



Annual Report  
Third Academic Year  
2024-2025

## Table of Contents

<b>Mission</b> -----	<b>2</b>
<b>Vision</b> -----	<b>2</b>
<b>Core Values</b> -----	<b>2</b>
<b>Innovative Practices and Implementation</b> -----	<b>2</b>
<b>Academic Performance</b> -----	<b>4</b>
<b>Financial Performance</b> -----	<b>9</b>
<b>Student Enrollment and Attrition</b> -----	<b>11</b>
<b>Governance</b> -----	<b>12</b>
<b>Management</b> -----	<b>13</b>
<b>Staffing</b> -----	<b>14</b>
<b>Growth and Retention</b> -----	<b>16</b>
<b>Future Plans</b> -----	<b>17</b>
<b>Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness</b> -----	<b>17</b>
<b>CACR Goals and Results</b> -----	<b>17</b>
<b>Annual Public Meeting</b> -----	<b>19</b>

## **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 green spaces that make up 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, emphasizing individualized learning. Creekstone embraces the unique needs of all children, including those requiring additional learning support.

Entering our third year, Creekstone has moved beyond initial program establishment and is now focused on refinement, consistency, and enrichment of Montessori practice. The environments are fully equipped, allowing guides to concentrate on observation-driven instruction and supporting academic growth through materials previously funded by CSP resources

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, Montessori-aligned curriculum nurtures each child's physical, cognitive, and emotional growth, fostering independence, curiosity, and a lifelong love of learning that leads to sustained academic success. The Montessori learning environment promotes the development of self-esteem through experiences that lead to an 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 two operational years, CSP Grant Funding allowed Creekstone to purchase essential Montessori materials, classroom furniture, and technology. During the third operational year, Creekstone transitioned fully into implementation mode, utilizing the purchased materials to deepen academic engagement, strengthen individualized learning, and further align Montessori presentations with Minnesota State Standards. All CSP funds have now been fully expended, and the school is operating sustainably using these materials for ongoing student support and instructional growth.

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, 51% of students met or exceeded grade level benchmarks, scoring higher than the statewide average of 49.6%, as well as the local district elementary composite of 40.4%.

In mathematics, 17.4% 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, 35.8% 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. 22.2% of students in Grade 5 met or exceeded the benchmark in Science as compared to 36.2% of students statewide and 33.3% of students in the local district. \*MCA Science administered a new Science Assessment during the 2024-2025 school year.

As shown in the graphics below, Creekstone Montessori students in grades three-six performed well in their third year of participating in MCA. Graphic 1 shows a 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 a comparison between Creekstone Montessori, Minnesota statewide results, and four Public Montessori Charter Schools within Minnesota.

CONTENT	STATE	CMS	RW (E), (M)	G	CF
READING	49.6%	51.1%	36.2%, 44.6%	57.7%	58.5%
MATH	45.2%	17.4%	40.7%, 30%	56.7%	56.5%
SCIENCE	26.2%	22.2%	N/A	N/A	N/A

CONTENT	STATE	CMS	Oak Hill	New Discovers	Cornerstone	Three Rivers
READING	47.8%	51.1%	69.7%	38.5%	47.2%	31.3%
MATH	42.8%	17.4%	46.8%	28.4%	19.4%	31.3%
SCIENCE	26.2%	22.2%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

*\* No data available for Science Assessment, statewide via MDE Report Card.*

Based on student performance in reading, math, and science, the North Star System indicates the following areas of performance growth:

55.9% of students have shown growth and/or maintained achievement progress in their reading knowledge and skills demonstrated within MCA.

39.4% of students do not currently meet grade-level math standards assessed within MCA.

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

44.4% 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 2025-2026 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 occur later in youth development. We have, however, added a Math Interventionist to our Student Support Team during our 2024-2025 school year, and this position has continued this school year. This individual will work one-on-one or in small groups with students performing below grade level. Our teachers and Student Services Director plan to have data digs to review our MCA results and better guide students in state standardized mathematics learning before the 2025 MCA. Additionally, our Lead Guides (Teachers) and our Student Services Director follow our FastBridge Assessment windows to complete data analysis and influence the instructional efforts within the classrooms based on student performance.

