



# Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School

# Annual Report

## 2014-2015

Submitted to:  
Volunteers of America  
on October 1, 2015

by Liesl Taylor, Head of School  
Melissa Santrach, 2014-15 Board Chair  
Elizabeth Coenen, current Board Chair

# Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School (CMES)

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## Introduction

From our newest addition, who just moved to Minnesota and has been here two days, “Mom! This is the school we wished they had had in [our city], but didn’t!”

It didn’t take our newest 4<sup>th</sup> year child long to understand that something special was happening here at his new school. Atticus observed children working in groups in the classrooms, walking together, exploring their work often outside the confines of their classrooms, acknowledging the challenge of their work and expressing joy in that challenge. We stopped by to see some children working in the sun on one of the classroom decks, “You coming here to our school?”, said one of our founding children, now a fifth year. “...because you should. We have a lotta fun here. We work hard, but have a lotta fun. We’re writing a play.” Human needs and tendencies, common to what makes all of us human – the need to communicate, explore, orient ourselves, and create order – are all at play in the work and community living we observe each day at Cornerstone. Not only are the children developing necessary cognitive skills in a way that is appealing to their developmental stage, in addition, the children are using and refining skills that are at the very heart of being human – of course that is immediately noticeable and appealing to a child!

In 2010, dedicated parents, in connection with the Montessori Center of Minnesota (MCM) wrote an application to create a K-6 charter. In January of 2011, Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School (CMES) was recognized as a Minnesota Charter School authorized by Volunteers of America (VOA) and opened in the fall of 2011 serving children in grades K-2. In the fall of 2012, CMES continued to grow, serving children in grades K-3. The fall of 2013 was especially exciting as we continued to serve a larger and older group of children by opening our first Upper Elementary classroom, housing 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade children! The excitement and hard work continued in 2014, with the addition of our last building and final group of older children. Embracing our rapid expansion and booming student population and the rewarding work that comes with it, has allowed us to continue moving towards the realization of the mission and vision of Cornerstone as it was written in our founding days and to experience in an increasingly complete way, the affects of an authentic Montessori environment on our student and family population.

### MISSION

*Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School’s mission is to support children from culturally and economically diverse backgrounds living in or near St. Paul’s East Side through a rigorous and high-impact Montessori program that empowers them to make positive decisions, develop self-discipline, and create a true sense of responsibility for themselves and others in their community.*

### VISION

*The vision of Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School is a world-class, cross-cultural elementary learning community featuring the powerful and highly differentiated Montessori curriculum, which comprehensively prepares children to achieve at high levels and to excel as leaders in the 21st century. It will provide the highest quality education to all children, regardless of their socio-economic or cultural backgrounds.*

In 2014-2015, CMES served children ages 5-12 in all-day Kindergarten and Elementary Montessori Environments in a 10-month program starting after Labor Day and ending in early June.

To note – CMES is an active 501(c)(3) nonprofit trust institution as noted in the Charities section of Minnesota Attorney General Lori Swanson’s website (*See Appendix B.*).

## Statement of Purposes

This is the Annual Report for Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School (CMES) and, as part of our first section, as outlined in law (*Minnesota Statutes 2011, 124D.10, subd. 1*) and directed by our authorizer Volunteers of America (VOA), we begin with a statement of purposes.

To wit:

### 1) CMES will improve pupil learning and child achievement:

CMES will do so by implementing an Association Montessori Internationale (AMI)-recognized program that individualizes learning for each child while also helping all children learn to work together respectfully and productively in the learning environment.

### 2) CMES will increase learning opportunities for pupils:

CMES will do so by first and foremost offering a public, AMI-recognized Montessori option on the East Side of St. Paul. Heretofore, Montessori education was available primarily in private schools with a few public schools sprinkled in, severely limiting the option for less affluent families.

Second, though no less important, CMES will provide numerous opportunities for learning with the context of the AMI Montessori environment. The classroom design by its very nature encourages and nurtures choice and the natural development of academic and social skills. Moving away from seat time, bells, and teacher-directed learning, CMES prides itself on truly and naturally individualizing learning for each child.

### 3) CMES will encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods:

Though Montessori education took shape in 1909 with AMI forming in 1929 to protect the integrity of Dr. Maria Montessori's work, AMI-certified Montessori instruction is **the** innovative approach for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In stark contrast to factory-style schools with an increasing emphasis on drill-and-grill approaches to improve test scores, authentic Montessori education offers a viable and innovative alternative.

More specifically (and this is illustrated throughout this report) – Dr. Montessori literally wrote the book (wrote many books) about differentiating instruction. Each child moves at his or her own pace in his or her own manner. The learning environment allows for this multiplicity of children's approaches to the materials.

### 4) CMES will measure learning outcomes and create different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes:

Using the Northwest Education Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests in mathematics and reading to establish baseline data and areas in need of remediation or exceptional challenge for children K-2, CMES will extend its individualization of instruction by looking at standardized test data as a way to focus and inspire learning. Then, as children enter 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, they will have the opportunity to take state OLPA and MCA tests as an additional way to measure progress and direct learning. Lastly, and though not yet complete, CMES is in the process of developing an independent and standardized assessment tool to gauge learning and growth within the AMI-certified Montessori classroom.

### 5) CMES will create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.

CMES staff members have a unique opportunity to blend AMI-certified training with Minnesota state standards and expectations. As they weave these two approaches together to maximize child success, each educator will explore new territory from at least two unique perspectives. Using both as a foundation for making wise decisions about the school environment and curriculum will be paramount to making CMES an outstanding place of learning for all children.

Per state guidelines (*Minnesota Statutes, 2011, 124D.10, subd. 14*), this report begins with a background about who CMES is, who authorizes us, and who attends CMES. Then we move onto how CMES operates. We look at finances, committees, board composition, and licensure. The last section looks at the work we do with children in grades K-6: their performance, our innovative programs, and our future plans to maintain and sustain CMES far into the future.





## Authorizer Information

Volunteers of America (VOA) is CMES's authorizer and has been since the school's inception. VOA is committed to uplifting all lives through its mission (according to its website, voamn.org) to help people "gain self-reliance, dignity, and hope."

In addition to providing numerous services to those in need since 1896, VOA also "offers authorization to Minnesota charter schools ... [that] provide successful learning opportunities to children in small, educationally creative settings. Authorization includes strong oversight, accountability and resources to help charter schools succeed."

CMES is proud to be associated with an organization of such integrity and determination to support underserved communities.

Main Contact: Stephanie Olsen, Manager VOA Charter School Authorizing Program  
Address: VOA-MN Education Center, 924 – 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55404  
Cell: 612-270-1998  
E-Mail: [solsen@voamn.org](mailto:solsen@voamn.org).

***For a description of VOA's oversight as well as reporting/accountability requirements for Cornerstone Montessori Elementary, see Appendix A.***

# School Governance

## School Governance Model

CMES staff, Board of Directors, and Head of School work together to create a program that supports the growth and achievement of all children enrolled at CMES. The Board of Directors, whose responsibilities include hiring and reviewing the performance of the Head of School, oversees the school. The Board entrusts the operations and management of the school to the Head of School and supervises the Head of School in this role. The staff collaborates on the program with the Head of School, who approves all programmatic decisions and presents them to the Board. The Director of Business Operations, in managing the finances of the school in conjunction with the consulting financial management firm, supports the Head of School. The Head of School and the Director of Business Operations report to the Finance Committee, which prepares and presents information to the Board of Directors for approval and oversight.

*See Appendix G for a copy of the Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School By-Laws.*

## Site Operations Committees

### *Board Level*

**Finance:** Chris Bewell, Liz Coenen, Melissa Santrach, Liesl Taylor, and Sandra Schmidt of SandMark Services LLC (our financial management firm)

**Governance:** Patricia Bachmeier, Chris Bewell, Liz Coenen, Jane Reilly, Melissa Santrach

**Accountability Committee:** Jane Reilly, Melissa Santrach, Liesl Taylor

**Head of School Evaluation Subcommittee:** Jane Reilly, Melissa Santrach, Molly O'Shaughnessy (MTCM)

**Development Committee:** Liz Coenen, Jane Reilly, Julie Richards and Melissa Santrach

### *School Level*

**Parent Involvement Committee (Part of Title I):** Marge Nitz (Parent), Michelle Walker Davis (Community Member), Eve Lo (Parent and CMES Board Liaison), Connie Gottfried (Parent) Liesl Taylor (Head of School)

**Reading Well by 3rd Grade Literacy Plan Committee/Child Study Team:** John Albright (Lower Elementary Teacher), Susan Buerger (Special Education Teacher), Kristen Campbell (Children's House Guide), Cynthia Crooks (ELL Teacher), Jessica Goff (Upper Elementary Teacher), Sylvie Grahah (Literacy Specialist), Amber Osterkamp (Lower Elementary Teacher), Sara Papacek (Children's House Guide), Liesl Taylor (Head of School)



## 2014-2015 School Year Charter Public School Board

*This table contains information for ALL board members.*

*2014-15 Election Date: May 19, 2015*

Name	Board Position	Group Affiliation (if teacher, file folder #)	Skills	Date Elected	Date Seated	Term Expiration	Phone Number	E-Mail Address	Member Meeting Attendance Rate
Melissa Santrach	Board Chair	Community Member	Previous Montessori Board Chair	5/21/2013	12/15/09	6/30/2015	651-303-3796	melissasantrach@cornerstone-elementary.org	11/13
Jane Reilly	Secretary	Community Member	Child in a Montessori school	5/21/2013	8/16/11	6/30/2016	651-216-4014	janereilly@cornerstone-elementary.org	12/13
Elizabeth Coenen	Treasurer	Parent	Runs non-profit organization	5/21/2013	7/13/10	6/30/2015	651-493-7194	elizabethcoenen@cornerstone-elementary.org	11/13
Kristen Campbell	Trustee	Teacher – file folder #471882	AMI-certified Montessori teacher	5/21/2013	7/1/13	6/30/2016	651-774-5000	kristencampbell@cornerstone-elementary.org	12/13
Andrea Galdames	Trustee	Community Member	AMI-certified Montessori teacher	5/20/2014	7/1/14	6/30/2017	612-220-2923	andreagaldames@cornerstone-elementary.org	11/13
Eve Lo	Trustee	Parent		5/21/2013	7/1/13	6/30/2016	612-868-7043	evelo@cornerstone-elementary.org	9/13
Juliann McDermott	Trustee	Community Member	AMI certified Montessori teacher	5/20/2014	7/1/14	6/30/2017	612-716-6077	juliannmcdermott@cornerstone-elementary.org	11/13
Marjorie Nitz	Trustee	Parent		5/20/2014	7/1/14	Resigned 5/19/2015	612-747-6248	marjorienitz@cornerstone-elementary.org	8/12
Julie Richards	Trustee	Community Member		5/20/2014	7/1/14	6/30/2015	571-435-5350	julierichards@cornerstone-elementary.org	9/13
Liesl Taylor	Ex-Officio	Head of School	AMI-certified teacher	NA	NA	NA	651-774-5000	liesltaylor@cornerstone-elementary.org	12/13

## **Policy Additions and Changes Adopted in FY 2014-2015**

### *200 Series*

210.1: Conflict of Interest (2/15/2011; revised July 2014)

### *400 Series*

410: Family and Medical Leave (11/18/2014)

410.1: Extended Family and Medical Leave (11/18/2014)

### *500 Series*

511: Fundraising (4/21/2015)

### *600 Series*

612.1: Title I Parental Involvement Policy (7/19/2011; revised 12/16/2014)

### *700 Series*

703: Fund Balance (6/27/2011; revised 10/28/2014)

706: Gift Acceptance (3/17/2015)

### *800 Series*

802: Disposal of Property (3/17/2015)

806: Emergency Procedures (5/17/2011; revised 5/19/2015)

## **VOA Site Visit Report Highlights**

VOA provided the following feedback to the school following the December 16, 2014, Fall Visitation.

*Mission and Vision:* CMES is observed to be a mission driven school with exemplary devotion to their mission and Montessori education. The faculty and board are strongly committed to offering a quality, personally relevant education to all students. CMES is achieving its statutory purposes, with ambition for continuous improving. The CMES program clearly aligns to the VOA-MN Hallmarks and “Uplifting all Lives.”

*Curriculum and Instruction:* Through interviews with teachers and management, as well as observations, CMES provides differentiated range of learning opportunities that will enable students to have individual learning needs met through Montessori methods, while still meeting the state standards requirements. CMES teachers were again observed to use time well to support student learning and time on task is maximized. Evidence of a daily routine exists through smooth transitions between activities. Teachers use assistant teachers effectively. CMES teachers are observed to be consistent and effective in implementing behavior management strategies. The school also benefits from the use of volunteer Senior Readers, which they use wisely for student benefit as well. The school does not utilize as much technology as other VOAMN schools, mostly because the Montessori means of instruction does not incorporate as much technology.

*School Culture:* The CMES climate and culture were again observed to be very positive and uniformly quite tranquil. The use of the bell to ring (by students or teacher) when the noise level gets distracting is evidence of an exemplary practice. Students at CMES are encouraged to perform and behave well. Teachers that were interviewed again indicated that CMES is a positive environment to work in; this is also evidenced by staff

retention. Students observed are on task and motivated to learn. Anti-bullying policies and procedures are evident in both policy and practice. As with almost all schools, CMES is encouraged to continue to advance student performance data analysis (data demonstrating if students are on track to meet the standards on the MCA exams) and data-driven decision making and utilize VOAMN Academic Performance Analyst Heather Swan as needed to assist with this practice. The CMES environment is collaborative and, especially being a Montessori school, student performance centered. The authorizer is pleased with how far CMES has come to ensure that the state standards are embedded into the Montessori method. CMES was part of a national effort in this regard and the authorizer got to review the scope and sequence chart that was developed through this effort. It was an amazing example of collaborative work. This is another example of an exemplary practice.

*Special Populations:* The authorizer routinely interviews the education team or lead teacher/coordinator. The special education lead teacher is very competent and understands compliance requirements and appreciates serving the needs of their CMES students. Responses provided to authorizer questions were very thorough. Based on observations and interviews, special education team members and classroom teachers work collaboratively and are supported by the administration. The school is encouraged to request to designate the topic of “special education” into the requirement of “ongoing board training.” The school has a defined Child Find process that is adhered to.

*Academic Leadership:* The school transitioned to a new director last year pretty smoothly. This year the director feels more confident about her position. The new director is becoming more comfortable and competent providing strong stewardship and oversight of the school. The director indicates that the board is responsive to the school’s needs. The school management team continues to be well balanced in skills, genuinely thoughtful and caring, knowledgeable, attentive to authorizer suggestions and devoted to continuous improvement. The school director and operations manager (AC) provide oversight of student standardized and state assessments to ensure legal compliance (e.g., proper administration of exams, required student accommodations are adhered to, storage and distribution of data).

*Management Effectiveness and Legal Compliance:* CMES leadership demonstrates an exemplary command of state and legal compliance, which earns them a star for exemplary practice/record. The new school leader and operations manager provides competent stewardship and oversight of the school. During the fall visit, the authorizer confirmed the completeness of the “VOA-MN School Compliance Binder.” The authorizer also verified that CMES engages in faculty performance observations and evaluations aligned with defined policy and procedure guidelines. The meeting with the school management team members and inspection of documents confirms that CMES complies with laws pertaining to student enrollment and discipline, as well as laws pertaining to student data – collection, storage, and distribution. CMES maintains and distributes annually a thorough student/ family handbook and employee handbook.

## **Board Training**

Ongoing training in financial matters occurred as part of the audit presentation in December. The auditor details every component of the financial reports and guides the board members in developing a deeper understanding of the financial condition of the school.

Its School Business Manager presented proposed budget revisions to the Board. During these presentations, Sandy Schmidt (SandMark Services Inc) goes over every component of the school’s revenue and expenses, elaborating on any changes to state or federal law and their impact on the school’s financial condition. These sessions are very dynamic and interactive, allowing for the active participation of each board member.

As a member of Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACS), board members are invited to various seminars and presentations throughout the school year with other member charter schools. Notices of these events are passed along to board members.

These board training sessions were held during scheduled board meetings during the 2014-15 school year for all school board members.

- *NWEA Test Results and Analysis*
  - July 15, 2014, Presented by Liesl Taylor, Head of School, CMES
- *CMES 2013-2014 Audit Report*
  - December 16, 2014, Presented by Dennis Hoogeveen, CPA, CliftonLarsonAllen
- *Tools for Oversight of Financial Matters*
  - January 20, 2015, Presented by Sandra Schmidt, Trainer
- *The Differences between AMI (Association Montessori International) and AMS (American Montessori Society) Training*
  - March 17, 2015, Presented by Juliann McDermott, Montessori Guide and Board Member
- *Board Retreat: Fund Development Training and First Steps*
  - April 11, 2015, Presented by Jim Olsen, Development Professional

Additional trainings attended by individual Board Members:

*Kristen Campbell*

- AMI Refresher course – Atlanta, Georgia – February 13-16, 2015.

*Elizabeth Coenen*

- MN Open Meeting Law Workshop (IPAD - Information and Policy Analysis Division, MN Department of Administration) – September 24, 2014
- Elementary Classroom Observations: November 13, 2014 and February 26, 2015

*Andrea Galdames*

- AMI Elementary Teacher Training

*Eve Lo*

- Charter School Brunch and Learn Series: Measuring Success and Quality Beyond Test Scores, November 20, 2014, Sponsored by CliftonLarsonAllen
- Board Repair, August 4, 2015, Sponsored by Hamline University

*Juliann McDermott*

- AMI Refresher course – Atlanta, Georgia – February 13-16, 2015.

*Marjorie Nitz*

- No additional training

*Jane Reilly*

- Give to the Max webinar – October 9, 2014, put on by the Give to the Max organization.
- Service Enterprise trainings at my workplace – Training focused on how to best structure a volunteer program within an organization.

