



In-District Charter School Application



Steele Montessori Academy

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1. CAPACITY OF APPLICANT LEADERSHIP TEAM

Laura Christenberry/Network Principal - Laura Christenberry founded Steele Montessori Academy with SAISD in 2017. She worked with the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector to create the vision and launch the first public Montessori school in San Antonio. Laura Christenberry has also had experience with the Young Women's Leadership Academy, another innovative in-district charter school, and was the assistant principal at Gates Elementary when it moved out of Improvement Required standing in just one year. Laura's skill set includes creating and articulating a solid vision to staff and parents, inspiring staff to continue and embrace Montessori principles, and organizing teams.

Pat Forero/Montessori Instructional Coach - Pat Forero has over 20 years of experience teaching in a Montessori school setting and is in her 2nd year as a Montessori Instructional Coach. Pat Forero has knowledge of both state standards and Montessori scope and sequence and has been trained by the MACTE program in primary. Pat has a strong skill set in building relationships with teachers that has resulted in her being able to work one-on-one with each of our teachers weekly. This has led to a growth in the fidelity of our Montessori program in our classrooms. Pat's other skill sets include organization, a sense of urgency for our vision, and helping the team stay focused on deadlines and content that is aligned to our beliefs.

Austin Hawk/ Lower Elementary Teacher - Austin Hawk has been teaching for seven years, with the last two being at Steele Montessori Academy. Austin Hawk has been trained in the Lower Elementary program through the American Montessori Society organization. Austin Hawk started as a teacher through the Teach for America program and has completed post-graduate education. He has participated in the TeachPlus program which utilizes teachers to solve current education policy issues. Austin Hawk has a strong skill set in seeing the vision of the school and how we fit with current educational trends and policies. He also serves on our Steele Montessori Board and has connections with other community members that can help our team create a quality governing board. Austin brings knowledge of educational policies and a passion for Montessori education to our applicant team as well as pushes our team beyond the boundaries.

Robin McNeil-Kandera/ Special Education Teacher - Robin McNeil-Kandera is our Special Education Inclusion teacher for our Pre-K and Kindergarten students. Robin has been teaching for 2 years and has experience working with students with special needs. Because of our high number of students with special needs, her expertise is valuable in making sure our charter addresses these needs.

Margaret Alvarez/Counselor - Margaret Alvarez has 19 years of experience as a school counselor and is in her third year as the counselor at Steele Montessori Academy. Margaret has worked in a variety of settings as a school counselor including middle school which will help us plan for extending to 8th grade. She also has experience as a parent of a Montessori student as both of her children went to a Montessori school. Margaret demonstrates a passion for incorporating mindfulness not only into our curriculum but into our daily life including how we utilize mindfulness into our discipline policy, use of breathing techniques to calm students, and our Yoga/Mindfulness class. Margaret has launched the Second Step curriculum, which has taught students to work together and resolve conflict on their own. The applicant team values Margaret's talents which include honoring everyone's opinion, knowing and valuing parent input, and pursuing the philosophy of Montessori.

Rebecca Gonzalez/ Associate Network Principal- Rebecca Gonzales has been in education for twenty-three years. Rebecca’s first experience with Montessori was in attending St. Mary’s Hall High School where the Montessori principles were in place. She joined the Steele team three years ago as a parent of a Steele student and has now joined the administration team. She was a classroom teacher for eleven years, a Campus Instructional Coordinator for four years, and an Assistant Principal for seven years. She has had experience with reviewing data and evaluating the effectiveness of programs that are being used on the campus.

2. STAKEHOLDER MAP

Students	
Stakeholder’s Top 3 Needs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students are seeking individualized instruction that allows for choice, engagement, and learning on a deeper level in an inclusive environment. Students interviewed in the District communicated that they want to know their voice matters and be seen as individuals. Students crave engagement in their learning environments and feel most capable of reaching that point when they have good relationships with the adults in their school and have a sense of belonging to the community. 2. Students in this day and age need curriculum and guidance in making healthy and safe choices that allow them to develop healthy relationships and learn to regulate their emotional well being. Students face an increasingly difficult social and emotional landscape to navigate, especially when coming from a low socio-economic background. 3. Students have voiced that they would like a curriculum in which they can work at their own pace. If a topic is something that the student feels they need more time to master, then they would like the option to spend more time on this topic to move towards mastery. Those students who are further along in the curriculum than other students would like the option to pursue their interests or have the option to move forward with their learning and not be held back for the sake of keeping all students together to meet a timeline.
How those needs were identified (discuss engagement)	These needs were identified during a focus group session in May of 2019. Campus Leadership Team also analyzed the year’s data from parent surveys, NWEA MAP scores, and reading levels during the Spring of 2019 as well.
How school is currently meeting the stakeholder’s needs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students are afforded the ability to make more choices everyday in a learning environment that more accurately resembles the real world. They are encouraged to research topics in which they express interest and are allowed to present their research to the class. Every week, students sit with the guide to choose the lessons that will be worked on for the following week. The student then has the choice of the order in which to complete the tasks. Once they have completed all expected work, on Friday the students have free choice time. Within a set timeframe, the students are allowed to engage in any of the activities within the classroom. They can also sign-up for a time to attend open gym or open art. 2. Our implementation of the Second Step curriculum explicitly teaches students emotional regulation and social skills to lead happy, healthy lives. The counselor delivers these lessons weekly to the students and teachers. By having the teacher learning alongside the students, the teachers are able to monitor the use of the skills taught to the students and are able to give extension lessons as needed. Mindfulness is also taught to the students once a week.

	<p>These lessons help the students be present and aware of their environment at all times. Students participate in yoga classes to help build healthy habits on how to deal with stressful times in their lives.</p> <p>3. By nature, Montessori curriculum is laid out in a conceptual and sequential manner that builds a strong foundation that many young learners seem to be struggling to build. Students are encouraged to continue with a Montessori material until the skill has been mastered. If a child has mastered the concept with the material, they are encouraged to move on to the next material/skill rather than waiting for the class as a whole to master the skill to move forward.</p>
Areas for growth in meeting the stakeholder's needs	<p>One area of growth involves bridging the gap between theories of Montessori and special needs of a student with disabilities. The Montessori theory calls for students to be intrinsically motivated while in the IEP for a special education student, it often relies more on extrinsic motivation to help the child improve academically and behaviorally. Independence is also a Montessori theory that Steele struggles with in regards to special needs students with disabilities. In Montessori, students who need more structure and need more supervision to complete work struggle with this concept.</p> <p>Another area of growth is aligning the Montessori curriculum with each grade level's state standards. The way the state standards are assessed is very different from how the concepts are taught and assessed in the Montessori curriculum.</p>

Campus Staff	
Stakeholder's Top 3 Needs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Campus staff crave opportunities to grow as professionals, especially in their capacities as leaders. Many teachers that thrive at Steele were recruited from SAISD where they were already known as successful teachers. They reported feeling fulfillment from the transition made to the Montessori model and from the meaningful relationships they have with students, but are eager to take on more responsibility and grow into roles that allow them to further support the school and students. 2. Campus staff is in need of tangible support in helping students with academic, behavioral, social, and emotional needs resulting from a variety of circumstances. Staff in our school work with students with a variety of ability levels, some coming from challenging backgrounds, who need concrete support to help students reach their potential in all areas. 3. Campus staff is in need of fellow staff members (including administration) that support the Montessori implementation. The staff want the leadership at Steele to continue to build autonomous opportunities for teachers to allow students to develop at their own pace and make each day meaningful to a variety of learners through a flexible and efficient model of education. Teachers need the autonomy to plan individual lessons and abide by the Montessori model.
How were those needs identified (completed engagement)?	<p>These needs were identified through the Staff Insight Survey given in the Spring of 2019, teacher feedback received in Spring of 2019, candidate interviews conducted during the Fall of 2018, and through the on-boarding process.</p>
How is the school currently meets the stakeholder's needs?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Having multi-age classes means that a teacher has a student for 3 years, and during that time they build very meaningful relationships with each child. Picking up right where they left off at the end of the previous school year has been instrumental in our teachers' ability to help students progress faster without losing momentum in the first quarter of the year. Teachers at Steele are participating in various programs to get various degrees, certificates, or to grow

	<p>professionally. These teachers are provided opportunities for leadership that supports the needs of the program they are participating in through the work of the school.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Montessori allows teachers more flexibility to meet a wide range of needs in their students. Teachers receive high quality training and subsequent certification that enables them to teach in a developmentally appropriate, yet challenging way for each student. Our staff has a highly collaborative culture, and regularly engages in productive problem-solving protocols that help them design systems of intervention for students in need. The leadership of Steele Montessori is dedicated to building teacher capacity with the Montessori curriculum. The teachers participate in Tuesday PLCs and after school PD. Teachers are allowed to choose the topic for these PLCs and PD which allow for the teacher's voice to be heard. The leadership also schedules experts from the Montessori community to provide professional development to address teacher needs.
Areas for growth in meeting the stakeholder's needs	Training in trauma and social/emotional/instructional strategies to use when specific disabilities are present or suspected.

Families	
Stakeholder's Top 3 Needs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Families communicated a deep desire to have a campus that provides a different environment for children that doesn't focus on testing. They prioritize happiness over standardized scores. Equitable and Inclusive environment that welcomes students and families, strengthens the community. Parents want their children to be exposed to all races, ethnic backgrounds, all levels of socio-economic status, and students with diverse educational needs/strengths. Well rounded curriculum/choice to allow families to pick a school that meets the needs of the child and sees them as individuals.
How those needs were identified (discuss engagement)	Community engagement protocol in May 2019 families were asked about the best school experience for their child and their hopes for their child's future, end of year surveys with parents (May 2018 and May 2019), feedback through social media (ongoing)
How school is currently meeting the stakeholder's needs	Montessori education was designed to meet the needs of students through hands on learning opportunities while also including social and emotional learning in the curriculum that supports the whole child. The Montessori curriculum is followed with fidelity. The focus is on the sequence of learning a concept rather than focusing on a timetable of reaching mastery. The student learning plan allows for students to have a choice on what order they would like to complete the day's work allowing for individualization of the curriculum. The district's choice school model welcomes all students from a variety of socio-economic status to apply for enrollment. The ratio for open enrollment is kept at 50% low socio-economic status. We welcome all students and families from various backgrounds and areas around the city/county to help build a warm and supportive environment for all learners.
Areas for growth in meeting the stakeholder's needs	Steele has the challenge of building community when we have families coming from all over the city and the county.

Community

Stakeholder's Top 3 Needs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Schools such as YWLA and Highland High Park partner with Steele in events, such as Girls and Boys Bash, in order to earn service hours and inviting our families and students to football games. These high schools need engagement with our students in order to build relationships with future students and generate interest in attending their campus. In addition, Trinity, TSU, and Emerging Leaders partners with our campus to recruit high quality candidates for their programs as well as use our innovative campus as a training site for new educators. 2. Private and public Montessori schools and Associations are invested in the outcome of our school and regularly check in with us during visits, calls, and conferences. The main need they have in regards to our success is the potential to spread Montessori education. They also need access to professional development and opportunities for collaboration with our staff. 3. Montessori education was designed to meet the needs of students in poverty with special needs, and it is currently in high demand. Although this widely sought out model is over 100 years old, it is not available to the vast majority of public school students. Even in a major metropolitan area like San Antonio, the average cost is \$8,000 to \$15,000 in tuition for a student to attend a private Montessori for just 1 year. The result is that Montessori education, which was originally designed for children in poverty with diverse learning needs, is an opportunity available to only a small, elite portion of children. Steele Montessori fulfills this need of access to the Montessori model by offering this model of education at no cost, utilizing an equitable enrollment model. We welcome all students and families and work to build a warm and supportive environment for all learners
How those needs were identified (discuss engagement)	These needs were identified through meetings with Highland Park and YWLA staff (Fall 2018), meeting and PMET (spring 2019), school visits (Fall 2018/Spring 2019), and the onboarding process (spring 2019).
How school is currently meeting the stakeholder's needs	Partnerships with high schools are currently providing their students with volunteer opportunities for their required hours. Those opportunities are further providing the high schools with potential students because our students are very excited about the interactions they have with the high school students. We currently partner with local Montessori schools to share consultants and professional development sessions. We network through associations such as AMC and PMET to increase collaboration with their teachers and share useful strategies, data, and creative solutions to challenges we all face. This will help Steele maintain a strong rating within the state accountability system thus having the ability to "market" our school as having a successful model. We will, in turn, be able to reach more families who are looking for a different educational model.
Areas for growth in meeting the stakeholder's needs	We need to do more neighborhood and business outreach to get a better idea of the needs they have.

