



Annual Report
Second Academic Year
2023-2024

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Mission

Creekstone Montessori School's mission is to provide a learning environment that embraces a child's natural desire to learn and to empower all children to grow to their full social, academic, and emotional potential through Montessori principles and methods of education.

Vision

Our purpose is simple: to inspire a lifelong passion for learning and build the foundations for profound respect towards humanity and the natural world.

Core Values

Creekstone Montessori School (Creekstone) is proud to represent a different perspective in education; driven by individualized instruction and the adoption of authentic Montessori pedagogy, increasing learning opportunities for all pupils and encouraging the use of different and innovative teaching methods, especially in the research-based Montessori strategies.

Located in Red Wing, MN, Creekstone offers authentic Montessori education from three-year old preschool through grade six. Creekstone students' education experiences are enriched by learning opportunities to explore nature, music, art and exercise the body during physical education and recess. Students are also given access to the woods, trails, and large greenspaces that makeup the school's campus on the Lutheran Social Service of MN historic Vasa site.

Innovative Practices and Implementation

Following the fundamental tenet of Montessori education, Creekstone allows children to learn in a social environment that supports the unique development of each child. As opposed to conventional school models, which involve group learning, Montessori emphasizes individualized learning. Creekstone allows room for catering to the unique needs of all children, including those requiring additional learning support.

Montessori pedagogy emphasizes children's developmental age and not their chronological age, as the Montessori perspective does not utilize chronological age to determine a child's ability. At Creekstone, classes are structured within a three-year age range, giving children a chance to work at their own pace. When children work in mixed-age groups, they will have a graded series of models for imitation and the opportunity to reinforce their knowledge by helping each other.

Creekstone's holistic curriculum helps children develop the physical, cognitive, and emotional competence and positive attitude towards learning that is required for academic success. The Montessori learning environment promotes the development of self-esteem through experiences

that lead to understanding of the concepts of the Montessori based academic curriculum.

Montessori pedagogy educates children for life by providing students the freedom to explore and develop their potential as they work with didactic materials independently and in groups through a flexible learning environment. This method is based on the concept of respect for self, others, and the environment. Creekstone classrooms are well-prepared to meet the developmental needs of the age span served within each environment.

Creekstone's classroom materials and furniture, based on the Montessori model, are designed for the child's physical needs (size and proportion) and psychological needs (areas of interest or skill development). The learning setting includes a full range of Montessori materials. It is the role of the guides/teachers to observe, to know, and to support the child as he or she proceeds through the stages of development. The learning process is governed by certain basic human tendencies or needs:

- The need to communicate, to use language;
- The need 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

The outdoor environment is considered an extension of the indoor environment. While there is 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, our outdoor space is used not only during recess but in everyday learning. The outdoor environment provides a "workspace" that is used during the Montessori teaching and learning cycle. Throughout the day and with the accompaniment of an adult, children may work on materials, garden, and explore the natural landscape of the outdoors.

Guides(Teachers) at Creekstone are not the center of the learning process, but rather they help to guide each child while also respecting his/her choices. The guides(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. Guides observe the children often and plan lessons based on his/her observations of the needs and interests of an individual or group.

Within our multi-age classroom 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.

Academic Performance

In its first and second operational year, CSP Grant Funding allowed Creekstone to purchase personal computers and curriculum materials, including high quality Montessori math and reading materials and supplies to allow our students to engage and work within the Montessori Method. In addition, supplies, materials, and professional development training fostered innovative & successful ways of learning - and initiated the process of aligning Montessori practices with State Standards. These measures, funded in great part by CSP Grant financial support, provided us with the tools to continue implementing plans and processes to support students and monitor academic progress with diligence and success.

Observations, instructions, and practices, including participation in Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments, provided essential developmental baseline assessment information for review to help guide instruction and provide ongoing quality support to students. This not only complies with MDE standards and the terms of our Authorizer agreement but also holds us accountable to our academic school goals.

In reading, 58.5% of students met or exceeded grade level benchmarks, scoring higher than the statewide average of 47.8%, as well as the local district elementary composite of 39.4%, and all 4 demographically matching schools.

