



CORNERSTONE

MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Annual Report - 2023-24 School Year



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Academic Elements

A1. Mission and Vision

Mission

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

Vision

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

CMES continues to provide the highest quality AMI Montessori education to the children of St. Paul. Nearly half of our student population comes from the Greater East Side and its immediately adjacent zip code, and 50% of the children we serve are children of color; Cornerstone is one of two AMI-recognized public Montessori school in the state of Minnesota, and therefore one of the only AMI-recognized schools to provide a truly accessible Montessori education to all children.

In our contract with the University of St. Thomas, the purposes of Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School in relation to the purposes for charter schools in Minnesota are outlined below.

The primary purpose of Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School is to improve student learning and student achievement. Additional purposes include:

- Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods.
- Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site, improve pupil learning and student achievement.

CMES improves student learning and achievement by implementing an Association Montessori Internationale (AMI)-recognized program that individualizes learning for each child while also helping all children learn to work together respectfully and productively in the learning environment. The Montessori classroom design, by its very nature, encourages and nurtures choice and the natural development of academic and social skills. Moving away from seat time, bells, and teacher-directed learning, CMES prides itself on truly and naturally individualizing learning for each child.

Using academic data collected through the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) and FastBridge, along with ample observation and classroom formative assessment, Cornerstone assesses what each child individually needs to succeed. Children whose math or reading skills are below grade level receive intensive intervention from a specialist in that subject. In 2018-19, Cornerstone piloted use of the Minnesota Executive Function Scale (MEFS) with the Developmental Environment Rating Scale (DERS) to measure the correspondence between exceptional Montessori environments and strong executive function skills in all children regardless of socio-economic status or race. In 2020-21, we also piloted use of FastBridge's Social, Academic, Emotional, and Behavior Rating Scale (SAEBRS) to identify children who may need additional support from a school social worker or Behavior Specialist. By looking at the whole child, and not only their academic skills, Cornerstone supports children to achieve to the best of their potential.

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

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

Cornerstone's teachers have tremendous independence over their learning environments. CMES will create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site, improve pupil learning and student achievement.

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

A2. Accountability Plan Goals (Aligns with Evaluation Rubric)

The 2024 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment results for CMES show the great efforts our teachers undertook in returning achievement to pre-pandemic levels. Reading proficiency (52.7%) continues to be higher than the state proficiency percentage of 49.9% (1.2a). Math proficiency is an area we continue to address; we saw a rather significant decrease in scores from 2023 to 2024, with 26.0% of children proficient compared to 35% in 2023 (1.2b). With this year the first that children who were in kindergarten during distance learning, as well as a year in which our special education program grew substantially, it was not necessarily surprising that scores overall declined.

Percent Meeting or Exceeding on MCA Reading 2023-2024 School Year (1.1)			
	<u># of Students Tested</u>	<u>Percent Meeting</u>	<u>Percent Exceeding</u>
Grade 3	16	18.8%	6.3%
Grade 4	19	26.3%	21.1%
Grade 5	20	55.0%	10.0%
Grade 6	19	47.4%	21.1%
Overall	74	37.8%	14.9%

Percent Meeting or Exceeding on MCA II/III Math 2023-2024 School Year			
	<u># of Students Tested</u>	<u>Percent Meeting</u>	<u>Percent Exceeding</u>
Grade 3	16	12.5%	6.3%
Grade 4	19	15.8%	10.5%
Grade 5	19	26.3%	0%
Grade 6	19	26.3%	5.3%
Overall	73	20.5%	5.5%

Despite overall declines in proficiency, Cornerstone’s North Star progress between 2023 and 2024 continues to be strong, and especially when viewed in comparison with the state achievement levels. 72.4% of children who completed the MCAs in both years maintained or improved achievement level in reading (1.4a), compared to the statewide percentage of 61%. Math proficiency/growth was less strong this year, with 37.5% of children maintaining or improving achievement level in math (1.4b), compared to 56.4% statewide.

The Science MCAs are an area where children at Cornerstone typically achieve highly (1.10). In 2024, 36.8% of Cornerstone’s fifth years met or exceeded standards, compared to 27.6% proficient in St. Paul Public Schools and 45.0% statewide. There is no clear reason for the decline in science achievement this year, apart from an increase in special education students.

With small sample sizes in our subpopulations, drawing conclusions year over year is challenging. Of the subpopulations identified, only Free/Reduced Lunch, Special Education, and Latine children had sizes large enough to count:

Subpopulation Proficiency (Reading, 1.3a)		
Subpopulation	Cornerstone % Proficient	Statewide % Proficient
FRL	37.8%	33.4%
Special Education (1.12a)	33.3%	25.5%
Latine	25.0%	28.7%

Subpopulation Proficiency (Math, 1.3b)		
Subpopulation	Cornerstone % Proficient	Statewide % Proficient
FRL	13.9%	27.0%
Special Education (1.12b)	4.8%	24.7%
Latine	8.3%	22.4%

Eight children receiving ELL services were assessed in the 2024 MCAs. In reading, Cornerstone’s children performed within 10% of the statewide percentage (1.11a). CMES’ children did not perform within 10% in mathematics (1.11b).

Internal assessments at Cornerstone help to guide our approach to individual interventions and class-level instruction. This year FastBridge assessments were used for both reading and math. Children who demonstrated grade level proficiency in the fall assessments were assessed again in the spring, while children who were below grade level in the fall were targeted for intervention and assessed in the winter, as well as the spring.

Using the aMath FastBridge assessment for grades 2-6, earlyMath for grade 1, aReading for grades 2-6, and Early Reading for kindergarten-grade 1, we see the compounding effects of Montessori (and intervention) over time. In reading, 69% of children overall are on target to meet grade level standards, but in grade 6 90% of children are at low or no risk of needing intervention. (1.6a). Our math results show similar strength in the upper grades, with 85% of 6th graders on target to meet grade level standards (1.6b).

% At Low or No Risk - Reading				% At Low or No Risk - Math			
	# of Students Tested, Spring	% At Low or No Risk	# At Low or No Risk		# of Students Tested, Spring	% At Low or No Risk	# At Low or No Risk
Kindergarten	18	56%	10				
Grade 1	19	74%	14	Grade 1	17	59%	10
Grade 2	20	60%	12	Grade 2	20	50%	10
Grade 3	17	47%	8	Grade 3	17	29%	5
Grade 4	19	74%	14	Grade 4	19	53%	10
Grade 5	19	79%	15	Grade 5	19	42%	8
Grade 6	20	90%	18	Grade 6	20	85%	17
Overall	132	69%	91	Overall	112	54%	60

While we still see the effects of Covid in our test results, with the 2nd and 3rd years who were in preschool and kindergarten during the height of distance learning generally showing lower proficiency and growth scores, we continue to be encouraged by the cumulative effects of our

Montessori program. This year's 6th years demonstrated remarkable proficiency and growth in both math and reading, and there are clear trends that as children spend more time at Cornerstone, their proficiency increases.

In our second year since 2020-21 with a full-time math specialist, we are excited by the number of children meeting growth goals. In math, 58% of children met their growth goals, making typical or better than one year's growth (1.7b). In reading, we saw similar strides, with 56% of children meeting growth goals (1.7a).

