Revised DCSD Charter Replication Application

Replication Application
Submitted to: *Douglas County School District - Choice Programming*
Submitted by: *Stem School Highlands Ranch*
Submitted at: *04/01/2025 03:51 PM*

Application Elements

Elements Completed: **20 / 20**

1. APPLICATION MATERIALS AND INSTRUCTIONS

A) INTRODUCTION

Reviewer Instructions

This application element is not evaluated.

Status: Completed

Form Result

Form for this application element has no data

Evaluation Rubrics

This application element is not evaluated

B) ELIGIBILITY TO APPLY FOR REPLICATION

Reviewer Instructions

This application element is not evaluated.

Status: Completed

Form Result

Form for this application element has no data

Evaluation Rubrics

This application element is not evaluated

2. REPLICATION APPLICATION AND EVALUATION STANDARDS

A) Executive Summary

Reviewer Instructions

THIS SECTION IS REQUIRED FOR THE REPLICATION. IF THERE IS NO CHANGE IN ANY OF THE SECTIONS BELOW IN THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FROM THE ORIGINAL CHARTER, PLEASE INDICATE IN YOUR RESPONSE SECTION THAT THERE IS NO CHANGE.
This section summarizes the key points of the proposal for the reviewers to prepare them for the upcoming content and is no more than two to three pages.

A concise summary of the core sections of the application that includes: mission and vision, target student population and community, educational philosophy and program, professional

development, and school governance and leadership.

Status: Completed

Form Result

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A concise summary of the core sections of the application that includes: mission and vision, target student population and community, educational philosophy and program, professional development, and school governance and leadership.

The Executive Summary should outline the elements of the application and provide an overview of the proposed school.

1. Proposed name of the charter school
2. The philosophy of the proposed charter school (vision and mission statements)
3. The circumstances and motivations that brought the applicant team together to propose this charter school
4. Primary contact person (including mailing address, email, and phone number)
5. Whether the school expects to contract with an outside educational management company and the name of the company, if already selected
6. Identify any organizations, agencies, consultants or institutions of higher education that are partners in planning and establishing this charter school, along with a brief description of their current and planned role and any resources they have contributed or plan to contribute to the school's development
7. Provide aggregate information concerning the grade levels and schools in which prospective pupils are currently enrolled, along with demographic information for the target population
8. Resume of Lead Administrator (if known)
9. List of board members
10. Educational program (Paideia, Core Knowledge, Classical, Project Based, Montessori, etc.)
11. Any unique features, such as a non-traditional school year, longer school day, key partner organizations, multiple campuses, school culture, etc.
12. Describe the school's core values about teaching and learning
13. Key programmatic features the school will implement to accomplish its vision and mission.
14. Projected enrollment for each grade level in years 1-5

15. Projected enrollment percentages of the following:
    1. Multi Language Learners
    2. Exceptional and Educationally Disadvantaged Students
    3. Free and Reduced Lunch Students
    4. Minority Students
    5. Please identify the rationale for how the projected demographics were determined.

Executive Summary

Proposed Name & Location: STEM School Castle Rock (working title) is a proposed PreK–8 charter school strategically located within Douglas County, near rapidly growing communities such as Dawson Trail, The Canyons or Sterling Ranch. Douglas County is a community that is in high demand for another high-quality, results driven STEM education. This name is used throughout the application and is synonymous for a different location if that location is determined to best meet the needs of Koson Schools dba STEM School Highlands Ranch and the Douglas County School District.

Mission and Vision: Our mission is succinctly stated: "Never Stop Innovating." We envision a future filled with exponential possibilities, where every child develops the knowledge, skills, creativity, and character essential to thriving, leading, and succeeding in an ever-evolving global society. Our core values—innovation, integrity, excellence, community, stability, and stewardship, and fun.—guide our commitment to a student-centered, inclusive, and future-focused learning environment.

Educational Philosophy and Model: STEM School Castle Rock aims to replicate the proven educational model of STEM School Highlands Ranch. Our instructional approach emphasizes Problem Based Learning, interdisciplinary projects, and dynamic industry partnerships. Students actively engage in authentic, real-world challenges through hands-on collaborative inquiry, supported by competency-based assessments and Student Showcase Conference. A Problem Based Learning model of education promotes the healthy development of the whole student because they develop a strong sense of identity and purpose as they figure out their personal strengths and weaknesses through solving challenging problems with their peers, teachers, and industry partners. As students form their identity, the school has the opportunity to support each student in personalized pathways of learning that further engage students in the learning process, helping them achieve the vision of being people who thrive, lead, and succeed in their lives. Additional distinctive programming features include a comprehensive STEM+ program comprising student clubs, sports, camps, and overnight trips focused on innovation, learning and service.

Target Population & Demographics: Initially, STEM School Castle Rock will serve 604 PreK – 5th grade students, expanding systematically to include Grades 6–8, reaching full enrollment of approximately 861 students by Year 5. Projected enrollment demographics reflect the diversity of Castle Rock and surrounding communities, with approximately 15% multi-language learners, 12% twice-exceptional and SPED students, 11% qualifying for free/reduced lunch, and 45% minority students. These projections are based on current demographic analyses of target communities and enrollment trends observed at STEM School Highlands Ranch. (See Appendix A. Demographics)

Motivations, Rationale, and Value to DCSD: Our diverse applicant team—comprising dedicated educators, community leaders, experienced STEM professionals, and engaged parents—shares a collective motivation to create a rigorous and equitable STEM-focused educational experience. Recognizing the need within DCSD for innovative, inclusive educational opportunities, we propose STEM School Castle Rock as an impactful solution to district and community priorities. Our school will align closely with DCSD's strategic goals, particularly around STEM education, innovation, workforce readiness, district growth and closing opportunity gaps. Given the rapid growth of local technology, engineering, and aerospace industries, our model directly

addresses critical regional workforce needs, providing exceptional academic results, high student engagement, and strong family satisfaction. Our distinct value includes fostering a culture of innovation, cultivating extensive community and industry partnerships, and serving diverse student populations.

Additionally, STEM School is positioned to grow based on significant enhancements to personnel and programs over the last three years. The school's leadership team has an average of 24 years experience in their respective fields and we have seen incredible results in enrollment, teacher retention, surveys, and student outcomes.

Our vision extends far beyond Douglas County. Communities across Colorado and throughout the country have approached us for guidance and to explore the possibility of bringing our innovative model to their neighborhoods. As we consider expanding to meet the growing demand for high-quality problem based learning with a STEM-focused education, establishing another top-tier, innovative STEM school in Douglas County is a logical first step, given both proximity and need. Currently, most charter schools in Douglas County follow a Core Knowledge or classical model. While some incorporate STEM or STEAM electives and labs, none fully integrate STEM and innovation into every lesson, starting in kindergarten and continuing through high school. At STEM School Highlands Ranch, we have successfully developed a Problem Based Learning approach that immerses students in STEM education while ensuring a strong foundation in reading, writing, math, and critical thinking. Our proven success positions us to meet the demand for a truly STEM-focused charter school grounded in Problem Based Learning in Douglas County and beyond.

This model is not aspirational—it's proven. From 2022 to 2024, STEM School Highlands Ranch increased its overall academic performance score from 83.7 to 88.1. Students consistently earn "Exceeds" evaluations across CMAS, PSAT, and SAT assessments in English language arts, mathematics, and science. These sustained outcomes reflect more than short-term success—they demonstrate the strength, stability, and replicability of Koson's instructional design.

In short, today's students are eager for this kind of education, and adding another charter school in Douglas County—especially one with a proven track record of exceptional student outcomes—will provide significant benefits to the community. (See Appendix A. Douglas County Charter School Breakdown by Model)

Development and Partnerships: The replication team comprises current STEM School Highlands Ranch and Koson Schools leadership. Our collaborative efforts include strategic planning support from Bellwether Education Partners, research and advocacy from the Colorado League of Charter Schools, and start-up financial support through the Colorado Schools Fund. We are also adding more robust partnerships with local STEM-related industries to facilitate student internships, mentorship programs, and enriched problem based learning experiences.

Steering Committee and Board of Directors: Our Steering Committee and fonding Board of Directors include seasoned members of the Koson Schools Board: Carla Gustafson (Chair), Erin Quigley, Ishmeet Kalra, Darrell Lomelino, Rudy Lukez, Greg Shick, Gina Wing, and Matt Cartier (Chief Innovation Officer). This committee offers extensive expertise in charter governance, educational policy, financial oversight, innovation, and legal compliance. Their proven track record demonstrates exceptional

capacity to responsibly administer public funding, implement effective governance systems, and ensure strict adherence to compliance and accountability standards, thereby establishing a high-quality charter school. The primary contact is Matt Cartier, Chief Innovation Officer: matt.cartier@kosonschools.org | 720-864-0245.

Enrollment and Recruitment: The STEM School Castle Rock will initially enroll PreK–5 students, expanding annually until reaching Grade 8. Our recruitment strategy emphasizes equitable access and inclusivity, with outreach specifically designed to attract diverse and traditionally underserved populations. We will implement a transparent enrollment process aligned with DCSD policies, prioritizing siblings, staff children, and local in-district residents to foster community integration and continuity.

Impact: STEM School Castle Rock will strategically address educational challenges facing our targeted student populations by providing rigorous STEM instruction through culturally responsive Problem Based Learning methodologies. Our comprehensive Multi-Tiered System of Support framework ensures personalized, differentiated instruction and targeted interventions, effectively accommodating diverse academic, social-emotional, and socio-economic needs. Continuous, data-driven assessments and extensive professional development will empower educators to rapidly identify learning gaps, tailor instruction, and promote inclusive, supportive classrooms. Leveraging the governance expertise of Koson Schools, we are committed to maintaining high academic standards, transparency, and a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring equitable academic achievement and personal growth for all students.

Programmatic Elements: Our educational program emphasizes rigorous, authentic Problem Based Learning experiences, extending learning opportunities through an extended school day and flexible academic calendar. We foster meaningful relationships with STEM-focused industry partners to provide mentorship, internships, and real-world project experiences. Additionally, our intentional school culture promotes innovation, creativity, equity, and inclusion. Key programmatic supports include robust Multi-tiered System of Support for personalized learning, culturally responsive instructional practices, and ongoing professional development tailored to equip educators with research-based strategies for student success.

Grade Levels and Projected Enrollment:

- Year 1: PreK (120), Grades 1–3 (92 each), Grades 4–5 (104 each) - Total 604
- Year 2: Add Grade 6 (87–88 students)
- Year 3: Add Grade 7 (85 students)
- Year 4: Add Grade 8 (85 students)
- Year 5: Full enrollment maintained at approximately 861 students (PreK–8)

Proposed Extended Opening Timeline

A three-year school opening timeline offers significant advantages for the community, district, and school operator compared to an accelerated 18- to 24-month schedule. By extending the process, we can strategically align and effectively manage critical milestones, including facility acquisition, STEM architectural design, zoning approvals, enrollment demand, and organizational readiness.

Proposed Process

- Demonstrate Operator Quality & Demand – Establish Koson (STEM School Highlands Ranch) as a proven educational entity with strong leadership, measurable outcomes, and a successful academic model.
- Secure Land & Targeted Letters of Intent (LOIs) – Identify land and collect location-specific LOIs to confirm enrollment demand.
- Construct STEM-Designed Facility & Confirm Enrollment – Align facility development with confirmed interest and secure student enrollments.
- Ensure a Strong, Sustainable Launch – Open fully enrolled and positioned for long-term success.

Benefits of This Approach

1. Addressing Land Availability and Construction Challenges

   Securing land for a new school is a significant investment that requires careful planning. A longer timeline allows for a more thorough site selection process, increasing the likelihood of identifying a location that meets both educational and community needs while successfully navigating zoning and permitting complexities.
   This extended timeline also mitigates the risks associated with construction delays, which are common when working within tight district-wide capital improvement schedules. By allowing for strategic planning and flexibility, this approach helps ensure that facility development remains on track without the pressure of unrealistic deadlines.

2. Strategic Alignment with District Planning

   A three-year timeline enables better coordination with the district's long-term planning. Instead of rushing to secure a location that may not align with district growth projections, this approach fosters collaboration to identify areas of highest need.
   By granting Koson Schools authorization with an extended timeline and associated milestones, can streamlined collaborative efforts to determine the best location for a PreK-8th grade school—one that aligns with both Koson's long-term plans and DCSD's growth strategy.
   This proactive strategy strengthens partnerships with the district and ensures:

   - A sustainable school model.
   - Minimized impact on existing district schools.
   - Enhanced alignment with community development efforts.

3. Streamlined Land and Facility Acquisition

   Obtaining authorization before securing land or a facility significantly improves negotiating power in real estate transactions. Many property owners and developers require evidence of authorization before entering formal negotiations, as contingency-based offers are often viewed as speculative.

Under the current authorization model—where approval is granted only after land or a facility is secured—operators face two problematic options:

- Negotiating a contract with an extended timeline to accommodate district authorization, or
- Purchasing land outright without certainty of approval.

Neither option is practical, efficient, or fiscally responsible. We have already lost a previous opportunity due to a closing date that was contingent on district authorization.
By securing authorization first, our approach allows for:

- A more thorough site selection process.
- Stronger negotiating power to identify and acquire a location that meets both educational and community needs.
- Smoother navigation of zoning and permitting complexities.
- A reduction in construction-related risks, which are common when aligning with district-wide capital improvement schedules.

4. Meaningful Community Engagement & Increased Enrollment Interest

Community buy-in is essential for a successful school launch. By securing authorization first, we can:

- Engage families and stakeholders with a confirmed location and timeline.
- Foster genuine interest, leading to higher conversion rates from interest to enrollment.
- Strengthen LOIs by providing clarity on location and opening details, reducing speculative commitments.

Families prioritize proximity and scheduling certainty when making enrollment decisions. A clearly defined timeline and secured location significantly increase commitment levels.

5. Enhanced Organizational Preparation

A three-year opening timeline allows for:

- The recruitment, development, and training of high-quality administrators and teachers.
- Leadership teams to participate in professional development, mentorship, and collaboration with established successful school models.
- The design and refinement of a rigorous, research-based curriculum.
- The establishment of strong academic and operational policies.
- The implementation of student support systems, extracurricular programs, and community engagement strategies.

This extended preparation period ensures the school opens with a strong foundation for long-term success.

Commitment to Execution & District Collaboration

By adopting this approach, we mitigate risks, improve facility acquisition, align with district planning, and foster stronger community engagement—ultimately increasing the likelihood of a successful and sustainable school launch.

Koson Schools recognizes that meeting the milestones outlined in the Extended Timeline with Milestones and Plan (attached) is essential for success. If delays arise, we will immediately provide written notification to the Douglas County School District, detailing:

- The reason for the delay.
- The corrective actions being taken.
- Any necessary adjustments to maintain progress on subsequent milestones.

Failure to meet these milestones substantially may result in the district reconsidering its authorization, including potential delays or withdrawal of charter approval. Koson Schools is fully committed to proactive engagement with the district to address challenges and ensure compliance with the agreed-upon timeline.

Upload any documents that support the content of this application element (optional)

A. Demographics - Crystal Valley Castle Rock.pdf
209.02 KB • Added 5 days ago

Extended Timeline with Milestones and Plan_DCSD 2025 Replication - Google Docs.pdf
75.31 KB • Added 5 days ago

A. DOUGLAS COUNTY CHARTER SCHOOL BREAKDOWN.pdf
49.52 KB • Added 5 days ago

Cartier_Matt_Resume Spring 2025.pdf
63.28 KB • Added 5 days ago

B) Vision and Mission Statements

Reviewer Instructions

THIS SECTION IS REQUIRED FOR THE REPLICATION APPLICATION.
The vision statement clearly describes the school's proposed impact on the community.
The mission statement clearly describes how the school will accomplish this vision, with a focus on the target student population.

Status: Completed

Form Result

(1) Provide a Vision Statement that is no more than two to five sentences and provides a clear description of how the school will impact the community.

Enter content here

Our school is built on one guiding principle: Never Stop Innovating. By fostering a dynamic learning environment, we empower students to develop the skills, creativity, and resilience needed to thrive, lead, and succeed in an ever-changing world. As Douglas County's largest progressive charter school, we will bridge the gap in innovation and real-world application, particularly for entrepreneurial, STEM-focused families. Problem based learning approach not only inspires curiosity and creative, critical thinknig but it also supports students' whole child development, through emotional resilience and self-discovery. Ultimately, we will cultivate future-ready leaders who use their talents to create meaningful change in their lives, their communities and beyond. In addition, STEM careers generate twice the salary as non-STEM careers which has a large, long term effect on for a community that values a problem based, STEM focused school. (https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/stem-employment.htm)

(2) Provide a Mission Statement that is no more than two to five sentences and defines how the school will accomplish the vision statement and how the school will meet the needs of the school's specific target population. (Either address measurable outcomes within the school's Mission or within the Goals and Objectives section.)

Our Pre-K–8th grade school will provide a student-centered, STEM-focused, problem-based learning environment that fosters curiosity, creativity, and real-world problem-solving. With rapid advancements in technology and the evolving skills needed for today's workforce, students require a different approach to learning—one that emphasizes adaptability, innovation, and critical thinking. Through hands-on experiences and industry-aligned challenges, students will develop the resilience and problem-solving abilities essential for success in an innovation-driven world. Our model also prioritizes special education and mental health support, ensuring all students build confidence and emotional resilience. By expanding the proven success of STEM School Highlands Ranch, we will empower the next generation of future-ready leaders at STEM School Castle Rock to thrive, innovate, and make a meaningful impact.

Upload any files that support the content of this application element (optional)

C) Goals, Objectives, and Pupil Performance Standards

Reviewer Instructions

THIS SECTION IS REQUIRED.
The applicant articulates annual and interim goals for the school that align to the school's vision and mission, relate to state and authorizer performance indicators, and accelerate student achievement. There is a clear rationale for the development of the stated goals and plan for addressing performance gaps.

Status: Completed

Form Result

Our school's vision is to cultivate future-ready, resilient, and innovative learners through hands-on, problem-based, and emotionally supportive STEM education. In alignment with this vision, our mission emphasizes providing real-world, STEM learning experiences that foster curiosity, adaptability, and creative problem-solving—in a way that personalizes learning to the needs of the student. To realize this vision, we have outlined a set of clearly measurable annual and interim performance goals focused on academic achievement, student growth, equity, and postsecondary readiness.

Annual and Interim Academic Achievement & Growth Goals

To ensure strong academic outcomes, we will monitor both external standardized assessments and internal competency-based evaluations. These tools will provide comprehensive insight into student performance across content areas, grade levels, and subgroups.

Goal Area	Measure	Annual Performance Target	Interim Benchmark
Academic Proficiency (ELA/Math)	CMAS	80% of all students meet or exceed expectations	Growth in percent proficient from fall to spring
Early Literacy (3rd Grade)	i-Ready, CMAS	80% of students reading and writing at grade level	75% demonstrate 0.5 year growth by winter
Middle School Literacy (5th & 7th Grade)	i-Ready, CMAS	80% of students reading and writing at grade level	80% show 1 year growth by spring
Annual Growth	i-Ready	80% of students make ≥1.25 years academic growth in reading and math	Fall–Winter: 75% make 0.5 year growth
Achievement Gap Closure	i-Ready & CMAS subgroup data	5% annual gain in grade-level proficiency for SPED, MLs, and FRL students	Underserved subgroups grow at ≥5% above schoolwide average

Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (Middle Grades)

To prepare students for postsecondary pathways, we integrate career exploration, STEM application, and real-world problem based learning beginning in elementary grades and culminating in capstone experiences by 8th grade.

Goal Area	Measure	Annual Performance Target	Interim Benchmark
STEM Application	Rubric-assessed capstone projects	100% of 8th graders complete interdisciplinary STEM capstone	By 5th grade, 75% complete collaborative STEM challenge
Career Exploration	Self-assessment & inventories	100% of 8th graders complete career interest & reflection activity	7th grade exploratory project tied to student interests

Schoolwide Organizational Goals

Goal Area	Measure	Annual Performance Target	Interim Benchmark
School Performance Framework (SPF)	State SPF Rating	Achieve "Performance" rating annually (≥85% overall score)	Annual growth in equity and growth indicators ≥5%
Student Retention	Enrollment data	≥90% annual retention	Monitored quarterly in enrollment dashboard
Teacher Retention	HR reporting	≥85% annual retention	Pulse surveys conducted biannually
School Culture	Net Promoter Score (NPS)	Score of ≥50 annually	Staff/family satisfaction check-ins mid-year

Rationale for Goals, Metrics, and Targets

The proposed goals and metrics were developed based on four foundational criteria:

1. **Alignment with Mission and Vision:** Our school's vision is to develop creative, resilient, and empowered learners through STEM-rich, problem-based instruction. The focus on deeper learning, innovation, and equity necessitates clear academic and growth metrics that measure both traditional outcomes and 21st-century skills.
2. **State and Authorizer Expectations:** Performance measures are aligned with the Colorado School Performance Framework (SPF) and Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) guidelines. Tools such as CMAS, i-Ready, and subgroup growth metrics ensure compliance with state and local accountability standards.
3. **Research-Based Growth Targets:** A goal of 1.25 years of academic growth exceeds the national average and reflects high expectations rooted in the research on accelerated learning and high-performing charter models. Gap closure targets of 5% annually align with recommendations from equity-centered improvement frameworks.
4. **Equity and Inclusion Focus:** We are committed to closing achievement gaps among historically underserved groups. Subgroup goals are designed to promote disaggregated data monitoring, equity audits, and culturally responsive interventions supported by our Multi-Tiered System of Supports and embedded in Professional Learning Communities.

Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

Progress toward each goal will be monitored through a quarterly continuous improvement cycle:

- Grade-level and department teams engage in data analysis and action planning.
- Instructional strategies and interventions are adapted based on formative assessment data.
- Leadership teams conduct quarterly reviews aligned with UIP priorities.
- If interim benchmarks are not met, root cause analyses are conducted, and instructional, staffing, or resource strategies are revised accordingly.

This comprehensive, data-informed process ensures that academic growth, equity, and future-readiness are consistently centered in our decision-making—and that each student receives the support they need to thrive.

Like STEM School Highlands Ranch, STEM School Castle Rock is committed to achieving and sustaining a “Performance” rating on the Colorado School Performance Framework (SPF) each year, with an overall year over year target score of 85% or higher. To meet and exceed state and district expectations, we will implement a comprehensive academic strategy rooted in data-driven instruction, multi-tiered supports, and continuous improvement cycles aligned with both Colorado Department of Education (CDE) performance indicators and the Douglas County School District performance framework.

Key Components of the Plan

1. Academic Growth and Achievement

- Goal: 80% of students will meet or exceed grade-level expectations in ELA and Math (as measured by CMAS).
- Tool Alignment: CMAS, i-Ready, and internal benchmark data will be used to assess progress toward SPF achievement and growth indicators.
- Data Cycles: Grade-level teams will participate in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to review formative and benchmark data, set instructional priorities, and implement action plans to address learning gaps.

2. Subgroup Performance and Equity

- Goal: Historically underserved student groups (e.g., students with disabilitiesSWD, MLs, and FRL students) will demonstrate at least 5% annual gains in academic proficiency and growth metrics, narrowing the achievement gap.
- Tool Alignment: Subgroup performance will be monitored using disaggregated CMAS, i-Ready, and ACCESS data to align with SPF equity measures.
- Targeted Supports: All intervention strategies will be aligned with a Multi-Tiered System of Supports framework and culturally responsive practices to ensure equity in access, support, and opportunity.

3. Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR)

- While PWR metrics are not fully weighted in SPF for Pre-K–8 schools, we will prepare students for long-term readiness through:
    - STEM capstone projects in 8th grade aligned with real-world challenges.
    - Career inventories and future-planning reflections beginning in 6th grade.
    - Competency-based rubrics aligned to critical thinking, collaboration, and applied learning.
    - STEM Student Showcase Conference, an annual event where family, friends, and industry partners come to the school to learn from students' presentations about their innovative solutions to real-world problems.

4. Internal Continuous Improvement Systems

- Quarterly Leadership Reviews: School leadership will review school-wide and subgroup data quarterly to assess progress on Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) goals and SPF-aligned benchmarks.
- Actionable Dashboards: Teachers and school leaders will have access to real-time dashboards tracking academic performance, growth, and subgroup outcomes to support rapid-cycle intervention.
- Root Cause Protocols: When goals or interim benchmarks are not met, teams will engage in structured root cause analysis and adapt instruction, intervention, or resource allocation accordingly.

5. Organizational Health & Stakeholder Engagement

- Retention Goals: ≥90% annual student retention and ≥85% teacher retention, tracked through enrollment reports and HR data.
- Culture Metrics: Annual Net Promoter Score of 50 or above, used to assess and adjust family and staff satisfaction.
- Transparency: Academic and school climate data will be shared through bi-annual progress reports to ensure transparency and stakeholder involvement in improvement efforts.

Alignment with District Expectations

This plan reflects full alignment with Douglas County School District performance expectations by:

- Maintaining rigorous, measurable academic and growth goals;
- Promoting equity through disaggregated subgroup monitoring and Multi-tiered System of Support interventions;
- Prioritizing whole-child development through emotional resilience and problem-solving capacity;
- Ensuring systems for accountability, reflection, and adaptation are in place at every level of the school.

Together, these structures will ensure that STEM School Castle Rock not only meets state and district performance expectations, but also cultivates a learning environment that promotes equity, innovation, and excellence for every student.

Enter content here

STEM School Castle Rock will employ a proactive, data-informed approach to identify and address academic growth gaps as they emerge, with a specific focus on historically underserved student populations, including special education students, multilingual learners , and students eligible for free and reduced lunch (FRL). This approach is embedded within our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), our Professional Learning Community structure, and our culture of continuous improvement.

1. Early Identification through Real-Time Data Monitoring

We utilize multiple data points to detect growth gaps at the earliest possible stage:

- i-Ready diagnostic assessments administered three times per year (fall, winter, spring) to measure growth and identify students not meeting expected learning trajectories.
- Formative assessments and student work artifacts collected weekly within classrooms.
- Benchmark assessments aligned to grade-level essential learning standards and progress toward Colorado Academic Standards.
- Disaggregated data dashboards track subgroup performance and flag disparities between student groups and the school-wide average.

2. Tiered Intervention through MTSS

Once growth gaps are identified, students are supported through targeted, tiered interventions:

- Tier 1: High-quality, differentiated instruction provided to all students using Universal Design for Learning principles.
- Tier 2: Small-group instruction tailored to specific skill gaps, delivered during designated intervention blocks.
- Tier 3: Intensive, individualized interventions for students demonstrating significant learning delays, coordinated with special education or language development specialists.

Interventions are documented and progress monitored using a schoolwide MTSS tracker, which is reviewed biweekly in student support team meetings.

3. Collaborative Analysis through PLCs

Each grade-level and department team engages in weekly PLC cycles where they:

- Analyze current data to detect emerging gaps or trends.
- Develop targeted action plans for students needing academic support.

- Adjust instructional strategies, pacing guides, or grouping structures to meet identified needs.
- Share best practices and implement common formative assessments to ensure instructional consistency.

Instructional coaches and special educators support teams in aligning intervention plans with evidence-based practices and IEP/ML service requirements.