In mathematics, 19.5% of students met or exceeded grade level benchmarks. In comparison, 42.8% of students statewide met or exceeded the benchmark in Math while in our local district, 43.1% of students met or exceeded the benchmark.

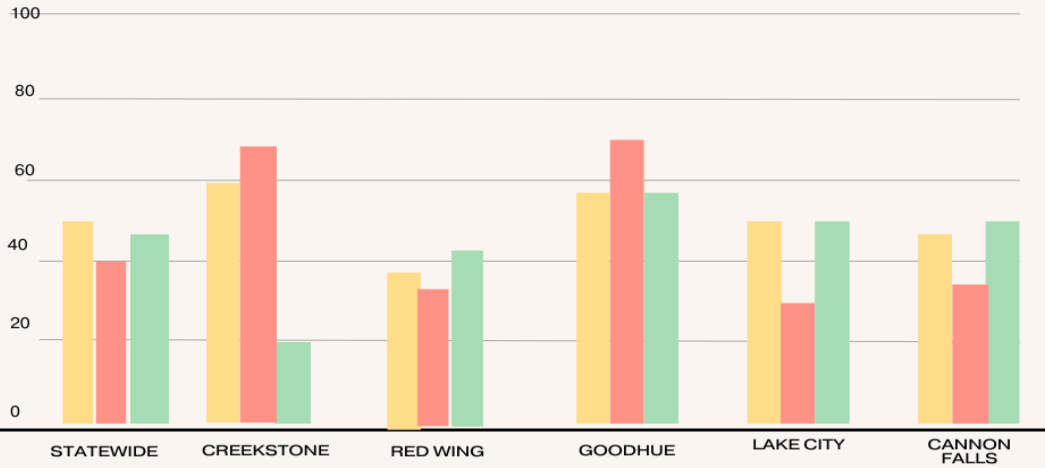
Science MCAs are only given to students in Grades 5 and 8 in Minnesota. At Creekstone, there are fewer than 25 students in Grade 5 who participated in the Science MCA this year. 67% of students in Grade 5 met or exceeded the benchmark in Science as compared to 39.6% of students statewide and 33.3% of students in the local district.

As shown in the graphics below, Creekstone Montessori students in grades three-seven performed well in their second year of participating in MCA. Graphic 1 shows comparison between Creekstone Montessori, Minnesota statewide results, and four local, demographically similar school districts in the surrounding districts within Goodhue County and Wabasha County. As shown, Graphic 2 shows comparison between Creekstone Montessori, Minnesota statewide results, and four Public Montessori Charter Schools within Minnesota.

2023-2024 MCA REPORT CARD COMPARISON

Creekstone Montessori School Academic Achievement in Reading, Math, and Science (Grade 5) in comparison to Minnesota statewide results, and four demographically similar, local school districts.