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

The table below illustrates progress on the Academic Performance Framework Accountability System, as outlined in the Authorizer contract.

Academic Goal	Academic Framework	Academic Performance Rubric Designation	Evidence/ Data Creekstone%/ Comparative %
1.1	Comprehensive Achievement & Civic Readiness		The school has not been identified for any type of support
1.2	Math Proficiency - State Comparison	More than 10 % below the state =	17.4%/45.2%
1.3	Math Proficiency - Local District Comparison	More than 10 % below the local district =	17.4%/ 35.8%
1.4	Math Proficiency - Demographic School Match Comparison	6-10 % below demographic comparison =	17.4%/31.4%
1.5	Reading Proficiency - State Comparison	Exceeds the state by more than 5 % =	51.1%/49.6%
1.6	Reading Proficiency - Local District Comparison	Exceeds the local district by more than 5 % =	51.2%/40.4%
1.7	Reading Proficiency Demographic School Match Comparison	Exceeds demographic school match by more than 5 % =	51.2%/46.6%

1.8	Science Proficiency - State Comparison	Exceeds the state by more than 5 % =	22.2%/26.2%
1.9	Science Proficiency - Local District Comparison	Exceeds the local district by more than 5 % =	22.2%/Not Available
1.10	Science Proficiency - Demographic School Match Comparison	Exceeds demographic match schools by more than 5 % =	22.2%/Not Available
1.11	MN Growth - Math	Low Growth % exceeds high growth % =	21.4% High Growth/ 57.1 % Low Growth
1.12	MN Growth - Math State Comparison	Exceeds the comparison group by more than 5 percentage points. =	13.7% High growth/ 44.1% Low Growth
1.13	MN Growth - Math Local District Comparison	Exceeds local district % by more than 5% points =	10.5%% High Growth/ 54.5%Low Growth
1.14	MN Growth - Math Demographic School Match Comparison	Within 5 percentage points of the comparison growth =	15.2% High growth/ 59.7%Low Growth
1.15	MN Growth - Reading	The high growth percentage exceeds the low growth percentage. =	36.2% High Growth/ 44.6% Low Growth
1.16	MN Growth - Reading State Comparison	The high growth percentage exceeds the low growth percentage. =	47.8% High Growth/ 49.6% Low Growth

1.17	MN Growth - Reading Local District Comparison	Exceeds Local District by more than 5% =	17% High Growth/ 46%Low Growth
1.18	MN Growth - Reading Demographic School Match Comparison	Within 5 percentage points of the comparison group. =	24.1% High Growth/ 35.0% Low Growth

### Financial Performance

The Creekstone Montessori School Board of Directors established a Finance Committee composed of members Ted LaFrance, Dr. Michelle Sturm, and 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, 2025, 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 2024-2025 school year was approved by the Creekstone Board of Directors on June 16, 2024.

The school had sufficient cash flow to meet its near-term obligations. Given both the cycle of payments from MDE and the holdback of funds until year-end, Creekstone utilizes a Line of \$100,000 Credit to ensure Creekstone’s ability to meet financial obligations promptly. At the end of the third operational year, Creekstone had a fund balance of \$55,784.

## FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Key financial highlights for the 2024-2025 year include the following:

- Total Assets and Deferred Outflows of Resources \$1,137,868.
- Overall revenues for the General Fund were \$1,712,530 while overall expenditures totaled \$1,704,346.
- The General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance is \$82,121, an increase of \$16,426 from 2024.
- The Food Service Fund total fund balance is \$0 after transfers in of \$7,733 from the General Fund.
- The Community Service fund balance is \$0.