4. Root Cause Analysis and Continuous Adjustment

If interim benchmarks are not met, teams conduct structured root cause analysis using protocols that examine:

- Instructional practice
- Curriculum alignment
- Learning environment
- Student engagement
- Cultural and linguistic responsiveness

Based on findings, teams revise their strategies and submit updated plans to school leadership. Adjustments may include reallocating staff, revising schedules, modifying grouping, or intensifying support services.

5. Leadership Oversight and Progress Monitoring

School leadership monitors the implementation and effectiveness of growth gap interventions through:

- Quarterly data reviews aligned with the Unified Improvement Plan
- Walkthroughs and instructional observations focused on equity of access and engagement
- Subgroup performance tracking to ensure equity targets are met or exceeded
- Stakeholder feedback (including families) to ensure interventions are culturally responsive and accessible

This dynamic and responsive system ensures that growth gaps are not only identified early but are actively addressed through intentional, evidence-based strategies. Our model ensures all students—especially those historically underserved—have equitable access to the supports they need to meet and exceed academic expectations.

Upload any files that support the content of this application element (optional)

STEM School Academic Outcomes.pdf

292.08 KB • Added 5 days ago

D) Evidence of Support and Targeted Population

Reviewer Instructions

This section is required for the Replication Application
The charter school should provide sufficient evidence that an adequate percentage of parents, pupils, and community members support the formation of the charter school, including a sufficient number of parents and pupils intending to enroll in the school when it opens.

Status: Completed

Form Result

The proposed K–8 STEM charter school is designed to serve a diverse and dynamic population of students across Douglas County, Colorado. Our target student population includes racially, ethnically, linguistically, economically, and politically diverse learners who are seeking an innovative, STEM educational experience rooted in real-world problem-solving that aims to do good in our world.

	DCSD	24-25 STEM	Replication
White	68.9%	50%	55%
Hispanic/Latino	16.2%	12%	13%
Asian	6.8%	26%	21%
Two or More Races	6.3%	8%	7%
Black or African American	1.4%	3%	3%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.3%	0.5%	0.5%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.5%	0.5%

Specifically, our school is designed to attract and support:

- Students who are underserved by traditional models, including those who do not thrive in lecture-based, rote-learning environments and are seeking deeper engagement through problem-based and inquiry-driven instruction.
- Twice-exceptional (2e) students, who demonstrate both high ability and learning differences, and require an approach that balances intellectual challenge with flexibility, scaffolding, and support.
- Gifted and talented students, who often feel unchallenged or disengaged in traditional classrooms, and benefit from interdisciplinary, complex, and creative problem-based tasks.
- Students with disabilities, who respond positively to kinesthetic, collaborative, and real-world learning and who require differentiated, scaffolded instruction that builds both confidence and competence.
- Multilingual learners (MLs) and who will benefit from culturally responsive, identity-affirming instruction and intentional access to high-quality STEM pathways.

- Students from economically diverse backgrounds, ensuring equitable access to rigorous, hands-on STEM education that prepares them for high-demand careers.

Our model offers an inclusive, emotionally supportive, and intellectually rigorous environment designed to nurture curiosity, collaboration, identity development, and real-world application. In contrast to an oversaturation of classical and Core Knowledge charters in DCSD, our school fills a critical gap by offering a progressive, STEM-centered alternative that prepares students to be adaptive, empathetic, and empowered problem-solvers.

We project STEM School Castle Rock student demographics will reflect both the district averages and STEM School Highlands Ranch actual enrollment, while also implementing specific outreach strategies to ensure equitable access for underrepresented student groups. Our three-phase outreach plan includes focused efforts to engage families of 2e students, special education learners, MLs, and families from historically underserved communities—ensuring all students who would benefit from our model are welcomed and supported.

The Board and Leadership Team of the proposed PreK–8 STEM School Castle Rock charter school bring deep, sustained ties to Douglas County School District and a proven track record of responsive, equity-centered leadership within the local educational landscape. Their collective experience reflects a strong foundation of governance, community engagement, and mission-aligned implementation, positioning them to launch and sustain a school that reflects and serves the unique needs of the community.

Established Governance with Local Roots

The founding board currently oversees governance of Koson Schools which supports the education of over 1400 students at STEM School Highlands Ranch, a high-performing, mission-aligned charter school in Douglas County. All board members are long-standing residents of the region, parents of students in Douglas County schools, and professionals in fields spanning education, engineering, finance, business, technology, and public service. Their leadership reflects a deep understanding of local families' educational priorities—particularly the demand for innovative, real-world STEM learning opportunities. This board will continue to operate as the governing board of directors of Koson Schools dba STEM School Highlands Ranch and extend to include oversight of STEM School Castle Rock.

Leadership Team with Regional Expertise

The school's Leadership Team is composed of educational professionals and industry experts with strong ties to local schools, community organizations, and businesses. Collectively, the leadership team has decades of experience in instructional leadership, school operations, special education, human resournces, finance, IT and workforce development in Colorado. Their longstanding relationships with local educators, families, and civic leaders allow them to design programming and outreach strategies tailored to the county's demographic landscape and evolving needs. Koson's new CIO brings 26 years of experience in education, including 16 years in Douglas County, and has played a key role in launching four successful schools during his career (Valor Christian High School and Colorado Christian Academy are two local examples). He has worked in Douglas County private and public schools since 2009 and has a proven track record of starting and operating schools that are attractive to parents in Douglas County. Koson's CFO has 17 years of experience in educational finance and has overseen the development of 12 schools, including the two most recent American Academy campuses in Parker. The rest of the shared services leadership team boasts an average of 24 years of expertise in their respective fields, bringing a wealth of knowledge and proven success to this replicaion effort.

Commitment to Community-Informed Decision-Making

The Board and Leadership Team regularly engage with parents, students, and local partners to ensure the school's model reflects community input. This includes

participating in regional educational networks, forming advisory meetings to gather stakeholder perspectives on programming, supports, and access, and facilitaing two student, teacher, and parent surveys per year. A few examples of our efforts to stay informed are STEM School Highlands Ranch's State of the School meeting, quarterly coffees, lunch with student groups, student advisory meetings, and student government presentation to the board.

Strategic Partnerships and Workforce Alignment

The Leadership Team has cultivated partnerships with local tech, aerospace, and engineering companies, including Quantinuum, Lockheed Martin, Calibre, Panther and others. These partnerships inform the school's Problem Based Learning model, mentorship programs, and workforce readiness initiatives—ensuring alignment between student learning and the region's future employment landscape.
Together, the Board and Leadership Team's deep community ties, local expertise, and demonstrated success in school governance provide a strong foundation for launching a new, innovative charter school that reflects Douglas County's values and advances its educational landscape.

STEM School Castle Rock's replication team has actively cultivated partnerships and networking relationships with a range of local, regional, and industry-aligned organizations to ensure strong community integration, real-world learning opportunities, and support for school development and sustainability. These partnerships directly align with the school's vision of preparing students for future success through hands-on STEM learning, problem-solving, and community engagement.

Planned and Emerging Partnerships

The following organizations have expressed strong interest in supporting the school through mentorships, Problem Based Learning opportunities, guest instruction, professional development, and postsecondary alignment. Letters of Support or Intent from many of these partners will be submitted by June 1, 2025.

STEM and Industry Partnerships

- Quantinuum – A leading quantum computing company who has partnered with our STEM teacher to create Quantum Computing lesson plans for middle school students.
- Lockheed Martin – Discussions are underway regarding STEM mentorship, project co-design, and aerospace-themed learning experiences.
- Blue Origin – Early engagement regarding speaker events and Problem Based Learning partnerships focused on engineering and space science.
- United Launch Alliance (ULA) – Exploring pathways for capstone collaborations and hands-on engineering challenges tied to real-world aerospace projects.
- Calibre Engineering - Working with our students on a design project that will be incorporated into our school master plan.
- Ongoing Partnerships: Panther Electronics, Cablenet Aerospace, Atomos Space, BAE Systems, Blue Canyon Technologies, Bohannan Huston, CISCO, HDR, HighQ Aero, Horrocks, Mayo Aviation, Merrick & Company, Mikron Corporation, Sierra Space, Soundscape VR, and Western Union.

Higher Education Partnerships

- Arapahoe Community College (ACC) – Planning dual-enrollment pathways and exploration events for middle school students, with a focus on career and technical education.
- Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver) – Engaged in early planning for culturally responsive educator training and potential student pipeline alignment.
- Colorado School of Mines – Exploring increased STEM collaboration as a high percentage of our students attend Mines for college.

Civic and Community-Based Organizations

- Douglas County Commissioners – Preliminary conversations around facility access and advocacy support for new charter development.
- Charter League of Colorado – Providing policy support, technical assistance, and replication planning expertise.
- Bellwether Education Partners – Offering strategic advising for organizational design, accountability, and performance monitoring.

Business & Parent Networks

- STEM Business Alliance – A network of local entrepreneurs and professionals committed to supporting real-world learning, career exposure, and community outreach.
- Parent and educator ambassadors recruited during Phase 1 outreach will facilitate connections to local nonprofits and community centers to ensure inclusive engagement.
- South Metro Chamber of Commerce - As a long-time member we will increase our exposure within this community

These partnerships are at varying stages of development, with Letters of Support in progress. All letters and agreements will be submitted as part of the final charter application package and enrollment readiness materials by June 1, 2025.
By leveraging this robust and growing network of collaborators, the charter school replication team is ensuring a community-connected launch that provides students with access to industry-aligned, equity-driven, and experiential learning opportunities from the very first year of operation.

File Upload

Extended Timeline with Milestones and Plan_DCSD 2025 Replication - Google Docs.pdf
75.31 KB • Added 5 days ago

A. Demographics - Crystal Valley Castle Rock.pdf
209.02 KB • Added 5 days ago

	Number of students/classrooms in Year 1 of operation	LOIs Received to Date
Pre-K	0	0
K	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	0	0
4	0	0
5	0	0
6	0	0
Summary		0

E) Educational Program

Reviewer Instructions

THIS SECTION IS REQUIRED FOR THE PROPOSAL.
There is a strong research-based rationale for the selection of educational model, curriculum, and instruction that is evidence-based and effective with the target population. This includes Include a description of how the school developed a curriculum that is culturally responsive and free of bias.

Status: Completed

Form Result

Section 1

Educational Program Model and Philosophy

Provide a rationale for selecting the chosen educational program model, curriculum and instructional practices, including research-based evidence that supports the effectiveness of the selected model with the targeted student population.

Our educational model is rooted in Problem Based Learning, a student-centered, inquiry-driven instructional approach that equips learners with the skills, mindsets, and experiences necessary to thrive in an innovation-driven, complex world. This model was chosen to align with our mission of preparing students to redefine limits and lead through creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving—particularly within the context of a diverse, high-expectation PreK–8 STEM community.

Why Problem Based Learning?

At Koson Schools, we believe that Problem-Based Learning is not just a teaching method but a gateway to transforming how students think, learn, and interact. Problem Based Learning allows students to tackle real-world problems, immersing them in complex, open-ended challenges that demand critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. By addressing issues that mirror those faced in the workplace, students develop practical skills that are directly transferable to their future careers.

Problem Based Learning reflects a fundamental shift from passive content consumption to active knowledge construction, where students grapple with authentic, real-world problems. This model has been shown to foster critical thinking, deepen content mastery, and significantly improve student engagement and motivation—especially for populations historically underserved by traditional instructional methods.

One of the greatest strengths of Problem Based Learning is its ability to simultaneously grow cognitive and social skills. As students collaborate to solve problems, they build essential teamwork abilities—such as communication, active listening, and adaptability—while also developing a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Problem Based Learning encourages students to take ownership of their learning, fostering a culture where questioning, experimentation, and peer feedback are integral parts of the process.

The impact of Problem Based Learning goes beyond just academic achievement. It nurtures soft skills like empathy, leadership, and resilience. When students work in teams to address real-world problems, they experience the highs and lows of collaboration, learning how to navigate challenges together. This mirrors the professional environments they'll one day enter, where social dynamics are just as critical as technical expertise.

At STEM School Highlands Ranch, we've seen how Problem Based Learning empowers students to become active, engaged learners who not only retain knowledge but apply it in creative ways. Whether they're designing solutions to environmental challenges, exploring the latest in technology, or solving engineering problems, our students are being prepared to enter an interconnected world that values both innovation and collaboration.

For businesses and other schools, adopting Problem-Based Learning can revolutionize education and workforce readiness. By fostering independent, critical thinkers who excel in both technical and social skills, Problem Based Learning equips students with the mindset and abilities they need to thrive in an ever-evolving world. It's a model that builds not just smarter students, but well-rounded, innovative future leaders.

Research supports the decision to implement Problem Based Learning as the foundation of our program:

- Hmelo-Silver (2004) found that Problem Based Learning enhances students' problem-solving skills, conceptual understanding, and self-directed learning strategies.
- Strobel & van Barneveld (2009) demonstrated that students in Problem Based Learning environments outperform those in traditional classrooms in terms of long-term knowledge retention and application.
- Linda Darling-Hammond (2008) emphasized the effectiveness of student-centered models like Problem Based Learning in promoting equity for diverse learners by emphasizing relevance, inquiry, and cultural connection.
- Additional research from BioMed Central and MDPI confirms that Problem Based Learning is particularly impactful in STEM education, increasing motivation, identity development, and interest in STEM careers—especially among students of color and multilingual learners. (see attachment for additional research)

Why This Model for Our Targeted Population?

Our targeted student population includes:

- Gifted and high-achieving learners seeking challenge through real-world application;
- Twice-exceptional students who require differentiated, flexible instruction;
- Students with disabilities who thrive in hands-on, collaborative learning environments;
- Multilingual learners and students from underrepresented backgrounds who benefit from culturally responsive, asset-based pedagogy.

Problem Based Learning offers differentiated entry points, multiple pathways to mastery, and a structure that integrates students' lived experiences and cultural identities into the learning process. The model allows for scaffolding, inquiry, and student agency, all of which are essential for engaging and supporting diverse learners.

Curriculum and Instructional Practice Alignment

Our curriculum integrates Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) with real-world design challenges, interdisciplinary projects, and mentorship from industry professionals. Core materials (e.g., Benchmark Reading, Eureka Math/enVision) are supplemented by teacher-designed units that follow a consistent Problem Based Learning planning template (included in the appendix).
Instructional practices emphasize:

- Inquiry-based learning driven by structured, real-world problems;
- Formative assessment embedded in student collaboration and reflection;

- Flexible grouping, MTSS-aligned intervention, and personalized learning pathways;
- Ongoing professional development in Problem Based Learning design, differentiation, and culturally responsive teaching.

Describe how the school will ensure that educational practices are aligned to the school's educational philosophy and are demonstrated to be successful with the identified targeted student population.

Our school's educational philosophy—A STEM education rooted in Problem Based Learning, student agency, equity, and innovation—guides every aspect of instructional design, curriculum delivery, and school culture. To ensure that educational practices consistently reflect this philosophy and are effective for our diverse, targeted student population, we have built a comprehensive system of alignment, implementation, and continuous improvement.

1. Instructional Framework & Teacher Training

We use a school-wide Problem Based Learning instructional design template aligned with our backward planning model (Wiggins & McTighe), ensuring all units begin with real-world, structured problems that frame the learning experience. Teachers receive intensive onboarding and ongoing coaching in:

- Designing authentic, culturally responsive problems;
- Scaffolding inquiry and critical thinking across ability levels;
- Differentiating instruction for diverse learners, including GT, 2e, ML, and SPED students;
- Embedding social-emotional learning and collaborative structures into daily practice.

This shared framework guarantees consistency and high fidelity to our instructional philosophy across all classrooms and grade levels.

2. Data-Driven Personalization and MTSS

Our school uses a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) embedded in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to ensure educational practices are responsive to student needs. Educators analyze real-time data (i-Ready, formative assessments, project performance, behavioral trends) to:

- Identify students needing enrichment, acceleration, or intervention;
- Tailor small-group instruction and flexible learning pathways;
- Adjust pacing and scaffolds within Problem Based Learning units;
- Ensure instructional equity and growth across subgroups.

This system directly supports the academic and developmental needs of our target population, including twice-exceptional learners and those from historically underserved communities.

3. Ongoing Professional Development & Coaching

All teachers participate in weekly PLCs and receive job-embedded coaching from content leaders and instructional specialists. Topics include:

- Problem Based Learning implementation and revision;
- Differentiation and Universal Design for Learning;

- Anti-bias and culturally responsive pedagogy;
- Academic language supports for MLs;
- Co-teaching and inclusive practices for SPED students.

Professional Development is differentiated based on teacher goals, student data, and walkthrough trends, ensuring that instructional practices remain learner-centered, high-quality, and aligned to school-wide expectations.

4. Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Instructional fidelity is monitored through:

- Classroom walkthroughs and unit reviews by coaches and leadership;
- Problem Based Learning effectiveness is measured through rubric-aligned project assessments, student reflection artifacts, and performance tasks calibrated to Colorado State Standards.
- Student work artifacts, project presentations, and exhibitions;
- Formative and summative assessment data across subgroups;
- Student and family feedback loops.

Where practices fall short of expectations, we engage in collaborative reflection and coaching cycles to improve alignment and impact.

Section 2

Curriculum and Alignment

Describe how the proposed curriculum is aligned to state model content standards. Provide examples such as:

Scope and Sequence

Scope and Sequence Overview

All work follows a backwards design planning model. For each content area and grade level, a comprehensive scope and sequence document is included in the appendix. This document outlines:

- Unit Titles & Thematic Problems – Clearly defined units with overarching themes and essential problems.
- Standards Alignment – Explicit references to the Colorado Academic Standards (CAS), including standard codes.
- Essential Standards & Learning Targets – Identification of essential standards, framed by key questions, problems, and specific learning objectives.
- Assessment Methods & Deliverables – Defined assessment tools, including formative and summative assessments, along with required student work products and project outcomes.
- Interdisciplinary & Vertical Alignment – Connections across subjects and grade levels to ensure coherence and progression in student learning.

Curricular Framework, including subjects to be taught by grade

Our school's curriculum is fully aligned with the Colorado Academic Standards and integrates those standards into a dynamic, interdisciplinary, and Problem Based Learning instructional model. The curriculum is designed not only to ensure mastery of state content expectations but also to go beyond those standards by embedding real-world problem solving, critical thinking, and collaboration into every learning experience.

Curriculum Design Approach

A combination of state-approved curricular resources, teacher-created units, and industry-informed learning experiences are utilized to support a guaranteed and viable curriculum across all grade levels. Our instructional planning follows a backward design model (Wiggins & McTighe), ensuring that learning outcomes are anchored in Colorado Academic Standards and intentionally scaffolded through authentic learning tasks.

Examples of Curriculum Aligned to Standards

Elementary School (Grades K–5):

- Reading, Writing, and Communication: Benchmark Reading Workshop is aligned to the Colorado English Language Arts Standards. It emphasizes close reading, text-dependent questions, and evidence-based writing.
- Mathematics: Eureka Math (transitioning to enVision Math) is tightly aligned to the Colorado Math Standards and promotes conceptual understanding and mathematical discourse.
- Science & Social Studies: Teacher-designed Problem Based Learning units are mapped to grade-level CAS outcomes. For example, the 3rd-grade science unit on invasive species aligns with standards on ecosystems and adaptation.
- Specials (Art, Music, PE, Technology): Custom curriculum aligned to the Colorado Comprehensive Health and Physical Education, Music, and Visual Arts Standards.

Middle School (Grades 6–8):

1. Core Content Areas: Custom interdisciplinary curriculum is aligned to CAS in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies, supported by department-developed scope and sequence documents and vetted instructional materials.
2. STEM Electives: Courses such as Engineering, Computer Science, and Robotics are aligned to Colorado's STEM Education Framework and ISTE standards.
3. World Languages: Spanish, French, and American Sign Language courses are aligned to the Colorado World Languages Standards.
4. Access Class: A custom-designed advisory curriculum incorporates Colorado's Social and Emotional Learning competencies.

Sample lessons showing alignment to state standards	**Sample (Grade 3 Science Unit):** **Unit Title:** Invasive Species in Colorado **Standards Aligned:** • 3-LS4-4: Make a claim about the merit of a solution to a problem caused when the environment changes. • 3-LS4-3: Construct an argument with evidence about survival in particular habitats. Unit Overview: Students investigate Japanese beetles in Colorado gardens and design community-based solutions to their spread. Culminating Task: Collaborative design presentation to local garden club with solutions evaluated by industry mentors. (Full lesson plan attached in appendix.)

Research that led to the curricular choices

The design of our curriculum is grounded in evidence-based educational research that supports academic rigor, equity, and engagement—particularly for diverse learners in STEM-focused environments. Our curricular choices are informed by a synthesis of national research, best practices in instructional design, and local data on student achievement and engagement. See Attachments for an expanded research list.

1. Problem Based Learning as the Core Instructional Model

Problem Based Learning was selected as the foundation of our educational program based on decades of research demonstrating its effectiveness in promoting deep, transferable learning—especially among students who are gifted, twice-exceptional, multilingual learners, and students from historically underserved populations.

- Barrows (1986), the pioneer of Problem Based Learning, emphasized the power of structured, real-world problems to drive engagement, inquiry, and collaborative learning.
- Hmelo-Silver (2004) found that Problem Based Learning environments enhance critical thinking, conceptual understanding, and student motivation by engaging learners in meaningful problem-solving.
- Strobel & van Barneveld (2009) conducted a meta-analysis showing that Problem Based Learning is more effective than traditional instruction in long-term knowledge retention and application.
- Darling-Hammond (2008) highlighted that Problem Based Learning and other student-centered models are especially effective for culturally and linguistically diverse learners, helping to close opportunity gaps by connecting academic content to students' lived experiences.

These findings reinforce our decision to fully integrate Problem Based Learning across all grade levels and content areas, ensuring that our curriculum supports both academic achievement and the development of lifelong learning skills.

2. Backward Design and Standards Alignment

Our curriculum design follows the Backward Design framework developed by Wiggins & McTighe (2005), which emphasizes starting with clear learning goals aligned to standards, then designing assessments and learning experiences that lead students to mastery.

- This approach ensures that all units are grounded in Colorado Academic Standards and aligned with grade-level competencies.
- It also supports clarity, coherence, and intentional planning across all content areas and grade levels, supporting vertical and horizontal alignment.

3. Gradual Release of Responsibility for Scaffolding and Differentiation

To ensure all students have access to rigorous content, we apply the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (GRR) (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983), which moves instruction from teacher-led modeling ("I do") to guided practice ("We do") to student independence ("You do").

- This model is particularly effective for multilingual learners and students with learning differences, as it provides structured opportunities to build confidence and competence.
- GRR is embedded into our Problem Based Learning structure to scaffold students through increasingly complex tasks and allow for differentiation based on readiness and need.

4. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Curriculum

Our curriculum reflects the research of Geneva Gay (2010) and Zaretta Hammond (2015), who emphasize the need for instruction that is culturally relevant, affirming, and responsive to diverse student backgrounds.

- We embed student identity, community relevance, and real-world application into Problem Based Learning units.
- Teachers receive ongoing professional development in culturally responsive teaching and use curriculum vetting tools to review materials for bias, representation, and equity.
- By positioning students as problem-solvers and change agents in their own communities, we empower historically underserved populations to see themselves in the curriculum and in STEM fields.

5. Real-World, Career-Aligned Learning

Our curriculum incorporates mentorships, industry engagement, and career pathways based on research from David Conley (2010) on college and career readiness, and alignment to the Colorado STEM Education Roadmap. Our design ensures that students are not only mastering standards but also developing the habits of mind and applied skills needed for success in high-demand industries.The curriculum at our school is not a collection of disconnected programs, but a cohesive, research-driven system intentionally designed to support high expectations, equity, and deep learning. Each curricular choice—from Problem Based Learning integration to culturally responsive practices—has been selected based on proven effectiveness with our target population and a commitment to ensuring all students thrive in a rigorous, inclusive, and innovation-driven learning environment.

Detail how curriculum objectives, content, and skills will be aligned horizontally and vertically.

Ongoing Vertical and Horizontal Alignment

To ensure coherence, consistency, and academic rigor across all grade levels and subject areas, our school has established a comprehensive system for both horizontal and vertical alignment of curriculum objectives, content, and skills. This alignment ensures that students receive a seamless, scaffolded educational experience rooted in the Colorado Academic Standards, and that each year of learning builds intentionally on the last—culminating in well-prepared, confident learners who are future-ready.

Horizontal Alignment (Within a Grade Level)

Horizontal alignment ensures that all students within a given grade level receive access to the same essential learning outcomes, instructional strategies, and performance expectations across all classrooms.

Key practices include:

- Grade-level Scope and Sequence Documents: Each team develops and maintains a clear outline of units, standards, and learning targets for each subject area.
- Common Essential Learning Standards: Teachers identify power standards and design Problem Based Learning units and assessments aligned to those outcomes.
- Collaborative Planning via PLCs: Grade-level teams meet weekly in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to co-plan lessons, share instructional strategies, develop formative assessments, and analyze student work to ensure consistency.
- Shared Assessments: Teams create and use common rubrics and performance tasks for measuring student proficiency across classrooms.
- Cross-Disciplinary Projects: At each grade level, teams coordinate interdisciplinary units to reinforce content through multiple subjects, supporting deeper learning and transfer of knowledge.
- STEM Student Showcase Conference: This pulls together cross-disciplinary work as a culminating event to highlight and celebrate the innovative work the students have done throughout the year as they solve real world problems in fields connected to our industry partners.

Example: In 5th grade, a science unit on renewable energy sources aligns with ELA standards through informational reading and persuasive writing tasks, while also linking to math standards involving data interpretation and graphing.

Vertical Alignment (Across Grade Levels)

Vertical alignment ensures that instruction across grade levels is cohesive, standards build logically year-to-year, and students are prepared for increasing complexity.

Key practices include:

- Department-Led Vertical Teams: Content-area leads from elementary and middle grades meet regularly to review how standards progress and ensure learning builds on prior knowledge.
- Vertical Scope and Sequence Maps: Each content area maintains a living document outlining how skills and concepts develop over time, with embedded

links to lesson plans, anchor projects, and assessments.

- Problem Based Learning Skill Progression: Problem-solving, collaboration, critical thinking, and presentation skills are intentionally scaffolded from kindergarten through 8th grade. Younger students may choose from predefined problem statements, while older students research, define, and refine complex, real-world challenges.
- Exit Standards by Grade: Each grade level defines clear competencies for reading, writing, math, and problem-solving, aligned to Colorado Academic Standards and used to inform promotion, intervention, and enrichment.

Example: In mathematics, conceptual understanding of fractions in grade 3 progresses to operations with fractions in grade 4, and ultimately supports ratio and proportional reasoning in grade 6. The vertical alignment plan ensures teachers are aware of past instruction and expectations for future readiness.

