

CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION FOR NH DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Wellheart Chartered Public School (WCS)

Opening Minds and Inspiring Wellness

Contact

Dr. Traci Korhonen: 619-929-9370, tracidemuth@dreamacademe.org

Mailing Address: 4 Pinewood Drive, Amherst, NH 03031

Opening Date

September 2025

Location

Hillsborough County

Submitted

July 24, 2023

Enrollment & Growth Chart

		K	1st	2st	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	Total
Year 1	2025-26	30	29	29	29	26	26	25	25	25	244
Year 2	2026-27	31	30	30	29	29	28	27	27	26	257
Year 3	2027-28	33	32	33	32	30	29	29	28	27	273
Year 4	2028-29	34	34	34	33	33	31	30	30	29	288
Year 5	2029-30	34	34	34	34	34	34	33	33	32	302

This application was made possible by the following community members, which include Founders and Founding Board Members, which are in no particular order.

Kyle Morse
Alison Sanchez
Amy Marcum (Hindmarsh)
Rich Lowney
Kimberly Bellemore
Gabrielle LeBlanc -Winch
Kim Ballantyne

Peggy Hafenberg
Megan Carignan
Michelle Flynn
Nicole Sousa
Brooke Santiago
Emily Wiete
Dr. Traci Korhonen

NO WAY. THE HUNDRED IS THERE

The child
 is made of one hundred.
 The child has
 a hundred languages
 a hundred hands
 a hundred thoughts
 a hundred ways of thinking,
 of playing, of speaking.

A hundred always a hundred
 ways of listening
 of marveling of loving
 a hundred joys
 for singing and understanding
 a hundred worlds
 to discover
 a hundred worlds
 to invent
 a hundred worlds
 to dream.

The child has
 a hundred languages
 (and a hundred hundred hundred more)
 but they steal ninety-nine.

The school and the culture
 separate the head from the body.

They tell the child:
 to think without hands
 to do without head
 to listen and not to speak
 to understand without joy
 To love and to marvel
 only at Easter and Christmas.

They tell the child:
 to discover the world already there
 and of the hundred
 they steal ninety-nine.

They tell the child:
 that work and play
 reality and fantasy
 science and imagination
 sky and earth
 reason and dream
 are things
 that do not belong together.

And thus they tell the child
 that the hundred is not there.
 The child says:
 No way. The hundred is there.

Loris Malaguzzi (translated by Lella Gandini)

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I. Letter of Intent

See **Exhibit A** for the Letter of Intent, submitted and received on 2/28/23 to the Department of Education Charter School Office.

II. Application Cover Sheet and Technical Requirements

A. Application Cover Sheet - See the cover of this application.

B. Technical Requirements

This application has been prepared using the criteria set forth in the ‘New Hampshire Department Application Rubric’ and evaluation guidelines set forth in the ‘New Hampshire Department of Education Charter School Evaluation Scoring Guide For Proposed Charter School Applications’ as provided by the State of New Hampshire at the time of receipt and acceptance of the ‘Letter of Intent’ as dated 2/28/23.

III. Introduction

A. General description and proposed or potential location, RSA194-B:3, II(a); Ed 318.05(c)(2)

Wellheart Chartered Public School (referred to as WCS or Wellheart hereafter) will provide an accessible, adaptable educational option to students grades K-8 in Hillsborough County. The Reggio-inspired, research-based educational model is integrated with areas of value and need in the local region, including but not limited to, wellness, nature, creativity, and freedom. WCS is designed to advance collaboration between students, teachers, families, and the community, in service of improved outcomes. This school is projected to open in Fall of 2025.

WCS’ educational model posits the environment as an informant of learning and, as such, puts special emphasis on location selection. The environment will reflect the school’s values of community, wellness, and natural elements. The school will provide suitable indoor and outdoor space to support curriculum and school growth projected in the five year model, and/or land to support construction of additional structures in the future. A potential property in Milford has been selected and the paperwork is awaiting charter approval. Please see sections **XI. Part B** and **XI. Part D** for more details on location.

B. Name, address, telephone and fax numbers, and email address of contact person, Ed 318.05 (c)(3)

Founding Leader: Dr. Traci Korhonen: 619-929-9370, tracidemuth@dreamacademe.org

Mailing Address: 4 Pinewood Drive, Amherst, NH 03031

C. Identification of the eligible person(s) or entity of the applicant, RSA 194-B:3, V. Ed 318.05 (c)(4)

In accordance with provisions to RSA 194-B:3, V, the WCS application to establish a state authorized charter school has been submitted by Dream AcadeME, a nonprofit organization. Dream AcadeME is a registered nonprofit organization with the State of New Hampshire, and will be managing the charter application process and operations functions until the state approves WCS as a chartered public school, upon which it will form its own non-profit 501(c)3. On the founding team Dr. Traci Korhonen, Ed.D. and Kim Ballantyne are NH registered teachers. Further, the founding team has more than 10 parents.

D. Educational Vision and Mission Statement, RSA 194-B:3, II (d), Ed 318.09 (e)(1)

Wellheart's mission applies Reggio-inspired pedagogy and research based practices for students to experience joyful, immersive, and inquiry-based learning in the context of their environment. We empower youth to make informed decisions and take actions rooted in knowledge, investigative thinking, and compassion. Our educational process is focused on values of human dignity, active participation, wellness, and freedom.

Wellheart's vision will cultivate ecologically aware and open-minded citizens with the capability to support themselves, others, and the planet through constructivism and collaboration. The educational model will integrate peers, teachers, family, community, and the environment to advance a culture of growth, symbiosis, and sustainability.

E. A summary of the school's focus, including a description of the characteristics, methods, and goals of the school, Ed 318.05 (c)(9)

WCS will focus on three primary goals in preparing children for a world that is becoming ever more dynamic by: 1) Encouraging a culture of care for ourselves, others, and the environment; 2) Taking ownership of our growth, health, and development, and; 3) Engaging in relationships, dialogues, and projects that develop our ability to initiate, research, plan, and execute when presented with challenges of any kind.

At WCS we support every child to express, enrich, and develop their individuality. We believe in honoring the unique learning styles and talents of each child. We provide opportunities for research, collaboration, skill building, and exploration by engaging with the students' contextual understanding and interests that emerge through play and peer relationships. We will create an indoor and outdoor environment that honors each child's innate desire for learning and fosters a culture of wellness. While some learning will be found in prefabricated curriculum, this will be balanced with project work that emerges from children's observed interests and curiosities.

CHARACTERISTICS

To achieve our mission, vision, and goals, WCS has adopted 11 guiding characteristics: 1) Reggio-Inspired Pedagogy, 2) Environment as 3rd Teacher, 3) Outdoor Classroom, 4) Teacher as a Researcher, 5) Families as a Partner, 6) Making Learning Visible, 7) Developmentally Appropriate Practices, 8) Wellness Education, 9) Socio-Emotional Well-Being, 10) Creativity, and 11) Free Thinking. To read about these areas in more detail and the research behind these 11 characteristics, please see **Exhibit B**. For examples of established, Reggio-Inspired Elementary and/or Middle Schools, please see **Exhibit H**.

METHODS

The above characteristics are implemented with these diverse methodologies:

Cross-Age Collaboration Methods... The environment is set up to allow students from different age groups to work and learn together. Our classrooms will be grouped and intermingled throughout the day in cohorts of Grades K-2, Grades 3-5, and Grades 6-8. For a full spectrum multi-age experience, some classes such as music, wellness, reading buddies, and some project work will take place with students from grades K-8.

Place-Based Learning Methods... WCS will offer school-site learning, but will also be highly integrated with place-based learning. RSA 189-24 allows for hybrid instruction with parent/guardian request. Parents will request hybrid learning through a form during the application process and commit to how many days a week (between 1-5 days) they wish to participate on-site for that school year. Place-based learning addresses a need in the larger community for families whose children do learn best in distinct environments, such as at home, museums, libraries, forests, parks, work studies, rehabilitation or specialist classes/services, and other off-site locations. Further, we support families who want to spend more time together, but need or want the community of a school - it takes a village!

