City, there has been interest expressed in implement green schools' strategies at The School.

Marine will take advantage of getSTEM, a web portal that connects Minnesota educators and businesses. It is a collaborative effort between the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota High Technology Council. The website provides a sharing network, allowing schools to request materials and human resources such as equipment, volunteers, speakers and judges. Businesses, in turn, offer materials, programs, and presentations to schools.

## Environment

The National Science Teachers Association “strongly supports environmental education as a way to instill environmental literacy in our nation's pre-K–16 students. It should be a part of the school curriculum because student knowledge of environmental concepts establishes a foundation for their future understandings and actions as citizens. Central to environmental literacy is the ability of students to master critical-thinking skills that will prepare them to evaluate issues and make informed decisions regarding stewardship of the planet. The environment also offers a relevant context for the learning and integration of core content knowledge, making it an essential component of a comprehensive science education program.”

The school will incorporate environmental education opportunities through curriculum enrichment by experiences in the out-of-doors and access of natural forest, prairie, and aquatic resources. The school has excellent access to natural resource assets. In addition to the forest, the School is located one-quarter mile from William O’Brien State Park, less than one-quarter mile from the Mill Stream, and about one-half mile from the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway.

The School will integrate environmental education and sustainability into our curriculum by partnering with neighboring William O’Brien State Park and the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, utilizing the outreach and field trip offerings of Warner Nature Center, and maximizing the use of the DNR-designated school forest for outdoor classroom and play space. We intend to integrate environmental studies with the science, math, reading and social studies curriculum.

In day-to-day learning experiences and contextualized learning activities, the environment and sustainability themes will be emphasized for local application and understanding of the global environment. For example, the Mill Stream will provide an excellent opportunity to apply sciences, math, and the arts while learning about water quality and river ecology through the study of aquatic and terrestrial species. Water samples from the Mill Stream will be analyzed and data collected. Our water quality will be compared to other water bodies and connections made to global water access concerns.

The DNR designated School Forest provides an outdoor classroom. Students learn and apply math, art, science, language arts, and social studies while gaining an appreciation and awareness of natural resources.

The School grounds have ample outdoor space for physical education, language arts, science, math and art activities. A large field with areas of trees provide quiet places to sit in class discussions and areas to stretch and move.

An idea for further exploration is to apply to the Made in Minnesota solar incentive program to provide up to 40 kilowatts of solar. Solar access has been analyzed for suitability and the building is solar ready. The Made in Minnesota operates as a lottery system. If the building is selected, students will be involved with the design and installation as well as ongoing energy monitoring.

The School recognizes that environmental awareness paired with the attributes of civic engagement will create the leaders and thinkers of tomorrow. The surrounding environs of the School are not static, as they are typically referenced in national and regional news, creating specific opportunities for multi-media projects and interaction with community.

### Arts

Many studies link participation in arts activities to student academic success. Particularly relevant, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum report (2006) cites improvements in a range of literacy skills among students who took part in a program in which the Guggenheim sends artists into schools. The study found that students in the program performed better in six categories of literacy and critical thinking skills, including thorough description, hypothesizing, and reasoning. Utilizing artist talents to bring programs into Marine Elementary may show similar results.

The Marine on St. Croix area is well-known as a home to many varied artists, writers, potters, sculptors, musicians and artisans. The School will leverage the proximity of the talent with students. Local artists, such as multi-media artist Karron Nottingham, will serve as artists-in-residence, providing art education to all classes. Local authors, such as J. Michael Blumer, will provide several days of instruction on writing, illustration, and publishing to our third- through sixth-grade students. Other authors will be invited to work with our younger students. Local musicians, such as folk musician Ross Sutter, will make dulcimers with our third- and fourth-grade classes every other year, and will provide instruction on how to play the instruments.

As the capstone to their time spent at the School, the sixth-grade students will produce and perform a play every spring, with the fifth grade providing supporting music and choral elements. The sixth-grade play is a long-standing tradition in Marine on St. Croix (over 40 years) and has tremendous community support and interest. It will be integrated into the curriculum of the sixth-grade classroom.

### History

The city of Marine on St. Croix has significant historic resources. It was founded in 1839

as Marine Mills. The city was the site of the first commercial sawmill on the St. Croix River.

A 450-acre, historic district in Marine on St. Croix was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974 for having state-level significance in the themes of architecture, commerce, exploration/settlement, and industry. It was nominated as the birthplace of Minnesota's lumber industry and for its representation of two separate but interdependent waves of immigration that created the town.

The district encompasses three distinct areas: the original business district, the residential area of the Yankee business owners, and the residential areas of the Swedish working class. Sixty buildings and three sites of ruins were identified as the contributing properties to the historic district in 1974.

Less than one block from the School is the Stone House Museum. The museum building is an example of early stone masonry. Built in 1872 by Swedish stone mason Gustav Carlson, it is constructed of local sandstone. It is recorded in the Library of Congress as “an outstanding example of the Swedish stone work of early Minnesota settlers.” Originally, the building served as the Marine town hall and jail.

The Stone House Museum and its collection of unique historic items are owned by the city of Marine on St. Croix. Since 1963, the Marine Women’s Civic Club has managed the collection with volunteers. The Civic Club is keenly interested in the collection being utilized by students as part of their learning.

In addition, the Historic Walking Tour of Marine on St. Croix, a brochure-sized map of the city full of historical tidbits and photos, features four half-hour walking tours of Marine. At each of the 40-some stops, the map gives a brief description of the building or featured location. This may be a tool teachers choose to integrate into the curriculum.

The overarching themes of the School are community, environment, arts, and history. Research has shown that this format of place- and community-based education has many benefits to student learning.

Research of four years of individual and cross-program evaluations of six place-based education programs representing more than 75 schools (rural, suburban, and urban) in five states showed that place-based education benefits the following areas:

- Place-based education can help educators become more excited and collaborative in their professional practice, and more likely to use local resources for teaching and learning

- Place-based education can actively shape and become embedded in a school's culture and identity
- Place-based education can help boost student academic achievement
- Place-based education can help engage students in their community and connect communities to their schools

Research strongly suggests that place- and community- based education positively impacts student learning as well as stewardship and citizenship behaviors. An additional benefit is that this approach has become a source of professional regeneration for educators. (*Place- and Community-based Education in Schools*, Gregory A. Smith and David Sobel, 2010)

In addition, research continues to show the benefits that access to nature and time spent outdoors has on cognitive abilities of people of all ages.

Richard Louv's *Last Child in the Woods* describes a growing body of research indicating that direct exposure to nature is essential for healthy childhood development and for the physical and emotional health of children and adults.

The success of Finland's schools have been attributed to the amount of time students spend outdoors and the authority teachers have in making curriculum and learning decisions for their students; both attributes that will be integral to Marine Area Community School.

Most recent, the January 2016 issue of *National Geographic* describes the benefits to our brains when we have access to nature. Nature can improve creativity by up to 50 percent and forest walks can decrease stress hormones by as much as 16 percent allowing the brain to disengage and restore its capacity for directioned attention. And, research suggests schools where children are able to explore in woods and nature foster self-confidence and an independent spirit.

- **Identify how the school will help disadvantaged students succeed academically**

All students will be engaged in a curriculum rich in content and instruction that offers depth and complexity, providing scaffolding support for students to achieve high standards. Experiential learning within the school environment and surroundings will provide authentic learning and application of skills. Teachers will differentiate according to needs of individual students by using ongoing formative assessment tools and instructional adjustments as indicated to support achievement of standards by all students. Scholarships

for enrichment will be solicited within the school community and offered to students with limited resources.

- **Describe other key elements of the program to demonstrate how they will increase student academic performance or meet the social/emotional needs of students**

The program planned at the proposed charter embraces a small, community-school philosophy where teachers are designers of the curriculum. Students' academic performance, self-confidence, and sense of belonging increases as a result of this curriculum and small-school focus.

Stuart R. Grauer, Ed.D., discussed the research into a number of small-school benefits in a definitive article titled "Small Versus Large Schools: The Truth About Equity, Cost, and Diversity of Programming in Small and Large Schools," published by the online Community Works Journal. Dr. Grauer noted that research has found that compared to larger schools, students in smaller schools fight less, feel safer, come to school more frequently, and report being more attached to their school. For teachers, small schools have consistently been shown to have the conditions necessary for improvements in professional climates. Small-school teachers feel more committed and connected in their work, and they report higher job satisfaction and a greater sense of responsibility for ongoing student learning.