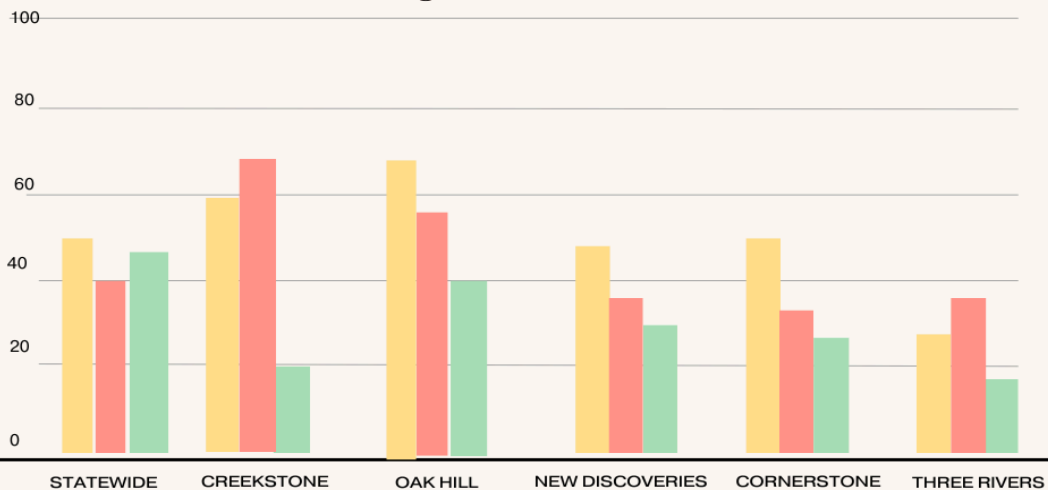
- READING ACHIEVEMENT
- MATH ACHIEVEMENT
- SCIENCE ACHIEVEMENT



2023-2024 MCA REPORT CARD COMPARISON

Creekstone Montessori School Academic Achievement in Reading, Math, and Science (Grade 5) in comparison to Minnesota statewide results, and four Montessori Charter Schools in Minnesota.

- READING ACHIEVEMENT
- MATH ACHIEVEMENT
- SCIENCE ACHIEVEMENT



Based on student performance in reading, math, and science, North Star System indicates the

following areas of performance growth:

82% of students have shown growth in their reading knowledge and skills demonstrated within MCA.

17% of students do not currently meet grade level standards assessed within MCA.

42.8% of students have shown growth in their math knowledge and skills demonstrated within MCA

57% of students do not currently meet grade level standards assessed within MCA.

Based on this information, Creekstone does not require support from MDE due to low performance as reflected in the North Star System.

Mathematics MCA data indicate the need for further study during the 2024-2025 academic year to identify key areas for student growth and needs for curriculum alignment with State Standards. It is consistent with Montessori philosophy that math retention and acquisition occurs later in youth development. We have, however, added a Math Interventionist to our Student Support Team. This individual will work one-on-one, or in small groups with students performing below grade level.

Faculty and staff will continue ongoing Montessori training across content areas throughout the year in order to increase learning opportunities for all pupils, including tactile-rich Montessori pedagogy, encouraging the use of interdisciplinary and innovative teaching methods.

The below table depicts Progress on the Academic Performance Framework Accountability System as identified in the Authorizer contract.

Academic Goal	Academic Framework	Academic Performance Rubric Designation	Evidence/Data Creekstone%/Comparative %
1.1	World's Best WorkForce	3	The school has not been identified for any type of support
1.2	Math Proficiency - State Comparison	More than 10 % pts below state = 1	19.5%/ 42.8%
1.3	Math Proficiency - Local District Comparison	More than 10 % pts below local district = 1	19.5%/ 43.1%
1.4	Math Proficiency - Demographic School	6-10 %pts below demographic	19.5%/ 28.3%

	Match Comparison	comparison = 2	
1.5	Reading Proficiency - State Comparison	Exceeds state by more than 5 % pts. = 4	58.5%/47/8%
1.6	Reading Proficiency - Local District Comparison	Exceeds local district by more than 5 % pts. = 4	58.5%/39.4%
1.7	Reading Proficiency Demographic School Match Comparison	Exceeds demographic school match by more than 5 % pts. = 4	58.5%/48.6%
1.8	Science Proficiency - State Comparison	Exceeds state by more than 5 % pts. = 4	67/0%/39/6%
1.9	Science Proficiency - Local District Comparison	Exceeds local district by more than 5 % pts. = 4	67.0%/33/3%
1.10	Science Proficiency - Demographic School Match Comparison	Exceeds demographic match schools by more than 5 % pts. = 4	67.0%/42.2%
1.11	MN Growth - Math	Low Growth % exceeds high growth % = 2	21.4% High Growth/57.1 % Low Growth
1.12	MN Growth - Math State Comparison	Exceeds comparison group by more than 5 percentage points. = 4	21.4% high growth/State High Growth = 14.2%
1.13	MN Growth - Math	Exceeds local	21.4 school high

	Local District Comparison	district % by more than 5% points = 4	growth/ Local District High Growth = 15.4%
1.14	MN Growth - Math Demographic School Match Comparison	Within 5 percentage points of comparison group. = 3	21.4% high growth/ Demographic Match schools high growth = 16.8%
1.15	MN Growth - Reading	High growth percentage exceeds low growth percentage. = 3	25.0% High Growth/ 17.9 % Low Growth
1.16	MN Growth - Reading State Comparison	High growth percentage exceeds low growth percentage. = 3	25.0% High Growth/ State High Growth 19.1%
1.17	MN Growth - Reading Local District Comparison	Exceeds Local District by more than 5% points = 4	25.0% High Growth/ Local District High Growth 15.4%
1.18	MN Growth - Reading Demographic School Match Comparison	Within 5 percentage points of comparison group. = 3	25.0% High Growth/Demographic Match schools High Growth 22.0%