*Julie Richards*

- No additional training

*Melissa Santrach*

- Minnesota Charter School Conference, July 29, 2014
  - Sponsored by CliftonLarsonAllen
- Give to the Max Day Webinar, October 9, 2014
  - Sponsored by GiveMN
- Employee Handbooks, November 11, 2014
  - Morning-long Seminar covering all aspects of Employee Handbooks, sponsored in part by Bearance Insurance (Thomas Farnham, Broker). Purpose was to obtain more information on FMLA regulations for preparation of CMES policy.
- Philanthropy Leaders Forum: Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation, May 14, 2015
  - Sponsored by Minnesota Council of Nonprofits
- East Side Education Partnership, October 15, 2014 and March 11, 2015
  - Sponsored by St. Paul Public Schools Foundation. Networking and fundraising sessions specifically geared toward assisting students and families on the East Side of St. Paul.
- Formal Observations in all CMES Environments

## School Management

### 2014-15 School Management and Faculty Information

*This table contains information for ALL members of the school management/administrative team and also includes faculty employed by the school who did not serve as a classroom teacher (e.g., curriculum coordinators, social workers, counselors, administrative assistance, paraprofessionals, custodial, technology, librarians, etc.).*

Name	File Folder Number	Assignment	Years Employed by the School	Left During 14/15	Not Returning 15/16
Christine Bewell		Director of Business Operations	4		
Guled Hassan		Special Education Assistant	1		
Frankie Nesbitt		Special Education Assistant	1		
James Papacek		Special Education Assistant	2	X	
Marcella Ramirez Montes		Educational Assistant	1		X
Nadiya Rapp		Educational Assistant	1		
Corinne Shields		Educational Assistant	3		X
Suzanne Splinter		Special Education Assistant	1		
Liesl Taylor	424839	Head of School	4		
Anne Thao		Special Education Assistant	1		
Padee Thao		Educational Assistant	3		
Anna Wiedemann		Educational Assistant	1	X	

### School Management

The school is led by the Head of School who is hired and held accountable for the success of the school by the Board of Directors. The Head of School reports to the Board of Directors monthly and is reviewed annually by the Head of School Review sub-committee of the Accountability Committee.

The Head of School oversees all aspects of the school, manages all staff and, specifically, is the pedagogical leader of the school. The Director of Business Operations manages many operational aspects of the school (e.g., the lunch program, busing, MDE MARSS reports, etc.). In the classroom environments the teachers are supported in their work and guided by the Head of School. The Head of School observes in the classroom and meets with teachers on a weekly basis to discuss lessons and student progress. The teachers are responsible, with the support of assistants, for supporting the growth and development of each Cornerstone student.

***See Appendix C for the 2014-15 CMES Organizational Chart that describes the structure of the CMES management team.***

## Administrative Professional Development

Liesl Taylor, our Head of School:

- AMI Refresher course – Atlanta, Georgia – February 12-15, 2015
- NWEA Test Results and Analysis
  - July 15, 2014, Presented by Liesl Taylor, Head of School, CMES
- CMES 2013-2014 Audit Report
  - December 16, 2014, Presented by Dennis Hoogeveen, CPA, CliftonLarsonAllen
- Tools for Oversight of Financial Matters
  - January 20, 2015, Presented by Sandra Schmidt, Trainer
- The Differences between AMI (Association Montessori International) and AMS (American Montessori Society) Training
  - March 17, 2015, Presented by Juliann McDermott, Montessori Guide and Board Member
- Board Retreat: Fund Development Training and First Steps
  - April 11, 2015, Presented by Jim Olsen, Development Professional
- Reading Comprehension Training – May, 2015
- Internet Safety Training – May, 2015
- Title I Schoolwide Plan Training Workshop – MDE – June 23, 2015

Chris Bewell, our Director of Business Operations:

- Participated in MDE monthly webinars for SERVS Financial Training and ESEA Title Program
- Paychex Payroll Training – July 2014
- NWEA Test Results and Analysis
  - July 15, 2014, Presented by Liesl Taylor, Head of School, CMES
- MDE New Charter School Training – July 30-31, 2014
- CSP Startup Grant Training – MDE – September 29, 2014
- CSP Grant Management Training Webinar – December 11, 2014
- CMES 2013-2014 Audit Report
  - December 16, 2014, Presented by Dennis Hoogeveen, CPA, CliftonLarsonAllen
- Tools for Oversight of Financial Matters
  - January 20, 2015, Presented by Sandra Schmidt, Trainer
- The Differences between AMI (Association Montessori International) and AMS (American Montessori Society) Training
  - March 17, 2015, Presented by Juliann McDermott, Montessori Guide and Board Member
- MDE Director Reporters Workshop – April 1, 2015
- Board Retreat: Fund Development Training and First Steps
  - April 11, 2015, Presented by Jim Olsen, Development Professional
- Title I Schoolwide Plan Training Workshop – MDE – June 23, 2015

## Head of School Professional Background

Liesl Taylor received her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology and Family Studies from St. Olaf College. Prior to pursuing her career in education, she served as the Supervisor of Early Intervention and the birth-to-three cognitive specialist in a program reaching out to an underserved population in Chicago. Liesl taught parenting classes while raising her own family and then began her career as a Montessori educator by receiving her AMI Montessori Elementary certificate through the Montessori Center of Minnesota (MCM) and her Minnesota State Teaching License through the College of St. Scholastica. Liesl worked and taught in public Montessori elementary classrooms for 12 years (two at Cornerstone) and assisted MCM teacher-training



assessing student work and mentoring new teachers for three years prior to beginning her work in administration.

### **School Leader Review – 2014 – 2015**

The Head of School Evaluation Committee, in conjunction with the Montessori Center of Minnesota, developed a comprehensive process for evaluation of Cornerstone's Head of School. This process and timeline was clearly articulated and approved by the board. The Head of School Evaluation committee consisted of CMES Board Chair Melissa Santrach, Executive Director of MCM Molly O'Shaughnessy, and Board member Jane Reilly. Jane served as Chair of the committee.

Having developed a solid evaluation tool, timeline, and process during 2013-14, the committee decided to use the same basic format in 2014-15, which would allow for comparisons from year-to-year. Much like the previous year, the evaluation survey was made available (online and on paper in English and Spanish) to school staff, board, and parents of children in both the private preschool and the public charter school since the head of school serves both schools. The response rate increased from 41 respondents in 2013-14 to 66 respondents in 2014-15.

The CMES Board Chair prepared a summary of the survey results and the Chair of the HOS Committee then shared with the Head of School. The survey responses were full of praise for the Head of School's work and recognized the many improvements made since last year. The surveys also cited several areas as needing continued attention – all of which were being actively addressed by the Head of School.

To conclude the 2014-15 year, the committee met with the Head of School to share reflections of the year. The Head of School presented an annotated version of the goals and challenges she offered at the beginning of the year and commented on the things that went as planned as well as how she modified the plan as the year unfolded. Overall, each area was thoroughly and thoughtfully attended to so that by year's end significant advancements were made in all areas. The reflections from the 2014-15 year will become the basis for the Head of School's 2015-16 professional development goals.

## Staffing / Teaching Faculty Information

### Teaching Staff Information

Seven of the nine teachers at CMES are licensed in their area of instruction. One teacher, John Albright, was granted a waiver to teach outside his licensure area, and one teacher, Sara Papacek, is working towards licensure completion. Ms. Papacek has AMI certification as well as a community expert waiver approved by the Minnesota Department of Education. Mara Johnson stepped in at the end of the year as a short-term substitute in the elementary classrooms.

Name	File Folder Number	Assignment	Years Employed by the School	Left During 14/15	Not Returning 15/16
John Albright	465409	Lower Elementary teacher	2		
Daniel Bachhuber	298793	Upper Elementary teacher	.5	X	
Susan Buerger	392840	Special Education teacher	2		
Kristen Campbell	471882	Kindergarten teacher	4		
Cynthia Crooks	267424	ELL teacher	4		
Jessica Goff	391619	Upper Elementary teacher	2		
Sylvie Grahman	459649	Reading Specialist	4		X
Mara Johnson	486194	Upper Elementary teacher	.5		
Amber Osterkamp	455024	Lower Elementary teacher	1		
Sara Papacek	997893	Kindergarten teacher	4		

### Academic Professional Development

#### Staff:

**August, 25, 2014:** Opening Staff Meeting Review of All Policies; Health and Safety Procedures, Mission and Vision Blood Borne Pathogens, CPR and First Aid Training, Food and Nutrition in Schools Training

**August, 26, 2014:** PBIS Training with Dave Stright – St. Paul, MN, 9-11 a.m.

**August 27, 2014:** Teacher Evaluation System; Lead Guide Effectiveness Rubric Training

**October 16, 2014:** Teambuilding Seminar with Joel Martin from Positively Powerful Triad West, 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**January 24, 2015:** Grace and Courtesy in the Elementary, 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**February 12-16, 2015:** AMI Refresher Course - The Prepared Environment - Mindfulness in Learning

**March 2, 2015:** All Staff Dinner; The Origin of Spices Team Building Workshop

**All Staff Meetings (Monthly):** All staff must attend – Standard Agenda:

- Updates/important upcoming dates
- Policy/procedure review or changes
- Staff development topic (i.e. special education intervention training, assessment training or review, Montessori reading and topic, cultural competency training)
- Suggested topics from staff

**Head Guide Meetings (Bi-Weekly):** Head of School and all lead teachers expected to attend – Standard Agenda

- Immediate issues/concerns
- Classroom sharing – successes, challenges, assessments, progress towards goals.
- Child study (reserve at least 20 minutes for this discussion, longer if needed) and intervention discussion.

**Level Meetings (Bi-Monthly at least, more as necessary):** Lead teachers and assistants or aides as requested for each level, Head of School attends frequently and reviews reports – Standard Agenda

- Immediate issues/concerns
- Lesson planning discussion (informed by observation, children's work, assessments)
- Intervention discussion for children who may need additional support.

**Week End Reports:** Done by all lead teachers to Head of School weekly and by Head of School to all staff weekly.

*Additional Staff Development Training by Individual:*

John Albright

- AMI Refresher course – Atlanta, Georgia – February 13-16, 2015

Daniel Bachhuber

- No additional training

Susan Buerger

- No additional training

Cynthia Crooks

- No additional training

Kristen Campbell

- AMI Refresher course – Atlanta, Georgia – February 13-16, 2015

Jess Goff

- AMI Elementary Teacher Training

Sylvie Grahman

- No additional training

Mara Johnson

- No additional training

Amber Osterkamp

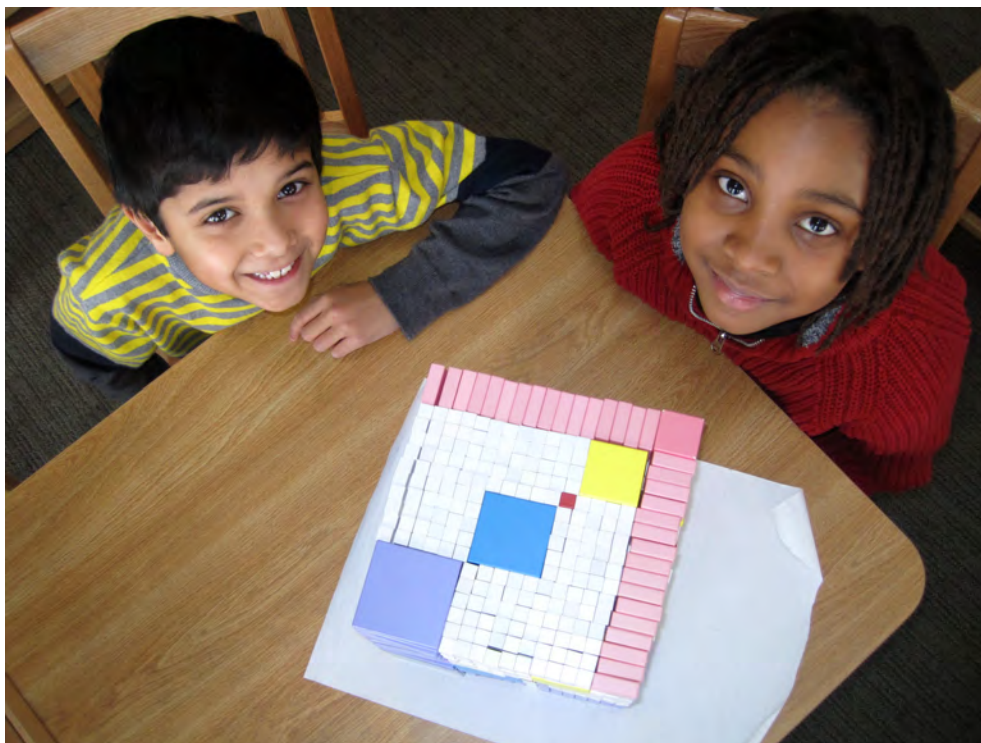
- AMI Elementary Teacher Training

Sara Papacek

- AMI Refresher course – Atlanta, Georgia – February 13-16, 2015

### **Staff Turnover and Staff Longevity**

This year we had nine licensed staff members and one short-term substitute, two with waivers. Eight of these staff members plan to return to the classroom next year. (One teacher retired mid-year due to medical leave; his replacement is returning). Our literacy specialist is not planning to return; she is choosing to stay home with her new baby. One of our Special Education paraprofessionals is returning to Cornerstone in a teaching capacity next year. Another Special Education paraprofessional has moved on to career experiences elsewhere. Two Montessori trained educational assistants left mid-year to become lead guides in other programs. Another educational assistant is returning to Cornerstone in a new capacity in 2015-16. One educational assistant was here on a work visa and has moved back to her native country. The retention rate for licensed staff is at 80%; for overall staff, our retention rate is 73% (or 16/22).



## School Admissions and Enrollment

Enthusiasm continues to grow for CMES in St. Paul's East Side community, as is evidenced by our waitlists for each grade level. It is our intention to provide high quality AMI instruction to families of the East Side. Included below are the admissions policies in the Board manual.

Also included in this section is the demographic information about the children who attended CMES this past year. We have approximately the same number of males as females (52%-48%), approximately 18% of Cornerstone children are Hispanic and 27% are African-American. 60% percent of CMES children qualify for free and reduced lunch, 18% of children receive special education services at CMES, and 13% of children qualify for limited English proficiency services (LEP). CMES children reside in St. Paul more than anywhere else (70% with 20% coming from Maplewood/Oakdale/North St. Paul and Woodbury and 10% from the Twin Cities Metro area).

### Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School Enrollment Policy

Under Minnesota law, Cornerstone's enrollment process starts with an enrollment period. The enrollment period will be November 1 – December 1. Notice of this enrollment period will be made public through postings in community centers and newsletters targeting the Phalen Village community and on the school's website.

The Board of Directors prior to the start of the Open Enrollment period will approve the enrollment model for each grade. This enrollment model will accommodate slight over-enrollment to account for likely child attrition.

**Enrollment Preference:** As required in Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School must offer preferential enrollment to siblings of children currently enrolled at Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School. As allowed for in Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Cornerstone Montessori offers preferential enrollment to children of school employees. **Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School may not and will not give preference to children of the private pre-school Cornerstone Montessori School. Any family from Cornerstone Montessori School who wants their child to attend Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School must participate in the enrollment and lottery process.** Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School is a public school and as such, the enrollment process may not consider eligibility based on intellectual ability, aptitude, measurement of achievement, or any other specific characteristic of children whose enrollment form is received in a timely manner.

**Enrollment Process:** Current children of Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School are considered enrolled for the purpose of determining the number of openings for the following year. On the first day of the Open Enrollment period, the number of openings in each grade level will be determined and the Open Enrollment process will begin. Prospective new children must submit enrollment applications by the Open Enrollment deadline.

If openings still exist in any grade after the Open Enrollment deadline, enrollment applications received after the deadline will result in admission on a first-received, first-enrolled basis. In the event post-deadline enrollment results in a full class and later enrollment applications are received, those children will be placed on a waiting list in the order in which the applications were received.

**Lottery Process:** If more enrollment applications are received during the open enrollment period than available openings in any grade, a public lottery for those openings in those grades must be held. Each of the grades is subject to the lottery process.

The lottery, if necessary, will be conducted on December 10. If December 10 falls on a weekend or holiday, the lottery will be held on the next business day following the weekend or holiday.

The lottery will be conducted by a third-party, unrelated to school staff, board, or applicants. It will occur in a public meeting with adequate notice. The children who are not chosen will be placed on a waiting list in the order their names are drawn.

Upon admission, Cornerstone may require additional information about enrolling children including information on special education needs, health care summaries, family background, and family routines and habits.

***Kindergarten Enrollment:*** Prospective children entering kindergarten must be five years of age on or before September 1 of the school year for which they are applying.

***Non-Discrimination Statement:*** No child may or will be denied admission to Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School on the basis of gender, religion, ethnicity, or intellectual or physical ability. Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School is a tuition-free school. Students from all backgrounds are encouraged to apply.

*Board Approved October 18, 2011*

*Revised August 28, 2012*

### **Acceleration & Retention Policy**

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School accepts children into grade levels based on their age on or before September 1 of the school year with 5 years being the age for acceptance into Kindergarten. Cornerstone will provide each child with an educational environment that provides optimal challenge and meets the child's developmental needs. Due to the nature of the Montessori environment and the training of the teacher, which covers multiple ages and the multi-age classrooms, lessons can often be remediated or accelerated to meet the needs of each child.

Cornerstone staff members – teachers and administrators – will continually and consistently assess the needs and development of each child to determine the best environment for each child. Decisions to advance or retain a child will be made by the Head of School in conjunction with the child's parents and will be based on staff experience and assessment of the needs of the child.

*Board Approved May 17, 2011*

***Please see Appendix D for a copy of the CMES Application Form and Appendix E for a copy of the Student Enrollment Form.***

### **Enrollment Process**

When a child is admitted to Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School, the family is notified and is required to complete the Student Enrollment Form and return it to the school by the stated deadline. Once CMES receives the Student Enrollment Form, an enrollment packet is given to the family for completion. The enrollment packet includes the following forms: Health Information, Emergency Information, Home Language Questionnaire, Computer and Internet Usage Contract, General Permission Slip, Parent Permission for Child Pickup, Parent Directory Permission, Family and Cultural Information, and Immunization Records.

## Student Background and Demographics

2014-15 School Year	October	%	June	%
Total # of Students	124	-	118	-
Females	60	48.39	57	48.30
Males	64	51.61	61	51.70
American Indian	2	1.61	2	1.69
Asian	17	13.71	17	14.41
Black	34	27.42	32	27.12
Hispanic	26	20.97	21	17.80
White	45	36.29	46	38.98
Free & Reduced	72	58.06	71	60.17
Special Ed (incl. 504)	17	13.70	21	17.80
LEP	18	14.52	15	12.71

Resident District	2014-2015	
	#	%
St. Paul	83	70.33
North St. Paul/Maplewood/Oakdale	15	12.71
Washington County/Woodbury	3	2.55
Inver Grove Heights/Cottage Grove/Eagan	4	3.39
Roseville/Little Canada	2	1.69
Minneapolis	8	6.78
New Brighton/Brooklyn Park	3	2.55

As demonstrated in these two tables, CMES works predominantly with children living in St. Paul who qualify for free and reduced lunch and identify as Hispanic, African-American, or Asian. In the past, children fitting this profile would not have had access to AMI-certified Montessori instruction; this data reminds us that we are making progress towards fulfilling our mission.