Research overwhelmingly reports that students learn more in smaller schools. Students in small schools significantly outperform students in large schools on standardized achievement tests.

Research consistently reveals that in small schools, students of all types feel they can connect with one another much more readily and openly, and also with caring adults whom they know quite personally. The true small school offers a greater sense of relationship connectedness and opportunity among virtually all stakeholders, such as are both implicit and proven in small organizations and communities.

Small schools demonstrate great achievement equity. Smaller, more communal learning environments reduce both student and teacher alienation commonly identified in larger school systems, and enhance student engagement in learning. In small schools, respectful relationships prevail, as do high expectations for behavior and achievement.

The sense of connectedness in small schools is not only felt and shared among students, it is shared by virtually all stakeholders and, in particular, with teachers. Research shows that in small schools, relationships between students and adults are strong, trusting, and ongoing. This leads to a clearer, safer, more enriched path to graduation and postgraduate plans, and the bonds continue on longer after graduation. Also, small-school parents are closer and have higher levels of involvement, and parental involvement is a critical factor in student success. Small schools have a leaner administrative structure, and the consequence of this is that the whole faculty shares in decision-making; decision-making which is less institutionalized and more flexible.

And, consistent with the proposed charter community connections, smaller schools more readily and frequently engage community-members in educating students.

- **Describe the relationship between the teaching/learning program model, the instructional and assessment system and the supporting research evidence**

The teacher-designed teaching and learning program will be evaluated through assessments. When assessments suggest changes are necessary to meet educational goals, evidence based research will inform the teaching and learning program.

- **If specific approaches are identified to meet the needs of students at risk of academic failure, describe the methodologies for addressing the challenges, including diagnostic methods to identify students performing below expectations & approaches to provide remedial instruction**

Students with special needs will be served using the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), which provides assistance before students fail and prevents students from having negative self-perception about their individual abilities to succeed. This school-wide, multi-level instructional system for preventing school failure will include screening, progress monitoring, and data-based decision making for instruction and movement within the multi-level system. The School will access resources and best practices through the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to implement a MTSS.

- **Describe any other targeted students who may require tailored strategies including how they would be identified, assessed & supported**

All students are recognized as unique individuals. Teachers will be trained to use learning styles inventories to gain useful information to identify the diverse learning needs of stu

dents. This will allow for instructional design focused on visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile learners.

Parents will be notified of concerns when a student exhibits academic and/or social behaviors indicating a need for modification to general education. The student will be referred to a team consisting of teachers and School administrators to develop strategies for academic interventions. Goals based on current data will be established, and a timeline will be set for when success or need for strategy change will be reviewed. If a formal referral is suggested, protocol within MDE guidelines will be followed.

Teachers will be trained in recognizing characteristics of gifted/talented learners and will be trained in research-based strategies (for example, from federal Javits Grant projects and the National Center for Research Gifted Education at the University of Connecticut) to identify and address the diverse needs of gifted/talented learners.

Students with an existing Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will receive services as outlined in their plan using resources within the School where appropriate and those provided by Stillwater Area Public Schools when required.

- **Explain how the school's assessment system will provide baseline data gathering, short- and long-term types of assessments, and how the school will use this information to revise professional development and instruction**

Students in grades K-6 will be assessed on academic levels in areas of reading, writing, math, and science at the beginning of the academic year using baseline assessments matching state standards and academic goals. Assessments will be acquired through a combination of adopted curriculum resources, teacher observation, and development of rubrics, checklists, and portfolios. Data will be compiled and used to guide instruction and measure progress toward academic goals. Teachers will routinely utilize formative assessment to measure progress toward goals and summative assessments to indicate goals met. Progress will be communicated to parents through progress reports three times per school year: fall, mid-year, and end of year. Students in grades three through six will participate in state testing (MCA) each spring and will utilize resources (such as those developed by Pearson and available online) to practice using testing strategies and format.

A writing portfolio assessment system will be used, allowing for concrete indicators of student growth and a basis for targeting instruction. This is in keeping with the findings of the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) writing test, which show

one of the common factors among students who do well on the test is that they come from classrooms where writing portfolios are used.

Teachers will regularly engage in a protocol for looking at and learning from student work (such as the Harvard Project Zero) to inform their instruction.

- **Describe how data will be used to inform ongoing curriculum development**

Staff will engage in ongoing data collection and reflection through Professional Learning Communities developed in a collaborative team effort to improve and support teaching strategies for student performance and achievement. Staff will collectively determine needs for professional development and seek resources to gain necessary skills. Staff members may play a role in gaining knowledge in specific areas and sharing through professional development among peers.

- **Describe core learning areas, including the curriculum and how it will be aligned to the Minnesota Academic Standards**

Marine School teachers and staff will outline and adhere to academic milestones at each grade based on current state standards and school goals in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Physical Education and Health, the Arts, and Economics. Teachers will thoughtfully and collaboratively develop a scope and sequence of skills and content in all academic areas that builds on prior knowledge and enables students to attach meaning to new content. All curriculum will meet or exceed state standard expectations and factor in skill levels of students in the school.

In addition to relying on alignment as done by professional curriculum developers and publishers, Marine teachers will be trained in aligning curriculum with the state standards.

Members of the founding team and a small group of educators will collaborate on specific curriculum outline and development beginning Spring 2016. This will lay the groundwork for a fully outlined and useable framework for the 2017 school year. Teachers will engage in further enhancements and make alterations as needed.

Curriculum will be aligned with the state standards: the 2010 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in English Language Arts, The 2007 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Mathematics, The Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Science, the 2011 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Social

Studies, The standards for literacy in science and history/social studies included in the Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in English Language Arts (2010), the Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in the Arts (2008), and the National Standards for Physical Education.

As directed by the Minnesota Department of Education, Marine Area Community School will develop standards for health education based on the National Health Education Standards and Minnesota Benchmarks

- **Detail tools, methods & instructional techniques identified for target populations, citing relevant evidence regarding their value in supporting student achievement**

As supported by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), teachers will utilize practices in community building (such as Responsive Classroom) to promote relationships among students and a respectful learning environment. The learning environment will incorporate independent, partner, and group learning situations where students can develop leadership and collaborative strategies. Students will have access to manipulatives to promote multi-sensory and experiential learning in all subject areas. Translation between concrete and abstract will solidify connections to prior knowledge and promote further understanding of advanced concepts in all subject areas.

The National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) has found one of the common factors among students who do well on their writing test is that they come from classrooms where writing portfolios are used. In keeping with these findings, teachers will provide opportunities for students to monitor and assess their own progress and take notice of their achievements and need for further development.

Teachers will regularly engage in a protocol for looking at and learning from student work (e.g. Harvard Project Zero) to inform their instruction.

- **Describe what (if any) supplemental materials will be developed during the school's first three years**

The development of any supplemental materials will be determined by the teaching team based on identified student needs as evidenced by student learning styles inventories, student interest inventories, student engagement, and student progress. Materials will be vertically aligned to provide smooth transition between grades.

- **Describe supplemental curricula for Special Education, electives or "special" courses and its linkage to Minnesota Academic Standards as available (e.g. modified standards)**

Students may require modified curriculum to meet their individual learning goals, which may include materials with matched content at a lower skill level. They may also have access to the same curriculum but with differing approach to mastering content at their level. This may range from decreased work load to accommodations that will allow students a differentiated structure to complete tasks (such as assisted technology, change of environment, additional adult support).

- **Describe the teaching skills and experiences needed to efficiently and effectively carry out teaching/learning program model**

An ideal teacher at the School will possess a strong desire to teach in a small, single-section, community school. They will have enthusiasm to design classroom curriculum that integrates the area's natural resources, historical opportunities, community resources, and the arts, while aligning to state standards. Collectively, the teaching staff will bring a depth of life experiences or professional teaching experiences in the sciences, arts, theater, and governance.

**Provide the daily schedule and calendar for the first year of operation and describe how it supports the school's mission**

- **Show that the schedule exceeds the minimum number of hours required by state statute, include:**
  - **Total instructional time per week/length of student instructional day**
  - **Minimum number of hours devoted to core academic subjects in each grade**
  - **Length of the school day**
  - **Total number of teacher contract days**
  - **Planned holidays**
  - **First/last day of classes**

The Marine Area Community School will provide instruction each year for at least the number of hours required by Section 120A.41. At this time, for the 2017-2018 school year students will receive at least 935 hours of instruction and at least 165 days of instruction. The school day will be 6.5 hours in duration. The first and last day of classes and planned holidays will match the Stillwater Area Public Schools' calendar. It is estimated that the school will provide 180 teacher contract days and 171 student contact days.