3. CAMPUS DECISION-MAKING

The campus leadership team is the campus-based decision making group. This group meets monthly and members include the principal, assistant principal, school counselor, one teacher from each level or grade, a member from the instructional assistants, two family members of students, and in the future two students (this will occur once the school houses fourth and fifth graders). Responsibilities of the CLT include revising the campus improvement plan, planning events, setting school goals, and approving the school's daily schedule. The teacher representatives on the CLT will be nominated and voted on by the

school staff, and the family member representative will be nominated and voted on by the members of the third decision-making group, the Parent Advisory Council.

Grade level teams are divided into the primary and lower elementary levels. These teams make the academic decisions based on data collected from MAP. They review the MAP data at BOY, MOY, and EOY. Based on the data shown on the learning continuum, the teachers are able to make adjustments to the work plans of the students in Transparent Classroom.

The campus is required by the district to create a TIP (Targeted Improvement Plan) plan to address the academic needs of the school. The members on the team are the principal, the administrator intern, the instructional coach, the Area Superintendent, and Coordinator of Instructional Leadership. The team is making periodic observations of the classrooms by specifically following a few students in a classroom each visit. The plan also includes creating a STAAR plan to track the progress of the students towards proficiency on the test and the team tracks this data with the teachers.

The Parent Advisory Council includes a parent or family member representative from each class in the school. This council was formed to address the gap of parent input created by the disbanding of the PTA. The PTA was disbanded due to the lack of parent support with four parents consistently running the organization and its events. The majority of the money collected on behalf of PTA went to the organization rather than the school was another factor in the disbanding of the organization. The teacher will communicate with the parent volunteer to assist with class and school events as well as attending quarterly meetings with the school principal. These meetings with school administration provide an opportunity for families from across the campus to stay informed, address concerns, and collaborate with each other. By having one parent representative from each classroom, this expands the parent participation that will be occurring at the school.

The ARD committee makes decisions on the students' IEP needs. The committee consists of the district representative, the general education teacher, the GEC teacher, the parent, and any other pertinent individuals based on the student's disability. Such things as the student's schedule, goals/objectives, testing accommodations, and classroom accommodations/modifications are addressed.

The MTSS committee addresses the needs of struggling students by deciding on instructional support that can be implemented for a student. This committee consists of the parent, the teacher, the MTSS coordinator and any other relevant district member. The committee makes decisions on next steps once they decide that all the instructional supports in place have not been of significant benefit to the child.

The LPAC committee is another academic based committee that addresses student needs. The committee consists of the LPAC coordinator, the bilingual/ESL teachers, and a parent. This committee reviews data of our English Learners. They make decisions on the instructional strategies to implement that will address their needs, on the placement of students into the Bilingual program, and on the STAAR accommodations that will be in place for the students as needed.

There is an interview committee that meets as needed to hire any additional staff for school staff vacancies. The committee uses the interview protocols that have been created by the campus to discern the will, skill, and vision of the applicant in regards to the Montessori model.

The school also has a report card committee that meets to align the Montessori curriculum with the state standards. This committee consists of teachers, the instructional coach, and administrators. The committee meets as needed to review the current report cards and meets as new grade levels are added to the school.

In the future, there will be a Montessori governing board. This board would be comprised of individuals that will be proponents of the Montessori model to ensure that as administrators change at the district level, the Montessori model will remain and to help raise money for the network.

4. DATA REFLECTION

Steele Montessori Academy continues to increase scores in Reading and Math on the NWEA MAP assessment and is higher than the district average of 23% in the 61st percentile or above. However, our current data shows that we are still below our goal of having 50% of our students scoring in the 61st percentile or above on Reading and Math. Currently 34% of our students are scoring in the 61st percentile or above in Reading and 37% are scoring in the 61st percentile or above in Math.

We also use a system called the Developmental Environmental Rating System which calculates environmental factors in learning including how a teacher initiates curiosity, respect from both the adults and children in the room, joy in the room, order and organization to inspire learning, and several other factors which give data on a variety of social and emotional skills of our students. Our goal is to have inhibitory control and social and emotional flexibility to be averaged at an 80. Currently our school is below our ¹goal at 65 for inhibitory control and 55 for social and emotional flexibility.

One piece of data that our team found particularly interesting is that teachers at Steele Montessori Academy stay. Our retention rate for 2018-2019 school year was 92% on a staff survey conducted by insight.

See Appendix A - Data Template.

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/16FjcoDaZ2VoH1NEekL5c8T5a_Wy1U1tz/edit#gid=2065423248

5. CHALLENGES FOR YOUR SCHOOL

After reviewing the data to find our three challenges, a Root Cause analysis was conducted to find the root cause for all three. This was done through in-person questioning and online use of Airtable to gather information from all involved.

Challenge #1 - Misalignment of Montessori Scope and Sequence to the TEKS and Navigating Challenges in Meeting Academic Proficiency Standards (MAP, STAAR).

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Currently, K-3 students at Steele Montessori are not meeting the proficiency standards in reading and math (according to 2018-2019 NWEA MAP testing). Only 32% of third grade students are scoring at the highest levels of reading (or in the top 40%) and only 37% perform at the highest levels in math. Our goal is to have 80% of students scoring in the top 40% on the Reading NWEA MAP by the end of 2023.

After surveying a host of stakeholders on the root causes, including teachers and campus administration, the following driver was identified:

As a public Montessori school, there is a need for Steele to follow the Montessori curriculum in conjunction with the state TEKS. The TEKS must be mastered in order to meet the state standard

on the STAAR assessment for state accountability since Steele is a public Montessori school. In the Montessori curriculum, there is a specific order of the lessons and their corresponding materials. If this sequence is not followed, critical objectives and steps to understanding the Direct Aim of each material would be missed. When the child moves on to the next material, they may not understand the full objective of the next work. Alignment work will need to be done to ensure that Montessori lessons are meeting the needs of the TEKS.

Challenge #2 - Increasing Social Fluency and Emotional Flexibility

According to the Developmental Environmental Rating Scale data compiled in MOY of 2018, the school's learning environment scored a 55 out of 100 in the area of social fluency and emotional flexibility. This is considered in the Developing range of the scale (37-55). Steele's goal is to be in the Optimal range (78-100). This area measures a child's respect with their environment and each other as well as the adult's respect with the child.

We gathered input on the root cause from our stakeholders analyzing the DERS data. The following root cause was identified:

A student benefits greatly from entering a Montessori school in the primary grades (PK3, PK4, Kinder). These students are taught the fundamental skills necessary to function in the classroom as a Montessori student, such as working through the whole three hour work cycle, patience when a material they need is not available, and how to use the peace corner when they are struggling emotionally, among other skills. As students enter into the Montessori model at the lower elementary levels, we see that they are unable to assimilate with the open structure of the school. They struggle with the independence of the three-hour work session because they have to rely on themselves to be productive and focus to complete their work. The Montessori method builds capacity with so many necessary skills to be successful in a Montessori school starting from the primary grades. The new students miss out on the opportunity to learn and internalize these skills.

Challenge #3 - Provide more opportunities for parents to participate in family engagement activities.

The enrollment at Steele Montessori consists of 54% of the students coming from within a two-mile radius from the school. 45% of the students are enrolling from outside of a two-mile radius of the school.

We gathered input on the root cause from our stakeholders analyzing the data on students showing the number of transfer students within the school versus the number of students within the two-mile

priority area. The following root cause was identified:

The only family engagement activities that are offered off-site are the Dia de los Muertos event, Chalk It Up, and Basura Bash which are all located in the downtown area or close to the school. Being a choice school, the families at Steele come from all over Bexar County. Thus, Steele needs to engage more parents in different areas of the county. We need to create more ownership within the school by offering different venues throughout the city for families to engage with other families and various opportunities for parents to have a voice.

6. MISSION

Steele Montessori Academy, fostering happy children who advocate for others and pursue their passions.

What we believe

- We believe that being in the present moment can help us focus better and bring us peace to our well-being.
- We believe we all are reflective learners who set meaningful goals for themselves.
- We believe that school is a joyful student-centered place to spend your day.
- We believe that the Earth is precious and full of resources that we must ethically manage.
- We believe that all children deserve access to a free and public Montessori education.
- We believe authentic and challenging work gives us a sense of purpose.
- We ARE deeply passionate and engaged in the work that we do. We do meaningful work that contributes to our community.
- We live in harmony with one another and treat each other with grace and courtesy.

7. GOALS

Goal #	Timeframe (1, 3 or 5 year)	Description of Goal in SMART format	2018-2019 Baseline Data	Data Used to Measure Progress towards Goal
1.	3 year	80% of students will score in the top 40% on the Reading NWEA MAP by the end of 2023.	K-2 is currently at a 32% proficiency rate	End of year MAP data, MAP fluency assessment
2.	3 year	We will eliminate achievement gaps on the STAAR Reading assessment by having less than a 15 point difference between the achievement of economically disadvantaged students and non-economically disadvantaged students.	Currently we don't have any STAAR data	STAAR data in domains 1 and 3,
3.	5 year	Steele Montessori Academy will be rated an A by the Texas Education Agency by 2025.	Current rating is a D. This is based on our connection with our sister school.	STAAR data, progress monitoring.

4.	5 year	60% of our special education students will meet or exceed their yearly growth measure for the STAAR Reading test.	Currently, 31% of our special education students meet or exceed the growth measure for STAAR reading.	STAAR data, reading fluency progress monitoring, NWEA MAP
5.	1 year	Maintain economic diversity within the school, ensuring that at least 50% of enrolled students qualify for free and reduced lunch with 25% being from Block 4 families.	62% of the students for the 18-19 school year were eco-dis. 14% of the students were from Block 4 families.	Equity audits, enrollment process, Snapshot demographics

Which goal will be the hardest to achieve and why?

We believe that Goal #1 will be the hardest to achieve because typically the district has had lower scores in reading resulting in an average of 34% of students score in the top 40% on the NWEA MAP Reading Assessment. The school will also need to find a balance between test preparation for STAAR and the Montessori philosophy that children will develop skills within their own timeline. The school will also have to align the Montessori standards with the TEKS to ensure that students are meeting both sets of standards.

8. ACADEMIC MODEL

Montessori education is based on the Montessori model researched and proposed by Dr. Maria Montessori. Her research focused on a child’s natural abilities to concentrate, explore, discover, and learn about the world around them. The main components of Montessori education include: mixed-age classrooms, uninterrupted work periods, Montessori materials, building independence, emphasis of outdoor learning/real-world activities, and focusing on the social and emotional needs of the child.

Montessori works by offering children choices and activities that motivate them to engage deeply and work independently. Montessori classrooms are carefully prepared environments stocked with unique educational materials and teachers who have been specially trained to assist children in exploring, concentrating, and mastering key academic and social/emotional skills.

Montessori classrooms look different from regular classrooms. The Montessori method includes some special elements:

- Mixed-age classrooms - Children are in the same classroom, with the same teacher for three years. The students and the teachers build a strong relationship over this time, helping students feel safe in their environment. Younger children learn from older ones. The mixed-age classroom also helps facilitate students learning at their own pace.
- Uninterrupted Work Periods and Choice - Children have long periods of time to follow their interests and work independently, building concentration and focus. Students are also able to have choice on the order of the tasks they work on during this work period.