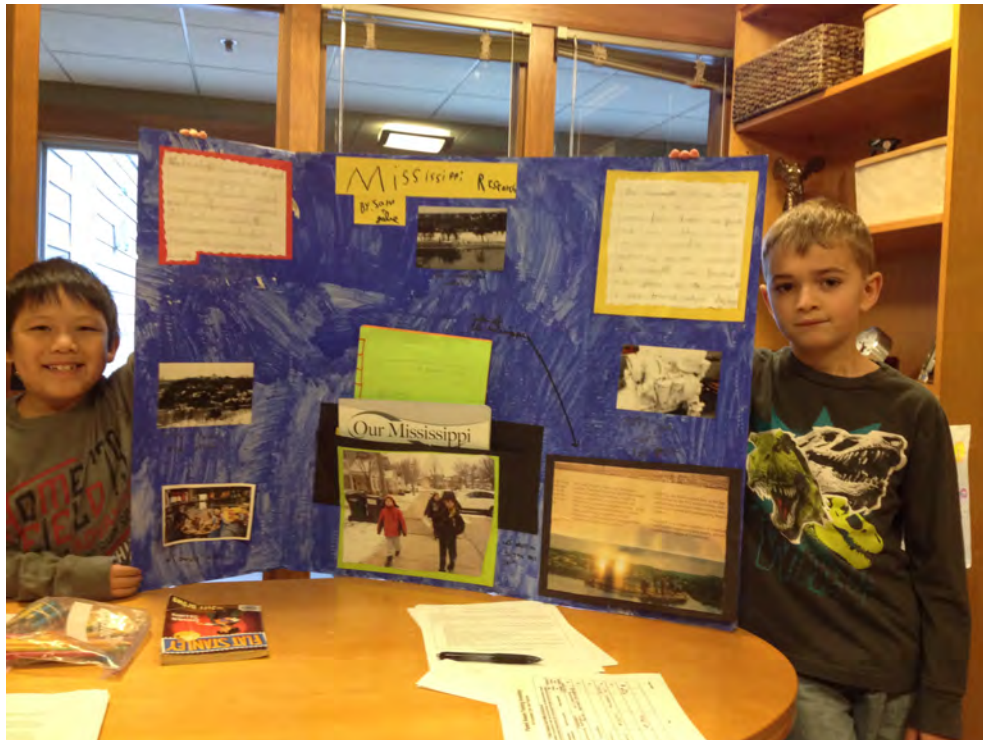
## Student Attrition

We began the school year with 10 children on the 1<sup>st</sup> Grade waitlist, 4 children on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade waitlist and 3 children on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade waitlist. Three families moved from St. Paul and left CMES during the school year. Two families living outside the St. Paul area chose to move their children to neighborhood schools closer to home. Two families moved their children to St. Paul Public Schools in their neighborhoods. One new family enrolled their children during the second half of the school year. We began the school year with an enrollment of 125 children and with the movements and decisions of families, total enrollment was 118 by the time the school year ended. Our Average Daily Membership (ADM) for the 2014-15 school year was 119.99. Over the course of the year, we served a total of 129 children, meaning that 9% were not retained, putting our retention rate at 91%. For the 2015-16 school year, we see waitlists continue to grow for Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grades, a sure sign that word has spread about CMES's impact on young people's lives.

## Student Enrollment and Attrition Rates

*This table identifies the 2014-15 end of year enrollment and an estimated 2015-2016 enrollment. Data based on end of year Average Daily Membership (ADM).*

School Year	Total	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	Attrition/Retention Rates
2011-2012	58	21	22	15					89%
2012-2013	81	22	23	22	14				96%
2013-2014	102	22	21	18	21	17	2	1	94%
2014-2015	118	19	23	19	16	25	16	0	91%
2015-2016 est.	131	20	19	22	18	15	23	14	



## **Academic Program / School Performance**

Established with VOA before the school opened, our goals for academic success are clearly articulated, challenging, and critical to CMES's long-term success in supporting children on the East Side of St. Paul.

Reflecting on the fourth year at CMES, we realize that we are at a real turning point as a school. We endured some tremendous struggles, each of which, when addressed in a positive intentional way, has supported us in seeing the opportunities for equally tremendous strides forward as we continue to pursue our goals and high expectations – namely, that each child will catch up to and exceed grade-level performance as measured by state, nationally-normed, and Montessori-based assessments.

In the first year, we implemented an authentic Montessori program and supported a student body, most of whom were new to Montessori and thus needed to adapt to the expectations of a Montessori environment which offers the freedom to responsibly move about school, to choose work and work partners, and to follow one's interest. During our second year, the children grew in their capacity to make responsible, challenging work choices that demonstrated academic growth while at the same time fostering an increasingly caring, conscientious and giving community. This combination is the foundation of authentic Montessori elementary education: challenging, integrated work within the context of community and with concern for the good of all. In our third year, we began our first upper elementary environment with 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> year children and were thrilled to see the next exciting step in elementary Montessori education come to fruition: Going out. Going out is a significant component of a Montessori elementary classroom. Going out evolves from a small group of children who are invested in a certain project of their own design needing to acquire some materials or more knowledge in order to bring that project to fruition. Going out is also when children are responsible for the care of a particular animal in the classroom and they have to go out and get the materials and food that they need to care for the animal. While Montessori teachers provide supervision to ensure safety and success of a going out experience, unlike a field trip, going out trips are organized by the children; this builds leadership, organization, research skills, and a connection to the larger community.

This year we welcomed our last new building onto the site in August and with it our second group of upper elementary children. Grateful for the lovely additions and beautiful walking paths connecting classrooms, landscaping, and surrounding community, we were all now able to enjoy the complete, busy, village-like existence of our unique school.

### **Learning Program Description**

AMI (Association Montessori Internationale) was founded in 1929 by Dr. Maria Montessori to maintain the integrity of her work and her vision of education for children. Montessori as a name is not trademarked. In the Twin Cities alone, a Google search produced ten schools with Montessori in the title; however, that does not guarantee a rigorous commitment to Dr. Montessori's vision and principles in educating young people. By contrast, CMES hires only teachers who have been AMI certified, and CMES's director Liesl Taylor is AMI certified and has been a classroom teacher in an AMI environment. This level of rigor and consistency guarantees for families a high-quality authentic Montessori education.

Founded in 1907 by Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952), Montessori pedagogy educates children for life. Children have the freedom to explore and to develop their potential as they work with didactic materials, either independently or in groups, in a prepared environment. The Montessori Method is based in the concept of respect for self, others and the environment. Montessori classrooms are prepared to meet the developmental needs of the age span served within the environment.

The materials and furniture are designed for the child's physical needs (size and proportion) and psychological needs (areas of interest or skill development). Each prepared environment includes a full range of Montessori materials, a trained Montessori guide/teacher, and a trained assistant. The materials are designed to assist growth in practical life, sensorial, mathematics, language arts, music, art, science, history, and geography. The work the child performs with the materials is intended to develop mental and manual dexterity. While working with the materials, the child develops concentration, self-confidence, respect, an understanding of order, and a joy of learning.

We believe that the child and his or her needs are the central and commanding focus of the learning process. It is the role of the teacher to observe, to know, and to defend the child as he or she proceeds through the stages of development.

We see in each child the future of our society, of our nation, and of our planet. The child in the process of fundamental development has unlimited possibilities, and the future rests on our ability to cultivate and nurture these potentials.

We believe that the learning process is governed by certain basic human tendencies or needs:

- The need to communicate, to use language
- The tendency for order: the need to organize, classify, and interpret reality
- The need for independence and activity, the drive to work constructively and purposefully
- The need for social relationships

In a Montessori school, the outdoor environment is considered an extension of the indoor environment. While there is a scheduled time for large motor activities that encourage collaborative group play and allow children to gain an understanding of the rules and movements associated with a variety of sports, the space is used not only during recess. The outdoor environment is also a "work space" that can be used during the Montessori work-cycle. Throughout the day and with the accompaniment of an adult, children may work on materials, garden, or simply explore the natural landscape of our outdoor space. We also offer the children a multi-purpose room to refine their large motor skills when weather keeps us from going outside.

The Montessori teacher facilitates activities within the environment while modeling respectful behavior. The teacher is not the center of the learning process, but rather helps guide each child while also respecting his/her choices. The teachers help the children reach their full potential by guiding them towards materials that meet their developmental needs and current interests. Individual and group lessons are varied and designed to meet each child's learning style and pace. The teacher observes the children often and plans lessons based on his/her observations of the needs and interests of an individual or group.

Within the multi-age community, older children often serve as teachers and mentors for the younger children. These children share their experiences by helping others. This process not only helps create a sense of community and interdependence, but also reinforces previous learning for the older children. Self-direction encourages trust, acceptance, and non-competitiveness. The materials, teacher, and children's community come together to assist the child in developing a strong self-image and sense of self-esteem, which is critical when building an attitude of learning and exploration to last a lifetime.

### *Children's House (Kindergarten)*

Kindergarten is part of our Children's House program, which in partnership with Cornerstone Montessori School – a private, preschool – serves children from the age of 33 months to 6 years. Cornerstone's two Children's House environments will have up to 30 children when at full capacity with 10 children enrolled in

Kindergarten at CMES and the other children enrolled in the private preschool program. Each environment has an AMI-trained guide/teacher along with an AMI-trained assistant and an aide. Either the trained assistant or the aide is a native Spanish-speaker.

This program is an all-day program. We offer a nutritious, catered lunch, which the children enjoy as a community. For much of the children's day they may choose work within the environment. There is also group time for music, stories, movement, and games. Children have time to play outside at least once a day (weather permitting). There is also the opportunity to use an indoor large motor space.

Children are free to choose work from the beautiful and well-defined areas of the environment. The adults in the environment serve as Guides who show the children how to use the concrete materials. Working with the materials not only helps develop coordination, concentration, independence, and a sense of order; it also helps the child become more disciplined and accomplished. Children in a Montessori environment usually have healthy self-esteem because they are helped to do things themselves. The children have ownership of the environment and take good care of it, returning materials with care.

The Children's House environment unifies the social, physical, and intellectual functioning of the child. We provide children with an early and general foundation that includes a positive attitude toward school, inner security, a sense of order, pride in the environment, curiosity, concentration, self-discipline, and a sense of responsibility for the self and for the group. Thus, through interacting with the Montessori environment, the child constructs him or herself in a positive manner. This benefits the child in school and in life.

Instruction occurs one-on-one and in small groups conducted at the child's pace. Montessori materials are organized in a logical, sequential nature, providing a structure that guides a child's discovery. A series of presentations, activities, and developmentally appropriate materials are designed to enable the child to master specific skills.

The Children's House environment is divided into four distinct areas:

**Practical life:** among other life skills, children learn how to wash, cook, sweep, plant, and sew.

**Sensorial:** children learn through sight, touch, sound, taste, and smell using binomial cubes, geometric shapes, constructive triangles, tasting bottles, and other materials that enable the child to classify, clarify, and comprehend the world.

**Language:** children are introduced to nomenclature and vocabulary through spoken-language games. They are also introduced to the 26 letters of the English alphabet and their associated sounds. With the help of a movable alphabet, children are able to write words, sentences, and stories. Reading quickly follows with materials that help explore grammar and the structure of language.

**Math:** children are taken from the concrete to the abstract through manipulation, experimentation, and invention by using math materials.

### *Elementary (Ages 6-12)*

From age six through age 12 – the elementary school years – the child is driven by a natural curiosity and tendency to explore the expansive interconnectedness within and across disciplines such as the arts, math, and social studies. Dr. Montessori used the term “cosmic education” to refer to this stage of education best fitting this period of child development. The Great Lessons are at the center of Montessori elementary education. These lessons are stories that explore the beginnings of the universe, the formation of the stars and planets, the progress of plant and animal life, the arrival of humans and language, and the origins of mathematics, geometry, and the sciences. From these stories the child develops sensitivity to the way things live, to the interdependence

of life, and to the fundamental needs of human beings. Timelines, charts, and research cards of human needs help the child in independent study and inspire more research in geology, sciences, biology, geography, and history. Montessori elementary children use their imagination and reasoning minds to explore all the parts of the universe. They may be engaged in a variety of learning activities at the same time.

At the center of the Montessori elementary classroom is the well-trained Montessori teacher. This professional is an “enlightened generalist” with knowledge deep enough to know details that add to the Great Lessons and connect the details into a big picture across the disciplines. The teacher’s role is to be the storyteller of our history and our world, as we understand it, to inspire the children, and then to guide them in acquiring the skills to pursue their interests and to explore the relationships among the different subject matters. This teacher is also trained in areas of child development. Because the Montessori child spends three years in the same classroom environment, the elementary teacher can be keenly tuned in to the unique personality of each child. This sensitivity permits the teacher to guide each child into areas of natural interest. The teacher or guide is in communication with the child and the family to help the child maximize his or her educational opportunities.

Much of the work of the elementary child is collaborative. The child learns in partnership with others through small group lessons and projects. At different times, each child is both a teacher and a learner. Because each child spends three years in the same classroom environment, the children have the freedom to explore subject areas as they become interested in them. The teachers, through the use of daily observation notes, lesson planning, and assessments, track each child’s use of materials and progress within a subject matter. The teacher uses the child’s interest to guide him or her to an exploration of all subject areas. The subjects that are covered in the Montessori classroom include mathematics, geometry, language, geography, science, art, and music.

Living in the world for the elementary child also involves working actively to make it a better place. Care of one’s environment is built into the Montessori curriculum. Children are responsible for keeping the environment clean, caring for the animals, and providing for the needs of guests. CMES children will take responsibility for recycling programs in their classroom environments, help maintain the grounds and the garden, and help the school be more energy efficient.

The Montessori curriculum is developed and reviewed by an international committee and not set according to US academic standards. As a consequence, there are elements in the Montessori curriculum, such as finding the cube root of a 9-digit number, that are not part of our state or national standards; also there are elements of our Minnesota state standards, such as the study of simple machines, that are not covered by the basic Montessori curriculum. There are however, specific provisions made in the training of Montessori teachers to ensure that the state standards are met in the Montessori classroom. CMES staff will continually evaluate state standards and Montessori curriculum to ensure that children who graduate from a level (kindergarten, third, and sixth grades) have met the state required standards.

One of the guiding principles of Montessori education is the development of the whole person, with particular emphasis on the development of reason and the will, along with a lifelong love of learning. For this reason, children in a Montessori environment are expected to work at their own pace and have a major role in setting their own work schedule rather than just doing specific assignments given by the teacher. This vast amount of freedom given to the children is tempered by three very important limits: the public school curriculum, the daily work journal used by each child to track his/her progress, and frequent individual meetings between the child and the teacher. The trained Montessori teacher is expected to help each child progress through the state public school curriculum, which is available in the classroom for the children to refer to in planning their studies. As part of each child’s assessment (including standardized assessments, Montessori records, the child’s work journal, and Montessori teacher’s observation notes), the Montessori teacher reviews with the child where the child is in terms of development within the Montessori curriculum and state standards and sets goals with the

child for further development. There is also a consideration given to the developmental level of the child; that is, more of the responsibility for covering the state curriculum falls on the teacher's shoulders in the early grades with the child taking more direct responsibility as she/he matures.

### Assessment Test Results

CMES conducted NWEA (Northwest Education Association) and its MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) test for the 4<sup>th</sup> year in a row and MCA III tests for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year. It should be noted with such small grade level sizes, one or two test scores can dramatically impact the mean of the test results. For example, one child's score can swing a grade level four to seven percentage points.

### NWEA Goal Series

2014-15 NWEA MAP ASSESSMENT - Math			
Grade	# Tested	Percent at or above national median	Percent meeting or exceeding RIT growth targets
Kindergarten	16	56%	38%
1 <sup>st</sup>	23	52%	22%
2 <sup>nd</sup>	17	41%	47%

2014-15 NWEA MAP ASSESSMENT - Reading			
Grade	# Tested	Percent at or above national median	Percent meeting or exceeding RIT growth targets
Kindergarten	16	69%	25%
1	23	61%	30%
2	17	35%	35%

In reviewing our NWEA scores, we can see that the percent at or above the national median increased significantly from last year to this. We are confident that our youngest children are getting a good start and are also growing in their ability to demonstrate that on computerized assessments.

### AYP Goal

Indicator	4	3	2	1
Adequate Yearly Progress The school is making adequate yearly academic progress (AYP), as measured by the Minnesota Department of Education's system of accountability.	Met AYP across all subgroups for at least the last two school years	Met AYP across all subgroups for the last school year	<b>Did not meet AYP across all subgroups for the last school year</b>	Did not meet AYP across all subgroups for the last two school years or more

CMES received its Multiple Measures Rating (MMR) from the Department of Education this year and is currently designated as a Continuous Improvement School.

**MCA-III Goal Series****MCA III Math - 2014-2015 School Year – Meeting and Exceeding Standards**

Grade Level	# of Students Tested	% Partial Meeting	% Meeting	% Exceeding
Grade 3	16	6%	13%	0%
Grade 4	24	13%	25%	8%
Grade 5	16	25%	0%	0%

**MCA III Reading - 2014-2015 School Year – Meeting and Exceeding Standards**

Grade Level	# of Students Tested	% Partial Meeting	% Meeting	% Exceeding
Grade 3	16	6%	13%	6%
Grade 4	24	21%	29%	13%
Grade 5	16	19%	44%	0%

**MCA III Science - 2014-2015 School Year – Meeting and Exceeding Standards**

Grade Level	# of Students Tested	% Partial Meeting	% Meeting	% Exceeding
Grade 5	16	13%	44%	0%

**Reading Percent Growth on MCA III – 2014-15 School Year**

	# Tested	Percent in each category
% Not Proficient, High Growth	3	7.9%
% Not Proficient, Medium Growth	9	23.7%
% Not Proficient, Low Growth	5	13.2%
% Proficient, High Growth	3	7.9%
% Proficient, Medium Growth	8	21.1%
% Proficient, Low Growth	10	26.3%

**Math Percent Growth on MCA III – 2014-15 School Year**

	# Tested	Percent in each category
% Not Proficient, High Growth	5	12.8%
% Not Proficient, Medium Growth	7	17.9%
% Not Proficient, Low Growth	13	33.3%
% Proficient, High Growth	1	2.6%
% Proficient, Medium Growth	3	7.7%
% Proficient, Low Growth	10	25.6%

This year CMES received its first Multiple Measures Rating (MMR) from the Department of Education and is currently designated as a Continuous Improvement School. We have been following our trend and our goals closely and knew this was likely in our early years with our student population. We are exceedingly aware of the attention we must pay to these goals and outcomes, but we are not discouraged; we are where we expected to be, we see many positive trends, especially everywhere we have put our careful efforts and energy, and we



will continue, with intention, to bring about progress in our children's abilities to demonstrate strong skills on these assessments and, more importantly truly strong academic success for each child.