**CREEKSTONE MONTESSORI SCHOOL**  
**RED WING, MINNESOTA**  
**STATEMENT OF NET POSITION**  
 June 30, 2025  
*With Comparative Data as of June 30, 2024*

	Governmental Activities	
	2025	2024
<b>Assets</b>		
Cash and investments	\$ 356,936	\$ 203,070
Due from other governmental units	23,583	107,497
Prepaid expenses	1,000	
Capital Assets:		
Right to use leased assets, net of accumulated amortization		115,029
Depreciable, net of accumulated depreciation	192,231	141,410
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>573,750</b>	<b>567,006</b>
<b>Deferred Outflows of Resources</b>		
Deferred outflow from pension activities	564,118	436,750
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Accounts payable	23,901	43,807
Accrued liabilities	97,437	114,330
Short-term indebtedness		30,000
Unearned revenue	83,100	16,735
Due to other governments	53,960	
Long-Term Liabilities:		
Lease payable - due within one year		117,355
Due in more than one year	7,885	
Net pension liability	637,177	652,736
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>903,460</b>	<b>974,963</b>
<b>Deferred Inflows of Resources</b>		
Deferred inflows from pension activities	310,260	155,257
<b>Net Position</b>		
Investment in capital assets	192,231	141,410
Restricted:		
State mandated reserves	67,336	40,000
Unrestricted	(335,419)	(307,874)
<b>TOTAL NET POSITION</b>	<b>\$ (75,852)</b>	<b>\$ (126,464)</b>

## Student Enrollment and Attrition

The board established a target enrollment of 117 (18 Pre K-6) students, as approved on

February 26, 2024. 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 123 at year's end, with 108 Kindergarten - 6th grade, and 15 Pre-K students. 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 almost full capacity with 117 students, with zero leaving the program. The entering class size for 2024 was 124, resulting in no attrition, nearly 100% of students returning, and an increase in the accepted enrollment.**

## **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 ensure the board carries out the school's mission, continually shows a duty of care, and supports and holds the Head of School accountable to their goals.

The Creekstone Bylaws state that 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 a Board of Directors, elected before the end of the third full academic year of operation as a charter school. The Board of Directors is composed of individuals nominated by the Creekstone Community and voted on by the Creekstone stakeholders, parents, and staff. For the 2024-2025 school year, Perry Sekus served as Chair, Shena 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 board meetings.

The Creekstone Board of Directors understands and complies with the 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.

### **Creekstone Montessori School Board of Directors Roster**

Established: March 14, 2021

Revised: June 20, 2022; October 17, 2022; July 1, 2023; August 21, 2023; January 25, 2024; June 10, 2024; October 15, 2024

Member Name	Board Position	Date Seated Term of Expiration	Postal Address	Phone	Email Address	Relationship to the School	MN Teacher Licence # Expiration Date
Perry Sekus	Chair	March 14, 2021 May 19, 2025	5225 US Hwy 61 #3 Red Wing, MN 55066	651-327-2468	psekus@creekstone montessori.org	Non-Parent Community Member	N/A
Ted LaFrance	Treasurer	October 17, 2022 October 17, 2025	5225 US Hwy 61 #3 Red Wing, MN 55066	651-327-2468	tlafrance@creekstone montessori.org	Parent	N/A
Sheena Tisland	Secretary	March 14, 2021 May 19, 2025	5225 US Hwy 61 #3 Red Wing, MN 55066	651-327-2468	stisland@creekstone monte	Parent	463180 Expires 06/30/2024
Amanda Williams	Director	January 22, 2024 January 22, 2027	5225 US Hwy 61 #3 Red Wing, MN 55066	651-327-2468	mwilliams@creeksto nemontessori.org	Licensed Teacher	447363 Expires 6/30/2025
Kristina Duerkop	Director	May 23, 2024 May 23, 2027	5225 US Hwy 61 #3 Red Wing, MN 55066	651-327-2468	tduerkop@creeksto nemontessori.org	Licensed Teacher	485066 Expires 6/30/2026
Michelle Sturm	Ex-Officio Director	July 22 2024 Unknown	5225 US Hwy 61 #3 Red Wing, MN 55066	651-327-2468	msturm@creekston emontessori.org	Executive Director	393005 Expires 06/30/2030
Danielle Mandelkow	Ex-Officio Assist. Director	July 22. 2024 Unknown	5225 US Hwy 61 #3 Red Wing, MN 55066	651-327-2468	dmandelkow@creek stonemontessori.org	Assist. Director Sped	517770 Expires 06/30/2026