% Meeting Growth Goals - Reading (1.7a)				% Meeting Growth Goals - Math (1.7b)			
	<u># of Students Tested, Fall & Spring</u>	<u>% Meeting Goal</u>	<u># Meeting Goal</u>		<u># of Students Tested, Fall & Spring</u>	<u>% Meeting Goal</u>	<u># Meeting Goal</u>
Kindergarten	15	33%	5				
Grade 1	18	61%	11	Grade 1	16	50%	8
Grade 2	20	60%	12	Grade 2	20	75%	15
Grade 3	17	59%	10	Grade 3	17	53%	9
Grade 4	18	59%	8	Grade 4	18	61%	11
Grade 5	19	47%	12	Grade 5	18	39%	7
Grade 6	20	74%	13	Grade 6	20	65%	13
Overall	127	45%	71	Overall	109	58%	63

Cornerstone's school-specific goal of meeting AMI standards was met in 2023-24. At both the Primary (3-6 years, including Kindergarten) and Elementary (6-12 years) levels, CMES was fully recognized (1.10). Cornerstone's excellence within the field is also demonstrated by the attractiveness of our program for visitors from the broader Montessori community. We hosted observers from across the country, including trainees from Colorado and Minnesota, and current teachers at multiple schools in Minnesota and Wisconsin; and we provided consultation to Montessori schools looking to increase access in our state. In addition, one of our lead guides, Sara Wade, was accepted into the prestigious AMI Training of Trainers program, which will ultimately allow her to provide teacher training at the 6-12 level.

The 2024-25 school assessment calendar can be found at:
<https://content.myconnectsuite.com/api/documents/65eb7f132a6541179ba877c99b17c0dc.pdf>.

A3. After School and Summer Programming

Free before care is offered at Cornerstone from 7:30 to 8:45am; during that time, children eat breakfast, play games, and help prepare the building for the school day. Before and after care are available for kindergarten children through Cornerstone Montessori School, the private partner school to CMES. Prior to the pandemic, after care for elementary aged children was available through the Boys and Girls Club across the street from our campus. When the Boys and Girls Club changed their programming, we were unable to offer any after-care options for our 1st-6th grade children until the 2022-23 year, when we partnered with the Sanneh Foundation to allow Cornerstone children to attend their KidzTyme program at the Conway Center using school transportation.

Summer programming is offered for children who qualify for Extended School Year Special Education services annually. Using Covid relief funds, we were thrilled to offer a General Education summer program in the 2021 and 2022 summers. In the summer of 2022, we served 59 1st-6th graders for six weeks, and an additional 12 kindergartners for 7 weeks. The 1st-6th grade children participated in a Montessori work cycle, field trips, and themed activities such as creating and performing plays, while the kindergarten children continued in their Children's House environments.

The General Education summer program was incredibly important for meeting the needs of our low-income and families of color. In the two summers that we offered programming, we served 118 unique children in grades 1-6, 79% of whom were children of color, qualified for Free/Reduced Lunch, and/or received Special Education services. We actively sought funding to enable the program to continue in the summer of 2023, however we only were able to generate enough funds to sponsor the enrollment of kindergartners. Using the existing early childhood program staff, 8 kindergarten children were fully funded to participate in eight weeks of school this summer. We are committed to keeping any programming free for families and will continue to explore funding opportunities, given that we expect state/federal funding to be insufficient or unavailable.

A4. Parent Engagement (Aligns with WBWF and Evaluation Rubric)

Cornerstone's families are engaged with their children's learning and are pleased with the education provided, and have been since the school's founding. In the 2023-2024 parent satisfaction survey, 27 families responded, of the roughly 120 families enrolled (the survey is administered to both Cornerstone Montessori School and Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School families). While we always hope for a higher response rate and will continue to explore ways of increasing feedback, we were proud to continue the trend of parents showing satisfaction with Cornerstone. This year, 92.5% indicated of respondents indicated they were satisfied with how their children were progressing at Cornerstone, 96.3% would recommend Cornerstone to family or friends, and 100% were satisfied with their experience in the community (no responses indicated dissatisfaction for any of these three questions).

In order to ensure parents feel like partners in their children's learning, we provide frequent emails with classroom updates and photos, and general school news and information. Parents can be notified of all communications via text message or email, ensuring that even families with limited internet access are able to connect with the school. We provide Spanish translation for all parent events, including conferences, and translate all of our communications into Spanish. One major goal for the 2023-24 school year was to increase communication with families around their children's academic experiences in the classroom; we did so this year by returning to the tradition of sending monthly newsletters with photos and classroom updates, and we provided digital photo albums for each classroom.

Our Parent Partnership events were fully in-person once again. Events were best attended when they centered around the children – sharing work, for example, or our newly annual ice cream social and fall festival. This has always been true, but it is clear that parents have less capacity to attend purely educational events than they have in the past and we will continue to work towards offering programming that is meaningful and supportive to families. Our most significant community events – Kindergarten Fly-Up and the Sixth Year Honoring Ceremony – were open to all families, once again, and the feeling of togetherness was palpable. This year we held our Honoring Ceremony at a nearby church, allowing all families who wanted to attend to do so comfortably, in contrast to previous years where we have crowded into a too-small space and needed to restrict attendance. We also recorded the graduation to share with family members out of town.

The Board of Directors at CMES continues to have strong parent representation, with three parent members.

A5. Curriculum (Aligns with WBWF)

The Montessori pedagogy, to which Cornerstone adheres, is a self-contained curriculum and method of instruction. CMES is committed to providing children a Montessori education of the highest quality; recognition by the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) ensures our quality is maintained. AMI was founded in 1929 by Dr. Maria Montessori to maintain the integrity of her work and her vision of education for children. Montessori as a name is not trademarked; only accreditation can guarantee a rigorous commitment to Dr. Montessori's vision and principles in educating young people. CMES hires only classroom teachers who have been AMI certified; our Head of School is also trained and we have committed to sending 5 current employees to AMI training over the next 2 years.

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

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

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

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

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

The Montessori curriculum is developed and reviewed by an international committee and not set according to US academic standards. As a consequence, there are elements in the Montessori

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

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

While Montessori is the foundation of our program, and the lens through which we view all decisions related to the children, the pandemic has made clear the areas where our Montessori albums fall short of the children's needs. For example, the elementary Montessori curriculum assumes children are capable readers when they enter 1st grade, an assumption that does not always match reality. In order to teach children in Lower Elementary to read, a practice that Dr. Montessori did not envision, we supplement our Montessori materials with Words Their Way, Handwriting without Tears, Heggerty, UFLI, and Orton-Gillingham. As with any Montessori material, the children are given presentations on these curricula and are able to choose them if they wish. Children who do not need the additional supports do not receive the lessons; in that way we meet children where they are, regardless of their skills when coming in to the environment.

Additions to the Montessori environment are made in conversation with the entire Lead Guide/Specialist team, based on need and expertise. We also consult with AMI Montessori teacher trainers when making decisions. The goal in introducing any intervention into the environment, particularly one that takes the children's scheduled time, is that it be provided until it is no longer needed. During much of the 2021-22 school year, for example, we designated "silent writing" time, to ensure that children were practicing handwriting. As children mastered the skills and demonstrated they were able to make that work choice independently, the group time decreased.

Children access additional experiences by choice, engaging in supplemental curricular activities such as Bird by Bird, a program of the Department of Natural Resources, for regular bird and wildlife exploration. We are always on the lookout for these sorts of opportunities, so that children who are interested can have additional curiosities satisfied in the school setting.

A6. Scheduling (Aligns with WBWF)

Cornerstone's schedule is established to support the child's development. The day begins with breakfast together – any child who is hungry is invited to eat. Once in the Montessori environment, children have free access to the entire curriculum. In a morning three-hour work cycle, guides offer individual and small group lessons, children choose work independently, and children move freely about the classroom. During this time as well, special education, ELL, math, and literacy services are pushed into the environment; children identified for these services work with the teacher individually or in small groups alongside their peers in the classroom. A two-hour minimum work period follows lunch and recess, with children continuing to make independent work choices and receiving lessons from their guides.