Last year, our less experienced fourth years, with some children brand new to Montessori, showed only 6% meeting standards in Math, with 13% partially meeting math proficiency. In reading, 13% met standards, with 6% partially meeting standards. This year, Cornerstone prioritized, in particular, this group of children and we implemented more supports in terms of extra math practice times in before school programming and the support of our newly hired Literacy Specialist. In looking at the results for this year, we can see that we were very successful with our literacy interventions and not as successful in our math interventions. The group of children we targeted improved from 6% partially and 31% meeting standards to 19% partially and 44% meeting standards in reading. This year in math that group demonstrated only 25% partially meeting standards in math.

In 2014, in Math, 29% of our third year children "met" standards with 10% exceeding standards and 14% partially meeting standards. This year, in 2015, as 4<sup>th</sup> years, 25% met standards with 8% exceeding and 13% partially meeting standards. Even though we added several new children into our fourth grade group who are not experienced Montessorians and some of who were struggling significantly in other systems, percentages remained about the same. When the data is broken down further, we can see that the children who have been with us the longest are improving and the children just entering will need more support. In reading, 63% compared to 65% last year of children ranged from partially proficient to exceeding proficiency, with more children falling in the partially meets standards than last year.

There are many trends to consider and we will aggressively address the negative trends and continue to support the positives! We will not be swayed or panicked in our approach, instead, hold steadfastly to the time-tested, scientifically proven Montessori approach and add support where needed to address the needs of our children who struggle with these skills and assessments, not forgetting to foster their many strengths, as well.

### **Mission Specific Academic Goals**

Cornerstone continues to see exceptional growth in our mission-specific goals of fostering development of executive functions and is even more excited to report that we have been able to implement assessment of executive functions this coming year, being administered by pediatric neuropsychologist, Dr. Steven Hughes with parent permission. We will be able to begin demonstrating the positive effects of Montessori education on elementary children over time and know that this is an incredible opportunity for Cornerstone in particular, but for all of public Montessori in general!

### **Attendance Rate**

CMES School will meet or exceed its attendance rate goal for Adequate Yearly Progress.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
Attendance rate for the school year ([ADA/ADM]* 100).	<b>More than 90% AND improves by at least 1% over the previous year</b>	More than 90% OR improves by at least 1% over the previous year	85-90%	Less than 85%

Our Average Daily Attendance (ADA) was 120, Average Daily Membership (ADM) 115.04, giving CMES a 96% attendance rate. The AMI Montessori method challenges and excites children, inspiring them to be present for what each new day brings. Cornerstone children truly enjoy their school experience and are inspired to be present as evidenced by the attendance rate.

## School Climate

### Parent Involvement and Satisfaction

CMES made available a school satisfaction survey for families in spring 2015, and our response rate was 36%. 90% of parents expressed that their children are well supported at CMES. Parents feel comfortable bringing their concerns to administration and would recommend the school to family and friends. In terms of communication, families are receiving good information from the office and about the social/emotional development of their children. Parents would like more detailed information regarding their child's academics and the Montessori Curriculum. Parents made several comments regarding the food program and were hoping to see their children's enjoyment of what is served increase. We have positively and intentionally addressed these shortcomings and have implemented programmatic improvements such as a new caterer, teacher blogs regarding classroom academics, and additional news supplements. Our school year culminated, once again, in an exceptionally well-attended community potluck dinner following the flying up ceremony of the Kindergarten children, in which the parents were thrilled to be included. Speaking volumes for the success of the program, perhaps more than anything else, is our rate of retention of our first sixth grade children! Rarely do new Montessori schools have all but one of their sixth year students stay for that year. Cornerstone will proudly graduate our first 14 sixth year students in the spring of 2015-16!

*Review Appendix F for the School Satisfaction Survey for Spring 2015 with the results.*



## Finances

Thanks to both Sandra Schmidt of SandMark Services LLC and to our Finance Committee, the school's finances are strong, and we have built a good foundation to move forward. Due to the conscientious approach of our Finance Committee Chair Liz Coenen, Board Chair Melissa Santrach, Director of Business Operations Chris Bewell, and Head of School Liesl Taylor (all of them working in concert with Sandra Schmidt), CMES has wisely plotted a course to achieve a 20-30% fund balance within five years and has made significant progress in achieving that goal.

### Internal Controls and Board Oversight

Cornerstone's Finance Committee, which consists of the Board Chair, Board Treasurer, the school's contracted finance manager, and school administration, meets monthly to oversee the school's finances. The Finance Committee reviews monthly financial statements prepared by the contracted finance manager. The financial statements are then submitted to the school board members and reviewed and accepted at the monthly school board meetings. Clifton Larson Allen, Certified Public Accountants, prepares the school's annual audit.

### Overview of Financial Health

The unaudited end-of-year fund balance as of June 30, 2015, was \$282,363 or 19.3%. The financial goal of the school is to continue to increase enrollment and work toward a fund balance of 20% to 30%. A finance summary is presented at the end of this section. Sandra Schmidt of SandMark Services LLC performs the accounting services for Cornerstone Montessori Elementary and Paychex performs the payroll services.

### 2013-14 School Audit

CMES ended FY 2013-14 year with a fund balance of \$206,010. This was \$81,262 better than the projected budget. Sandra Schmidt, using Skyward School Finance Software, provided the accounting services. Clifton Larson Allen, Certified Public Accountants, audited the school's financial records.

Clifton Larson Allen conducted an independent audit of the financial statements of the governmental activities and each major fund of Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School as of and for the year ended June 30, 2014. The financial statements were presented fairly and the auditor issued a "clean" audit report.

In accordance with Government Auditing Standards, Clifton Larson Allen issued their report on November 21 2014, and it was submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education and Volunteers of America. Clifton Larson Allen presented the 2014 Fiscal Year Audit at the December 16, 2014, School Board Meeting and the audit was accepted.

***See Appendix H for the 2014-15 Financial Statements and Revised Budget.***

## Innovative Practices and Implementation

### Curriculum - AMI-Certified Montessori Approach

Innovative practice is AMI in the public sector. The broader educational community is recognizing many of Dr. Montessori's methods today as innovative best practices. Acknowledging, "developmentally appropriate" as an ideal learning environment, child-centered practices are being merged into many traditional systems. At Cornerstone, the innovative practices of Montessori are time tested, but remain innovative. Now, more than ever, it is of particular importance for our student population to experience authentic Montessori education in the public sector. Whereas more privileged children come to school having already had a wealth of positive experiences and viewing themselves as capable learners and important people, *many children represented in our student population have experienced the opposite*. Due to, in part, limited opportunities, they are often the children who start academically behind expected grade levels and then continue to fall further behind each year.

In an authentic Montessori classroom, the child is a central agent in the process of learning. The whole child is nurtured. The multi-aged classroom is set up as a community of people who are living and working together. Amongst this three-year span in age, the grades are not defined. Children don't see themselves or each other as "behind" or "smarter" or "in the slow group" because those distinctions aren't made. Children learn that they are at school to work extremely hard *doing their own best work each day*. In addition, all presentations in a Montessori classroom are designed to appeal to the specific developmental needs and attributes of the child receiving the lesson. All learning at all times is differentiated. Scaffolding is beautifully and inherently present in the materials children use for their work. Because each child's learning experience is tailored, children see that they are competent learners. Children are invigorated by the work they have completed and are inspired to explore increasingly greater academic challenges – and experience success in doing so.

Socially, children learn that all have strengths and all have struggles. Every child comes to realize through repeated interactions and experiences with others in the community that he or she has something important to offer. Setbacks and disappointments are dealt with as a community in a supportive, respectful, and nurturing way. As the community develops, children spontaneously address social issues right along side of academic concepts, and all interactions and choices are seen as opportunities to assist in the development of executive function strategies and engagement; skills that are now seen as increasingly important for each child's future success.

Children being mentored and educated in an authentic Montessori classroom in these ways believe in themselves as capable people and as important members of society. Children who believe in themselves in these ways have an enormous capacity to excel academically and to thrive in the inspiring and rigorous academics AMI classrooms are known for.

In addition, the long-term goal of children leaving the program and taking their exceptional citizenship skills, sound self-esteem, and positive attitude towards learning has profound implications for their success in future educational settings and in society as a whole.

### Special Education Services

Twenty-one children of 118 (17.8%) qualified for special education services or a 504 plan to provide appropriate accommodations to maximize learning during the 2014-15 school year. General education staff and special education staff worked tirelessly this year to develop a deeper understanding of each others' roles with the children receiving Special Education services. As a new charter school with a growing special education

population, this is an area that continues to need attention each year so that we develop an exceptional, flexible and compliant Special Education Program.

We are excited to report that we had a wonderful Special Education Review this year, both in terms of due process and the paperwork end of the program and in terms of the site visit. Our site visit compliance auditor enthusiastically praised all aspects of our program implementation, but was especially impressed by the fact that she “couldn't tell” who was receiving services at any given moment because the children's adaptations and necessary supports take place in such an organic way in our school – they are a natural part of the children's days. Her visit was topped off when one of our most struggling children put out a tablecloth, set the table for tea and invited and served our guest expertly, not forgetting the importance of engaging in polite conversation to make her feel at home! We have much to do to continue growing our program and have begun meetings to further refine and define systems that will support the varied team of adults working with the children so each child can reach his or her own full potential here at Cornerstone.

Our Special Education Director for the 2014-15 school year was Cori Wahl from EdVisions. Our Special Education Staff consisted of one Special Education teacher, one floating Paraprofessional, and three one-on-one Paraprofessionals.

### **English Language Learners (ELL)**

Fifteen children were served in Cornerstone's English Language Learners program during the 2014-15 school year. They ranged in age from one kindergartener to a cohort of five upper elementary children who worked together to improve reading skills and increase working vocabulary.

The WIDA ACCESS English Language Proficiency Test scores of Cornerstone children over the past four years show that most have gained the language skills they need to learn and produce work successfully in an English-speaking educational environment in a span of 3-5 years. The 3-5 year span is typical of language growth in elementary-aged ELL children, but to watch this happen before our eyes still feels amazing.

A few children started at Cornerstone in 2011 at the very beginning stage of language learning in which they could not speak any English, but were listening and soaking in everything. Some of these same children tested at the highest level in the speaking portion of the test last year. This is an amazing skill that children have that is the envy of adults, most of whom would probably agree that speaking a new language is much more difficult than listening or reading. Cornerstone's active classrooms that promote cooperative learning provide English learners many opportunities to develop their speaking skills in both social and academic settings with peers and adults.

Developing a vocabulary robust enough to permit learning in a wide variety of subject areas takes many years for language learners, but continuous work on it is a strong goal at Cornerstone. In 2014-15 the children learned to use various dictionaries, to write simple definitions and to use new words from their focused reading in original sentences.

This year work with English spelling, grammar and other writing conventions are the major goals for the upper elementary children who are nearly finished in the ESL program, while others will work on developing stronger reading skills.



## Student Highlights

### Earth Day

A small group of children from the Garden classroom planned and independently ran an Earth Day Celebration! The children researched earth-friendly guidelines, developed plans and generated funds and supplies so their schoolmates could plant flowers and other plants, make bird houses, and work to clean up our outside environment. The day culminated in a school wide, child hosted sing along with an utterly precious version of “This Pretty Planet” bringing most of the staff to tears.



### Class Play

The children in the Pond classroom wrote and performed a play! One of the Great Lessons, and foundations of Montessori Elementary education is the Story of the Coming of Life. The children learned that one way they can demonstrate what they’ve learned is to write a play about it and a whole team of children became passionate about doing just that. In true Montessori, going-out fashion, the children went outside the confines of their classroom to find out what they needed to know about writing and performing a play. They funded, arranged and visited by bus, the upper elementary children at Sunny Hollow Montessori School and watched their production of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”. The children interviewed the older children afterwards to get advice and inspiration. In May, to the utter delight of all, the children performed their version of “The Timeline of Life” complete with a time machine, trilobites galore, dinosaurs, wooly mammoths and human beings!

## Writing to the Smithsonian Museum

A child in Children's House Two in Kindergarten was interested in knowing more about Panda Bears. She got out the moveable alphabet and composed a letter to the Smithsonian Institute to get more information. Much to her delight, late in the spring she received a letter back and is now forever inspired to dive in, ask questions, and seek whatever it is you want to know.





## **Staff Highlights**

At Cornerstone we are often too eager to recognize only our areas for growth. It is equally as important to recognize the extraordinary work of our staff. While our staff is relatively new (either to Montessori, to public school requirements, or to teaching all together), they have matured considerably in their growth as teachers in this unique setting and have continuously demonstrated a tireless commitment to creating high-quality environments for Cornerstone children and families. What follows are some more specific highlights about the people with whom we are fortunate to work.

Jess Goff, Upper Elementary Teacher, Amber Osterkamp, Lower Elementary Teacher, and Nadiya Rapp, Lower Elementary Teacher Assistant, completed their AMI Elementary Teacher Training program! They will be entering the classrooms in 2015-16 fully trained, with a wealth of energy, knowledge and presentations to support exceptional classroom development and inspire the same exceptionality in the children's development socially, emotionally, and academically.

Frankie Nesbitt, a special education paraprofessional consistently embraced and pursued knowledge of the Montessori philosophy culminating in the successful, voluntary completion of the three-week Assistants Course offered through the Montessori Center of Minnesota.

Liesl Taylor, Head of School, was asked to speak on a panel in Washington D.C at the first Montessori Public Policy Initiative (MPPI) Advocacy Retreat next Fall. Liesl will speak from her experience at the programmatic-level regarding the results of the advocacy work being done here in Minnesota.

Padee Thao is pursuing her degree as an English Language Learner Teacher. Though the children believe she lives at school in the Pond classroom, she leaves many days a week to attend classes and study a field in which she is meant to thrive. She brings back the benefits of her studies and expertise, and her positive attitude and energy, to the children and her colleagues each day.

Sara Papacek took on new responsibilities as a Level Lead, consulting with the Head of School on systems and programs at the Children's House level. Sara was tireless in her work to host numerous tours and inspire several observers and student teachers with the magic she makes happen for the children in her environment.

Chris Bewell, Director of Business Operations, continues to be the go-to person for those involved in charter school startups. Volunteers of America continues to contract with her as their CSP grant specialist to assist new charter schools in the CSP grant process. This year Chris took over the payroll responsibilities working with Paychex and Sandra Schmidt of SandMark Services LLC to develop the current payroll system.

## **2014-15 Awards**

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School received the 2015 VOA School Board Governance Award.

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School received the Minnesota Department of Education FY 2015 School Finance Award.

## Service Learning

This year, as the program strengthened and evolved, the children appropriately moved away from parent or staff-planned service ideas and service learning became more “organically grown” from the children’s work and natural desire to help when they found a need.

Ella, a child in her second year of lower elementary, came to school one day and told her teacher she was interested in World Hunger. She dug right in to research the topic. Though she came up rather short on books about world hunger written for children, she was not deterred. Ella’s teacher supported her in connecting with another teacher who had just returned from an Agricultural Studies trip to Cuba. Ella interviewed the teacher and they had a discussion about how people in Cuba are learning to grow all of their own food. Her work and research continued; Ella found a map in the Atlas that showed world hunger around the globe; something had to be done. One thing led to another and she soon heard about a coin drive some Montessori children had done in an area school years before. Ella invited a partner to do her work with her and the two of them ran a coin drive to raise money and purchase an animal for a family in need through the Heifer Foundation. Ella raised \$166.00 by collecting “...pennies on Monday, nickels on Tuesday, dimes on Wednesday, quarters on Thursday, and anything you want to bring on Friday.”

Children experience service learning within our own school community as well, when they volunteer to support classroom communities with younger children. One such example is seven-year-old Amina knitting small wash clothes for the Toddler Community children to use with the tiny hands!



Cornerstone is also on the receiving end of lovely service work as twice each year, once in the fall and once in the spring, the students from Spectrum High School, a charter school also authorized by VOA, board their bus and make the trek from Elk River to Cornerstone, delivering to children glowing from excited eyes and grateful hearts, fleecy scarves handmade for each, books for individual children lovingly wrapped and the fun of a springtime field day. This has become a tradition and something the children treasure. Sending the high school students back each time brings on a chorus of “when can they come back? Can we invite them again? *Can we go see them?*” Perhaps someday soon it will click in the mind of a little Cornerstone child to arrange just such a visit...



## Operational Performance

### Running at Full Capacity

Our Average Daily Membership (ADM) for the 2014-2015 school year was 119.9. Over the course of the year, we served a total of 129 children, meaning that 9% were not retained, putting our retention rate at 91%.

### Facilities

CMES continues to rent from the Montessori Center of Minnesota (MCM). Through thoughtful reflection and negotiation, CMES has been able to share space and other resources without distracting CMES from its overall mission and vision.

For the 2014-2015 academic year, CMES leased 7056 square feet of classroom and program space from MCM, which is a separate non-profit organization, also located at 1611 Ames Avenue in St. Paul. Most excitingly, MCM completed its expansion in 2014-15 to include an additional and final classroom space solely to support the actualized growth of CMES. Cornerstone, which consisted first of the main building housing two classrooms - one space intended as a classroom and one space adapted to become a classroom - and next as the main building with a “pod”, and next as the main building with two pods, became, this year, a stunningly beautiful and buzzing-with-activity village for children aged 16 months to 11 years old! Even on the coldest days our Minnesota winter could offer, the spaces between the now four buildings were bustling continuously with children, staff, specialists and tutors as we went about our daily business at Cornerstone.