- Montessori Materials - The Montessori curriculum calls for the use of hands-on learning tools. These materials are both attractive to the child and designed to support the deep exploration of important concepts.
- Outdoor Learning/Real-world Activities - The classrooms include real-world activities such as caring for plants and animals, keeping the room clean and organized, and preparing and serving food. Children love engaging in real activities and, in addition to becoming responsible members of the classroom community, the skills they practice--attention, focus, coordination--set the stage for more advanced academic work. Outdoor learning in Montessori includes learning how to take care of our environment and stressing the mental health of being in the outdoors. The ultimate goal is to teach children to enjoy being in nature. It will help them have a better conceptual understanding of biology and environmental science concepts. The grace and courtesy lessons that are presented to the students helps the student be ready to function in a community both at school and beyond the school walls.
- Building Independence - Within the limits set by the teacher and the classroom, children have a high level of independence and responsibility. The students are charged with sweeping and mopping the floor plus cleaning the tables and washing dishes after each mealtime. The students are allowed to choose a comfortable area within the classroom or designated areas outside of the classroom to work without the direction of the teacher.
- Montessori Trained Teachers - Montessori teachers, or Guides, take additional training to learn the use of the materials and to study how children learn. Teachers typically give lessons to one child at a time or a small group, while the other children work independently, supervised by a classroom assistant. Teachers are given binders or albums with lessons for all the materials that will be used in their classrooms. They practiced those lessons in training. Then, the lessons are implemented and utilized when planning individual, small group, and whole group lessons.

Social Emotional Learning is a critical part of academic learning in the Montessori model. We incorporate the Second Step Curriculum into our daily learning which is key to developing social and emotional success in our school. Second Step is a product of Committee for Children, which helps to develop the Executive Function and self-regulation skills that are the mental process that enables a child to plan and focus attention. The Second Step program is a universal, classroom-based curriculum, it is research-based, and lessons are developmentally appropriate and sequential. Lessons are purposeful and designed to increase student's school success, decrease problem behaviors and promote social-emotional competence and self-regulation. The developmental lessons incorporate academic success by focusing on skills for learning, empathy, emotional management and problem solving. Skills taught are in cooperation with adults, focus attention, remember directions, stay on task, teach handling emotional challenges and getting along with others.

Montessori also has a peace curriculum that teaches conflict resolution and learning how to handle situations independently. Grace and courtesy is also incorporated into the Montessori classroom. These are lessons that teach manners and how to function in a community.

The Montessori model addresses the special populations in various ways. Whether you have been identified as gifted or as a student in need, you can benefit from the model by being provided opportunities for teachers to individualize lessons to meet your individual needs and/or to pace students according to their needs. The students also have access to hands-on and visual manipulatives for every concept. There are built in role models by having three grade levels in one classroom allowing

for peer assistance which also increases the opportunity for communication, meeting the needs of our English Learner students.

Montessori State Accountability Plan

Working within the Montessori curriculum, we have come to the understanding that there is an instructional gap between the Montessori curriculum and the TEKS, possibly leading to lower than expected STAAR scores. The misalignment between the two curriculums was found during an analysis of the MAP data by the lower elementary teachers and administration. We found that some of the items that were tested had not been taught by the Montessori curriculum. To address this misalignment, we have developed Montessori materials to fill in the gap caused by the discrepancy between the Montessori curriculum and the MAP and STAAR testing. For example, number lines and ten frames are not part of the Montessori materials but have been added to meet the requirements of the MAP and STAAR testing. In addition, a STAAR plan has also been developed to meet this need. The plan entails providing the students a STAAR formatted assignment as part of the students' work plan. The number of reading passages that students are given is increased each month to build the stamina that is needed to concentrate on the assessment. A review of the data generated by these assignments is also in place, including a data wall review and planning a corrective instruction plan to fill in any gaps the students may be exhibiting. Another factor that may contribute to the lower than expected MAP and STAAR scores for our third graders is that fifth grade is identified as the grade level in which the students will master the Montessori curriculum. Those students who have not attended a Montessori school since primary will be missing foundational skills both academically and social/emotionally that were taught in the primary grade levels. The teachers take the time to present these Montessori materials, procedures, and routines to these lower elementary students that would have been introduced to them in primary grades. With this plan in place, Steele is confident that we will meet our STAAR goal.

9. DATA AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) - The PLC meetings are held every week for both primary and lower elementary. The Lower Elementary meetings consist of the teachers, the principal, and the instructional coach. In Lower Elementary, the first few meetings of the year focus on incorporating the state standards into the Montessori curriculum. For third grade specifically, a plan on how to prepare the students for STAAR was devised with scheduled assessments that would allow for tracking of TEKS based data to help maintain academic progress by all third graders. The STAAR based data is reviewed every three weeks and adjustments are made to students' work plan to ensure that their needs are met and/or their strengths are addressed.

The Primary meetings consist of the teachers, the principal, and the instructional coach. The Primary meetings look at the instructional needs of the students and adjust work plans as needed. The meetings at BOY are used to reflect on practices from the previous year to assess their success and if any changes need to be made.

For both Primary and Lower Elementary, the learning continuum is consulted three times a year at minimum (after each administration of MAP) to make decisions on the individual work plans for the students. The learning continuum report translates MAP scores to learning statements. Teachers are able to see at which grade level the student begins to struggle with the concepts that are related to the

TEKS. For example, a student may begin to struggle with adding with regrouping at a 2nd grade level despite the fact that they are in third grade. Adjustments are made to the student work plans after reviewing the MAP data at BOY and MOY by using the learning continuum to fill in gaps the student may be experiencing. Zone charts are also kept and reviewed at the PLC meetings after the administration of MAP. The zone charts keeps track of the student progress according to the Masters, Meets, and Approaches categories which correlates to the STAAR test.

Campus Leadership Team (CLT) - The campus leadership team meets once a month. The committee consists of the administration team, teachers representing both primary and lower elementary, parents, and community members. The committee meets to discuss all available school data, including the Insight Survey data, MAP data, enrollment data and make updates/adjustments to the Campus Improvement Plan as needed.

Administrative Team Meetings - The administrative team consists of the principal, the assistant principal, the instructional coach, and the counselor. The team meets weekly to review the needs of the teachers as seen in walkthroughs and T-TESS observations. The team also reviews the Developmental Environmental Rating Scale (DERS) data at BOY, MOY, and EOY. Coaching sessions are held based on this data. The team also makes decisions concerning the allocation of funds for instructional materials and professional development based on all data available.

Additional data will be collected using the following manner to address the needs and perspectives of the key stakeholder groups:

Students

- The counselor will give the SEAD (Social/Emotional Learning Development) survey in the fall semester to assess how safe the students feel on campus. The school counselor and administrators will review the Social, Emotional, and Academic Development (SEAD) data to make changes or enhance the Second Step Curriculum.
- To assess the academic progress of the students, they will be administered MAP (BOY, MOY, and EOY), STAAR (3rd and 4th), and COR (observation based) for the Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD) class. All academic data will be discussed and adjustments to the curriculum and the student work plans will be made by the PLC committees.

Teachers

- At the end of the year, teachers participate in the Insight survey to assess Peer Culture, Diversity/Equity/Inclusion, Leadership, Learning Environment, Academic Expectations, Career Progression, Family and Community Engagement (Teacher Perspective), Observation and Feedback, Evaluation, Professional Development, and Instructional Planning for Student Growth. The CLT and administration team will meet to discuss the needs of the teachers and how they will be addressed the next school year.
- A T-TESS (Texas Teacher Evaluation & Support System) observation (yearly) and walkthroughs will be completed by the administration throughout the year to assess instructional effectiveness and to provide coaching opportunities.
- A DERS observation will be conducted at BOY, MOY, and EOY of each classroom. This observation is used to assess how closely the classroom environment matches the expectation of a Montessori classroom. The instructional coach uses this information to coach teachers in how to create a more Montessori aligned classroom.

- A survey will be given at the EOY to assess how teachers are looking to serve the school in a leadership capacity and their interest in future professional development. The administration team uses this data to plan professional development opportunities for the following school year and to look for leadership opportunities for teachers within the school system.

Families

- A survey will be sent out at various times of the year to assess the parent perception of the programs offered at the school and any needs that we may not be meeting.
- The parents will be asked to take the PBIS survey to assess their perception of the climate and safety of the school.
- There will be a yearly SPF (School Performance Framework) in-person meetings using a protocol to gather information concerning academic needs, social/emotional needs, and the overall health of the school.
- All data will be reviewed at the CLT meeting shortly after the data is received and adjustments will be made by all relevant members of the committee.

Community

- Our data and current goals will be updated yearly on the website.

10. PROPOSED AUTONOMIES

Proposed Autonomy	Description of Autonomy	Rationale
Staffing	<p>We request that the Montessori network have increased autonomy around hiring.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hiring protocols: The hiring process would include group interview protocols, task oriented protocols, questions written specifically to ensure the applicant meets the needs of the Montessori network, and a lesson demonstration by teachers. ● We are requesting the flexibility to use staff across the network. Some staff will be utilized at both schools but will not carry full-day caseloads. This allows the flexibility to have the staff member service students across the network. ● We request to hire for specific positions to support the behavioral, social/emotional, and curriculum initiatives and needs of the school. 	<p>The rationale for his autonomy is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hiring individuals who believe in our mission and understand Montessori philosophy is essential to our work. We are looking for an applicant who has the will, the skill, and the mindset for becoming a Montessori teacher. The network is in need of teachers who are willing to work extra hours to get certified to be a Montessori teacher and prepare lessons that meet the needs of the individual student. This dedication needs to be ascertained during the interview process to avoid the misuse of resources, including time and money, if a teacher is hired that is not dedicated to or does not understand the high demands of the Montessori method. ● Each campus has unique needs. In order to best meet these needs, utilizing staff between the two campuses would help serve students more effectively. For example, a behavior specialist that does not carry a full caseload at one campus may go to the other campus once a week to serve students. ● The network may need positions to be added to meet the needs of the Montessori curriculum. Some examples of these positions would be an agriculture teacher to allow for more real-world teaching, staff to support mindfulness, staff to support the inclusion model seen in the schools, staff to support our behavioral model, etc. ● In the Montessori model, larger class sizes are in place to have students of mixed-ages in one room. As a result, we have intentionally staffed with a second adult who provides another support for students. This enables the older students to be

		<p>role-models for the younger students. The nature of the curriculum requires that the students work independently and the assistant serves as a supervisor as the teacher is conducting lessons. The assistant also serves as a social/emotional support. The assistants also plan with the teachers and share observations that they have made on the students with the teachers to create plans that will meet the students' needs.</p>
	<p>We request no forced placement or forced transfer of teaching and administrative staff into the campus.</p>	<p>Teachers within the Montessori network are required to attend extensive training to become Montessori certified. A new teacher to the school without previous Montessori training will cost the district on average \$14, 900 By maintaining a stable staff, we ensure that our staff has the needed skills to implement the very specific Montessori model.</p>
	<p>We request autonomy to determine staff stipends. Teachers with dual certifications should receive higher pay as they will be carrying an increased caseload across the network of Montessori schools.</p>	<p>Montessori certified teachers are not readily available due to the low number of Montessori schools compared to the number of traditional schools. Montessori teachers must also get specialized training to be a certified Montessori teacher which takes seven weeks of full day training in the summer. They also have follow-up observations and training throughout the year before becoming certified. The teachers spend up to 20-25 hours a week on preparation of individual lessons for the students and their own money on supplies. These additional hours allow the teachers to implement the Montessori curriculum with fidelity. A stipend being offered to the teachers would help retain the teachers at the school and keep us from losing a significant amount of our financial and human capital.</p>
Calendar	<p>We request the ability to adjust our campus operations as necessary to accommodate Montessori challenges.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We will be asking for our new to Montessori students to attend school a week or two in the summer to begin showing them the routines necessary to be successful. Teachers will be brought back before their contract begins to teach things such as practical life, rug rolling, an introduction to essential Montessori materials and routines, and grace and courtesy. This will allow the students to experience more success with the routines that are integrated into every aspect of the Montessori curriculum. ● The teachers will be brought back early to have them attend necessary professional development, be able to provide two full parent conference days, etc. to help us achieve our mission.
Professional Development	<p>We request that school administration and their staff have the option, but will not be required, to attend all district professional development.</p>	<p>The Montessori network schools have unique professional development needs due to the specificity of the curriculum used that may not be met by the professional development offered by the district. It's important to have the staff choose to attend the district offered professional development that will best meet their needs with implementing their curriculum or meet their student needs. The Montessori network will rely more heavily on consultants and the Montessori network for their professional development such as Lesson Studies, PMET (Public Montessori Educators of Texas) conference, and The Montessori Event by the American Montessori Society.</p>