Financial Performance

The Creekstone Montessori School Board of Directors established a Finance Committee composed of members Ted LaFrance, Nancy Dana, Elissa Behnke, Joseph Solvine. The Finance Committee met regularly to review monthly financial statements prepared by Creekstone's Financial Business Partner, EdFinMN, and to discuss all pertinent financial matters. For any matters requiring board approval, the Finance Committee presented such matters to the board for decision making.

The school Fund Balance Policy establishes a general operations reserve fund balance. Creekstone has completed its Annual Audit for the period of its inception through June 30, 2024 performed by Smith Schafer, in which No Material Findings were noted.

The school established and maintained an annual budget, developed by the Finance Committee in partnership with EdFinMN, which was presented to the board for final approval. The budget for the 2023-2024 school year was approved by the Creekstone Board of Directors on June 19, 2023.

The school had sufficient cash flow to meet its near-term obligations. Given both the cycle of payments from MDE and holdback of funds until year-end, Creekstone utilizes a Line of Credit in the amount of \$100,000 to ensure Creekstone's ability to meet financial obligations in a timely manner.

At the end of the third operational year, Creekstone had a fund balance of \$65,695. The school's liabilities exceed assets and deferred outflows of resources by \$126,464. This is mainly due to the recognition of the Net Pension Liability.

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Key financial highlights for the 2023-2024 year include the following:

- Total Assets and Deferred Outflows of Resources \$1,003,756.
- Overall revenues for the General Fund were \$1,632,351 while overall expenditures totaled \$1,568,025.
- The General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance is \$65,695, an increase of \$15,955 from 2023.
- The Food Service Fund total fund balance is \$0 after transfers in of \$28,409 from the General Fund.
- The Community Service fund balance is \$0.

CREEKSTONE MONTESSORI SCHOOL
RED WING, MINNESOTA
STATEMENT OF NET POSITION
June 30, 2024
With Comparative Data as of June 30, 2023

	Governmental Activities	
	2024	2023
Assets		
Cash and investments	\$ 203,070	\$ 95,580
Due from other governmental units	107,497	222,703
Capital Assets:		
Right to use leased assets, net of accumulated amortization	115,029	210,019
Depreciable, net of accumulated depreciation	141,410	155,134
TOTAL ASSETS	567,006	683,436
Deferred Outflows of Resources		
Deferred outflow from pension activities	436,750	
Liabilities		
Accounts payable	43,807	71,037
Accrued liabilities	114,330	98,631
Short-term indebtedness	30,000	75,000
Unearned revenue	16,735	23,875
Long-Term Liabilities:		
Lease payable - due within one year	117,355	104,952
Lease payable - due in more than one year		109,287
Net pension liability	652,736	
TOTAL LIABILITIES	974,963	482,782
Deferred Inflows of Resources		
Deferred inflows from pension activities	155,257	
Net Position		
Investment in capital assets	141,410	155,134
Restricted:		
State mandated reserves	40,000	
Unrestricted	(307,874)	45,520
TOTAL NET POSITION	\$ (126,464)	\$ 200,654

Student Enrollment and Attrition

The board established a target enrollment of 103 (18 Pre K-6) students, as approved on February 19, 2023. The school year began with waiting lists in every grade level. Based on student demand, the Board of Directors approved to increase enrollment, the actual enrollment was 107 (18 PreK, 89 K-6) at year end. Creekstone has an Admission Policy that outlines admissions, enrollment and lottery processes. This policy is followed diligently by the board and school administration.

Attrition: The year began at full capacity with 103 students, with zero leaving the program. The entering class size for 2024 was 107, resulting in no attrition rate. 100% of the students returned.

