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**QSR - CONTRACT RENEWAL APPLICATION**

***Completed by charter school in final year of contract to determine renewal terms.***

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Pillsbury United Communities encourages the school to be thoughtful in their responses. By providing clear and concise responses to the questions, schools can help ensure that the renewal process is completed in an effective manner. It also helps reduce the number of questions that the reviewers have, therefore making the process more efficient.

The Contract Renewal Application should be no longer than 15 pages (excluding attachments) and addresses the following areas:

Section I. Cover Sheet

Section II. Student and Staff Report

Section III. Mission, Strategy, and Goals

Section IV. Leadership and Operations

Section V. Academics

Section VI. Governance

Section VII. Financial

The report should discuss the progress the school has made, existing and future challenges, and how it has responded directly to any concerns/challenges that it has faced over the term of the contract. For example, if a school has had major financial problems, it might devote more space to discussing how the issue has been addressed and/or resolved. Because renewal is approached as an ongoing process, the application should be thought of as a summary or re-cap.

Directions for the QSR application:

Please note the following directions when completing the QSR application:

* Submit completed application electronically by assigned date to PUC-OPCS.
* Include a table of contents.
* Include header or footer with school name and page numbers.
* All attachments should be clearly labeled.
* If a specific question does not apply to your school. Please respond “not applicable”.
* Answer each question in the application at the charter district level. If there are multiple sites within a district, provide site specific responses as designated in the application and as applicable in responses.

Note: Upon review of the application, if we find that items are missing the school is contacted and given 3 days to provide the missing content.

## Section I. Cover Sheet

Name of Charter Leader: Eric Williams, Ed.D.

Name of Board Chair: Sara Fromm, MS, NCC

Charter School’s Initial Opening Date: 8/1/2005

Current Operational Grades for the School: K-8

Name of Contact Person for this Application: Eric Williams, Executive Director

Mailing Address, Telephone, and Email of Contact Person: 3241 Oakham Lane, St. Cloud MN 56301 | 763.300.1189 | ewilliams@strideacademy.org

Name of Alternate Contact Person for this Application: Sara Fromm, Board Chair

Alternate Contact Person: 3241 Oakham Lane, St. Cloud MN 56301 | 330.687.5809 | sfromm@strideacademy.org

##

##

Signature of Charter Leader Signature of Board Chair Date: November 2, 2020

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## Section II. Student and Staff Report

Complete the following including data for each year of your contract term: Multiple sites complete this form for each site. Add rows/ columns for additional grade levels served and school years. *(Appendix A)*

## Section III. Mission, Strategy & Goals

1. **Provide a summary of this contract term highlighting academic and organizational successes.**

From being slated to close in 2017 and then given the opportunity to stay open at the last minute, STRIDE Academy has enjoyed increasing enrollment numbers and a variety of successes.

Enrollment: STRIDE Academy added 7th Grade in 2019-2020 and 8th Grade in the 2020-2021 school year. Additionally, the school’s reputation as a high-performing school in the community has had an impact on current enrollment. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic and the school’s decision to begin the 2020-2021 school year in distance learning, the school’s enrollment is down by about 45 students than what was budgeted for. The school will continue to monitor the enrollment trends and make the necessary staffing adjustments.

Q-Comp Activities in PLCs: Equity/Culturally Responsive Teaching: STRIDE Academy has been a part of the State’s Q-Comp program. Each year the Q-Comp Leadership Team meets shortly after the beginning of school to determine the direction of the school’s Q-Comp goals for the staff. For the past three years the school has focused its efforts on student achievement, student engagement, and culturally responsive teaching. In order to build upon the Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching goal from last year (2019-2020), the school is including an examination of individual beliefs, biases and understanding race, racism, and equity. The other timely goal selected for this year is the continuous improvement of the school’s distance learning plan and activities in service to students’ academic, social, and emotional growth. Q-Comp is a large part of the overall Teacher Development and Evaluation Plan at STRIDE Academy. The school now has five teacher leaders who serve as mentors and peer observers/coaches who are well respected for their experience, excellence in teaching, and commitment to the continuous improvement of STRIDE. The primary work of the Teacher Leaders is to work with the staff to ensure a common understanding of effective instruction as well as support the well-being of the teacher. Their work is centered on meeting the needs of students, including curriculum and other instructional programs used by the school. Throughout the year the mentors/mentees meet regularly through grade level collaboration or weekly outside of grade level meetings. The year includes three additional professional development sessions focusing on new teacher feedback/needs and observations from administrative and peer mentor observations and conversations. Each year the average teacher can earn about $2,000 per year by participating in Q-Comp. This has helped the school remain competitive in attracting and retaining teachers!

Strides for Reading Programming: The school’s dyslexia program continues to expand and thrive. Even through distance learning, tutoring continues for more than 70 students during the school day, including evenings and weekends! This Orton-Gillingham-based programming is offered to all students who meet the programs’ established screening criteria, regardless of whether there has been a formal assessment for dyslexia or dysgraphia. Strides For Reading has and continues to be a reason STRIDE is becoming known regionally for helping students who might have otherwise slipped through the academic cracks of large traditional school districts. This year, STRIDE was recognized at the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools’ Annual Meeting as a finalist for the Innovation Award.