Structures That Support Alignment

- Weekly PLC Meetings: Grade-level and department teams collaborate on horizontal and vertical alignment through shared planning time and structured agendas.
- Quarterly Curriculum Reviews: Instructional leaders and teacher teams review unit pacing, assessment data, and alignment fidelity, making real-time curriculum adjustments.
- Instructional Coaching: Coaches support teachers in aligning instructional materials, assessments, and differentiation strategies to school-wide objectives and developmental progressions.
- Curriculum Maps and Lesson Libraries: All teachers access a shared digital repository of lesson plans, project templates, and aligned instructional resources, reinforcing consistency and collaboration.

By prioritizing both horizontal and vertical alignment, our curriculum guarantees that all students—regardless of background or classroom—receive an equitable, rigorous, and connected learning experience. This structure ensures academic growth, skill development, and continuity of learning across the K–8 continuum.

Describe how the school will monitor implementation of curriculum with fidelity to include scope and sequence and exit standards.

To ensure our educational program is implemented with fidelity and consistency, our school has established a robust system for monitoring the curriculum's alignment to the Colorado Academic Standards, adherence to the school-wide Problem Based Learning model, and progression toward clearly defined exit standards. This monitoring system ensures that every student—regardless of classroom or background—has access to a guaranteed, viable, and rigorous curriculum that prepares them for success in future academic and real-world settings.

1. Scope and Sequence Monitoring

Each grade level and content area maintains a comprehensive scope and sequence document aligned to the Colorado State Standards. These documents:

- Outline units of instruction, priority standards, essential questions, and performance tasks;
- Define when and how standards will be introduced, reinforced, and mastered;
- Link to lesson plans, assessments, and Problem Based Learning design templates.

Monitoring Process:

- Quarterly curriculum audits are conducted by instructional coaches and leadership to review pacing and alignment.
- Weekly PLC meetings serve as checkpoints for teams to reflect on unit pacing, adjust based on student data, and share practices.
- A shared digital curriculum map repository ensures transparency and consistency across classrooms, and is reviewed regularly by department leads and administration.

2. Implementation of Problem Based Learning Framework

To ensure consistency and high-quality delivery of our signature instructional model, teachers are required to:

- Use a Problem Based Learning unit planning template that integrates real-world problems, inquiry-based learning, and backward design;
- Align their unit outcomes and performance tasks to Colorado standards and grade-level expectations;
- Document and submit units and project overviews for administrative review.

Fidelity Checkpoints:

- Instructional coaches conduct biweekly classroom walkthroughs with a Problem Based Learning-alignment rubric;

- Student artifacts (projects, reflections, presentations) are reviewed by teachers and leadership using common rubrics;
- Teachers receive formative feedback during post-observation coaching sessions focused on content rigor, inquiry, and cultural relevance.

3. Monitoring Exit Standards and Student Mastery

We define grade-level exit standards for literacy, math, and problem-solving that align to Colorado's academic expectations and are vertically articulated across grade bands.

Monitoring Process:

- Each grade level uses common assessments and rubrics to assess student proficiency against exit standards;
- Progress monitoring tools such as i-Ready (K–8), unit-based assessments, and Problem Based Learning product evaluations track growth and readiness;
- Teachers update student progress on standards-based report cards aligned to grade-level outcomes;
- Students reflect on and present their learning through annual showcases and capstone presentations, reinforcing mastery of skills in real-world contexts.

When students are not meeting exit standards:

- Multi-tiered System of Support teams review data and implement targeted supports;
- Individualized learning plans are developed in collaboration with teachers, specialists, and families;
- Instruction is adjusted using formative data to reteach, scaffold, or accelerate as needed.

4. Leadership Oversight and Continuous Improvement

School leaders play a key role in ensuring implementation fidelity through:

- Quarterly curriculum and data reviews with instructional staff;
- Use of a Curriculum Implementation Dashboard that tracks pacing, assessment completion, and subgroup data;
- Annual curriculum evaluation process where teachers and leadership analyze student outcomes, reflect on alignment, and revise units accordingly.

Additionally, our leadership team ensures that:

- All teachers have access to coaching and collaborative planning;
- Professional development is aligned to curriculum goals, instructional gaps, and emerging student needs;

- Families receive clear communication about learning goals, unit outcomes, and student progress.

Describe an organized, cohesive curricular design that aligns to the vision, mission and philosophy of the school, along with research to demonstrate that it will meet the needs of the target population.

Our curriculum is intentionally designed to reflect and advance the vision, mission, and educational philosophy of the school—empowering students to redefine limits, engage deeply with real-world challenges, and develop the problem-solving skills, resilience, and creativity needed to thrive in an innovation-driven world.

At its core, our school operates on the belief that learning should be meaningful, inclusive, inquiry-driven, and future-focused. To this end, our curriculum blends rigorous, standards-based academic instruction with real-world applications through a Problem Based Learning model, ensuring all students—particularly those in our diverse target population—are prepared for academic success, personal growth, and community impact.

Alignment to School Vision and Mission

- Vision: We cultivate future-ready leaders who leverage their talents to create meaningful change in their communities and beyond, empowering them to thrive, lead, and succeed in life.
- Mission: We deliver an engaging, hands-on, STEM-rich education that challenges students with real-world problems, fostering adaptability, curiosity, and emotional resilience. Our goal is to inspire them to “Never Stop Innovating” as they develop creative solutions that improve their lives and communities

Our curriculum fully supports these aspirations by:

- Embedding authentic, interdisciplinary problems that connect students to their communities and global challenges;
- Supporting student agency, identity development, and culturally responsive learning;
- Offering personalized learning pathways that meet diverse academic and social-emotional needs;
- Ensuring alignment with Colorado Academic Standards across content areas.

Curricular Structure and Design Features

Our curriculum is organized into a vertically aligned, standards-based framework that incorporates:

- Grade-level scope and sequence documents with unit overviews, priority standards, and interdisciplinary connections;
- Common Problem Based Learning design templates to ensure consistency in planning, problem framing, and real-world application;
- Backward design (Wiggins & McTighe) to link instruction directly to desired learning outcomes and exit standards;
- Shared rubrics and performance assessments to measure mastery and growth;
- Progressive skill development, including collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and reflection, intentionally scaffolded from Kindergarten through 8th grade.

Curriculum Anchored in Research and Best Practices

Our curricular choices are grounded in leading educational research:

- Problem Based Learning (Barrows, 1986; Hmelo-Silver, 2004): Promotes deep understanding, self-direction, and critical thinking. Research shows Problem Based Learning is especially effective in STEM education and for diverse learners.
- Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Gay, 2010; Hammond, 2015): Engaging students' cultural identities and lived experiences enhances motivation and access to rigorous content.
- Gradual Release of Responsibility (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983): Supports differentiation and independence across learning contexts.
- College and Career Readiness Frameworks (Conley, 2010): Our curriculum emphasizes not only academic content, but also 21st-century skills, digital fluency, and real-world problem solving that prepare students for future success.

The curriculum is designed to ensure access and success for all students through:

- Differentiated instruction, flexible grouping, and competency-based progression;
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for both academic and SEL needs;
- Embedded formative assessments and student-led reflections to guide personalized learning;
- Co-teaching, scaffolding, and universal design to ensure equity and inclusion across all classrooms.

Our cohesive, research-informed curriculum is not just aligned with our mission—it is an embodiment of it. By combining academic rigor with cultural responsiveness, innovation with inclusion, and theory with application, we ensure that all students experience an education that is both deeply human and future-ready.

Section 3

Instructional Strategies

Discuss the process and methods that will differentiate instruction based on identified student needs.

Our instructional approach is grounded in the belief that every learner deserves access to rigorous, relevant, and personalized learning experiences. Differentiation is a foundational component of our educational model and is implemented through a school-wide, data-driven system designed to meet the diverse academic, linguistic, and social-emotional needs of our students.
We serve a wide range of learners and to ensure each student reaches their full potential, we use a multi-layered strategy to differentiate instruction at the planning, instructional, and assessment levels.

1. Multi-Tiered System of Supports

We implement a robust Multi-Tiered System of Supports framework that ensures early identification and support for students requiring enrichment or intervention.

- Tier I: Core Instruction is differentiated to meet diverse needs through flexible grouping, choice in content or process, and scaffolding.
- Tier II: Targeted Interventions include small-group supports in reading, math, and executive functioning.
- Tier III: Intensive Interventions are individualized and designed collaboratively by interventionists, special education teachers, and classroom teachers.

Student progress is reviewed during biweekly data meetings and addressed in weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), allowing for timely adjustments to instruction and support plans.

2. Flexible Grouping and Personalized Learning Pathways

Teachers use formative assessment data to create flexible, skill-based groups that allow for reteaching, extension, and enrichment.

- Students may work in small groups, one-on-one, or independently depending on their needs and learning goals.
- Instructional materials are tiered to match students' readiness levels while maintaining high expectations.
- Personalized learning pathways allow students to progress through standards at their own pace, supported by targeted mini-lessons, learning menus, and goal-setting conferences.

3. Competency-Based and Problem Based Learning

Our Problem Based Learning model naturally differentiates instruction by:

- Providing multiple entry points and varied solution pathways;
- Allowing students to explore problems through their own interests and identities;
- Supporting personalized pacing through scaffolded inquiry, revision, and presentation phases.

Students demonstrate mastery through authentic assessments (e.g., prototypes, presentations, reflective writing), which offer flexibility in demonstrating learning and ensure equity in evaluation.

4. Gradual Release of Responsibility

We implement the Gradual Release of Responsibility model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) to ensure all students can move from teacher-led instruction to independent application.

- "I Do" – Direct instruction and modeling;
- "We Do" – Guided practice and scaffolding;
- "You Do Together" – Collaborative learning with peers;
- "You Do Alone" – Independent practice and application.

This approach supports students with varying readiness levels and encourages academic independence over time.

5. Supports for Specific Populations

- Gifted & Talented and Twice-Exceptional Students: Challenged through curriculum compacting, acceleration, independent inquiry, and mentorship.
- Students with Disabilities: Receive inclusive instruction with IEP-aligned supports, co-teaching models, and scaffolded resources.
- Multilingual Learners: Supported with sheltered instruction, language scaffolds, home-language integration, and vocabulary-rich instruction across all subjects.
- Social-Emotional Needs: Differentiated through trauma-informed practices, relationship-building, and access to advisory, counseling, and peer mentoring.

6. Instructional Coaching and Professional Development

Teachers receive weekly support from instructional coaches on differentiation strategies including:

- Use of Universal Design for Learning;
- Differentiating product, process, and content;
- Leveraging formative data for flexible instructional planning;
- Culturally responsive differentiation rooted in student identity and community relevance.

Professional learning is embedded in weekly PLCs and early-release professional development days and is targeted to real classroom needs based on walkthrough and student data.
Differentiation at our school is not an add-on—it is embedded into our instructional philosophy and daily practice. Through responsive structures, personalized learning, and inclusive pedagogy, we ensure that all students—regardless of background, ability,

or interest—receive the individualized instruction and support they need to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Describe school-wide instructional methods and strategies that will promote rigor and high expectations for all students.	Koson Schools is committed to fostering a culture of academic excellence where all students—regardless of background, ability, or identity—are held to high expectations and supported in achieving success. We believe that rigor is not merely about difficulty; it is about creating learning environments where students are consistently engaged in meaningful, challenging, and empowering work that requires deep thinking, collaboration, and persistence. To this end, we have adopted a cohesive set of instructional strategies that are implemented school-wide to promote rigor, equity, and student agency. At the heart of our instructional model is Problem Based Learning, a research-backed approach that centers instruction around complex, real-world challenges. Problem Based Learning promotes rigor by asking students to apply content knowledge in novel situations, evaluate multiple perspectives, and create innovative solutions to authentic problems. Projects are designed with clear, standards-aligned learning targets and require students to demonstrate mastery through interdisciplinary products, presentations, and reflective analysis. This ensures that academic expectations are not only high but also relevant, engaging, and intellectually demanding. To further promote rigor, we embed authentic, real-world problem solving across all subjects. Students are regularly challenged to think critically, synthesize information from multiple sources, and defend their ideas with evidence. Instruction emphasizes metacognition, perseverance, and productive struggle, preparing students to navigate ambiguity and approach challenges with confidence. These habits are reinforced through inquiry-based learning, Socratic discussions, peer critique, and student-led conferences, which deepen understanding and accountability. Our school also implements cross-disciplinary collaboration to connect concepts across subject areas. For example, a science project on water quality may involve mathematical data analysis, persuasive writing, and historical research—encouraging students to think holistically and apply their learning in interdisciplinary contexts. This model reflects the complexity of the real world and raises the cognitive demand of tasks across the curriculum. Instructional planning is informed by the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) framework, which moves students from guided learning to independent application. This model ensures that all students are scaffolded appropriately and ultimately empowered to own their learning. Teachers balance direct instruction with guided inquiry and student-led exploration, enabling learners to engage with complex texts, concepts, and tasks while building independence. To ensure consistency in promoting high expectations, all teachers participate in weekly Professional Learning Communities where they collaborate to analyze student work, calibrate rubrics, and refine instruction. Instructional leaders and coaches conduct regular classroom observations to monitor rigor and provide targeted feedback. Common rubrics are used to assess key skills such as communication, collaboration, and critical thinking, and student performance data is reviewed regularly to ensure all learners are being appropriately challenged. A key aspect of our approach is student voice and ownership. Students set learning goals, reflect on their progress, and present their work publicly during showcases and exhibitions. This process builds self-efficacy and reinforces the expectation that all

students are capable of producing high-quality work. Rubrics, exemplars, and revision protocols are used to guide students toward excellence, and feedback is provided frequently to support continuous improvement.

Ultimately, our school-wide instructional approach combines rigor, relevance, and responsiveness. By engaging students in meaningful work, holding them to high standards, and providing the support needed to succeed, we ensure that all learners rise to their full potential and are prepared to thrive in school, career, and life.

Describe culturally responsive, research-based instructional methods and strategies that will be employed to meet the needs of the targeted student population.	Our school is intentionally designed to serve a diverse and dynamic student population, including multilingual learners, twice-exceptional students, students with disabilities, gifted learners, and students from historically marginalized backgrounds. STEM School Highlands Ranch is the most diverse school in DCSD. People from all walks of life desire a problem based STEM education that produces results and, as such, all types of students drive from a wide radius to come to our school. To meet the needs of all learners and ensure that every student sees their identity, culture, and lived experience reflected in the curriculum and classroom, we employ culturally responsive, research-based instructional strategies as a core component of our educational model. We ground our approach in the research of scholars such as Geneva Gay (2010) and Zaretta Hammond (2015), whose work emphasizes the importance of culturally responsive teaching in fostering inclusion, motivation, and academic success. Hammond's concept of the "culturally responsive brain" reminds educators that learning is relational and that students thrive when they feel safe, valued, and connected. In alignment with this, our instructional strategies focus on building trust, affirming identity, and making learning personally and culturally meaningful. One of the most powerful levers for culturally responsive instruction in our school is our Problem Based Learning model. Because Problem Based Learning is rooted in real-world challenges, it creates a natural bridge between academic content and students' communities, cultures, and interests. Teachers are trained to design problems that are relevant, localized, and identity-affirming—for example, addressing environmental issues in students' neighborhoods or exploring innovations shaped by diverse inventors, scientists, and changemakers. This approach fosters engagement by connecting learning to students' lived realities and empowering them to be agents of change. Our school-wide instructional practices also reflect an asset-based approach to teaching. Rather than viewing differences as deficits, we recognize and celebrate the strengths that students bring to the classroom—including multilingualism, diverse cultural perspectives, and unique ways of thinking. Instructional methods include choice-based assignments, flexible grouping, and multiple means of demonstrating learning, which honor students' voices and provide inclusive pathways to mastery. Teachers use Universal Design for Learning principles to ensure that content, process, and product are accessible and differentiated to meet all learners' needs. For multilingual learners, we integrate language scaffolding strategies across content areas, including structured academic language routines, sentence frames, visual supports, and vocabulary instruction embedded in meaningful contexts. Our school uses a sheltered instruction model, such as SIOP - Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol, ensuring that content is comprehensible while also promoting language development. Teachers are trained in leveraging students' home languages and cultures as assets in the classroom. To ensure equity and inclusion for students with disabilities and 2e learners, we utilize co-teaching models, executive function supports, and individualized scaffolding that support access to rigorous Problem Based Learning tasks. Instructional strategies are intentionally varied to support multiple modalities of learning (e.g., visual, kinesthetic,

auditory), and accommodations are seamlessly embedded into classroom routines to normalize support and reduce stigma.

Classroom culture is a cornerstone of culturally responsive teaching. Our educators are trained to establish environments grounded in relationship-building, empathy, and restorative practices. Teachers foster classroom communities where students feel a sense of belonging and psychological safety, essential for risk-taking and deeper learning. Culturally responsive classroom management strategies are used to prevent exclusionary discipline practices and instead promote reflection, repair, and re-engagement.

Finally, we actively partner with families and communities to inform our curriculum and practices. Through family advisory councils, student-led conferences, and culturally inclusive events, we ensure that instruction is not only academically rigorous but also community-anchored and identity-affirming.

In sum, our culturally responsive instructional strategies are not supplemental—they are central to our mission of equity, inclusion, and excellence. By designing instruction that is rooted in relationships, relevance, and high expectations, we empower every student to thrive academically while developing a strong sense of self, purpose, and agency in the world.

Section 4

Structures and Supplemental Programming

Describe the supplemental programming will be offered (i.e., electives, special courses, summer school, extra-curricular activities, social/emotional programming, remediation and intervention and staffing and funding needs).

Our school's supplemental programming is strategically designed to support the whole child and extend learning beyond the core academic program. Grounded in our mission to foster curiosity, resilience, and real-world readiness, these structures ensure that students have access to a rich, well-rounded educational experience that includes academic acceleration and intervention, social-emotional learning, creative exploration, and opportunities for leadership and enrichment. Programming is aligned to both Colorado Academic Standards and our school's Problem Based Learning and STEM-focused philosophy.

Electives and Special Courses

Students across grade levels will have access to a diverse array of electives designed to support creativity, innovation, and personal interests.

- Elementary (K–5): All students will participate in Art, Music, Physical Education, and Technology courses. Each special is aligned to Colorado standards and includes opportunities for problem based learning. For example, in art class, students may design public awareness posters for environmental projects they're exploring in science.
- Middle School (6–8): All students will participate in an Engineering and a Computer Science elective course each year. Students will select from a range of electives, including:
    - Engineering and Robotics
    - Computer Science and Cybersecurity
    - Quantum Computing
    - Digital Design and Media Arts
    - World Languages (Spanish, French, ASL)
    - Health and Wellness
    - Performing and Fine Arts (Drama, Music, Visual Arts)

These courses are built into the school day and integrate Problem Based Learning principles, allowing students to apply their learning in interdisciplinary ways.

Social-Emotional Learning Programming

We prioritize student well-being through a comprehensive school-wide Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) program that includes:

- Advisory Classes (Access): Weekly sessions focused on self-awareness, relationship-building, goal-setting, and restorative community practices.
- Embedded SEL in Problem Based Learning: Students reflect on personal growth, group collaboration, and communication during projects.
- Counseling Services: Licensed school counselors support students through one-on-one check-ins, group support, crisis response, and preventative wellness education.

- Trauma-Informed Practices: All staff receive training to recognize and respond to student needs with empathy and cultural sensitivity.
- Mental Health Partnerships: We collaborate with community agencies to provide expanded services, including school-based therapists and parent workshops.

Remediation and Intervention

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports is in place to address academic gaps and support acceleration:

- Tiered Academic Supports: Students receive small-group instruction or individualized support in literacy, math, and executive functioning during dedicated intervention blocks.
- Data Cycles: Progress is monitored through i-Ready, teacher-created assessments, and formative classroom data to adjust support as needed.
- Special Education Services: Inclusive co-teaching, pull-out support, and IEP-aligned instruction ensure students with disabilities receive appropriate services.
- Multilingual Learner (ML) Support: Sheltered instruction, vocabulary scaffolding, and bilingual resources help MLs access core content and grow language proficiency.
- Targeted Staff Roles: Interventionists, SPED staff, and ML specialists collaborate with classroom teachers to co-plan and deliver services.

Extracurricular Activities and Enrichment Opportunities

We offer a robust portfolio of extracurricular options that allow students to pursue interests, build leadership skills, and engage with STEM fields in hands-on ways:

- STEM Competitions & Clubs: FIRST LEGO League, Science Olympiad, Cyber Patriot, Girls Who Code, Rocketry Club, Drone Lab, Technology Student Association.
- Academic Enrichment: Junior Business Club, DECA, Battle of the Books, Mathletes.
- Leadership & Service: Student Council, Peer Mentors, Green Team, UNICEF Club.
- Creative Arts: Drama Club, Music Ensembles, Art Club, Digital Filmmaking.
- Athletics (Middle School): Soccer, Volleyball, Cross Country, Basketball, and E-sports.

Clubs are led by faculty, community mentors, and external experts, and operate during lunch, after school, and on weekends depending on interest and schedule.

Summer Programming and After-School Support

- STEM Summer Camps: Problem-based week-long sessions focused on engineering, coding, robotics, and entrepreneurship.

- Academic Readiness Camps: Designed for rising students who need support in reading, math, or executive functioning.
- After-School Enrichment (6-8): A structured after-school program (3:00–6:00 PM) includes academic support, enrichment labs, and supervised free time.
- BASE Program (K–5): In partnership with the district, we will offer before- and after-care for working families.

Staffing and Funding Needs

To support the supplemental programming described above, the school will hire or contract:

- Elective teachers (STEM, arts, world language);
- Interventionists and SPED support staff;
- Licensed school counselors and SEL specialists;
- Club and athletics coordinators;
- Community partners for enrichment and mentorships (volunteer).

Funding sources will include the general operating budget, Title I/III/IV grants (as applicable), competitive STEM and wellness grants, and community fundraising and industry partnerships. In-kind support from local tech, engineering and aerospace companies will also help sustain STEM-focused programming and mentorships.
By offering a comprehensive range of supplemental programs, we support the full spectrum of student needs and interests—academic, emotional, social, and creative—ensuring that every learner has the opportunity to thrive, lead, and succeed.

Describe how technology will be implemented into the overall educational program. Describe a technology plan that clearly meets the vision and mission of the school.

Technology is an essential pillar of our educational program, not only as a tool for instruction but as a vehicle for innovation, equity, and future-readiness. Our approach to technology integration directly supports the school's mission to empower students through real-world, Problem Based Learning, and our vision to cultivate future-ready leaders equipped to thrive in a rapidly evolving digital world.

Our technology plan is designed to meet students at every stage of development—from foundational digital literacy in early grades to advanced applications in middle school—and is built around three core commitments: equitable access, purposeful integration, and digital fluency.

1. Equitable Access Through 1:1 Device Model

To ensure every student has access to digital learning tools, we will operate a 1:1 device model beginning in kindergarten. All students will be assigned a school-owned tablet (K), Chromebook (1-5) or laptop (6-8), with support for home internet access provided to families in need.

- Classrooms will be equipped with interactive flat panels, high-speed wireless access, and educational software aligned to grade-level expectations.
- Devices will be preloaded with tools for research, creation, accessibility, and assessment—including Google Workspace for Education, Canvas LMS, and STEM-focused apps such as Scratch, Tinkercad, Desmos, and Python environments.

This approach ensures all students—regardless of background—can fully participate in digital learning experiences at school and at home.

2. Purposeful Integration Into Curriculum and Instruction

Technology is integrated into instruction in developmentally appropriate and instructionally purposeful ways across all grade levels:

- Elementary Grades (K–5): Students are introduced to digital citizenship, basic programming, multimedia creation, and keyboarding. Hands-on tools like Dash & Dot, Kodable, and Scratch Jr. support early exploration of coding and robotics. Students use digital platforms to collaborate, research, and present ideas in problem based learning contexts.
- Middle School (6–8): Students engage in advanced tech electives, including robotics, coding (Python, Java), digital media design, game development, and cybersecurity. Technology is also embedded in core classes through simulations, virtual labs, collaborative writing tools, and multimedia storytelling.

Technology supports both content mastery and Problem Based Learning implementation by:

- Enabling students to research and analyze real-world problems;
- Designing digital prototypes and simulations;

- Creating and delivering multimedia presentations to authentic audiences;
- Collaborating across teams using shared documents and platforms.

3. Building Digital Fluency and Future-Ready Skills

Aligned with our mission to prepare students for the future, we intentionally build students' digital fluency, computational thinking, and responsible technology use:

- All students receive explicit instruction in digital citizenship, aligned with Common Sense Media standards, including online safety, media literacy, ethical use, and managing digital identity.
- Students participate in tech-based design challenges and career exploration activities that mirror real-world industry applications, such as building apps, conducting scientific data analysis, and designing for accessibility.
- Our curriculum aligns with ISTE Standards for Students and Colorado's Computer Science Standards, ensuring students graduate with essential 21st-century skills.

4. Technology-Enhanced Differentiation and Assessment

Technology is used to differentiate instruction and personalize learning through:

- Adaptive software platforms like i-Ready and Newsela;
- Learning management systems (Canvas) that support varied pacing and multiple ways to demonstrate understanding;
- Digital portfolios and rubrics that allow for multimedia products and reflection;
- Real-time formative assessment tools like Pear Deck, EdPuzzle, and Kahoot to adjust instruction responsively.

Students with IEPs and multilingual learners benefit from built-in accessibility tools, including screen readers, text-to-speech, voice typing, visual dictionaries, and translation features—ensuring equity and inclusion across digital tasks.

5. Professional Development and Tech Support

To ensure technology is used effectively, all teachers receive ongoing professional development on:

- Instructional technology integration;
- Digital tools that support Problem Based Learning, differentiation, and student agency;
- Cybersecurity and data privacy;
- Coaching on tech-rich lesson design and platform usage.

Our Instructional Technology Coach and IT support staff provide regular training, co-planning, and troubleshooting to build educator confidence and ensure seamless classroom implementation.

6. Future Planning and Sustainability

Our technology plan includes:

- A device refresh cycle every 3–4 years to maintain functionality and security;
- Integration of new tools based on student needs and instructional goals;
- Data privacy policies and digital use agreements for students and staff;
- Evaluation of technology's impact on learning through usage analytics, classroom observations, and student/teacher feedback.

By embedding technology meaningfully into curriculum, instruction, and assessment, we prepare students to think critically, collaborate globally, and lead with creativity and confidence. Our technology plan is not an add-on—it is a strategic tool for delivering on our mission of real-world, innovative, and inclusive learning for all.

Submit a proposed annual calendar, bell schedule, and student-teacher contact time as an attachment to the application.