Process-Based Learning Methods... Ideas are developed and built upon one another over time. The students are given time to revisit and reflect on their original work and ideas. They develop these further through new experiences, activities, and forms of expression, with the focus being on process over product. The continuity of work is important in building and sustaining collaborative working relationships with classmates and teachers.

Project-Based Learning Methods... Students engage in co-construction of ideas, skills, and concepts while cooperating with other students and their teachers in long-term projects. Projects may be based on either teacher or student initiatives, but are always developed in relation to the children's interests. When children are fully invested in a project, they become intrinsically motivated to learn and work through challenges.

Multidimensional Learning Process Methods... The four dimensions of child development include social, emotional, physical, and cognitive. In addition to these developmental domains, there are also dimensions of learning styles, often referred to as auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learners. Understanding the individual learning styles of our students, and teaching in a way that integrates them all in various dynamics, will guide our teaching practices.

Multidisciplinary Learning Process Methods... This interdisciplinary method allows us to connect all aspects of learning including outdoor education, arts education, the food program, wellness (emotional and physical), and all academic subjects, which can offer students a global understanding of life. This method can help bring students to a new awareness of the meaningful connections that exist among the disciplines. Our focus will be to integrate subjects in order to create a 'flow' to student learning.

Technology as Research Tools... We want children to have access to technology when it has the possibility to enrich their learning. Computers can be a wonderful tool for engineering, designing, and researching. We will have one portable computer lab with laptops with 30 devices so an entire grade level can use computers at once. Computers will be used solely for research and school-related work. WCS primarily opts for "old-fashioned" textbooks for each student instead of learning devices. Therefore, WCS does not need a device for each child, and finds that unnecessary to educate children, and oftentimes more of a distraction from learning. Teachers and parents will communicate using an app like Class Dojo or something similar, to share work the child does at home and at school. A physical portfolio will be kept at school where children will bring work completed at home, as well as a virtual portfolio on Google Docs or a similar platform to work on at home or at school. (See technology policy in Section VI, Part L).

F. Target Population

As a public charter school, WCS will welcome all students grades K-8 and their families. We project that a majority of students will reside in Hillsborough County and represent the current diversity of the area. We anticipate that WCS will build a community that connects various cross-sections of our region, including but not limited to:

- Families who seek an emphasis on wellness and socio-emotional skill development in their students' educational curriculum and environment.
- Families who desire to be highly involved in their students' academic experience, and serve as educational partners in place-based learning.
- Families of students who may benefit from an educational model incorporating more physical activity, time outdoors, hands-on learning experiences, and/or emergent curriculum. This includes students who may experience attention or behavioral challenges in traditional school structures.
- Families of students who experience clinical conditions that limit their ability to thrive with a 5-day a-week, on-site educational schedule. This includes students who experience medical conditions that impact their physical stamina.

G. Measurable Goals and Objectives for school opening and a timeline for implementation, Ed 318.05 (c)(9)

WCS's proposed timeline for implementation is as follows:

July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form our Founding Board Members. – Complete • Secure an accountant and bookkeeper. – Complete • Secure a lawyer. – Complete • Visit at least five potential school sites. – Complete • Approve a detailed five-year post-operations budget. – Complete
August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make an offer on a facility or secure a rental location. – Complete • Start formation process and outline transition timeline to become a separate nonprofit from Dream AcadeME. – In progress • Approve a budget that includes full operations costs for the period February 2024-August 2025. – Complete
September 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for a grant from the State of NH when it opens mid-September. – Complete • Founding Board members create marketing/communication tools and start outreach to key contacts to raise awareness. – Ongoing • Post Co-Heads of School and Teacher positions online. – Complete
October 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin preparations for the first fundraiser event, form a fundraising committee. - Complete • Founding Board members develop public relations, fundraising, and facilities preparation. – In progress • Founding Board members outline plan and gather paperwork for applying to National School Lunch Program. – In progress • Develop a Fundraising Committee - Complete
November 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Founding Board members negotiate terms for acquiring property. – In progress

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Founding Board members develop plan for traffic study, site surveillance, environmental inspections, certifications, etc.– In progress • Fundraising Committee Launch fundraiser events - Complete
December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare 1023 form – In progress • Build relationships within the community for fundraising. – In progress • Founding Board members begin interviews for Co-Head of School positions. – In progress • Fundraising Committee to plan fundraising events. – In progress • Develop site surveillance plan. – In progress
January 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin building a school website. • Secure NH nonprofit status • Develop Board of Trustees onboarding, training, and development program • Appoint a formal Board of Trustees to oversee transition of oversight and operations. • Enter into initial contract with facility • Site surveillance complete
February 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch Board of Trustees onboarding, training, and development program • Fundraising Event • Begin non-invasive health and safety inspections, filing for permits, and traffic studies. • Fire Inspection • Architectural Plans developed for site inspections, compliance, and certifications • Develop and adopt employee contracts with the support of relevant consultants-planning positions.
March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Founding Board members finalize Co-Head of School positions • Kitchen inspected for National School Lunch Program and initial paperwork filed. • Develop a balanced operating budget developed with the support of consulting CPA and approved by the Board of Trustees, annual renewals in line with following fiscal years.
April 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan pilot program for Fall 2024 to build community of families and work out the model under a different nonprofit (not under the charter nonprofit, no overlap in spending)
May 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Traffic Study and integrate requirements with the town and site (if needed) • Marketing campaign plan designed. • All planning positions (as defined in CSP Grant) filled. May include: Co-Heads of School, Maintenance/ Facilities Manager, Administrative Specialist, and Mentor Teacher
June 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next steps filed with National School Lunch Program • WCS website built and launched. • Written and electronic informational materials developed, with support of graphic design and marketing consultants, including accessible formats that address barriers to information in standard formats.
July 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete enrollment and hiring for pilot program
August 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catch up for any remaining tasks unresolved

September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Enrollment and Outreach Committees actively engage in recruitment activities and dissemination of application materials. • Initiate connections with public school leaders and counselors to share information on the school, to support potential recommendations to students and families who may benefit from the WCS model. • Initiate live informational and/or recruitment sessions offered in the catchment area communities.
October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board approves and oversees implementation of outreach campaigns to recruit and hire full-time and special subject teachers. – In progress • Begin remediations for health and safety compliance
November 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty hiring begins and ongoing through May
December 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family and Faculty and Staff Handbooks.
January 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form relationships with local public charter schools for purposes of collaboration • Partnerships established with at least 8 local nonprofits in family/education services • Develop and adopt employment policies/procedures as required by regulations/rules.
February 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food certification completed
March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informational materials shared to school districts in the target catchment area. • Open student enrollment, conduct lottery, and accept applications on rolling basis. • Purchase and implement software systems to manage student information. • Develop and adopt employee contracts and policies/procedures for all positions
April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Founding Leader(s) secure vendors for school operations. • Continue rolling enrollment. • Board completes policy development.
May 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty contracts are finalized, with identified teachers to begin work early July 2025, and other faculty to begin August or September 2025. • Contracts for Administration, Administration Assistant, and other staff positions. • Implement an effective communication system for administration, teachers, and families to include student information, curriculum updates, and school news.
June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities necessary upgrades/renovations are complete or close to complete. • Founding Leader(s) oversee acquisition and production of curriculum materials • Wire building for Wifi & Telecom
July 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracts for remaining identified faculty and staff go into effect. • Complete admissions process and school governance entities and processes. • Teachers begin professional development and curriculum planning. • Complete inspections and certificates for completed remediations for health and safety compliance • Food service staff trained in food safety
August 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up furniture building and facility • Teachers continue professional development and curriculum planning.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase of at least one 14 passenger vehicle, addition to school insurance, identification and training of drivers, student utilization numbers in towns with above average rates of at-risk variables.
September 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellheart Opens

The Board of Trustees is accountable for compliance with this timeline and with all provisions for the operation of the school as set forth in the application as approved.

H. Projected student enrollment for each of the first 5 years of operation, Ed 318.05 (c)(6)

Our projected enrollment is based on an interest list we have gathered throughout 2023 and is at 83 families, and from interactions with the public through Q&A sessions at public libraries and community events, as well as other social networking events, such as local chamber events, charter school events, nonprofit fundraisers, etc.