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As required by the Minnesota Charter School Statute, the board members participated in ongoing training during the 2024-2025 school year. These training sessions included information about School Finance (7/30/2025), School Law, including Open Meeting Law Standards (7/30/2025), School Budget (7/30/2025), Special Education Law, and Human Resources (7/30/2025), School Governance(7/30/2025). Participation was completed by the following Board members: Perry Sekus, Sheena Tisland, Tina Durkop, Amanda Williams, Danielle Mandelkow, and Ted LaFrance.

**Management**

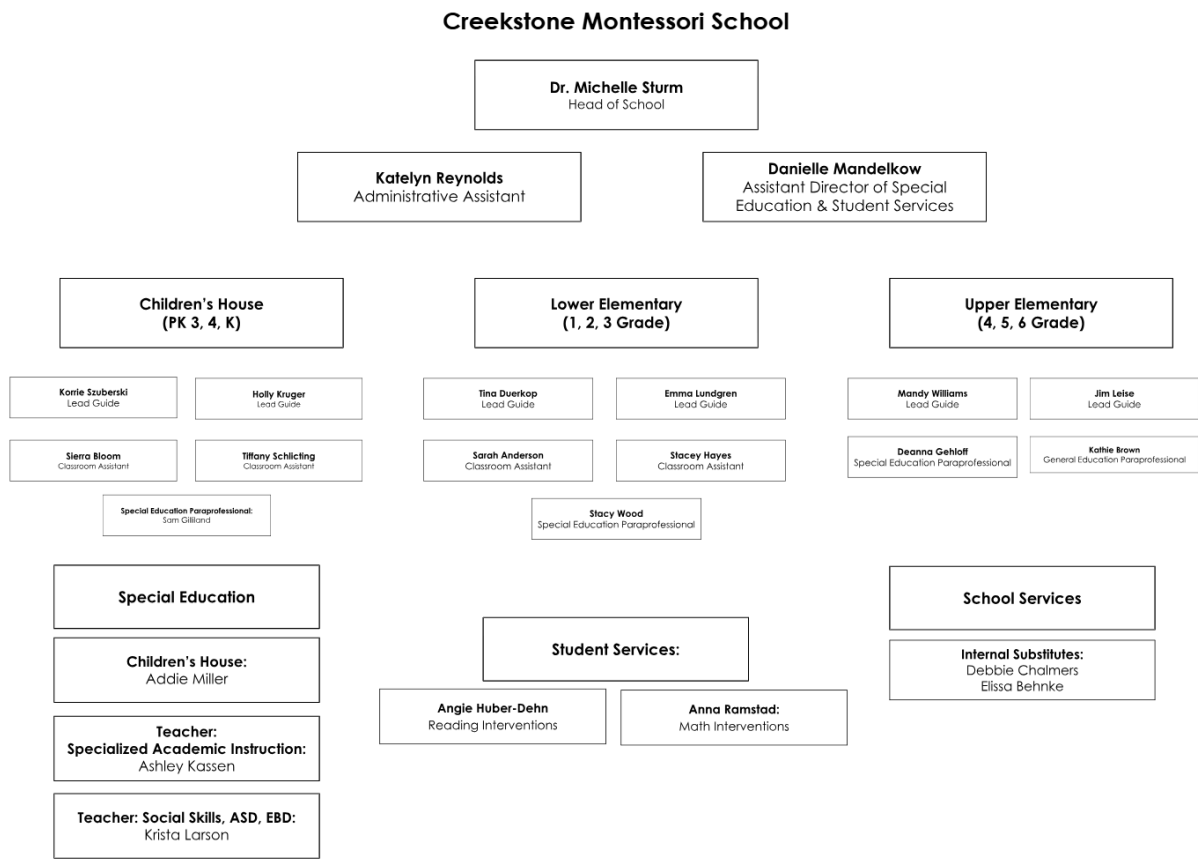
The Creekstone board works closely with legal counsel to ensure that state law changes that impact the Bylaws initiate a review of the Bylaws. Additionally, Creekstone’s membership with the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACS) helped the board stay aware of changes in legislation that impact 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 Executive Director/Head of School Dr. Michelle Sturm on July 1, 2024, 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's administrative functions and for deciding policy matters concerning school administration.