SAMPLE_2025-2026 STEM Teacher Contact Times.pdf
270.77 KB • Added 5 days ago

Gradual Release of Responsibility Lesson Breakdown Template.pdf
70.13 KB • Added 5 days ago

SAMPLE_2025-26 STEM BELL SCHEDULE.pdf
168.43 KB • Added 5 days ago

Invasive Species PBL Lesson Plan (3rd Grade).pdf
151.33 KB • Added 5 days ago

SAMPLE_2025-2026 STEM Academic Calendar.pdf
268.44 KB • Added 5 days ago

PBL Instructional Design Template.pdf
95.91 KB • Added 5 days ago

Research for Problem Based STEM Education.pdf
133.03 KB • Added 5 days ago

Sample Kindergarten Scope and Sequence.pdf
32.24 KB • Added 5 days ago

Sample ELA Scope and Sequence.pdf
28.92 KB • Added 5 days ago

Provide a description of the ongoing professional development for faculty and staff, such as individual professional development plans, staff-wide trainings, and the assessment of progress made toward professional performance goals.	At our school, professional development is foundational to instructional excellence and is intentionally designed to be ongoing, personalized, data-driven, and aligned with our mission of innovation, equity, and real-world learning. We view great teaching as the most powerful driver of student success, and as such, we invest deeply in supporting educators as continuous learners and reflective practitioners. Each teacher develops an Individual Professional Development Plan at the start of the school year. These plans are created during one-on-one goal-setting meetings with an instructional coach or director and are rooted in student data, school-wide goals outlined in the Unified Improvement Plan, and teacher self-reflection. Teachers identify areas of focus, such as differentiation, culturally responsive teaching, or Problem Based Learning implementation. Progress on these goals is monitored throughout the year via coaching cycles, peer collaboration, and formal check-ins during mid-year and end-of-year reviews. All staff also participate in structured, staff-wide professional development. Before the school year begins, new and returning educators engage in two weeks of onboarding, which includes sessions on Problem Based Learning, culturally responsive teaching, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, instructional technology, social-emotional learning , and compliance topics such as SPED and ML requirements. Throughout the year, monthly early-release days are dedicated to professional learning that addresses key instructional priorities, such as inquiry-based lesson design, formative assessment, co-teaching strategies, and fostering equity and belonging in the classroom. These sessions are data-informed and adapted to current school needs, often led by instructional coaches, school leaders, and guest facilitators. To support collaboration and consistency across grade levels and subject areas, educators participate in weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). These teams analyze student work, plan interdisciplinary units, reflect on student engagement, and co-develop instructional strategies. PLCs follow a structured inquiry cycle and are supported by instructional coaches who help align planning to standards and student performance trends. Instructional coaching is a cornerstone of our development model. Every teacher has access to a coach who provides ongoing, non-evaluative support through classroom observations, co-planning sessions, modeling, and individualized feedback. New teachers also receive mentorship through weekly check-ins focused on onboarding, instructional planning, and classroom management. Coaching cycles are personalized to teacher goals and help translate professional learning into classroom practice. Progress toward professional goals is assessed through a comprehensive performance evaluation system that includes formal and informal observations, student achievement data, self-reflection, and evidence of instructional growth. Teachers meet with administrators mid-year and at the end of the year to review progress, using a growth-oriented rubric aligned with state educator effectiveness standards. Feedback is formative and strengths-based, promoting a culture of continuous improvement. Teachers demonstrating strong instructional practice may take on leadership roles such as PLC lead, model classroom host, or professional development facilitator. Our approach to professional learning reflects the same core values we uphold for students: personalized growth, reflective practice, and relevance. Through

differentiated learning opportunities, collaborative structures, and meaningful coaching, we ensure every educator is supported in creating inclusive, rigorous, and engaging learning environments where all students can thrive.

F) Plan for Evaluating Pupil Performance

Reviewer Instructions

THIS SECTION IS REQUIRED FOR REPLICATION APPPLICATION. IF THERE IS NO CHANGE IN THE PLAN FOR EVALUATING PUPIL PERFORMANCE FROM THE ORIGINAL CHARTER, PLEASE INDICATE IN YOUR RESPONSE SECTION THAT THERE IS NO CHANGE.
The applicant proposes a thorough plan for evaluating student performance across the curriculum, that considers both student needs and the effectiveness of the educational program, has appropriate systems for maintaining and monitoring student information and using information to make changes to the educational program as appropriate, and includes procedures for taking corrective action in the event that performance falls below goals and standards.

Status: Completed

Form Result

Section 1

Describe how the school will use assessment data (baseline, formative, summative, yearly and state and federally required testing) to monitor the progress of all students. Describe how various forms of data will be managed and the systems that will be used. Describe how student progress will be shared with the school community.

STEM School Castle Rock will use a comprehensive and strategic approach to assessment that includes multiple data sources—baseline, formative, summative, and state-mandated—to monitor the academic progress of all students and ensure timely, targeted support. Our approach is built around continuous improvement cycles that inform instruction, support student growth, and maintain alignment with Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) and the Colorado READ Act.

Baseline and Benchmark Assessments

At the beginning of each school year, students in grades K–8 take the i-Ready diagnostic assessment in both reading and math. This baseline data provides a clear picture of each student's current performance and learning needs. Additional beginning-of-year assessments include the Benchmark Reading Inventory and unit-based math diagnostics. These tools are administered again in winter and spring to track growth over time and inform instructional adjustments.

Formative and Interim Assessments

Throughout each unit, teachers use formative assessments such as exit tickets, observation rubrics, writing samples, and problem-solving tasks to monitor progress toward specific learning objectives. In addition, each department and grade level develops and administers common interim assessments aligned to state standards and school-wide proficiency scales. These are scheduled on a quarterly basis and reviewed during weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to inform reteaching, grouping, and enrichment plans.

Summative and State Assessments

Students participate in all state and federally mandated assessments, including:

- CMAS (Grades 3–8, ELA, Math, and Science);
- PSAT (Grade 8);
- READ Act assessments for K–3 students as required;
- ACCESS for ELLs for multilingual learners;
- NAEP participation, if selected.

All state testing is scheduled according to the Colorado Department of Education assessment calendar, and internal calendars will be aligned to ensure instructional pacing supports readiness for these benchmarks.

Data Management Systems

Assessment data will be managed through a combination of platforms, including Infinite Campus (for official student records and grades), i-Ready's online portal (for diagnostic and growth tracking), and Canvas LMS (for classroom assessments and student work portfolios). Additionally, the school will maintain internal data dashboards that aggregate performance data from formative, interim, and summative sources. Instructional leaders and coaches will use these dashboards during regular data meetings to analyze trends, identify at-risk students, and determine action steps.

Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

PLC teams meet weekly to review student performance data and use a structured inquiry cycle to adjust instruction. These teams analyze common assessment data using agreed-upon proficiency scales that define mastery at levels 2.0 (approaching), 3.0 (meeting), and 4.0 (exceeding). Intervention plans are developed when students do

not meet priority standards, including small group support, tutoring, and targeted reteaching.

Communication with Stakeholders

Student progress will be communicated regularly and transparently to families and the community. This includes:

- Bi-Annual progress reports and standards-based report cards;
- Student-led conferences where learners present evidence of growth and set goals;
- Parent access to real-time data via Infinite Campus and Canvas;
- Annual state assessment results shared via formal mailings and community meetings;
- School-wide performance summaries (SPF ratings, CMAS results) shared with the STEM Board, Accountability Committees, and public stakeholders.

Through this multi-tiered assessment and data management system, STEM School Castle Rock will ensure that all students are progressing toward academic mastery, that instruction is responsive and equitable, and that families and stakeholders remain informed and engaged in the learning process.

Section 2

Describe the corrective actions the school will take if it falls short of student academic achievement or growth goals.

Enter content here

STEM School Castle Rock is committed to maintaining a high-performing, student-centered academic program. When data indicate that student achievement or growth is falling below established goals—whether across the whole school, within specific subgroups, or by content area—the school will initiate a structured, multi-tiered corrective action plan designed to address root causes and accelerate improvement.

Data-Driven Root Cause Analysis

The first step involves a comprehensive review of assessment data (i-Ready, CMAS, PSAT, internal benchmark assessments), student work samples, and instructional artifacts. This review is led by the Director of Curriculum and Instruction, instructional coaches, and grade-level PLCs. Data is disaggregated by subgroup to identify equity gaps among historically underserved populations, such as multilingual learners (MLs), students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and students of color. If a performance gap is identified—e.g., fewer than 60% of students meeting growth targets on i-Ready or subgroup proficiency falling below state averages on CMAS—the school leadership team will convene a targeted Data and Instructional Review Team. This group analyzes instructional pacing, curriculum alignment, professional development gaps, and fidelity of intervention implementation to determine actionable next steps.

Corrective Action Planning

Once root causes are identified, the school develops an Corrective Action Plan with defined timelines, staff responsibilities, and progress monitoring indicators. Corrective actions may include:

- Instructional coaching for targeted teachers, focused on specific strategies such as differentiated instruction, small-group work, or data-informed reteaching;
- Targeted professional development sessions tied to the identified gaps, such as deepening understanding of state standards, increasing rigor, or integrating culturally responsive pedagogy;
- Curriculum refinement, including replacing or revising underperforming instructional materials with standards-aligned, evidence-based resources;
- Intensified student interventions, such as extending intervention block time, adding tutoring supports, or restructuring groupings based on updated data;
- Peer classroom visits and model lessons to build shared capacity and consistency across instructional teams.

Progress Monitoring and Reassessment

Each Corrective Action Plan includes progress benchmarks to be reviewed every 6–9 weeks. Instructional leaders conduct classroom walkthroughs, review interim assessment data, and meet with PLCs to assess implementation fidelity and early indicators of impact. If growth remains flat or below target after one semester, the school will escalate supports, which may include restructuring teaching assignments, adopting a new curriculum, or seeking external coaching or consulting support.

Engagement with Students, Families, and Stakeholders

Throughout the corrective process, STEM School Castle Rock will maintain transparency and collaboration with the school community. Parents will be informed

when students are not meeting grade-level expectations and will be invited to participate in intervention planning. The School Accountability Committee and Board of Directors will receive regular updates and be involved in monitoring the implementation of school-wide improvement efforts.

Alignment with State and District Accountability

All corrective action plans will align with the school's Unified Improvement Plan, the Colorado School Performance Framework, and Douglas County School District's performance expectations. Where needed, the school will partner with the district or CDE for additional support or compliance monitoring.

By using a responsive, data-informed process grounded in collaboration and continuous improvement, STEM School Castle Rock will ensure that underperformance is addressed quickly and strategically, keeping all students on track for academic excellence and long-term success.

Section 3

Provide the school's proposed Assessment Plan. Be sure to address the following:

Describe the types of assessments that will be given and their frequency.

STEM School Castle Rock is committed to developing students who are curious, empowered, and prepared to thrive in a dynamic, innovation-driven world. Our assessment plan is a critical mechanism to ensure that students are not only mastering academic content but also building the habits of mind, collaborative skills, and problem-solving abilities that align with our mission. Grounded in equity, continuous improvement, and real-world relevance, our multi-tiered system of assessment allows us to personalize instruction, accelerate learning, and cultivate student ownership. Our assessment model includes a balance of diagnostic, formative, interim, and summative assessments—each serving a clear purpose in monitoring progress, informing instruction, and advancing student learning:

- Diagnostic Assessments: All students take i-Ready Reading and Math diagnostics three times annually (fall, winter, spring). These nationally normed, adaptive assessments provide a baseline for growth and help educators identify student strengths and skill gaps early in the school year.
- Formative Assessments: Embedded in daily instruction, these include teacher-developed exit tickets, quick writes, performance rubrics, peer reviews, observation logs, and student self-assessments. In our Problem Based Learning model, formative checks are integral to understanding student reasoning, collaboration, and iteration within real-world projects.
- Interim/Benchmark Assessments: Administered quarterly, these include unit-based Benchmark Reading and Math assessments, as well as common grade-level assessments developed and refined in PLCs. These provide frequent, actionable insights into student progress toward grade-level standards.
- Summative Assessments: All required state and federal assessments are administered according to the Colorado Department of Education calendar. These include:
    - CMAS (grades 3–8 in Math, ELA, and Science)
    - PSAT (grade 8)
    - ACCESS for MLs (for multilingual learners)
    - READ Act Assessments (grades K–3)

Additionally, Problem Based Learning capstone presentations and exhibitions serve as authentic summative assessments of applied knowledge, aligning to our mission of cultivating student voice, critical thinking, and innovation.

Describe how assessments will measure what the students are intended to learn.

Our instructional model is anchored in backward design and aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards (CAS). Teachers use proficiency scales for every priority standard, clearly describing what it looks like to “approach,” “meet,” or “exceed” expectations (levels 2.0–4.0). These scales define learning goals and performance criteria, which guide assessment design and ensure alignment between what is taught and what is measured. Assessment items and tasks are mapped to specific learning targets, and in Problem Based Learning units, rubrics are co-developed with students to reflect both content mastery and essential competencies such as collaboration, problem-solving, and communication.

Describe how the school will assure that the assessment measures are relevant, reliable and valid.	To ensure the relevance, reliability, and validity of assessments: • PLCs co-develop and vet assessments using a shared rubric review process. • Assessment items are aligned to standards, vetted for bias, and reviewed for cultural relevance. • Rubrics are calibrated across teachers to ensure consistent scoring. • Teachers analyze item-level performance to improve assessment design. • Standardized tools like i-Ready and CMAS offer external validity and allow norm-referenced comparison. All assessments reflect our commitment to culturally responsive and inclusive education by offering multiple ways for students to demonstrate learning, including project presentations, writing, oral reflections, and digital portfolios.
Describe the plan to identify people with assessment expertise who are involved in the school's assessment planning and development.	The Teacher Support Team—composed of experienced instructional coaches—oversees assessment planning and implementation. Team members are trained in assessment literacy, universal design for learning, Problem Based Learning assessment, and data analysis. They collaborate with teachers to design standards-aligned assessments, facilitate calibration sessions, and lead regular data review meetings. These coaches also ensure that assessments reflect diverse learner needs and are accessible for multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and twice-exceptional students.
Describe the professional development that will be provided to faculty to implement the assessment plan and identify alternative assessments.	All staff receive comprehensive training on the assessment system. New teachers participate in onboarding that includes: • Standards-Based Learning (SBL) and backward design; • Designing and using proficiency scales; • Administering and interpreting i-Ready, CMAS, and internal benchmark data; • Using Canvas and Infinite Campus for data management and student progress monitoring. Ongoing professional development occurs through: • Monthly early release sessions focused on assessment literacy, Problem Based Learning rubric development, and data-driven decision making; • Weekly PLCs that include assessment review and instructional alignment; • Coaching cycles targeting assessment planning and differentiation. Teachers also explore alternative assessments to meet the needs of diverse learners, including oral presentations, multimodal projects, and scaffolded performance tasks.

Describe how the assessment plan will inform and guide professional development.	Assessment results are a cornerstone of professional learning planning. Teachers set professional development goals informed by trends in i-Ready growth, CMAS proficiency levels, subgroup data, and classroom assessments. Instructional coaches guide teams to identify gaps (e.g., reading comprehension, math fluency) and facilitate targeted PD sessions or individual learning pathways that align with school-wide and departmental goals.
Describe how the assessment results will inform and foster refinement of curriculum and instruction.	Assessment results directly inform curriculum development and refinement. In PLCs, teachers review interim data to determine which standards require reteaching or extension. Common assessments highlight content pacing issues, and i-Ready domain analysis identifies priority areas for spiral review or intervention. When data reveal consistent underperformance, instructional leaders conduct root cause analyses to refine unit design, instructional strategies, and scaffolding supports. This continuous improvement cycle ensures that instruction remains rigorous, equitable, and aligned to the school's vision of meaningful, personalized learning.
Identify how assessments will be used to allow early detection of students who are struggling.	Assessment results directly inform curriculum development and refinement. In PLCs, teachers review interim data to determine which standards require reteaching or extension. Common assessments highlight content pacing issues, and i-Ready domain analysis identifies priority areas for spiral review or intervention. When data reveal consistent underperformance, instructional leaders conduct root cause analyses to refine unit design, instructional strategies, and scaffolding supports. This continuous improvement cycle ensures that instruction remains rigorous, equitable, and aligned to the school's vision of meaningful, personalized learning.
Describe how assessments will inform daily instructional practice.	Assessment is embedded in daily practice. Teachers use real-time data from exit tickets, student journals, and informal conferences to adjust pacing, groupings, and lesson delivery. Within Problem Based Learning units, formative feedback cycles—such as peer reviews, critique protocols, and teacher conferencing—allow for ongoing adjustment to instruction and deeper engagement with the content.
Describe how student assessment data will inform course completion and grade-level advancement.	Grade-level advancement and course completion are determined by demonstrated mastery of priority standards. Students must achieve a score of 3.0 or higher on at least 80% of identified priority standards in core subjects to be promoted. Teachers use vertical alignment documents and end-of-year assessments to evaluate student readiness for the next grade level. Students not meeting these criteria receive targeted summer or extended-year learning opportunities and are supported by customized learning plans to ensure successful progression. The assessment system at STEM School Castle Rock is built to be rigorous, equitable, and aligned to the school's mission to "Never Stop Innovating." It empowers students, equips teachers, and ensures accountability to high standards. By integrating real-time feedback, culturally responsive assessment practices, and a growth-oriented culture, our assessment plan ensures that all students are on a path toward deep learning, future readiness, and lifelong success.

Upload any documents that support the content of this application element (optional)

STEM School Academic Outcomes.pdf
292.08 KB • Added 5 days ago

G) Budget and Financial Plan

Reviewer Instructions

THIS IS A REQUIRED RESPONSE SECTION FOR THE REPLICATION APPLICATION.
The charter school should describe reasonable, functional and accountable business operations.

Status: Completed

Form Result

Section 1

Establishing Business Operations

(1) Provide the school's draft financial policies and procedures as attachments.

G6. Internal Audit Policy.pdf
764.2 KB • Added 6 days ago

G4. Financial Planning & Budgeting Policy.pdf
751.95 KB • Added 6 days ago

G1. Authorized Signatures & Purchasing Policy.pdf
768.56 KB • Added 6 days ago

G2. Comprehensive Fee Policy.pdf
885.33 KB • Added 6 days ago

G3. Credit Card Policy.pdf
753.53 KB • Added 6 days ago

G5. Fiscal Accounting & Reporting Policy.pdf
750.29 KB • Added 6 days ago

G7. Investment Policy.pdf
807.21 KB • Added 6 days ago

(2) Describe how the school will establish functional and accountable business operations. Include the following:

The structure of the proposed business office, including identifying critical positions and roles.

Business Office Structure

The proposed charter school will leverage the deep expertise of our current in-house business operations team, which has a proven track record of managing a high-performing charter school's fiscal and operational responsibilities. The business office is composed of:

- **Chief Financial Officer (CFO)** – 18 years of experience in charter school finance and budget planning. Oversees all fiscal strategy, reporting, and compliance.
- **Human Resources Director** – 30 years of HR and operations experience. Manages benefits, compliance, onboarding, and personnel policies.
- **Bookkeeper/Payroll Lead** – 35 years of experience, responsible for payroll accuracy, recordkeeping, and audit preparation.
- **Business Office Assistant** – 9 years of experience supporting procurement, vendor relations, and documentation.
- **Purchasing Assistant (BOA)** – 22 years of experience in inventory control, purchasing systems, and internal controls.

With the launch of the new school, we will expand by hiring:

- **HR Assistant (1.0 FTE)** – To assist with onboarding and personnel record management across both campuses.
- **Business Office Assistant (1.0 FTE)** – To manage school-based procurement, receivables, and office-level financial documentation.

This experienced team ensures that the school has the capacity, systems, and expertise to manage all aspects of business operations responsibly and efficiently from day one.

Describe how the school will establish an accounting system (cash management, purchasing, accounts payable/receivable, payroll, tracking of fixed assets).	The school will utilize Skyward as our integrated Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. This system supports all accounting and financial functions, including: • Cash Management: Real-time tracking of cash flow, deposits, and reconciliation. Monthly bank reconciliations are completed and reviewed by multiple staff members to ensure integrity. • Purchasing: Purchase requests flow through Skyward's requisition and approval system, with budget checks, PO tracking, and vendor management integrated to enforce financial policy compliance. • Accounts Payable & Receivable: The AP system automates invoice processing, matching with POs, and generates payments. AR functions include billing for grants, donations, and other revenue streams and managing receivables using aging reports. • Payroll: Skyward handles salary processing, tax reporting, benefits administration, and integrations with time tracking tools. Payroll runs are reviewed and approved by multiple team members. • Fixed Asset Tracking: We maintain an up-to-date inventory of capital assets including furniture, technology, and facilities equipment. Skyward tracks depreciation and supports compliance with audit and insurance requirements. Skyward's comprehensive platform ensures transparency, efficiency, and accountability, with robust built-in reporting that aligns with state and federal compliance requirements.
Describe the process for developing and managing the school's budget from year to year.	Our budget development process is collaborative, mission-aligned, and grounded in fiscal sustainability. It follows these key steps: 1. Revenue Forecasting: Based on PPR projections, legislative updates, and enrollment modeling. 2. Stakeholder Input: Administrators, department leads, teachers, and families provide input on priorities through surveys, advisory councils, and strategic planning meetings. 3. Drafting: CFO and Leadership draft a budget prioritizing instructional quality, staffing, special education, facilities, and programmatic needs. Contingency plans are modeled. 4. Board Review and Approval: A draft is presented to the Board for review and feedback before final approval. The budget is aligned with strategic goals and operational plans. 5. Ongoing Monitoring: Budget-to-actuals are reviewed monthly with site leaders, and adjustments are made mid-year as needed. Board Finance Committee meets monthly and quarterly reports are shared with the full Board. This process ensures fiscal accountability while enabling responsiveness to enrollment, state funding shifts, and instructional needs.

Identify checks and balances applicable to financial transactions, including spending limits, required additional signers, and other financial safeguards.	The school implements rigorous internal controls and separation of duties to protect assets and ensure accountability:
	• **Spending Limits:**
	  ◦ Up to $5,000: Executive Director or business office designee
	  ◦ $5,000–$10,000: CFO or CIO approval
	  ◦ $10,000 - $25,000: Requires Board Treasurer authorization
	  ◦ Over $25,000: Requires Board approval
	• **Dual Authorization**: All checks, wire transfers, and credit card purchases require two signers/approvals.
	• **Procurement Policy:** All purchases are made via Skyward and must align with approved budgets. Purchases exceeding designated thresholds require competitive bids or quotes.
	• **Credit Card Controls:** Issued only to authorized staff, with pre-set limits and mandatory receipt submission. Transactions are reconciled monthly and audited internally.
	• **Monthly Internal Reviews:** The finance team conducts monthly reconciliations and expense audits.
	• **Annual External Audit:** Performed by an independent CPA firm to ensure regulatory compliance and best practices.

Describe the school's plan to contract for an annual independent audit.	We currently contract with Hinkle & Associates, a respected CPA firm with charter school audit expertise. The school will: • Issue an engagement letter confirming the audit scope, timelines, and compliance standards. • Prepare financial documents, reconcile accounts, and respond to auditor inquiries during fieldwork. • Submit required financial reports to DCSD and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). • Publicly post the audit findings and present key learnings to the Board and stakeholders. • Implement recommendations for improved financial practices. If needed, a competitive RFP will be used to select a new auditor.
Describe any core services that will be contracted out related to business operations (i.e., bookkeeping, payroll, HR.)	All business operations, including HR, finance, and bookkeeping, will be handled in-house. No core services will be outsourced, ensuring full control and accountability of school finances.

Describe anticipated private revenue sources, including contributions and grants. Note which have already been obtained and which are anticipated, as well as how each revenue stream will be used in support of non-core operational expenses.	While we have not yet secured private funding for the new school, we anticipate applying for the following: • Colorado Charter School Program (CCSP) Start-Up Grant • Charter School Growth Fund • Endowment contributions from local businesses and philanthropic foundations • Donor gifts and corporate sponsorships (e.g., Lockheed Martin, Blue Origin, ULA) Private revenue will support non-core needs such as: • Classroom technology upgrades • Student scholarships and afterschool enrichment • Expanded SEL programming • STEM industry mentorships and field trips These sources will not be relied upon for basic operations and are excluded from initial conservative budgets.
Describe the school's plan for compliance with district, state, and federal accounting and reporting requirements.	The school is fully committed to financial compliance across all jurisdictions: • District: Timely submission of budgets, quarterly reports, audit results, and grant documentation to DCSD. • State: Adherence to the Public School Financial Transparency Act, compliance with the CDE Chart of Accounts, and submission of Financial Pipeline data. • Federal: Compliance with 2 CFR Part 200 for federal grant management, Single Audit Act (if applicable), and IRS tax filing requirements. • Transparency: Posting budgets, audits, salary schedules, and other required documents on the school website to meet public transparency laws. Our Skyward ERP system is designed to support these requirements with built-in compliance features.
Describe the school board's commitment to oversight of financial practices, including clear alignment to the other financial components in the application.	The Board of Directors maintains active oversight of all financial matters through: • Quarterly Budget Reviews: Regular reviews of financial reports, variances, and budget forecasts. • Audit Committee: Oversees internal controls and the external audit process. • Policy Governance: Enforces all financial policies including purchasing, investments, credit card usage, and asset management. • Strategic Financial Planning: Approves multi-year plans, fund balance allocations, and contingency planning. This governance structure ensures that fiscal practices are aligned with the school's mission to provide equitable, innovative, and hands-on STEM education.

Include a description of anticipated salary and benefit costs.

The school follows the DCSD salary schedule and offers a competitive benefits package aligned with district offerings. Initial cost assumptions include:

- Salary: Teacher salaries range from $50,000 to $80,000 depending on experience and qualifications.
- Benefits: Including PERA, health, dental, and vision, totaling approximately 28–30% of salary per employee.
- Total Compensation: Salary and benefits represent approximately 70–75% of the annual operating budget, reflecting a strong investment in people.

Salaries will be adjusted annually based on budget availability, inflation, and competitive benchmarks.
The proposed school's business operations are grounded in sound financial principles, experienced staffing, robust systems, and strong governance. Every component—from accounting systems and internal controls to board oversight and compliance—is designed to ensure long-term sustainability and alignment with our mission: to prepare students to thrive, lead, and innovate in a dynamic and ever-changing world.

Section 2
Budget Narrative

(1) Clearly explain revenue and cost assumptions and the source of the assumptions.

Our school's budget is grounded in conservative, research-based financial projections that align with historical funding trends in Douglas County School District (DCSD), guidance from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), and proven practices from the successful operation of STEM School Highlands Ranch. Our revenue and expenditure assumptions are structured to ensure fiscal sustainability, programmatic excellence, and alignment with the school's mission to provide an innovative, problem-based STEM education for all learners.

Revenue Assumptions

Revenue projections are based on a combination of secured and anticipated funding sources, with assumptions informed by state policy, district historical data, and our operating experience. The sources and assumptions are as follows:

1. Per Pupil Revenue (PPR): 64–70% of Total Revenue
    - Source of Assumption: Based on historical PPR allocations in DCSD and projections from the Colorado Joint Budget Committee and School Finance Act updates.
    - Explanation: This is the school's primary source of funding. Projections account for modest annual increases based on inflationary adjustments approved by the legislature and are adjusted based on conservative enrollment scenarios. For contingency planning, budgets are modeled at 85% enrollment to reflect possible fluctuations.
2. Mill Levy Override (MLO) Revenue: 12–13%
    - Source of Assumption: Based on DCSD's allocation of MLO funds to charter schools, consistent with our current distribution at STEM School Highlands Ranch.
    - Explanation: MLO revenue is earmarked 100% for salaries and benefits to remain competitive with surrounding districts and support teacher retention and recruitment. These assumptions are aligned with current MLO disbursement practices.
3. Local Funds: 16–20%
    - Source of Assumption: Derived from historical data from our existing school and estimated based on similar programs across Colorado charter schools.
    - Explanation: Includes Pre-K tuition, student fees, investment interest, fundraising, and small local grants. These funds are allocated toward enrichment programs, technology upgrades, and operational support.
4. State Categorical Funds: ~2%

- Source of Assumption: Based on CDE allocation guidelines for English Language Proficiency Act (ELPA) funding, special education categorical aid, and capital construction allocations.
- Explanation: These funds are restricted for specific populations and facility improvements and are used accordingly.