		K	1st	2st	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	Total
Year 1	2025-26	30	29	29	29	26	26	25	25	25	244
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Year 5	2029-30	34	34	34	34	34	34	33	33	32	302

I. Students to be served: grade levels, maximum number, and other information about pupils to be served. RSA 194-B:3, II (e), Ed 318.09 (c)(5)

WCS will support students in grades K-8. As per our five-year model, the student body will grow by approximately 5-6% each year, from 244 total enrolled students in year one to the capacity of 302 total enrolled students by year five. A relatively low teacher-to-student ratio is required to support our students in the unique ways described in this application. Therefore, we will sustain an average ratio of 1:15.

Through close connection with families and our community, we hope to fill our seats and maximize our impact. Our unique place-based model and adaptable schedule allow us to optimize outreach and serve as many students as possible. We look forward to supporting a diverse school population through our learning styles, learning needs, socioeconomic status, family dynamics, and other cross sections of our community.

J. Educational Need: —How is this school different...will it be located in an underserved community for educationally disadvantaged, at-risk students? List the district, charter, and non-public schools in the general area.

Other schools in the Hillsborough County Area include:

2nd Nature Academy/Nature of Things
 Academy For Science And Design Charter School
 Amherst School District
 Bedford Academy
 Bedford School District
 Brookline School District
 Christian Bible Church Academy
 Contoocook Valley School District
 Country Village Montessori School
 Gate City Charter School For The Arts

Goffstown School District
 Heritage Baptist Academy
 Hillsboro Christian School
 Hillsboro Deering Coop School District
 Hollis Brookline Coop School District
 Hollis Montessori School
 Hollis School District
 Hudson School District
 Kreiva Academy Public Charter School
 Lionheart Classical Academy
 Litchfield School District

Making Community Connections Charter School
 Manchester School District
 Mascenic Regional School District
 Mason School District
 Merrimack School District
 Microsociety Academy Charter School Of Southern NH
 Milford School District
 Mill Falls Charter School
 Mont Vernon School District
 Nashua School District
 New Boston School District

Pelham School District, Pine Hill School
 Polaris Charter School
 Souhegan Collaborative School District
 South Merrimack Christian Academy
 Tabernacle Christian School
 The Derryfield School
 The Founders Academy Charter School
 The Well School
 Washington School District
 Wilton-Lyndeborough School District
 World Academy

WCS is different from public schools in the following distinct ways:

- 1) Hybrid Model; 2) Parental Involvement; 3) Value of Play

Hybrid Model

WCS school is distinct in NH its offering of adaptable schedule choices with place-based learning, aka extended learning. Under ED 306.2(h), it states: “‘Extended learning’ means the personalized learning process that allows for demonstration of competencies through means outside of the traditional classroom.” For purposes of this application, we refer to extended learning as place-based learning. We offer more than the required number of hours of instruction, but also believe students learn outside of the classroom. Therefore, students advance by proficiency and mastery through personalized learning, defined in ED 306.02(m), “‘Personalized learning’ means a process which encourages student curiosity by connecting learning with learner’s interests, talents, passions, and aspirations including actively participating in the design and implementation of their learning.”

In Southern California, DaVinci Connect Charter School grades TK-8, offers a 2-day a week model where students learn at home with parents 3 days a week and provide teachers with work samples of students’ learning at home. WCS’ Founding Leader has visited DaVinci school, met with their school principal, and worked with families who attend DaVinci (<https://www.davincischools.org/schools/da-vinci-connect-tk-8/>). This model is wildly successful and the school has a waitlist, however, it doesn’t reach lower income families who need a 5-day a week model.

WCS takes the model a step further by offering choices of 1-5 days a week at school (no less than 1 day a week), in order for all socioeconomic levels to be reached. Parents are asked to commit to a weekly schedule for the entire school year in their application, but on a case-by-case basis families can shift their schedule if their needs change. Parents requisition fewer than 5 days a week of school will also be required to complete a request for place-based learning off site. Our site and staffing will allow for all enrolled students to be on campus at any given moment and to accommodate all students at campus events. Teachers are assigned certain students based on schedule and age, and follow a similar hybrid schedule as their students (ex: a group of students attend in-person M/T/W and place-based Th/F, and a teacher aligns schedules that group of students at school M/T/W and then working remotely Th/F).

WCS wishes to support the family unit by allowing a flexible schedule and build family and school connectedness. Therefore, 4-5 days/week seats will be offered for about 55% of students, 3 days/week seats for about 30%, and 1-2 days/week seats for the remainder. These percentages were gathered by conversations and intake forms from parents sharing their desired schedule and looking at the local school district enrollment numbers and at-risk populations. In the event that a need for a different ratio is revealed during

the lottery, WCS will make adjustments at that time according to the demand. This opportunity for adaptation will be defined in the lottery process. **Exhibit R** shows an example projection for enrollment using the hybrid schedule.

Parental Involvement

In the last few years, many parents were forced to homeschool their children and commonly discovered that they enjoy supporting their children's education. Therefore, time together as a family has become more of a priority and increased overall happiness. Research in multivariable analyses (Steiner et. al., 2019) shows that family connectedness has protective effects for lifelong emotional distress, all violence indicators, including intimate partner violence, multiple sex partners, STI diagnosis, and both substance use indicators as adults. Compared to individuals with low scores for each type of connectedness, having high levels of both school and family connectedness was associated with 48% to 66% lower odds of health risk behaviors and experiences in adulthood, depending on the outcome (Steiner et. al., 2019). Studies of K-12 students show a beneficial relationship between parental involvement and the following motivational constructs: school engagement, intrinsic/extrinsic motivation, perceived competence, perceived control, self-regulation, mastery goal orientation, and motivation to read (Gonzalez et al., 2005). Children with a high-quality parent-child relationship are more likely to establish and develop good peer relationships (Liao et al., 2021).

WCS will have an open door policy with parents allowed to be with their children and support teachers. Parents will be asked to complete a background check as part of their application in order to participate on campus regularly, while all parents are strongly encouraged to volunteer, WCS understands that some families might find this challenging. In that case we would encourage another family member, such as a grandparent, aunt, uncle, etc. to take the parent's place as a volunteer, if possible. The school will encourage parents to teach workshops or lessons in areas of their expertise, and ask parents to volunteer on a regular basis in wellness and cooking sessions, outdoor education, woodworking, and outside during free play. In this way, WCS is likened to a Collaborative school model, where parent involvement is integral to its philosophy and success.

Play

In 2018, NH amended its education law (RSA 193-E:2-a) regarding structuring kindergarten in a play-based model. The section of the law is provided in its entirety below:

II-a. Instruction in support of kindergarten standards shall be engaging and shall foster children's development and learning in all domains including physical, social, cognitive, and language. Educators shall create a learning environment that facilitates high quality, child-directed experiences based upon early childhood best teaching practices and play-based learning that comprise movement, creative expression, exploration, socialization, and music. Educators shall develop literacy through guided reading and shall provide unstructured time for the discovery of each child's individual talents, abilities, and needs.

Looking at the Finnish and Estonian school models, compulsory schooling does not begin until age 7, children spend fewer hours in school each day, have fewer days in their school year, and homework is minimal. Children spend far more time playing outside, even in the depths of winter with a rule of 15 minutes outside for every 45 minutes of instruction in Finland. Yet, 93% of Finns graduate from academic or vocational high schools, 17.5 percentage points higher than the United States. Additionally, they accrue 30% less in educational expenses. Finland ranks third in the Education Ranking by Countries in 2021, with a total score of 1.631K (Weller, 2017). Finland has the highest rate of high school completion in the world. According to the World

Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report, Finland has the best-developed education system in the world.

Many educators in the United States have long been puzzled by the fact that countries like Finland and Estonia can wait until the age of 7 to teach children to decode words, yet remain among the top-performing nations on the international PISA test for reading, math, and science (*Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2018-2019)*). Additionally, the Finnish have shown starting academic learning at 7 years instead of 5 years improves academic performance, and other research evidences this. The pushdown curriculum in kindergarten and 1st grade, with a narrow emphasis on isolated reading and numeracy skills, is detrimental even to the children who succeed and is especially harmful to children labeled as failures (Shepard and Smith 1988).