In the kindergarten classes, part of the Children's House, the program is all-day (care is available 7:30-5:30). We offer a nutritious, catered lunch, which the children enjoy as a community. For much of the children's day they may choose work within the environment. There is also group time for music, stories, movement, and games. Children have time to play outside at least once a day (weather permitting). There is also the opportunity to use an indoor large motor space.

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

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

In the elementary program, grades 1-6, the work periods are supplemented by "class congress" or "council," where children address community concerns and problem-solve together. Silent reading and read-aloud are also incorporated into the daily schedule, giving children a sustained period to develop a love of reading and story-telling. As in the Children's House, lunch is a community affair, with meals served together and children responsible for the cleanup and setup of their lunch. A full hour is provided for recess, allowing children to gain valuable physical skills and to practice being in community in a less structured environment.

The 1.5 hour lunch/recess time gives children the opportunity to experience life at Cornerstone in a non-academic setting. Licensed teaching staff oversee the children at school and "across the street" at the Boys and Girls Club field, supporting the development of gross motor skills and collaborative play skills.

A7. Professional Development and Teacher Evaluation Systems (Aligns with WBWF and Evaluation Rubric)

Professional development is an important part of our annual calendar, offering opportunities for personal enrichment, school-wide shared learning, and preparations and planning for improvement and community growth. In addition to the professional development opportunities that are detailed in the attached spreadsheet, Cornerstone staff meet regularly to review systems and troubleshoot pressure points within our work:

Lead Guide/Specialist Meetings (Monthly): Head of School and all lead teachers and specialists (Special Education Teachers, Literacy, Math, and Behavior Specialists, ELL Teacher)

Standing Agenda

- Immediate issues/concerns
- Sharing – successes, challenges, assessments, progress towards goals.
- Supporting our support staff
- Lesson planning discussion (informed by observation, children’s work, assessments)
- Child Find (reserve at least 20 minutes for this discussion, longer if needed) and intervention discussion.

Level Meetings (Monthly): Lead Guides and assistants, aides, paraprofessionals, all specialists, and school administration. Level Lead/Program mentor facilitates meeting.

- Immediate issues/concerns
- Systems and routines
- Intervention discussion for children who need additional support.

Special Education Meetings (Weekly): Each classroom paraprofessional team met weekly with their respective Special Education teacher; and the Special Education teachers and staff (Head of School, School Social Worker) met weekly with Amanda Wilmot, our longtime Special Education Director, and other Special Ed team members.

The Children’s House (Kindergarten) teams meet weekly, as do the Elementary Lead Guides. Elementary teams meet every other week with their entire environment staff and specialists. The Head of School meets with each licensed teacher monthly and as needed, and paraprofessionals and assistants as needed/requested.

Our overall staff priority this year was to build a common language around equity. The entire staff, including our partners at Cornerstone Montessori School, completed a 10-hour series of trainings with Embracing Equity. Staff were also invited to participate in Conscious Discipline, an online training program. In addition, our five Montessori Elementary teachers in training completed observation and student teaching hours at Cornerstone and nearby schools, and several of our paraprofessionals completed CPI training with Twin Cities Education Consultants.

Staff Evaluation

Staff at Cornerstone engage in a self-review, as well as a review with school administration. Every staff member meets with the Head of School in the fall to set goals for the year. In late winter, they complete a self-review rubric assessing their work as defined by the job description and their goals set in the fall. This rubric is then also completed by the staff member’s lead guide, Special Education teacher, and/or the Head of School. Every staff member meets with either their lead guide, supervisory Special Education teacher, or the Head of School to discuss the rubric.

Evaluation at Cornerstone is intended to be productive and on-going. Staff are frequently asked to consider their work, through team meetings and conversations with other staff. The lead guides and licensed specialists (ELL, Literacy and Math, Special Education) meet at minimum monthly with the Head of School. Each classroom's Special Education team meets weekly, as well, offering the paraprofessionals direct opportunities for peer support and conversation with the Special Education teachers.

Please see attachment A7 for information about the 2023-24 in-service opportunities.

A8. Innovative Practices, Initiatives and Future Plans

Applying a high-quality AMI Montessori curriculum to a public charter school is Cornerstone's first and most important innovative practice. Acknowledging "developmentally appropriate" as an ideal learning environment, child-centered practices are being merged into many traditional systems. At Cornerstone, the innovative practices of Montessori are time tested yet remain innovative in that they are being applied in their purest form in the public sector, increasing access to high quality Montessori education for all children. Now more than ever, it is of particular importance for our children to experience education that fosters optimal outcomes both academically and developmentally – ensuring every child the chance to reach his or her fullest potential. Whereas more privileged children come to school having already had a wealth of positive experiences and viewing themselves as capable learners and important people, *many children represented in our student population have experienced the opposite*. Due in part to limited opportunities, they are often the children who start academically behind expected grade levels and then continue to fall further behind each year. The children at Cornerstone are given freedom and independence to manage their own learning, with the guidance of a highly trained adult. In a world where children are rarely trusted to make decisions for themselves, being told "you are capable" is profoundly meaningful, particularly for children who do not have stable environments outside of school.

Our School-Based Mental Health program continues to be a shining example of the ways in which Cornerstone meets the needs of the whole child. Our full-time school social worker, Antje Veit, provides individual sessions for children with IEPs and for children with specific needs, offers social skills lessons in small groups, coordinates a pen pal program with children in Ghana, and has helped to create a drumming program this past year (Beat the Odds, an evidence-based SEL curriculum). Providing on-site mental health supports for our children is tremendous in encouraging comfort with school as an institution, particularly for children and families with histories of educational trauma, and in giving children the tools to cope and thrive despite the world around them. Our MSW intern supported Antje in delivering SEL supports last year and is writing a curriculum for our Lower Elementary social skills groups during the 2024-25 school year.

Making use of the rich diversity of Minnesota was an exciting opportunity this year. Cornerstone's children were invited to participate in the Department of Natural Resources' pilot Bird by Bird program. Participating students had quarterly sessions with DNR staff to learn about our local avian population, culminating with a field trip to the Carpenter Nature Center. Upper Elementary children were also able to attend Camp Ihduhapi and our 6th years had their first ever overnight camping experience at Osprey Wilds. Although the weather didn't allow for the high ropes course, as was widely anticipated, the children had an incredible time and we are hopeful this will become an annual occurrence for our graduating class.

Equity was the focus for staff professional development in 2023-24, following the conclusion of an equity audit in prior years. Our Head of School, Elementary Level Lead, and a colleague from Cornerstone Montessori School completed a year-long Leadership Residency Cohort with Embracing Equity, and simultaneously all school staff participated in the organization's Anti-Racism Training Cohort. At the Board level, Cornerstone's Equity Committee, at long last, made it off the ground. We are looking forward to continuing to work towards anti-racism as a school.