Curriculum and Instruction	We are requesting that Montessori curriculum be the main curriculum of the school.	Staff must be able to teach utilizing the Montessori method with fidelity, which will not always follow the district set scope and sequence. With this in mind, the Montessori network will have to intentionally plan when the TEKS will be met within the Montessori curriculum.
	We are requesting autonomy concerning the Montessori curriculum schedule to be implemented rather than having to follow the district schedule.	The Montessori schedule allows for a three hour uninterrupted work cycle. It also allows for free choice options for the students and the teaching of social/emotional skills within the day.
	We are requesting autonomy concerning the Social/Emotional curriculum.	The Montessori method works to build independence and intrinsic motivation through the curriculum. Intrinsic motivation is a strong component of the Montessori curriculum that is counterintuitive to the PBIS strategies used to motivate and change a child’s behavior. We need the autonomy to address SEL needs in a Montessori appropriate method. Montessori relies on using the Second Step curriculum, teaching Mindfulness, teaching Grace and Courtesy, and teaching students to use calming spots/peace places as a means to meet their social/emotional needs.
	We are requesting the autonomy to have “farm” type animals on campus for the students to interact with.	Part of the Montessori curriculum includes global mindedness. By having “farm” type animals on campus, the students are able to care for and have a shared sense of responsibility within the school community by caring for the animals.
	We are requesting autonomy with the usage of technology in the classroom to align with the Montessori philosophy.	The Montessori curriculum calls for minimal use of technology within the classrooms. The main purpose of technology usage in the Montessori curriculum is for students to conduct research on topics of their choice.
Grade Reporting and Assessments	We are requesting the autonomy to choose to use the appropriate district assessments that would compliment the Montessori curriculum and the ability to opt out of those that are in contrast to the Montessori method.	The district assessments do not measure the necessary indicators to see the success of a classroom in following the Montessori curriculum. Therefore, we need to use other measuring systems such as DERS and Transparent Classroom. We would continue to use the MAP, LAP3, and of course administer the STAAR assessment in accordance with district and state guidelines. We would opt-out of using the district CBA assessments.
	We are requesting the autonomy to use a skill based report card system that will be a fit for the Montessori curriculum and also address the state standards.	The standards based report card shows a more accurate representation of how the student is progressing towards mastering the skills being taught. It also aligns with the Transparent Classroom software that the teachers use to lesson plan and track student progress.

11.SCHOOL NETWORK DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Due to the success seen at Steele Montessori and the demand for seats at the school evidenced by the lottery waiting list, the decision was made to open an additional public Montessori school. Rodriguez Montessori will be the second public Montessori school to open within SAISD. This Montessori network will allow the two Montessori schools to function as one unit yet allowing for each school to establish its own culture.

A. RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

As the founding principal of Steele Montessori, Laura Christenberry has dedicated a lot of time to researching best practices of Montessori education and implemented those with fidelity. I have visited and interviewed principals of public Montessori schools across the country who believe in Montessori education for everyone regardless of income and who are taking steps to advocate for social justice issues through the lens of Montessori education. I have taken an overview course in Montessori education and continued my research by studying Maria Montessori's writings.

Before opening Steele Montessori Academy, I attended Purdue University and Trinity University both of which instilled a commitment to innovation and "outside the box" thinking which has helped me pursue the design of this Montessori school. I have also worked on the administrative team at two schools which were Improvement Required. Within one year, I coached teachers and developed an improvement plan which led to our success by going from Improvement Required to Met Standard in one year.

In my two years at Steele Montessori Academy, I have continually evaluated our Montessori program to ensure access for everyone and fidelity to Montessori. My strengths include being able to articulate my vision and futuristic thinking as well as building a trusting culture which I believe has led to my success at Steele Montessori Academy.

B. SYSTEMS

Hiring System - The network will use similar hiring systems. The network will create a hiring team consisting of staff from both schools. This will help ensure the philosophy and mission of the network is upheld at all schools. The network will use self-created interview processes to include group tasks, individual tasks, and individual interviews with questions written to ensure the applicant exhibits the qualities of a Montessori teacher, the applicant's creativity, and the ability of the applicant to be a team player.

Professional Development - Professional development will be implemented as a network with the flexibility to meet individual teachers' needs. All teachers will need to be trained through an accredited Montessori association. Professional development will be key to ensuring consistency within a Montessori network. The teachers will need to attend the PMET conference in order to network and to learn new and innovative methods to be used in the classroom through conducting classroom observations in Austin area Montessori schools and attending the sessions offered. Lesson studies will need to be conducted on campus with the Instructional Specialist in order to ensure the growth of the teachers to meet the needs of the students. The teachers of the Montessori network will also benefit from attending any district professional development that is offered that will meet the Montessori model. To ensure consistency within the school itself, teachers will conduct observations of fellow teachers' classrooms (across both schools) to provide feedback to each other and to garnish new ideas. The teachers will also attend The Montessori Conference put on by the American Montessori Society.

Montessori Model - The network with Steele and Rodriguez will use the same observation tools to ensure the classroom environment is following the Montessori model (DERS, Essential Elements of a Public Montessori). The following components of the Montessori model will be duplicated across the network: three-hour work cycle, student work plan, outdoor education, real-world activities, mixed-age

classrooms, social/emotional curriculum, Montessori scope and sequence, and Montessori based classroom environment (furniture and materials).

Parent Engagement - The network will look to engage parents from both schools at family engagement opportunities. Parent engagement is an integral part of the Montessori experience. Some of the means by which instructional strategies to be used at home are conveyed to the parents include First Thursday meetings held the first Thursday of each month and Facebook Live meetings held every last Friday of the month. Parent engagement activities will be key for both schools to implement to give the schools the “neighborly” feel that you get from neighborhood school. Some of these engagement activities can include, but are not limited to, Movie Night, the Fiesta Parade and Carnival, Watch Me Work nights, Mother’s Day Tea, and Basura Bash. The events can be held at the network schools and invite all the families from all the schools.

Open Enrollment - Montessori schools are part of the choice schools in SAISD which means that parents have to apply to attend. The network schools will plan many marketing activities to attract families to apply for the network schools. One possible idea for the promotion of the schools can include info sessions to be held during the open enrollment period. These sessions can give an overview of the Montessori model and its mission through a powerpoint presentation and teacher demonstration at the various Montessori schools. Tours of the schools could be held on specific days at specific network schools to allow for more opportunities for parents interested in the Montessori model to attend the tours at a convenient time.

New Family Welcome - The network will need to ensure a smooth transition for new families to the Montessori network. There are two ways in which this is accomplished. The network schools will hold a New Family Orientation during the school year they accept their seat. At this orientation, the presenters can review the school policies, the key aspects of the Montessori curriculum (independence, communication, care of the environment, self-care), and the Second Step Curriculum for social/emotional support. There is also a welcome session at the beginning of the new school year where the new families are given a chance to mingle with the current families in order to build community.

Onboarding of Teachers - Once a teacher is hired into the Montessori network, if they are not Montessori trained they will attend a summer training to begin the process of becoming a certified Montessori teacher. The instructional coaches from the network will help the teacher set up their room. The current teachers on their level reach out to them and take them out for a getting to know you session. They also try to answer any questions the teacher may have at this time.

Social/Emotional Instruction - The Second Step curriculum will be used across the network to teach lessons on various social/emotional subjects. These will be conducted by the counselor with the teacher present. The teacher being present allows for extension lessons to be taught and for the implementation of the strategies in the classroom.

Lastly, all autonomies that are allowed will work in all schools within the network with the ability to allow for individual autonomies that will fit the school’s particular model.

C. MITIGATING RISKS

Risk	Mitigating Strategy
Ensuring alignment academically and culturally between the two schools	The administrative teams will review all pertinent data to ensure alignment across the schools in the network. The administrative team and other relevant stakeholders will conduct observations at their fellow school using an observation instrument agreed upon by all involved (for example the DERS instrument) to ensure that there is alignment between the schools. Professional development opportunities based on this review of data and on the data gathered from the observations will involve both schools and can be held at any of the network schools. Parent engagement activities can be planned with input from each school and held at each school, alternating from one network school to the next.
Ensuring that staff that is hired have a passion and understanding of what the Montessori model entails	The hiring process will be crucial in ensuring that the potential hire is exhibiting the necessary passion for teaching in a Montessori school, among other skills and values. We could potentially hold information sessions for teachers and staff that are interested in applying as a Montessori staff member. All schools in the network will use the same job descriptions, interview protocols, and timelines for hiring new staff members. The intent is to create a hiring committee that will have members from all network schools. This hiring committee will be in all interviews for additional staff members, ensuring that the vision of the network is upheld.
Communication between the two schools	The schools will have to set standing meeting dates to allow for the schools to communicate with each other. Areas on which the schools would need to communicate include: academics, staffing concerns, classroom environments, professional development, and parent engagement activities. Some of this communication will happen with the advisory board sub-committees, such as the hiring sub-committee, the events sub-committee, etc. Specifically, the schools will need to have standing meetings at minimum every two weeks to ensure that both schools are meeting the vision and mission of the school. The schools could also use Google Sharing capabilities to share data and other pertinent information. Meetings can also be held by Zoom so that administrators can remain on their campus while still being able to communicate.
A decline in Steele’s results or culture due to the time and commitment it will take to open another Montessori school.	Opening the new Montessori school will need to involve the input and assistance of the current teachers and administration at Steele. Without having an established staff at the new network schools, the expertise of the current team will be needed which entails having them represent both schools at events, taking time to help with completing charters at the schools, and meeting with those involved with opening the new network schools to provide their valuable input from their personal experience of having previously opened the first public Montessori school. This means that we will have to spread the amount of work amongst the current staff to not overwhelm any one person. We will have to get their input electronically to reduce the amount of time they spend on face-to-face meetings. The administration team will also need to be intune with the mood and needs of the staff to not stretch them to the breaking point. Open dialogue will be very important and frequent check-ins with the teachers will be needed.

12. HUMAN CAPITAL

We are a school who believes our culture is as important as our academic achievement. We want teachers who are looking to grow students' independence, foster their growth mindset, teach them how to advocate for their passions, and to instill global mindedness through teamwork and dedication. We look to hire guides who are willing to work for the benefit of the whole child through innovative thinking and a long-term commitment to the Montessori model. We are willing to grow our people through coaching, tailored Montessori professional development and support, and by fostering leadership skills that yields steady and consistent growth.

Recruitment

Recruitment of highly qualified and motivated Montessori teachers is vital to the school's success, yet, it is also an aspect of Human Capital that Steele needs to focus on for improvement. Steele staff uses both the Public Montessori Educators of Texas conference and The Montessori Event hosted by the American Montessori Society to recruit new members of the school. Both of these conferences allow networking to occur and allows Steele to actively recruit new members to the Montessori network in SAISD. The majority of the teachers that are employed at Steele have also worked in the traditional schools within San Antonio ISD. This allows Steele to recruit from traditional teachers to become Montessori teachers. The teachers and administration use these connections to actively recruit potential applicants who have a strong work ethic and strong teaching skills that align with the Montessori model.

Because Steele is relatively new to the Montessori public sector and the first public Montessori school in San Antonio, the universities in the area are not invested in creating a pathway for teachers to be Montessori trained. This is an avenue of recruitment that needs to be further explored in order to create a broader pool of qualified Montessori teachers in the SAISD area. This would save the district thousands of dollars by not having to pay for the teachers to be Montessori certified.

At Steele, the staff demographics are 34% white, 52% Hispanic, 14% African American, 17% male, and 83% female. To ensure that we continue to diversify our staff, Steele needs to begin reaching out to professional organizations, such as the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE), to have access to recruiting quality candidates from diverse ethnicities, races, and gender.