The School will meet or exceed the state requirements for the number of hours devoted to core academic subjects in each grade. The School schedule may look as follows:

Reading: 60 minutes

Writing: 50 minutes

Math: 80 minutes

Science: 40 minutes

Social Studies: 40 minutes

Community Building/Breaks: 30 minutes

Health/PE: 45 minutes

Lunch: 30 minutes

Recess: 15 minutes

## GOALS & STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Provide a 7-8 page description of the school's goals and metrics, how progress toward goals will be measured throughout the year, how data will be obtained and stored, and how that data will be used for program improvement and provided to the authorizer. Additional goals beyond state requirements may be identified for which the school will be held accountable over time. (For new schools, actual baseline test scores, attendance rates and other data are not available until after the school begins operations.)

- Describe specific student achievement goals for achieving the school's mission and the Minnesota Academic Standards, including mathematics, reading, and any other content areas applicable to the school's program focus

The goal of the School is to promote life-long learning for all students and prepare them academically, socially, emotionally and physically for success in middle school and beyond. The School will encourage parents and guardians to be active in their child's education, and for their voice to be heard as a component of school visioning.

Specific content areas where the School will focus on student achievement relative to State Standards follow:

### Reading

Emphasis will be placed on skill development and steady growth from a beginning reading level based on phonics and word recognition in Kindergarten to more complex interactions with texts at higher grades to assure comprehension and readiness for college and career. Children will have access to books at their independent and instructional reading level both in the content areas they are learning and topics of interest and will learn strategies to independently engage with varied texts.

### Writing

A connection between reading and writing will be emphasized as well as writing as a form of inquiry and an outlet for sharing personal narratives. The process of writing will evolve from the earliest stages of drawing and making lists as forms of written expression to development of structured writing beginning with a plan and moving toward published pieces demonstrating awareness of English language structure and editing skills. Students will engage in research and will publish for audiences within the school and the community, perhaps the local newspaper.

### Math

Fundamental skills of number sense and operational procedures to solve problems will be developed through guided practice in the discovery of patterns and relationships. They

will explore patterns as they appear in nature and create patterns to share through the arts. Students will gain knowledge of geometry and algebra concepts beginning with identification of shapes and patterns in Kindergarten to the use of measurement as a problem-solving tool by grade 6. They will learn to gather and make use of data to make informed decisions in the school and community such as surveying an audience for a specific purpose.

### Social Studies

Understanding physical place in the world and on an historical timeline at the youngest grades will allow students to build on this knowledge and understand historical perspectives. Students may discover their ancestry within the area of the town with support from the local museum and present their findings to the community. They will have a basis of understanding of the purpose of government and how acting on civic responsibility impacts the community. The impact of geography and economics on the historic development of a place is essential to understanding the people and cultures before us.

### Science

The youngest learners will begin their science and inquiry experience by learning to observe living and non-living things through senses and describe physical properties. Students will progress as learners to pose questions and investigate the physical world and how environment impacts survival. They will grow to understand how engineering design is part of a problem solving process and will assess human impact on Earth changes. Exploring the St. Croix River Valley and noting evidence of glaciers will guide students into further understanding of geology specific to Minnesota.

### Physical Education

All students will have opportunities to develop intrinsic enjoyment from physical movement and identify health benefits derived from physical activity. They will practice locomotor and nonlocomotor skills with increased complexity as they mature and experience a wide range of games to apply movement strategies and learn behavioral skills. During their elementary school years, students will work toward increasing and documenting their personal best level of fitness and explore varied activities within the surrounding area of the school such as running, skiing, team sports, climbing, racket sports, and ice skating which will encourage them to partake in life-long activities. Students will also learn the basics of healthy eating and explore nutritional aspects of foods to become good decision makers at all age levels.

### The Arts

Students will learn foundations of art with respect to dance, music, visual art, media arts and theater and will be able to represent the various Art forms through their own expres-

sion based on foundational knowledge. They will annually perform or produce art that visually depicts personal reflection and expression. All ages will participate in vocal music sessions and an annual performance for an audience in preparation for a culmination of Art forms in their 6th grade year. Skills related to visual art and poetry will be taught at all grade levels with encouragement to enter contests and enter the annual Arts and Academics Fair..

- **Explain how the goals are linked to closing achievement gaps and setting high expectations for all students**

Enrolling a student at the School will come with an expectation that parents and guardians of enrolled students will be engaged and participatory. Past experiences of parent and community involvement have been high, somewhat indicative of small schools. Students at the current Marine Elementary have enthusiastically participated in an Arts, Science and Academics Fair, ongoing arts enrichment including musical performances, and exploration of academically enriching content. As a result, test scores have been consistently in the high range and progress has been notable.

A value-added or student-growth model will be used to analyze student success over time to better understand the educational development of individual students.

- **Describe the rationale for determining that selected goals are reliable, measurable and attainable**

The School will exceed all areas of proficiency, compared to other area school averages, by a minimum of three percentage points in 2017 and increase by one percent each year after for four years. The goal is that the School will exceed other area schools' proficiency by a minimum of five percent within five years.

Rationale for proficiency goals are based upon past trends at the current Marine Elementary School. In 2015, students in math were 90.7 percent proficient, in reading 89.7 percent proficient, and science 78.9 percent proficient.

*Area Schools 2015 Proficiency Percentages*

- Reading 71.9 percent
- Math 69.7 percent
- Science 69.7 percent

In the Multiple Measurements Rating (MMR), the School will achieve Reward School status in 2017, 2018, and Celebration School status in 2019 and beyond.

In addition to the above testing metrics, the School will also seek to have higher levels of parent involvement, non-parent/community member involvement, and other forms of community engagement than that of surrounding schools. quantify the impact of community interaction with the school curriculum.

Rationale for proficiency goals are based upon past trends at the current Marine Elementary School. In 2015, students in math were 90.7 percent proficient, in reading 89.7 percent proficient, and science 78.9 percent proficient.

- **Identify student performance goals for achieving other accountability measures such as attendance, graduation, and appropriate aspects of school's proposed program**

Attendance by the student population will meet or exceed 95 percent of annual school days.

Parent-teacher conferences will meet or exceed 70 percent participation. Surveys and parent feedback will guide the scheduling and content of parent conferences.

The numbers of participants in the Art, Science and Academic Fair will exceed 50 percent of the student population.

90 percent of students will participate annually in local civic engagement, via volunteering, participation in community events, interviews with local civic leaders, etc.

- **Describe goals for student growth over time in content areas, especially mathematics and reading**

At minimum, students will make adequate yearly progress to meet or exceed grade level standards within the school year and receive guidance to maintain growth over the summer months. All students will perform at or above grade level in Reading and Math according to MCA scores (grades three through six) and/or on-going standards-based assessments.

- **Describe how the school's assessment system will provide baseline data and appropriate ongoing data throughout the year to continuously monitor student achievement/performance against annual goals**

Learning outcomes will be measured through required state assessments and site-based assessments (both formative and summative), as well as the ability of students to demon-

strate and participate in deeper understanding through the civic-engaged, contextualized learning. Staff will develop and evaluate a continuous improvement plan based on academic data and family engagement data.

- **Explain how this data will be used to modify teaching and learning strategies to enhance performance**

Data will be routinely collected, analyzed, and shared among staff to determine areas where curriculum needs to be adjusted and modified to assure mastery or extension.

- **Identify how data will be obtained and stored**

The Founding Board or School Administrator will identify a means of data storage and desires feedback from the authorizer on the most effective interface.

- **Identify how data will be provided to the authorizer**

The Founding Board requests feedback from the authorizer on the best methods to provide data.

- **Explain how state achievement and reporting requirements will be met**

A testing coordinator will be assigned to the task of gaining access to materials and protocol for administration, collection and submission of standardized tests.

Federal CSP Accountability Preference Priorities
Replicating High-Performing Models
Improving Achievement and High School Graduation Rates
Promoting Diversity
Improving Productivity

State Education Accountability Priorities

Governor Dayton's 7-Point Plan: Better Schools for a Better Minnesota:

Reading Well by Third Grade

Raise the Bar – Close the Gap

Meeting High Standards Across Content Areas

High School Graduation, College and Career Ready

Support Teaching for Better Schools

## EVALUATION PLAN

**Provide a 4-5 page description of how the school will gather and organize implementation data for the teaching/learning program model including instruction/assessment system, curricula, and other identified critical aspects identified in the teaching/learning program.**

**Describe roles and responsibilities for analyzing the relationship between student achievement/performance data and education program data to identify areas of gaps or deficits in student achievement connected to Minnesota Academic Standards, especially in mathematics and reading**

The roles and responsibilities for analyzing the relationship between student achievement/performance data and education program data is held jointly by the teaching team and School Administrator. Teachers and the School Administrator will be involved in analyzing student data using formative assessments during the year, and making instructional adjustments to address the areas of gaps or deficits in student achievement. The summative data from state assessments will be analyzed by teachers annually with instructional adjustments to address the areas of gaps or deficits in student achievement planned for the coming year.