A9. Awards

N/A

B. Governance and Operational Elements

B1. Teacher Licensure Verification (Aligns with Evaluation Rubric)

B1. Licensure Template

School Name: Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School
Year Reported On: SY2024

Teacher Name	Returning in		Subject Taught	Grade(s) Taught	File #	Function			Expiration Date	Notes
	At School in SY24? Y or N	SY2025? Y, N or New				Code	Student Level	Function Description		
Bahnemann, Hayley	Y	N	Lower Elementary	1-3	482561	180100	K-6	Elementary Education	6/30/24	
Burgess, Kaitlyn	Y	N	Math	2-6	1004964	180100	1-6	Elementary Education	6/30/28	
Cornwell, Emma	Y	Y	Special Education	K-6	1011527	180100	K-6	Elementary Education	6/30/25	Out of Field Permission for Special Education
Crooks, Cynthia	Y	Y	English Language Learners	K-6	267424	60206	K-12	English as a Second Language	6/30/27	
Fabel, Jessy	N	New	Math	2-6	475741	180100	K-6	Elementary Education	6/30/29	
Fendt, Tom	N	New	Lower Elementary	1-3	1003623	180100	K-6	Elementary Education	6/30/27	
Goff, Jessica	Y	Y	Upper Elementary	4-6	391619	180100	1-6	Elementary Education	6/30/28	
Green, Megan	Y	N	Kindergarten	Kindergarten	102080	180150	B-Grade 3	Early Childhood Education	6/30/24	
Johnson, Mara	Y	Y	Upper Elementary	4-6	486194	180100	K-6	Elementary Education	6/30/23	
McDermott, Molly	Y	N	Kindergarten	Kindergarten	500248	180150	B-Grade 3	Early Childhood Education	6/30/28	
Olson, Monica	Y	New	Special Education	K-6	1033110	020000	K-12	Visual Arts	6/30/27	Out of Field Permission for Special Education
Riemer, Megan	Y	Y	Reading	K-6	396133	50196	K-12	Reading	6/30/27	
Schoenherr, Kristin	Y	Y	Kindergarten	Kindergarten	469500	180100	K-6	Elementary Education	6/30/25	
Schwartz, Alyssa	Y	New	Kindergarten	Kindergarten	511769	180150	B-Grade 3	Early Childhood Education	6/30/26	Newly supporting kindergarten instruction
Splinter, Suzanne	Y	Y	Special Education	K-6	332621	199810	K-12	Academic and Behavioral Strati	6/30/26	
Vasquez, Claudia	Y	New	Kindergarten	Kindergarten						Claudia co-teaches with Alyssa Schwartz
Veit, Antje	Y	Y	Social Work	K-6	1005504	940710	PreK-12	School Social Worker	6/30/26	
Wade, Sara	Y	N	Lower Elementary	1-3	407070	180100	K-6	Elementary Education	6/30/27	
Wright, Dannika	Y	Y	Lower Elementary	1-6	477695	180100	K-6	Elementary Education	6/30/25	

B2. Management and Administration (Aligns with Evaluation Rubric)

The school is led by the Head of School who is hired and held accountable for the success of the school by the Board of Directors. The Head of School reports to the Board of Directors monthly and is reviewed annually by the Head of School Review Committee using data including the Head of School's Professional Development Plan, Annual Goals, and parent and staff surveys.

The Head of School oversees all aspects of the school, manages all staff, and is the strategic leader of the school. The Director of Business Operations manages many operational aspects of the school (e.g., the lunch program, busing, MDE MARSS reports, etc.). The teachers are responsible, with the support of assistants and paraprofessionals, for supporting the growth and development of each Cornerstone student. An additional position, Elementary Program Manager, was added in 2021-22 to support the Director of Business Operations and Head of School with day to day programming, such as lunch and recess, and she supported the teachers in meeting the needs of their classrooms.

Each year the Head of School submits a Professional Development Plan to the CMES Board for approval. In this plan are events she intends to attend, as well as skills she intends to gain. The Director of Business Operations and the Elementary Program Manager discuss their professional development goals with the Head of School.

Notable professional development activities from our administrative team are listed below.

Alyssa Schwartz, Head of School

Please see attachment B2 for the FY24 Professional Development Plan.

Chris Bewell, Director of Business Operations

MDE Ed-Fi Training – Introduction to MARSS in Ed-Fi Reporting – July 25, 2023

MDE MARSS University – MARSS 109 – Changes for Next Year – August 1, 2023

MDE MEGS Training – Completing the ESEA Consolidate App in MEGS – August 30, 2023

MDE MN Learning Management System Webinar for DACS – September 28, 2023

Webinar – Cyber Insurance & Risk Management – October 3, 2023

Embracing Equity Session 1 – December 4, 2023

Grant Opportunity: Innovations in Service Learning – December 11, 2023

MDE ESSER Fall Amendment Webinar – December 14, 2023

Embracing Equity Session 2 – January 8, 2024

Pearson DAC Test Administration Training – January 11, 2024

Embracing Equity Session 3 – January 29, 2024

January ISAC New Member Webinar – February 1, 2024

FNS – Procuring Goods and Services for SNF-Food Service Management and Vended Meal Contracts – March 12, 2024

SchoolinSites All Products Webinar – March 19, 2024

MDE – Summer EBT Overview and Data Entry Process – March 26, 2024

FNS – Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program (FFVP) Overview & Application – March 28, 2024

Kraus Anderson Staff Benefits Webinar – April 2, 2024

MDE S-EBT Training – April 12, 2024

MDE Overview of FY25 ESEA Consolidate App – May 6, 2024

MDE Title I Part A MEGS – May 15, 2024

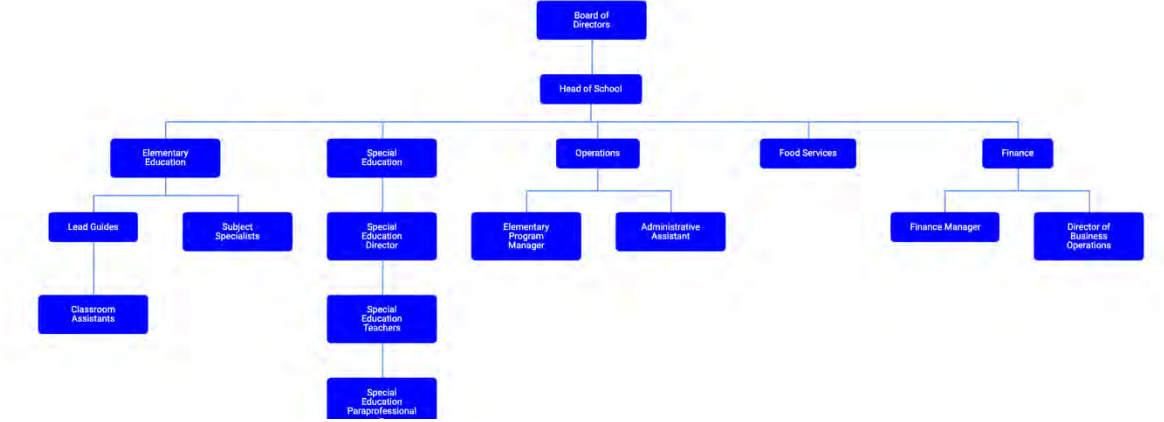
Lindsay Ruble, Elementary Program Manager

Completed AMI Elementary Diploma at The Montessori Institute, Denver

Navigating Behavior Challenges through Positive Behavioral Intervention Strategies – University of Minnesota Extension

Embracing Equity: Real Talk, Real Actions – Embracing Equity
Building the Capacity to Educate for Peace – AMI/USA
Future of Montessori Summit – AMI/USA
Monthly Equity Cohort – Sprockets

2023-2024 Organizational Chart



B3. Organizational Strengths, Challenges and Plans

Cornerstone has a strong operational environment, as evidenced by positive parent survey results, a robust fund balance, and consistency in administration. We are supported by committed board members who believe in our mission of providing high-quality Montessori to a diverse community, and who take care to follow best practices of board governance. Our greatest strength as a school is our staff: highly trained AMI Montessorians who also hold Minnesota state teaching licenses and support staff who seek to meet the needs of the children they work with. These individuals devote themselves daily to the hard work of supporting children's development; they do not compromise the Montessori pedagogy and have developed structures for balancing state testing and curricular requirements with children's freedom. We have overall low teacher turnover, particularly among licensed staff, which leads to a community that is stable and invested in the long-term vision of the school. Transitioning to the 2024-25 school year we saw higher teacher turnover than is typical, however the departures were expected (at times encouraged) and we are positive about the teachers taking over environments and positions.