Hiring Process

The hiring of new teachers is conducted by the interview committee which is comprised of representatives from school administration and teachers. The interview for teachers includes several components. One part of the interview is answering rubric-based questions that are scored by members of the interview committee. Another part of the interview is to have the candidate conduct a demonstration lesson with a small group of students of varying needs and levels. The students are given the opportunity to provide feedback to the members of the committee after the demonstration lesson. The final component of the interview is an observation of the Montessori environment followed by a debrief with members of the interview committee.

In similar fashion, the hiring of the administrative team, assistants, and other auxiliary staff is conducted by a committee. The applicants are taken through a group task and scored on a rubric to assess the skills of the applicant while working in a group. They are then taken to an individual interview where they are asked questions that are meant to ascertain the applicant's will and skill, and to assess their vision alignment with the Montessori model.

On-boarding

If a teacher is hired and does not have a Montessori certification for the position they will fill, the

teacher will attend Montessori training at the Houston Montessori Center at the expense of the district. This training is a six-week course in the summer prior to them beginning the school year and then they must go back two times during the coming school year and return the following summer for a week. Various projects, reports, and observations are completed throughout the year before the teacher can officially receive their Montessori certificate which is required to teach in a Montessori environment. The summer prior to the new teacher starting, various people from the campus reach out to the new hiree to let them know they are supported, to answer any questions or concerns they may have, or to provide resources. This gesture also begins to build the relationship of the new applicant with the team they are joining. The school places a high priority on this because a connected team can yield high academic results when they work together for the benefit of the students.

Once the guide joins the team, administrators, instructional coach, and grade-level peers continually work together to support new employees. If the guide is new to the district, an onsite guide or the instructional coach becomes their mentor for two years. Grade level planning takes place and Professional Learning Communities are also held weekly to teach/review any of the instructional strategies or technology used in the classroom. On-site professional development is given monthly and outside Montessori consultants are also brought in to aid in the growth of fidelity with the Montessori curriculum.

Steele does need to review their on-boarding policy which can be made to be more systematic. There could be a 30/60/90 day plan devised that would not only address the new teachers that start at the beginning of the year, but it could also incorporate ideas of how to on-board various types of employees as well as ideas of how to on-board at any time during the year.

Teacher Development

According to the Professional Development and Leadership Opportunities survey, the staff finds the visits at other Montessori schools and lesson studies to be of most value to them. Every year, at least five employees attend the National American Montessori Institute Conference, which is attended by Montessori educators from around the world. Some guides also attend the Public Montessori Educators of Texas conference that is held yearly. During these two conferences, teachers attend workshops that grow their practice. They also have the opportunity to visit other Montessori classrooms as a resource for ideas concerning how to maintain the Montessori classroom. Once the teachers return, they share information and resources with their peers through lesson studies.

Weekly Professional Learning Communities are held by the teachers, administrators, and the instructional coach. These meetings act as mini professional developments driven by the teachers. At these meetings, the teachers review all available data to make a plan to address the needs that are present according to the data. At the meetings, the teachers also share instructional strategies with which they have experienced success, discuss ideas for the next theme to be taught, and discuss behavior concerns. Lesson studies are also held during the PLC time. This process lets teachers share ideas that will support the upcoming themes of study, ideas for teaching social/emotional strategies, or ideas that will enhance the Montessori environment in the classrooms. The lesson study process supports the teachers' desire to learn through group discussion as evidenced in the Professional Development and Leadership Opportunities survey.

Administrators and the Instructional coach observe all the teachers and meet with them regularly to give constructive feedback and help the guides reflect on their own practice. The administration uses both the Developmental Environment Rating System (DERS) data and the T-TESS observation data to provide more targeted instructional feedback. The Instructional Coach asks the teacher guiding questions which help them reflect on their practice rather than telling them what they need to do. This builds the teachers ability to self-reflect and builds their ability to think through their practice on their own. Montessori consultants are hired to make observations of the classrooms in December to ensure fidelity to the Montessori model. The consultants debrief with the teachers the day of the observations to give them an overall impression of what they observed. From the data they gather during the classroom observations and the information they gathered from the debriefing session, the January professional development is planned for the teachers to address any areas of need.

Teacher Retention

According to the Insight survey completed by teachers at the end of the school year in 2018-2019, the top three retention strategies that influenced teachers staying at Steele are the school provided the teacher with regular and positive feedback, the school provided teachers with access to additional resources for their classroom, and the school encouraged the teacher to continue teaching at their school the following year. The top reason for teachers planning to stay included a positive school culture and learning environment.

Teachers receive weekly coaching from the Instructional Coach. The Instructional Coach will make observations in the classrooms and provide feedback on how to strengthen their teaching practice or how to enhance the learning environment for the students.

Teachers' voices being heard is an important part of the school culture and climate at Steele which influences teacher retention. The administration surveys the teachers at the end of the year to ascertain their professional development needs and to see the areas in which they would like to grow as leaders. This information is used to plan professional development the following year, the mode by which it will be implemented, and which teachers are comfortable with leading the professional development.

Steele encourages teachers to stay at the school by offering them leadership opportunities. When teachers were surveyed through the Professional Development and Leadership Opportunities survey, it was found that they wanted to take on leadership opportunities that included starting student clubs, becoming team leads, chair the PBIS committee, taking on the GT coordinator role, and taking on the lead role for primary and lower elementary. Currently, a teacher is in these roles on campus. This allows the teacher to grow in their knowledge and to sharpen their leadership skills. It also offers them a broader view of how the school is run and how every part of the school interacts with each other for the benefit of the whole child. This also builds buy-in on the part of the teacher as to the success of the school. This helps retain the teacher as they want to be a part of this success.

Teachers are part of the interview committee. This entails input in writing the interview questions, setting the criteria for the rubric to rate applicants, and being a part of the actual interviews. Teachers are also a part of the Campus Leadership Team which reviews data and makes decisions that will impact the school to continue the progress of the school. The administration also surveys the professional development needs of the staff at the end of the year to hear their personal needs for growth. The survey is then reviewed to make professional development decisions for the following school year.

Teachers are able to pursue various programs outside of the school or the district to further their leadership skills. We currently have a teacher in the The Leadership SAISD program and the instructional coach is in the Emerging Leaders program. These two Steele members are supported in these programs by being allowed to practice these skills through the work of the professional learning community and by implementing ideas that they have heard through these programs.

Steele also has a family-like feel among the staff which mirrors the culture of the Montessori classroom environments. All staff are invited out a few times a year for dinners or a special outing to help build our school community family. We even support our Physical Education coach by attending one of his team's games. The staff celebrates the holidays together through various traditions that have been established. One area of professional development that could be furthered by a Montessori network that was seen in the Professional Development and Leadership Opportunities survey is the desire to interact with Montessori schools in the area. By creating a network of public Montessori schools, the teachers would have a wider range of professional development and leadership opportunities. The network schools could conduct instructional rounds with each other to provide feedback as to the fidelity with which the Montessori model is being implemented at the schools. The schools could also share in the professional developments that are offered at each individual school. There is also the possibility of teachers coaching teachers by having more teachers available within the network to get this work done.

13. CLIMATE & CULTURE

Steele Montessori prides itself on fostering a very family-like climate and culture where the child comes first. This family-like culture can be seen through the relationships between student and student, student and teacher, teacher and parent, teacher and teacher, and teacher and administration. Importance is placed on the interactions that occur at the school to foster a culture that also focuses on the happiness of the children. The vision of the school and the systems that are in place are how the school maintains this climate and culture.

Physical Environment

The Montessori model is very intentional concerning the environment influencing the climate and culture of the school. In Primary, the students are taught patience through the materials that are on the shelves. There is only one of each material on the shelves in the classroom and the students are taught how to handle the situation of the material they need not being available. They are taught to be patient and to find an alternative task to occupy the time. There is a sensory path on the first and second floor that the students can use to reset their mood and join the classroom, ready to work. Each classroom has a peace corner which students can use to calm themselves down. In the peace corner there are various sensory objects that the student can manipulate, books on emotions, and social stories on how to handle various emotions. Each classroom has its own unique set-up for the peace corner. All of these environmental aspects of Steele help us meet the individual needs of the students.

Systems

The PBIS committee has set up common area expectations. These expectations support the Montessori model by focusing the students on taking care of the world, their school, each other, and themselves. The expectations are set for the hallway, recess, dismissal, stairway, and arrivals. The PBIS committee

created lessons that teach each of these expectations at the beginning of the year and are reviewed again in January and March.

To assist those students who are exhibiting more trouble with either behavior or academics, the teachers conduct child studies. During Child Study, the teachers present the academic or behavioral needs of the students to their fellow grade level teachers. The members then discuss all the possible strategies that may be implemented for the benefit of the child. The teacher uses the Branching Mind system to track the data of the student's reaction to the strategies that are implemented.

Programs

There are many programs and systems in place that help Steele build and maintain its climate and culture. The Second Step program is used to teach social/emotional lessons that will help students regulate their emotions. The counselor teaches the social/emotional lessons to the students while the teacher is in the classroom. The teachers are then able to reinforce and extend the lessons. Grace and courtesy is taught to help the students function in a community. They are taught to offer food to their peers during the family style lunch, greeting people, being able to have a positive interaction with their peers, and respecting the environment both inside and outside of the school. Finally, the students are given lessons on Mindfulness and Yoga by the assistant principal and the counselor. The students will receive Mindfulness lessons once a month and Yoga once a month. These lessons help the students find an outlet for their emotions and help the students be in the moment.

Steele also uses restorative practices and conscious discipline to help maintain the climate and culture on campus. If a child has wronged a fellow student or adult either emotionally or physically, restorative practices are used to make amends to the relationship. This includes writing notes of apology, conducting random acts of kindness, or apologizing in person. Every classroom has a peace place where students go when they are struggling to maintain their emotions in the classroom. There is also a sensory path in both hallways which allow students to take some time to reframe their thoughts and behavior. All of these strategies are used first to keep a child from acting out and to discipline a child without having to resort to suspension which research shows is not effective.

When reviewing the data on discipline, there is a large amount of discipline referrals that are occurring in the classroom. Part of the cause for this data is the new students to the school that have not been through the primary program which stresses how to function appropriately in the Montessori classroom where there is a need for self-sufficiency and students are taught how to make appropriate choices with the openness of the classroom.

Another cause for this data is the fine line that exists between the idea of creating choices in a classroom and having structure in the classroom. There is a varying degree of structure in the classrooms. We have classrooms in which student choice and student voice are stressed, but the structures that allow for this to occur with order have not been established. For example, some teachers during circle time can be seen having all students sitting quietly and listening, taking turns to talk as you would in a standard conversation. Other teacher's circle time can be a bit chaotic with students speaking out of turn and over a fellow student or the teacher who may be speaking. The instructional coach is looking for some Montessori professional development that will have teachers learn how to create a structured environment that still allows for the child to have choice and ownership of the classroom. Our PBIS team could also make observations of the classroom and as a group identify

a routine that can be created to account for any differences in the routines in the classroom to create more uniform procedures and routines in the classroom.

14. SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

School communication is key to helping our stakeholders feel involved with decision making of Steele Montessori. This creates ownership by all invested in Steele and builds a trusting relationship between the school and the various stakeholders. The school uses many different methods of communication to ensure that we are able to meet a variety of information needs of the stakeholders.