5. Other Revenue: ~1%

- Source of Assumption: Primarily from "PERA On-Behalf" contributions, a flow-through item reported as both revenue and expenditure for pension obligations per state reporting requirements.

Expense Assumptions

Expenditure assumptions are aligned with the school's educational priorities, projected enrollment, staffing models, and facilities needs. All cost assumptions are informed by current expenditures at STEM School Highlands Ranch, vendor quotes, district comparables, and industry standards.

1. Salaries & Benefits: 50–58% of Total Expenses

- Source of Assumption: Based on the DCSD salary schedule and benefits structure, as adopted by our current school.
- Explanation: This includes base pay, PERA contributions, insurance, and other benefits. Salary scales are structured to retain high-quality educators and support staff while complying with PERA and ACA requirements.

2. Purchased Services: 28–37%

- Source of Assumption: Historical expenditures and required fees under the DCSD Shared Services Agreement and contracted services for security (SRO), technology, legal, and custodial.
- Explanation: This category also includes bond payments, financial and legal services, and third-party professional supports. These are essential for facilities management and regulatory compliance.

3. Supplies and Materials: 7–8%

- Source of Assumption: Projections based on existing school budgets and start-up charter models from the Colorado League of Charter Schools.
- Explanation: Includes instructional materials, classroom and office supplies, software, textbooks, and operational consumables.

4. Property & Capital Expenditures: 5–7%

- Source of Assumption: Based on actual FF&E costs for similar school buildouts and vendor estimates for facilities equipment and

infrastructure.
- Explanation: These are one-time or capital investments in technology, furniture, fixtures, equipment, and minor renovations.

5. Insurance Costs: ~1%

    - Source of Assumption: Based on actual premium data from current school and industry benchmarks for charter schools of similar size and scope.
    - Explanation: Covers liability, property, workers' comp, and general insurance coverage.

Source Validation and Ongoing Updates

All assumptions have been cross-referenced with:

- Colorado Department of Education funding forecasts
- DCSD charter school funding guidance
- Third-party financial consultants with charter school expertise
- Historical data from STEM School Highlands Ranch

These projections will be revisited quarterly and annually as part of our financial monitoring and strategic planning processes. The Board of Directors, CFO, and administrative team will collaborate to adjust the budget as needed to ensure sustainability and alignment with the school's mission and programmatic priorities.

(2) Describe basic start-up costs, facility funding, FFE acquisition, curriculum, professional development, and secured grants. Evidence of grant awards should be included as attachments. Title funds and unsecured grants should not be included. NOTE: The charter school should submit a budget that reflects a balanced operational forecast. If the school intends to apply for any grant, including the CCSP Start-Up Grant, a second budget should be submitted that reflects a balanced operational forecast without the proposed grant award(s).	The financial model for launching our charter school is designed to ensure operational readiness, educational excellence, and fiscal sustainability from day one—without reliance on unsecured or anticipated grants. Our start-up budget reflects a conservative and balanced forecast that includes essential pre-operational expenses such as facility development, furniture and equipment, curriculum acquisition, technology, and staff training. These investments are strategically aligned with our mission to provide a rigorous, inclusive, and STEM-driven education through a Problem Based Learning model. Start-up costs encompass land and facility acquisition, furniture, fixtures, and equipment (FF&E), curriculum materials, technology infrastructure, initial professional development, legal and compliance fees, and early administrative staffing. These costs will be phased across the pre-opening and first year of operation to ensure the school is fully prepared to deliver a high-quality learning experience on day one. The facility will be secured through a public-private partnership with a mission-aligned private developer. This partner will finance land acquisition, construction of a purpose-built educational space, and core FF&E needs. The lease agreement will be structured to align with enrollment growth and financial sustainability, with lease payments built into the school's annual budget. FF&E costs include student and staff desks, flexible seating, smart boards, interactive projectors, science lab equipment, maker space materials, and security and kitchen infrastructure. These resources will be sourced from trusted vendors and timed to align with the construction timeline. Curriculum and instructional materials will be aligned with Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) and designed to support our Problem Based Learning model. Resources will include Benchmark Reading, Envision Math, custom science and social studies units, and digital learning tools such as IXL and Canvas. All instructional content will be accessible and culturally responsive, meeting the diverse needs of our learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners. Professional development is a cornerstone of our launch strategy. Initial training will include pre-service summer institutes focused on Problem Based Learning, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), standards-based grading, differentiation, and student support. Ongoing coaching and data-informed professional learning communities (PLCs) will reinforce instructional quality and support continuous improvement. Additional training will be provided to support teachers serving multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and gifted students. Leadership development will also be prioritized for instructional leads and administrative staff. As of the date of this application, no grants have been secured. However, we intend to apply for the Colorado Charter School Program (CCSP) Start-Up Grant and seek additional philanthropic partnerships. To maintain fiscal responsibility, our base budget does not include these potential funds. If secured, grant funds will supplement—rather than replace—core spending, and will be directed toward enhancing curriculum, technology, and instructional capacity. A second, alternate budget reflecting potential CCSP grant funding will be submitted in accordance with the application requirements. This comprehensive and mission-aligned start-up plan ensures that we are prepared to open a financially sound and academically excellent charter school. By prioritizing

infrastructure, instruction, and staff development, we lay the foundation for long-term student success and school sustainability.

Evidence of grant awards

Grant Awards.pdf

19.14 KB • Added 5 days ago

(3) Include anticipated administrative costs and plans for school growth with appropriate projections and timelines.

Our administrative costs and growth plan are designed to scale thoughtfully over time, ensuring that the school maintains strong leadership, operational efficiency, and student support as enrollment increases. The financial model reflects strategic hiring and phased growth aligned with enrollment projections and programmatic needs for a Pre-K–8 school that will grow incrementally over a four-year period.

Year 0:

Leading up to the school opening, an Executive Director will be hired to recruit staff - including the Pre-K Director and the Elementary Director - and will also oversee enrollment processes, facilitate community engagement, and begin the process of carrying out the strategic plan for STEM School Castle Rock. Together, the Executive Director, Pre-K Director, and Elementary Director roles will equate to 1.5 FTE.

Year 1 (Pre-K–5):

In our opening year, administrative costs will include salaries and benefits for key leadership and support roles, including the Pre-K Director, Elementary Director, Business Director and Office Assistant. These positions are critical to establishing a strong operational foundation and ensuring compliance, communication, family engagement, and instructional oversight. We will also hire core instructional staff, a school counselor, special education team members, and multilingual learner support, based on projected enrollment and student needs.

Years 2–4 (Adding Grades 6–8):

As we expand one grade level per year, we will hire additional teaching staff for each new grade level and electives to support a robust middle school program. This includes STEM-specific electives (e.g., engineering, computer science), world languages, and fine arts. To support growing student needs, we will incrementally expand student services by hiring an additional counselor, a Dean of Students or Assistant Principal, and additional intervention staff, including special education teachers and paraprofessionals. Administrative staffing will grow proportionally, with the potential addition of 3 other staffing FTE based on need.

Facilities & Operational Costs:

Operational costs—such as office supplies, software licenses, technology infrastructure, insurance, and utilities—will grow alongside enrollment. Our facilities plan includes expansion of classroom space and instructional areas within a purpose-built facility that accommodates growth to full enrollment. Lease terms and facility-related costs are structured to scale with enrollment, ensuring financial feasibility at each growth stage.

Financial Projections:

Enrollment projections are tied directly to staffing and administrative cost assumptions. For every 100 students added, we plan to maintain or reduce the student-to-staff ratio in both instructional and administrative roles. We are also establishing a contingency fund to manage any unexpected changes in enrollment, staffing needs, or operational costs.

Sustainability:

Our approach ensures that administrative costs are aligned to actual student enrollment and educational needs, providing a financially sustainable path to full K–8 implementation. As the school scales, we will continue to monitor administrative

efficiency and cost per pupil to ensure resources remain focused on direct student support and academic outcomes.

By strategically phasing growth and administrative expansion, we ensure that the school will maintain a high level of service, strong leadership, and a stable financial foundation, aligned with our mission to deliver a rigorous, student-centered, problem-based STEM education.

(4) Demonstrate how the budget narrative is aligned with the vision and mission and the programs described in each section of the application, particularly identifying anticipated costs associated with the target population, including special populations.	The budget narrative is intentionally aligned with the school's mission to empower students to innovate, persevere, and lead through a problem-based STEM education model that supports diverse learners. Every financial decision—both in start-up and long-term projections—reflects a commitment to delivering a rigorous, inclusive, and forward-thinking educational experience that meets the needs of all students, including those students with disabilities, multilingual learners, twice-exceptional students, and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. **Alignment with Vision and Mission:** The school's core purpose is to create a dynamic, real-world learning environment where students build resilience, creativity, and critical thinking skills through Problem Based Learning. The budget supports this mission through investments in hands-on STEM equipment, collaborative project spaces, and technology integration that enhances innovation. For example, funding is allocated for interactive whiteboards, robotics kits, coding tools, and makerspace materials—all foundational to the school's Problem Based Learning approach. **Instructional Investments:** A significant portion of the budget is directed toward staffing highly qualified educators and providing extensive professional development to support the implementation of Problem Based Learning, culturally responsive instruction, and inclusive classroom practices. Instructional coaches and teacher support staff are budgeted to ensure the curriculum remains aligned with Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) while allowing for interdisciplinary, real-world learning. Funding is also designated for teacher training in supporting multilingual learners, special education inclusion models, and social-emotional learning (SEL), aligning with our holistic approach to education. **Meeting the Needs of Special Populations:** Recognizing the unique learning needs of students with disabilities, multilingual learners (ML)), and 2e students, the budget includes dedicated funds for: • Special Education staffing (SPED teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers), • Therapeutic services such as speech, occupational, and behavioral support, • Assistive technologies and adaptive learning tools, • Multilingual Learner (ML) programming, including bilingual support staff, translated resources, and language development tools. These costs ensure compliance with IDEA, ELPA, and other legal obligations while upholding the school's commitment to personalized learning and equitable access. **Student Services and Support Systems:** The budget includes resources for full-time counselors, SEL programming, and wellness initiatives to support the emotional and social development of students—particularly those who may struggle with executive functioning, trauma, or transitional challenges. These support systems are essential to building a school culture that values perseverance and emotional resilience, both critical to our educational mission. **Operational and Facilities Planning:** Operational line items—including utilities, insurance, and technology infrastructure—scale with enrollment and support the smooth functioning of a high-performing

learning environment. Facility design and FF&E (furniture, fixtures, and equipment) have been budgeted to promote collaboration and STEM immersion. Flexible classroom configurations and specialized learning labs further reinforce our instructional model.

Transportation, Food, and Equity Supports:

While we do not plan to offer full transportation, food service will be provided by Douglas County School District Nutrition Services and is not included in the base operating budget, though flexibility will be built in to reassess needs annually. The budget includes contingency funds to support students who qualify for the Free and Reduced Lunch program with transportation stipends, school supplies, and access to enrichment programming, ensuring equity remains central to our planning.

Financial Sustainability:

A prudent reserve strategy, contingency budget based on 85% enrollment, and phased administrative growth allow us to remain responsive to enrollment fluctuations without compromising program quality. The school will also seek state categorical funding, mill levy overrides (MLOs), and private philanthropic support to enhance core programming and increase access for underrepresented groups.

(5) Describe how the projected population enrollment is adequate to meet long-range plans for the chosen school model, staffing and facility needs.

The projected population enrollment is strategically designed to support the school's long-range academic, staffing, and facility goals while ensuring sustainable growth and high-quality implementation of our problem-based STEM educational model. Our enrollment targets are based on comprehensive demographic analysis, local demand for progressive STEM-focused education, and facility capacity planning, ensuring that our school model can scale effectively without compromising quality.

Enrollment Alignment with School Model:

Our chosen model—grounded in Problem Based Learning, interdisciplinary STEM instruction, and personalized support for diverse learners—requires a staffing and student ratio that enables small-group collaboration, individualized support, and cross-disciplinary project work. The projected enrollment starts with Pre-K through 5th grade in Year 1, gradually expanding to 8th grade by Year 4. This phased growth ensures our staffing model can scale alongside student needs, maintaining optimal class sizes and teacher-student ratios critical to inquiry-driven instruction and meaningful mentorship.

Facility Design and Capacity:

The school facility is being designed to accommodate the full enrollment buildout over time, with flexible classroom configurations, specialized STEM labs, and collaborative learning spaces that reflect our instructional philosophy. The building will be constructed in phases aligned to enrollment milestones, ensuring both financial and instructional sustainability. By Year 4, the facility will support the full PreK–8 program, with dedicated space for middle school electives, maker labs, science studios, and inclusive learning environments that meet the needs of all learners, including students with disabilities and multilingual learners.

Staffing Plan Based on Enrollment Growth:

Our staffing model is directly aligned with projected enrollment, allowing for the gradual addition of instructional, administrative, and support personnel. In Year 1, staffing includes core teaching staff, special education and multilingual learner support, and foundational administrative roles (Executive Director, Pre-K Director, Elementary Director, and Business Director). As grade levels are added, new classroom teachers, elective instructors, interventionists, and student services staff will be hired to maintain a robust academic program and strong school culture.

Financial Sustainability and Operational Viability:

Enrollment projections are intentionally conservative and based on demonstrated community interest in high-quality STEM programming. These projections align with our financial model, ensuring that per-pupil revenue (PPR) and mill levy override (MLO) funding will be sufficient to cover operational and instructional expenses. Contingency planning includes a fully balanced budget at 85% enrollment and a minimum enrollment threshold that allows for financially viable operations even in the event of lower-than-anticipated enrollment. This conservative fiscal planning protects program integrity while allowing for long-term planning.

(6) Provide a contingency budget plan based on 85% enrollment, with specific adjustments and related dollar amounts noted, to meet financial need if anticipated revenues (i.e., PPR) are lower than anticipated.	The proposed budget reflects a fiscally responsible and mission-aligned plan that supports the successful launch and sustainable growth of the school. With a projected funded pupil count of approximately 500 in Year 1 and over 740 by Year 5, the school has developed an enrollment strategy that balances ambitious growth with operational viability. Revenue projections are diversified across preschool tuition, mill levy overrides, student fees, and other local sources, reducing risk and ensuring financial resilience. Year 0 and Year 1 budgets reflect conservative assumptions to safeguard early operations and ensure readiness prior to full-scale implementation. Budget allocations are tightly aligned with the school's educational program, including the integration of Problem Based Learning, targeted student supports, and inclusive practices. The financial plan accounts for investments in staffing, instructional resources, student services, and facility needs, all of which are critical to delivering the school's instructional model. Student participation fees, rental income, and other supplemental revenue streams are also included, enhancing the school's capacity to offer extended learning experiences, enrichment opportunities, and real-world applications aligned to its STEM focus. In Year 1, the school anticipates approximately $9.4 million in total revenue, supporting 44 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff across administration, licensed teaching roles, and specialized supports. The staffing model is designed to ensure instructional quality, student safety, and responsive intervention from the outset. Funding sources in Year 1 include more than $1.2 million in mill levy override revenue and $1.27 million in Pre-K tuition, creating a strong fiscal foundation to launch core programming and student supports aligned to the needs of the target population. By Year 5, projected revenues increase to approximately $14.7 million, enabling the school to scale to 76.5 FTE staff, expand programming, and maintain manageable student-teacher ratios. Staffing increases are directly tied to enrollment growth and will support deeper implementation of Problem Based Learning, differentiated instruction, and specialized services for multilingual, SPED, and twice-exceptional learners. The budget reflects responsible growth, with expenditures calibrated to ensure that quality and access are sustained as the student body grows. This financial plan is designed to meet both the academic and operational expectations set forth by the authorizer. It reflects strong internal planning processes, alignment with the educational philosophy, and a structure for ongoing monitoring and adaptation. Coupled with robust re-engagement and retention strategies, the school is well-positioned to meet enrollment targets, maintain financial health, and deliver a high-quality learning experience to all students it serves.

(7) Set forth the minimum enrollment needed for viable operations, including maintaining a balanced budget.	The minimum enrollment needed for viable operations and to maintain a balanced budget is 50% of the projected enrollment for Year 1. At this threshold, the school can cover core operational expenses—including staffing, instructional programming, and facility-related costs—by strategically scaling staffing and expenditures in proportion to actual enrollment. Our financial model includes contingency planning to accommodate enrollment fluctuations. At 50% enrollment, we would reduce the number of instructional staff and support roles while preserving the integrity of our academic program and student services. Administrative and operational costs would be adjusted accordingly, ensuring compliance with state and district requirements and maintaining high-quality instruction through optimized class sizes and resource allocation. This conservative approach reflects our commitment to fiscal responsibility and ensures that the school can operate sustainably even in the event of lower-than-anticipated enrollment during the start-up phase. By maintaining flexibility in hiring and expenses, the school can protect essential programming and remain aligned with its mission to provide innovative, inclusive, and high-quality STEM education.

(8) Describe how the school will comply with employment law and personnel operations, including tax, payroll, retirement, insurance and background check requirements.	The school is fully committed to complying with all federal, state, and local employment laws and maintaining sound personnel operations to ensure a safe, equitable, and legally compliant workplace. Our Human Resources team, composed of experienced professionals, will oversee all employment practices, including tax compliance, payroll, retirement benefits, insurance administration, and background checks. **Payroll and Tax Compliance:** Payroll will be processed through our ERP system, Skyward, ensuring timely and accurate wage payments to all staff. The system will withhold and remit all required payroll taxes, including federal income tax, state income tax, Social Security, Medicare (FICA), and unemployment insurance taxes (FUTA and SUTA). The HR department will ensure compliance with IRS reporting requirements by issuing W-2s to employees and 1099s to applicable contractors annually. **Retirement and Insurance Benefits:** All eligible employees will be enrolled in the Colorado Public Employees' Retirement Association (PERA) in accordance with state law. Contributions will be automatically deducted from payroll and submitted on time. In addition, the school will offer a comprehensive benefits package that includes health, dental, vision, and life insurance coverage, with options that comply with the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Workers' compensation insurance will also be maintained as required under Colorado law. **Background Checks and Hiring Compliance:** To ensure student safety and comply with Colorado Revised Statute 22-32-109.7, all employees will undergo fingerprint-based background checks through the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and FBI. We will also conduct employment verification and reference checks to ensure candidates meet the qualifications for their roles. Our hiring process will strictly adhere to all Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws, including Title VII, ADA, and ADEA, ensuring a nondiscriminatory process across all hiring practices. **Personnel Policies and Compliance Monitoring:** An Employee Handbook will clearly outline all personnel policies, including workplace expectations, compensation, benefits, leave policies (including FMLA), anti-discrimination policies, grievance procedures, and performance evaluations. Ongoing training for HR staff and administrators will ensure continued compliance with evolving employment law. Regular internal audits will be conducted to verify that payroll records, personnel files, and benefit enrollments are accurate, secure, and in compliance with legal requirements.

(9) Address and demonstrate a clear understanding of and plan for compliance with the Financial Transparency Act (C.R.S. 22-44-301) and provide sample financial templates and reports, such as a dashboard template, as an attachment. *Please note, Section S requests information specific to budgets for serving students with special needs.*

The school demonstrates a clear understanding of and is fully committed to compliance with the Colorado Financial Transparency Act (C.R.S. 22-44-301), which requires public schools and charter schools to ensure transparency and public access to financial information. We view financial transparency not only as a legal obligation but as a core value that builds community trust and reinforces our commitment to responsible stewardship of public funds.

Transparency Website and Public Access to Financial Documents

We will maintain a dedicated Financial Transparency section on the school's website, easily accessible to the public. This section will include all required documentation and reports, such as:

- Annual Adopted Budget (submitted to DCSD and CDE)
- Annual Independent Audit Reports
- Quarterly Financial Statements
- Salary Schedules for All Employees
- Accounts Payable Check Registers
- Credit Card Expenditure Reports
- Statement of Financial Position
- Dashboard Summaries for Board and Community Review

These documents will be updated in accordance with the timelines established by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and the law. Clear labeling and archiving practices will be used to ensure that the public can compare data across years and understand trends in spending and budgeting.

Financial Reporting Systems and Internal Controls

The school will use Skyward, an integrated Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, to maintain up-to-date financial records and generate compliance-ready reports. Skyward supports:

- Real-time tracking of revenue and expenditures
- Detailed accounts payable/receivable ledgers
- Budget-to-actual comparisons
- Fixed asset management
- Payroll and PERA tracking

Skyward's built-in Colorado chart of accounts ensures alignment with state reporting requirements and simplifies submission through the CDE Financial Transparency Pipeline.

Board Oversight and Internal Audits

All financial data will be reviewed monthly by the school's CFO and the Board's Finance Committee. Quarterly financial dashboards and narrative reports will be presented in

public board meetings. Internal monthly audits, reconciliations, and annual independent external audits will be conducted to ensure accuracy and adherence to financial policies and GAAP.

Ongoing Compliance and Continuous Improvement

To ensure long-term compliance:

- Financial staff will participate in annual training on state financial regulations.
- A calendar of compliance deadlines will be maintained by the CFO to ensure timely submissions to DCSD, CDE, and other regulatory agencies.
- The school will remain current with any updates or amendments to the Financial Transparency Act and CDE guidance.

Sample financial templates and reports

G10. School Reports.pdf
558.46 KB • Added 6 days ago

G8. Quarterly Report Template.xls
67.79 KB • Added 6 days ago

G11. SPED report Template.xls
13.93 KB • Added 6 days ago

(10) Summarize the following assumptions included in the budget narrative:

Facility-projected costs.

The projected facility costs range from $40 million to $50 million, encompassing all necessary expenses for land acquisition, site development, building construction, and furnishing. These costs include:

- Land purchase suitable for long-term academic use
- Construction and infrastructure development
- FF&E (Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment) such as desks, security systems, classroom technology, and kitchen equipment
- Soft costs, including architectural design, engineering, legal fees, and permitting
- A contingency allocation to account for inflation and unforeseen construction expenses

These costs are covered through a private investment partnership and bond proceeds, structured to support long-term growth and financial sustainability.

Insurance-costs (liability, Workers' Comp, building, etc.).

Insurance costs, including liability, workers' compensation, and property insurance, are projected to be approximately 1% of total expenditures annually. This estimate is based on historical claims data and typical coverage costs and will be adjusted as needed during annual budget revisions.

Employment plans (salary, benefits, PERA, and insurance).	The school follows the Douglas County School District (DCSD) salary schedule to ensure competitive pay. Benefits include: • Full participation in PERA (Public Employees' Retirement Association) as mandated by state law • Employer-sponsored health, dental, and vision insurance • Compliance with all applicable federal and state employment laws, including payroll tax obligations and insurance requirements These costs represent approximately 50–58% of total expenditures, reflecting a focus on investing in a highly qualified staff.
Transportation, including field trips (if transportation will be offered).	Student transportation will not be offered as part of daily operations. However, funds will be allocated to support transportation for field trips, including charter buses or other services when educationally relevant. These costs will be incorporated into program or activity budgets on a per-event basis.
Insurance and liability costs.	This category is integrated into the overall insurance assumption and includes general liability coverage, property insurance, workers' comp, and coverage for school-sponsored activities. As noted, these costs are projected at 1% of the annual operating budget, subject to annual review based on risk assessments and claims history.
Food Services (if offered)	The school will not operate its own food service program. Students will be encouraged to bring meals from home or purchase vendor-provided lunches (if applicable). Food service will be provided by Douglas County School District Nutrition Services and is not included in the base operating budget, though flexibility will be built in to reassess needs annually.
TABOR Reserve	The school will not operate its own food service program. Students will be encouraged to bring meals from home or purchase vendor-provided lunches (if applicable). Food service will be provided by Douglas County School District Nutrition Services and is not included in the base operating budget, though flexibility will be built in to reassess needs annually.

Section 3
Five-Year Budget

5 Year Budget Attached

File Upload

G14. FY24-25 Charter Budget Application 85% Enrollment.xls
315.02 KB • Added 6 days ago

G13. FY24-25 Charter Budget Application.xls
314.35 KB • Added 6 days ago

G9. FY 24 Audit.pdf
11.06 MB • Added 5 days ago

G15. Multi Year 2nd Campus Only.pdf
430.11 KB • Added 5 days ago

G16. Consolidated Budget.pdf
437.22 KB • Added 5 days ago

H) Governance

Reviewer Instructions

IF THERE IS NO CHANGE IN THE GOVERNANCE FROM THE ORIGINAL CHARTER, PLEASE INDICATE IN YOUR RESPONSE SECTION THAT THERE IS NO CHANGE.
The board consists of a wide range of experienced members with the capacity to oversee a successful school, and a commitment to do so. There is a clear description the transition to a formal board, the nature and extent of parent/community involvement in the board, and draft board member agreements and conflict of interest statements.

Status: Completed

Form Result

IF THERE IS NO CHANGE IN THE GOVERNANCE FROM THE ORIGINAL CHARTER, PLEASE INDICATE IN YOUR RESPONSE SECTION THAT THERE IS NO CHANGE. IF THE CURRENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL EXTEND OVERSIGHT TO THE REPLICATED CAMPUS, PLEASE INDICATE THIS IS THE CASE.
This section provides detailed information on the governance philosophy and how the board will approach its oversight role, the role and make-up of the board and the role of the school's administration in carrying out the school's mission and vision.
Founding Board/Steering Committee

- *Describes who can serve on the board and the process for recruiting, onboarding and ongoing training for board members.*
- *Describes the number of members, composition of the board of directors, committee names and functions, and member skill sets. Bios or resumes for each board or steering committee member are included as an attachment.*

- *Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation are included as attachments. A board member conflict of interest policy and a policy for handling parent and staff complaints are included as an attachment.*
- *Demonstrates an understanding of the requirements of Open Meetings and Open Records laws, as well as FERPA.*
- *Describes the process for creating and maintaining a School Accountability Committee.*

Board Procedures

- *Provides a clear description of the differences in roles and responsibilities of the board and school administration. A job description for the head of school is included as an attachment.*
- *Describes the plan and timeline for how and when the board will evaluate the school leader and use this information to analyze the leader's need for coaching and professional development is in place.*
- *Describes how the board will regularly monitor key indicators such as finance, student achievement, and school culture. Sets forth a plan for a board annual self-evaluation and how the results will be used to identify areas for board growth and professional development.*

Section 1

Board/Steering Committee Members

Provide resumes of board and committee members as attachments to the application.

Resumes of board and committee members	Board of Director Bios.pdf 1.67 MB • Added 7 days ago
Describe board members' connection to and understanding of the DCSD community.	**The current Koson board will oversee STEM School Castle Rock and there is no change in governance from the original charter.**
Describe the nature and extent of parental and/or community member involvement in the board.	**The current Koson board will oversee STEM School Castle Rock and there is no change in governance from the original charter.**

Include a current Board Member Agreement and Conflict of Interest statement.