As in any year, we face similar challenges to other public charter schools in finance (the ever-widening discrepancy between revenue and expenditures, especially with the current inflation rates) and in our reliance on enrollment for fiscal stability. We make use of federal and state grants that were previously underutilized, and we are working to seek out private grant opportunities as they arise. Fundraising is an area where we hope to strengthen our work in the future: Cornerstone has grown in its ability to attract community members for its board, which we have particular hope will lead to increased success in development endeavors. Our board leadership, Julaine Roffers-Agarwal as chair and Jean Melancon as vice-chair, is committed to strengthening the board and both members have done an outstanding job during their tenures of building CMES' presence in the community.

Over the past year we have seen our special education population rise significantly, with close to 30% of the student body receiving services in fall 2024. Our first permanent Setting III environment was established in January 2024 and its impact could be felt immediately in how designating space limited access to sensory and regulatory spaces for other children. We are proud to be pioneering the implementation of Montessori with children who have complex cognitive disabilities, and it at times feels that we are building the plane as we fly it. We do not expect these higher needs to decrease and how they affect the school as a whole will likely take time to be fully apparent.

Among our general education population, long-term impacts of Covid likewise remain visible, with attendance frequently low and staffing levels difficult to maintain. Our children continue to require greater remediation, especially in the early grades, than they typically would, drawing the Montessori guides away from Cosmic Education. And staff and children alike demonstrate high needs, emotionally and socially. Though Cornerstone remains strong in most ways, with a high fund balance and high student/teacher retention, it was a challenging year for many, after a series of challenging years. We continue to emphasize educating the whole child and meeting every single person in our community where we are, and so we are able to build on our strengths: a remarkable and dedicated staff, a committed and supportive board of directors, and a community of families and children who believe in Montessori and access to high quality, learner-centered education.

B4. School Enrollment and Attrition Trends (Aligns with Evaluation Rubric)

We began the 2023-24 school year with 138 children enrolled and a waitlist for some grades. We had more children coming and going throughout the year than is typical, including multiple families who left in the fall and returned by the spring, and several children who took extended trips to see family overseas (more than 15 days). By the end of the school year, total enrollment was 136 children with an Average Daily Membership (ADM) of 138.68.

Enrollment Trends

2023-24 Grade	Number of students who enrolled in the school on or before Oct 1	Number of students who enrolled after Oct 1	Number of students who left after Oct 1	Number of students enrolled at the close of the school year	Number of students who remained enrolled in the school for the full year
K	18	3	1	20	18
1	21	2	2	21	21
2	19	3	2	20	19
3	20	1	3	18	17
4	20	0	1	19	19
5	20	0	2	18	18
6	20	0	0	20	20
Total	138	9	11	136	132

Attrition Chart

School Year	Total	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	Attrition/Retention Rates
2011-2012	58	21	22	15					89%
2012-2013	81	22	23	22	14				96%
2013-2014	102	22	21	18	21	17	2	1	94%
2014-2015	118	19	23	19	16	25	16	0	91%
2015-2016	129	24	18	21	15	16	22	13	93%
2016-2017	132	21	18	18	21	18	19	17	94%
2017-2018	138	24	24	18	16	22	18	16	90%
2018-2019	143	21	21	27	18	19	27	10	88%
2019-2020	142	21	19	21	27	17	19	18	83%
2020-2021	138	20	21	22	21	25	13	16	87%
2021-2022	135	19	17	23	22	18	24	12	90%
2022-2023	139	22	18	18	22	22	19	19	89%
2023-2024	136	20	21	20	18	19	18	20	90%
2024-2025 est.	132	19	19	22	20	18	18	16	

School Demographics (as of October 1)

American Indian	5	3.6%
Asian	11	8.0%
Black or African American	18	13.0%
Hispanic or Latine	27	19.6%
White	61	44.3%
Multiracial	16	11.6%

Special Education	31	22.52%
English Language Learners	20	14.5%
Free/Reduced Lunch	78	56.5%
Homeless/Highly Mobile	0	0.0%

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

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

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

As required in Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.11, Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School must offer preferential enrollment to siblings of students currently enrolled and to a foster child of that pupil's parents at Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School. As allowed for in Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.11, Cornerstone offers preferential enrollment to children of school employees. CMES does not give preference to students of the private preschool Cornerstone Montessori School. The enrollment process may not consider eligibility based on intellectual ability, aptitude, measurement of achievement, athletic ability or any other specific characteristic of children whose enrollment application is received in a timely manner.

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

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

The 2023-24 open enrollment period was February-March, with the lottery held April 15, 2024.

Please see attachments B4.1 for the Enrollment Policy, B4.2 for the 2023-24 Application Form, and B4.3 for the 2023-24 Enrollment Form

B5. Community Partnerships

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School is co-located with the Montessori Center of Minnesota (MCM) and shares a Head of School and Kindergarten teachers with Cornerstone Montessori School, a private preschool serving children 16 months to age 5. This relationship has helped to establish CMES as one of the premier public Montessori schools in the country. Student teachers from MCM observe and do their student teaching at Cornerstone, and staff work for the elementary training course in the summer. Cornerstone's staff also benefit from workshops and mentorship opportunities provided by MCM. Cornerstone Montessori School enrolls 1/3 children receiving state or local scholarships, 1/3 children receiving private scholarships, and 1/3 children paying full tuition. This diverse student body, embedded in the community of St. Paul's East Side, yields a lottery pool for CMES' Kindergarten class that is already committed to the program and to Montessori (please note there is no priority given to CMS children in the lottery).

Cornerstone works with the East Side Area Business Association to promote strong connections in the Greater East Side community. Cornerstone has been able to share community resources with families through this partnership, and is able to reach new families through relationships with organizations like Family Values for Life, the Hazel Park Learning Center, and the East Side Boys and Girls Club. CMES children participate in after-care at the Conway Center, a free program offered through the Sanneh Foundation. We provide busing to Conway, so that children whose parents cannot pick them up at 4:00 have a safe, supportive environment to spend their late afternoons. This relationship has been a great success in our community and we are excited to continue it in FY25.

As described earlier in this report, we worked with Bird by Bird at the DNR this year, and our children went on trips to Camp Ihduhapi and Osprey Wilds. Our annual Family Tree Clinic presentations, on puberty and healthy relationships, were successes in our Upper Elementary environments. Children also participated in Going Outs to the University of Minnesota, SeaQuest, the Science Museum, and a metro-wide DAPE experience, among other outings in the community. We were thrilled to work with the Bell Museum to provide eclipse glasses for all of our children, even if the weather didn't cooperate this April for children to see the eclipse in Minnesota.

B6. Board Member Orientation and Training Plan (Aligns with Evaluation Rubric)

Prior to being nominated for election, potential CMES board members meet with the Board Chair to answer any questions they may have and to ensure that they understand the role of the board. Elections are held in May and membership officially begins on July 1st of the elected year. The CMES Board Chair guides new board members through an orientation process. Administrative activities include establishing Cornerstone e-mail addresses for board related correspondence and directions are given to open an account with the MN Association of Charter Schools to register for new board member classes. The Board Chair monitors progress made in completing the statutory training requirements in the areas of Board Governance, Finance, and Employment Law during the first year on the board, with at least one of the classes taken within the first 6 months of being on the board. As part of the orientation process, board members are provided an eHandbook of Board Member Information that includes basic legal documents, school organization documents, a review of the current strategic plan, board operations information, financial operations information, student and program information, and staffing and school operations information. The CMES Board complies with new legislation requiring that board members complete training prior to being seated in 2024.