- **Identify the rationale for frequency of evaluation to effectively monitor and adjust strategies**

The goal of assessment is to drive instruction and should come in various forms without taking time away from instruction itself. Formative tests will be ongoing, summative tests will be at the end of a unit of study, and standardized tests will be yearly.

- **Describe the school's procedures for taking corrective action if student achieve-**

**ment results fall below the goals approved by the authorizer in the charter contract**

The founding board requests feedback from the authorizer regarding best procedures for corrective action.

- **Briefly describe the teacher evaluation plan**

Teacher evaluations will be informed by peers, students, and parents. These evaluations will guide professional development plans focused on self and school improvement. The School will employ innovative review processes (for example, 360-degree reviews) so as to de-stratify leadership and reduce blind spots within the school directing process.

The Founding Board will make full use of the implementation resources available on the Minnesota Department of Education website:

<http://www.education.state.mn.us/MDE/EdExc/EducEval/ModelDesign/index.html>

- **If the school plans to contract with an external service provider for evaluation services, describe how the contractor was selected, which evaluation elements will be completed by the contractor, the financial commitments for the evaluation, and level of external evaluator's flexibility in determining evaluation methods.**

The school does not plan to contract with an external service provider.

## GOVERNANCE PLAN

Provide a 6-7 page description of the proposed school's governance plan.

Describe the following:

- **The process involved in developing the applicant team**

Building upon years of contemplation over the opportunities a non-districted public school could offer in Marine on St. Croix, several concerned and motivated parents met in the spring of 2015 to discuss specific action steps needed to provide an alternate education model for elementary programming in Marine on St. Croix. From that meeting, Kristina Smitten and Lisa White began to research alternate models in depth. This research identified the charter school model as the best option.

In founding the applicant team, several areas of expertise were identified, including education, legal, finance, small business management, and community connections. Jon Dettmann was asked to join the team, based on his experience as an attorney and parent of elementary students. Lisa Dochniak was asked to join the team, based on her expertise as an elementary school teacher and parent of Marine Elementary School alumni. Glen Mills, mayor of Marine on St. Croix, was asked to join the team, based on his long-standing connection with the community and his status as a Marine Elementary School alumnus. Kristina Smitten and Lisa White joined the team, based on their experience as small business owners, parents of current Marine Elementary School students, and volunteers within the school district and community. Additional community members with much experience in finance, law, and education are assisting and offering advice, though will not be members of the Founding Board.

- **Individual expertise represented on the steering committee, including:**
  - o **Experience in K-12 education**

Jon Dettmann has practiced environmental litigation at Faegre Baker Daniels LLP for 20 years. His clients include individuals and businesses harmed by environmental catastrophes including oil spills, wild land fires, and hurricanes. He also advocates to protect wilderness areas and endangered species across the country and has taught courses at the William Mitchell College of Law. He is a frequent speaker on environmental issues and is a long-time board member of Climate Generation: A Will Steger Legacy, which educates and empowers youth on the issue of climate change. He received his B.A. from Yale University and his law degree from the University of Virginia.

Lisa Dochniak is a licensed teacher and has been teaching elementary school students at Randolph Heights School (part of the St. Paul Public School system) for 25 years. She spent her first ten years at Randolph Heights as a fifth- grade teacher, and is in her 15<sup>th</sup> year as a Kindergarten teacher. She holds an undergraduate degree in Elementary Education from University of Wisconsin-River Falls and a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Saint Mary's University-Minnesota.

Glen Mills has extensive community leadership experience and has been involved with Stillwater Area Schools his entire life. He served on the Marine City Council from 1998 to 2000, and as been the Mayor of Marine on St. Croix since 2001. He has served as coordinator on collaborative projects between the City of Marine on St. Croix, Washington County and the Stillwater Area School District #834.

Kristina Smitten served on the steering committee of Our Schools Our Valley, the advocacy group to pass the 2013 levy for Stillwater Area Public Schools. She was appointed to a committee to help develop the Bridge to Excellence, the Stillwater Area Public Schools strategic plan. She served as a parent liaison for the District's Curriculum Advisory Committee and helped develop district-wide marketing materials with communications staff. She was a District point of contact for the 2015 bond request in Marine on St. Croix. She chaired Marine Elementary's Arts, Science and Academic Fair, and has volunteered at the school in varying capacities. Professionally, she was the past state coordinator of Project WET (Water Education for Teachers). Before moving to Marine on St. Croix, her oldest child attended Nova Classical Academy, a charter school in St. Paul.

Lisa White has served as co-chair of fundraising activities for the current Marine Elementary School parent-teacher organization for many years. She served as the PTO board treasurer and proceeded over bi-monthly meetings from 2011 until 2015. She organizes and implements free school-community events to foster strong relationships between families. Lisa engages in ongoing conversations with the Stillwater School Board and participates in Stillwater Area Public School meetings and activities. She frequently volunteers in the classroom.

- o **Experience in design/operation of a school**

Lisa Dochniak has served her colleagues as an Elementary Math Lead responsible for monthly professional development training, has served on committees focused on family engagement and promotion of school community, and has consistently acted as PTA liaison. She has hosted and trained numerous preservice teachers and has effectively recruit-

ed and trained volunteers to support the learning environment. She has experience writing SCIP goals, analyzing standardized test data, developing extended day activities to increase student achievement, and has knowledge of budgeting criteria within a school. She is also active in developing and implementing fundraisers promoting reading and has developed engaging curriculum to teach concepts outlined in the Core Knowledge sequence.

Jon Dettmann, Glen Mills, Kristina Smitten and Lisa White all have a general understanding of the design and operation of a school, due to their varied and ongoing experiences as parents of elementary students and volunteers for the current Marine Elementary School and the Stillwater Area Public Schools.

Members of the Founding Board have significant nonprofit board experience, including as founding members of organizations. The Founding Board is adept at understanding gaps in expertise and has ability and access to guidance and supplemental skills as needed to ensure success.

- o **Expected roles during the start-up phase**

Jon Dettmann will be reviewing the process through a legal lens, and will be advising and providing feedback throughout.

Lisa Dochniak will be facilitating and overseeing all aspects of the teaching/learning program, goals and student performance, and evaluation plan

Glen Mills will be providing updates to members of the community, facilitating lines of communication between the School and city of Marine on St. Croix and advising on the process from his position as a life-long resident of the community.

Kristina Smitten and Lisa White will be responsible for coordinating and overseeing all aspects of the School start-up, including - but not limited to - facilities, transportation, nutrition, and marketing and outreach.

All members of the Founding Board will be responsible for the interviewing and hiring of the school administrator, teachers and staff.

- **The process to appoint or elect the initial governing board (not less than 5 members) and the timeline**

The initial Board of Directors will be elected in January 2018 for one-, two- or three-year terms to allow for staggered seats. At least five (5), but not more than eleven (11) directors will be elected. The Board of Directors will have at least one licensed teacher, one community member (a person neither a licensed teacher employed by the School nor a parent of a student currently attending the School), and one parent or legal guardian of a student enrolled at the School. If a member of the Founding Board is not elected, then at least two members of the Founding Board will be ex-officio and non-voting members. A student will be appointed to the Board of Directors, in a non-voting seat, prior to December 31, 2017. Student candidates will self-nominate for the position.

- **The types of experience and expertise (such as education, management, finance and law) sought for the board**

The Board of Directors will be comprised of individuals who have varied experiences and expertise. Backgrounds in education, management, finance and law will be sought. Additional qualities might include expertise in the history of the St. Croix River Valley, natural resources and the arts, as well as individuals with a passion for civic involvement.

- **The role of parent and community involvement in the school governance & engagement strategies**

In addition to Board representation of a parent and community member, parents will be voting members to elect future board members, and parents and community members will be invited to participate on committees and to review and provide feedback as policy documents are being developed. Parent and community resources will be requested to assist with marketing, events, etc.

- **How bylaws will address powers and duties, size, terms, composition, qualifications, term limits, officer positions and duties, election procedure, vacancy replacement, minimum number on the board & quorum and decision making process**

Please refer to the attached bylaws.