Stakeholder	Purpose of Communication	Communication Method
Students	Communication between the students and the school allows for students to feel that they are a priority and that their needs will be met. When the students are heard, it also builds trust between them and the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students have the opportunity to voice their desires to their teachers and to the administration on campus. The students in lower elementary are expected to plan any field trips that they would like to attend. They have to give the reasoning why and a detailed plan as to costs, buses needed, chaperones needed, etc. The administration reviews the plan and will either approve the plan or ask more questions of the students. It's a negotiation until both parties see the plan as acceptable before the field trip is approved. Students have also voiced the different types of clubs that they would like to see after school. They have voiced their desire to have a Robotics Club, a Girl's Club, and an Art Club resulting in these clubs coming to fruition. ● Morning circles are a time for the students and teacher to set-up the day for success and to evaluate and address any needs of the group as a whole. Any new materials that have been set out are reviewed for the correct usage. If the teacher noticed a classwide concern from the day before, the class will discuss the occurrence and what needs to occur in the future to correct the situation. The class can also take time to pursue common interests of the classroom. For example, if the students have expressed an interest in a current event, the teachers can begin a classroom discussion around this common interest. ● The work plans are a reflection of interactions between the student and the teacher within the classroom. The teacher is able to work with the student throughout the week and note their habits and interests through classroom observations and conversations with the child. The teacher is able to tailor the work plan with input from the child during one-on-one sessions that are held weekly. The student interest in subjects may influence the lessons they are given. For example, if the student was to exhibit an interest in geometry, their work plan may reflect more lessons on this subject versus the lesson plans of other students. Progress made by the student are also shared during this one-on-one session. ● Students experiencing behavioral difficulties will be assigned a Check-in/check-out person. This person can be anyone on campus with whom the student has a connection. The purpose of these conferences is that the Check-in/Check-out person is to review the student's expected behavior and the goal at the beginning of the day and at the end of the day to review how their day went and the progress that was made

		<p>towards their goal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● For our special education students and any other students in need, visual schedules reflecting their daily schedule are used and reviewed. Cue cards and social stories can be used to convey the desired behavior to be met by the student. The Daily Behavior Report Card is the form used to house the goal and the progress being made. This is what is used as a visual for the discussion during the conference time.
Staff	<p>Staff being invested in the work that is needed and desired at Steele is key to success. Communication of the school's areas of need to the staff will help them see where they can contribute to the need through the use of their unique skills. For example, if the students decide they would like a gardening club, through communication of this need, teachers skilled in gardening can volunteer to help with this initiative.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Each Friday, a weekly bulletin is sent to the staff members. In this bulletin, there is a calendar for the week that lists deadlines, visitors that will be on campus, events happening on campus, and administration that will be out on certain days. The dates and topics of the PLC and staff meeting are also listed on the calendar. On the bulletin, there are also reminders from the nurse, the counselor, the instructional coach, and administration. These reminders can include subjects such as PBIS items that need to be reviewed, reminders of tour groups on campus, and reminders of parent information that needs to be conveyed. ● Faculty meetings are held every week to discuss topics that have been determined through data review or observations within the classroom. Teachers can also request or express interest in certain topics being covered. ● Coaching sessions are used to convey areas of growth for a teacher. These areas of growth are determined by looking at the data from various resources such as the Developmental Environmental Rating Scale (DERS), classroom observations, or T-TESS observations/walkthroughs. ● Teachers have the ability to provide the administration team with feedback on various subjects leading to an overall feel of success of the teachers through the Insight Survey. Teachers are also asked to complete a survey on their professional development needs, how they want to develop as a leader, and how they can contribute to the campus.
Families	<p>Families have a desire to ensure that their student is being academically and socially/emotionally successful. They also want to know how they can contribute to the success of the school. When the school conveys this information through its communication, then a relationship is built between the school and the families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Transparent Classroom is an academic resource by which parents are informed of their child's academic progress. Parents can see when a Montessori formatted lesson is introduced, worked-on, or mastered by their child through an email sent by the teacher through the app. This app also allows the teachers to send pictures of the parent's child engaging in different activities throughout the day. ● Report Cards are a means by which the school communicates the academic progress of a child to the parent. The report card is skills based and is sent home every 9-week period. On the report card, comments can be made to the parent in regards to the student's work habits or a request for a conference can be made. Along these same lines, a progress report is sent home every three weeks, communicating to a parent the academic progress a student is making in school. Parent/Teacher Conferences are often held immediately after the report cards are sent home. There are two times a year where teachers have a full day allotted to scheduling these conferences. During the conferences, the parent and teacher can discuss the academic and social/emotional progress of the child. ● Various apps such as Remind and ClassDojo are used to convey every day messages to the parents. The teachers send electronic versions of fliers

		<p>that are also sent home in a folder with the child. The parents are able to ask quick questions or convey quick messages concerning their child to the teacher and the teacher can respond at their earliest convenience. The school also uses these apps to remind parents of family engagement activities that will be occurring at the school and donations that will be needed by the classrooms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Phone Calls and School Messenger messages are used to convey messages that are needed to be sent to the school community as a whole. Some of these messages can include reminders of free dress days, reminders of upcoming events/holidays, and reminders of needed donations to name a few. ● The Parent Advisory Council meets monthly to give their input on the planning of the family engagement activities. They can share their ideas on the event, offer access to resources in their possession that would help implement and enhance the event, and have a chance to volunteer to help with the event. This committee is also the bridge between the parents and the school. The parents can voice their concerns to the parents on the advisory council and the council member can let the administration team know of the concern. ● Surveys are sent to the parents to ascertain the effectiveness of Steele in meeting the needs of their children academically and socially/emotionally. The survey also gathers information on the effectiveness of the family engagement activities occurring at Steele.
Communities	Communication with the community helps build confidence in the actions of the school. It helps to build support from the community with our model.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Many of our staff members have affiliations with organizations outside of school. Through discussions with these entities, they come to see Steele as a resource for sound instructions, an example of an effective school culture, and an exemplar for implementing the Montessori model in public school. The school is contacted by these organizations for visits to the school with question and answer sessions to follow. Some of these organizations include Teach for America (TFA), and the New Schools Venture Fund. ● In order to inform the immediate community of what Steele has to offer, we have made visits to the two closest public libraries to leave fliers with our information session dates and brochures that contain information about the school. We have also visited daycare centers in the area to promote Steele. ● The school uses its website to advertise our Montessori program to the masses. Each teacher has a website that gives a glimpse into their experience as a Montessori teacher.

The administration team will need to have a standing item on the administration meeting’s agenda regarding school communication. When communication needs to be sent out or collected, a task will have to be created with the name/s of the person/people who would be responsible for the communication being sent and the data, if any, being collected from the communication. For example, if the school is in need of volunteers for a family engagement activity, then the FACE Specialist would be tasked with sending out that communication. Another example would be if the teachers are holding parent conferences, the teacher and the administration would be responsible for conveying this information through the various communication means such as the Remind app, School Messenger, and

fliers. In order to assess the success of the plan, Steele can track data on how many people like our posts and watch our Facebook live, track the attendance of parents at family engagement activities through sign-in sheets, track the data of how many families were reached through the School Messenger messages, and collect valuable data through surveys. All of this communication data can be discussed at the administration meeting and adjustments can be made accordingly.

15. FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Steele Montessori Family and Community Engagement has many aspects to its implementation. We look to engage families and the community through fun events on campus that bring families together, we offer presentations to help parents understand the Montessori model and how they can help their child at home, we offer different volunteer opportunities for parents to support the success of the school, and through different methods we work to have the family/community voice be heard at the school. Success of the plan can be seen through the academic success of the school, the number of families we are able to provide resources to, and through the number of parents attending the school sponsored events which is on average 418 parents according to the school's quarterly report which is turned in to the Governmental and Community Relations Partners in Education department.

There are many events that Steele hosts in order to engage the families with the school and its staff in an informal and fun manner. Some of the events include Steele Movie Night, Fiesta at Steele, and Mother's Day Tea. To engage families in events that impact the community, the school participates in events such as Dia De Los Muertos, Basura Bash, and Chalk It Up. These events expose the students and their families to culturally and environmentally based events that are outside of the immediate area of Steele, thus reinforcing the global awareness aspect of the Montessori Model.

There is a parent room at Steele where the parents are able to house all the materials they need in order to be effective volunteers. There is an area that houses books and toys for the younger non-school age children that the parents may bring while volunteering. The parents have tables, chairs, laminators, and office supplies so they can complete the work that the teachers have asked them to do. The room also acts as the Family and Community Engagement Specialist's office so the parent volunteers have easy access to her if questions arise.

Parents are often not versed in the Montessori model. Steele hosts a First Thursday event every month. This event is meant to equip parents with a clear visual of what occurs in a Montessori setting to help their child progress academically and social/emotionally. Topics that are covered include Edison's Day (a video depicting the day of a child in a Montessori school), Math in the Montessori classroom, Language in the Montessori classroom. The school hosts two Watch Me Work nights, one each semester. The Montessori model calls for the students to not receive homework. This causes a disconnect between the school and the families because the parents do not know the progress of their children and they do not get a glimpse into what their children are working on. The Watch Me Work nights allow the families to enter their child's classroom for a demonstration by their child of the lessons that they have received. This is also a time when the parents can ask general academic questions about the Montessori curriculum. The parents leave the evening knowing that their children are indeed working on academic skills.

Steele's business collaborations also help with family engagement and the Montessori model. We reach out to the businesses in our immediate area as well as city wide. We are able to get many donations that we use to entice parents to attend our engagement programs that are held for families (San Antonio Aquarium, Chuy's Restaurant, San Antonio Zoo, etc.). Another way that Steele engages with the community is by creating non-profit and business partnerships such as Irma's Angels, Slab Cinema, and HEB. Irma's Angels collect donations of food items from a school food drive and, in return, they create food boxes for our families in need. HEB has committed to supporting our Montessori model by giving a \$100 community card to ensure that all the classrooms have a snack. Slab Cinema gives the school a \$100 discount for the use of their screen for our Family Movie Night. These partnerships allow us to meet a basic need that the families, increase the effectiveness of our family engagement activities, and helps build a trusting relationship between the school and the families.

The education community often reaches out to Steele to develop a mutually beneficial relationship. The community of educators interested in creating public Montessori models within their districts visit Steele to gather information on how to make Montessori successful in a public school. They are very interested in touring the classrooms and asking the administration and the teachers questions on the Montessori model and what the school perceives as the key to our success. They are also very interested in how Steele has promoted a Montessori education in a setting which the traditional method of school is the norm. Steele has also been able to share consultants and professional development sessions with other Montessori schools within the area. We are also able to collaborate with other Montessori teachers and share teaching strategies with fellow Montessori teachers that have been met through the various Montessori associations with whom Steele has created relationships.

Schools within the district are known to reach out to Steele as a partner which their students can utilize to fulfill volunteer hours. Young Women's Leadership and Highlands High School are two of the schools that have allowed students to help Steele through volunteering at our various parent engagement opportunities. The high school students not only are able to receive volunteer hours, but the Steele students are able to develop relationships with these students and are able to see these students as positive role models.

Finally, Steele has developed two ways by which parents can be a part of the decision making process for the school. The first method by which they can participate is by being part of the Campus Leadership Team. Two parents are asked to be a participant on this team. This team is tasked with making decisions for the school as a whole. They review the campus improvement plan and make adjustments as needed. In order to make these adjustments, the members review data that is available at the school to help them make informed decisions. The team, along with the parents, also makes decisions about procedural topics and professional development needs of the school.

Steele also has a Parent Advisory Council. The purpose of this council was to steer away from having a PTA organization on campus but still have parents be an important part of the school. Each classroom has a parent representative on this council. The main purpose of the council is to serve as the first point of contact for the school and the classroom when volunteers are needed for various events. The parents are also the first point of contact when parent input is needed. The greater number of parents on this council allows for more voice and ideas to be heard as well as the amount of work to be spread more evenly. The council conducts meetings monthly with the Principal and the Family and Community Engagement Specialist. The agenda items usually revolve around volunteer or donation opportunities

occurring at the school, gathering parent ideas on various upcoming family and/or student engagement events, gathering ideas on how to promote the school, or gathering ideas on how to improve the student/parent experience at Steele.

16. STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Steele Montessori Academy is a local school within the San Antonio Independent School District; we are committed to achieving excellence in our academics, attendance, and parental/family engagement. This is an academy where the voice of the child matters and where we offer them options throughout the school day. Outdoor play, social/emotional awareness, cultural awareness, and academics are cultivated to foster a well rounded child who will be empathetic, intentional, independent, adaptable, and creative.

Steele Montessori is a school that strives to nurture a student who is intentional, empathetic, adaptable, creative and independent. The Montessori model allows students to have choice throughout their school day, including choice on their assignments and their work space. A strong emphasis is placed on cultural and global awareness through research, through field trips in Lower Elementary to environmentally aware destinations, and through events such as the Holidays around the World. Strong relationships are built between the teachers, parents, and students due to the child staying in the same classroom for three years and relying on their peers for assistance and looking to them as a role model. Families become a part of the Steele Family through family engagement activities and the possibility for their voice to be heard through various means.