## Program Challenges

As we look back over the year, we are thrilled to see that our mission of providing high-quality, rigorous, authentic Montessori education in the public setting is being realized. We see it in the effusive delight with which the children approach their work; we see it in their compassionate actions towards others, we see it in their conscientious problem-solving sessions, and we see it in their thoughtful approach to all aspects of their day. We see it in the fact that the halls and outdoor spaces are buzzing with the learning activities and explorations of children. We see it in the fact that “Going Outs” have become a routine – as they should be – but still and always, exciting part of our days. We continue to make intentional, data-driven decisions and purposeful progress in addressing our program challenges, and realize that our challenges continue to center around establishing stability after a time of extremely rapid growth, and around establishing systems that allow for long-term sustainability both of exceptionally qualified staff and of programmatic aspects that support our mission, and around supporting our children’s success in being able to demonstrate strong skills on their standardized assessments. Sadly, but not unexpectedly, we received our first Multiple Measurements Rating (MMR), and we are classified as a “Continuous Improvement” School, which means we must improve our children’s proficiency so that we are meeting progressively stronger goals each year. This year we did not meet our goals for growth and improvement as measured by the MCAs. Details are discussed in “Future Plans”.

## Accountability to the Standards

Cornerstone continues to see discrepancies between the work of which a child is capable in the classroom and his or her ability to demonstrate that skill correctly on abstract standardized tests. Even though we implemented strong components to support the children’s reading skills, we feel that more has to be done to support our struggling readers’ success. To address these issues we have done the following:

1. Cornerstone has increased the position of part-time literacy specialist to .75. In addition to overseeing all aspects of the development of an exceptional literacy program, including conducting student assessments, training and supporting reading tutors, collecting and reporting necessary data, and providing some direct instruction to our most struggling readers, our literacy specialist will stay longer to train and mentor teachers and parents in supporting a stronger literacy program that extends beyond the time the children have with the literacy specialist and into the children’s entire school day. In addition, the literacy specialist is overseeing the work of applying for and managing tutors from the Reading Corps Program, a renowned program for its success in supporting struggling readers. Cornerstone is continuing the Explore Corps Reading Tutor program through Volunteers of America.
2. We continue to provide sample, traditional textbooks as references for the children and teachers in meeting the requirements of the Minnesota academic standards, as recommended in our Montessori elementary albums. Cornerstone has purchased math and reading examples, aligned to the Minnesota standards, for first through fourth grades from Houghton-Mifflin to meet this need. We expect these materials to provide a level of competency for the children as they become accustomed to the way things are presented, as well as bridge the gap between vocabulary we use in our Montessori presentations and the vocabulary of testing.
3. We are providing reading and math support after breakfast before children enter the classroom for the children who may not have access to that support outside of school, or who need more of it at school to reach their potential.



4. Cornerstone has increased the number of leveled readers we originally purchased and continues to use the suggested practice exercise cards from American Reading Company's 100-step program to support the children, families, tutors, teachers, and administrators in working together to reach our literacy goals. Cornerstone will send home weekly folders this year with this information, with the support of parent volunteers.
5. Through the work of parent volunteers and their efforts in book-making, Cornerstone will be able to send 30 minutes of child-chosen reading material home with each child as we continue to implement the 100-step American Reading Company Program.
6. Cornerstone children, families, teachers, and administration will continue to benefit greatly this year after having received an exceptional new tool from AMI, documenting in a clear and detailed way, the linking of Common Core Standards to our Montessori presentations. (Not adjusting and aligning our Montessori presentations to the standards, which could compromise the richness of the program, were we to narrow it to the standards.) The document clearly outlines any areas – there are very few – in which Montessori presentations may not directly address a standard. Teachers will receive training to support any minor adjustments necessary in addressing these areas as well as addressing, specifically, any differences in the Minnesota State Standards. This was an 18 + month project involving many highly qualified Montessorians from the Minneapolis/St. Paul area and nationwide, and we are so grateful for their work!
7. Cornerstone will implement an on-line math practice tool to support children in feeling more comfortable and in being more successful in demonstrating their skills on computerized assessments. We realize not all children have the skills they are asked to demonstrate, but we don't want children with the skills and the know-how to score low because they are not experienced in the method and vocabulary of assessment.

### **Sustaining our Staff**

One such need continues to be the need for support for our exceptional teachers, lest they become exhausted and burned out early in their careers. Cornerstone teachers are passionate, committed, certified in AMI Montessori, and licensed by the state of Minnesota. Teachers are with children and families – some in our year round program – for three and sometimes six or more years with siblings, cousins, and other extended family. Teachers and all staff need specific guidance and support around healthy coping and processing of the intense emotional experiences (positive and challenging) that happen when working with our diverse population. When we compare ourselves to programs that have been successful in sustaining this level of high quality staff and high quality education to an underserved and diverse population we realize they have strong, consistent mental health components and trainings for their staff members, something we are excited to implement in 2015-16.

### **Parent/Guardian/School Communication**

With rapid growth and the implementation of an innovative educational method comes the need for exceptional, frequent, and consistent parent communication around all aspects of a child's development and a family's involvement with the school. We greatly improved in meeting parents' needs in this area this year with regards to weekly news, but still need to improve, particularly with regards to providing enough information to parents so they were knowledgeable as to their child's academic progress.

## **Future Plans**

Though we recognize our challenges and seek to address them head-on, we are also extremely excited by the future! Cornerstone has much to celebrate and much to pay close attention to.

Cornerstone will pay close attention to our Continuous Improvement School rating, but we don't want to lose sight of the strong progress of our reading program and the affect it had on our children. In FY2014, 40% of our third year children "met" standards and 20% exceeded them. In FY2015, private charitable contributions allowed us to offer a stipend for a half-time Literacy Specialist who conducted reading assessments of all children and worked one-on-one with 9 students who were the most in need of support. By the end of the 2014-2015 school year, our internal reading assessment demonstrated that 36% of the children who were below grade level made over one year's worth of growth as a result of the support they received. 75% of those children whose gains were greater than one year worked directly with the Literacy Specialist. Overall, 65% of our elementary students are at or above grade level on the Developmental Reading Assessment scale. We are confident that our approach is working. In reviewing MCA scores, however, we are mindful of the work yet to be done. We have increased the Literacy Specialist position to .75 and have implemented new components to the literacy program. 1) We hired a literacy specialist with experience in mentoring parents and teachers in best practice when reading with children. 2) More children will be seen directly by the specialist since we saw such success with this last year. 3) Cornerstone has a new "All School Sustained Silent Reading Period" during which the Literacy Specialist will model best practices and mentor parents, who are invited to join us for this time, and teachers in strong, effective reading instruction and support. 4) Cornerstone is making books for all children to take home each evening to read; our goal is that every child has material to read and reads for 30 minutes at home every night. 5) The Literacy Specialist will conduct staff training and a separate parent training on how to read with children; she will cover "Three Ways to Read" and "Eight Steps to a Successful Silent Reading Period." 6) The Literacy Specialist will lead the school in applying for Reading Corps Tutors, a program we are ready to support and embrace for the success the children consistently demonstrate in that program.

Where we see the most discrepancy between what children do in the classroom and what they demonstrate in their standardized assessments is in math. Cornerstone purchased subscriptions to on-line math practice software for the 2015-16 academic year in an effort to help the children make the leap from the concrete world of Montessori math, as it should be for all children through age 11, developmentally, to the abstract world of demonstrating their skills on the computer. This software will be used in the classroom in limited amounts and for the purpose, not of learning math, but to support the children in learning how to demonstrate what they do know on the computer vs. the Montessori materials.

Cornerstone plans to pursue School Based Mental Health Services. We are currently doing our research and putting together a task force to consider this valuable resource for our children and families. Indirectly and directly, supporting our most struggling students in this way will benefit every aspect of the program.

Cornerstone's parent volunteer population has grown considerably both in number and in the generous commitment of time they are dedicating towards big, on-going projects. Next year, a group of parents will continue deepening our relationship with Buttermilk Farms by taking the steps to become a CSA drop site. The older children will eventually run the weekly drop site with the support of the parent volunteer.

Parents are also beginning the project of connecting with our community to develop a community garden! Others are interested in helping to support and develop our ideas for a nature playground. Cornerstone is going to be one busy place on Saturday mornings!

In a sincere effort to support and sustain our precious staff, we are pursuing some mindfulness training and other staff-care efforts beginning with additional staff and new staffing patterns. Both in the elementary school and in the preschool, we have hired a full time, fully-trained Montessori Float and expect the impact to be dramatic in many ways.





## World's Best Workforce Report Summary

In accordance with 2013 Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.11, a school board, at a public meeting, shall adopt a comprehensive, long-term strategic plan to support and improve teaching and learning that is aligned with creating the world's best workforce. The school board must transmit an electronic *summary* of its annual report to the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Education each fall.

### The report summary must include:

- A summary of progress toward improving teaching and learning and striving for the world's best workforce (specifically, progress toward closing the achievement gap); all students ready for kindergarten; all students in third grade achieving grade-level literacy; all students attaining career and college readiness before graduating from high school; and all students graduating from high school.
- Information about best practice strategies that were implemented and that are showing evidence of impacting closing the achievement gaps and working toward creating the world's best workforce in Minnesota.

### Identified Needs Based on Data

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School submitted its first World's Best Workforce Report to the Minnesota Department of Education and posted the report to the school website in December 2014. At that time the 2013-14 school year assessment data was reviewed to determine Cornerstone's needs.

### Assessment Test Results

CMES conducted NWEA (Northwest Education Association) and its MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) test for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row and MCA III tests for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, as it was the second year we had 3<sup>rd</sup> grade children. It should be noted with such small grade level sizes, one or two test scores can dramatically impact the mean of the test results. For example, one child's score can swing a grade level four to seven percentage points.

In reviewing NWEA scores, we were disappointed to see that there were still some discrepancies between the skills demonstrated in the classroom and what the children demonstrate on their NWEA assessments. Though we began strong reading support in 2013-14 through tutors, a leveled reading program, and Orton-Gillingham instruction, and supported our children's success in the math portions of the test by allowing the use of Montessori materials, we understand that this is only a start. Cornerstone hired a literacy specialist for the 2014-15 school year to make sure that our efforts were purposeful in helping the children demonstrate strong skills on their assessments. We scheduled a second training session to support the teachers in using the NWEA data for informed instruction, and researched the purchase of math books to support the children's knowledge of testing vocabulary and practice in doing work that looks like what they are going to be asked to do when formally assessed. We continue to have confidence that as more children experience the full cycle of each level, we will see a marked increase in their academic skills as well as their abilities to demonstrate themselves successfully on standardized assessments.

We were optimistic and excited about the upward trend in our MCA scores, and at the same time tireless in our effort to continue programmatic improvements to support not only demonstration of continuous progress, but truly strong academic success for each child.

Our less experienced fourth years, with some children brand new to Montessori, showed only 6% meeting standards in Math and 31% meeting standards in Reading. Cornerstone prioritized, in particular, this group of children as we implemented yet more supports in terms of extra math practice times in before school programming and the support of our newly hired Literacy Specialist.

It is clear that in 2013-14 we assessed very few fifth and sixth year children and a few were strong and one really demonstrated need. In 2013, in Math, 15% of our third year children “met” standards with 0% exceeding standards. In 2013, in Reading, 31% of our third year children “met” standards with 0% exceeding standards. It is worth noting that this group of third year children is the group who has been in a Montessori environment for a full cycle, plus some years in Children’s House and Toddler Community beforehand. As these children become stronger test-takers and developmentally ready to abstract (in their fourth and fifth years) we will expect to see jumps in their scores, as well. We expect this trend to continue with each group of children experiencing more longevity in Montessori Environments!

### **School Specific Academic Performance Goals**

*For a description of Academic Performance Goals see Appendix A - VOA’s oversight as well as reporting/accountability requirements for Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School.*

### **Support Category / Best Practice Strategies and Action Steps**

#### **Students**

Cornerstone continued to see discrepancies between the work of which a child is capable in the classroom and his or her ability to demonstrate that skill correctly on abstract standardized tests. Even though we implemented strong components to support the children’s reading skills, we felt that more had to be done to support our struggling readers’ success. To address these issues we implemented the following:

1. Cornerstone hired a part-time literacy specialist to oversee all aspects of the development of an exceptional literacy program, including conducting student assessments, training and supporting reading tutors, collecting and reporting necessary data, and providing some direct instruction to our most struggling readers.
2. Cornerstone continued the Explore Corps Reading Tutor program through Volunteers of America.
3. We provided sample, traditional textbooks as references for the children and teachers in meeting the requirements of the Minnesota academic standards, as recommended in our Montessori elementary albums. Cornerstone purchased math and reading examples, aligned to the Minnesota standards, for first through fourth grades from Houghton-Mifflin to meet this need. We expect these materials to provide a level of competency for the children as they become accustomed to the way things are presented, as well as bridge the gap between vocabulary we use in our Montessori presentations and the vocabulary of testing.
4. We increased the consistency with which we provided brief daily or weekly homework exercises that were presented in the same way the material is presented in formal testing situations.
5. We provided homework support after breakfast before children entered the classroom for the children who may not have access to homework support outside of school.
6. Cornerstone purchased leveled readers and suggested practice exercise cards from American Reading Company’s 100-step program to support the children, families, tutors, teachers, and administrators in working together to reach our literacy goals.
7. Cornerstone children, families, teachers, and administration benefited greatly from an exceptional new tool from AMI, documenting in a clear and detailed way, the linking of Common Core Standards to our Montessori presentations. (Not adjusting and aligning our Montessori presentations to the standards, which

could compromise the richness of the program, were we to narrow it to the standards.) The document clearly outlines any areas in which Montessori presentations may not directly address a standard. Teachers received training to support any minor adjustments necessary in addressing these areas as well as addressing, specifically, any differences in the Minnesota State Standards. This was an 18 + month project involving many highly qualified Montessorians from the Minneapolis/St. Paul area and nationwide, and we are so grateful for their work!

### **Teachers and Principals**

Cornerstone makes it a priority to send all AMI trained staff to a four-day long AMI refresher course each year for professional development. This trip inspires the teachers and other trained staff and administrators to remain firmly grounded in pure Montessori pedagogy despite the almost continuous pressures to compromise aspects of the educational method to demonstrate “success” as more traditional school models do. Compromising aspects of Montessori pedagogy will not serve the children well in the long run; authentic Montessori education has cumulative affects both in terms of exceptional academic skills and strong social-emotional development. In addition, and because we recognize the significant challenges we face as we seek to serve a truly diverse population, teachers have the opportunity to be intimately involved in suggesting and planning other professional development opportunities they desire in addressing and supporting their day-to-day challenges. For example, staff participates in such in-services as Adverse Childhood Experiences, The Functions of Behavior, Understanding Generational Poverty, and The Importance of Sleep and its affects on Children and Education.

### **Current Student Achievement Plans**

Cornerstone’s Literacy Plan, Title I and Title II Plans, and the Elementary Lead Guide (teacher) Evaluation Rubric were submitted as additional attachments.

## **Conclusion**

We are almost giddy with excitement as we look back on the last year, our first year with the village of Cornerstone complete and the upper elementary program off the ground in the last two buildings! As a young program, it often takes some time to retain the sixth years (sixth graders) and yet we are starting our first year of the program with sixth year children and there are 14 of them! All but one of the sixth year children stayed and it speaks volumes about where the program is and what is happening for the children here at Cornerstone. We feel the older children's presence in their strong leadership and amazing capabilities; their capacity to see what needs to be done and make it happen. The lower elementary classrooms are full to brimming with experienced and grounded Montessori children; what we haven't seen happen until mid year in our first few years, is happening in the classrooms already in the first weeks of school. Children working in low murmurs, engaged, interested, excited, creative and supportive. Children taking part in setting up and implementing systems of justice that make sense. Children are asking for presentations. Children loving the work they are here to do. We realize we are still in the very beginning years of the school and there is much work to be done! We have our Continuous Improvement School Rating to pay close attention to, but we will not lose sight of the fact that there are many measures of success and this is one. We are renewed and energized for the immensity of this work by the realization that our mission of providing high-quality, rigorous, authentic Montessori education in the public setting is a reality that many children and families are now experiencing. Parents, teachers, staff, and most importantly, the children themselves, know, feel, and experience the exceptionality of the education at Cornerstone. We look forward to sharing our continued growth towards our mission with you in the 2015-2016 Annual Report.

## Appendices

### Appendix A – VOA Accountability and Oversight System



#### **School Accountability and Authorizer Oversight System**

I. School Accountability System & Authorizer Oversight

II. Authorizer Intervention Tool

III. Contract Renewal Rubric

#### **Introduction**

Volunteers of America of Minnesota (VOA-MN) is committed to fulfilling its role as a charter school authorizer by holding its schools accountable for a range of results. The accountability system presented in this document ensures that VOA-MN will uphold its legal obligation to make sure the schools it authorizes are reaching (or making adequate progress toward) the goals and benchmarks outlined in its charter contract and Minnesota statute.

VOA-MN uses a standard charter contract with unique school-specific terms that capture different approaches to achieving student success. The individuality of each school will be preserved in the “Academic Program Description” addendum to the charter contract.

One of the most important ways VOA-MN gathers information about the schools it authorizes is through on-site visits. Site visits allow the authorizer to observe the school in action firsthand, hear directly from all key stakeholders, and corroborate school-reported information and data. VOA-MN conducts two different types of site visits: Formal and Informal - Monitoring. The Formal site visits will follow a more structured protocol, and will produce written and oral feedback to the school staff and board. VOA-MN will also make informal monitoring visits to schools for follow-up oversight, special events, and check-ins.

Volunteers of America of Minnesota has developed an assessment system that will be used to determine the extent to which the school is meeting expectations under the VOAMN School Performance and Accountability Framework, as well as guide charter contract renewal decisions. The assessment system uses the same standards scale as the Authorizer Accountability and Oversight System:

- Meets standard
- Partially Meets / Approaching standard
- Not meeting standard

★ A school may also earn an additional star if the school meets standard in an area of examination and demonstrates an exemplary practice (e.g., academic growth, model policy or procedure). In the Academic Performance section, the star is also synonymous with Exceeding Standards on the tables.

The primary purpose of a charter school is to improve pupil learning and student achievement. VOA-MN holds the schools it authorizes accountable in five major areas: academic performance, fiscal management, board governance, management and operations and legal compliance. Each area has multiple indicators of success and

the charter school's performance on each indicator will be rated as indicated in the aforementioned paragraph. Four essential questions drive VOA-MN's accountability of charter schools.