Board Member Agreement and Conflict of Interest statement	Policy_Conflict_of_Interest_2023.pdf 67.21 KB • Added 7 days ago OATH_OF_OFFICE.pdf 19.44 KB • Added 7 days ago

Section 2

Board Procedures

Include board non-profit articles of incorporation and bylaws.

Board non-profit articles of incorporation and bylaws	BYLAWS_STEM_2018_amended_08-10-18.pdf 110.06 KB • Added 7 days ago BYLAWS_STEM_2018_amended_08-10-18.pdf 110.06 KB • Added 5 days ago

Describe the length of board terms, a description of board officers and their roles, how often the board will meet, a description of the key expectations for board members and the following:

Election of new members	The current Koson board will oversee STEM School Castle Rock and there is no change in governance from the original charter.
Number of parents to serve on the Board	The current Koson board will oversee STEM School Castle Rock and there is no change in governance from the original charter. The Koson board includes three Class A members that are STEM School Highlands Ranch parents, elected by the parent community. The Koson board will address adding parent representation from the new school prior to Year 1.
Number of positions on the Board voted on by parents, vs number of positions filled by appointment.	The current Koson board will oversee STEM School Castle Rock and there is no change in governance from the original charter.
Number of community members to serve on the Board	The current Koson board will oversee STEM School Castle Rock and there is no change in governance from the original charter.

Duties of individual board members and of the governing board as a whole	The current Koson board will oversee STEM School Castle Rock and there is no change in governance from the original charter.

How members will be held to and will hold themselves to:

How members will be held to and will hold themselves to: Responsibility to develop policies	The current Koson board will oversee STEM School Castle Rock and there is no change in governance from the original charter.
How members will be held to and will hold themselves to: Provide financial and operational oversight.	The current Koson board will oversee STEM School Castle Rock and there is no change in governance from the original charter.
How members will be held to and will hold themselves to: Address parent and staff complaints.	The current Koson board will oversee STEM School Castle Rock and there is no change in governance from the original charter.
How members will be held to and will hold themselves to: Commit to Board training regarding governance best practices.	The current Koson board will oversee STEM School Castle Rock and there is no change in governance from the original charter.
How members will be held to and will hold themselves to: Development of a policy describing the relationship between the Board and the school leader, including a plan for hiring and evaluating the school leader.	The current Koson board will oversee STEM School Castle Rock and there is no change in governance from the original charter.

How members will be held to and will hold themselves to: Compliance with statutory requirements regarding the staffing and role of the School Accountability Committee.	The current Koson board will oversee STEM School Castle Rock and there is no change in governance from the original charter.
How members will be held to and will hold themselves to: Compliance with Open Meeting Statutes (Sunshine laws).	The current Koson board will oversee STEM School Castle Rock and there is no change in governance from the original charter.
How members will be held to and will hold themselves to: Compliance with Open Records laws and FERPA	The current Koson board will oversee STEM School Castle Rock and there is no change in governance from the original charter.
How members will be held to and will hold themselves to: Compliance with Conflict of Interest requirements	The current Koson board will oversee STEM School Castle Rock and there is no change in governance from the original charter.
How members will be held to and will hold themselves to: Preparation, attendance and participation in scheduled board meetings	The current Koson board will oversee STEM School Castle Rock and there is no change in governance from the original charter.
How members will be held to and will hold themselves to: Understanding charter's corporate documents and financial statements	The current Koson board will oversee STEM School Castle Rock and there is no change in governance from the original charter.

I) Employees/ Human Resources

Reviewer Instructions

IF THERE IS NO CHANGE IN THE EMPLOYEES SECTION FROM THE ORIGINAL CHARTER, PLEASE INDICATE IN YOUR RESPONSE SECTION THAT THERE IS NO CHANGE.
This section provides a variety of information on the school's employees and employment policies, and the relationship that will exist between the charter school and its employees.

- *Describes the process to locate, interview and hire the School Leader.*
- *Describes the recruiting and hiring process and includes a hiring timeline. Describes how the school will ensure that teachers are highly qualified for their positions.*
- *Job descriptions for all key employees, including teachers and administrative staff are included in an attachment.*
- *Describes which employees will be under contract and which will be "at will."*
- *Sets forth a plan to use data to manage, disaggregate, display, and adjust or change curriculum and instruction, as well as identify professional development focus areas.*
- *Provides a description of the staff evaluation process and timeline.*
- *An Employee Handbook is included as an attachment. If a Handbook is unavailable, a summary of the school's policies and procedures is included in the narrative with a timeline for completing the Handbook.*

- *An organizational chart is included that shows all key positions as an attachment.*

Status: Completed

Form Result

A draft staff handbook	I. Employee Handbook.pdf 866.78 KB • Added 6 days ago

Section 1

Organizational Charts and Staffing Plan are provided.	I. Org Chart and Staffing Plan.pdf 28.75 KB • Added 6 days ago

Section 2

Description of the process for recruiting and hiring skilled faculty and staff are provided.

Koson Schools is committed to recruiting and retaining high-quality, mission-aligned educators and staff who are deeply invested in fostering innovation, equity, and academic excellence. Our recruitment and hiring process is strategically designed to ensure that all team members are not only highly qualified but also culturally responsive, student-centered, and committed to continuous improvement through Problem Based Learning.

Recruitment Process

1. Strategic Workforce Planning
   Prior to each hiring cycle, school leaders assess current staffing, projected enrollment, and emerging programmatic needs to determine anticipated vacancies and new roles. This ensures alignment between staffing decisions and the school's growth trajectory, student needs, and academic priorities.

2. Job Description Development
   All job descriptions are reviewed annually and updated to reflect essential duties, required qualifications, and alignment with the school's mission, vision, and educational model. These descriptions include expectations for collaboration, equity-driven practice, use of data to inform instruction, and proficiency in implementing Problem Based Learning.

3. Diverse and Targeted Recruitment Channels
   To ensure access to a wide and diverse applicant pool, recruitment efforts include:

   - Posting on major education job boards (e.g., EdJoin, SchoolSpring, Indeed)
   - Outreach through Colorado League of Charter Schools and teacher preparation programs
   - Direct engagement with culturally responsive teaching networks and affinity groups
   - Internal referrals and alumni networks
   - LinkedIn and social media campaigns targeted to local and national educators with STEM backgrounds

4. Talent Pipelining and Internal Growth
   In addition to external outreach, the school invests in developing emerging leaders from within. Promising staff are provided leadership coaching, expanded responsibilities, and professional development to prepare them for future leadership roles, including positions at the proposed new school site.

Hiring Process

1. Application Review and Screening
   The hiring committee—composed of school administrators and content-area

leads—reviews applications against a structured rubric that assesses qualifications, alignment with school values, demonstrated experience with diverse learners, and evidence of innovative or student-centered instructional practice.

2. Performance-Based Interviews
   Selected candidates participate in a multi-stage interview process, including:
   - Structured behavioral interviews with scenario-based questions aligned to school culture
   - Demonstration lessons or problem based learning simulations
   - Equity and inclusion case studies
   - Debrief and reflection conversations with the interview team
3. Reference and Background Checks
   Prior to any offer, the school conducts reference checks with previous supervisors and peers, and all candidates undergo fingerprint-based background checks in compliance with Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S. 22-32-109.7).
4. Hiring Decision and Onboarding
   Final hiring decisions are made collaboratively by the school leadership team, ensuring consideration of instructional need, team dynamics, and culture fit. Once hired, staff engage in a comprehensive onboarding program that includes training in the school's mission, instructional framework, MTSS, culturally responsive teaching, and school operations.

Retention and Support

To ensure strong staff retention, the school offers:

- Competitive salary aligned with DCSD pay scales
- Employer-paid benefits and PERA contributions
- Robust professional development and instructional coaching
- Teacher-led PLCs and innovation teams
- Opportunities for leadership development and stipended roles

Section 3

Describe the Professional Development Plan for faculty at the new school. The discussion should include:

How professional development is aligned and will help teachers operationalize the vision, mission, values, culture and goals of the school.

At Koson Schools, professional development (PD) is a cornerstone of our commitment to innovation, excellence, and equity in education. Our PD plan is intentionally designed to operationalize the school's vision of empowering students to become critical thinkers, problem-solvers, and lifelong learners through a dynamic, inclusive, and Problem Based Learning model.

Alignment with Vision and Mission

Our mission—to provide a rigorous STEM education rooted in real-world problem solving—comes to life through continuous faculty learning. All PD sessions emphasize instructional practices that prioritize inquiry, hands-on learning, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Teachers are trained to facilitate learning experiences that challenge students to innovate, lead, and apply knowledge in meaningful contexts.
To ensure alignment with our values of excellence, curiosity, perseverance, and inclusion, PD topics are carefully selected to reinforce:

- **Culturally responsive teaching** that affirms student identities and broadens perspectives.
- **Differentiation and personalized learning** to support diverse learners.
- **Student agency** through formative assessment, goal-setting, and reflection.
- **Social-emotional learning** integration to build a healthy school culture grounded in respect and empathy.

Embedding School Culture and Goals

We foster a collaborative, growth-minded professional culture through weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), where teachers engage in data analysis, unit planning, and interdisciplinary Problem Based Learning design. These sessions not only build instructional coherence but also nurture collective responsibility for student outcomes—an essential part of our culture.
Additionally, the school's strategic goals, including improving student achievement in STEM fields, closing achievement gaps, and expanding real-world learning opportunities, directly shape PD priorities each year. For example, if data indicates a need to strengthen middle school math outcomes, targeted PD will be provided on inquiry-based math instruction, use of formative assessments, and scaffolding for struggling learners.

Vision in Practice: Ongoing Learning Structures

Our PD structure includes:

- **Summer Institute** for all staff, focused on onboarding, Problem Based Learning design, DEI practices, and school culture.
- **Monthly school-wide PD days**, aligned to data cycles and instructional goals.
- **Instructional coaching** with full-time coaches supporting teachers in planning, implementation, and reflection.

- **Leadership development pathways**, providing emerging leaders with targeted training in instructional leadership, data-informed decision-making, and team facilitation.
- **Choice-based PD**: Teachers “choose their own learning adventure” based on individual growth goals connected to school-wide Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) priorities.

How professional development will support staff to meet the needs of students with academic challenges, students with IEP's and 504's, Gifted and Talented students and English language learners

Professional development at Koson Schools is purposefully designed to equip staff with the knowledge, tools, and strategies needed to effectively support the full range of learners, including students with academic challenges, Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), 504 Plans, those identified as Gifted and Talented (GT), and multilingual learners (MLs). Our inclusive, data-driven model ensures that all students receive the differentiated support they need to thrive.

Students with Academic Challenges

Teachers participate in training on evidence-based interventions through our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), which provides a framework for identifying struggling students early and delivering tiered supports. Professional learning includes how to design and implement small-group instruction, use formative assessment data to drive remediation, and incorporate scaffolds into daily lessons. Teachers are also trained in universal design for learning (UDL) principles to ensure curriculum access for all.

Students with IEPs and 504 Plans

All teachers receive annual training on the legal and instructional requirements of IEPs and 504 Plans, including how to read and implement accommodations, modifications, and behavior intervention plans. Special education staff and general education teachers co-plan and co-teach, supported by professional development on inclusive practices, collaboration strategies, and differentiated instruction. Staff are also trained in trauma-informed practices to support students with social-emotional or behavioral needs.

Gifted and Talented Students

Our professional development emphasizes differentiated instruction and curriculum compacting to ensure GT students are appropriately challenged. Teachers are trained to design extension opportunities within our Problem Based Learning model, allowing GT students to explore advanced applications, research questions, or leadership roles within collaborative projects. Ongoing PD helps educators recognize and support twice-exceptional learners—students who are both gifted and have learning differences.

Multilingual Learners

All instructional staff receive training in strategies for supporting Multilingual Learners (MLs), including the use of visual supports, sentence frames, vocabulary development strategies, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Teachers are supported in modifying Problem Based Learning projects to ensure language accessibility while promoting language development. In addition, the ML coordinator provides coaching and collaboration opportunities to help general educators differentiate instruction while maintaining academic rigor.

How the professional development plan and teacher evaluations will use and be aligned with performance data

The professional development plan at Koson Schools, as demonstrated at STEM School Highlands Ranch, is directly aligned with performance data to ensure that instructional practices are continuously improving and responsive to student needs. Data informs both the design and the delivery of professional learning, and it plays a central role in teacher evaluations.

Alignment with Performance Data

Each year, teachers set professional goals in collaboration with their instructional coach and director, using a variety of data sources including CMAS, iReady, PSAT/SAT, benchmark assessments, and classroom formative data. These goals are integrated into individual professional learning plans that align with our school's Unified Improvement Plan and overall academic priorities.
Teachers receive targeted professional development aligned to identified needs—whether related to improving student achievement in specific content areas, addressing learning gaps for certain student groups, or refining instructional strategies such as differentiation or formative assessment. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).
PLCs regularly analyze student progress data and collaborate to adjust instruction, co-design units, and engage in shared learning aligned with common student outcomes.

Integration into Evaluation

Our teacher evaluation system is structured to meet the intent of Colorado SB 10-191 and includes both professional practices and measures of student growth.
Performance data—including student achievement and growth—constitutes a significant portion of the evaluation process. Teachers are evaluated not only on what they teach, but also on how effectively they use student data to inform their practice, differentiate instruction, and contribute to student success.
Observation feedback, student growth data, and goal progress are all discussed during mid-year and end-of-year evaluation conferences. These evaluations inform ongoing professional development recommendations, coaching priorities, and leadership opportunities, ensuring a continuous cycle of growth.

How professional development will change as the school grows and matures based on data

As the school grows and matures, professional development at Koson Schools and future campuses will evolve in response to data-driven insights, shifting instructional needs, and the expansion of grade levels and staff. The professional development model is designed to be dynamic and responsive, ensuring that training and support remain aligned with the school's mission to provide a high-quality STEM, Problem Based Learning experience for all students.

Phase-Based Approach to Growth

In the early years of the new school site, professional development will focus heavily on foundational implementation of the school's instructional model, including onboarding teachers in our Problem Based Learning framework, data-driven instruction practices, and the use of proficiency scales and common assessments. New staff will receive targeted onboarding and coaching to ensure alignment with school culture, expectations, and instructional philosophy.
As the school expands to include additional grade levels, the professional development plan will incorporate grade-specific training, vertical alignment initiatives, and expanded leadership development opportunities. Cross-grade teams will work more closely to ensure curricular coherence and progressive skill-building for students.

Use of Performance and Growth Data

Professional development priorities will be regularly adjusted based on performance data, including student academic outcomes (e.g., CMAS, iReady, PSAT), behavior trends, instructional walkthroughs, and teacher evaluations. PLCs and instructional coaches will analyze trends to identify areas for improvement or targeted support. For instance:

- If data reveal gaps in math achievement, PD may emphasize strategies for math differentiation or intervention.
- If subgroup performance data highlight the need for improved support for English Learners or students with IEPs, PD may focus on co-teaching models, scaffolding techniques, or culturally and linguistically responsive instruction.

Tiered and Personalized Support

As staff tenure and expertise deepen over time, PD will become increasingly personalized and differentiated. Experienced teachers may lead or co-facilitate PD sessions, engage in peer coaching, or take on leadership roles within PLCs. Teachers will be encouraged to pursue individual professional learning pathways based on their goals and student needs, supported by instructional coaches and aligned with school improvement priorities.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

The professional development plan will also evolve to incorporate innovative practices, industry trends, and community partnerships. As the school's Problem Based Learning model matures, PD may include collaboration with industry professionals, site visits to partner organizations, or participation in statewide or national STEM learning networks. Overall, the professional development program is designed to be iterative, adaptive, and reflective—growing alongside the school and grounded in the belief that empowered educators are key to student success.

Section 4

Describe how the school's teacher evaluation system will meet the intent of Colorado SB 10-191. Be sure to address:

The role student progress and achievement play in teacher evaluations.

Professional development at Koson Schools will be evaluated through a continuous improvement cycle that ensures alignment with the school's mission, responsiveness to staff and student needs, and impact on instructional quality and student outcomes. Evaluation methods will include both qualitative and quantitative measures and will be embedded in existing school systems such as PLCs, coaching, and the teacher evaluation process.

1. Staff Feedback and Reflection

After each professional development session, participants will complete surveys that gather feedback on the relevance, clarity, usefulness, and applicability of the training. These surveys will help school leaders and instructional coaches assess how well the session met teacher needs and inform adjustments for future PD. In addition to surveys, teachers will engage in reflective exercises, including journaling and peer discussions, to deepen learning and link PD to classroom practice.

2. Instructional Walkthroughs and Classroom Observations

Instructional coaches and school leaders will conduct regular walkthroughs and formal observations to assess the implementation of strategies learned through PD. These observations will be documented using a rubric that includes indicators aligned with Problem Based Learning, differentiation, and culturally responsive teaching. Trends from these observations will guide future coaching cycles and PD topics.

3. Student Performance Data

Evaluation of PD will be closely tied to student achievement and growth data. PLCs and school leaders will analyze assessment data (e.g., CMAS, iReady, PSAT/SAT, common assessments) before and after implementation of PD initiatives to identify changes in student performance. If specific PD (e.g., supporting English learners or using data to differentiate instruction) is tied to improved outcomes for targeted groups, the training will be considered effective and potentially scaled school-wide.

4. Coaching and Goal Progress Monitoring

Each teacher will set annual professional growth goals aligned with school improvement priorities and based on student data. Instructional coaches will support and monitor progress toward these goals throughout the year. The extent to which PD supports goal achievement will be a key measure of its effectiveness.

5. Staff Retention and Engagement

Long-term indicators of successful professional development include staff retention, engagement in school improvement work, and leadership development. Exit surveys, mid-year check-ins, and staff satisfaction surveys will provide additional insight into how well PD supports teacher growth, morale, and alignment with school values.

6. School Improvement Planning and UIP Alignment

Finally, the impact of PD will be evaluated in the context of the school's Unified Improvement Plan (UIP). If PD initiatives lead to measurable progress on UIP goals—such as closing achievement gaps or improving subgroup performance—they will be recognized as effective components of the school's instructional improvement strategy. This multi-tiered evaluation framework ensures that PD is meaningful, impactful, and responsive—driving continuous instructional improvement and aligning directly with the school's mission to prepare all students for success through hands-on, innovative STEM education.

The teacher evaluation system at Koson Schools is designed to fully align with the intent and requirements of Colorado Senate Bill 10-191, which emphasizes educator effectiveness by tying teacher evaluations to measurable student academic growth and professional practice. The school's evaluation model is built on a balanced system that incorporates data-driven performance indicators and high-quality instructional standards, ensuring accountability, growth, and continuous professional learning.

Alignment with SB 10-191

Under SB 10-191, 50% of a teacher's evaluation must be based on student academic growth and 50% on professional practices. At Koson Schools we meet and exceed this standard by implementing a performance evaluation model that is transparent, collaborative, and growth-oriented.

Student Academic Growth (50%)

Student academic progress and achievement are integral to teacher evaluations. The school uses multiple measures to assess student growth, including:

- State Assessments (CMAS, PSAT/SAT): Data from state assessments are disaggregated by student subgroup and analyzed by content area to inform individual and team-level teacher performance.
- Benchmark and Interim Assessments: Tools such as iReady, unit assessments, and common formative assessments developed in PLCs are used to track student growth across the academic year.
- Student Learning Objectives: Teachers set annual Student Learning Objectives that are aligned with grade-level standards and supported by baseline and summative data. Progress toward meeting these goals is a formal component of their evaluation.

Teachers are responsible for demonstrating student growth for all learners, including students with IEPs, English language learners, and gifted and talented students. Data is reviewed within Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and through one-on-one coaching sessions to reflect on instructional impact and adjust practices in real time.

Professional Practices (50%)

The other half of the evaluation is grounded in the Colorado State Model Evaluation System's Quality Standards, which include:

- Mastery of content and pedagogy
- Delivery of effective instruction
- Facilitation of a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment
- Collaboration with families and the school community
- Professional responsibility and reflection

These domains are assessed through classroom observations, instructional walk-throughs, student engagement evidence, lesson artifacts, and educator reflection.

Evaluation Process

- Pre-Evaluation Meeting: Teachers collaborate with their evaluator to establish growth goals and align their practice with school priorities and UIP targets.
- Mid-Year Check-In: Evaluators and teachers review data and progress on goals, adjusting strategies as needed.
- Observations: Multiple formal and informal observations are conducted throughout the year using clear rubrics that incorporate Problem Based Learning strategies and differentiated instruction.
- End-of-Year Summative Review: Final evaluations include analysis of student growth data, goal attainment, professional practices, and contributions to the school community.

Support and Professional Growth

Teachers who need additional support participate in a structured Improvement Plan, which includes targeted coaching, goal setting, and monitoring. High-performing educators are recognized and provided leadership development opportunities.
By embedding student outcomes and instructional excellence at the core of the evaluation process, Koson Schools ensures that its educator effectiveness system meets the intent of SB 10-191, drives continuous improvement, and strengthens outcomes for all students.

Attach any supporting documents (optional)

Assistant School Director..pdf
120.84 KB • Added 5 days ago

Preschool Director.pdf
132.04 KB • Added 5 days ago

Kindergarten Teacher.pdf
138.38 KB • Added 5 days ago

Teacher Ã¢ÂÂ Upper Elementary.pdf
133.31 KB • Added 5 days ago

Teacher Ã¢ÂÂ Early Elementary.pdf
133.31 KB • Added 5 days ago

Preschool Teacher.pdf
133.92 KB • Added 5 days ago

Dean of Students.pdf
130.98 KB • Added 5 days ago

Executive Director.pdf
134.9 KB • Added 5 days ago

I. Teacher Rubric.pdf
173.57 KB • Added 5 days ago

I. Hiring Process.pdf
34.18 KB • Added 5 days ago

I. Recruitment & Retention Strategies.pdf
26.39 KB • Added 5 days ago

J) Insurance Coverage

Reviewer Instructions

Proposed insurance coverage aligns with statutory and district-mandated requirements and aligns with what the school is proposing within the application.

Status: Completed

Form Result

Attach copies of insurance policies or other documentation to support	J. STEM School Coverage & Limit Letter.pdf 158.04 KB • Added 7 days ago J. Insurance Policy Documents.pdf 1.04 MB • Added 7 days ago

K) Parent and Community Involvement

Reviewer Instructions

The applicant provides evidence of parent and community involvement in the development of the school as well as the ongoing support of the school once opened.
The applicant provides opportunities to solicit feedback from stakeholders.
The applicant identifies reasonable plans for external partnerships to support the school.

Status: Completed

Form Result

(1) List existing community partnerships that are currently in place.

- Identify all of the partnerships in the Entity box.
- In the Nature of Partnership / Description of any Planned Resources or Agreements column, please provide a brief summary of the nature of the partnership, as well as any planned resources or agreements in place.
- In the Attachment Title column, please identify the attachment that includes the agreement or letter that formalizes the partnership.

Entity Box	-

Entity	Nature of Partnership / Description of Planned Resources or Agreements
Camp Invention / National Inventors Hall of Fame	Provides hands-on STEM summer camps to promote innovation and design thinking aligned with school programming. Planned partnership to host on-site STEM camps. Existing partnership with STEM School Highlands Ranch. Status: Anticipated
Lady Trailblazers / Girls Persist	Partnership to support leadership development and mentoring for young women in STEM. Future collaboration on after-school clubs and speaker events. Existing partnership with STEM School Highlands Ranch. Status: Anticipated
Mountain Performing Arts	Partnership to offer integrated performing arts electives, after-school programs, and annual student showcases. Existing partnership with STEM School Highlands Ranch. Status: Anticipated
Pals Chess	Provides curriculum-aligned chess programming that enhances critical thinking and strategic planning for elementary and middle school students. Existing partnership with STEM School Highlands Ranch. Status: Anticipated
Wize Academy	Coding and robotics programming partner offering after-school enrichment and summer camps in alignment with STEM focus. Existing partnership with STEM School Highlands Ranch. Status: Anticipated

Douglas County Libraries	Partner in literacy programming, parent engagement nights, and early childhood literacy initiatives. Also a host for community outreach events. Status: Prospect
Castle Pines & Castle Rock Chambers of Commerce	Strategic partners supporting community engagement, business networking, and advocacy. Support with outreach, family events, and local exposure. Status: Prospect
Dads of Castle Rock / Rotary Club of Castle Rock	Volunteer-based support for school events, mentoring, and community service opportunities. Status: Prospect
Douglas County Human Services / Help & Hope Center	Provide wraparound services and referrals for families in need, including food, clothing, housing support, and health services. Support outreach to at-risk populations. Status: Prospect
Parker Evangelical Presbyterian Church Early Learning Center / STEM Childcare / Ivybrook Academy / Goddard Child Care	Early education partners assisting with feeder pathways and outreach to Pre-K families. Planning information sessions, STEM days, and family engagement events. Status: Prospect
City of Castle Rock	Operate summer camps out of there recreation faciliies to establish reputation and community connections.

(2) Discuss how students and parents were informed of the proposed school and what community meetings were conducted.

The Board of directors approved an updated Strategic Plan in October 2024 which included the goal to expand the Koson network and open additional schools. The Strategic Plan was shared through Board meetings (September 10, 2024 October 1, 2024) and email communications.
Families at our existing STEM School Highlands Ranch campus were the first to be informed on April 1 about the proposed charter through a series of intentional communications designed to build early awareness and trust. School leadership shared the announcement via email, will include updates in weekly family newsletters, and engage in direct conversations during parent meetings and campus events. These initial touchpoints allowed families to ask questions, express interest, and provide feedback on the vision for a new school. Their insights will shape foundational elements of the proposal and generated early momentum for broader community engagement. A series of information sessions are planned for April 21st, May 8th, and May 14th, 2025.

(3) Describe the outreach efforts within the Community and elsewhere to prospective students, including at-risk populations, and identify the targeted student population, including at-risk students, for the proposed charter school.

Initial Engagement and Feedback Collection

The concept for the school emerged from ongoing conversations with families, educators, and community leaders affiliated with STEM School Highlands Ranch, who expressed a need for expanded access to innovative, high-quality STEM education—particularly in underserved areas of Douglas County. To capture this feedback systematically, we conduct additional activities such as:

- Informal focus groups with current families, teachers, and advocates to discuss educational needs and barriers to access
- Surveys distributed to current and prospective families on school culture, academic priorities, and student support needs
- Listening sessions hosted with local community organizations, exploring the role of STEM in future-readiness and civic engagement

Ongoing Collaboration

Our planning team includes parents, educators, and professionals serving on the Growth Task Force and Board of Directors. Their lived experience and expertise ensure the school is grounded in community values. In addition a School Advisory Committee consisting of parents, local leaders, and community partners is being established to support and lead family engagement strategies and serve as community ambassadors.