Another developmental rationale to wait to teach reading, writing, and math in a more rigid academic manner is because the brain of a child is often not equipped for this level of abstract thought before 7 years old. The prefrontal cortex is the last part of the brain to develop and goes through waves from birth through age 25 when it is considered to be completely developed. This part of the brain is responsible for judgment and abstract thinking. At around 7-8 years the prefrontal cortex goes through a wave of development in abstract thought, which is required to learn to read and write. This is why primarily teaching paper to pencil does not make sense for young children, and they show high frustration levels and are sometimes labeled as hyperactive or delayed, when instead it may be the expectations and environment that are not developmentally appropriate according to brain science and research-based evidence.

In the WCS model, there is a robust outdoor education program with ample time for learning and free play outdoors. The importance of recess is supported by theory and with experimental and longitudinal data showing how recess breaks maximize children's cognitive performance and adjustment to school (Pelegri et al., 2005). The school also will allow children more time to play in kindergarten and bring kindergarten back to its roots based in play. "Once kids enter school, the importance of free play doesn't end. All of the patterns that induce states of play are present and remain important for growth, flexibility, and learning." (Brown, MD. & Vaughan., 2009, p. 102). Research suggests that students are more successful collaborators when they are given adequate time to engage in meaningful play with their peers in an environment created for inquiry (Corsaro, 2011). Through true play and time spent together, students can develop a strong sense of self and discover what drives their interests and desires. "The abilities to make new patterns, find the unusual among the common, and spark curiosity and alert observation are all fostered by being in a state of play." (Brown, M.D. & Vaughan, 2009, p. 128). Children need to be spending the first 6-7 years of life developing social and emotional skills, physical skills, cognitive understandings, and creative thinking *through play!*

With this strong foundation, children can then go onto learning in a more robust and faster manner when their brains are ready (Davies, 2010), catching up typically by 4th grade to peers who started literacy and math in kindergarten. Research also continues to show that later born children (summer birthdays starting school at an older age) outperform those children who are younger (Sharp, 2002). Bedard & Dhuey (2006) showed the youngest members of each cohort scored 4–12 percentiles lower than the oldest members in grade four and 2–9 percentiles lower in grade eight. This means the children who were given the gift of play until 6-7 years old outperform those traditionally schooled peers by middle school in academic testing when looking at PISA

data (*OECD, 2018-2019*), while also having a stronger and healthier mindset overall that sets them up for success in all areas of life, as indicated in research cited throughout this application.

For these reasons, WCS will utilize an approach similar to the approved Waldorf charter schools already in NH. WCS will expose kindergarteners to texts, with heavy emphasis on listening to stories, gently introducing early readers, writing for purpose in play, and singing songs that bring awareness to phonics and phonemic awareness. The school will expose kindergarteners to counting and sorting in natural ways through their play, but we will not begin any formal academic work in the sense of what that looks like in most schools until children are 7 years of age, which will be early-to-mid-year in 1st grade. The multi-age classroom allows us to work with children in this flexible way. Children who express individual desire and interest to participate in more academic style learning will be welcome to do so with their older classmates, but children will not be left feeling defeated and with lower confidence and interest in learning because of push-down curriculum.

At-Risk Population

WCS values a diverse and dynamic student body and staff. WCS anticipates serving students who are educationally disadvantaged, economically disadvantaged, or otherwise at-risk at rates equal to or greater than the target catchment area. The school's foundational elements, educational philosophy, and model all integrate best practices for supporting at-risk students, in ways that are distinct from the public district school model. For this reason, WCS anticipates that at-risk students and families will be drawn to the innovative and accessible educational opportunity that WCS will offer- as they are the cross sections of the population in greatest need, and who stand to gain the most.

Examples of at-risk categories in the target catchment area's public elementary and middle school student population, according to iPlatform data include, but are not limited to:

- About 2% English Language Learners (ELL)
- About 19% Special Needs & Disabilities
- About 11% Qualify for Free & Reduced Lunch

According to iPlatform data, the closest local school district, Milford, supports 15.2% of students who qualify for Free & Reduced Lunches, 19.4% students who have special needs and/or disabilities, and 2.5% are ELLs- relatively consistent with the rates for the total target catchment area. As such, WCS reasonably anticipates serving a roughly similar distribution of at-risk students. According to Data USA statistical analysis, the percentage of Hillsborough County's population that is foreign-born increased from 8.92% in 2015 to 9.98% in 2020, equivalent to 4,100 people.¹ This data indicates ongoing growth in immigration, and subsequently the ELL population, moving forward. At the time of this application, the WCS development team has extensively outlined plans to support at-risk students.

K. Any reasons why the prospective board of trustees believes RSA 194-B:3,XII relative to a shortening of deadlines may apply to this case

Wellheart Chartered Public School respectfully requests that the New Hampshire State Board of Education conduct a hearing for the application approval at the next available board meeting following its internal review to facilitate a September 2025 school opening. WCS has identified a location, initiated negotiations with owners and financial partners, and intends to enter a purchase or rental agreement following completion of due diligence (in collaboration with the town). WCS will be proceeding with procurement of our facility

¹ Data USA. Accessed October 2023. <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/hillsborough-county-nh>

effective upon charter approval from the NH State Board. Facilities require manageable renovations, and we are making plans for such construction. Please see Section **XI. Part D** for further details on the active facility planning process. WCS has developed a comprehensive, research-based, curriculum to meet the needs of the many learners in the area who seek a flexible public education option. We appreciate your consideration to shorten the deadline.

IV. Governance

A. Governing Board: roles, responsibilities, qualifications, skill set, experience, Ed 318.09(e)(2)

The current governing bodies of the WCS include: Founding Board, Founder Members, and Application Team. The individuals on these teams are connected by the desire to offer future generations a Reggio-inspired, research based education. Governing bodies represent a broad range of experience and expertise, including but not limited to: educational and organizational leadership, teaching, finance, school counseling, financial development, health and wellness, entrepreneurship, real estate and property management, and alternative education. For names and biographies, please see **Exhibit C**.

The immediate work of the governing bodies is to fundraise, secure our facility, and promote the school. The charter school's mission and program has been developed to include the legislative goals of the NH Public Charter Schools Act, including improving pupil learning abilities, creating new professional opportunities for teachers, and providing expanded public-school choice for parents and students.

The Founding Board will be appointed by the Nonprofit Board sponsoring the Charter Application. Upon receiving charter authorization, the Founding Board members will create a Board of Trustees, with one or more founding members transitioning to the WCS Board of Trustees ("Board"). The Board shall have direct oversight of WCS operations, serve as custodians of the school Mission and Vision, fulfill fiduciary stewardship responsibilities, provide fiscal oversight and legal guidance to school leadership, foster community support, and seek out fundraising opportunities for the school. Guidelines for Trustees will align with the WCS mission and vision. Interested persons should be honest, compassionate, open-minded, able to problem solve, ability to discuss differing views appropriately, and have a desire to actively participate. Candidates must have a willingness to attend board and committee meetings, utilize critical thinking, be willing to be held to their responsibilities, network, be self-disciplined, willing to enhance and/or develop working skills, and recruit students as well as board members.

In compliance with RSA 91-A-2, the Board will conduct an open meeting once a month throughout the year. Trustees are expected to attend meetings regularly. For the purpose of conducting business, the Board will follow the New Hampshire Right to Know Law, RSA 91-A. For purposes of lawful meetings, a quorum is defined as a majority of trustees physically present or participating through video or voice conferencing systems. Board members are expected to attend 75% of board meetings. Records and meeting minutes will be kept in accordance with statutory guidelines and made available online.