Ongoing training in financial matters occurred as part of the audit presentation in October. The auditor detailed every component of the financial reports and guided the board members in developing a deeper understanding of the financial condition of the school. Cornerstone's Business Manager, Joe Aliperto (Dieci School Finance, LLC), additionally presents proposed budget revisions as needed throughout the school year and monthly reviews of the school's finances. During these presentations, Mr. Aliperto covers every component of the school's revenue and expenses, elaborating on any changes to state or federal law and their impact on the school's financial condition. These sessions allow for the active participation of each board member.

Cornerstone is a member of Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACS), thus board members are invited to various seminars and presentations throughout the school year with other member charter schools. Notices of these events are passed along to board members in advance, and a summary is provided following the events when information has relevance to a strategic initiative.

The Governance Committee provided opportunities for ongoing training at regular board meetings for 2023-24, including:

- 8/15/23 – Board Member Book Reports
- 9/19/23 – Introduction to the East Side – Julie Richards
- 10/15/23 – Board Retreat
- 10/17/23 – Audit Presentation - Abdo
- 12/19/23 – Boys Totem Town & CMES Strategic Plan – Jean Melancon
- 1/23/24 – Charter Landscape Presentation – Scott Flemming
- 5/21/24 - The use of pronouns, gender identity, and gender affirming care in children – Dr. Kelsey Leonardsmith
- 6/18/24 – Board Year Timeline Presentation – Jean Melancon & Julaine Roffers-Agarwal

Individual board members also participated in continuing education and training opportunities, including:

Carolyn Ganz

- Classes/Webinars Attended
 - Marc Frankel Board Training for Minnesota Montessori Schools - 11/17/2023

- Propel/Northeast Bank Non-Profit Training - 11/28/2023
- Books Read
 - Multiple news articles ("We must examine effects of school choice"; "Momentum Builds in Payne-Phalen"; school budget articles re loss of federal funds, etc.)
 - *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi

Jean Melancon

- Classes/Webinars Attended
 - Propel/Northeast Bank presentation – 10/4/2023
 - *Twelve Golden Rules of Nonprofit Finance*
 - *Bring out the Best in your Board* focusing on board best practices
 - Marc Frankel Board Training for Minnesota Montessori Schools - 11/17/2023
- Books Read
 - *Of Bears and Ballots, An Alaskan Adventure in Small-Town Politics* by Heather Lende
 - *Brave Enough* by Jessie Diggins
 - *Find a Trail or Blaze One, A Biography of Reatha Clark King* by Kate Leibfried
 - *Life Stories and Lessons from the Say Hey Kid* by Willie Mays and John Shea

Julaine Roffers-Agarwal

- Classes/Webinars Attended
 - UMN Health Coaching Presentation: Celebrating Disability Pride Month: Disability Justice in Our Daily Lives – 7/11/2023
 - UMN ECHO Training: Ableism & Disability Justice – 9/12/2023
 - UMN ECHO Training: Removing Barriers and Creating Access – 9/26/2023
 - UMN ECHO Training: Gender, Gender Identity, and Sexuality – 10/18/2023
 - UMN ECHO Training: Race, Racism, and White Supremacy – 11/7/2023
 - UMN ECHO Training: Challenging Classism – 12/7/2023
 - Embracing Equity: Redefining Allyship – 2/14/2024
 - UMN ECHO: Religious and Spiritual Identities – 2/21/2024
 - UMN ECHO: Understanding and Addressing Gender-Based Oppression (Completion of entire UMN ECHO certificate) – 3/20/2024
 - Wood Badge training: Advanced adult leadership training designed and implemented by Boy Scouts of America – 4/26-28/2024 and 5/18-19/2024
- Books Read
 - *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus
 - *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver
 - *Broken* by Jenny Lawson
 - *Our Missing Hearts* by Celeste Ng
- Plays Attended
 - *What's Cookin'?*, Children's Theatre Company
 - *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress*, Children's Theatre Company
 - *The Carp Who Would Not Quit*, Children's Theatre Company
 - *Alice in Wonderland*, Children's Theatre Company
 - *A Year with Frog and Toad*, Children's Theatre Company
 - *123 Andrés: Activate*, Flint Hills Family Festival

B7. Board Member Information (Aligns with Evaluation Rubric)

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School Board of Directors Information – 2023-24 School Year

Updated 7/31/24

Name	Date Seated	Term End Date	Position	Type	Expertise	Email	Phone	Attend Rate	Governance Course 100	Employment Course 300	Financial Management Course 200
Tyler Bouwens	7/1/22	6/30/25	Trustee	Parent	Mental health, social service supports, environmental thoughtfulness	tylerbouwens@cornerstone-elementary.org	651-774-5000	75%	10/27/2022 through MACS	8/8/23 with Nancy Dana	9/26/22 through MACS
Carolyn Ganz	10/16/19 elected 7/1/20 reelected 7/1/23	6/30/20 6/30/23 6/30/26	Treasurer	Community Member	Financial Expertise	carolyngenz@cornerstone-elementary.org	651-774-5000	92%	8/19/2020 through MACS	2/27/2020 through MACS	1/22/2020 through MACS
Jessica Goff	7/1/16 reelected 7/1/19 reelected 7/1/22	6/30/19 6/30/22 6/30/25	Secretary	Teacher file folder #391619	AMI certified Montessori teacher	jessgoff@cornerstone-elementary.org	651-774-5000	92%	3/11/2017 through MACS	3/11/2017 through MACS	11/28/2016 through MACS
Jean Melancon	7/18/17 reelected 7/1/20 reelected 7/1/23	6/30/20 6/30/23 6/30/25	Board Vice-Chair	Community Member	Previous Montessori Board Chair, Business & Board Consultant	jeanmelancon@cornerstone-elementary.org	651-774-5000	92%	9/21/2017 through MACS	10/3/2017 through MACS	11/26/2017 through MACS
Jeremy Miller	7/1/23	6/30/26	Trustee	Community Member	Financial Expertise	jeremymiller@cornerstone-elementary.org	651-774-5000	92%	7/30/24 with Nancy Dana	8/8/23 with Nancy Dana	11/20/2023 Through MACS
Rohan Chougule	appointed 7/1/23	6/30/24	Trustee	Community Member	Strategic and financial planning, big picture focus	rohanchougule@cornerstone-elementary.org	651-774-5000	100%	7/30/24 with Nancy Dana	8/8/23 with Nancy Dana	10/30/2023 Through MACS
Julaine Roffers-Agarwal	7/1/18 reelected 7/1/21	6/30/21 6/30/24	Board Chair	Parent	Project Management, communication	julainerooffersagrawal@cornerstone-elementary.org	651-774-5000	100%	9/12/2018 through MACS	11/10/2018 through MACS	10/30/2018 through MACS
Sarah Stocco	12/18/19 elected 7/1/20 reelected 7/1/23	6/30/20 6/30/23 6/30/26	Trustee	Parent	Outdoor education background, former teacher	sarahstocco@cornerstone-elementary.org	651-774-5000	92%	1/13/21 through MACS	1/27/21 through MACS	5/19/20 through MACS
Alyssa Schwartz	NA	NA	Ex-Officio	Head of School	AMI certified Montessori teacher	alysaschwartz@cornerstone-elementary.org	651-774-5000	100%	9/12/2018 through MACS	11/10/2018 through MACS	9/24/2018 through MACS

C. Financial Elements

C1. Fiscal Health (Aligns with Evaluation Rubric)

Cornerstone continues to be in a strong financial position, with an audited end-of-year fund balance, as of June 30, 2024, of \$1,062,487, or 34.5%. The fact that the school has consistently achieved an uncommitted fund balance of at least 20% of expenditures since its fifth year of operation is both consistent with the school's fund balance policy and wise operating procedure, as the fund balance will help the school weather unanticipated emergencies and unforeseen events, including increased state funding holdbacks.