Steele has a well-defined method for promoting the availability of their Montessori model. The first part of this process is to promote the school and it's Montessori model. Flyers of the various information sessions and tours are taken into the community. They have been left at the two closest public libraries, at daycare centers, and at various businesses around the area. Steele also promotes the school through its website, its Facebook page, and through the various events held by the district.

Another important part of the promotion of Steele are the Information Sessions that are held four times during the open-enrollment period. At these sessions, an overview of the Montessori method is given, including the mission of the school, a glimpse at the life of the student, family engagement and parent involvement, and the role of the teacher in the school and the classroom.. After this presentation, the prospective parents are able to tour a primary and a lower elementary classroom. The prospective students are able to engage with some of the Montessori materials that are available for their exploration. The teacher is available to answer any questions that the prospective parents may have. The parents are also able to view the outdoor play area that is unique to Montessori. The prospective parents also take a brochure and flyer with them to help promote Steele.

Every Tuesday from 9:00-10:00, Steele holds tours of the school. A member of the administration team takes prospective parents through a primary classroom and a lower elementary classroom. The prospective family can get a first hand look at what their child would experience on a typical school day. They can ask brief questions of the teacher, but the main source of information is the person conducting the tour. They are able to see the gym, the art room, and the outdoor play area. Since this is more of an intimate setting, the parents are able to ask any questions that may pertain more to their child.

Retention of students not only entails ensuring that the needs of the students are met, but it also means the parents must have confidence in the school so that their desire is for their child to attend Steele. Once a family has accepted the seat at Steele for the following school year, the family is invited to a Family Orientation event which consists of a rotation through various topics. During one rotation, the

topics that are discussed include what can be done at home to prepare their child for their Montessori experience, what can be expected the first day, week, and month of school, how birthdays are celebrated with a Celebration of Life, the school's stance on behavior, including not using rewards, and how the social/emotional needs are met and an overview of the strategies taught to address this topic. In the next rotation, the administrative team reviews the handbook/policies/procedures, special events of the year (first thursday, watch me work), arrival/dismissal, rainy days, uniforms, visiting your child at school (1st 6 weeks, eating lunch with child, bringing food to child), classroom parties, and the school's policy on cultural proficiency. There is another rotation with the teachers in order to have a question and answer session with the parents, give samples of schedules their child may follow, and to allow the teachers to discuss the balance that can be seen between the student being held accountability yet having some freedom within the classroom. The final session is with the school's Family and Community Engagement Specialist in which volunteer opportunities and procedures are discussed, the background check process, and parent conduct expectations are reviewed.

Steele has many parent engagement activities that occur throughout the year to help the families make a meaningful and fun connection to the school. Annually, Steele hosts two family movie nights, two Watch Me Work nights, a Loteria night, a Valentine Family Dance, and many more activities to have parents join the faculty/staff and fellow Steele families in fun activities. The school also engages in community events such as Basura Bash and Chalk It Up to help families engage with each other but to also reinforce the idea that the school is looking to mold globally minded children. There is also a Parent Advisory Council to engage parents in the planning of engagement activities and to help make decisions on behalf of the school. All of these activities help create parent ownership in order to build a school-home connection which supports the retention of their child at Steele.

Open lines of communication is also key to retaining the students. The parents have access to their child's teacher through the Remind app, email, and phone calls. The teachers usually respond to any communication from the parent within 24 hours and are more than willing to hold face-to-face conferences as requested. This communication is also extended into biannual school-wide parent conferences.

Students building a strong relationship with their teacher and their peers is another way in which Steele retains its students. The students are with the same teacher for three years in a row (Primary being PK3-K and Lower Elementary being 1st-3rd). The teacher has the unique opportunity to really know their students academically and personally. This allows the teacher sufficient time to find unique and personally tailored strategies to meet the needs of the child. The teacher is also to build a strong working bond with the parent throughout those three years that their child is in the teacher's classroom. The students within the classroom also build strong relationships with each other and use each other as role models and resources.

Choice which is built into the Montessori model helps Steele retain students. Students are given choice during the school day. Students are able to create a work plan alongside the teacher and choose which assignments will be done at a self-chosen time during the three hour work cycle which occurs each day. If all their assignments are completed, they have free choice time at the end of the week to engage in an activity of their choosing or pick to attend either open gym or open art. Students are able to have a snack as needed, choose where to work both within the classroom or outside of the classroom at designated areas, and are able to choose topics to explore in depth.

Meeting the needs of the students both academically and social/emotionally are also important to retention of the students. The hands-on approach to the Montessori model and the ability for teachers to pace children's learning according to their need (children who may be struggling are able to remain on a skill longer and an advanced child being able to forge ahead) helps the teachers meet the individual

needs of each child. The counselor led lessons through the Second Step Curriculum helps build the social/emotional capacity of the students with the teachers reinforcing the skills.

17. CAMPUS GOVERNANCE

A. ROLE

The intent is for Steele to have both an Advisory Board and a Campus Advisory Committee. We see the role of the Advisory Board as having three purposes. The first purpose of this Advisory Board is to protect our culture of Montessori and its autonomy which includes maintaining or reimaging the mission and vision of the school as it grows. Our Advisory Board would also connect the school to the broader community. The last purpose of the board is to hold the school accountable to reaching its goals. We are currently working with the Parent Advisory Committee which could potentially be transformed into a separate Campus Advisory Committee. Parents, teachers, and community members could be on this committee. This Campus Advisory Committee will focus on local items that occur on a daily or monthly basis. They will advise on such things as parent engagement opportunities, . They will work alongside the Advisory Board to help the board fulfill its purpose. This will create a more robust Advisory Board with all stakeholders being involved.

B. STRUCTURE

The Advisory Board will meet 4-6 times a year. A minimum number of meetings expected to be attended will be set. The board could potentially have between 10-15 members with a three year term commitment and a two year term limit. The committee will be broken down into roles and sub-committees. The roles could include Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Events Coordinator, Chair of Promotion, etc. Examples of the sub-committees include Family Engagement Committee, Accountability Committee, Nomination Committee (to find new candidates for vacant positions), and School Promotion Committee. These committees will meet as needed. The agenda will be driven by the principal of Steele, the Chairperson, and the leads of any sub-committees. A standing agenda item could be reviewing data and the progress that is being made towards the school goals, including a review of the MAP data, Insight Survey data, Parent survey data, enrollment information, and the budget from the preceding year as a few examples. Another standing agenda item could be an update on all projects that are in progress.

C. SUSTAINABILITY

Recruitment of members can begin by engaging with our current Montessori contacts such as people we have met through the Montessori networks, contacts within the SAISD school district, and the contacts that have already been established at the school. We want to prioritize mutually beneficial partnerships to retain board members and attempt to stagger terms to avoid the loss of knowledge and capacity. An example of a mutually beneficial partnership is one potential board member is a part of the Teach for America organization. A mutual benefit would be we could reach out to him for potential applicants to vacancies at the school while we offer to host tours of our school for Teach for American members. We want to ensure that each board member feels that their presence is making a difference in the Montessori community by using their talents to best fit the needs of the school. We would acknowledge their contributions at events hosted at the school or through communication that would be sent from the school to the families/communities. We would also have students write thank you notes to the

board for the work they are doing on behalf of Steele. As a network, we want to make sure that we are performing both academically and in providing the authentic Montessori experience.

D. ACCOUNTABILITY

The board would hold Steele accountable at the yearly Performance Review Meeting. Steele would present an update to their goals and objectives and their progress towards their Performance contract from the following year. Steele will also be expected to present new goals and objectives and update their Performance contract for the current school year. A yearly walkthrough will be held between the Steele principals and the board members. A debriefing after this walkthrough will be held to ensure that the Montessori model is being implemented with fidelity. Steele will be expected to maintain a rating of a C or higher within the Texas state accountability system.

E. MEMBERSHIP

Board Member Name (First and Last)	Affiliation or Role	Relevant Expertise
1. Laura Christeberry	Principal	Opened Steele Montessori Academy
2. Austin Hawk	Teacher	Lower Elementary Teacher
3. Erin Aparicio	Teacher	Primary Teacher
4. Jonathan Garcia-Nungaray	Advisor for Montessori for Social Justice	Education / elementary /
5. Feliciano Duran	Advisor of Outdoor Education	Outdoor Education
6.	Advisor of Montessori Philosophy	accreditation expertise, Montessori teacher
7.	City Networking Liaison	fundraising, networking
8. Heidi Head	Parent	
9. Laura De Leon	Parent	

18. BUDGET EXERCISE

Item Description	Estimated Cost	Rationale	Sustainability Plan
New to Montessori Teacher Training	<p>Montessori certification for new teachers</p> <p>Incoming Upper Elementary teachers will need to have a Montessori accreditation. This will include:</p> <p>Summer 1 Seminar 1 Seminar 2 Summer 2</p>	<p>In order to be considered a Montessori school, the teachers need to be Montessori accredited. By attending the training which is offered in Houston, TX, the guides can receive the Montessori accreditation. In addition, the Montessori model has a very specific curriculum to follow that includes the many manipulatives being used in the lesson. This training will teach the guides to use the materials properly and in which sequence to present them. The training will also train the teachers on using the grace and courtesy lessons and</p>	<p>The Steele staff and the Steele Advisory board will work to secure additional funding, including SB 1882 funds and private fundraising through events and grant writing.</p>

	<p>HMC course (7-8 wks)</p> <p>\$7,200 per teacher for the cost of the course (\$36,000)</p> <p>\$6,923.50 total cost per teacher for hotel costs (\$34,617.50)</p> <p>\$3,410 total food cost per teacher (\$17,050)</p> <p>\$918.72 total mileage costs (4 times total @ \$229.68) per teacher (\$4,593.60)</p> <p>Total cost for three new teachers: \$92261.10</p>	<p>the peace curriculum which is specific to the Montessori model.</p>	
Montessori Curriculum	<p>Total cost for three classrooms (\$16425.00 x 3): \$49,275.00</p>	<p>The Montessori curriculum has very specific albums and materials that are needed to implement the curriculum to its full capacity.</p> <p>Steele is adding Upper Elementary which will house fourth grade next year. With the additions of this grade level, we will need to add additional classrooms to include the Montessori curriculum, materials, and furniture for each classroom.</p>	<p>Any funding received from the district for curriculum can be used first. Once all the local funds have been used, the Steele staff and the Steele Advisory board will work to secure additional funding, including SB 1882 funds and private fundraising through events and grant writing.</p>
Classroom Furniture	<p>Adjustable shelf unit w/lip \$447 each (6 p0)</p> <p>Total cost for three classrooms: \$51,333.00</p>	<p>Steele will be in need of new furniture for the new classrooms. A Montessori classroom requires many shelves that house the Montessori manipulatives. The aesthetics of the classroom are also very important to the Montessori environment leading to the furniture needing to be wood and matching.</p>	<p>The Steele staff and the Steele Advisory board will work to secure additional funding, including SB 1882 funds and private fundraising through events and grant writing. Once the initial purchase has been made, we will use local funds to replace any broken furniture.</p>
Technology	<p>Total Cost: \$53,803.90</p>	<p>The teachers will need a laptop in order to research supplemental materials and ideas to enhance their lessons. They will also need the laptops to test students and to track data. The iPad cart will be for the</p>	<p>The sustainability of the technology of the campus can be supported by the district initiatives for technology among all campuses.</p>

		students to access learning apps and to do research. The Smartboards would be used to enhance the curriculum through being a teaching tool as well as access to the website to enhance the lessons.	
Chickens	Total Cost for Chicken Coop and accessories: \$1697.02	Montessori education is grounded in nurturing the student's respect for nature. Montessori education also stresses the need to work as a community for the good of the community. Having a chicken coop with chickens allows for the students to learn to care for these animals as a school community.	The chickens and their needs would be sustained through fundraising and local funds.
Professional Development	Total Cost for PD: \$15,610.00	Teachers will sharpen their skills with the Montessori curriculum and on how to maintain a Montessori environment through professional development. They will be able to gather ideas from fellow Montessori educators at professional conferences and through classroom visits. The end result of this professional development will be seen through the student academic progress.	Local funds will be used to provide professional development for the teachers.
Study Lounge	Total Cost: \$60,000	Offering students options is a part of the Montessori curriculum. Having a study lounge would allow students to have an alternative seating area to study and complete their research.	The Steele staff and the Steele Advisory board will work to secure additional funding, including SB 1882 funds and private fundraising through events and grant writing. Once the initial purchase has been made, we will use local funds to replace any broken furniture.
Outdoor Play Equipment/Playground	Total Cost: \$230,560.89	Outdoor play is a key component of the Montessori model. The appreciation of the environment is reinforced by being in its presence. The students learn to appreciate what the outdoor area has to offer and learn to respect the area at the same time.	The Steele staff and the Steele Advisory board will work to secure additional funding, including SB 1882 funds and private fundraising through events and grant writing. Once the initial purchase has been made, we will use local funds to make repairs.
Gardens	Total Cost: \$6079.73	Teaching the students about nature is a component of the Montessori curriculum. The raised gardens will allow the students to care for nature within their environment.	Local funds and school fundraising will be used to sustain the gardens.