Special Education Programming: STRIDE successfully completed the MDE program monitoring process with 100% compliance and provides ongoing comprehensive training for our Special Education Paraprofessionals, as well as weekly collaborative learning time for special education staff. The school reviewed the previous system and then developed a comprehensive qualifying procedure to identify students through a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) structure. STRIDE has now secured an on-site Speech/Language Pathologist and has been successful in staffing all employment vacancies for special education teachers and paraprofessionals. In September, the school was recognized by the Minnesota Department of Education for ensuring individual student due process records meet or exceed requirements. This recognition is reflective of the dedication and professionalism of the staff and the administration’s efforts to provide the best instruction for students who are served in Special Education.

English Learner Program: STRIDE Academy has embraced the role of serving more English Learners than it has in the past. In 2014-­2015, STRIDE’s district wide EL program comprised 12 students of the school’s enrollment. Today STRIDE serves over 281 English Learners which makes up nearly 61% of the schools’ enrollment.

The school is proud of the EL program. In 2018-2019 STRIDE facilitated a year-long WIDA professional development opportunity titled, “Cultivating Practices to Support Language Learner Success”. Twice a month the EL team met with the kindergarten and first grade teams to learn, discuss, and implement best practices into the classrooms to support EL students. Many of these practices were taught to the entire STRIDE staff during PLC’s, staff meetings, and professional development time.

In 2019 STRIDE’s EL coordinator, Suzy McIntyre, presented at the Pillsbury United Communities Professional Development Day. Her presentation “Using Interactive Supports to Integrate Language Domains” was well-attended and received. In that same year she trained classroom teachers on effective ways to incorporate Seesaw into their teaching repertoire to support EL learners’ speaking skills.

Recently, Ms. McIntyre was nominated to be a 2020-2021 WIDA Fellow. Through a rigorous application process, ten Fellows were selected from around the nation. The WIDA Fellows’ program brings expert teachers and WIDA professional learning specialists together in a collaborative effort to enhance the development of professional learning and services for EL students. WIDA Fellows serve as classroom implementation experts and EL staff to the WIDA professional learning design team. Through Ms. McIntyre’s representation, STRIDE is on the design team to create online training sessions for school leaders and educators. The school has requested to be on the “School Improvement Planning for Multilingual Learners” team. It should be noted that Suzy McIntyre is currently the only WIDA Fellow from Minnesota.

Personalized and Social-Emotional Learning: In the summer of 2018 the school applied for and received funds from the Bush Foundation to develop a program to support Personalized Learning (PL) and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) within the school’s curriculum. Since then, PL and SEL have been incorporated within the school’s annual budget. Recognizing the impact the pandemic has had on the school’s students, the school made a commitment to support the programs with increased staffing in these areas. As a result, more students have become actively involved in creating agency in their individual learning.

Some of the efforts of the PL and SEL Coordinators include: ongoing support/training for staff during PLC, grade-level, individual, and faculty meetings. Collaborating with the primary grades to incorporate creative and critical thinking skills lessons. Meeting with multiple grade levels to participate in engineering design challenges. Meeting regularly with students as an extension to their classroom learning. New instructional strategies and resources are shared with teachers to encourage greater learner participation and engagement. A Makerspace provides materials and supplies for hands-on learning, engineering, and inventive thinking projects. A Personalized Learning website provides a multitude of resources for teachers.

The SEL position provides resources and professional learning opportunities for staff and instruction to students that cultivate a sustainable SEL model through multiple approaches. Examples include:

* Primary grades added lessons focused on *recognizing, understanding, labeling, expressing, and regulating* emotions ([RULER](https://www.rulerapproach.org/about/what-is-ruler/)).
* All grade levels appointed “P.A.W.S.itive Peer” students to train for and act as peer supports for other students ([*CASEL*](https://casel.org/)*: social-awareness, relationships*).
* Small groups of students met with our SEL Coordinator to enrich or extend their own social-emotional growth.
* New instructional strategies and resources were shared with teachers to encourage authentic embedment of Social-Emotional learning in the classroom.
* “Family Groups” were established, connecting staff and students across the building on a monthly basis to engage in community-building and SEL-related activities.
* An SEL website was created to provide SEL resources for teachers and SEL learning opportunities for students.
* An SEL newsletter was designed and distributed to staff on a monthly basis with resources and applicable lessons relevant to their current needs and those of their students and families.
* Videos of encouragement from staff to students during this difficult time <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wX1Dou8oWkY&feature=youtu.be>

Differentiated Learning: STRIDE Academy works hard to differentiate instruction throughout the school’s academic program. Parents are informed of this before they enter STRIDE Academy. Differentiating instruction ensures that students will have appropriate challenges to provide opportunity for growth. If they are below grade level, focused interventions help students receive specific attention in areas of need. If students are above grade level, flexible grouping helps students receive enrichment-focused opportunities with attention to a rigorous program focusing on standards, problem solving, and critical thinking. Given our student-centered focus, differentiated instruction is an accepted practice by parents, students, and staff. To accomplish appropriate differentiation, all students are pre-assessed in math and reading. The assessment data is used throughout the year to place students in their flexible skill groups. Student confidence and success increase when they learn in a differentiated instruction model. The schools’ Multi-Tiered Systems of Support allows teachers to monitor student data and make adjustments throughout the year.