- **How and when bylaws will be adopted by the board**

The first official meeting of the founding board will be held immediately upon receiving approval by the Minnesota Department of Education. The first order of business at the

first meeting will be to approve the bylaws. It is expected that this meeting will be held in April 2016.

- **The governance structure for the school, including an Organization Chart (including the roles in Administration Plan below)**

The **Authorizer** relationship is defined in contract and is by definition the supervisory body providing autonomy and oversight to the school.

The **Board of Directors** is the ultimate authority over the School, including student performance, educational model, evaluation, governance, finance, administration and operations.

The **Executive Committee** is comprised of the Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer and is charged with facilitating routine tasks and information gathering including assuring Board best practices in procedures and processes.

Any **Committees of the Board** are created as needed and charged with specific tasks to be completed within specific timeframes.

The **Advisory Board** is comprised of stakeholders in the community who value the work and success of the school and contribute as a critical friends group while assisting with fundraising.

The **Teacher Advisory** has the responsibility of informing the Board on the effectiveness and evaluation of the academic program, teacher performance and presenting the best possible teacher cadre to serve the school.

The **Parent Advisory** is the essential measure of school effectiveness in balance with academic and non-academic evaluations, such as Parent surveys and feedback compared to MCA's and other academic tests.

The **Student Advisory** provides an opportunity for student leaders to bring suggestions to the board, inform service learning projects, and oversee student evaluation and feedback about the school.

The **Advisory Board, Teacher Advisory, Parent Advisory and Student Advisory** meet together quarterly or as needed to share their progress and reports to the Board of Directors. Individually, these groups meet and advise the board quarterly or as needed.

- **The amount of authority the governing board will convey to the school's leaders, along with a clear delineation of their respective roles (board & leaders) & the means by which leaders will be evaluated**

The Founding Board is currently developing a response to this question, and intends to have a completed response by March 1, 2016. The Founding Board requests direction from the authorizer on authority conveyed by the governing board to the School's leaders, clear delineation of respective roles (board and leaders) and the means by which leaders will be evaluated.

The Administrator will be responsible for day-to-day decision-making.

Per Minnesota Statute 124E.07, Subdivision 6, The board shall adopt personnel evaluation policies and practices that, at a minimum:

- (1) carry out the School's mission and goals;
- (2) evaluate the execution of charter contract goals and commitments;
- (3) evaluate student achievement, postsecondary and workforce readiness, and student engagement and connection goals;
- (4) establish a teacher evaluation process under section 124E.03, subdivision 2, paragraph (h); and
- (5) provide professional development related to the individual's job responsibilities.

**Explain the proposed transition between the founding members and the school's governing board, including:**

- **The timeline for start-up tasks with founding members duties to ensure a successful opening**

The founding members desire to work with the authorizer on a timeline for start-up tasks. Some next-steps include: develop job descriptions for the Administrator, teachers and key employees, develop key employee policies, fully develop the curriculum and evaluation processes. The Founding Board will develop a policy on authority conveyed by the governing board to the School's leaders, clear delineation of respective roles (board and leaders) and the means by which leaders will be evaluated by March 1, 2016.

- **Identification of individuals making the transition**

The Board will include a minimum one teacher, one parent, one community member and a student representative. The School's Board of Directors will embody an open process and open sharing of decisions on policy and practice.

- **How the transition plan will provide for a smooth shift of responsibilities**

At least two members of the Board of Directors will be elected members of the Founding Board. If two members of the Founding Board are not elected, then at least two members of the Founding Board will be ex-officio and non-voting members. This will provide the new Board of Directors with the institutional memory of the school vision and mission, goals, educational plan and evaluation, and plans for administration, operations and governance, thus providing a smooth shift of responsibilities.

- **How the founder group's original vision and mission will be realized**

The original vision and mission of the Founding Board will be realized if the school increases learning opportunities for all pupils by deeply integrating the area's environmental, historical, community and arts resources into the curriculum and gives teachers the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the School.

**Describe how leaders will be hired and transition of leadership will occur**

The general governance, management and direction of the School will be vested in the Board of Directors, the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. The Board of Directors will be responsible for hiring, retention, and removal of the School Administrator and the teachers.

**Explain if the school will become part of a cooperative or contract with an education service provider**

The School will not become part of a cooperative or contract with an education service provider.

**Explain how training for new board members as required by statute will be provided**

Per Minnesota Statute 124E.07 Subdivision 7, each Board member shall attend annual training throughout the member's term on the board. All new board members shall attend initial training on the board's role and responsibilities, employment policies and practices, and financial management. A new board member who does not begin the required initial training within six months after being seated and complete that training within 12 months of being seated on the board is automatically ineligible to continue to serve as a board member. The School shall include in its annual report the training attended by each board member during the previous year.

In addition, Board members will be expected to identify their individual and collective education, training and development needs annually and develop an ongoing education plan so that they may more effectively perform their responsibilities as board members.

Board members will report and share their learning from training experiences.

**Explain the proposed board operating plan, including meeting frequency, role of any standing committees, selection and removal procedures, term limits, powers, roles, decision-making process, ongoing development and board policies including enrollment policy, discipline policy, nondiscrimination, procurement, travel approval & reimbursement**

The Board of Directors will meet at least monthly during the school year. The Board Chair or one-third of the members of the Board may call special meetings of the Board of Directors at any time, for any purpose. The annual meeting of the Members shall be held at such time and location as determined by the Board of Directors, provided that the Annual Meeting shall occur between February 1 and May 1 of each year and shall be held on a day in which the School is in session.

No standing committees have been formed.

The Members shall elect those members of the Board of Directors whose terms of office will begin on the following July 1 and any vacancies on the Board not otherwise filled as provided in Article IV. At least sixty (60) days prior to the Annual Meeting, the Board of Directors will invite nominations for all the Director positions that will be filled at the Annual Meeting and specify the date by which nominations shall be received by the Board secretary. The Board of Directors will compile the list of nominees and notify the Corporation's Members of the nominees for each position at least fifteen (15) days prior to the Annual Meeting. Members unable to attend the Annual Meeting may submit a written ballot to the Board Secretary prior to the Annual Meeting. Proxy voting is not permitted.

Directors may resign at any time, effective immediately or at a specified later date, by giving written notice to the Board Chair or the Secretary of the Board. Unless otherwise specified therein, the acceptance of such resignation shall not be necessary to make it effective. A director may be removed at any time, with or without cause, by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of a majority of all remaining directors of the Board.

The term of office of board members is two years and shall begin on July 1. No board member may serve more than six consecutive years. To the extent possible, the initial

terms of the Board members shall be structured so that approximately one-half of the Board terms expire each year.

The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the Board of Directors, perform such duties and exercise such powers as are necessary or incident to the supervision and management of the business and affairs of the School; sign and deliver in the name of the School all deeds, mortgages, bonds, contracts or other instruments requiring an officer's signature, unless otherwise directed by the Board; have the general powers and duties usually vested in the office of the Board chair; and have such other powers and perform such other duties as the Board of Directors may from time to time prescribe.

The Vice-chair is empowered to act as the Chair in the event of the Chair's absence from a Board meeting or in the Chair's incapacity as determined by the Board of Directors.

The Treasurer shall keep accurate accounts of all monies of the School received or disbursed, have the care and custody of the corporate funds and securities, have the power to endorse for deposit all notes, checks and drafts received by the School, render to the Board all financial reports and transactions of the School; and perform such other duties as may be directed by the Board. Pursuant to a resolution of the Board of Directors, one or more of the functions of the Board Treasurer may be delegated to another individual or firm providing financial services to the School.

The Secretary shall record all proceedings of and the minutes of the Members, Board of Directors and committees in a book to be kept for that purpose; preserve all documents and records belonging to the School; maintain a list of all Members of the School in good standing; give notice of all meetings of the Members, Board of Directors and committees; and provide all reports as may be requested by the Authorizer or the state Department of Education; and perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the Board of Directors or the Board Chair.

The School shall employ a chief administrative officer and a chief financial officer who shall have the duties and responsibilities and hold their positions for the time prescribed by the Board of Directors. The Board shall also employ such teachers and other employees necessary for the effective and efficient operation of the School.

The School will follow Minnesota State Statute 124E.11 delineating admissions requirements and enrollment. The School shall enroll an eligible pupil who submits a timely application, unless the number of applications exceeds the capacity of a program, class, grade level, or building. In this case, pupils will be accepted by lot. The School will de-

velop and publish, including on its website, a lottery policy and process that it must use when accepting pupils by lot.