The Creekstone Board carried out its responsibility in appointing an Executive Director/Head of School and overseeing their work. As such, the Executive Director/Head of School is the only school staff member the board evaluated. The Governance Committee developed the framework and process for such evaluation and completed an evaluation. Goals were set for the 2025-2026 school year. Below is the 2023-2024 Creekstone Organizational Chart.



## Staffing

Dr. Michelle Sturm hired the additional 2024-2025 Creekstone staff, including an Administrative Assistant, a Special Education Paraprofessional, a Behavior Support Specialist, a School Social Worker, and all other employees needed 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 Program, we have requested out-of-field permission for our licensed lead guides. 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.

2024-2025 Staff Information

Name	File Folder Number	Montessori Certificate	# Years at Creekstone
<b>Administrators</b>			
Dr. Michelle Sturm	393005	Primary Orientation	1
Danielle Mandelkow	5117770	-	3
Katelyn Reynolds	N/A	-	1
<b>Teachers</b>			
Holly Kruger	180150	Degree - UW River Falls	2.3
Debbie Chalmers		Montessori Certified	3
Korrie Szuberski	448134	NAMC	2
Christina Durkop	485066	In process- Center for Guided Montessori Studies	3

Emma Lundgren	180100	-	1
James Liese	366734	-	1
Amanda Williams	447363	NAMC	3
Krista Larson	1032066	-	1
Addie Miller	500547	-	3
Ashley Kassen	190201	-	2
<b>Classroom Assistants, Paraprofessionals, Support Staff</b>			
Sarah Anderson	180100	-	1.75
Samantha Gilliland	N/A	-	3
Kathie Brown		Montessori Certified	3
Stacey Hayes	-	-	2
Ally Murray	-	-	.5
Deanna Gehloff	-	-	3
Angie Huber-Dehn	-	-	3
Anna Ramstad	-	-	3
Stacy Wood	-	-	3
Sierra Bloom	-	-	3

Tiffany Schlichting	N/A	N/A	2.5
Melissa Stein	-	-	.5
Amy Rose Lavalle	-	-	.5

## Growth and Retention

At the end of the third operational year, 85% of lead guide faculty and administrative staff were retained and returned for the 2025-2026 school year. 77% of the required program support staff were retained for the 2025-2026 school year. Additionally, at the end of the 2024-2025 academic year, 83% of students intended to return for the 2025-2026 school year.

Professional growth and development are key priorities 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 and mentorship for all staff members. This support will continue through the 2025-2026 academic year.

## Future Plans

At the end of the third 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 plans include Pre-K - Grade 6 enrollment growth and the implementation of an authentic Montessori Adolescent Program that will serve students in 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 is 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.

## Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness

The Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness 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. We do 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 2025-2026 academic year and beyond.

### CACR Goals and Results

**All Students Ready for School:** Provide the result for the 2024-2025 school year that directly ties back to the established goal.

Required CACR 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	In Process
		We have added a Reading Specialist who is working with students one-on-one. Creekstone students 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 a career and college		Upper Elementary students were introduced to multiple career opportunities and researched different colleges in the spring of 2025.	Yes	Yes	Yes
All students graduate from high school		We have not completed enough years in existence to get a class to graduation, and we do not yet serve middle school or high school students.	Yes	Yes	Yes

**Annual Public Meeting**

A Creekstone Annual Public Meeting was held on May 21, 2025, 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, board member elections took place, and a variety of reports, including academic, financial, organizational structure, and family involvement, were provided to the public. We will review CACR progress at the 2025-2026 Annual Public Meeting, scheduled for May 18, 2026, as well as in August at the Back to School Family Gathering.