Rock ‘n’ Read

Two years ago, STRIDE partnered with the founders of Rock n’ Read to embed music in the schools’ curriculum for students in 2nd through 6th grade. The program’s mission is to use singing to unlock children's potential for reading and learning. The goal is that all students are reading at grade level through singing. STRIDE is fortunate to have the Rock N Read program and the accompanying professional development provided free of charge through a grant from the Minnesota Legislature. Results of a four-year study funded by the MN State Legislature found statistically significant improvements in reading. After 14 hours of singing songs with a software program, 1/3 of 4th and 5th graders who scored at the bottom reading level (Does Not Meet) on the 2017 MN Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) went up a level (to Partly Meets) on the 2018 MCA. This is impressive because long-standing studies show that lower-level readers rarely achieve grade level success.

Through the professional development sessions, STRIDE teachers have learned fun, proven research- and evidence-based singing strategies outside the “lab time”. Some of the strategies the teachers have learned include: Affirming Parallel Concepts: singing songs and playing singing games to consciously practice reading and math skills improves retention and automatic recall. Group Choral Reading: reading metrical poems and stories over a steady beat as a whole group increases vocabulary, prosody, comprehension, and fluency. Same-Language Subtitling:singing along with lyrics that light up as they are sung in videos of musicals creates inescapable reading behavior and positively impacts reading achievement.

Education in the Time of COVID-19:

Upon reviewing the results from the parent survey in Spring 2020, it became clear that the school needed to craft its distance learning plan to meet the needs and concerns of the families and students to ensure the programming is more effective. With the leadership, the school’s Cultural Community Liaison, and support staff, the school was able to gather feedback from all of the families. The school has provided technical assistance with the hardware and software that their children use every day. The school continues to monitor and adjust engagement strategies and formats with families to ensure the feedback is gathered in a timely manner and the needs of the families and students are being met.

Starting in March of 2020 through fall of 2020, the school has remained in distance learning mode because of COVID-19’s threat to physical safety. Following the end of the Governor’s executive order, the school immediately formed a school COVID Response Team composed of a multi-disciplinary group. The school administration, health professionals, buildings and grounds staff, Special Education staff, teachers, and STRIDE’s Cultural and Community Liaison worked collaboratively throughout the summer months to strike a delicate balance between the physical health and safety of students and staff, as well as mental, social, and academic health needs of our students.

After reviewing the Spring 2020 Distance Learning feedback from parents and staff, the teacher leadership team planned two weeks of learning opportunities (in addition to the traditional back to school professional development) for staff to learn how to refine teaching and learning in a Distance Learning model. Sessions requested by and presented by staff included virtual courses in: Zoom, Seesaw, Google Classroom, Effectively Using Paraprofessionals, Special Education Accommodations and Modifications, Sharing Distance Learning Successes from the Spring, Increasing Student Engagement, and Conducting Virtual Parent Conferences. Throughout the professional development this fall a major goal for teachers was to incorporate student talk/academic language through Zoom. Staff contributed more than 500 hours in preparation to better meet the needs of students by growing as professionals.

In order to continue with distance learning in the 2020-2021 school year, the school needed to move to a one-to-one learning device environment. Because the technology to enhance the quality of the instructional experience was sorely lacking in the spring, the school decided to invest funds from the Coronavirus Relief Fund, Stearns County emergency funds, and the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEERS) funds to purchase devices, accessories, hotspots, and other technology in order to ensure the best instruction could be delivered in this challenging environment. Additionally, the school hired two new technology navigators to service a technology “hotline” in order to teach parents and students about how to use devices and do perform the increased troubleshooting that comes with a one-to-one deployment.

Community Eligibility: In 2018-2019 STRIDE applied to participate in the Community Eligibility Program through the Department of Education. In addition to free breakfast and lunch for all students, a fresh fruit or vegetable snack is served three days per week for students. Because not all students qualify for the program, the school supplements the program through its general fund. A consequence of the pandemic has been the temporary suspension of the Community Eligibility program. This was temporarily replaced with an expansion of the Federal Summer Lunch Program which continues to provide for free meals for all students for the remainder of the school year. The school plans to continue with the Community Eligibility program next year.

1. **How has the school realized its mission over the last contract term? Include specific examples. Multi-site, how have each charter school site contributed to the overall realization of the mission?**

STRIDE Academy’s mission is: To nurture individuals while fostering leadership and empowering students to attain their highest potential in a family-centered environment. STRIDE’s mission has been realized over the last three years through its commitment to personalized learning, increased social-emotional learning opportunities, and a focus on literacy and academic growth. For example, STRIDE’s dyslexia program has been able to find a number of students who the school might have missed because of a lack of tools to serve their needs. STRIDE’s focus on providing useful modalities for teaching English Learners has led the school to invest in more evidence-based literature, technology and visual-based instruction tools and curriculum.

The message about STRIDE’s commitment to differentiated instruction in a family-centered setting has reached beyond the community. Anecdotally, on several occasions, our Cultural Community Liaison has reported on families who are moving or have moved to St. Cloud because they wanted their children to attend STRIDE Academy. Oftentimes families indicate they’ve heard from a friend or family member that STRIDE is a high-quality school in St. Cloud. This reputation is a refreshing change from three years ago.

STRIDE’s board and administration take pride in the school’s empathy-based approach. School Leadership continually strives to navigate the delicate balance between ensuring fiscal responsibility and recognizing the human needs of our students and staff. This is evidenced by: investments in technology and staffing for specialized needs such as Personalized Learning, Social Emotional Learning, Dyslexia, and English Learner Specialists.