## **BOARD GOVERNANCE PERFORMANCE**

### **Does the school have a compliant board engaged in proper oversight?**

Effective board governance is essential to the successful start-up and operation of a public charter school. The diversity of charter school board memberships – teachers, parents, community leaders, and volunteers – heightens the importance of consistent expectations and development activities.

The authorizer regularly monitors the performance quality of the school board based on authorizer observations; interviews with the director, board and faculty; and the review of school policies, reports and board meeting minutes. A school must have a governance model that provides quality oversight by ensuring that there are checks and balances between the board and the school administrators.

A school board is responsible for developing, implementing, and assessing policy; defining sound employee relations; conducting open meetings; recognizing and conforming to the legal mandates imposed by state and federal laws; and governing within the limits of a delegation of state authority – as a nonprofit and public school board. Additionally, the board has an obligation to assess its successes and failures; inform the public of all deliberations and decisions; promote accountability; enhance public understanding of its mission; conform to standards of ethical behavior; provide a framework for setting goals; and develop strategic plans for the accomplishment of those goals.

**VOA-MN's governance expectations / performance indicators include the following:** The Board of Directors complies with Minnesota law regarding board training requirements and board governance structure.

- The board regularly reviews, updates, and approves its bylaws. The bylaws are consistent with state law.
- The Board conducts a comprehensive evaluation (including all aspects of the position description) of the performance of the school leader through a defined annual evaluation process.
- The Board has a board-approved professional development plan for the school director (if applicable as required by Minnesota Statutes 2009, 124D.10, subd. 11(b)).
- The Board of Directors will maintain a quorum for all board meetings.
- A board packet, containing the agenda, related documents, and monthly financials is distributed to all members of the Board of Directors, the school leadership and the Authorizer at least three days prior to each board meeting. The Board of Directors complies with the Minnesota Data Practices Act (Minn. Stat. Chapter 13).
- The Board of Directors institutes / follows an orientation process for bringing on new members.
- The Board of Directors completes a self-evaluation each year.
- The school board periodically engages in strategic planning, and the school exemplifies the strategic direction set by the board.
- The school board meets its governance model requirements laid out in its bylaws and as required by Minnesota Statute and will maintain a balance of skills and expertise among members at all times (i.e. business, marketing, legal, accounting, fundraising, human resources, education, etc.).
- The Board of Directors maintains a "Board Documents Binder" at all times which includes meetings minutes, board documents (bylaws, articles of incorporation, etc.), and financial statements.
- The Board maintains a "School Board Policy Binder." The board reviews, updates, and approve its policies as needed or required by state law.

## **SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS**

### **Is the organization effective and well run?**

Effective day to day operations of a charter school support the Learning Program. A well-run school provides an environment in which staff and students can perform at the highest possible level and more effectively reach the school's goals. Management and operations of the school will be monitored by the authorizer on an ongoing basis.

### **VOAMN's school management and operations expectations / performance indicators include:**

- The school will maintain a high level of parent, teacher and student satisfaction rates based on interviews, surveys and retention rates.
- Mission and Vision are central to the school's identity and inform all decision making processes.
- The school's learning program exemplifies the mission and vision of the school.
- The school exhibits strong academic and organizational leadership.
- The school employs highly qualified, appropriately licensed teachers.
- School has an employee retention rate exceeding 75 percent (excluding retirements).
- All school staff and volunteers have completed criminal background checks per state law and school policy.
- The school meets / maintains its enrollment goals and experiences stable to growing enrollment (waitlists).
- The school maintains a safe facility that is conducive to learning.
- The school institutes a fair and open student admission process that complies with Minnesota law.
- The school is fulfilling its purposes as defined in the Charter School Law (Minnesota Statutes (2009), 124D.10, subd. 1) and charter contract.
- The learning program exemplifies VOA Hallmarks.
- The school institutes a fair and open employment process that complies with state and federal law.
- The school has defined job descriptions and evaluation process for all faculty members.
- Teacher evaluations are designed and conducted consistent with state statutory requirements.
- The school maintains a complete and well-organized VOA-MN "Compliance Binder" on site that includes VOA-MN defined evidence of compliance with state and federal statutes organized in the manner prescribed by VOA-MN.
- The school shall submit information to the authorizer in accordance with the VOA-MN prescribed "Annual Submission Calendar."

## **SCHOOL ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

### **Is the school's learning program a success as evidenced by high academic performance annually?**

All public schools, including charters, must fully participate in the state assessments - Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments. Additionally, the school shall annually complete a VOA-MN (authorizer)/School jointly approved interim assessment in reading and math. Data from state assessments will be compiled and evaluated in the Annual VOA-MN Authorized Charter Schools Academic Performance Report by the authorizer. Charter schools are also required to set specific and measurable goals in academic and nonacademic areas for which they agree to be held accountable in their charter contract. These goals provide the central focus for the charter school leadership, staff, and families.

Each of the following expectations and performance indicators pertain to the individual school specific VOA-MN performance goals. The indicators provide the ability for the school to achieve their goal over the course of the entire term as well as providing benchmarks for each individual year of the contract term. Each VOA-MN authorized school will have a different term length. The SMART goals will accommodate those terms and variables such as past performance & demographics of the school. School specific academic SMART Goals are

negotiated in every new or renewal charter contract. VOA authorized schools will be judged on whether they meet their goals for the entire contract term, for half of the term or part of the term. If only half or part of the contract term goal is reached, the length of the renewal contract term will be reduced accordingly. The authorizer also reserves the right to terminate the charter based on poor academic performance.

**VOAMN's academic performance expectations / performance indicators for all schools include:**

- Students are performing as well or better than students at schools in their local district on state examinations in reading, math, and science based on VOA SMART goals unique to individual schools.
- Individual school individual SMART goals are achieved during contract term.
- Students are performing as well or better than the State on state examinations in reading, math, and science based on VOA SMART goals unique to individual schools.
- Students are showing positive growth based on the growth z-score average from year to year in math and reading according to VOA SMART goals unique to individual schools.
- School has adopted a formal teacher evaluation process and adheres to the requirements set forth in state statute (Minn. Stat. 122A.40).
- All teachers (but especially new teachers) are supported through a school-wide professional development plan.
- Professional development is job-embedded and directly linked to instructional practice in order to improve student achievement.

**SCHOOL SPECIFIC ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE GOALS**

**Goal increase: Term 5 year contract**

- ***Reading Proficiency 24 percentage points***
- ***Math Proficiency 28 percentage points***
- ***Science Proficiency*** (Science proficiency goal will be amended after a proficiency percentage is publicized, approximately June 15, 2016 as long as the cell size is large enough)
- ***Reading growth z-score*** (Growth will not be shown until October of 2014, being that only 3<sup>rd</sup> graders have tested at the current time. A growth goal will be written at that time.)
- ***Math growth z-score*** (Growth will not be shown until October of 2014, being that only 3<sup>rd</sup> graders have tested at the current time. A growth goal will be written at that time.)

**2013-2014 (contract renewal year)**

**Proficiency**

**READING** – The percentage of all students enrolled October 1 in grades 3-6 at Cornerstone Montessori who earn an achievement level of Meets the Standards or Exceeds the Standards on all reading state accountability tests (MCA, MOD, MTAS) will increase from 30.8% in 2013 to 36.8% in 2014. *(Increase of 6 percentage points)*

**MATH** - The percentage of all students enrolled October 1 in grades 3-6 at Cornerstone Montessori who earn an achievement level of Meets the Standards or Exceeds the Standards on all math state accountability tests (MCA, MOD, MTAS) will increase from 15.4% in 2013 to 22.4% in 2014. *(Increase of 7 percentage points)*

**SCIENCE** – There will not be a cell testing in Science in 2013-2014



### **Growth**

**READING** – Goal will be amended by June 15, 2015 after growth has been shown during the 2014 testing cycle.

**MATH** - Goal will be amended by June 15, 2015 after growth has been shown during the 2014 testing cycle.

### **2014-2015 (year 1)**

#### **Proficiency**

**READING** – The percentage of all students enrolled October 1 in grades 3-6 at Cornerstone Montessori who earn an achievement level of Meets the Standards or Exceeds the Standards on all reading state accountability tests (MCA, MOD, MTAS) will increase from 36.8% in 2014 to 42.8% in 2015. *(Increase of 6 percentage points)*

**MATH** - The percentage of all students enrolled October 1 in grades 3-6 at Cornerstone Montessori who earn an achievement level of Meets the Standards or Exceeds the Standards on all math state accountability tests (MCA, MOD, MTAS) will increase from 22.4% in 2014 to 29.4% in 2015. *(Increase of 7 percentage points)*

**SCIENCE** – This will be the first year of science testing. The science proficiency goal will be amended after the testing cycle provides a percentage. If the cell size is too small, it is expected that Cornerstone Montessori will make every effort to move each student toward individual proficiency.

### **Growth**

**READING** – Goal will be amended by June 15, 2015 after growth has been shown during the 2014 testing cycle.

**MATH** - Goal will be amended by June 15, 2015 after growth has been shown during the 2014 testing cycle.

### **2015-2016 (year 2)**

#### **Proficiency**

**READING** – The percentage of all students enrolled October 1 in grades 3-6 at Cornerstone Montessori who earn an achievement level of Meets the Standards or Exceeds the Standards on all reading state accountability tests (MCA, MOD, MTAS) will increase from 42.8% in 2015 to 48.8% in 2016. *(Increase of 6 percentage points)*

**MATH** - The percentage of all students enrolled October 1 in grades 3-6 at Cornerstone Montessori who earn an achievement level of Meets the Standards or Exceeds the Standards on all math state accountability tests (MCA, MOD, MTAS) will increase from 29.4% in 2015 to 36.4% in 2016. *(Increase of 7 percentage points)*

**SCIENCE** – The science proficiency goal will be amended after the testing cycle provides a percentage. If the cell size is too small, it is expected that Cornerstone Montessori will make every effort to move each student toward individual proficiency.

### **Growth**

**READING** – Goal will be amended by June 15, 2015 after growth has been shown during the 2014 testing cycle.

**MATH** - Goal will be amended by June 15, 2015 after growth has been shown during the 2014 testing cycle.

### **2016-2017 (year 3)**

#### **Proficiency**

**READING** – The percentage of all students enrolled October 1 in grades 3-6 at Cornerstone Montessori who earn an achievement level of Meets the Standards or Exceeds the Standards on all reading state accountability tests (MCA, MOD, MTAS) will increase from 48.8% in 2016 to 54.8% in 2017. *(Increase of 6 percentage points)*

**MATH** - The percentage of all students enrolled October 1 in grades 3-6 at Cornerstone Montessori who earn an achievement level of Meets the Standards or Exceeds the Standards on all math state accountability tests (MCA, MOD, MTAS) will increase from 36.4% in 2016 to 43.4% in 2017. *(Increase of 7 percentage points)*

**SCIENCE** – The science proficiency goal will be amended after the testing cycle provides a percentage. If the cell size is too small, it is expected that Cornerstone Montessori will make every effort to move each student toward individual proficiency.

#### **Growth**

**READING** – Goal will be amended by June 15, 2015 after growth has been shown during the 2014 testing cycle.

**MATH** - Goal will be amended by June 15, 2015 after growth has been shown during the 2014 testing cycle.

#### **2017-2018 (year 4)**

##### **Proficiency**

**READING** – The percentage of all students enrolled October 1 in grades 3-6 at Cornerstone Montessori who earn an achievement level of Meets the Standards or Exceeds the Standards on all reading state accountability tests (MCA, MOD, MTAS) will increase from 54.8% in 2017 to 60.8% in 2018. *(Increase of 6 percentage points)*

**MATH** - The percentage of all students enrolled October 1 in grades 3-6 at Cornerstone Montessori who earn an achievement level of Meets the Standards or Exceeds the Standards on all math state accountability tests (MCA, MOD, MTAS) will increase from 43.4% in 2017 to 50.4% in 2018. *(Increase of 7 percentage points)*

**SCIENCE** – The science proficiency goal will be amended after the testing cycle provides a percentage. If the cell size is too small, it is expected that Cornerstone Montessori will make every effort to move each student toward individual proficiency.

#### **Growth**

**READING** – Goal will be amended by June 15, 2015 after growth has been shown during the 2014 testing cycle.

**MATH** - Goal will be amended by June 15, 2015 after growth has been shown during the 2014 testing cycle.

#### **2018-2019 (year 5 contract renewal year)**

##### **Proficiency**

**READING** – The percentage of all students enrolled October 1 in grades 3-6 at Cornerstone Montessori who earn an achievement level of Meets the Standards or Exceeds the Standards on all reading state accountability tests (MCA, MOD, MTAS) will increase from 60.8% in 2018 to 66.8% in 2019. *(Increase of 6 percentage points)*

**MATH** - The percentage of all students enrolled October 1 in grades 3-6 at Cornerstone Montessori who earn an achievement level of Meets the Standards or Exceeds the Standards on all math state accountability tests (MCA, MOD, MTAS) will increase from 43.4% in 2018 to 50.4% in 2019. *(Increase of 7 percentage points)*

**SCIENCE** – The science proficiency goal will be amended after the testing cycle provides a percentage. If the cell size is too small, it is expected that Cornerstone Montessori will make every effort to move each student toward individual proficiency.

#### **Growth**

**READING** – Goal will be amended by June 15, 2015 after growth has been shown during the 2014 testing cycle.

**MATH** - Goal will be amended by June 15, 2015 after growth has been shown during the 2014 testing cycle.

### **SCHOOL FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE**

#### **Does the school exhibit strong fiscal health?**

Charter schools receive public funds and must meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management. It is VOA-MN's duty to ensure that the schools are responsible stewards of public funds. The charter school shall provide VOA with a copy of its draft and final annual budgets and monthly cash flow projections for each fiscal year by July 1 of each fiscal year. VOA-MN shall use submitted budget and cash flow statements, along with any other relevant information, to determine if the charter school has a realistic balanced budget plan each year. VOA shall use the financial statements presented in the charter school's annual financial audit, along with any other relevant information, to determine if the charter school maintained a balanced budget during the prior-year. In general, schools are expected to have "clean" annual financial audits.

The VOA-MN Charter School Authorizing Program publishes annually a School Financial Oversight Report on their network of authorized charter schools. The parties acknowledge that the Minnesota Charter Schools Law requires a charter school to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management. This requirement has two underlying purposes: to ensure the successful operation of the school into the future and to ensure the proper use of public funds.

#### **VOA-MN's school financial expectations / performance indicators for all schools include:**

- The school maintains a balanced budget.
- The school is compliant with state and federal financial reporting compliance.
- The school's financial audit will be submitted to the state by December 31. The school will have a clean financial audit (i.e. no major findings).
- The school is current on all financial obligations, including, but not limited to: pension payments, payroll taxes, insurance coverage, loan payments and terms.
- The school provides VOA-MN and school board members with monthly financials at least three days prior to board meetings. Packets include at least the following: 1) detailed income/expense report, 2) cash flow sheet, and 3) check register.
- The school develops and maintains a targeted fund balance determined by the school board for a projected period of years.
- The school board has a finance committee that meets monthly to review financials.
- All board members exhibit working knowledge of financial oversight.

**LEGAL AND CONTRACTUAL COMPLIANCE** - Charter schools are required to follow many state and federal laws pertaining to all public schools and are expected to uphold all provisions of the charter school contract. As such, VOA-MN expects rigorous compliance with legal and contractual obligations. Each VOA-

MN authorized charter school shall maintain a "Compliance Binder" on site that includes VOA-MN defined evidence of compliance with state and federal statutes organized in the manner prescribed by VOA-MN. Additionally, VOA-MN authorized charter schools shall submit information to the authorizer in accordance with the VOA-MN prescribed "Annual Submission Calendar." Management and operations of the school will be monitored by the authorizer on an ongoing basis and reported on annual in the Formal Site Visit Report and additionally as needed. One of the most important ways VOA-MN gathers information about the schools it authorizes is through on-site visits. Site visits allow the authorizer to observe the school in action firsthand, hear directly from all key stakeholders, and corroborate school-reported information and data. VOA-MN conducts three different types of site visits: Formal and Informal/Monitoring.

## **SITE VISITS**

- **Formal Site Visit-** Formal Site Visits are typically conducted once per year by a member of the VOA-MN Authorizing Program Leadership Team who interviews key stakeholders, and conducts classroom observations. Written feedback is provided to the Board of Directors and School leadership guided by the Site Visit Rubric. VOA-MN staff will provide formal written feedback summarizing our observations. The feedback will identify areas of strength and areas that require improvement. If a more serious issue arises from a site visit VOA-MN may implement an intervention from "Range of Interventions" table. This written feedback will be provided to both the board and school administration.
- **Informal or Monitoring Site Visit-** VOA-MN may conduct informal or monitoring site visits at any time to fulfill its duties as an authorizer. Reasons for monitoring visits may include: investigation of a complaint, determination of readiness to open, follow up on implementation of improvement plans, or documentation of best practices. These visits are typically less formal and may be impromptu or without notice. The frequency, duration, and intensity of these visits depend greatly on the school's standing with VOA-MN.

## **BOARD MEETINGS**

VOA-MN will observe a minimum of one school board meeting per year. The authorizer will use the Board Meeting Observation Rubric for internal use only (authorizer only documentation).

## **SCHOOL PUBLISHED ANNUAL REPORTS**

The charter school law (MN Stat. 124D.10, subd. 14) includes requirements for a charter school annual report. Additionally, VOA requires that annual reports include specific elements defined by VOA-MN annually (generally in June). VOA-MN required elements include how the school is performing based on the three essential questions: Is the student learning program a success? Does the school exhibit strong financial health? Is the organization effective and well-run? VOA-MN requires that schools submit a draft to the authorizer for review and comment (by an annually defined date) and that the final draft be board approved and posted to the school's official website by October 1st annually.

## **AUTHORIZER PUBLISHED SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REPORTS**

In addition to the Formal Site Visit Report that each school is provided, VOA-MN will also annually publish three VOA-MN Charter School Network Reports: Academic Performance, Board Governance, and Financial Management. The cumulative purpose of these four reports is to assess the ongoing performance of VOA-MN authorized schools regarding academic success, fiscal viability, and organizational effectiveness. The combination of school performance based on the three VOA-MN Annual School Performance Reports, annual Formal Site Visit Reports, informal and monitoring site visit observations, authorizer observations of board meetings, and ongoing monitoring of school reporting and compliance provides an accountable oversight mechanism for the authorizer, schools, and other organizations. This collective body of evidence will also form the basis for contract renewal decisions. VOA-MN has aligned these materials to each other as closely as possible to reduce redundancy, allow for more efficient completion by both the schools and VOA-MN, and to better align to the NACSA authorizing standards.