Governance

It is the role of the Board of Directors to manage and direct the affairs of the Creekstone organization. School board officers are charged with the duty of carrying out the responsibilities entrusted to them for the care, management, and control of the public school of the school district. The board continues to lay the groundwork needed to establish essential policies and processes that ensures the board carries out the school's mission, continually shows duty of care, and supports and holds the Executive Director accountable to their goals.

The Creekstone Bylaws state the officers of the corporation shall consist of a Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. The Bylaws also state that beginning with the creation of the Corporation, the affairs of the Corporation shall be managed by an interim Board of Directors until Directors are elected, which will occur prior to the end of the third full academic year of operation as a charter school. The interim Board of Directors may be composed of the founders and other individuals nominated by and approved by the founders to serve on the Board of Directors. Currently, the interim Board of Directors are still acting, as we have not yet reached the end of the third full academic year. For the 2023-2024 school year Perry Sekus served as Chair, Sheena Tisland as Secretary, and Ted LaFrance as Treasurer. The officers have performed their fiduciary duties and carried out their responsibilities as outlined in the Bylaws.

To ensure that all board members are consistently updated and well-informed on current school issues, activities, and topics to be board-discussed and approved, the Creekstone Governance Committee meets regularly to prepare monthly board meeting agendas, reports and materials that cover all subjects to be discussed at the monthly regular board meetings.

The Creekstone Board of Directors understands and complies with Open Meeting Law. Required board meeting information is posted on the school website. Below is a chart reflecting the membership on the board since its inception.

Member Name	Board Position	Date Seated	Term of Expiration	Postal Address	Email Address	Relationship to the School
Perry Sekus	Chair	14-Mar-21	14-Mar-24	5225 US Hwy 61 #3 Red Wing, MN 55066	psokus.cfb@creekstonemontessori.org	Non-Parent Community Member
Beth Borgen	Director	14-Mar-21	14-Mar-24	5225 US Hwy 61 #3 Red Wing, MN 55066	bborgen.cfb@creekstonemontessori.org	Non-Parent Community Member
Ted LaFrance	Treasurer	17-Oct-22	17-Oct-25	5225 US Hwy 61 #3 Red Wing, MN 55066	tlafrance@creekstonemontessori.org	Parent
Sheena Tisland	Secretary	14-Mar-21	14-Mar-24	5225 US Hwy 61 #3 Red Wing, MN 55066	stisland.cfb@creekstonemontessori.org	Parent
Ron Ward	Director	14-Mar-21	14-Mar-24	5225 US Hwy 61 #3 Red Wing, MN 55066	rward.cfb@creekstonemontessori.org	Non-Parent Community Member
Nancy Dana	Ex Officio Director	01-Sept-23	01-July-24	5225 US Hwy 61 #3 Red Wing, MN 55066	ndana@creekstonemontessori.org	Creekstone Montessori School Interim Executive Director
Elissa Behnke	Ex Officio Director	01-Sept-23	14-Mar-24	5225 US Hwy 61 #3 Red Wing, MN 55066	ebehnke.cfb@creekstonemontessori.org	Interim Director of Operations

As required by the Minnesota Charter School Statute, the board members participated in ongoing training during the 2023-2024 school year. These training sessions included information about School Finance (4/21/23), School Law including Open Meeting Law Standards (04/11/23), School Budget (4/21/23), Special Education Law and Human Resources (04/04/2023), School Governance (04/11/23). Participation was completed by the following Board members: Perry Sekus, Sheena Tisland, Ron Ward, Beth Borgen, Nancy Dana, Kelsie Kuyath, Danielle Mandelkow, Elissa Behnke, and Ted LaFrance.