Additional examples of STRIDE’s commitment include; providing competitive salaries, incorporating pedagogical and instructional strategies that are evidenced based, providing relevant staff development training, and increasing enrollment and grade levels over the past three years in a responsible and measured way. STRIDE has committed to supporting literacy by incorporating Rock n’ Read into the curriculum, implementing EL strategies and curriculums that focus on oral and written language proficiency, and providing hands-on experiences for students. Additionally, the school continually seeks parent and staff feedback to improve.

1. **How does the charter school fit with Pillsbury United Communities mission, vision and values for authorizing charter schools? Complete the below table.** *(Appendix B)*
2. **Please describe programs and activities that support the mission (e.g. community partnerships, parent programs, after school and extracurricular activities). How have these programs helped the school realize its mission? Include specific examples.**

PATHS: Parents & Teachers Helping Students

The mission of PATHS is to promote community and connection within STRIDE Academy for the purpose of supporting our students. PATHS does this through active and purposeful engagement with parents, teachers, and staff. PATHS supports the STRIDE mission through directly promoting community and supporting the needs of each individual child. PATHS also engages in supportive activities for staff which improves overall school culture.

Some highlights include:

* Purchased iPads to be used in the library and/or classrooms.
* Purchased classroom subscriptions to map software and other ancillary curriculum software.
* Supplemented yearbook cost for all students/staff.
* Organized and conducted several fundraiser events including coffee sales, School Toolbox, and a Silent Auction.
* Purchased prizes for Family Fun Night.
* Purchased lunches and dinners for teachers during conference days or evenings.
* Supplemented cost of field trips and service-learning projects for all grade levels.
* Purchased gifts for Teacher, Paraprofessional, and Administrative Assistant Appreciation Weeks.

PAC: Panther Activities Club
The STRIDE Academy Panther Activities Club (PAC) is an organization composed of parents, staff, and friends of STRIDE Academy. The PAC provides additional support to all extra-curricular activity programs at STRIDE Academy through volunteerism and/or financial support. PAC helps purchase supplies, equipment, provide scholarships, helps with team events, as well as recognizes students’ participation beyond what the activity fees provide.

PAC supports the STRIDE mission through its support of extracurricular activities. For years, parents and students have valued the variety of activities that are offered at STRIDE. These activities offer a multi-dimensional approach to building community and engaging children.

Some highlights include:

* Organizing and conducting fundraisers such as dine-out nights, cook-outs and apparel sales.
* Organizing concessions and tournaments.
* Ensuring that activity fees do not rise through the creation of scholarships.
* Recognition of participation and end of the season celebrations.

Extracurricular Activities and Athletics at STRIDE continue to be an important part of the school’s effort to promote personal development. The school employs a part-time Activities Director and offers a diverse set of extracurricular activities such as; Rocket Club, Lego Club, Coding Club, and Drama Club. In addition, STRIDE offers a number of sports including soccer, baseball, softball and basketball. We are able to do this through direct collaboration with neighboring schools and through maintaining a close partnership with nearby districts.

1. **How does the charter school collaborate with parents to encourage active participation in their student’s education? Provide an example. Multisite, note differences between sites.**

From the first tour of the school, STRIDE prides itself on being a school that works directly with families to support their children. The school's staff and administrative support team makes a concerted effort to know each family and child by name and gets to know the family needs in order to bring in a “circle of support” to assist the family in order to work toward success. Though distance learning has been tumultuous and stressful for so many, there have been some nuggets of opportunity in that the school has gotten to know the daily lived experiences of families in unprecedented ways and has remained nimble to make adjustments.

STRIDE’s multilingual paraprofessionals and Cultural/Community Liaison play a strong role in encouraging active participation for many of our parents. With over 50% of students from East Africa, STRIDE Academy has a number of parents who request English Language support when interacting with the school. STRIDE employs four paraprofessionals and one cultural community liaison to assist with home language needs with parents. The role of the Liaison is often more than just interpreting the language, but also includes being a true liaison in cases where parents are learning about the school’s education process and the staff are learning about the needs and priorities of the families. This is especially important as we rely on parents to support their child’s education at home. As a result, STRIDE has a strong link to the area's Somali community.

School administration is intentional about working with parents and guardians through SPED processes, working through behavioral issues, and in acknowledging student “wins.” There are a number of opportunities for parents to be active within the school. In addition to the traditional classroom volunteer opportunities, STRIDE Academy also encourages parents to volunteer to assist with athletic and co-curricular activities through the previously mentioned organizations, PATHS & PAC.

School conferences are held twice per year. The school has been piloting a student-led conference model. This model encourages student accountability and empowers students to move to a place of stronger autonomy. Research indicates that attendance at student-led conferences is greater than for teacher-led conferences. This year, because of distance learning, our Open Houses were held over Zoom or via telephone and each meeting was entirely personalized for the student/family needs. Conferences were also held virtually.

At the governance level, STRIDE encourages public comments and attendance at meetings and retreats. Community members know that all board members are available for emails and further conversations. We have set a strong precedent for active participation through being open to receive feedback from our constituents. The school also encourages parents to participate in board committees.