**AUTHORIZER LIAISON:** Volunteers of America of Minnesota designates the following employee as the official authorizer liaison to the School:

Stephanie Olsen, Senior Manager

VOA-MN Charter School Authorizing Program

612-270-1998

solsen@voamn.org

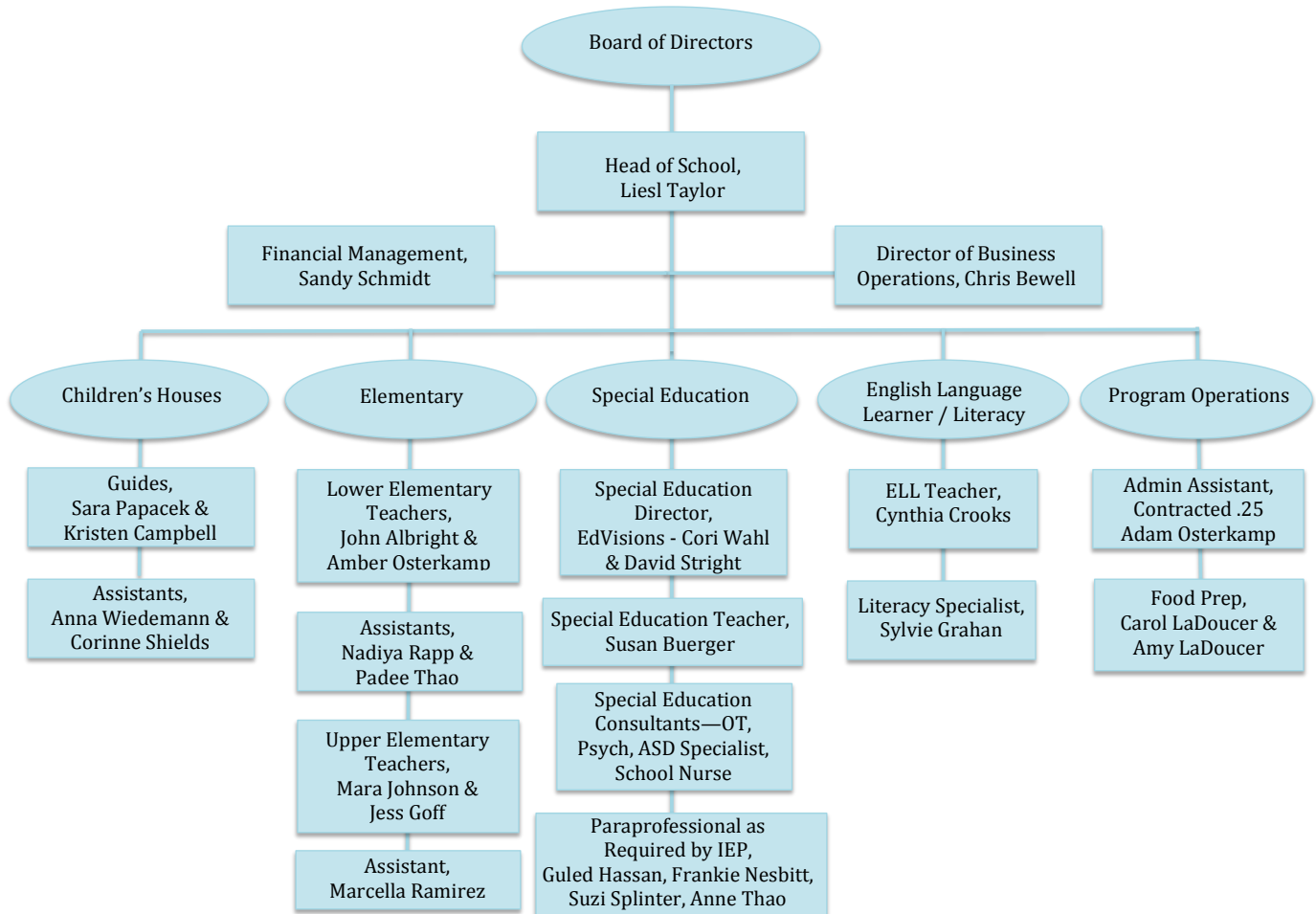
## Appendix B – Non Profit Status

Organization Name	CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Organization Type	TRUST
Contact Person	LIESL TAYLOR
Address	1611 AMES AVE
City	SAINT PAUL
State	MN
Zip Code	55106-2903
IRS Code 501(c)	03
Purpose or Description	To support children from culturally and economically diverse backgrounds living in or near St. Paul's East Side through a rigorous and high-impact Montessori program that empowers them to make positive decisions.
Phone Number	(651) 774-5000
Status	ACTIVE
Extension	Granted

**Taken from:** <http://www.ag.state.mn.us/Charity/SearchResults.asp?FederalID=271556815>

## Appendix C – CMES 2014-15 Organizational Chart

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School Org Chart—Positions as of 2014-2015 School Year



## Appendix D – 2014-15 Application Form

<p align="center"><b>Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School</b>  <b>Application Form for the 2014-2015 School Year</b>  <b>Enrolling grades K-6 for the 2014-2015 School Year</b></p>
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Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School will accept applications for enrollment for the following academic year, from **November 1 to December 1, 2013**. To be eligible for kindergarten your child must be 5 years old by September 1, 2014. If you wish to enroll your child at Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School, please fill out the information and return it to:

**Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School**  
**1611 Ames Avenue**  
**Saint Paul, MN 55106**

For more information, please contact the school at 651.774.5000

---

Student Information (Please print clearly)

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 2014-2015 Grade (please circle one):            K        1        2        3        4        5        6

---

Parent/Guardian Information (Please print clearly)

Mother/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
  
 Father/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

---

I hereby verify that the above information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature of parent/guardian: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

No child will be denied admission to Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School on the basis of gender, religion, ethnicity, immigrant (legal or non) status, or intellectual or physical ability. Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School is a charter public school and is tuition-free. Students from all backgrounds are encouraged to apply.

If more people apply than the number of spaces available for a given grade, program, or facility, Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School will conduct a public lottery to determine admittance to the school. The only preference we give in admitting students is for children who are siblings of current Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School students or children of Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School staff. In order to get this preference, parents **MUST** submit an application before the end of the open enrollment period. The lottery will be held on Monday, December 9, 2013, at 5:00 p.m.

---

(CMES Office Use Only)

Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_ Notice of Enrollment Sent on Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix E – 2014-15 Student Enrollment Form

### Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School

1611 Ames Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55106

Phone: 651.774.5000 Fax: 651-209-0846

### Student Enrollment Form 2014-15

**Student Name** (first middle & last) \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_

Last School Attended \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Grade (Sept. 1, 2014) \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Country of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Home Primary Language \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian/Mother Name** (first & last) \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phones: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian/Father Name** (first & last) \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phones: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

#### Siblings

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ School Attending \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ School Attending \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ School Attending \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ School Attending \_\_\_\_\_

The U.S. Department of Education requires the following two-part question regarding race and ethnicity. Please complete both Part A and Part B.

Part A. **Is this student Hispanic/Latino?** *(Choose only one)*

- ☐ **No, not Hispanic/Latino**
- ☐ **Yes, Hispanic/ Latino**  
(A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.)

The above part of the question is about ethnicity, not race. **No matter what you selected above, please continue to answer the following by marking one or more boxes to indicate what you consider your student's race to be.**

Part B. **What is the student's race?** *(Choose one or more)*

- ☐ **American Indian or Alaska Native**  
(A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.)
- ☐ **Asian**  
(A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand and Vietnam.)
- ☐ **Black or African American**  
(A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.)
- ☐ **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander**  
(A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa or other Pacific Islands.)
- ☐ **White**  
(A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East or North Africa)

Did your child receive special services or participate in special programs at a previous school? \_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_No

Does your student have an IEP? \_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_No

Does your student receive any other community services? \_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_No

Provider \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any custody related issues? \_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_No

Other Comments:

Signature of parent/guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix F – CMES School Satisfaction Survey Spring 2015



## 2014-15 Parent Satisfaction Survey Results

*Note: The survey was available May 13<sup>th</sup> through May 26<sup>th</sup> online and in paper form. Respondents could choose to do the survey in English or Spanish. Thirty responses were received, 29 on line, 1 via paper, and all were submitted in English.*

**In which language would you like to complete the survey? ¿En qué idioma desea completar la encuesta? (30 responses)**

**Result Responses Percentage**

English	30	100.0%
Español	0	0.0%

### A. Overall Satisfaction

**A-1. My child is supported well at Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School. (30 responses)**

Result	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	18	60.0%
Agree	9	30.0%
Agree Somewhat	2	6.7%
Disagree Somewhat	0	0.0%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.3%
Does Not Apply	0	0.0%

**A-2. I am satisfied with the school's lunch program. (30 responses)**

Result	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	6	20.0%
Agree	10	33.3%
Agree Somewhat	2	6.7%
Disagree Somewhat	4	13.3%
Disagree	2	6.7%
Strongly Disagree	4	13.3%
Does Not Apply	2	6.7%

**A-3. I would recommend Cornerstone to my family or friends. (30 responses)**

Result	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	17	56.7%
Agree	9	30.0%
Agree Somewhat	3	10.0%
Disagree Somewhat	0	0.0%
Disagree	1	3.3%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Does Not Apply	0	0.0%

## B. Communication Between Home and School

### B-1. I feel comfortable bringing my concerns to the school's administrators. (30 responses)

Result	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	13	43.3%
Agree	13	43.3%
Agree Somewhat	4	13.4%
Disagree Somewhat	0	0.0%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Does Not Apply	0	0.0%

### B-2. I am satisfied with the communication I receive regarding Montessori philosophy. (30 responses)

Result	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	9	30.0%
Agree	11	36.7%
Agree Somewhat	9	30.0%
Disagree Somewhat	1	3.3%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Does Not Apply	0	0.0%

### B-3. I am satisfied with the communication I receive regarding events and schedules at school. (30 responses)

Result	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	6	20.0%
Agree	16	53.3%
Agree Somewhat	5	16.7%
Disagree Somewhat	3	10.0%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Does Not Apply	0	0.0%

### B-4. I am satisfied with the communication I receive regarding my child's social/emotional development. (30 responses)

Result	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	6	20.0%
Agree	10	33.4%
Agree Somewhat	9	30.0%
Disagree Somewhat	3	10.0%
Disagree	1	3.3%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.3%
Does Not Apply	0	0.0%

**B-5. I am satisfied with the communication I receive regarding my child's academic progress. (30 responses)**

Result	Responses Percentage	
Strongly Agree	5	16.7%
Agree	12	40.0%
Agree Somewhat	8	26.7%
Disagree Somewhat	3	10.0%
Disagree	1	3.3%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.3%
Does Not Apply	0	0.0%

**B-6. I feel comfortable talking to my child's guide. (30 responses)**

Result	Responses Percentage	
Strongly Agree	17	56.7%
Agree	11	36.7%
Agree Somewhat	1	3.3%
Disagree Somewhat	0	0.0%
Disagree	1	3.3%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Does Not Apply	0	0.0%

**C. Parent/Guardian Involvement - Volunteering**

**C-1. Did the school host workshops or courses that helped you understand and work with your child? (30 responses)**

Result	Responses Percentage	
Yes	27	90.0%
No	0	0.0%
I don't know	3	10.0%

**C-2. Approximately how many workshops or courses did Cornerstone provide for parents on parenting skills (i.e., discipline, child development, etc.) this year? (30 responses)**

Result	Responses Percentage	
None	2	6.7%
1-2	2	6.7%
3-4	10	33.3%
5-6	7	23.3%
7 or more	3	10.0%
I don't know	6	20.0%

**C-3. How many workshops or parenting courses did you or your family attend this year? (30 responses)**

Result	Responses Percentage	
None	4	13.3%
1-2	19	63.3%
3-4	5	16.7%
5-6	2	6.7%
7 or more	0	0.0%
I don't know	0	0.0%

**C-4. If you DID attend workshops/courses this year, did they provide you with useful information? (30 responses)**

Result	Responses	Percentage
Yes, Always	17	56.7%
Usually	11	36.7%
Not usually	1	3.3%
Never	1	3.3%

**C-5. If you DID NOT attend some or any workshops/courses at Cornerstone this year, please specify why. Choose all that apply. (36 responses)**

Result	Responses	Percentage
I was not provided with enough information or notice	2	5.4%
Workshop(s) not held at convenient times	9	25.4%
No child care available	2	5.4%
Workshop information provided is difficult for parents to understand	1	2.8%
I was not interested in workshop topic(s)	11	30.4%
Workshop(s) not provided in language I understood easily	1	2.8%
Other—please specify:	10	27.8%

**C-6. How many parent-teacher conferences did you attend this year? (30 responses)**

Result	Responses	Percentage
None	0	0.0%
1	6	20.0%
2 or more	24	80.0%

**C-7. This year, were you contacted by Cornerstone staff regarding... Choose all that apply (61 responses)**

Result	Responses	Percentage
Your child's academic successes	12	19.7%
Your child's academic struggles	5	8.2%
Your child's positive social behavior	16	26.2%
Your child's challenging social behavior	9	14.7%
No reason, just to make contact	9	14.7%
Other—please specify	10	16.5%

**C-8. Were you asked this year about your interests, talents, or availability for volunteering at Cornerstone? (30 responses)**

Result	Responses	Percentage
Yes	26	80.0%
No	4	20.0%

**C-9. If you volunteered this year, please indicate how often for each activity:**

**Helping for community gatherings (29 responses)**

Result	Responses	Percentage
Never	21	72.4%
1 time	5	17.2%
2-3 times	1	3.4%
4 or more times	1	3.4%
Other	1	3.4%

**Sharing a talent or custom from your culture (29 responses)**

Result	Responses	Percentage
Never	26	89.6%
1 time	1	3.4%
2-3 times	0	0.0%
4 or more times	1	3.4%
Other	1	3.4%

**Organizing a school event (29 responses)**

Result	Responses	Percentage
Never	25	86.2%
1 time	2	6.8%
2-3 times	0	0.0%
4 or more times	1	3.4%
Other	1	3.4%

**Other, please specify (29 responses)**

Result	Responses	Percentage
Never	16	55.1%
1 time	2	6.8%
2-3 times	1	3.4%
4 or more times	7	24.1%
Other	3	10.3%

**C-10. If you did not volunteer this year, please indicate why. Choose all that apply. (28 responses)**

Result	Responses	Percentage
I was never asked	2	7.1%
I didn't know who to contact or how to get involved	1	3.6%
I didn't feel I had the skills to volunteer	0	0.0%
I had a conflict with my work schedule	16	57.2%
I didn't feel comfortable	2	7.1%
I wasn't interested	2	7.1%
Other—please specify	5	17.9%

**C-11. This year when you visited Cornerstone...**

**Was the reception staff friendly and helpful? (30 responses)**

Result	Responses	Percentage
All of the time	27	90.0%
Most of the time	3	10.0%
Some of the time	0	0.0%
None of the time	0	0.0%

**Were the teachers easy to talk to? (30 responses)**

Result	Responses	Percentage
All of the time	21	70.0%
Most of the time	8	26.7%
Some of the time	1	3.3%
None of the time	0	0.0%

**Were the administrators easy to talk to? (30 responses)**

Result	Responses	Percentage
All of the time	21	70.0%
Most of the time	7	23.3%
Some of the time	2	6.7%
None of the time	0	0.0%

**Did you feel comfortable interacting with parents of cultural and ethnic backgrounds different from yours? (30 responses)**

Result	Responses	Percentage
All of the time	22	73.4%
Most of the time	7	23.3%
Some of the time	1	3.3%
None of the time	0	0.0%

**Did you feel welcomed? (30 responses)**

Result	Responses	Percentage
All of the time	28	93.3%
Most of the time	2	6.7%
Some of the time	0	0.0%
None of the time	0	0.0%

**Were written communications from the school available in a language you understood? (30 responses)**

Result	Responses	Percentage
All of the time	30	100.0%
Most of the time	0	0.0%
Some of the time	0	0.0%
None of the time	0	0.0%



## D. Safe and Secure School Environment

### D-1. My child is safe at Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School. (30 responses)

Result	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	19	63.4%
Agree	10	33.3%
Agree Somewhat	1	3.3%
Disagree Somewhat	0	0.0%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Does Not Apply	0	0.0%

### D-2. I feel welcome when I visit Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School. (30 responses)

Result	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	20	66.7%
Agree	10	33.3%
Agree Somewhat	0	0.0%
Disagree Somewhat	0	0.0%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Does Not Apply	0	0.0%

### D-3. The school is clean and neat. (30 responses)

Result	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	23	76.7%
Agree	4	13.3%
Agree Somewhat	3	10.0%
Disagree Somewhat	0	0.0%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Does Not Apply	0	0.0%

### D-4. Children demonstrated age-appropriate, respectful behavior. (30 responses)

Result	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	13	43.3%
Agree	14	46.7%
Agree Somewhat	2	6.7%
Disagree Somewhat	0	0.0%
Disagree	1	3.3%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Does Not Apply	0	0.0%

## E. Quality of Educational Programs/Student Academic Progress

### E-1. My child's teacher is well qualified. (30 responses)

Result	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	19	63.4%
Agree	7	23.3%
Agree Somewhat	3	10.0%
Disagree Somewhat	0	0.0%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Does Not Apply	1	3.3%

### E-2. I am satisfied with how the school supports my child's development regarding reading. (30 responses)

Result	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	16	53.3%
Agree	8	26.7%
Agree Somewhat	3	10.0%
Disagree Somewhat	3	10.0%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Does Not Apply	0	0.0%

### E-3. I am satisfied with how the school supports my child's development regarding math skills. (30 responses)

Result	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	15	50.0%
Agree	8	26.7%
Agree Somewhat	4	13.3%
Disagree Somewhat	2	6.7%
Disagree	1	3.3%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Does Not Apply	0	0.0%

### E-4. I am satisfied with the Montessori program provided at Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School. (30 responses)

Result	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	16	53.3%
Agree	9	30.0%
Agree Somewhat	2	6.7%
Disagree Somewhat	1	3.3%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Does Not Apply	2	6.7%

**E-5. My child is being supported in his/her development and is learning a lot at Cornerstone Elementary. (30 responses)**

<b>Result</b>	<b>Responses Percentage</b>	
Strongly Agree	16	53.3%
Agree	7	23.4%
Agree Somewhat	3	10.0%
Disagree Somewhat	1	3.3%
Disagree	1	3.3%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Does Not Apply	2	6.7%

## Appendix G – CMES By-Laws

**AMENDED AND RESTATED  
BY-LAWS  
OF  
CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
(Effective October 12, 2010)**

### **ARTICLE I – NAME AND OFFICE**

- 1.1** **NAME.** As registered with the State of Minnesota through its Articles of Incorporation, the name of the School shall be Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School.
- 1.2** **OFFICE.** The registered office shall be as stated in the Articles of Incorporation. The Corporation may have such other offices within the State of Minnesota as the board of directors may determine or as the affairs of the corporation may require. The registered office may be, but need not be, identical with the principal office in the State of Minnesota.