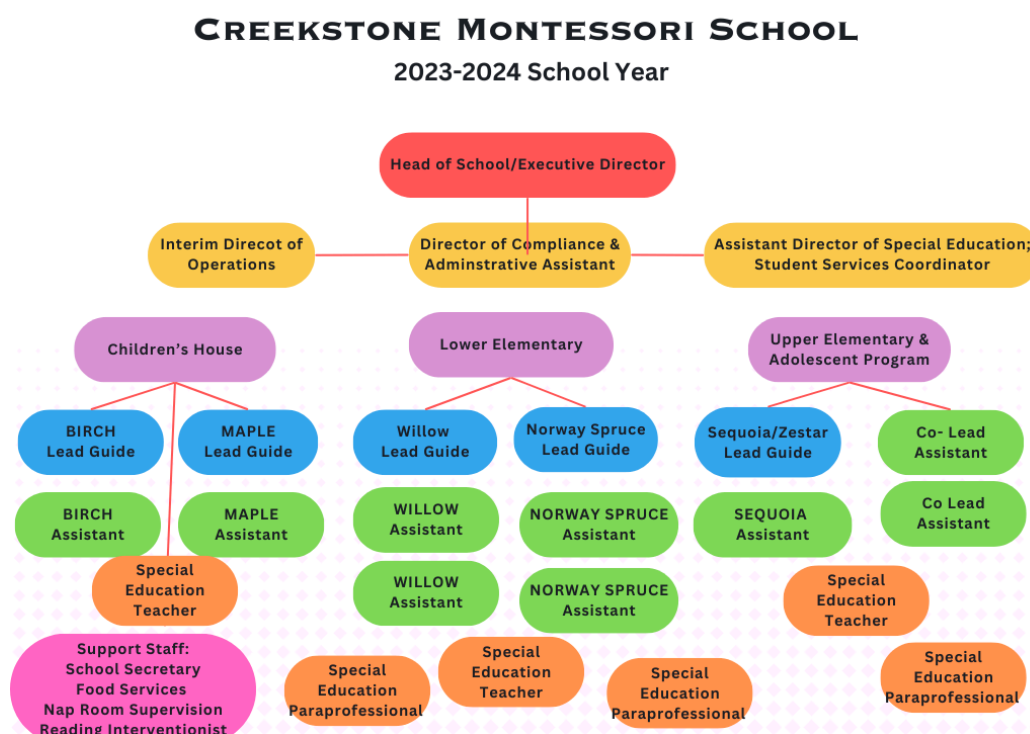
Management

The Creekstone board works closely with legal counsel to ensure state law changes that impact the Bylaws initiate a review of the Bylaws. Additionally, Creekstone's preoperative membership with Minnesota Association of Charters Schools (MACS) helped the board stay aware of changes in legislation that impact charter schools and prompt the need to update and/or create essential policies.

The School Board remained responsible for policy matters relating to School Management including, but not limited to, budgeting, curriculum, programming, personnel, and operating procedures.

The School Board hired Interim Executive Director Nancy Dana on September 1, 2023 to implement operational procedures and perform administrative functions, including the supervision, support, and evaluation of all staff, at the Board's discretion. The School Board was, at times, responsible for overseeing the School administrative functions, and for deciding policy matters concerning school administration.

The Creekstone Board carried out their responsibility in appointing an Executive Director and for overseeing their work. As such, the Executive Director is the only school staff member the board evaluated. The Governance Committee developed the framework and process for such evaluation and completed an informal evaluation based on the needs of the school and what was possible to accomplish in a short period of time under unusual circumstances. Short term goals were set with the expectation that they would be completed with the hire of a full time director. Below is the 2023-2024 Creekstone Organizational Chart.



Staffing

Nancy Dana hired the additional 2023-2024 Creekstone staff including, part time Special Education Teacher, Special Education Paraprofessionals, and all other employees not licensed to perform duties deemed necessary for the successful operation of the school.

Creekstone faculty members are all either appropriately licensed or in the process of completing such licensure. Because of the unique program in the Upper Elementary and the Adolescent Program, we have requested out of field permission for our licensed lead guide. This is necessary due to the small class size and the interdisciplinary nature of the pedagogical model. Below is a chart indicating licensed and unlicensed staff for FY24.