1. **Describe the academic and non-academic goals established in the charter contract. How is the school measuring progress towards achieving these goals? Provide the results of each goal to date. Use the below table to organize if applicable**. Note: Because of the SARS CoV-2 global pandemic, the State of Minnesota postponed the Accountability tests in 2020.*(Appendix C)*

**Mission, Strategy & Goals- DOCUMENT REQUEST**

* School Mission and Vision Statement (Exhibit A)
* Annual Reports from all years in the contract term (Exhibit B & C)

## Section IV. Leadership and Operations

1. **Describe the distribution of tasks and responsibilities. How does this distribution ensure compliance with state statute and enable pupil performance for all students?** *(Appendix D)*
2. **Describe the professional development opportunities available to and required by staff members.**

Learning teams (Professional Learning Communities, PLC) at STRIDE continue to focus on instructional strategies targeting improvements in student achievement in math and reading. Additionally, the school provides a year-long series of training in concepts associated with Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning (CLR). For example, teachers at the primary level learned and implemented several techniques for gaining the attention of students through songs, chants, and non-verbal cues. Teachers at the intermediate level implemented strategies related to vocabulary development, in particular with using visual representations of words scaffold language and content instruction for English Learners.

PLCs engaged in a variety of activities, including those noted in the previous section. Each of these professional development activities was designed to have a specific, targeted effect on improving outcomes, both in student academic achievement, as well as developing the motivation to learn, and the resiliency and determination to persevere in the face of several challenges.

High-quality discussions took place among teachers during their PLC meetings during the school year. Teachers shared strategies to help their peers with specific problems relating to student achievement and behavior. The large group PLCs allowed for multiple grade levels to share ideas and strategies related to data and student achievement. The small group PLCs allowed for teachers to focus more specifically on individual students, groups of students, and standards to improve student achievement.

PLC groups at STRIDE regularly used student achievement data, gathered through the use of interim assessments, to identify instructional strategies to increase student achievement. Teams also discussed specific research-based teaching strategies designed to help English Learners increase their ability to meet standards in math and reading. For example, teachers regularly discussed the impact of CLR strategies and their impact on students, and through these discussions several adaptations were made in classroom instruction that had a positive impact on the implementation of this strategy. The decision to implement the CLR program was likewise identified by both the administration and PLCs as a way of meeting the needs of a student population that continues to reflect an increasingly diverse population of students.

PLCs shared data on a regular basis during PLC sessions which provided guidance to colleagues on how to tailor their instruction to meet the needs of students. Instructional strategies were presented and discussed during large group PLCs, and follow up discussions were held at small group and large group PLCs on a regular basis throughout the school year.

Data collected from interviews conducted with teacher leaders at STRIDE consistently show there are a number of positive outcomes that have a direct impact on classroom instruction. In particular, faculty members consistently express appreciation for the opportunities for professional development for staff, and also followed through with accountability measures to ensure that PLCs were focused and structured in discussing and implementing the concepts associated with CLR.

1. **Describe the performance evaluation process for executive director, staff and teachers. Multisite, please list each site and note any differences in staff performance evaluation.**

Administrators conduct pre-conferences, observed classes (for teachers), gather data and provide feedback to teachers and support staff in a post-conference. In these feedback sessions, teachers identified strategies to meet the needs of their students. For teachers, data collected were also reviewed in these feedback sessions in order to design strategies for improved instruction. In the Review Process, the principals cite examples of how teachers and support staff are able to use feedback in the post conference to design improvement plans that would improve their job performance.

During the school year the principal uses the pre- and post- observation conferences as an opportunity for self-reflection by the teacher. In the pre-conferences the teachers are asked not only to review their objectives for the lesson, but also to anticipate possible areas for adjustment during the upcoming lesson. Likewise, the post-observation conference makes increased use of open-ended, reflective questioning strategies in an effort to increase the ability of teachers to analyze their own lessons and make improvements in teaching strategies.

The principal is evaluated by the executive director. The process used has been developed by the elementary and secondary principal’s associations along with the Minnesota Department of Education.

The board has adopted a model for Executive Director evaluation that includes using strategic plan goals, job description, and other informal data to gather a “360-degree view.” The school also uses a Performance Feedback form with metrics for communication, leadership behaviors and problem-solving, actions regarding strategies, vision, change and flexibility, and overall leadership. This evaluation process takes place 180 days and 270 days from the start of the school year.

1. **What is the behavior intervention system? How are staff trained in the behavior intervention system? Describe the key responsibilities of staff to maintain and protect school culture (i.e. Classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, dean of students, behavior interventionist, executive director, etc.) Multisite, please list each site and note any differences in behavior intervention systems.**

The school has adopted a PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) model *(See Appendix E)* for behavior intervention. The school’s Administration, the PBIS coach and members of the PBIS team train staff through various professional development sessions throughout the year. Staff members are trained on the behavior flowchart and matrices that are location and situational specific. Both staff and students are formally trained on expectations, and newly implemented strategies. The intention of this work is to improve school-wide climate and behavior. Through STRIDE’s tailored PBIS program, the school has developed a set of beliefs and expectations for students in which every student is encouraged to be the best version of themselves. *(Appendix E)*

1. **Describe the admission and lottery process. Please explain how you ensure that these processes are aligned with the charter law. Multisite, please list each site and note any differences in admission and lottery process. What are the school’s procedures for withdrawals and transfers? Multisite, please list each site and note any differences in withdrawals and transfer procedures.**

The admissions and lottery process is established in Board Policy 715 which aligns with state statute and has been reviewed by the school’s counsel. All applications received during the open enrollment period are automatically accepted for enrollment (i.e. admitted) unless more applications are received than the available enrollment established by the Board for the applicable grade(s) are placed in the lottery; however, siblings of currently admitted students (including foster siblings) and children of staff employed in school have preference.