The Board's purposes include, but are not limited to the following: A) Overseeing that the school's curriculum/program and operation are aligned with the terms of its charter, bylaws, policies, and its mission statement; B) Creating policies that further clarify and assist in maintaining the mission and educational goals; C) Evaluating performance annually and reporting to necessary parties. These evaluations will be used to decipher the effectiveness of WCS programs, and necessary adjustments that must be made; D) Making certain that the school is financially solvent by approving annual budgets and development of strategic growth

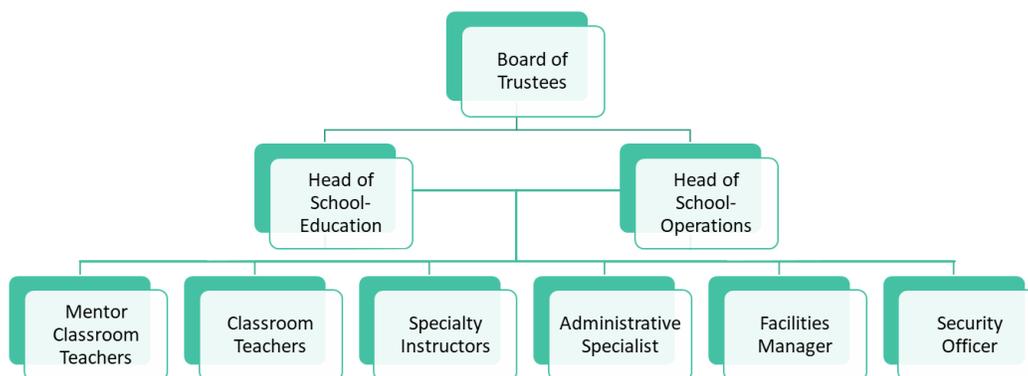
plans; E) Ensuring proper accounting and reporting policies are being followed, and: F) Assisting committees when necessary.

B. Method by which trustees and their terms are determined, RSA 194-B:3, II(c)

In compliance with RSA 194-B:5, WCS will be governed by a Board of Trustees composed of no less than 5, and no more than 12 members. In addition, the school may establish ex officio board members and/or advisors who will be non-voting. The Founding Board will appoint the first Board of Trustees. Year one Trustees will be appointed for one or two-year terms to establish initial staggered terms and governance stability. A formal transition and induction will take place within two months of school authorization and before the school begins to operate. Thereafter, Trustees shall be elected at each annual meeting of the Board for two-year terms. Each Trustee, including a Trustee elected to fill a vacancy, shall hold office until the expiration of the term for which he or she was elected and until the election and qualification of a successor, or until that Trustee's earlier resignation or removal. The Board will nominate and elect by majority vote the initial Chair of the Board for WCS. Board member selection will be based on personal and professional background and a commitment to WCS' mission and vision. Board development will be carried out with intentionality to produce a diverse and effective board, representing the school and broader community, and broad ranging professional backgrounds. In compliance with law, parents will comprise 25% or more of the members of the board of trustees.

C. Board of Trustees By-Laws, Ed 318.09(e)(2) - See Exhibit D for Draft of Board By-Laws.

D. Organizational Structure and Growth Plan, RSA 194-B:3, II (b)



WCS's initial plan for growth will be focused on strengthening the structure of WCS from within, before considering external growth or expansion. We expect our facilities will continue to grow in accordance with the school community. Of particular importance are continued development and refinement of daily policies, procedures, and practices. WCS will work to expand and enhance the strengths of our faculty through professional development.

Supplemental programming, including before, during, and after school activities will be developed to meet the demands, and further enrich, our student populations. For students' learning needs and tracking progress, the Co-Head of School Education will require teachers to report any concerns with a student's progress towards mastery, so that interventions can take place to support the student and family. With ongoing parent

communication, faculty meetings, and peer-to-peer staff meetings, students who need support will be addressed to avoid a student lapse in learning and ensure the student gets what they need. We acknowledge that we are accountable for student learning and therefore there is ongoing communication between Co-Heads of School and Staff.

Ongoing Board Development and capacity building will be conducted in order to bolster community awareness, support, and fundraising potential. In turn, this will promote further growth potential. The school will also work with students to design and implement a business plan for a school market that will support curriculum based learning, real life skill building, and create an additional revenue stream to fund school activities.

E. Fundraising Plan, Ed 318.09 (e)(11)

WCS has a detailed Fundraising Plan that offers a dynamic strategy. See **Exhibit E** for Fundraising Plan.

F. Grievance Complaints Process or Policy

WCS is committed to providing an optimal learning/working environment for employees, students, families, and volunteers. The school will strive to create an environment in which all members of the community are able to discuss conflicts, complaints, suggestions, and questions with respectful and honest communication in a timely manner. WCS strives to ensure fair and honest treatment of all Collaborative members. All Collaborative members are expected to treat each other with mutual respect and are encouraged to offer positive and constructive criticism. Internal Grievance/Disputes arising from within WCS, including all disputes among and between students, staff, parents, volunteers, advisors, partner organizations, and governing board members, will be resolved pursuant to policies and processes developed by the school. The sending district shall not be involved with internal disputes of WCS unless WCS requests sending district involvement or it is legally required. For more details on our Grievance Policy, please see **Exhibit S**.

V. Education Plan

A. Curriculum and Instruction that meets or exceeds state standards in the subject areas offered; clearly defined, research-based with evidence of effectiveness, RSA 194-B:3, II(f); Ed 318.09 (e)(4)

WCS' curriculum and instructional models and tools will exceed state standards. Throughout this application are citations demonstrating a need for a shift in the systemic model of education away from the factory model. This includes how students are grouped, how they are taught, how families are involved, and at the level of depth at which students learn. WCS will cultivate an approach that considers the whole child and all of their cognitive, physical, emotional, and developmental needs across the ages, and integrates subject matter within real life contexts. Howard Gardner (2011) states that important ideas, topics, theories and skills ought to be taught in more than one way, and these ways should activate the multiple intelligences. With this in mind, WCS has researched the best prefabricated curriculums that align the Common Core Standards (CCS) in their lessons and also with our values in investigatory work, teachers as researchers, constructivism, questioning, and creativity. Alignment to the standards can be found in **Exhibit F**. WCS has selected other supporting curriculums that are theoretical and approach-based, and further, WCS will have a diverse teacher resource library where teachers old and new can come for support and to learn new ways of working with children. Teachers will engage in robust curriculum training in July and August prior to school opening, along

with ongoing professional development and training during faculty meetings, which will be held every Wednesday afternoon. Co-Head of School Education and Mentor teachers will also provide ongoing support with curriculum development and implementation. When Co-Heads disagree, the Board Chair will have decision making authority (See **Exhibit S** for more about the leadership model).

MATH

WCS will primarily use *Illustrative Mathematics* as our school’s foundational math curriculum for grades K-8. Since it is a program that spans across grades K-12, our elementary and middle school students will have consistency at WCS and transition well into high school. Further, it aligns with CCS and meets EdReport’s Expectations (green). Overall, we value *Illustrative Mathematics’s* problem-based curriculum that engages students hands-on, with the teacher as a guide, using questioning and problem-solving to understand mathematics. They offer the children context and opportunities to explore materials and make their own connections, “giving students the space and time to interact or play with the idea in intuitive ways and to talk about it in terms that make sense to them (rather than in formal terms).” *Illustrative Mathematics* values productive struggle where students work to figure things out before being given an explanation, instead teachers facilitate deeper thinking by asking meaningful questions.

As a secondary math curriculum we will look to *Contexts for Learning Mathematics* for grades K-6. We chose *Contexts for Learning Mathematics* because it offers stories where children get to act out the parts and understand the application of mathematics into real-world scenarios. Cross-curricularly, *Contexts for Learning Mathematics* integrates with reading skills, theater, pretend-play, and comprehension, which are important components for ELA in the elementary years.

Teachers will be reading Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI) theory-based books recommended by Heinemann to gain strategies, language, and understanding of children’s development in mathematical learning, while at the same time growing their own math skills and confidence. These texts will help teachers learn children’s intuitive mathematical strategies and how to create math problems centered on the context of children’s lives. There are several books we will pull from, all recommended by Heinemann (<https://www.heinemann.com/cgimath/>).

Kumon and/or *Rocket Math* will be utilized on an as needed basis for those students who require repetition to solidify or retain math facts. We will lean on skills and drills from *Kumon* and/or *Rocket Math* on an individual student basis. Finally, to maintain our values that young children learn from play, in Kindergarten we will use the math lessons as tools for math stories and provocations in children’s experimentation with materials and understanding numbers in the real world and in relationships.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA)

The five pillars of English Language Arts include: phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. We have selected a structured literacy approach that builds on the science of reading through instructional practices that are multisensory with explicit instruction through a systematic approach. We have selected ELA curricula and supporting instructional texts that merge these five pillars.