2023-2024 Staff Information

Name	File Folder Number	Montessori Certificate	# Years at Creekstone
Administrators			
Nancy Dana			1
Elissa Behnke			1
Kelsie Kuyath			2
Danielle Mandelkow	5117770		2
Teachers			
Deborah Chalmers		AMI	2
Brooke Dressen	In Progress	NAMC	2
Holly Kruger	477907	UW-River Falls	2
Betsy Manning	380319		2
Korrie Szuberski	448134	NAMC	2
Addie Miller	500547		1
Amanda Williams	447363	NAMC	2

Krista Larson	1032066		.25
Classroom Assistants, Paraprofessionals, Support Staff			
Sarah Anderson			1.75
Sierra Bloom			2
Kathie Brown			2
Claire Flaska			1
Linda Beyers			1
Stacey Hayes			2
Angie Huber-Deh n			2
Samantha Hunter			1.75
Allyssa Lee			2
Anna Ramstad			2
Tiffany Schlichting			2
Stacy Wood			1.5

Trisha Woodcock			2
Brittany Young			1.25

Growth and Retention

At the end of the second operational year, 100% of lead guide faculty and administrative staff were retained and returned for the 2024-2025 school year. Nearly 100% of required program support staff were retained for the 2024-2025 school year. Additionally, at the end of the 2023-2024 academic year, 100% of students intended to return for the 2024-2025 school year, with waitlists in every program/grade level.

Professional growth and development is a key priority for the school and as such, resources are dedicated to the training of each employee. Creekstone provided generous tuition reimbursements to staff and continued its partnership with Montessori Center of Minnesota for ongoing authentic Montessori training for all staff members will continue to take place throughout the 2024-2025 academic year.

Future Plans

At the end of the second operational year, Creekstone is beautifully outfitted with materials and organized in a pure, authentic Montessori fashion. Most notably, our students are actively learning and immersing themselves in this new Montessori environment and countless families and lives have been impacted by this educational experience. The board is extremely proud of the work and investments from our community partnerships in allowing Creekstone to reach such milestones.

Creekstone Montessori School is proud to provide educational programming that promotes and embraces innovative learning. Our future plans include Pre-K - Grade 6 enrollment growth and the implementation of an authentic Montessori Adolescent Program that will serve students Grades 7-8. We are in the process of exploring expansion at our current location, as well as exploring partnerships for a new facility. The goal being to create a physical environment that is a true representation of our mission. We will continue to build collaborative partnerships with Lutheran Social Services, our current land owner, as well as continue to reach out to those within our community.

2024-2025 World's Best Workforce (WBWF) Summary

The World's Best Workforce strategic plan focuses on five goals for continued student performance. Due to the K-6 scope of our charter and education services, Creekstone has not set a goal for high school graduation. In the future we intend to introduce our Upper Elementary students to the benefits of higher education and the significance beyond high school graduation. The board will appoint new members to an Education Committee in the coming year to further develop goals in each area for the 2024-2025 academic year and beyond.

WBWF Goals and Results

All Students Ready for School: Provide the result for the 2023-24 school year that directly ties back to the established goal.

Required WBWF Goal	LEA Entered Goal	Result	Is this a multi-year goal?	Is the LEA on track to meet this goal?	Has the goal been met?
All children are ready for school		We are training all licensed staff in LETRS. We are also training all licensed staff in the alignment of Montessori Presentations with state standards.	Yes	Yes	Yes

		We have added a Reading Specialist that is working with students one-on-one, Creekstone student performed as well or better on MCA testing as compared to surrounding districts.	Yes	Yes	Yes
All racial and economic achievement gaps between students are closed		All students have equal access to programming. We have aligned our budget to allow all students access to curriculum supplements, field trips, and support regardless of their ability to pay,	Yes	Yes	Yes
All students are ready for career and college		Upper Elementary students were introduced to multiple career opportunities and researched different colleges in the spring of 2024.	Yes	Yes	Yes

All students graduate from high school		We have not completed enough years in existence to get a class to graduation	Yes	Yes	Yes
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Annual Public Meeting

A Creekstone Annual Public Meeting was held on May 23, 2024 in compliance with 501(c)(3) organization requirements. A description of Creekstone as a 501(c)(3) was discussed, an overview of Open Meeting Law was presented, founding board members were introduced, and a variety of reports including academic, financial, organizational structure, and family involvement were provided to the public. We will review WBWF progress at the 2024-2025 Annual Public Meeting, scheduled for May 19, 2024, as well as in August at the Back to School Family Gathering.