Order of Admission: *(Exhibit H)*

The lottery for an upcoming school year occurs on the fourth Tuesday of January of a current school year.

Enrollment forms received after December 15th of a current school year will be time stamped and students will be added to the waiting list after the lottery and in order of time submitted. During the current school year, all interested students can submit an application at any time. New students must complete an application (required of both sibling and non-sibling applicants).

Application Processing and Lottery Procedures: *(Exhibit H)*

Student Recruitment: STRIDE Academy markets itself before and during the enrollment period to recruit students to meet its enrollment goals as set by the board of directors. STRIDE Academy may use the specific measures, such as: radio advertisements, distributing flyers to local daycare centers and pre-schools, advertisements in local newspapers postings to social media.

1. **Describe the key community partnerships, how they are impacting the school’s academic goal, and how the school evaluates the usefulness and effectiveness of community partnership. Multisite, please note specific partnerships and evaluation practices.**

The school partners with Reach Up-Head Start of Central Minnesota, which leases space for a Reach Up classroom. This has helped increase enrollment in the school’s Kindergarten classes. This is evaluated annually. The school partners with Promise Neighborhoods and hosts a Promise Fellow in the building to support a core group of students with social-emotional connections and academics. Regular evaluations of the Promise Fellow is done in cooperation with Americorps. The school also has a collaborative relationship with Greater Minnesota Mental Health and hosts a counselor in the building. This counselor assists with mental health and family needs and with evaluations. Additionally, the school hosts both Math Corps and Reading Corps tutors in the school. Assessment data and joint evaluations are used to determine each program’s effectiveness. STRIDE has partnered with the other charter schools on various joint efforts such as nursing services, meal preparation and plans to partner with activities and athletics when possible. This cooperation has been beneficial to the three St. Cloud charter schools. The school also has a relationship with the local school district for transportation, emergency evacuation procedures, and sharing facilities and athletics.

1. **Does the school contract out any of the essential business functions (e.g., finances, student data management, human resources)? If yes, please list each contract and identify the area in which they are contracted. Multisite, please list and note any differences in business function.**

Yes, BerganKDV: Business Accounting and Payroll Services, Viewpoint: Data Warehouse, Skyward: Student Management, Kraus Anderson: Human Resource, Granite City Real Estate: Maintenance and Janitorial, CMERC: Tech support.

**Leadership & Operations - DOCUMENT REQUEST**

* Professional development plan and calendar for the current and previous academic years. (Exhibit D)
* School schedule (start time, class times, etc) (Exhibit E)
* Staff meeting schedules (Exhibit F)
* Copies of the enrollment application (Exhibit G)
* School admission policies (Exhibit H)
* Student and staff handbooks (Exhibit I)

## Section V. Academics

1. **Provide a description of the document(s) that are used to link classroom practices with that of state standards (e.g. sample curriculum map, scope and sequencing document, pacing guides). Multisite, please provide a description for each site.**

A Curriculum Map *(Appendix F)* reviews: Key concepts to be learned, what MN Academic Standards are addressed, the assessments that will be given, the skills to be acquired, vocabulary that ties back to the key concepts, resources that will be used, primary and secondary documents, and college readiness skills. Assessment Analysis and Planning sheets*(Appendix G)* are used to modify and adjust instruction as well as reteaching when necessary.

1. **Provide, if applicable, a list of educational programs (Everyday Math, Houghton Mifflin, etc.) used to support the implementation of the curriculum. Multisite, provide information regarding each site.**

Math - GO Math. A curriculum that supports the Mathematical Practices through several specific features including; lessons focused on depth of content knowledge, essential questions to begin lessons, math talk and questioning strategies that promote a student’s use of a variety of approaches to explain their reasoning.

Language Arts - Journeys, a comprehensive Language Arts curriculum with evidence-based results. Its comprehensive reading and writing program facilitates engagement and helps all levels of learners improve. *Into Literature* is the new curriculum that extends our language arts instruction in grades 7-8.

Science - National Geographic Science Curriculum. Grades K-6 has access to a number of hands-on activities and manipulatives that enhance the exploration of the earth and life science curriculum. The National Geographic Science curriculum aligns with the Minnesota State Science Standards. Generation Genius also supports our science standards in grades K-8.

Newsela -an Instructional content platform that publishes daily news articles to support instruction for ELA, Social Studies, Science, and SEL. Every article comes in 5 reading levels, tailored to the skill level of each reader. Assessments are integrated directly into articles to help students engage with the content and to give teachers and administrators actionable insights on students’ reading activity.

Barton Reading Program - is a teaching method created for students with dyslexia. It's based on the highly structured Orton–Gillingham approach and is designed to be used by people without educational training (parents, caregivers, relatives etc.…).

For technology in grades 7-8, we have a 3D printer with a curriculum that will be used for the first time this year. The technology standards are also supported in the instruction and practice with our Google Suite tools, including Classroom, Docs, Sheets, and Slides.