Joe Aliperto of Dieci School Finance LLC performed the accounting services for Cornerstone Montessori Elementary for the 2023-24 school year, and Paychex performs the payroll services.

Key financial highlights for the 2023-24 school year include:

- Expected total general fund revenues of \$3,033,675
- Expected total general expenditures of \$3,205,991
- Expected fund balance for all funds projected at \$1,062,487 (34.5%)
- The 2023-24 budget was set at 138 ADM. The actual ADM for the 2022-23 school year was 138.68
- Average cash on hand throughout the 2023-24 school year was 51.8 days

The 2024-25 budget is set at an ADM of 138. The projected general fund revenues for FY25 are \$2,716,314 and general expenditures are \$2,738,612. The ADM for 2024-25, as of October 22, 2023, is 131.42.

Please see attachment C1 for the FY25 budget.

C2. Internal Controls and Board Oversight (Aligns with Evaluation Rubric)

Cornerstone's Finance Committee, which consists of the Board Chair, Board Treasurer, the school's contracted finance manager, the Director of Business Operations, and the Head of School, meets monthly to oversee the school's finances. The Finance Committee reviews monthly financial statements prepared by the contracted finance manager, as well as monthly donations, the school budget, and any federal or state grants/allocations that require discussion. The reviewed financial statements and donations are submitted to the school board members for review and acceptance at the monthly school board meetings.

Thanks to both Joe Aliperto of Dieci School Finance, LLC, and to our Finance Committee, the school's finances remain strong. Due to the conscientious approach of our Board President Julaine Roffers-Agarwal, Board Treasurer Carolyn Ganz, Director of Business Operations Chris Bewell, and Head of School Alyssa Schwartz (all of them working in concert with Joe Aliperto), CMES has again achieved its fund balance goal of at least 20% of expenditures.

Abdo Eick & Meyers, LLP, Certified Public Accountants, prepared the school's annual FY24 audit. Abdo issued a clean audit with no findings.

C3. Awards

CMES met the qualifications for receiving the MDE School Finance Award in 2024. We are inquiring as to why the school was omitted this year.

Appendix A7

A7. Professional Development Offerings

School Name: Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School
Year Reported On: SY2024

Training Title	Training Provider	Audience (e.g. all staff, math teachers, Title IX staff)	Date/s	Required? Y or N
1 Montessori 2.0	Sara Wade	All Staff	8/28/23	Y
2 CMES: Who we are and who we want to be	Alyssa Schwartz	All Staff	8/28/23	Y
3 Disability Sensitivity	Indigo Education	All Staff	8/28/23	Y
4 CPR/First Aid	Minnesota Medical Training	All Staff	9/1/23	N
5 Connection Before Correction	Mirae Hassler	Kindergarten Teachers	3/7/24	Y
6 Hmong Cultural Center Tour	Hmong Cultural Center	All Staff	3/7/24	Y
7 Building Resilient Schools & Homes	Conscious Discipline	All Staff	throughout	N
8 Anti-Racism Cohorts	Embracing Equity	All Staff	throughout	Y
9 Mental Health Consultation	Nora Springer	Kindergarten Teachers	throughout	Y

Appendix B2

Professional Development Plan 2023-24

1. *Staff Inclusion/Relationship Building*

Objective: To support staff in feeling included, welcomed, and supported in their personal and professional growth at Cornerstone.

Plan:

- Utilize Circles and other relationship-building systems to structure staff meetings and other large group activities
- Read *Onward*
- Participate actively in Embracing Equity Anti-Racist Training Cohort

Despite strong staff retention, feedback and observation continue to show that staff are burned-out, demoralized, and feel a lack of community in their work. I would like to support the growth of a staff community that mirrors the one we expect amongst our children/families and to develop a culture of caring.

2. *Supporting Academic Growth*

Objective: To strengthen the academic outcomes of children and support licensed teachers in providing high-quality, effective teaching.

Plan:

- Meet regularly with new and new-to-the-profession teachers
- Implement regular touch-points using FastBridge data to assess growth
- Observe more frequently in the environments/intervention spaces
- Attend relevant workshops and MACS meetings

While we do not consider test data to be a well-rounded measure of children's growth and development, it is our responsibility to ensure that children meet grade-level standards and are able to access the Montessori curriculum. Our assessments over the past year indicate that there is work needed to support growth over the course of the year (progress tends to stagnate) and to bring children's skills up to state standards.

3. *Equity in Education*

Objective: To continue to deepen understanding of the ways education policy perpetuates inequity and oversee implementation of Cornerstone's equity practice and philosophy.

- Participate actively in Embracing Equity cohorts
- Attend/organize school-wide professional development on equity topics
- Read books and attend workshops related to equity and education, including *Raising Antiracist Children* by Britt Hawthorne

This area continues to be essential in meeting our school's mission. As a white leader in a diverse school, it is my obligation to learn more about the experiences of our families of color and to consider my own implicit bias directly.

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School
Enrollment Policy

Under Minnesota law, Cornerstone's enrollment process starts with an enrollment period. The enrollment period will be February 1 through March 31. Notice of this enrollment period will be made public through postings in community centers, local businesses, school newsletters and the school's website.

The enrollment capacity for each grade will be determined by the Head of School prior to the start of the Open Enrollment period.

Enrollment Preference: As required in Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.11, Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School must offer preferential enrollment to siblings of students currently enrolled and to a foster child of that pupil's parents at Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School. As allowed for in Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.11, Cornerstone Montessori offers preferential enrollment to children of school employees. **Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School may not and will not give preference to students of the private pre-school Cornerstone Montessori School. Any family from Cornerstone Montessori School who wants their child to attend Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School must participate in the enrollment and lottery process.** Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School is a public school and as such, the enrollment process may not consider eligibility based on intellectual ability, aptitude, measurement of achievement, athletic ability or any other specific characteristic of children whose enrollment application is received in a timely manner.

Enrollment Process:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kindergarten Enrollment: Prospective students entering kindergarten must be five years of age on or before September 1 of the kindergarten year.

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

Board Approved: August 28, 2012

Board Amended: January 22, 2019

Revised: October 20, 2020

Revised: January 19, 2021

Revised: January 16, 2024



Application Form for the **2023-24** School Year
Enrolling grades K-6

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School will accept applications for enrollment for the **2023-24** academic year, from **February 1 to March 31, 2023**. To be eligible for kindergarten your child must be 5 years old by September 1, 2023. If you wish to enroll your child at Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School, please complete and return to:

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School, 1611 Ames Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55106
Fax: 651.209.0846 or email: info@cornerstone-elementary.org
For more information, please contact the school at 651.774.5000

Student Information (Please print clearly)

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Grade for **2023-2024** School Year (please select/circle one) K 1 2 3 4 5 6

Parent / Guardian Information (Please print clearly)

Parent / Guardian 1 _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

E-mail Address _____

Parent / Guardian 2 _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

E-mail Address _____

The Minnesota Government Data Practices Act requires that you be informed that the information you provide is considered private. You are not legally required to provide any information on this enrollment application. Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School staff will have access to any information you do provide and use it in the enrollment process. Failure to provide the information requested would necessitate that an enrollment decision be made without the benefit of reviewing the information you could provide. If you do provide the requested information, it is our expectation that any information you provide will be truthful.