Kitchen	Total Cost: \$4600.00	Practical life is a component of the Montessori curriculum. The students learn things such as pouring, sweeping, dish washing, and cooking. Currently, the students only cook items that do not require heat. It would reinforce the practical life lessons if they had access to a working kitchen.	Local funds and school fundraising will be used to sustain the kitchen.
Art Supplies	Total Costs: \$5380.00	The students benefit from having art instruction at least two times a week. In Montessori, we strive to help our students be creative. Art class is also used as a motivator for the students to complete their work plan. It's an option for them to attend on Fridays if they have met the requirements on their work plan.	Local funds and school fundraising will be used to sustain the art supplies.
Library	Total Cost: \$100,000	The Montessori lower elementary children conduct a lot of research as part of their cultural curriculum. There is a need for more nonfiction books and research software that can assist with this effort. Fiction books need to be accessible for the primary grade levels to assist with their fluency rates.	The Steele staff and the Steele Advisory board will work to secure additional funding, including SB 1882 funds and private fundraising through events and grant writing.
Office Furniture	Total Cost: \$4100.00	Steele is currently using the library as the main office. Once the main office moves back into the area designated for the main office, the secretary and the principal will need furniture.	Local funds and school fundraising will be used to sustain the furniture.
Supplemental Materials	Total Cost: \$26,000.00	Teachers are often making supplemental materials for their lessons to enhance the Montessori curriculum. For example, the teachers made a knobless cylinder attribute card sorting activity to reinforce the Montessori lessons for geometry.	The Steele staff and the Steele Advisory board will work to secure additional funding, including SB 1882 funds and private fundraising through events and grant writing.
Office Accessories	Total Cost: \$7648.67	As Steele grows in size, extra office materials for use by the increasing number of people joining the staff will be needed. The poster maker will assist with the teachers making supplemental materials for their classroom and to help enhance/promote the various family engagement activities. The walkie-talkies will be needed for added school safety.	Local funds and school fundraising will be used to sustain the furniture.
Social Emotional Materials	Total Cost: \$1200.00	This subscription will be a supplemental resource for the Second Step curriculum that the school uses for their social/emotional lessons. It teaches	Local funds and school fundraising will be used to sustain the furniture.

		calming techniques and mindful breathing to students.	
Supplemental Materials	Total Costs: \$75,000.00	The Waseca materials would be a researched based addition to the Montessori language curriculum. These materials work for students with special needs (color-coded, etc.) as well as the general education students. These materials are very sturdy and meant to withstand usage by children.	The Steele staff and the Steele Advisory board will work to secure additional funding, including SB 1882 funds and private fundraising through events and grant writing.
Promotion of Steele Montessori	Total Cost: \$1000.00	In order to maintain the correct ratio of 50% non-economically disadvantaged students to the 50% economically disadvantaged and because we are an open-enrollment school, the school needs to promote its availability to the community to maintain a steady and proportionate number of applicants.	Local funds and school fundraising will be used to sustain the furniture.
PE Equipment	Total Cost: \$14,106.38	Being a part of a public school system, Steele is required to meet the state mandated number of minutes a child needs to attend physical education classes and health classes. The coaches are in need of this equipment to effectively teach the PE/Health TEKS.	Local funds and school fundraising will be used to sustain the furniture.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

New Student Welcome		
Milestone	Action Steps	Responsible Parties
Start Date: February 12, 2020 End Date: May 18, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct phone calls to families that have been offered a seat at Steele through the lottery. Send welcome cards to newly accepted families. Hold welcome session for new families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrator/s Counselor Senior Coordinator of Operations Instructional Coach Data Clerk Secretary
Estimated Start Date: July 20, 2020 Estimated End Date: July 24, 2020	Newly accepted students to lower elementary without Montessori background will be asked to attend a summer session to give the student background knowledge on how to handle Montessori expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrator One Primary Teacher One Lower Elementary Teacher Counselor Instructional Coach
Student Recruitment		

Milestone	Action Steps	Responsible Parties
Start Date: September 1, 2020 End Date: November 4,, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Choose sites for flyer/brochure drop off. ● Drop off fliers/brochures to sites. ● Schedule info sessions off site. ● Attend community events to promote open enrollment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Administrator/s ● Senior Coordinator of Operations
Start Date: November 4, 2020 End Date: January 31, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Monitor the number of applications being submitted weekly. ● Adjust the flyer/brochure drop off as needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Administrator/s ● Senior Coordinator of Operations
Start Date: October 20, 2020 End Date: January 22, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hold info sessions once a month at Steele. ● Hold weekly tours on Tuesday (9:00-10:00) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Administrator/s ● Senior Coordinator of Operations ● One primary & one lower elementary teacher ● Instructional Coach
Alignment of Montessori Curriculum and TEKS/MAP/STAAR		
Start Date: August 3, 2020 End Date: May 31, 2021 This will occur at the beginning of the year PD sessions before school starts and BOY, MOY, and EOY administration of MAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review the Montessori expectations with the TEKS/MAP expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Administrator/s ● Instructional Coach ● Primary & Lower Elementary Teachers
Start Date: August 3, 2020 End Date: May 31, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create Montessori needed materials to help with the alignment of the two curriculums. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Instructional Coach ● Primary & Lower Elementary Teachers

Appendix A - Data Template

DIRECTIONS: Please enter data into the cells shaded **YELLOW**. Do NOT enter any information into the non-yellow cells. If a data point is not applicable for your school, then please type "N/A" into the corresponding yellow cell.

SCHOOL NAME: Steele Montessori Academy

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Change Y1 to Y3	% Change Y1 to Y3
PART 1: ENROLLMENT AND STUDENT PERSISTENCE					
A. General Information					
Grade Levels Served (e.g., K-8; 9-12, etc.)		PK3-1	PK3-2	N/A	N/A
Total Enrollment Count		105	158	158	N/A
B. Student Population					
% African-American		5%	4%	4%	N/A
% Asian		0%	0%	0%	N/A
% Hispanic		88%	88%	88%	N/A
% White		6%	6%	6%	N/A
% Other Race/Ethnicity		0%	2%	2%	N/A
% Economically Disadvantaged		75%	63%	63%	N/A
% English Language Learner		3%	4%	4%	N/A
% Special Education		8%	20%	20%	N/A
C. Student Persistence					
% of Students who Remain at School from Previous Year (All Students)			93%	93%	N/A
% of Special Education Students who Remain at School from Previous Year			100%	100%	N/A
PART 2: ACADEMIC OUTCOMES					
A. MAP Grades 3-8 Outcomes (if applicable)					
% of Students who Meet or Master Standards (Reading)		32%	34%	34%	N/A
% of Students who Meet or Master Standards (Math)		32%	37%	37%	N/A
% of Students who Meet or Master Standards (Writing)	NA	NA	NA	#VALUE !	N/A
% of Students who Meet or Master Standards (Science)	NA	NA	NA	#VALUE !	N/A
% of Students who Meet or Master Standards (Social Studies)	NA	NA	NA	#VALUE !	N/A

B. STAAR EOC Outcomes (if applicable)					
% of Students who Meet or Master Standards (English I)		NA	NA	#VALUE !	N/A
% of Students who Meet or Master Standards (English II)		NA	NA	#VALUE !	N/A
% of Students who Meet or Master Standards (Algebra I)		NA	NA	#VALUE !	N/A
% of Students who Meet or Master Standards (Biology)		NA	NA	#VALUE !	N/A
% of Students who Meet or Master Standards (U.S. History)		NA	NA	#VALUE !	N/A
C. Self-Selected Outcomes (Select up to 3 data points to share)					
DERS (Developmental Environmental Rating System) Inhibitory Control		NA	65	65	N/A
DERS (Developmental Environmental Rating System) Social Fluency & Emotional Flexibility		NA	55	55	N/A
				0	N/A
Part 3: HUMAN CAPITAL					
<i>Select 3 data points to share. (Examples: average years of teacher experience, % of teachers who remain from preceding year, # of master teachers, average TTESS proficiency scores, average # of staff absences, Insight survey results, etc.)</i>					
Insite Surveys-Teachers planning to stay at Steele		NA	100%	100%	N/A
Insite Surveys-Teachers believe Steele has a positive culture and learning environment		NA	80%	80%	N/A
% Of Teachers who remain from preceding year		NA	92%	92%	N/A
Part 4: STUDENT DISCIPLINE					
<i>Select 3 data points to share. (Examples: Review 360 incidents, # of student suspensions (in-school and out-of-school), # of DAEP placements, etc.)</i>					
Number of Referrals		62	247	247	N/A
Percentage of referrals involving racial minorities		93%	87%	0%	N/A
Number of Out-of-School Suspensions		0	1	1	N/A

ADDENDUM – COMPLIANCE WITH IN-DISTRICT CHARTER LAW AND DISTRICT POLICY

The School certifies that this in-district charter application complies with Texas Education Code Section 12.059, as follows:

1. The education program being offered is described in the charter application.
2. The continuation of this charter is contingent on satisfactory student performance on state-required assessment instruments, satisfactory financial performance under state financial accountability provisions, and on compliance with other applicable accountability provisions.
3. In accordance with SAISD Policy EL(LOCAL), the SAISD Board may place this School on probation or revoke the charter in accordance with the School's performance contract if it finds that the campus charter:
 - a. Violates a provision of applicable state or federal law, which may result, after a cure period, in revocation at the conclusion of the School year;
 - b. Violates student achievement provisions of the charter, including the failure to meet the metrics set forth in the performance contract for the campus charter after a three- or five-year review period;
 - c. At the end of two School years, the campus charter may be revoked or placed on probation if it is rated as "improvement required" or fails to meet state accountability standards or is at the bottom five percent in comparison to all campuses in terms of student achievement in the District based on the school performance framework; or
 - d. After a cure period, the charter fails to meet generally accepted accounting standards for fiscal management.
4. The School will not discriminate in admissions on the basis of national origin, ethnicity, race, religion, or disability.
5. The governing structure of the campus is described in the charter application.
6. In order to ensure the health and safety of students and employees, the School will comply with Texas Education Code Chapter 38.
7. The District will conduct an annual audit of financial and programmatic operations of the School in accordance with state and federal law and District policy.
8. The School will provide all information necessary for the District to participate in PEIMS reporting.

In accordance with EL(LOCAL), the School and the SAISD Board of Trustees agree as follows:

1. This charter has a term of ten years, beginning with the 2020-21 school year and ending with the 2030-31 school year, with a three- or five-year performance review and renewal cycle, as defined in EL(LOCAL).
2. The Board waives all applicable District policies and procedures per EL(LOCAL) and the School's In-District Charter Application.
3. The School will comply with its Board-approved school performance contract, and the District's annual process for reporting and reviewing the performance contract.
4. The School will follow the District's unified enrollment policy and procedure, including FD(LOCAL), FDB(LOCAL), F1 and F51. In the event of any conflict between the charter application and district policy and procedure regarding student enrollment, district policy and procedure will govern.
5. The School will participate in District-wide NWEA MAP testing, or its future replacement assessment, as determined by the District.