As a foundational curriculum, we will be using Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) PreK-5 and Amplify ELA 6-8 curriculum, both of which are aligned to CCS and meet EdReport’s Expectations (green).

The CKLA PreK-5 program is built on the Science of Reading and sequences rich and diverse content knowledge in history, science, literature, and the arts with research-based foundational skills instruction. The Knowledge strand of the CKLA program is designed to help students build the background, knowledge, and vocabulary critical to listening and reading comprehension through introducing, presenting, and discussing read-alouds in each domain. The Amplify ELA 6-8 program guides students using a blended curriculum designed specifically to support students and prepare them for high school and beyond. With ELA 6-8, students learn to tackle any complex text and make observations, grapple with interesting ideas, and find relevance for themselves. Amplify advocates that, “Educating middle schoolers is a critical endeavor with unique challenges and opportunities. Every Amplify ELA lesson is designed to help teachers establish a classroom where students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally, while developing the essential skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening in order to form a literate community.” We also selected Amplify ELA because it includes project work, social emotional learning, and collaboration, which are part of our core methods of instruction. Amplify cites 40 sources of research to support their structure in designing curriculum for middle schoolers. This document can be viewed here:

https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/2751142/ELA/PDFs/ELA_Program%20Guide-Digital.pdf

Our Structured Literacy Curriculum includes *PRIDE Orton-Gillingham Reading & Comprehension Program (K-5)*, which is based on the Science of Reading and aligned with CCS. It requires teachers to do some training before the start of the school year, which helps to strengthen our early grade educators. *PRIDE* also has a strong parent program that supports parents with their children on off-site learning days. Not only does this program serve all beginning readers, but it is successfully used to teach children with learning differences such as dyslexia, auditory processing, and childhood apraxia of speech. John Hopkins School of Education completed an instructional design review of *PRIDE* in 2021, which can be accessed here:

https://149864161.v2.pressablecdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/PRIDE-Design-Review_Redacted.pdf

Orton-Gillingham (OG) was developed by a neuropsychiatrist named Dr. Samuel Orton, and by a teacher and psychologist named Anna Gillingham. OG uses evidence-based methods focusing on key components such as systematic phonics, multisensory (auditory, visual, and tactile), structure, logical order, cumulation, teacher-student interaction, and explicit instruction. The *PRIDE* website has a page dedicated to the research around OG, which can be explored further here:

<https://pridereadingprogram.com/orton-gillingham-evidence-based/>

In addition to the decodable readers available through Amplify, we can access others from *Just Right Reader (K-2)*, which is aligned with CCS and has assessment based packets of books and classroom libraries that children read and can take home. Children get new packets continuously until they make it through all the levels. Additional support materials for classroom activities pulled from *Literacy Work Stations: Making Centers Work*, by Debbie Diller, *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children*, by Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell, and from the online resource, *Reading Rockets*. “Reading Rockets is a national multimedia project that offers a wealth of research-based reading strategies, lessons, and activities designed to help young children learn how to read and read better. Our reading resources assist parents, teachers, and other educators in helping struggling readers build fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills,” (<https://www.readingrockets.org/teaching/reading-basics>).

In Writing, we will be using *Patterns of Power*, which has three groupings (K-1, 1-5, & 6-8). *Handwriting Without Tears* for Grades K-5, and *The Writing Revolution*, by Judith C. Hochman and Natalie Wexler, for instructional strategies across all grades K-8th. There is also *Keyboarding Without Tears* available to students in grades K-5. As an additional resource, we will incorporate *Project-Based Writing (6-8)* to support research, organization, and presentation of ideas.

As nearly explicitly shown in their titles, these curriculums are hands-on, developmentally appropriate, and/or project based, which are aligned with our characteristics and methods. *Handwriting Without Tears* begins with playdough and blocks to help strengthen muscles for writing and allowing children to experiment with letter shapes. It moves into fun ways that children practice forming letters, eventually teaching cursive. Cursive helps students to cross the midline, which is commonly known as an important component to support brain development and connection between the two halves of the brain. The *Keyboarding Without Tears* uses a similar format since it's the same developer as *Handwriting Without Tears*, in order to teach children how to type. *The Writing Revolution*, by Judith C. Hochman & Natalie Wexler, informs teachers on building writing skills sequentially from writing words, to sentences and varied sentence structures, to then simple and more sophisticated paragraphs, to finally a paper or essay that builds in complexity over time. *Project-Based Writing (6-8)* is a supplemental writing book for teachers to help guide students in connecting writing to their projects, which are a massive component of our school methodologies. And finally, in Kindergarten we offer children exposure to all of these areas of ELA and integrate them through play, projects, and the outdoors.

SCIENCE

Our first choice for science curriculum is *OpenSciEd (K-8)*, which is aligned with NH's Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and also meets EdReport's Expectations (green). *OpenSciEd* is driven by investigative work built on students' wonderings and discovered through a collaborative manner. Further, the lessons are adaptable to connect it to the context of the children in the classroom and their lived experiences. We appreciate the groundedness in NGSS combined with constructivist methods for children to create meaning and also the flexibility *OpenSciEd* offers teachers as facilitators.

However, currently grades K-5 are only partially released for *OpenSciEd*, with the units becoming available from Summer 2024-Winter 2026. The roll out schedule can be found here: <https://www.opensci.ed.org/k5-unit-development-schedule/>). Therefore, to supplement science the first two years, we will also use the *Carolina Smithsonian (K-8)* science curriculum, which aligns clearly to NGSS. To further integrate science we will draw from these next generation storylines for elementary and middle school: <https://www.nextgenstorylines.org/what-are-storylines> Finally, Lisa Murphy's *Even More Fizzle, Bubble, Pop & Wow! Simple Science Experiments for Young Children* book will be used as supplemental science for fun play-based K-2 science activities. If we find we need more hands on kits, we will look to *Foss Science Kits* for further materials and project based learning. Young children are natural scientists in their curiosity and how they work through the scientific process through their play, and so we allow these experiences to guide them in Kindergarten.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Our choice for Social Studies is *TCI Social Studies Alive! (K-8)* because it is aligned with CCS and practices inquiry-based and hands-on learning. We also appreciate the flexible structure so teachers can align the

curriculum with their schedule. Further, the curriculum is integrated with literacy, aligning with our multidisciplinary teaching methods.

To offer supplemental activities for teachers and students, we will integrate *Henry David Thoreau for Kids*, by Corinne Hosfeld Smith, which has 21 activities that overlap with science, woodworking, arts, New England history, engineering/design, mapping, math, reading, writing, volunteerism, and physical education. Further, *The Complete Guide to Service Learning*, by Cathryn Berger Kaye, M.A. will be an integral part of our service learning projects at WCS. It not only guides teachers in understanding what service learning is, but connects service learning themes to all grades K-12 and integrates ELA, Art, Music, Math, Physical Education, Computers, and Science with each service learning project! Kindergarteners will focus on areas relevant to their lives and abilities, and focus on what WCS deems developmentally appropriate.

THE ARTS

To ensure a fully encompassed arts program, teachers will consistently look to NH Arts Standards to ensure each Art standard is reached by the school year's end. Since the Arts Standards are manageable and because we have allocated notable time daily to art and music, WCS is confident the school will meet or exceed state standards.

Visual Art

Our organic art program will exceed state standards. An entire classroom will be delegated as an Atelier (art studio) where every grade level will have blocks of time to access the space every day. Children will not only visit the art space to use a variety of media and learn art techniques, they will also gather in the space to explore subjects like social studies, math, science, and ELA. The art teacher is called an Atelierista and uses the children's learning in group work to explore varied art media to create and express their learned experiences. Woodworking will also be offered at our school for each grade level. Students will not only learn elements of art and design, but also math, science, engineering, and building.

Music

In Music our students will be learning instruments (wind, string, keys, and percussion) in K-8 and orchestra in grades 6-8. Students will be encouraged to learn two instruments over their K-8 journey with WCS. Music will also be played inside classrooms and contribute to many parts of the day, including understanding the importance of music throughout history and the stories songs tell. Music will be integrated with ELA, Social Studies, Science, and Art lessons.