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

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____ Date ____ / ____ / ____

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

If more people apply than the number of spaces available for a given grade, program, or facility, Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School will conduct a public lottery to determine admittance to the school. The only preference we give in admitting students is for children who are siblings of current Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School students or children of Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School staff. In order to get this preference, parents **MUST** submit an application before the end of the open enrollment period. **The lottery will be held on Monday, April 10, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.**

(CMES Office Use) Date Received: _____ Notice of Enrollment Sent on Date: _____

Appendix B4.3

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School

1611 Ames Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55106

Phone: 651.774.5000 Fax: 651.209.0846

Student Enrollment Form 2023-24

Student Name (first middle & last) _____

Age _____ Date of Birth _____ Gender _____

Last School Attended _____

City _____ State _____ Grade (Sept. 1, 2023) _____

Home Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone or Main Contact Cell Phone _____

Country of Birth _____ Home Primary Language _____

Parent/Guardian 1 Name (first & last) _____

Home Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phones: Home _____ Cell _____ Work _____

e-mail _____

Parent/Guardian 2 Name (first & last) _____

Home Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phones: Home _____ Cell _____ Work _____

e-mail _____

Siblings

Name _____ Age _____ School Attending _____

Name _____ Age _____ School Attending _____

Name _____ Age _____ School Attending _____

Name _____ Age _____ School Attending _____

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

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

No, not Hispanic/Latino

Yes, Hispanic/ Latino

(A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.)

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

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

American Indian or Alaska Native

(A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.)

Asian

(A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand and Vietnam.)

Black or African American

(A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.)

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

(A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa or other Pacific Islands.)

White

(A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East or North Africa)

Did your child receive special services or participate in special programs at a previous school? ____Yes ____No

Does your student have an IEP? ____Yes ____No

Does your student receive any other community services? ____Yes ____No

Provider _____ Phone _____

Are there any custody related issues? ____Yes ____No

Other Comments:

The Minnesota Government Data Practices Act requires that you be informed that the information you provide is considered private. You are not legally required to provide any information on this enrollment form. Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School staff and the Minnesota Department of Education will have access to any information you do provide. Failure to provide the requested data would necessitate that education decisions are made without the benefit of reviewing the information you could provide. If you do provide the requested information, it is our expectation that any information you provide will be truthful.

Signature of parent/guardian: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C1

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School
FY25 Original Budget

	FY24 Revised Budget	FY25 Original Budget	Change from FY24 Revised
ADM/PPU	138.0	138.0	-
Fund 01 - General Fund			
Operating Revenue			
State Revenue			
3rd Party Billing - Dept of Health	1,106	1,106	-
School Trust Land Endowment	8,113	8,113	-
General Education Aid	1,268,989	1,292,816	23,827
English Learner Cross Subsidy	593	593	-
Literacy Incentive Aid	15,741	15,741	-
Charter School Lease Aid	181,332	181,332	-
Long-term Facilities Maintenance	18,216	18,216	-
Hourly Worker Unemployment	20,629	20,629	-
Library Aid	20,000	20,000	-
Student Support Aid	20,000	20,000	-
State Special Ed Aid	941,967	913,612	(28,354)
ADSIS Grant	87,039	100,639	13,600
Total State Revenue	2,583,725	2,592,797	9,072
Federal Revenue			
Title I	28,474	29,032	558
Title II	3,967	3,967	-
Title IV	10,000	10,000	-
Federal Special Ed Aid	15,801	15,801	-
Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)	80	80	-
Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS)	2,792	2,792	-
ESSER III	83,173	-	(83,173)
ESSER III - Learning Loss	-	-	-
ESSER III - HUS	10,000	-	(10,000)
Direct Fed Aid&Grant	7,690	-	(7,690)
P-EBT Coordinator Revenue	653	-	(653)
Total Federal Revenue	162,631	61,673	(100,958)
Other Local Revenue			
Interest	9,000	5,000	(4,000)
Donations	1,030	1,030	-
St. Paul & Minnesota Foundation	30,000	-	(30,000)
Give to the MAX - November Campaign	6,021	2,500	(3,521)
Prairie Care Grant	-	19,666	19,666
Miscellaneous Revenue	500	500	-
HOS Reimbursement - MTCN	31,593	33,148	1,555
Total Other Local Revenue	78,144	61,844	(16,300)
Total Operating Revenue	2,824,499	2,716,314	(108,186)

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School
FY25 Original Budget

	FY24 Revised Budget	FY25 Original Budget	Change from FY24 Revised
ADM/PPU	138.0	138.0	-
Operating Expenditures			
Administration			
Salaries and Wages	167,982	171,342	3,360
Benefits	37,454	37,986	532
Purchased Services	122,920	122,920	-
Supplies	31,322	31,322	-
Dues/Memberships/Other	27,800	27,800	-
Total Administration	387,478	391,370	3,892
Elementary Education			
Salaries and Wages	393,975	407,853	13,878
Benefits	118,799	133,581	14,782
Purchased Services	13,750	13,750	-
Supplies	22,000	22,000	-
Summer Programming	11,321	-	(11,321)
Total Elementary Education	559,845	577,184	17,338
State Special Education			
Salaries and Wages	625,453	599,146	(26,307)
Benefits	127,854	123,341	(4,513)
Purchased Services	156,802	156,802	-
Supplies	-	-	-
3rd Party Billing	1,106	1,106	-
Total State Special Education	911,215	880,395	(30,820)
ADSIS Grant			
Salaries and Wages	114,302	136,970	22,668
Benefits	26,813	29,041	2,228
Supplies	3,950	1,720	(2,230)
Total ADSIS Grant	145,064	167,731	22,667
Federal Funds			
Title I	28,474	29,032	558
Title II	3,967	3,967	-
Title IV	10,000	10,000	-
Federal Special Education	15,801	15,801	-
ECSE	80	80	-
CEIS	2,792	2,792	-
ARP Act (ESSER III)	93,173	-	(93,173)
Total Federal Funds	154,288	61,673	(92,615)

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School
FY25 Original Budget

	FY24 Revised Budget	FY25 Original Budget	Change from FY24 Revised
ADM/PPU	138.0	138.0	-
Instructional Support Services			
Salaries and Wages	57,736	58,691	955
Benefits	12,292	12,790	498
Purchased Services	5,000	2,500	(2,500)
Supplies	350	350	-
Total Instructional Support	75,378	74,331	(1,047)
Student Support Services			
Salaries and Wages	20,000	20,000	-
Purchased Services - Transportation	-	8,000	8,000
Pupil Transportation - Regular	178,266	153,000	153,000
Pupil Transportation - Sp Ed	68,000	68,000	68,000
Pupil Transportation - ESY	15,649	15,649	15,649
Pupil Transportation - Homeless	20,000	20,000	20,000
Pupil Transportation - Other	2,200	2,200	2,200
Health Services	2,000	2,000	-
Total Student Support Services	306,115	288,849	266,849
Facilities and Maintenance			
Purchased Services	94,500	94,500	-
Supplies	1,100	1,100	-
Facilities Lease	201,480	201,480	-
Total Facilities and Maintenance	297,080	297,080	-
Total Operating Expenditures	2,836,464	2,738,612	186,263
Net Operating Income	(11,964)	(22,298)	(294,449)
Fund 02 - Food Service			
Revenue			
State Revenue	42,500	42,500	-
Federal Revenue	58,320	58,320	-
Local Revenue	8,200	8,200	-
Total Revenue	109,020	109,020	-
Expenditures			
Purchased Services	17,100	17,100	-
Supplies	91,920	91,920	-
Total Expenditures	109,020	109,020	-
Food Service Fund Net Income	-	-	-

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School
FY25 Original Budget

	FY24 Revised Budget	FY25 Original Budget	Change from FY24 Revised
ADM/PPU	138.0	138.0	-
Designated Expenses			
General Fund Committed			
Staff Development - AMI Sponsorship	21,500	21,500	-
Equity in Education	26,730	-	(26,730)
Total Expenditures - Committed Funds	48,230	21,500	(26,730)
NET INCOME ALL FUNDS	(60,195)	(43,798)	(267,718)
Beginning Fund Balance	1,124,150	1,063,955	
Ending Fund Balance	1,063,955	1,020,157	
Fund Balance Percentage	37.5%	37.3%	