The School will give enrollment preference to a sibling of an enrolled pupil and to a foster child of that pupil's parents and may give preference for enrolling children of the School's staff before accepting other pupils by lot.

### **Discipline policy, nondiscrimination, procurement, travel approval & reimbursement**

The School will follow all discipline policies as set forth in Minnesota State Statute 121A and as proscribed by the Minnesota Department of Education.

The School will follow all nondiscrimination policies as set forth in Minnesota State Statute 121A.

All procurement policies and contracting services will be compliant with Minnesota law and will adhere to the requirements described on the Minnesota Department of Education website:

<http://www.education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/FNS/CACFPCenter/Procure/index.html>

The Founding Board requests direction from the authorizer on policies related to travel approval and reimbursement.

### **Explain how compliance with Open Meetings and Open Records laws will occur and who is accountable**

The School will comply with all Open Meetings and Open Records laws, specifically Minnesota State Statute Chapters 13 and 13D, and sections 120A.22, subdivision 7; 121A.75; and 260B.171, subdivisions 3 and 5.

The School will comply with section 120A.22, subdivision 7, governing the transfer of students' educational records and sections 138.163 and 138.17 governing the management of local records.

The School Administrator is accountable for following all Open Meetings and Open Records laws.

### **Describe how the founding governing board will create and adopt board policies**

The Board of Directors or Committees of the Board will prepare the policy for reading at a Board Meeting. The Board of Directors will vote and by majority determine adoption of the policy.

**Describe how the school plans to gather and organize implementation data for the a) governance plan; b) management plan; and c) operation plan and use results for continuous improvement as well as adaptation to changing market & fiscal realities**

The school will gather and evaluate data from teachers, school staff, parents and board members regarding the governance, management and operation of the school on an annual basis. The school will also collect data regarding area demographics and changes in the landscape of local elementary education options. These results will be used to continuously improve the governance, management and operation of the school.

**Attach the following documents:**

- **Actual or draft articles of incorporation or bylaws indicating legal status and IRS tax-exempt status (if obtained)**
- **Resumes of applicant team members and/or founding board members**
- **Draft of initial board policies including Conflict of Interest (delineating potential conflicts and how they will be addressed) and Grievance Process policies with clear process for issue identification and resolution**

Please find attached documents.

## **ADMINISTRATION PLAN**

**Provide a 6-8 page explanation of the school's proposed management structure.**

**Provide a narrative description clearly delineating employee roles, showing who is responsible for oversight of the educational program & operations at each level of the organizational chart (see above, Governance Plan)**

The Administrator will oversee the day-to-day operations and human resources/employees of the School. The teachers are responsible for the design, implementation, and oversight of the teaching and learning program. The Administrator will act as the Facilitator for the teachers as the designers of the curriculum.

**Describe who holds responsibility for employee hiring, supporting evaluation & termination.**

The Founding Board has the responsibility to hire, evaluate and terminate the first School Administrator. After the Board of Directors is elected, the hiring, evaluation and termination of the Administrator will become their responsibility. Employee hiring, evaluation and termination is the responsibility of the Founding Board and Administrator. After the Board of Directors is elected, employee hiring, evaluation and termination will become their responsibility.

**Include job descriptions for school leaders, teachers & key employees, including accountabilities for alignment with mission & vision**

The Founding Board will begin developing job descriptions for the Administrator, teachers and key employees in the spring of 2016.

**Describe standards for determining staff qualifications to meet NCLB (Waiver) and all licensure requirements**

The Board of Directors and School Administrator will ensure that all School staff meet all of the necessary licensing requirements set forth by the State of Minnesota.

**Describe key employee policies including employment practices, benefits, leave policies, grievance policy, conflict of interest policy, harassment, drug-free workplace, classroom practices & evaluation practice**

The Founding Board will create key employee policies in Spring 2016.

**Describe how the school staff development & evaluation plan is aligned to the school improvement plan & individual professional development plans**

Alignment of the School's staff development and evaluation plan to the School improvement plan and individual professional development plans will be detailed after these plans have been developed.

**Describe how adequate time for collaboration will be implemented to:**

- **Ensure resources are sufficient to support a comprehensive professional development program**

Teachers at the school will be hired by early Summer 2017. The Administrator and teachers will immediately collaborate to identify professional development needs and receive adequate and appropriate professional development training. A comprehensive professional development program will be an integral part of the school, with a budget line item identified to support. This program will be ongoing and ever-changing, in an effort to meet the unique needs of individual teachers as they ensure that program content aligns with the School mission, curriculum, instruction and assessment strategies.

- **Ensure program content aligns with school mission, curriculum, instruction & assessment strategies**

The Founding Board and their committees will begin developing partnerships with local natural resource managers, historical and civic resources, and artists in summer 2016. These partnerships will be used to develop programming that aligns with the School mission, and will be woven into the School curriculum and instruction. Assessment strategies will be developed alongside the curriculum and instruction.

- **Ensure annual plans derive from a school needs assessment based on instructional weaknesses, teacher interest and analyses of student outcomes**

The School Administrator will facilitate a formal annual School needs assessment based on instructional weaknesses, teacher interest and analyses of student outcomes. An ongoing, informal school needs assessment will be conducted through the year, enabling the

Administrator to address urgent needs as they arise.

- **Ensure effective, ongoing support & training to novice teachers & teachers new to the school or profession**

Immediately upon hiring, novice teachers and teachers new to the School and profession will meet with the Administrator and teacher group to identify support and training needs. Teachers will be instrumental in making recommendations for support and training. Identification of needs will occur at least annually, and more frequently if desired by the Administrator and teachers.

- **Ensure the professional development program is systematically evaluated to determine its effectiveness**

The School Administrator will facilitate an annual evaluation of the professional development program to determine its effectiveness. The Administrator and teachers will conduct evaluations.

- **Ensure that all staff receive initial & ongoing orientation & professional development in support of the school's mission, vision & outcomes**

The School Administrator will ensure that all staff receives initial and ongoing orientation and professional development in support of the School's mission, vision and outcomes.

**If the proposed school intends to contract with an education service provider (ESP) such as a charter management organization, cooperative, education management organization, or any other type of school management provider:**

- **Provide evidence the service provider is authorized to do business in Minnesota**
- **Include a detailed explanation of the ESP's success in serving student populations similar to the targeted student population with demonstrated academic achievement as well as successful management of non-academic school functions (e.g., back-office services, school operations, extra-curricular programs) if these are to be covered in the contract.**
- **Include a draft of the proposed management contract with the proposed duration of the management contract; roles & responsibilities; scope of services and resources to be provided by the ESP; performance evaluation measures & timelines; compensation structure including identification of all fees to be paid to the ESP; methods of contract oversight & enforcement; investment disclosure; & conditions for renewal & termination of the contract:**
- **Explain the relationship between the school governing board & the ESP, specifying how the governing board will monitor & evaluate the performance of the**

service provider, the internal controls that will guide the relationship, & how the governing board will ensure fulfillment of performance expectations, or have a means for severing the contract.

- Explain which staff will be hired & terminated by the ESP or report to or be paid by the ESP & any relationship with the governing board on these decisions.

The School does not intend to contract with an ESP.

## OPERATIONS PLAN

**Provide a 6-8 page operations plan.**

**Describe in detail how the charter school intends to:**

- **Inform the community about the school, including possible need to translate communications & specific tactics to contact educationally and economically disadvantaged & hard-to-reach populations**

Marketing efforts for the School will target families within a 25-mile radius of Marine on St. Croix. These communities include: Marine on St. Croix, Scandia, Forest Lake, Hugo, Centerville, White Bear Lake, Mahtomedi, Oakdale, Lake Elmo, and Bayport. Wisconsin communities include Osceola and St. Croix Falls.

Parents of current Marine Elementary School students have developed marketing materials. Those materials (examples attached) were designed, and will be printed and distributed exclusively utilizing parent and community resources. The designs will be altered to reflect the new school name.