Dance & Theater

Dance will be incorporated into our daily meetings on a regular basis, as well as part of learning in other subjects and outdoors. Dance and theater will be combined at times for performance and self-expression. Theater will also be used through reader's theater in grades K-8 and in *Contexts for Learning Mathematics* for grades K-6. Students will be encouraged to use theater as a tool for sharing what they learn with others. We will integrate dance and theater with music as indicated by children's project work

HEALTH

WCS will meet or exceed health standards through a holistic approach to health and wellness that is at the heart of our school. We have closely examined NH's Health standards, which include: *Alcohol & Other Drugs, Injury Prevention, Nutrition, Physical Activity, Family Life & Sexuality, Tobacco, Mental Health, Personal & Consumer Health, and Community & Environmental Health*. To address many of these areas, especially social-emotional and mental health, will be using *Mind Up (Prek-2 & 3-5)*, *Responsive Classroom (The*

Morning Meeting Book), and *Choose Love*, by Jesse Lewis, (*Choose Love* can be reviewed here: <https://legacy.chooselovemovement.org/schools/>). WCS will offer a variety of experiences, tools, environments, books, conversations, projects, and field trips related to health that evolve from the dynamics and relationships between teachers, families, and students. Please see **Exhibit G** for a detailed description of our health education intentions.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

WCS will offer a robust outdoor education program, with students spending 1-2 hours or more outside every day. Teaching students to appreciate movement and the natural environment will be a priority for us. We value exposing students to a range of different activities that allow them to find what brings them personal satisfaction and gives them a sense of positive wellbeing. The goal for our students is for them to understand how to care for themselves and others through physical activity. Students will learn to be aware of how their bodies feel before, during, and after physical activities while exploring various ways to enhance their health through movement. We will meet or exceed the NH physical education standards and emphasize the benefits of stretching bodies (strength and flexibility), team building (cooperation and resolving conflicts), physical challenges (speed and agility), and body awareness. We will also help to bring in the physical body during mindfulness and meditation, and at a cellular level when we study wellness and prepare our meals. Please see **Exhibit G** for a detailed description of our physical education intentions.

COMPUTER EDUCATION

WCS will exceed state standards for middle school students to have 45 minutes of computer science a week. Technology will act as a fun problem solving tool - meaning, what problem exists and what tools can we create to analyze and solve this problem? We will engage students in discovery to research up-and-coming computer technology for future use and to probe why this might be in development. Moreover, for hands-on application, we will have a variety of computer technology tools in our woodworking workshop, a mobile laptop classroom cart, and other computer science devices to incorporate science, engineering, and math. Students will primarily use computers and learn computer technology to support the development of projects they undertake throughout the school year that emerge through their interests. Elementary students are encouraged by the state to learn computer science through play and integrated with other subjects. Therefore, younger children will be exposed to computer science tools for their own project work and play-based learning, which naturally will emerge throughout the year. See **Exhibit G** for more details on Computer Science Education.

- B. Current research for selecting curriculum, Ed 318.09 (e)(4). There is a clearly defined, research-based curriculum being proposed with the potential to increase student achievement that meets or exceeds the school's content area standards, Ed 318.09(e)(4)**

WCS underwent diligent research in selecting curriculum and instruction that not only meets or exceeds state standards, but crosses core values with our school's 11 Characteristics and seven Methods. In the previous section we presented the curriculum and related research and reviews, here we present the research that supports our methods to teach the curriculum. Research on our Characteristics that deeper define the Reggio philosophy and our school culture is listed in Section III Part E can be found in **Exhibit B**.

METHODS RESEARCH

Furthermore, research around our methods include classroom formation, integrated subjects, addressing the whole child as a learner, focusing on the process of learning, utilizing various learning spaces, effective use of technology, and mindfulness practices.

Cross-Age Collaboration Methods... A multi-age system is adequately supported by research, and practices methods different from the common factory model of education. Traditional grading systems assume that all children are the same in development and needs, that they can be taught in the same way, that learning can be sequenced into discrete skills and become more complex from year to year, and that education is a product, not a process (Stone, 1997). At WCS throughout the day students will be invited to join cross-age small groups, learning workshops, and engage in peer-mentoring exercises. During cross-age project work students will learn how to negotiate, support each other, compromise, learn, and build diverse friendships with children of different ages. Students will engage in work they are ready to learn and proceed at their own pace. While working alongside peers with different abilities and levels of understanding, we are modeling a culture more reflective of our real world where people are not segregated by age, but work together based on shared interests and abilities. The multi-age system understands that all children, even children of the same age, are different in their development and needs, that children construct their own knowledge in their own way, that learning should be child-centered (not curriculum-centered), and that education is a process, not a product (Piaget 1976, Piaget and Inhelder 1969). Multi-age classrooms promote social learning, where children learn from one another (Vygotsky 1978).

Place-Based Learning Methods... Place-based learning strives to integrate the school's surrounding environment and community to allow students to construct their own learning guided by proven educational methods (Lieberman & Hoody, 1998). There is a need in our community for children who cannot learn in a classroom or factory-model school setting five days a week. Parents who resort to teaching their children at home sometimes feel isolated and desire the academic support from educators and the social emotional learning that school has to offer. Regular school/teacher contact with families choosing to provide a similar academic journey for their children can combat this isolation, especially when there is not strong support from close friends and family (Atkinson et al., 2007). Teachers will assume the same schedule as their students, meaning working from home supporting children virtually on their home learning days, and through ongoing communication using apps to show children's work between the parents and teachers. The place-based learning method was found to be very successful after Dr. Lieberman collected evidence from 40 schools displaying children learn more effectively in place-based learning/environment than in traditional settings.

"This evidence comes from site-visits, interviews, survey results, and gains on both standardized test scores and GPAs...(the evidence) include(s): better performance on standardized measures of academic achievement in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies; reduced discipline and classroom management problems; increased engagement and enthusiasm for learning; and, greater pride and ownership in accomplishments."(Lieberman & Hoody, 1998).

The integration of place-based learning into our campus will be invaluable and embedded in a variety of places, including but not limited to: the kitchen, woodworking shop, Atelier, open outdoor space, gardens, ponds/streams, forest, tented areas/yrurts, etc. In addition, all students will be offered field trips to farms, local businesses, museums, etc. According to Clairborne's research (2020), real-world learning applies classroom theories and concepts to deepen understanding, increase motivation, improve academic performance, and fosters personal and social growth. Further, "older students may also use place-based learning for volunteering, community service, and early work experience. Field experiences early in a student's career can be formative

and can inspire students to continue in a field,” (Claiborne, et al., 2020).

Process-Based Learning Methods... The research suggests that students are more successful collaborators when they are given adequate time to engage in meaningful play with their peers in an environment created for inquiry (Corsaro, 2011). The outcome is unknown at the start of many projects and the teachers allow the children to direct the learning process while simultaneously provoking their thinking. Teachers will question their own reasoning and challenge their current beliefs to create a state of disequilibrium that will serve to move thinking forward and solidify conceptual understandings. Creating a classroom in which all students are expected to fully explain their thinking in both the whole-class setting and when discussing problems in small groups is valuable whether their strategies are correct or incorrect (Webb et al., 2008). Working through misconceptions until students can verbalize correct and complete explanations is an important process of learning. The wonder and curiosity of learning burns brightly as students and teachers become researchers and observers, letting their learning unfold.

Project-Based Learning Methods... Projects promote learning through doing and experiencing. “The educational philosophies of John Dewey, Edgar Dale, and Jerome Bruner asserted that experience is essential to the learning process” (Garrett, 1997). Furthermore, choosing projects that have a real impact in life, such as building a chicken coop for the school, helps students see the value of learning and doing. “Such students try to benefit from school assignments and demonstrate greater levels of cognitive engagement in school work, and they report using more self-regulation, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies. Use of such strategies is related to the development of deeper level understanding of subject content,” (Blumenfeld et al., 1991). Collaborative projects also encourage the development of executive brain functions, such as planning, following through, and persevering. In addition, children also practice negotiation, communication, compromising, cognitive flexibility, trial and error experimentation, and innovative problem-solving (Galinsky, 2010).