In SEL, we utilize three curriculum resources. For K/1, [Emotional ABC](https://www.emotionalabcs.com/)'s (Moody Monster helps kids to broaden vocabulary and understanding of emotions). For 2/3/4, we use [Sanford Harmony](https://www.sanfordharmony.org/) and use Marc Brackett's [RULER](https://www.rulerapproach.org/) components (Recognize, Understand, Label, Express, Regulate). For 5/6/7/8, we use CASEL's resources and some of [Sandy Hook Promise's](https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/our-programs/program-overview/) "It Starts with Hello" and "Say Something"

1. **Provide an overview of how your educational program differentiates to address the needs of all students. What is the range of levels and how does the school support all students? Multisite, please list each site and note any differences.**

Using the multiple forms of data available (demographic, academics, and program fidelity) to our school, we determine the social and academic needs of individual students. For social support, we have students that receive support from our school social worker, our SEL coordinator, counseling with Greater MN Counseling, and/or one-on-one time with teachers or paraprofessionals to provide support and time to connect with a caring adult in the building. Some students have additional needs and receive outside counseling or treatment. For academics, we have students that range from several grade levels below their grade level expected proficiency to students above grade level. We have PLC time for grade levels to collaborate around Tier 1 supports and core instruction for all learners, in collaboration with EL specialists and special education teachers. For Tier 2, we have Title 1 support, STRIDES for Reading program reading interventions, enrichment activities with our Personalized Learning Coordinator, and MTSS team interventions put in place to support students. We regularly train and support staff to understand and review data in order to maintain flexible grouping to best meet the needs of individual students.

1. **Describe the process by which teachers use data to inform decisions regarding instruction. Multisite, please list each site and note any differences in use of data for decision-making.**

Formative Assessments: Teachers use a wide variety of methods to conduct in-process (or “real time) evaluations of student comprehension, learning needs, and academic progress during a lesson, unit, or course.

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS): Formerly known as Response to Intervention (RTI), MTSS is a process of documenting the academic progress of students at STRIDE. Teachers use a formal process of collecting academic data in their decision to provide additional services.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS): an evidence-based framework for developing positive behavior. It is used in many schools in Minnesota as well as throughout the country. The mission of PBIS at STRIDE is to create a positive climate for learning. The staff implement practical strategies to bridge social and academic learning in every venue of the school throughout the day.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): intended to promote collaborative learning among the teachers within grade levels. Other academic disciplines (Art, Music, PE, EL, SPED, Title) also participate in the PLCs with the common goal of supporting high student achievement. The PLC’s are an effective means to organize teachers into working groups of professional learners that leads to measurable action steps.

1. **Please fill out the below table. Add additional rows as necessary.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Internal Assessment** | **Purpose** | **Frequency** | **month administered**  |
| MAP | Proficiency and Growth | 3 times/year | Fall Winter Spring |
| WAPT/Screener | EL Service Screener | Upon Registration | As needed |
|  |  |  |  |

1. **How does the school evaluate and identify students with special learning needs? How are IEP’s developed, reviewed and revised? How are transition plans developed, where applicable? Multisite, note any differences in sites.**

STRIDE Academy has an MTSS system in place. General education teachers who need additional assistance programming for struggling students complete a MTSS referral form. This form contains identifying information regarding the student and specific teacher concerns. This completed form goes to the MTSS team. The team then recommends intervention strategies for the teacher to implement. After data is collected, discussed and analyzed the MTSS makes a recommendation to move forward with an evaluation or continue with selected interventions. If the decision is made to move ahead with an evaluation, a team, including the parent, holds a meeting with the purpose of developing a comprehensive evaluation plan for the identified student.

Once the evaluation process is completed a results meeting is scheduled. At this meeting, all test results are discussed and collectively the team determines if the student qualifies for special education services. If the student meets special education criteria, the team develops an IEP for the student. The IEP goals are reviewed 3 times per year in writing. The entire IEP is reviewed at least on an annual basis. At any time, a team member may request another IEP meeting to revise the current plan. STRIDE currently does not enroll 9th grade students, therefore transition is not addressed.

1. **How are special education students integrated within the school and the general education program? Multisite, note any differences in sites.**

In a Least Restrictive Model, Special education students are integrated within the general education curriculum to the fullest extent possible. Students receive “pull-out” services for specialized instruction if they are multiple years below their same age peers in the general education curriculum.

1. **What is the enrollment process and transition procedure for English learner students? Multisite, please note any differences in sites.**

The school’s current enrollment process is slightly altered due to COVID. If a family wants to register, they come to the school and call when they get here. IF it is a family that needs an interpreter, the school’s Cultural Community Liaison enrolls the family with the enrollment secretary. The technical support personnel meets the family at their vehicle to issue devices and the accessories needed to ensure access. Once completed, teachers (and the EL Coordinator) are notified and begin reviewing the student’s files.

Once a review of the child’s academic record, an examination of the ACCESS data and a conversation with the family and student, the EL coordinator and the principal determine whether or not the student qualifies for EL services and the level of service to be provided. If an ACCESS score is not available, the school administers the WIDA screener. For the 2020-2021 year only, schools have received permission from the Minnesota Department of Education to get parents' verbal permission to enroll students temporarily into the English Learner program. This occurs until school is back to an in-person learning model, when onsite screening can occur. *(Appendix H)*

1. **Does the school offer distinct programs/activities for ELL students? Parents? Multisite, please note any differences in sites.**

STRIDE incorporates a Co-Teaching model to best leverage resources to EL students. Training and support from school leaders and the EL coordinator have worked to implement: pre-teaching vocabulary, analysis of ACCESS scores matched to the WIDA standards, and professional development in Cultural Bias and Culturally Responsive Teaching. The school has purchased an online curriculum that has been proven to support learners as an intervention in the acquisition of language and math skills. Depending on levels of learners STRIDE has created a program based on needs. More intense instruction is provided for the Level 1 English Learners as well as a focus on the acceleration of the growth for students who are below grade level by doubling course time in those areas.