Public Communication Tools

To expand awareness beyond the current school community, we launched several public-facing tools:

- Dedicated Webpage: Featuring FAQs, project timeline, and the school's mission and vision
- FAQ Submission Form: Allowing families to submit questions and receive direct responses
- Social Media Campaigns: Sharing updates, key milestones, and engagement opportunities

Additionally, STEM School Castle Rock will benefit from the Board of Directors' investment in Finalsite—a leading education communications and CRM platform—originally purchased for STEM School Highlands Ranch. The platform is currently being implemented for a full launch at Highlands Ranch by July 1, 2025, and the same tools, functionality, and timeline will be extended to support communications, enrollment, and family engagement at the Castle Rock campus.

Planned Community Meetings (Launching April 1)

A series of engagement activities will occur throughout the planning period, including

- In-person town halls at libraries and community centers
- Virtual info sessions for working families and those with limited access
- Open houses with curriculum demos and school model overviews
- Targeted listening sessions for multilingual families, SPED parents, and early childhood providers

Feedback Collection Tools

To ensure two-way communication and co-design, we will collect feedback through:

- Community surveys (digital and in-person)
- QR-code-enabled flyers linked to online forms
- Suggestion boxes at appropriate public events

Survey questions focus on educational priorities, enrichment preferences, and family support needs. Data will influence program design and operations.

Targeted Student Population

The proposed charter school seeks to serve a diverse and inclusive student body, including:

- Students from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds
- Students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL)
- Multilingual Learners (MLs)
- Students with disabilities (SPED, 504 Plans)
- Gifted and Talented (GT) students
- Students underrepresented in STEM careers

Our Problem Based Learning instructional model and culturally responsive practices are designed to meet these learners' varied academic, social, and emotional needs.

Inclusive and Targeted Outreach Strategies

To reach at-risk and underrepresented populations, our outreach plan includes:

1. Early Childhood & Educational Partners

- Hosting info sessions and STEM demos at preschools in Castle Rock, Lone Tree, and Parker
- Partnering with early childhood centers including those serving low-income families (e.g., Primrose, Goddard, Montessori at Lone Tree)
- Engaging literacy and academic support organizations

2. Social and Human Services Agencies

- Distributing materials via Douglas County Human Services, Help & Hope Center, and Tri-Lakes Cares
- Coordinating with housing, food security, and resource providers
- Providing multilingual communications to ensure accessibility

3. Culturally Responsive Community Engagement

- Partnering with faith-based and cultural organizations to host events
- Recruiting diverse parent ambassadors for grassroots outreach
- Hosting family-friendly STEM events at libraries and community spaces

4. Grassroots Outreach & Canvassing

- Conducting door-to-door canvassing in apartment complexes, parks, and high-traffic areas

- Sharing flyers and interest forms in grocery stores, libraries, clinics
- Running geo-targeted digital ad campaigns focused on high-need zip codes

5. Accessible Information and Enrollment Support

- Offering virtual and in-person open houses with interpretation services
- Providing enrollment assistance via phone, email, appointment scheduling and walk-in office hours
- Creating a multi-language FAQ and family guide on the school website

Equity Commitment

Our goal is to reflect the diversity of the broader community and ensure equitable access to a rigorous, student-centered STEM education. Through inclusive, intentional, and culturally responsive outreach, we are building a foundation for a school that centers innovation, equity, and community partnership from day one.

(4) Describe how staff and the Board will engage with external partners to help build a network of support for the proposed new charter school.

To build a strong, sustainable foundation for our proposed charter school, both staff and Board members will take an active and intentional role in engaging with external partners across sectors. Our strategy focuses on cultivating a mission-aligned network that reinforces our educational model, expands opportunities for students and families, and strengthens community trust and support.

Staff members—including school leadership, community engagement coordinators, and teachers—will serve as the day-to-day relationship-builders with key partners such as local preschools, libraries, STEM organizations, social service agencies, and cultural institutions. Through outreach meetings, shared events, and collaboration on programs, staff will foster connections that directly benefit our students, particularly in the areas of academic enrichment, early childhood transition, and access to community resources for families.

Board members will complement these efforts by leveraging their professional and civic networks to secure support from local business leaders, nonprofit organizations, real estate and development partners, and philanthropic stakeholders. Their role will include facilitating introductions, advocating for the school's mission in public and private forums, and helping to formalize partnerships that offer long-term strategic value. Board members will also support the identification of funding opportunities and serve as ambassadors in community-facing events.

Together, staff and Board will collaborate to host joint engagement opportunities such as community STEM nights, business and education roundtables, and family-centered workshops that feature contributions from our external partners. We will formalize these relationships through memorandums of understanding (MOUs), letters of support, and ongoing communication structures that clarify expectations and promote shared outcomes.

Ultimately, our approach ensures that partnership-building is not a one-time outreach effort, but a sustained, relationship-based strategy woven into the fabric of the school. By aligning with organizations that share our commitment to innovation, equity, and whole-child learning, we will establish a powerful network of advocates, collaborators, and champions who help our school—and its students—thrive.

Upload any documents that support the content of this application element (optional)

Extended Timeline with Milestones and Plan_DCSD 2025 Replication - Google Docs.pdf

75.31 KB • Added 5 days ago

L) Enrollment Policy

Reviewer Instructions

The applicant details a plan for recruitment of all students, including special populations. The proposed enrollment policy and priorities for enrollment are non-discriminatory and align with district policy and procedures and statue as applicable.

Status: Completed

Form Result

This section explains how students who want to attend the school will be admitted and enrolled, and how the school manages the process once students are interested in attending the school.

- *Enrollment and lottery policies and procedures are included as an attachment. Demonstrates that enrollment is available to all students without regard to race, creed, color, sex, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, ancestry, disability, or need for special education services. Sets forth any enrollment priority weighting for particular groups of students.*
- *Describes how the larger community will receive information about the school, including a description of outreach to at-risk and minority communities.*

(1) Detail the plan for student recruitment, including students with special needs, English Language Learners, Gifted and Talented students, at-risk students, and other educationally disadvantaged students. Describe how the school will serve a diverse community within its programming description.

Enter content here

At STEM School Highlands Ranch, our recruitment strategy is grounded in inclusivity, access, and equity, with a clear commitment to enrolling and supporting a diverse population of learners. We aim to ensure that all students—including those with special needs, Multilingual Learners, Gifted and Talented students, at-risk youth, and other educationally disadvantaged students—are aware of, welcomed into, and supported by our school community. Our comprehensive recruitment plan leverages community partnerships, targeted outreach, and personalized enrollment support to reach families from all backgrounds.

We intentionally partner with DCSD's McKinney-Vento coordinator to connect students with community-based organizations that serve populations historically underrepresented in charter schools, such as Douglas County Human Services, Help & Hope Center, and Tri-Lakes Cares, to expand awareness of our school in lower-income and culturally diverse neighborhoods. In addition, we intend to collaborate with local early childhood centers and preschools, including bilingual programs and those serving children with disabilities, to connect with families of young children who may benefit from early intervention or enrichment. Outreach materials are translated into multiple languages, and bilingual staff are available to assist families through the enrollment process.

Our school tours, enrollment consultations, and Prospective Family Nights provide opportunities for families to learn about the school's instructional model, specialized support services, and inclusive culture. During these sessions, we offer detailed information about our SPED and LL programs, 504 accommodations, counseling services, and GT programming, ensuring that families understand the resources available to support their child's academic and social-emotional needs. We also promote the availability of transportation assistance and lunch support for qualifying families.

In alignment with our mission to offer a rigorous STEM-focused, Problem Based Learning experience for all students, our programming is intentionally designed to be flexible and responsive to diverse learning needs. This includes co-taught and push-in models for special education services, targeted language acquisition interventions for LLs, differentiated instruction and acceleration opportunities for gifted learners, and tiered supports for at-risk students. Our inclusive classrooms incorporate Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, and all staff receive ongoing professional development in culturally responsive teaching, trauma-informed practices, and meeting the needs of diverse learners.

Through these deliberate and equity-focused strategies, STEM School Highlands Ranch ensures that student recruitment is not only accessible to all, but actively inclusive of students who have historically been underserved in education. Our commitment to representation, access, and support is embedded in every stage of the recruitment and enrollment process.

(2) Describe the outreach conducted to raise awareness in the targeted student population and their families about the proposed school. especially at-risk populations.

To ensure broad awareness and equitable access to STEM School Highlands Ranch among the targeted student population—including at-risk students and their families—we have implemented a comprehensive and intentional outreach strategy that combines digital engagement, grassroots efforts, and community-based partnerships. Our outreach began with identifying key community organizations that serve families facing economic hardship, limited English proficiency, or barriers to traditional educational access. We intend to engage with local partners such as Douglas County Human Services, Help & Hope Center, Tri-Lakes Cares, and the Douglas County Health Department to help distribute enrollment information, provide referrals, and co-host information sessions tailored to underserved families. These partners also help identify potential barriers—such as language, transportation, or lack of familiarity with charter schools—and collaborate with us to address them through direct support and translation services.

To increase visibility and foster personal connections, we plan to develop and distribute multilingual marketing materials, host enrollment consultations in community hubs, and leverage parent ambassadors from diverse backgrounds to share their experiences with prospective families. These ambassadors play a critical role in building trust and credibility with families who may be unfamiliar with STEM-based education or skeptical of new educational models.

Our outreach strategy includes hosting and participating in community events, including local library storytimes, neighborhood festivals, and cultural celebrations, where families can meet staff, ask questions, and explore what makes STEM School Highlands Ranch unique. Our mobile enrollment support team plans to attend these events and will be equipped with translated enrollment materials, technology for on-the-spot applications, and staff trained in ML and SPED supports.

Through these coordinated efforts, we aim to ensure that all families—regardless of background—are informed about the opportunity to attend our new STEM School campus and have the tools and support necessary to participate fully in the enrollment process.

(3) Provide the school's enrollment policy and criteria for enrollment decisions that ensures non-discrimination throughout the enrollment process.

STEM School Highlands Ranch is committed to an inclusive, transparent, and equitable enrollment process that ensures access for all students regardless of race, creed, color, sex, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, ancestry, disability status, or need for special education services. The school's enrollment policy fully complies with all applicable federal and state laws, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Colorado Charter Schools Act.

Open Enrollment & Non-Discrimination

STEM School Highlands Ranch participates in the Douglas County School District's (DCSD) Open Enrollment process, which includes Round 1 (priority-based) and Round 2 (rolling) windows. All students residing in Colorado are eligible to apply for enrollment. Admissions decisions are not based on academic performance, testing, disability status, or any other discriminatory criteria. All students are admitted on a space-available basis, and a lottery is conducted if applications exceed available spots.
To ensure full compliance with non-discrimination standards:

- No student is denied admission due to the need for special education or related services.
- IEPs, 504 plans, and other accommodations are reviewed only after an enrollment offer has been accepted, to determine the appropriate supports and ensure the school can provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).
- Enrollment materials are made available in multiple languages to support MultilingualLearners (MLs), and translation services are offered during the application process.

Enrollment Priorities

To promote a cohesive and community-centered school culture, STEM School Highlands Ranch follows the enrollment priorities set forth by DCSD:

1. Siblings of currently enrolled students.
2. Children of current staff or board members.
3. Residents of the Douglas County School District.
4. All other Colorado residents.

Enrollment Management

STEM uses DCSD's Open Enrollment Manager system to validate and process applications. This system ensures an objective and automated process, aligned with district policy and state law. Enrollment decisions are recorded and tracked through this centralized system to promote consistency, transparency, and accountability.
By maintaining a clear and equitable policy, STEM School Highlands Ranch ensures that all families—particularly those from underrepresented or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds—have fair access to its innovative, high-quality STEM programming.

If applicable, attach any relevant documents

L.1_STEM_Policy_Enrollment_2024.pdf
63.76 KB • Added 5 days ago

M) Transportation and Food Services

Reviewer Instructions

IF THERE IS NO CHANGE IN THE TRANSPORTATION AND FOOD SERVICES FROM THE ORIGINAL CHARTER, PLEASE INDICATE IN YOUR RESPONSE SECTION THAT THERE IS NO CHANGE.
If the school plans to offer transportation, the applicant provides an explanation of a transportation plan that meets the needs of the school.
If the school does not plan to offer transportation, the applicant describes any alternative means for meeting students' transportation needs.

Status: Completed

Form Result

IF THERE IS NO CHANGE IN THE TRANSPORTATION AND FOOD SERVICES FROM THE ORIGINAL CHARTER, PLEASE INDICATE IN YOUR RESPONSE SECTION THAT THERE IS NO CHANGE.

This section addresses whether the school plans to offer any transportation services to students and if not, describes how students' transportation needs will be met without transportation services.

- *If the school plans to offer transportation, the applicant explains how this will be provided to include field trips, before and after school, and extracurricular activities.*
- *If the school does not plan to offer transportation, the applicant describes any alternative means for meeting students' transportation needs. This includes low-income students.*

Food Services:

This section addresses whether the school plans to offer food service to its students.

- *If the school plans to offer food service, describes anticipated arrangements with a Food Service Authority or other food service arrangements, including catering.*

Transportation Services

If the charter school is proposing to offer transportation services to the proposed school, this section must be completed. If the school will not offer transportation services to this proposed school, describe what the school plans as an alternative.

Describe how the school will provide transportation services to students, including field trips. Be sure to address, at minimum, the following:

(1) How the plan will serve the needs of low-income students

There will be no changes to our current practices at this time.

(2) How the plan will comply with insurance and liability issues

There will be no changes to our current practices at this time.

(3) How the plan will comply with state and federal rules and regulations

Enter content here

There will be no changes to our current practices at this time.

Food Services

If the school is proposing to partner with DCSD food services, the charter school will agree to meet all required capital improvements as identified by the DCSD Nutritional Services Team.

If offering a nutrition program offered by a School Food Authority, the charter school should affirm that the school will use federal Free and Reduced-Lunch (FRL) Program forms and will distribute these to families. Further, that the school will apply federal policy in determining FRL eligibility.

There will be no changes to our current practices at this time.

Upload any documents that support the content of this application element (optional)

N) Facilities

Reviewer Instructions

THIS SECTION IS REQUIRED FOR THE REPLICATION APPLICATION
The applicant provides a comprehensive facility needs assessment that aligns with the proposed school program.

Status: Completed

Form Result

THIS SECTION IS REQUIRED FOR THE REPLICATION APPLICATION
Needs Assessment

- *Provides a facility needs assessment that aligns with the mission and vision of the school and the anticipated curriculum, including number of classrooms, specials rooms, administrative space, common spaces, outdoor spaces, square foot needs per student/space, and anticipated cost per square foot.*
- *An appropriate and realistic facility contingency plan is provided.*

Needs Assessment and Constructional and Operational Timeline

(1) Provide a facility needs assessment, outlining the necessary square footage for the expected student population and a plan for space utilization appropriate to any proposed school design.

Enter response here

Facility Needs Assessment and Space Utilization Plan

Koson is planning for a purpose-built facility designed to serve a projected enrollment of 800–1,000 students in grades Pre-K through 8, with a scalable design to accommodate phased growth. The facility will reflect the school's mission to offer a hands-on, inquiry-based STEM education grounded in interdisciplinary collaboration, project-based learning, and real-world application. The space will support 21st-century learning environments with flexible and tech-integrated infrastructure.

Projected Enrollment and Square Footage Requirements

To ensure an optimal learning environment, we anticipate requiring approximately 80,000 to 100,000 square feet, based on enrollment projections and the educational model. This estimate is grounded in industry best practices, recommending 80–100 square feet per student for high-functioning STEM facilities, and adjusted for the need for specialized lab and collaborative spaces. We anticipate allocating space across the following categories:

Space Type	Number of Rooms	Estimated Sq. Ft. per Room	Total Sq. Ft.
Core Academic Classrooms (K–8)	36	800	28,800
Pre-K Classrooms	4	900	3,600
Science Labs	4	1,200	4,800
Technology & Coding Labs	2	1,200	2,400
Makerspace / Engineering Workshop	2	1,500	3,000
Art & Music Studios	2	1,000	2,000
Innovation/Design Thinking Center	1	2,000	2,000
Library & Media Center	1	2,000	2,000
Cafeteria / Multipurpose Space	1	4,000	4,000

Gymnasium	1	6,000	6,000
Administrative Offices	—	—	3,500
Counseling / SPED / Intervention	—	—	2,000
Hallways, Storage, Bathrooms	—	—	12,000
Total Estimated Sq. Ft.			~95,100

This layout ensures appropriate instructional space and specialized environments to implement our STEM-focused, problem-based learning model while meeting all required accessibility and safety codes.

Space Utilization Strategy

Our facility will be designed to be flexible and modular, allowing learning spaces to be reconfigured to support interdisciplinary, team-based, and individual learning. For example:

- Classrooms will be grouped by learning community (e.g., lower elementary, upper elementary, middle school) with shared breakout and collaboration zones.
- STEM labs will be centrally located and equipped with industry-grade tools to promote vertical alignment in science and engineering education from early grades through middle school.
- Common areas and flex zones will double as innovation hubs for robotics competitions, science fairs, and entrepreneurship pitch events.
- Outdoor learning spaces will support environmental education, physical activity, and social-emotional development through structured play and team-building activities.

Our administrative areas will be centrally located for visibility and accessibility, with adjacent spaces for counseling, student services, and parent engagement.

Alignment with School Design and Growth Plan

The school is planned for phased expansion—initially opening with Pre-K through 5th grade and expanding through 8th grade by year 4. The facility will be constructed in two phases to align with this growth:

- **Phase I (Years 1–2):** ~60,000 sq. ft. core facility supporting Pre-K–5 and initial staff
- **Phase II (Years 3–4):** Additional ~35,000 sq. ft. to support middle school expansion, elective spaces, and additional student services

This approach balances financial sustainability with programmatic fidelity, allowing the school to open strong while reserving capacity for future growth and innovation.

Facility Has Not Been Identified

While no final lease or purchase has been executed, we began searching for land along the southern border of Castle Rock, Castle Pines, Sterling Ranch, and NE Parker. We are working to have solidified some options by the time the board votes on Authorization in June, 2025. Our efforts are to secure land as quickly as possible to allow ample time to execute a phenomenal opening with full enrollment in August, 2028.

- Are zoned for educational use or will be submitted for rezoning upon contract finalization
- Are served by main roadways and transit routes, facilitating access for all students, including at-risk populations
- Allow for ground-up construction, giving us the ability to customize the facility design to match our STEM-based, collaborative learning model

Zoning, Safety, and Compliance: Our development partner has experience navigating Douglas County's zoning processes. All construction will be compliant with:

- International Building Code (IBC)
- National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- State and local safety and egress codes We will include all required fire suppression, emergency response systems, and accessible pathways into final designs.

Timeline:

1. Site Identification and Acquisition:

   By **May 1, 2026**, the Applicant shall have identified and secured a site suitable for a STEM-focused educational environment, meeting all preliminary site suitability criteria.

2. Financing and Land Development Approval:

   By **October 1, 2026**, the Applicant shall secure financing for construction and receive necessary approvals to develop the land.

3. Local Zoning and Building Ordinance Compliance:

   By **February 1, 2027**, the Applicant shall secure all required zoning, environmental clearances, and building permits from local authorities.

4. Construction Initiation:

   By **April 1, 2027**, the Applicant shall begin the construction and site development process.

5. Facility Completion:

By **June 1, 2028**, construction and all relevant phases of building completion shall be finalized, obtaining all required occupancy certifications.
Contingency Plan: In the event that land is not secured by May 1, 2025 the project will be abandoned or a briefing with contingency plan and timeline will be proposed and submitted to the District.

(2) Submit plans which identify a timeline for the the new construction and opening of the charter school.

Upload any documents that support this application element (optional)

Extended Timeline with Milestones and Plan_DCSD 2025 Replication - Google Docs.pdf
75.31 KB • Added 5 days ago

O) Waivers

Reviewer Instructions

IF THERE IS NO CHANGE IN THE WAIVERS FROM THE ORIGINAL CHARTER, PLEASE INDICATE IN YOUR RESPONSE SECTION THAT THERE IS NO CHANGE.
The applicant provides a list of state statutes and district policies for which waivers are being requested and provides adequate rationale and replacement plans.

Status: Completed

Form Result

IF THERE IS NO CHANGE IN THE WAIVERS FROM THE ORIGINAL CHARTER, PLEASE INDICATE IN YOUR RESPONSE SECTION THAT THERE IS NO CHANGE.

This section includes statements acknowledging a commitment to comply with all laws and policies that are not waived and a list of proposed state and district waivers. The requested waivers should match the proposed autonomy, school mission and vision, goals, operations, governance, and employment relationships of the proposed charter school. In addition, the school should acknowledge if they will accept automatic statutory and policy waivers, or if the school plans on taking the non-automatic state waivers.

- *Presents a list of district policies for which waivers are being requested. Sets forth replacement rationales for the non-automatic waivers being requested, including expected financial impact if any and how the effectiveness of the waiver will be evaluated.*
- *Provides a list of the automatic and non-automatic state statutes for which waivers are being requested. Sets forth replacement rationales for the non-automatic state waivers*

being requested, including expected financial impact if any and how the effectiveness of the waiver will be evaluated.

Automatic Waivers of State Rule and Statute

The State Board of Education offers automatic waivers to state statutes and state rules for charter schools. Below is a list of waivers that have been automatically granted to charter schools upon the establishment of a signed charter contract. More information about waivers can be accessed on CDE's waiver webpage.

Non-Automatic Waivers of State Rule and Law

Charter schools may receive waivers from specified areas of statute once a charter contract has been established. This flexibility is intended to provide charters with the autonomy to fully implement the educational plan outlined in the school's contract with the authorizing district. Charter school waiver requests must meet the requirements set in the Charter School Act (22-30.5-101, C.R.S.). More information about waivers can be accessed on CDE's waiver webpage.

1. Identify the state rule or law for which the school is seeking non-automatic waivers. For each requested waiver, please provide the rationale and a replacement plan specifying the manner in which the charter school will comply with the intent of the waived statute.

Douglas County School District Policy Waivers

DCSD has an established and published waiver request policy and procedure. Waivers requests to District policy must be submitted on the appropriate template, and are subject to the DCSD Board of Education's approval. In the event that an application is approved, DCSD staff will assist with all waiver requests.

- Working Copy of Charter Leaders Master Waiver Document
    - Review status for each waiver
        - Automatic waiver request template
        - Non Automatic waiver template

Upload any documents that support the requirement of this application element

O. Waivers.pdf
27.58 KB • Added 6 days ago

P) Student Discipline, Expulsion or Suspension

Reviewer Instructions

THIS SECTION IS REQUIRED FOR THE REPLICATION APPLICATION. IF THERE IS NO CHANGE IN THE STUDENT DISCIPLINE, EXPULSION, OR SUSPENSION PLANS FROM THE ORIGINAL CHARTER, PLEASE INDICATE NO CHANGE IN YOUR RESPONSE.

The applicant provides a discipline policy that aligns with statute and policy and provides appropriate details for addressing student discipline, expulsion, and suspension.

- *Complies with state law, limiting reasons that may be used to justify expulsion or suspension of students in preschool through grade 2;*
- *Does not discriminate against students on the basis of hair texture, type, or protective hairstyles commonly or historically associated with race.*

Status: Completed

Form Result

THIS SECTION IS REQUIRED FOR THE REPLICATION APPLICATION. IF THERE IS NO CHANGE IN THE STUDENT DISCIPLINE, EXPULSION, OR SUSPENSION PLANS FROM THE ORIGINAL CHARTER, PLEASE INDICATE NO CHANGE IN YOUR RESPONSE.

This section defines how the school intends to handle student discipline and establish a student culture in which all students are able to learn.

- Provides a Discipline Policy and Procedures Manual as an attachment that aligns with state law and district policies, unless waived. Sets forth how the policy will address state statutory requirements, policies, processes, due process rights and alignment with school culture.
- Describes how disciplinary expectations will be communicated to parents/guardians and students.
- Describes how the school will handle discipline for students with disabilities to ensure compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and 504 regulations to include Manifestation Hearings and Behavior Plans as appropriate.

(1) Describe the school's discipline policy, including suspension and expulsion processes, that aligns with federal civil rights, special education law, applicable state statute (CRS 22-33-105 and CRS 22-33-106), and the authorizer's policies.

Enter content here

There will be no changes to our current practices at this time.

(2) Detail how the charter proposes to handle student discipline, expulsion and suspension.

There will be no changes to our current practices at this time.

(3) Detail how the charter will provide for an alternative education for expelled students.

There will be no changes to our current practices at this time.

(4) Provide a copy of the student discipline policy, including suspension and expulsion as attachments.

Q) Serving Students with Special Needs

Reviewer Instructions

THIS SECTION IS REQUIRED FOR THE REPLICATION APPLICATION. IF THERE IS NO CHANGE IN SERVING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS PLANS FROM THE ORIGINAL CHARTER, PLEASE INDICATE NO CHANGE IN YOUR RESPONSE.
This section addresses how the school will meet the needs of a variety of "special needs" students who may enroll at the school. Specific research-based instructional programs, practices and strategies should be employed to produce a continuum of services to help ensure academic success for all students that is supported by good assessments.
Addtional Points to Consider in your responses:
Program Administration

- *Explains how the assessment system will enable the school to identify students with special needs and how the student and teacher daily schedules provide adequate time for services and supports.*
- *Describes the strategies for serving students with special needs and how the program will be implemented and overseen. Identifies the number and type of instructional or other staff that will teach or support special needs students, including contracted service providers.*

Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 Plans
Programming

- *A continuum of services designed to meet ongoing student needs is clearly described.*
- *Service models demonstrate that students are provided specialized instruction according to their identified needs while they are ensured access to the general education curriculum with non-disabled peers to the greatest extent possible.*
- *A plan for communication to teachers and staff regarding student needs for accommodations is in place. A plan for oversight to monitor compliance is fully described.*

Staffing

- *Teachers and related service providers are identified and budgeted for according to required staffing levels.*
- *From date of hire, staff hold required CDE endorsements for their role at all times.*
- *Appropriate staffing levels are maintained at all times, including how mid-year/unanticipated vacancies will be addressed.*
- *Staff receive ongoing mentoring, coaching, and professional development specific to their practice.*

Budget

- *Proposed budget clearly includes all necessary staff, equipment, instructional materials, assessments, etc.*

Response to Intervention (RtI/MTSS)
Programming

- *A plan or structure is in place for monitoring all students for academic, social-emotional, and/or health concerns.*
- *Universal screening processes are in place, and targeted and intensive interventions are readily accessible to students.*

Staffing and Budget

- *Screening, assessment and progress monitoring materials are included in budget, and trained staff are available to conduct and review the screening, assessment and progress monitoring.*

English Language Learners (ELLs)
Programming

- *Provides the implementation plan for meeting the needs of English Learners that supplements the general education curriculum, instruction, and assessment strategies. This includes the qualification process for services, model for direct instruction, type and frequency of progress monitoring, parent and family communication, process for exiting students from the program, and continued evaluation of programming to ensure students are successfully served.*
- *A plan for oversight to monitor compliance is fully described.*
- *If the district is under court order to provide mandated services for English Learners, describes the process following the terms of the law.*
    - *Provides the plan for meeting the needs of English Learners that support and supplement the current curriculum and instructional strategies. This includes the qualification process for services, the frequency of progress assessments, how parents will be notified, how the school will exit students from the program, and continued evaluation of the program to ensure students are successfully served.*

Staffing

- *Teachers and related service providers are identified and budgeted for according to required staffing levels;*
- *Staff hold required CDE endorsements for their role at all times;*
- *Appropriate staffing levels are maintained at all times, including how mid-year/unanticipated vacancies will be addressed;*
- *Staff receive ongoing mentoring, coaching, and professional development;*

Budget

- *Proposed budget clearly includes all necessary staff, equipment, instructional materials, assessments, etc.*

Gifted & Talented Students (GT)
Programming

- *Provides the implementation plan for meeting the needs of gifted learners that supplements the general education curriculum, instruction, and assessment strategies. This includes the identification process, planning for service provision and instruction, type and frequency of progress monitoring, parent and family communication, and continued evaluation of programming to ensure students are successfully served.*
- *A plan for oversight to monitor compliance is fully described.*

Staffing

- *Teachers and related service providers are identified and budgeted for according to required staffing levels;*
- *Staff hold required CDE endorsements for their role at all times;*
- *Appropriate staffing levels are maintained at all times, including how mid-year/unanticipated vacancies will be addressed;*
- *Staff receive ongoing mentoring, coaching, and professional development.*

Budget

- *Proposed budget clearly includes all necessary staff, equipment, instructional materials, assessments, etc.*

At-Risk Students

- *Describes interventions and strategies to bring low performing and credit deficient students up to grade level and the anticipated areas of support students will need.*

Status: Completed

Form Result

Programming

(1) Detail how the school will accommodate the needs of all students. Rather than listing law or regulation, provide an explanation of how students will be served in the charter school. Information related to student identification, interventions, programming, assessment, progress monitoring, re-designation and exiting special programming should be addressed.