In addition to mailings to preschools, prospective families, posting of flyers, and ads run in local publications, lawn signs will be made and placed throughout Marine on St. Croix, Stillwater, May Township and Scandia. These materials will be used in future marketing and in the strategies outlined below:

- A dedicated school website
- Feature articles in local newspapers; press releases to those newspapers
- Online resources: Stillwater Patch, The Stillwater Current, and local online community bulletin boards
- Leverage social media including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter
- Mailing to families with children aged pre-K to fifth grade in the demographic area
- Newspaper ads in key demographic areas advertising open houses, leveraging online resources as a way to reach people
- Posters, flyers and postcards in coffee shops, grocery stores, playgrounds, preschools, libraries, community centers, ECFE and food shelves, especially in lower income areas where families may have less access to online resources. We will provide and highlight listings of information available by phone, or at community events

- Email blasts to mailing list
- Attend key local farmer's markets (Scandia, Marine on St. Croix) and events such as Stillwater Summer Tuesdays
- Personal 1:1 campaign to increase word-of-mouth outreach
- Where possible, marketing materials will be provided to area realtors to share with prospective buyers in the area

Outreach to educationally and economically disadvantaged and hard-to-reach populations, including students with special needs and English learners strategies include:

- Target posters and postcards in economically disadvantaged areas
- Contact Hmong and Latino community leaders to help correctly target marketing and PR materials
- Spanish translations of key messages and bilingual posters in key areas
- Attend community events such as farmer's markets, festivals, etc., in economically disadvantaged areas

It is unlikely that people will drive more than a half hour to attend school. This effectively eliminates communities such as Minneapolis and St Paul where there are larger minority populations. According to the 2010 census, Washington county is 85 percent Caucasian, 4 percent African-American, 5 percent Asian, and 4 percent Hispanic.

There is an active and tightly knit community of special-needs families that communicate primarily through Facebook. We will work with those families to help spread the word.

- **Attract and enroll students/families (include the proposed timeline)**

The Founding Board and their committees will continue to develop and refine the marketing strategy for the School through the spring and summer of 2016. Marketing efforts will begin in the Fall 2016 with an increased presence through the 2016-2017 school year. Marketing efforts will be at their strongest in the late winter through early autumn 2017. Much depends on enrollment. If the School is retaining a large waiting list, the marketing efforts will be lessened.

- **Identify the number of students targeted for years 1-5 including number of students in each class/team**

Grades	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
K	12	16	21	21	21
1	18	20	21	21	21
2	20	22	24	24	24
3	20	22	25	25	25
4	20	25	27	27	27
5	22	25	28	28	28
6	22	25	29	29	29
Total	134	155	175	175	175

- **Describe the rationale for initial enrollment targets & growth targets, including efforts to attract & retain a comparable or greater enrollment of students who are educationally or economically disadvantaged compared to the local district**

The current elementary school in Marine on St Croix has a current enrollment of 157 students. Enrollment numbers at the current Marine Elementary School have steadily increased over the past few years, since the parent organization launched an effective marketing campaign. Increasing enrollment to capacity is anticipated, as the Stillwater School District expects to close three elementary schools in the northern half of Washington County (where the School is located) at the end of the 2016-2017 school year.

- **Define an admissions preference system (i.e., siblings or children of teachers, etc.)**

Enrollment preference will be given to a sibling of an enrolled pupil and to a foster child of that pupil's parents. The School will give preference for enrolling children of the School's staff before accepting other pupils by lot

- **Maintain a wait list or conduct a lottery process**

All eligible students that complete the application within by the application deadline for the upcoming school calendar year will be eligible to attend the School. If an eligible student misses the application deadline and a space is available at the appropriate grade level, the student will be immediately eligible to attend.

When the number of applications exceeds the number of spots available for the particular grade, a lottery will be conducted to determine those students that will be admitted and those that will be put on a waiting list. Steps will be followed to ensure the procedure is equitable to all applicants.

- **Conduct a student placement system if appropriate for the education program, complying with Charter School Law requirements that diagnostic or placement exams may be given only after students have been officially enrolled**

The School will not limit admission to pupils on the basis of intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, or athletic ability and may not establish any criteria or requirements for admission that are inconsistent with this section.

**Describe how the school plans to identify at-risk students, students with disabilities, English language learners (ELL) & gifted/talented students; assess their needs; & create strategies for their academic success**

Teachers will be trained in recognizing diverse student strengths and needs, and in instructional strategies that address those strengths and needs. Needs will be assessed by teachers through ongoing observation and use of student work with rubrics.

Best practices for identifying gifted/talented students, their characteristics and their special needs will be used (e.g. SEM -School-wide Enrichment Model - from the University of Connecticut).

**Explain how the school will implement a comprehensive child find process to address needs for adaptations or special education assessments & staffing**

If there is concern over a child's development, staff will carefully monitor the child and note specific observations. The teacher will communicate with parents and seek support in following procedures in the best interest of the child. Staff will follow Early Identifi-

cation protocol and utilize resources including staff and tools to address needs of individual students during and after the referral process.

**Indicate how the school recognizes requirements to meet the needs of IEPs and ELLs & to comply with the requirements of IDEA and 504 plans. Include certified personnel, documentation, assessments, adaptations & modifications.**

The School will contract with District 834 or another outside resource to formulate a plan for servicing students with IEPs and/or 504 plans. ELL students will receive intervention services focused on language and vocabulary development and interpreters will be contracted to communicate with families regularly.

Health services will be provided consistent with State Statutes 121A.21 for schools under 1000. A needs assessment process will determine the health services model that best meets the School's needs. Based upon the determined level of service needed a licensed nurse will be hired by the School or we may use a consulted licensed school nurse employed by the Stillwater District.

**Describe the role of parent partnership, volunteer requirements & opportunities after the school opens**

The parents will play a vital role in the operation of the School. They will be encouraged to run for seats on the Board of Directors, do work for the Committees of the Board, actively participate in the Parent Advisory, contribute their time in the classroom, and become involved in the MSA (see below). Because the School has a small enrollment, it will be strongly encouraged (but not required) that every parent volunteers their time or talent.

There will be many volunteer opportunities for parents during the school day. These will include but are not limited to volunteer opportunities assisting teachers in the classroom, on the playground, and in the School forest; chaperoning various field trips; and contributing assistance during School activities such as the Arts, Science and Academics Fair, Sixth Grade Play, and Winter Field Day.

The Marine School Association (MSA) is the non-profit parent, guardian, and community support organization for the School. Founded in 1965, the organization's goal is "To empower parents, through coordinated efforts with teachers and staff, to create and support educational opportunities, designed to promote the development of confident and self-reliant children." The MSA raises funds for the School and holds many free school community events throughout the year.

### **Describe community partnerships or involvement including purpose & expectations**

The community has always been a strong supporter of elementary education and realizes that a strong elementary school is important to the fabric of the community. The concept of community is the overriding theme of the School's mission statement. The School will partner with the community and individual community members to provide opportunities for education, engagement and enrichment in the areas of civics, leadership, art, music, reading, writing, and science. It is expected that other areas of engagement will be identified as the curriculum is developed.

### **Explain the process used to transfer student records to or from the charter school**

The School will comply with Minnesota State Statute Section 120A.22, subdivision 7 when transferring student records.

### **Describe the proposed policy for student discipline, suspension, or expulsion that provides due process rights under the Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal act**

The School will follow the procedures of the Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, State Statutes 121A.40 – 121A.56. The Administrator, teachers and staff are responsible for adhering to the guidelines provided in the Statute.

Generally, depending on the severity of the action warranting discipline, teachers will be the first point of contact for students regarding disciplinary action. If the teacher determines that the student is not able to change behavior or that the conducted behavior is disruptive to other classmates or potentially harmful to the student or other students, then the School Administrator will meet with the student. Depending upon the implication, it is the School Administrator's discretion to contact the student's parent/s or guardian/s.

### **Describe the school's transportation arrangements. Describe the school's food service program. Explain the facility needs assessment including:**

- **How many instructional spaces are needed**
- **Number of specialized spaces needed (art, music, library, gym, etc.)**
- **Number of bathrooms needed**
- **Number of offices needed**
- **Amount of common space needed**
- **Amount of outdoor space needed**

Transportation for the School will be contracted with the Stillwater School District, and will be subject to their schedule. This in turn will determine the school day start and end

times.

Bids have been requested from three food service companies for the School's food service.

The School intends to be located in the current Marine Elementary School building. This building has seven classrooms, a library, media center, gymnasium/cafeteria with a stage, a kitchen, two rooms for specialists and a portable unit used for music. The building also houses a staff room, administrator's office, nurse's room, meeting room, custodial room, boys and girls bathroom (each with 4 stalls), a staff bathroom, and a bathroom in the office.

The outdoor space at the School is expansive, and includes a School forest, ice rink, playground equipment for younger students, playground equipment for older students, and about four-acre grassy area with two baseball diamonds. There is also access to tennis courts.