**Academics- DOCUMENT REQUEST**

* Policies and procedures related to special populations (e.g., ELL, special education, etc.) (Exhibit J)
* Sample lesson plans from various grades and subject areas (Exhibit K)
* List of teacher names, assignments (Exhibit L)
* Classroom observation videos (Exhibit M)

## Section VI. Governance

1. **Describe how the board monitors the school’s academic performance and charter contract compliance. Multisite, please list each site and note how this is addressed across sites.**

The school board has created a standing committee called the Academic Excellence Committee. This committee is chaired by the current Vice President of the board who is also a teacher member at Stride Academy and is charged with ensuring high academic standards at the Academy, true to STRIDE Academy’s mission. The major goals of the committee are to monitor the School Improvement Plan, to message progress on the School Improvement Plan to the STRIDE community and to discuss and monitor progress on the strategic plan.

Additionally, administration has compiled an Annual Calendar to keep track of charter contract compliance as well as MDE and fiscal compliance measures. This calendar is used by the board to help set agendas for meetings and ensure that the board is on-track with governance.

1. **How does the board intervene if the school is not meeting goals? Provide an example where the Board has intervened. Multisite, please note any differences in sites.**

Over the past three years, with new school leadership, a stronger, more cooperative relationship has been established. Without intervening in operations, the Board Chair has worked closely with the Executive Director to create redundancies and a system of checks and balances to ensure progress in meeting goals and a collaborative environment when challenges arise. Our past three years have been an example of the board becoming involved when the school was not meeting goals and then slowly regaining a “50,000-foot view” once solid administrative leadership was established.

In addition to ongoing training, twice per year, the board engages in a school board retreat with a chosen theme that is applicable to current challenges. In 2018-2019, the board retreat focused on ways to strategically grow enrollment in ways that would not overwhelm the physical space or the family-centered environment. The board’s decision to add middle school was met with excitement and enthusiasm by the school community. In 2019-2020, the board focused on quickly pivoting during the pandemic to offer governance that supported leadership and staff in order to provide effective distance learning. In 2020-2021, the board continues to focus on overseeing the school during distance learning, balancing fiscal responsibilities with declining Kindergarten enrollment and ensuring staffing stability.

1. **How does leadership evaluate the effectiveness of school programs? Multisite, please note any differences in sites.**

The school collects valuable input through its Academic Excellence Committee, from the examination of standardized test data, teacher created assessments, teacher feedback, parent feedback through surveys & conferences and student engagement & feedback to teachers in determining the effectiveness of school programs.

1. **What does school leadership do to improve teaching and learning? Multisite, please note any differences in sites.**

Administrators provide teachers and staff with high quality, relevant professional development; coaching through the formal and informal teacher evaluation process; support through peer observation throughout the year; and to provide all students with access to high quality curriculum and access to the necessary technology and connectivity. Similar to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the school’s education program, school leaders respond and adjust instruction and curriculum based on the continual analysis of student assessment data, engagement and feedback from parents, students, and teachers.

1. **What is the schedule the board has adopted for evaluating the school leader(s)? Multisite, please note any differences in sites.**

The Executive Director evaluation process takes place 180 days and 270 days from the start of the school year. The principals are evaluated halfway through the beginning of the year and then at the end of the year.

**Governance – DOCUMENT REQUEST**

* Board handbook (**Exhibit N This is being sent via Fed. Ex.)**
* Board’s strategic plan (Exhibit O)
* Board bylaws (if changes) (Exhibit P)
* Board conflict of interest statements (Exhibit Q)
* Board meetings schedule (Exhibit R)

## Section VII. Financial

1. **Has the school received any significant audit findings for any of the fiscal years covered in the contract? If so, please describe the steps the school has taken to address the auditor's findings.**

The school had a collateral coverage finding in FY17 which was remedied with its ICS account. The school also had a bank signer finding in FY19, and the bank signers were updated during FY20 to add Eric Williams as a signer. There were no findings for FY20.

1. **Has the school remained in good standing with all financial obligations? (e.g., pensions, taxes, insurance, contracts etc.)?**

The school has remained in good standing with all financial obligations.

1. **Does the school anticipate any upcoming financial challenges? If yes, please describe.**

In FY21 the school added 8th grade back and anticipated 498 students. Unfortunately, with the challenge of CoVid-19 and navigating the unknown landscape of distance learning the school has struggled to retain students in this environment. As of October 30, the school’s ADM is 454. Also, there has been discussion at the state level of a significant deficit in the coming biennium. This may lead to cuts in education and a potential holdback which would have implications on the school’s cash flow and potentially force it to borrow funds. The school is still working to rebuild its financial health through conservative budgeting and the cooperation of the bondholders in a deferment agreement which helped to delay the FY19 principal payment on the school’s bonds. This agreement has been updated in FY21 and STRIDE has started paying that deferred principal back and expects to satisfy that obligation at the conclusion of FY22.

**Financial – DOCUMENT REQUEST**

* Provide copies of the audits over the length of contract (Exhibit S,T,U)
* Provide a list of any outstanding invoices more than 60 days overdue N/A