### **ARTICLE II - PURPOSE AND AFFILIATION**

- 2.1** **PURPOSE.** The purposes for which the School is organized are stated in its Articles of Incorporation.
- 2.2** **AFFILIATION.** The School is founded on the principles and pedagogy of the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), the organization founded by Maria Montessori in 1929. As such, the school will strive to hire AMI-trained teachers whenever possible.

### **ARTICLE III - MINNESOTA LAW COMPLIANCE**

- 3.1** **COMPLIANCE.** The governance of the Corporation will at all times be in accord with the provisions of MN Stat. §317A (Nonprofit Corporations), MN Stat. §124D.10 (Charter Schools), §124D.11 (Revenue for a Charter School), MN Stat. §13D.01 et seq (Minnesota Open Meeting Law), MN Stat. §13.01 (Minnesota Government Data Practices Act), and such other provisions of Minnesota laws therein referenced.

### **ARTICLE IV - MEMBERSHIP**

- 4.1** **MEMBERSHIP.** The school shall have no members.

### **ARTICLE V - BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

- 5.1** **GENERAL POWERS.** The affairs of the Corporation shall be managed by its Board of Directors. Except as limited by the Articles of Incorporation, these Bylaws, MN Stat. §124D.10, and by law, the Board of Directors shall have the power and authority to do all acts and perform all functions that the Corporation may do or perform.
- 5.2** **DIRECTOR RESPONSIBILITIES.** Board members are expected to be good stewards of the Corporation, attend all board meetings, actively participate in Board activities, attend Department of Education-approved training as may be required from time to time, and comply with all state and federal laws that pertain to Minnesota Charter schools.

**5.3 NUMBER AND COMPOSITION.** At all times, the Board of Directors shall consist of at least five (5) but no more than fifteen (15) nonrelated members and include: (i) at least one licensed teacher employed at the school or a licensed teacher providing instruction under a contract between the School and a cooperative; (ii) the parent or legal guardian of a student enrolled in the charter school; and (iii) an interested community member who is not employed by the charter school and does not have a child enrolled in the school. The Board will also consist of at least one (1) AMI-trained individual, to serve in any capacity. The chief financial officer and the chief administrator shall be ex-officio nonvoting board members. Director seats shall be designated as seats A, B, C, etc. initially to be drawn by lot. At the date of these by-laws, the Board of Directors is a “non- teacher majority,” and board membership shall be in accord with the provisions of MN Stat. 124D.10 Subd. 4(g).

**5.4 TERMS**

**5.4.1 FOUNDING BOARD MEMBERS.** The Founding Board members shall consist of those individuals named in the Articles of Incorporation, and shall serve a two-year term. New terms will begin on July 1 and end June 30, coinciding with the corporation's fiscal year. Any vacancies created during that time and any newly created directorships shall be filled by a majority vote of the Board of Directors. Founding Board members will serve until a timely election for members of the ongoing charter school board of directors is held, before the school completes its third year of operation.

**5.4.2 ONGOING BOARD MEMBERS.** The ongoing board of directors will be elected before the School completes its third year of operation. At the Annual Meeting in the third year of the School's operation, or such earlier date as the Board may determine, one third of the directors (e.g., Directors A, B, and C) will be elected to a one (1) year term; one third of the directors will be elected to a two (2) year term; and one third of the directors will be elected to a three (3) year term. Additionally, the statutory designated teacher, parent, and community member directors shall at this time be elected to three year terms. Thereafter, directors shall hold office for a three (3) year term or until a successor has been duly elected and qualified, or until the director dies, resigns, is removed or the term otherwise expires as provided by law or by the Bylaws of this Corporation. Board members are eligible for re-election for up to three (3) consecutive terms.

**5.5 NOMINATION PROCESS.** Beginning 60 days in advance of the Corporation's annual meeting, the Board of Directors will solicit nominations for all of the Directorate positions that will be filled at the next annual meeting. The Board of Directors will compile the list of nominees and notify the eligible voters of the nominees for each position 30 days before the date of the annual meeting.

**5.6 ELECTIONS.** The election of the board of Directors shall be in compliance with Section 124D.10 subd. 4(c) of the Minnesota Statutes.

**5.7 QUORUM AND ADJOURNED MEETING.** A duly called meeting at which at least a majority of the members of the Board of Directors are present shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of the Board of Directors. If, however, such quorum shall not be present at any such meeting, the director or directors present thereat shall have the power to adjourn the meeting from time to time without notice other than announcement at the meeting, until a quorum shall be present. Notwithstanding the foregoing, if a quorum is present when a duly called meeting is convened, and later enough directors withdraw from the meeting so that less than a quorum remains, the directors remaining may continue to transact business until adjournment.

**5.8 PRESENCE AT MEETINGS.** Unless at some date permitted by Minnesota law, members of the Board of Directors or of any committee, as applicable, may participate, but not be deemed present or vote, in a meeting of the Board of Directors or any committee by means of conference telephone or similar

communications equipment by which all persons participating in the meeting can simultaneously hear each other. Such participation at a meeting shall constitute presence in person at the meeting.

- 5.9 VOTING.** Each member of the Board of Directors shall have the power to exercise one (1) vote on all matters to be decided by resolution of the Board. The affirmative vote of a majority of a quorum of Board members shall constitute a duly authorized action of the Board.
- 5.10 RESIGNATION AND REMOVAL.** 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 Corporation. 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 Corporation. The Board may, but shall not be required, adopt a policy defining "cause" for the purposes of these By-laws.
- 5.11 VACANCIES.** Unless otherwise provided by Minnesota Statutes, Section 317A.227, vacancies of the Board of Directors caused by death, disqualification, resignation, disability, removal or such other cause shall be filled by appointment of a new director by the affirmative vote of a majority of the remaining directors, even if less than a quorum. A director filling a vacancy shall hold office until the end of the term for the seat which that Director holds or the next annual election of directors, whichever first occurs.
- 5.12 COMPENSATION.** Directors, as such, shall not receive stated salaries for their services. Directors may be reimbursed for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, as the Board of Directors from time to time determines to be directly in furtherance of the purposes and in the best interests of the School.
- 5.13 DIRECTOR CONFLICTS OF INTEREST.** Directors must comply with MN Stat 124D.10 regarding conflict of interest. In addition, all directors are expected to fully disclose all conflicts or potential conflicts of interest and refrain from voting on any such matter.

## ARTICLE VI - MEETINGS

- 6.1 MEETINGS.** Meetings are to be scheduled and conducted in accord with the Minnesota Open Meeting Law and Roberts Rules of Order. Regular meetings of the Board shall be held not less than once each month during the academic year at a time and place to be set by the Board, with notice of the time and date published in accordance with Minnesota Open Meeting Law, MN Stat. 13D.01 et. seq. Summer meetings may be held at the discretion of the Board of Directors. Notification of such meetings shall be in accordance with Minnesota Open Meeting Law.
- 6.2 SPECIAL AND EMERGENCY MEETINGS.** As permitted by Minnesota law, special and emergency meetings of the Board of Directors may be called. Notification of such meeting shall be in accordance with Minnesota Open Meeting Law. Such notice shall contain the date, time, place, and purpose of the meeting.
- 6.3 ANNUAL MEETING.** The Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors shall be held in May for the purpose of presenting reports by the Board President, Treasurer, and Head of School on the activities and financial condition of the school. Elections for open seats on the Board of Directors will also take place in accordance with Section 124D.10 subd. 4(d) of the Minnesota Statutes.
- 6.4 MEETING NOTICE.** Regular meetings of the Board shall be held once each month during the academic year at a time and place to be set by the Board, with notice of the time and date provided to the directors and all constituents in accordance with Minnesota Open Meeting Law.

## ARTICLE VII - COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD

- 7.1 COMMITTEE FORMATION.** The Board of Directors may, by resolution passed by a majority of the Board of Directors, designate, define the authority of, set the number and determine the identity of, members of one or more committees. The Board may, by similar vote, designate alternate or replacement members of any committee. Committee members need not be members of the Board of Directors. The Board Chair shall be an ex-officio member of all committees, unless the Board Chair serves as a member of such committee.
- 7.2 AUTHORITY OF COMMITTEES.** Each committee shall be under the direction and control of the Board and shall keep regular minutes of its proceedings. Committee actions shall have no effect unless approved by the Board.
- 7.3 PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING MEETINGS.** Committee meetings shall be conducted in accord with the provisions of the Minnesota Open Meeting Law. Committee activities shall be conducted such that they will advance the best interest of the School. The meetings of all committees shall be open to attendance by all directors, but such directors may not vote unless they are members of that committee.

## ARTICLE VIII - OFFICERS

- 8.1 OFFICERS.** The officers of the School shall be elected by the Board for one (1) year terms, and shall consist of a Board Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary who must be concomitantly serving on the Board of Directors. The Board may appoint such additional officers who need not be members of the Board of Directors including, but not limited to, designating as officers the chief administrator and the chief financial officer of the School, who are serving as ex-officio members of the Board of Directors, with such duties as it deems advisable. Any officer may be removed at any time prior to the expiration of his or her term by affirmative vote of a majority of the Board. Duties of the officers shall be as follows:
- 8.2 BOARD CHAIR.** The Board Chair shall act as the chairman of the Board of Directors and exercise the functions of the office of the president of the Corporation. The Board Chair, when present, shall preside at all meetings of the board; see that orders and resolutions of the board are carried into effect; sign and deliver in the name of the School deeds, mortgages, bonds, contracts, or other instruments pertaining to the business of the School, except in cases in which the authority to sign and deliver is required by law to be exercised by another person or is expressly delegated by the School's organizational documents or by the board to another officer or agent of the School; maintain records of and, when necessary, certify proceedings of the Board; and perform other duties prescribed by the board or by Minnesota Statutes, Section 317A.305, subd. 2.
- 8.3 VICE CHAIR.** The Vice Chair shall act in the capacity of the Chair whenever the Chair is absent or unable to attend to the School's business. The Vice Chair shall perform other such duties prescribed by the board from time to time or by Minnesota Statutes, Section 317A.305, subd. 2.
- 8.4 SECRETARY.** The Secretary shall keep the minutes of all Board Meetings; in the absence of the Secretary, another Board member will act as secretary. In addition, the Secretary will see that all notices are duly given regarding Board meetings, be custodian of all documents and records belonging to the Corporation, and perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the Board of Directors or the Board Chair from time to time.
- 8.5 TREASURER.** The Treasurer shall keep accurate financial records for the School. The Treasurer shall endorse and deposit money, drafts, and checks in the name of the School; disburse the funds of the School

as ordered by the Board, making proper vouchers therefore; and perform any other such duties as may from time to time be prescribed by the Board of Directors or by the Board Chair. The Treasurer may, with board approval, delegate the day-to-day financial operations of the School to another person. Monthly, or upon board request, the Treasurer shall provide the Board with an account of transactions and of the financial condition of the School. The Treasurer shall also serve as the Chair of the Finance Committee.

## **ARTICLE IX - DISTRIBUTION OF ASSETS**

- 9.1 RIGHT TO CEASE OPERATIONS AND DISTRIBUTE ASSETS.** By a two-thirds (2/3) vote of all directors, the Board of Directors may resolve that the Corporation cease operations and voluntarily dissolve. Such resolution shall set forth the proposed dissolution and direct designated officers of the Corporation to perform all acts necessary to affect dissolution. If such cessation and distribution is called for, the Board of Directors shall set a date for commencement of the distribution.
- 9.2 CESSATION AND DISTRIBUTION.** When cessation of operations and distribution of assets has been called for, the Board of Directors and the designated officers shall cause the Corporation to discontinue its regular business activities and operations as soon as practicable, and shall liquidate and distribute all the Corporation's assets to other entities in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, Section 317A.735 and in accordance with the Articles of Incorporation. Notice of intent to dissolve shall be filed with the Secretary of State, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Section 317A.723.

## **ARTICLE X - INDEMNIFICATION**

- 10.1 INDEMNIFICATION.** Each director, officer, and employee of the School, past or present, and each person who serves or may have served at the request of the School as an appointed representative, shall be indemnified by the School, for actions taken and decisions made by such persons on behalf of this School, in accordance with, and to the fullest extent permitted by MN Stat. 317A.521.
- 10.2 LIMITATION ON INDEMNIFICATION.** The School shall not be obligated to indemnify any other person or entity, except to the extent such obligation shall be specifically approved by resolution of the Board of Directors.
- 10.3 INSURANCE.** In accordance with MN 124D.10 subd. 25(c), the School shall obtain at least the amount of and types of insurance up to the applicable tort liability limits under MN Stat. 466. A copy of the insurance policy must be submitted to the School's authorizer and the commissioner before starting operations. Changes in the School's insurance carrier or policy must be submitted to the authorizer and commissioner within 20 business days of the change.

## **ARTICLE XI - FINANCIAL MATTERS**

- 11.1 FISCAL YEAR.** The fiscal year of the Corporation shall be from July 1 of one calendar year to June 30 of the following calendar year.
- 11.2 ACCOUNTING SYSTEM.** The Board of Directors shall cause to be established and maintained, in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles applied on a consistent basis, an appropriate accounting and financial reporting system for the School.
- 11.3 ANNUAL AUDIT.** The Board of Directors shall engage an independent auditor to annually audit the records and books of the School. The Secretary and Treasurer shall submit all records and books of the School for examination by the auditor as requested. Pursuant to MN Stat. 124D.10 Subd. 6a, the School will submit an audit report to the commissioner and its authorizer by December 31 each year.



**11.4 DOCUMENTS KEPT AT REGISTERED OFFICE.** The Board of Directors shall cause to be kept at the registered office of this Corporation all records required by the Minnesota Open Meeting Law and originals or copies of:

**11.4.1** Records of all proceedings of the Board of Directors and all committees;

**11.4.2** Records of all votes and actions of the members;

**11.4.3** All financial statements of this Corporation; and

**11.4.4** Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of this Corporation and all amendments and restatements thereof.

## **ARTICLE XII - AMENDMENTS**

Subject to the provisions of MN Stat.317A.181, Subd. 2(b), these bylaws may be amended in whole or in part by an affirmative vote of a majority of the directors then seated.

## **CERTIFICATE**

The undersigned Secretary of Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School, a Minnesota nonprofit corporation, does hereby certify that these Amended and Restated By-Laws were adopted and approved by a majority vote of the Board of Directors this 12 day of October 2010.

Margo Roberts, Secretary

## Appendix H - 2014-15 Financial Statements and Revised Budget

**Cornerstone Montessori Elementary  
Revenue and Expenses  
July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015**

<b>Annual Organization Revenue and Expense</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>2014-2015 Revised Budget</b>	<b>2014-2015 Actual FYE</b>
<b>Annual Revenues</b>			
Governmental Source Revenue	Federal Funds	91,523	99,667
Earned Income Revenue & Donations	Local Funds	41,745	40,848
State Aid Payments	State Funds	1,398,074	1,397,948
<b>Total Organization Annual Revenues</b>		<b>\$ 1,531,343</b>	<b>\$1,538,464</b>
<b>Annual Expenditures</b>			
Administration		\$ 53,743	\$ 52,526
District Support Services		174,958	156,973
Instructional Program Services		793,701	777,286
Instructional Support Services		26,215	18,160
Pupil Support Services		223,102	223,271
Buildings and Equipment		237,404	226,603
Fiscal and Other Fixed Cost Programs		9,721	7,292
<b>Total Organization Annual Expenditures</b>		<b>\$ 1,518,843</b>	<b>\$1,462,111</b>
<b>Revenue Less Expenses Becomes Fund Balance</b>		<b>\$ 12,500</b>	<b>\$ 76,353</b>
<b>Beginning Fund Balance, All Funds, July 1, 2014</b>		<b>\$ 206,010</b>	<b>\$ 206,010</b>
<b>Projected Fund Balance, All Funds, June 30, 2015</b>		<b>\$ 218,511</b>	<b>\$ 282,363</b>
<b>Percent Fund Balance to Expenditures</b>		<b>14.4%</b>	<b>19.3%</b>

\* This report is intended to display the revenue and expenditures during the fiscal year. Please note these are pre-audit numbers. Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School has an annual audit of its financial statements. A final version of the 2014-2015 audit will be made available by December 2015.

**Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School  
Saint Paul, Minnesota  
Balance Sheet  
As of June 30, 2015**

	<b>Beginning Balance Audited June 30, 2014</b>	<b>Ending Balance Pre-Audit June 30, 2015</b>
<b><u>Assets</u></b>		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash and Investments	\$ 91,923	\$ 158,422
Accounts Receivable	2,107	1,260
State Aids Receivable	139,235	191,726
Federal Aids Receivable	7,231	3,725
Prepaid Expenses and Deposits	17,858	22,033
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$ 258,354</b>	<b>\$ 377,165</b>
 <b>Total All Assets</b>	 <b>\$ 258,354</b>	 <b>\$ 377,165</b>
<b><u>Liabilities and Fund Balance</u></b>		
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Salaries and Wages Payable	\$ 39,841	\$ 52,670
Accounts Payable	6,473	15,821
Line of Credit Payable	-	-
Payroll Deductions and Contributions	6,029	11,311
Deferred Revenues	-	15,000
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 52,343</b>	<b>\$ 94,802</b>
 <b>Fund Balance</b>		
Beginning Fund Balance	\$ 124,748	\$ 206,010
Fiscal Year Net Income (Loss)	81,263	76,353
<b>Total Fund Balance</b>	<b>\$ 206,010</b>	<b>\$ 282,363</b>
 <b>Total Liabilities and Fund Balance</b>	 <b>\$ 258,354</b>	 <b>\$ 377,165</b>