**Describe the plan for identifying location (if not yet completed), timeline & milestones to be met**

The Stillwater School District Administration has proposed the closure of the current Marine Elementary School and two other elementary schools in the district. The Stillwater School Board will take their final vote on the school closures at the February 11, 2016 meeting. If the district does not vote to close the current Marine Elementary School on February 11, the Founding Board will implement plans to locate the School in the identified secondary location (Christ Lutheran Church), about one block from the current school location.

**Provide the analysis of alignment between target location (or prospective sites if not affected by confidentiality issues) for school & facility needs assessment including:**

- Overall facility size given design of school's education program model
- Zoning & occupancy requirements
- Assurance of compliance with applicable building codes
- Assurance of compliance with health and safety laws
- Assurance of compliance with the requirements of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Identification of additional funding or financing needed to bring facility online with potential sources for needed funding & description of relationship &/or budget impacts if real estate consultants are involved

The current Marine Elementary building and grounds accommodates the facilities needed to deliver programming desired, and is consistent with applicable zoning and state regulations and laws. Discussions have occurred with Stillwater School District #834 regarding leasing the building. Since that time, the district has expressed interest in selling the real estate versus leasing. The conversation regarding leasing or buying will be reopened after the district decision regarding potential closure (February 11). In the meantime, the founding team is mapping out options related to leasing the building, or working with an entity to create an affiliated nonprofit building corporation to purchase the school. If necessary, the secondary location can accommodate the size, facility and room needs, and is ADA accessible.

**Explain fund allocation based on estimated renovation costs, square foot needs per pupil & cost per square foot, average square foot costs in the intended location & the percentage of budget designated for facility needs**

Please see attached supporting budget details.

## **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**Describe the start-up financial plan for staff, planning, pre-opening & other costs with time-lines (other than CSP funds, include only grants or donations already received or for which commitments have been received) showing revenues & expenditures.**

Depending on the amount of CSP funds secured; the preoperational financial plan will reflect a lean start up with resources allocated toward the initiatives that the Board of Directors feels that will best position the School prior to the first day of school. Preoperational staffing will likely be a start-up administrator in a salaried position. Other contractual support will be provided in accounting, marketing, human resources and legal as necessary.

The earliest the School will initiate the preoperational expenses will coincide with the official approval of the CSP funding date. Based on the anticipated funding date the School will execute a monthly procurement schedule to ensure that all supplies, equipment, technology, and curriculum is in place and prepared for the first day of school. As such, the CSP budget will be planned in accordance with the School's funding and priority of needs.

Additionally, some operational items will also need to be purchased during the first several years of operations with the support of the CSP grant. The budget projection reflects both CSP revenues as well as expenses that will be considered allowable under the grant guidelines. Along with the accurate budgeting and cash flow projection the School will have both an annual and monthly financial plan as the School develops.

**Describe financial policies & procedures including checks & balances of cash disbursement & ways to ensure alignment with the school's mission and vision.**

Over the course of the preoperational phase the Board will review sample policies and will develop the initial set of required financial policies. Additionally, the board, with the guidance of the School's financial advisor, will develop a Standards and Procedures manual for the School's operators. The combination of strong policies and clear procedures will produce comprehensive internal controls that will provide security and transparency for the board and public.

Policies such as the cash disbursement policy, fund balance policy, depository policy, and others impact both governance and operations of the School. These policies will help guide the School leadership in regards to financial goals, compliance, and oversight of the School operations.

The Standards and Procedures manual will be essential to 1) documenting the various business procedures and 2) documenting the internal controls that are critical to ensuring public funds are properly managed. This living document will be developed with the support of the School's financial advisors.

Over the course of developing the financial policies/procedures, the mission, vision and beliefs of the program will always be held central during the process to ensure the alignment of financial resources to the program values.

**Describe a proposed state-compliant financial management system.**

SMART Finance/HR and Skyward are two potential financial management options. Depending on the recommendation of the financial advisor the Board will select the most effect and efficient state compliant finance system.

**Identify who will be responsible for the school's financial management.**

The School's finances will be managed with a multi-layered approach to execution, review, and governance. The School Administrator will collaborate with the financial advisor for day-to-day operational items. The School will develop a functioning finance committee to review details of the School's finances. Additionally, the monthly board meetings will include a full financial report provided by the financial advisor.

This comprehensive approach will provide to various levels of controls and oversight needed to ensure solvency is achieved in the first year of operations.

**Describe the school's process to contract with an Audit Firm to conduct an annual, independent financial audit including how results will be disseminated to MDE and the authorizer.**

The School's financial leadership will request and review at least three audit proposals from well-respected firms that provide audit services to charters. After reviewing the

proposals and determining the best fit for the School the financial leadership of the School will work with the audit firm to plan and execute the annual audit.

**Explain how the school will remain fiscally solvent, adhere to generally acceptable accounting practices, have no material breaches, & will address any concerns from the independent financial audit.**

As the School's accounting/finance structure takes form, the necessary processes, policies, and related internal controls will be developed to ensure the public funds are managed and disbursed in a legal and appropriate manner. Any areas of weak internal controls will be addressed to the extent possible. It is the School's expectation that the initial audit reports will identify weaknesses in the initial audit reports, but that over the first year of full operations many, if not all, issues will be addressed and alleviated.

The primary tools the School will use to monitor solvency and sustainability will be the monthly financial statements and the short term/long range budget models. The combination of strong monthly financial reporting and continual budget review/management will help ensure that the School is clear on where the status quo stands and what adjustment the School's operations will have to make to achieve sustainability.

The School's accounting guidance is mandated by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) as well as UFARS requirements. As such, the generally accepted accounting practices will be deployed to ensure that all applicable accounting processes are secure and in compliance with the GASB standards.

**Describe the school's plan to ensure that STAR, MARSS, UFARS, EDRS, CLICS, SERVS reports & data uploads are completed.**

The School's office team and financial advisor will ensure that all the necessary data management programs are up to date with correct info. The School will be primarily responsible for ensuring that the MARSS data reflects the actual enrollment and rolling ADM. The School will also be primarily responsible for submitting the food service reimbursements on the CLICS system to generate the reimbursement related to the food service activity.

The School's financial advisor will manage UFARS, EDRS, SERVS, and will aid in the completion of the semiannual STAR reporting. Through the communication structure that will be developed between the financial advisory firm and the School leadership we

can have high confidence that the respective systems will be well maintained with accurate information.

**Provide an adequate & reasonable plan to manage startup costs with available federal, state and/or private grant funds, describing adequate allocations & anticipated timelines.**

The primary principal factor when addressing management of funds is the public purpose principal. All activities during the startup phase must 1) meet the public purpose test, 2) be compliant with grant guidelines, and 3) have the proper review, approval, and reconciliation. As the School prepares for the startup phase a month by month budget/cash flow will be developed to gain a better understanding of how and when the funds will be paid out and received.

On an ongoing basis, the board will receive monthly updates on funds spent and available. With ongoing financial reporting and communication, the financial management of the startup phase will be well executed.

**Describe budget assumptions based on a minimum number of students needed for financial viability in addition to 100% of anticipated enrollment.**

The first year and subsequent budgets anticipates growing enrollment until capacity is met at three years. Although many expense line items include a fixed and variable cost portion we can assume that costs are fixed for the stated budgeted enrollment. Assumptions will change if enrollment is higher or lower than anticipated.

**Explain how data on implementation of the financial plan will be used to show compliance to state and authorizer requirements when reporting to stakeholders.**

Annually, the School will have an independent audit performed. The audit includes review of state and federal compliance items. As such, the financial structure and related controls will be tested on an ongoing basis. Any deficiency identified within the School's internal controls or operations the School will adjust accordingly to ensure any corrections are implemented.

**Explain how the financial audit data will be used to make adjustments in fiscal policies and procedures to improve the financial health of the school.**

Dependent on the outcomes of the audits the School will incorporate the recommendations and comments as the board reviews the financial policies and the School management reviews the procedures on an ongoing basis. The School will seek to partner with an audit firm that will proactively provide guidance on pending accounting/audit requirements. A strong relationship between the School and the audit firm will be critical in ensuring an effective and efficient audit that will yield guidance on the School policies and procedures.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**Provide one-page detail in reference to:**

- 1. Have you submitted an application or will submit a substantially similar application to another authorizer?**

Yes. We have submitted an application to Novation Education Opportunities.

- 2. Have you previously applied for a charter from another authorizer? If so, provide the authorizer name, application date & status. If denied, provide a copy of the letter stating reasons for denial.**

No. We have not previously applied for a charter from another authorizer.