To accommodate the needs of all students, our school will implement a comprehensive, inclusive support system grounded in data-driven instruction, personalized interventions, and a collaborative team approach. We believe every student brings unique strengths and learning needs, and our goal is to ensure that each learner is met with the appropriate level of support, challenge, and care—regardless of their background, learning style, or circumstances.

Student Identification begins with universal screening of all students at least three times per year using tools such as i-Ready for academic benchmarks, teacher observations, and school-based referrals for behavioral, social-emotional, or language needs. These screening tools allow us to identify students who may benefit from additional support and begin the process of tailoring services. For students who exhibit persistent challenges, our school will initiate targeted interventions and progress monitoring within the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) before considering any referrals for special education or 504 accommodations.

Interventions and Programming will be tiered to match the intensity of student needs. Tier 1 supports include strong core instruction with embedded differentiation strategies, accommodations as needed, and classroom-based supports like flexible grouping and scaffolds. Tier 2 interventions provide small-group instruction in targeted areas such as reading, math, executive functioning, or social skills. These groups are facilitated by intervention specialists, counselors, or trained general education teachers. For students requiring more intensive help, Tier 3 services offer individualized interventions or pull-out supports. In some cases, these may lead to further evaluations and eligibility for formal supports such as an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan.

Assessment and Progress Monitoring are integral to our instructional model. Students receiving interventions are closely monitored through curriculum-based measurements (CBMs), formative assessments, and individualized SMART goals. Our intervention teams—including classroom teachers, specialists, and administrators—meet regularly to analyze student data and adjust supports accordingly. These teams ensure that interventions are not only in place but effective and timely.

Re-designation and Exiting Special Programming will be handled with great care and collaboration. For English Language Learners (ELLs), language proficiency assessments (e.g., ACCESS) will determine when students meet exit criteria. For students receiving Tier 2 or 3 academic or behavioral supports, exit decisions are based on demonstrated progress over time, typically supported by several cycles of progress monitoring data. For students with IEPs or 504 Plans, annual reviews and re-evaluations every three years—or as needed—ensure services remain appropriate. In all cases, families are partners in the process and are included in data reviews, service planning, and decision-making.

Our approach ensures that support services are seamlessly integrated into the fabric of everyday teaching and learning—not as a separate system, but as a shared responsibility across all staff. Through early identification, targeted support, and responsive instruction, we will provide a learning environment where all students can access the curriculum, thrive academically and socially, and reach their full potential.

(2) Describe how the charter school will implement programming and provide oversight for each of the groups listed below:

- Students identified as educationally disadvantaged students
- Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- Students with Section 504 Plans
- Students identified as English Language Learners
- Students struggling academically with no learning disability
- Students identified as Gifted and Talented
- Homeless students/ McKinney-Vento Act.

Koson Schools is committed to meeting the needs of all students by implementing inclusive, evidence-based programming and a strong system of oversight tailored to each group's specific needs. We believe that equity in education means understanding and supporting diverse learners through targeted services, continuous progress monitoring, and a team-based approach that includes educators, families, and community resources.

Students Identified as Educationally Disadvantaged

Educationally disadvantaged students—such as those from low-income backgrounds, experiencing food or housing insecurity, or facing barriers to academic success—will receive layered supports through our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). This includes academic interventions, social-emotional learning (SEL) supports, access to school meals, and mental health counseling. Teachers will receive professional development in trauma-informed practices and culturally responsive instruction. These students will be identified through universal screeners, school intake forms, and teacher referrals, and monitored through data meetings and progress tracking tools. We will maintain strong partnerships with community organizations to help provide wraparound services.

Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

Students with IEPs will be served through a continuum of services aligned with their unique learning needs. Our special education staff—including licensed special educators, speech/language pathologists, and school psychologists—will deliver services through inclusive co-teaching, pull-out instruction, and direct therapy, as needed. Every student's IEP will be implemented with fidelity, and progress toward IEP goals will be tracked regularly using standardized assessments and curriculum-based measures. Annual reviews and triennial reevaluations will be held in collaboration with families and service providers. The Director of Student Services will oversee compliance and case management.

Students with Section 504 Plans

Students with disabilities who require accommodations but do not qualify for special education will be supported through Section 504 Plans. These plans will be developed collaboratively with families and school staff and will outline specific accommodations necessary to access the general education curriculum. Teachers will be trained on 504 compliance and implementation. Plans will be reviewed annually and updated as needed. The 504 Coordinator, in partnership with the school counselor, will ensure that all plans are followed and that accommodations are effectively documented and communicated.

Students Identified as English Language Learners (ELLs)

Our English Language Development (ELD) programming will support students in acquiring academic and social English proficiency while participating fully in grade-level content. ELLs will be identified through home language surveys and language proficiency assessments (e.g., WIDA ACCESS). Services will be provided through a combination of push-in and pull-out models, with ELD teachers collaborating closely with general education staff. Instruction will be differentiated based on language proficiency levels, and ELL progress will be monitored regularly. Parents will receive communications in their preferred languages, and students will have language acquisition plans reviewed annually.

Students Struggling Academically with No Learning Disability

Students who do not have a diagnosed disability but are performing below grade level will be supported through our MTSS framework. These students will receive evidence-based Tier 2 (targeted small group) and Tier 3 (intensive, individualized) interventions in literacy, math, and executive functioning. Intervention progress will be tracked biweekly, and adjustments will be made based on data. If a student continues to struggle despite robust interventions, a referral for evaluation under IDEA or Section 504 may be initiated. Interventionists, classroom teachers, and student support teams will collaborate to ensure each student receives the right level of support.

Students Identified as Gifted and Talented

Gifted students will have access to programming that extends and enriches core instruction. Students will be identified through a body of evidence that includes standardized tests, teacher/parent referrals, and student performance. Individual Advanced Learning Plans (ALPs) will be developed with input from teachers, parents, and the student. Instruction will be differentiated in the classroom and may include acceleration, independent projects, or specialized electives. A dedicated GT coordinator will oversee identification, programming, and ongoing evaluation of student progress. ALPs will be reviewed annually, and teachers will receive training in supporting gifted learners.

Homeless Students / McKinney-Vento Act

Students experiencing homelessness or housing instability will be identified at enrollment and throughout the school year. We will ensure immediate enrollment regardless of documentation and provide access to transportation, meals, counseling, and academic support. A designated Homeless Liaison, in coordination with the district McKinney-Vento Coordinator, will ensure students have access to services and remain in their school of origin when appropriate. Teachers and staff will be trained annually to identify and refer students in unstable housing situations, and outreach will be made to families to ensure awareness of available support.
Across all student groups, our school is committed to inclusive practices, proactive identification, individualized supports, and continuous monitoring to ensure every student can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Oversight will be led by the

Director of Student Services and a cross-functional team of specialists who meet regularly to evaluate programming and ensure compliance with all state, federal, and district requirements.

The plan for implementation must include a comprehensive description of:

- Programming models and processes that will be implemented to ensure accommodation, instruction, intervention and support for students on 504 plans or IEPs, or for students who are educationally disadvantaged (i.e., co-teaching, inclusion, resources, curriculum, grouping of students, plan for needed physical space or equipment, etc.)
- Programming models and processes that will be implemented to identify and accommodate students who are Gifted and Talented
- Programming models and processes that will ensure the needs of all English Language Learners are met
- Framework for oversight to ensure compliance with law and regulation (i.e. compliance with individualized plans, methods for progress monitoring and assessment, procedural compliance, chain of command, problem-solving/accountability process, etc.)
- A description of the framework for monitoring all students to determine universal, targeted or intensive needs. (MTSS/RtI)

To accommodate and support all learners, the school will implement a comprehensive and inclusive set of programming models and processes rooted in best practices, data-informed decision-making, and legal compliance. For students with 504 Plans, IEPs, and those who are educationally disadvantaged, we will use co-teaching, push-in/pull-out models, and differentiated instruction to ensure equitable access to high-quality learning. In secondary classrooms, co-teaching will allow general and special education teachers to collaboratively deliver instruction in inclusive settings. At the elementary level, specialized instruction will be delivered both within and outside the classroom, based on student needs and service delivery models. Accommodations such as extended time, assistive technology, sensory tools, and flexible seating will be consistently implemented. Curriculum will be differentiated to include manipulatives, visuals, and adaptive materials, and classrooms will be designed to provide space for small-group interventions, resource services, and therapy.

To meet the needs of Gifted and Talented students, a universal screening process will be used alongside referrals and body-of-evidence collection to identify students for GT services. Identified students will receive personalized Advanced Learning Plans (ALPs), which will guide instruction, enrichment, and acceleration opportunities. These may include flexible grouping, compacted curriculum, and advanced coursework, such as independent study or participation in STEM-focused projects and competitions. Teachers will receive training in differentiation to meet GT student needs in all content areas.

English Language Learners (ELLs) will be supported through a multi-tiered service delivery model. Initial identification will occur through the home language survey and WIDA ACCESS screener, followed by the development of individualized Language Learner Plans (LLPs). Tier 1 support will include instructional scaffolds and co-planned lessons between general education and ELD teachers. Tier 2 will provide small-group pull-out sessions with ELD teachers, while Tier 3 will offer intensive, individualized instruction for newcomers and students with the greatest language needs. Language proficiency will be monitored annually, and re-designation will occur when students meet state-defined exit criteria. Families will be supported with translated materials and interpretation services throughout the process.

Oversight of special programming will be conducted by the Director of Student Services and the IEP & Assessment Specialist, who will ensure compliance with individualized plans, legal timelines, and service delivery. Teachers will use a digital system to track accommodation implementation, service minutes, and progress toward student goals. PLCs and data team meetings will be used to review progress and make instructional adjustments. A clear chain of accountability will be in place, with service providers reporting to support leads, who in turn report to the Head of School and Board of Directors. Quarterly reports and compliance checks will ensure transparency and adherence to all requirements.

A robust Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework will be implemented to monitor and respond to students' academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs. Universal screening using tools like i-Ready will occur three times a year. Students identified for Tier 2 interventions will receive targeted small-group instruction, while those requiring Tier 3 support will receive individualized plans and more intensive

services. Regular progress monitoring and data reviews will guide decisions about movement across tiers, referral to special education, or exit from intervention. This framework ensures that all students are supported in a timely, inclusive, and effective manner.

Staffing

(1) Based on the intervention plan, describe how the school will hire and retain properly licensed staff to meet the needs of students with individualized needs. Describe the professional development plan for special education teachers, including a calendar of professional development days.

To effectively support students with individualized needs, the school will implement a strategic approach to hiring and retaining properly licensed staff. All special education teachers and related service providers will be required to hold appropriate Colorado Department of Education (CDE) endorsements for their roles, ensuring legal compliance and instructional quality from the outset. Job postings will be disseminated widely through local, state, and national platforms to attract high-quality candidates. The school will also collaborate with staffing agencies and university partnerships to help fill hard-to-staff or specialized positions, such as speech-language pathologists or school psychologists.

To retain top talent, the school will offer competitive salaries aligned with Douglas County School District's pay scale, comprehensive benefits packages, manageable caseloads, and a supportive professional culture that promotes collaboration and continued learning. Special education staff will have access to dedicated planning time, coaching support, and leadership pathways within the school to foster long-term career growth and satisfaction.

Professional development (PD) for special education teachers will be ongoing, embedded in the school's calendar, and responsive to student data and instructional needs. Each year, special education teachers will participate in at least five dedicated PD days focused on topics such as effective IEP development, differentiated instruction, co-teaching strategies, trauma-informed practices, behavioral interventions, and legal compliance. Additionally, the school will offer regular coaching sessions and PLC meetings to support implementation of practices and review student progress. Staff will also be encouraged to attend relevant district trainings, conferences, and workshops to stay current with best practices and regulatory changes. A full professional development calendar is included in the appendix, reflecting intentional scheduling of sessions across the year to support continuous improvement and implementation fidelity.

(2) Describe the professional development plan for general education teachers and related service providers to have access to coaching, mentoring, and professional development specific to their practice to serve the needs of students with individualized needs, including a calendar of professional development days.

Enter contet here

The professional development plan for general education teachers and related service providers is designed to ensure that all staff are equipped with the knowledge, tools, and support necessary to effectively serve students with individualized needs. The plan includes structured coaching, targeted mentoring, and professional development sessions that are aligned with the school's instructional goals and student support framework.

Throughout the school year, general education teachers and service providers will participate in a minimum of five dedicated professional development days focused specifically on inclusive practices, differentiation, co-teaching strategies, accommodations and modifications, behavior management, social-emotional learning (SEL), and collaboration with special education and support staff. These sessions will be facilitated by internal experts, instructional coaches, and external consultants as needed. Additional training will be embedded during early release days, PLC meetings, and staff collaboration time to allow for ongoing, just-in-time learning tied directly to student needs.

Teachers will receive coaching through a blended model that includes informal walk-throughs with feedback, scheduled observation cycles, and one-on-one support from the school's instructional coach and special education leads. New or early-career teachers will be paired with mentor teachers who have demonstrated success in working with diverse learners, creating a strong foundation of support and professional growth. Peer observation and reflection will also be embedded into the professional culture, enabling staff to learn from one another's practices.

All training and coaching opportunities are aligned to school priorities, state and federal compliance expectations, and the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework. Staff will receive support in analyzing student data, developing intervention strategies, and implementing accommodations and modifications with fidelity. A full professional development calendar, included in the appendix, outlines the scheduled learning sessions throughout the academic year, ensuring sustained and intentional professional learning for all staff.

(3) Describe the teacher-to-student ratio for special service providers that complies with authorizing district's requirements for students with individualized needs.

To ensure high-quality support and compliance with Douglas County School District (DCSD) requirements, the school will maintain teacher-to-student ratios for special service providers that align with the district's established guidelines for serving students with individualized needs. These ratios are carefully planned to allow for the delivery of effective, targeted instruction and related services while maintaining manageable caseloads for staff.
The staffing plan includes the following ratios:

- **Special Education Teachers (LSS):** 1:25
- **Speech-Language Pathologists (SLP):** 1:30
- **School Social Workers or Psychologists (Elementary):** 1:700
- **School Social Workers or Psychologists (Secondary):** 1:800
- **Occupational Therapists:** 1:30

These ratios will guide hiring decisions and service planning throughout the year. The school's leadership team will regularly assess service needs based on student enrollment, IEP service minutes, and caseload demands to ensure staffing remains aligned with both district policy and student support needs. Additional staff or contracted service providers will be brought in when necessary to meet unexpected increases in service demands or to cover mid-year vacancies. This approach ensures that all students with individualized needs receive the appropriate level of support, and that staff have the capacity to implement accommodations, provide specialized instruction, and deliver high-quality services consistently.

(4) Describe a plan to modify the instructional programs, practices, and strategies, as well as any schedule adjustments and any additional resources the school will employ to meet the needs of students with individualized needs.

The school is committed to proactively modifying instructional programs, practices, and schedules to ensure that students with individualized needs—including those with IEPs, 504 Plans, English Language Learners (ELLs), Gifted and Talented (GT) students, and students identified through MTSS—receive equitable access to rigorous, supportive learning environments.

Instructionally, the school will emphasize differentiated instruction, co-teaching, and inclusive practices. Teachers will design lessons using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, allowing multiple pathways for students to access content, engage in learning, and demonstrate mastery. Flexible grouping strategies, scaffolded supports, and the integration of assistive technology (such as text-to-speech tools or graphic organizers) will be standard. Teachers will also collaborate with interventionists, special education staff, and ELD teachers to co-plan and, when appropriate, co-teach in general education settings to reduce student pullout and promote inclusive learning.

To accommodate service delivery and instructional supports, the daily schedule will include dedicated intervention blocks—at the elementary level, this time will be used for academic support, speech/language services, and enrichment; at the secondary level, an "Access" period will be used for social-emotional learning, executive functioning instruction, tutoring, or targeted interventions. These built-in times prevent students from missing core academic content while receiving services.

Instructional practices will also include curriculum modifications and personalized accommodations for students with disabilities and language acquisition needs. Curriculum materials will be selected with flexibility in mind, offering adaptive features and supplemental supports. Additional resources, such as enrichment tools for GT students, behavior intervention plans, or progress monitoring assessments, will be employed based on student need.

To ensure effective implementation, the school will invest in ongoing professional development for teachers, focusing on inclusive strategies, differentiated instruction, co-teaching, and use of data to drive intervention. Coaching and mentoring will be embedded to support staff in applying these practices in real time.

Ultimately, this approach ensures that all students—regardless of background or learning need—can thrive within a responsive, student-centered academic environment.

Budget Narrative for Serving Students with Special Needs

(1) Detail in the narrative how the budget will ensure required resources are in place and will be maintained to support all students, including students with individualized needs, 504 designations, READ Plans, Gifted and Talented, or educationally disadvantaged students. The description should include curricula and instructional materials; assessment materials; equipment; necessary staffing ratios in each identified area, according to authorizer ratio requirements; and professional development costs.

The school's budget is intentionally designed to ensure the allocation and sustainability of all necessary resources to support a diverse student population, including those with individualized needs, students on 504 plans, those with READ Plans, Gifted and Talented (GT) students, and educationally disadvantaged students. At the core of this financial planning is a commitment to equitable access, instructional excellence, and compliance with district and state mandates.

Curricula and Instructional Materials: The budget includes funding for high-quality, evidence-based core curriculum aligned with Colorado Academic Standards, supplemented with differentiated instructional materials to support diverse learners. This includes leveled readers, manipulatives for hands-on math instruction, intervention programs such as SPIRE or Wilson for students on READ Plans, and enrichment materials for GT students. For students with IEPs and 504 plans, adaptive learning tools, visual supports, and assistive technologies (e.g., speech-to-text software, audiobooks, and graphic organizers) are budgeted to ensure access to content.

Assessment Materials: To support early identification and ongoing monitoring, the budget provides for universal screening tools such as i-Ready, WIDA ACCESS for multilingual learners, CoGAT for GT identification, and curriculum-based measurement tools for monitoring academic growth. Funds are also allocated for diagnostic and standardized testing protocols required for special education eligibility, 504 accommodations, and progress monitoring, including subscriptions for scoring software or licensing where applicable.

Equipment and Physical Resources: The budget accounts for specialized equipment to serve students with disabilities, such as adjustable desks, noise-canceling headphones, alternative seating, and sensory supports. Therapy-specific tools for occupational and speech-language services are also included, ensuring service providers can deliver targeted interventions effectively.

Staffing Ratios and Personnel: Based on the projected enrollment and the anticipated percentage of students requiring specialized services, the budget includes funding for licensed special education teachers, educational assistants (paraprofessionals), speech-language pathologists, school psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, and English Language Development (ELD) teachers. Staffing levels are aligned with Douglas County School District's required ratios (e.g., 1:25 for special education teachers, 1:30 for SLPs, 1:700 for mental health professionals at elementary level), and contingency plans are in place to contract external providers if hiring is not possible mid-year.

Professional Development Costs: The budget designates funding for ongoing professional development tailored to general and special education staff. This includes training in IEP implementation, behavior interventions, trauma-informed practices, culturally responsive teaching, and co-teaching models. Funds are also set aside for staff to attend district-provided workshops, conferences on gifted education, MTSS, and English language instruction. Mentoring and coaching programs are supported through stipends and release time.

Through careful forecasting, aligned spending, and a clear commitment to instructional equity, the budget ensures that all students, especially those with specialized needs,

are served with the resources, personnel, and instructional tools necessary for their academic and social-emotional success.

(2) Describe any specialized services that are to be contracted out. Include services contracted to the authorizer, or with outside consultant(s), including special service providers and school nursing services.

The school plans to contract specific specialized services to ensure that all students receive the high-quality support they need, especially in cases where in-house capacity may be limited or when highly specialized expertise is required. These contracted services will complement the core instructional and student support framework by filling in gaps that cannot be addressed through full-time staff alone.
First, the school will utilize Douglas County School District (DCSD) specialist teams to provide targeted services that go beyond the internal staffing structure. These district-contracted services may include Behavior Specialists, Autism Specialists, Audiologists, Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) Teachers, Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TVIs), and SWAAAC (Statewide Assistive Technology, Augmentative and Alternative Communication) teams. These experts will support the needs of students whose Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) require highly specialized instruction or evaluations not deliverable in-house.
In the event that the school is unable to hire a school psychologist or other related service provider, such as a speech-language pathologist (SLP) or occupational therapist (OT), the school will contract with licensed agencies or individual consultants to ensure timely provision of services and evaluations, including cognitive assessments and required reevaluations.
Additionally, school nursing services may be contracted out if a full-time nurse is not on staff. The school will either employ a licensed nurse or partner with a certified nursing provider to support student health needs, oversee medication administration, and maintain compliance with state health regulations.
All contracted service providers will be required to meet Colorado Department of Education (CDE) licensure standards and undergo background checks. These partnerships will be governed by clear scopes of work and monitored by the Director of Student Services and IEP/Assessment Specialist to ensure accountability, effectiveness, and compliance with all legal and procedural requirements.

Upload any documents that support the content of this application element (optional)

Center Based Programming

Explain your Board's level of interest in providing center-based education at your school. If there was an opportunity to collaborate with the District for land allocation based on the addition of

center-based classrooms that were operated by DCSD, would you have an interest? What would this type of relationship look like from your perspective?

We are interested in this opportunity. However, based on our conversations with Superintendent Kane and Gordon Mosher, it appears that the district's strategy has shifted. We were informed that the district no longer intends to lease land, making such an arrangement no longer feasible. If this strategy were to change, we would be open to revisiting the possibility of a partnership.
Additionally, we recognize the significant need for center-based programming in our district. Alongside this replication application, we would welcome discussions on the possibility of opening a charter school specifically designed to serve students with these needs. Currently, the district's special education funding model presents financial challenges that make it difficult for a charter school to operate such a program. However, we are open to exploring collaborative solutions to help address this growing need.

Notes

Question was added at 04/02/2025 11:15 AM by Dan Mcminimee

Please provide specific examples to illustrate to the comment "Currently, the district's special education funding model presents financial challenges".

Question was added at 04/02/2025 11:17 AM by Dan Mcminimee

Please provide more information specific to the comment "However, based on our conversations with Superintendent Kane and Gordon Mosher, it appears that the district's strategy has shifted."

S) School Management Contracts

Reviewer Instructions

IF THERE IS NO CHANGE IN THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT CONTACTS FROM THE ORIGINAL CHARTER, PLEASE INDICATE IN YOUR RESPONSE SECTION THAT THERE IS NO CHANGE.
The applicant demonstrates the effectiveness of the proposed school management provider academically, operationally and financially, includes a rationale for the selection of this provider, and identifies any existing or potential conflicts of interest between provider and school and board stakeholders.

Status: Completed

Form Result

IF THERE IS NO CHANGE IN THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT CONTACTS FROM THE ORIGINAL CHARTER, PLEASE INDICATE IN YOUR RESPONSE SECTION THAT THERE IS NO CHANGE.
If the applicant is proposing to contract with an education management provider, they must complete this section and the authorizer should

be provided the opportunity to review and approve the contract prior to it being executed. If there is no intention of contracting with an education management provider, this section does not apply.

(1) Provide a history of the operations of the education management provider, as well as a summary of the performance data for the schools the education management provider is managing at the time of the application or has managed previously, including documentation of academic achievement and school management success.

This section does not apply to our organization at this time.

(2) Provide evidence demonstrating the education management provider's capacity for successful expansion while maintaining quality in the schools it is managing.

This section does not apply to our organization at this time.

(3) Provide evidence that there are no existing or potential conflicts of interest between the members of governing board of the proposed charter school and the education management provider.

This section does not apply to our organization at this time.

(4) Provide evidence that the management contract is negotiated at arm's-length, with both parties having independent legal counsel.

This section does not apply to our organization at this time.

(5) Provide a plan adopted by the charter school governing board to evaluate the performance of the management company at least annually, including a copy of the instrument that will be used to conduct the evaluation.

This section does not apply to our organization at this time.

Performance of the management company evaluation tool

(6) State which staff will be employed by the management company vs. the school.

This section does not apply to our organization at this time.

(7) Provide a copy of the actual or proposed performance-based contract between the governing board of the school and the education management provider that specifies, at a

minimum, the following material terms:

- Performance evaluation measures;
- The methods of contract oversight and enforcement that the governing board will apply;
- The compensation structure and all fees that the proposed charter school will pay to the education management provider; and
- The conditions for contract renewal and termination. The contract must be able to be severed by the school due to lack of satisfactory academic performance or for cause without undue burden to the school.

Performance-based contract between the governing board of the school and the education management provider

If the applicant is proposing to contract with an education management provider, they must complete this section and the authorizer should be provided the opportunity to review and approve the contract prior to it being executed. If there is no intention of contracting with an education management provider, this section does not apply.

EMP Selection

Explains the process by which the ESP/service provider was selected.

This section does not apply to our organization at this time.

EMP Track Record

- *Provides evidence that the provider has been successful in the academic and/or business operation aspects of other schools, including demonstrated academic achievement with the target population, as well as successful management of non-academic school functions.*

This section does not apply to our organization at this time.

EMP Management Plan

- *Provides a draft management contract as an attachment, including the cost, length of contract, and the process to evaluate, oversee, renew, or terminate the contract without adversely affecting the viability of the school.*

This section does not apply to our organization at this time.

Legal and Contractual Relationship with EMP

- *Provides an explanation of any existing or potential conflicts of interest between the governing board of the proposed charter school and the education management provider.*
- *Provides clear evidence that the ESP/service provider is authorized to conduct business in Colorado.*

Enter content here	This section does not apply to our organization at this time.
Upload any documents that support the content of this application element (optional)	