Multidimensional Learning Process Methods... WCS interweaves the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive dimensions of learning with the three primary learning styles: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Social and emotional development includes forming secure relationships, developing self-confidence, and the ability to function as a member of a group. This serves as the foundation for relationships that give meaning to the school experience. Small and large motor development and physical activities with a multi-sensory focus benefits student learning. Students process information more completely when they are given kinesthetic ways to connect to new learning concepts. Experiential learning includes hands-on opportunities that allow students to make sense of the world around them (Dodd-Nufrio, 2011). Cognitive approaches toward learning refer to the styles that reflect the many ways children become involved in learning through experiences, listening to others, and developing their interests. From these experiences, children construct knowledge of patterns and relations, cause and effect, and methods of analyzing and solving problems in everyday life. When we think about the three styles of learning either auditorily, visually, or kinesthetically, research supports the integration of these practices. For instance, presenting new information to students using music and movement allows them to acquire knowledge and retain information in a meaningful and joyful way. Integrating physical activity with academics can increase children's cognition and energy expenditure, develop social skills, and improve mental health (Petrigna et. al, 2022). WCS believes that every child benefits when learning maintains a connection of multidimension.

Multidisciplinary Learning Process Methods... Topics that weave together in a way that makes sense will naturally feel more cohesive to our students. We can promote self-determination in children by helping them

to engage in activities which will enhance their flow experience (Peifer et al.,2022). Interdisciplinary learning is one of many ways to learn over the course of a curriculum. When educators consider their curricular objectives and students' needs, they may choose interdisciplinary learning to deliver part or all of the content they will present. Howard Gardner (2011) has categorized at least eight intelligence competencies. They are linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal (social-understanding), interpersonal (self-understanding), and naturalistic. Each form of intelligence is independent and related to functioning in a particular area of the brain (Trawick-Smith, 2023). Diverse methods of teaching and learning must be provided for all students. WCS is committed to understanding students in a way that helps individualize instruction and recognize that students learn in different ways, while also helping them to discover the interdependence of academics within a subject of their interest.

Technology as Research Tools... While WCS values technology, the school recognizes the importance of limiting exposure to screen time. Groundbreaking science from Dr. John Hutton (2019) shows that screen time lowers the development of the brain's white matter in young children, an area key to language, literacy, and cognitive skills. In addition, according to a national study of 2-17 year olds, technology use that exceeds one hour per day is linked with a host of negative side effects including "less curiosity, lower self-control, more distractibility, more difficulty making friends, less emotional stability, being more difficult to care for, and inability to finish tasks," (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). Physical health of students may also suffer from prolonged technology use. Even 30 minutes of screen time can cause eye strain, headaches, and tiredness (Smahel et al., 2015). Limiting screen time and technology use is shown to be beneficial to children. A study found that, "after five days interacting face-to-face without the use of any screen-based media, preteens' recognition of nonverbal emotion cues improved significantly more than that of the control group," (Uhls et al., 2014). For these reasons and more, limiting screen time and only using technology for educational purposes with an educator present is of the utmost importance at WCS.

C. Statement that the school will have available information about its curriculum and policies to all persons, and parents and students considering enrollment, RSA 194-B:2,II; Ed 318.07(b)(6)

In accordance with Section 194-B:2, II: Every chartered public school shall make available information about its curriculum and policies to all persons, and parents and pupils considering enrollment in that school. This information will be made accessible on the WCS website and hard copies will be available upon request.

D. Measurable Academic Learning Goals and Objectives and Timeline for Accountability, RSA 194-B:3, II(g). There are clearly defined high and attainable educational goals and objectives, Ed 318.09(e)(5)

Measurable academic learning goals, objectives, and standards for every grade level at WCS are outlined in the **Exhibit F** through the links and are aligned with the Common Core Standards (CCS) as set by the State of New Hampshire, and none have been omitted. In addition to the curriculum linked to the CCS, we will use the outdoor environment and Reggio philosophy to encourage a culture of care, ownership of our growth, health, and development, and engagement in relationships, dialogues, and projects that develop our ability to initiate, research, plan, and execute when presented with challenges of any kind. These goals and objectives are integral to our mission and vision, and will be entrenched into the school culture. Cross-age collaboration will provide students some flexibility in the pace of their learning. Our goal is to ensure that all students are meeting the standards in a timely manner and are gaining developmentally appropriate skills needed for continued self-growth and for active, positive participation. Learning happens best when students are involved in goal setting, and can slow down or speed up as necessary.

The WCS timeline for accountability will be structured around our trimester calendar. Parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled thrice-yearly and an important part of our goal setting process with students. After the teachers have gotten to know the students, the first conference will be at the end of the 1st trimester, during which teachers, parents, and students will meet together. This collaborative meeting will focus on individualized goal setting where teachers, parents, and students design and set goals and intentions to review ongoing. The 2nd conference at the end of the 2nd trimester will give the parents, teachers, and students the opportunity to share the work in progress, review learning goals, reflect on what practices best support each student, make needed adjustments, and set goals and intentions for the remainder of the year. At the 3rd and final conference of the year, students will present their completed portfolio that will be used to assess the student's proficiency in the learning goals.

E. Performance Standards

Performance Standards and Next Generation Science Standards are outlined in **Exhibit F** through the links provided. While some aspects of the curriculum may differ in their implementation and timing from that of other public schools, none of the standards have been omitted and it is expected that our students will meet or exceed standards. In addition to goal setting described in Part D, teachers will use checklists and/or narrative summary reports to share with parents the performance outcomes of their students at trimester conferences. To assess performance we will use a learning scale rather than the traditional letter grades. The standard grading system causes students immense stress and is not an accurate indicator of where students are in their learning. The standard grading system persists simply because it is steeped in tradition, not because it has shown to be effective (Guskey, 2013). A learning scale develops skilled thinkers and reinforces the idea that we are always learning. The key grading principles are that grades should have meaning and students should have multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning based on feedback (Townsend & Buckmiller, 2016). We want to move beyond memorization to perform well on tests in order to get the highest grade, towards true intelligence rooted in creativity, problem solving, and perseverance.

Explanation of Performance Scale:

- *Not applicable (Score of 0)*: indicates content and skills that were not a major focus of instruction and assessment during the reporting period.
- *Needs attention (Score of 1)*: indicates a concern for the child's learning which needs to be further understood. The child shows difficulty in an area of learning and requires additional instruction, practice, and support. Parents and teachers together need to give attention to finding an appropriate response to the child's difficulty.
- *Progressing toward expectations (Score of 2)*: indicates the child shows understanding of basic concepts and skills and demonstrates the ability to apply the skills with increasing success. The child's academic performance may vary in consistency with regard to accuracy and quality, but the child shows developmentally appropriate progress.
- *Meeting expectations (Score of 3)*: indicates the child consistently meets academic standards and expectations for her/his age. The child shows the ability to apply skills with accuracy, independence, and quality, needing only minimal assistance.
- *Exceeding expectations (Score of 4)*: indicates the child consistently exceeds the learning standards and expectations. The child demonstrates self-motivation and the ability to apply skills with consistent accuracy, independence, and a high level of quality.

F. Achievement Tests to be used to measure academic and other goal achievement, including, but not limited to, objective measures of literacy and numeracy competencies, including spelling, reading, expository writing, history, geography, science, and mathematics, RSA 194-B:3, II(h)

WCS recognizes that regular ongoing assessments help teachers plan effectively and allow students to see their progress toward gaining new skills and knowledge. WCS also understands that standardized testing provides quantifiable data on overall school performance, informing program evaluation and accountability.

Standardized Testing

WCS will measure achievement of the NH College and Career Ready Standards in complement with RSA 194-B:8 V, to assess each student near the end of each school year to evaluate educational progress of each pupil, as specified in RSA 194-B:3 II(h). WCS will use the NH statewide education improvement and assessment program, as provided in RSA 193-C. Student achievement will initially be measured using current mandatory State Assessment System (SAS) testing in grades three and eight, with accommodations for students with learning challenges.

Screening & Diagnostic Assessments

Universal screening assessments are given to all students at the start of the school year to analyze the students' current skills in given areas. Screening assessments should be relatively fast and efficient to administer. One type of useful screening assessment involves curriculum-based measures (CBMs), examples include DIBELS Next or Aimsweb. Diagnostic Assessments are used to determine students' level of knowledge and understanding, to monitor progress and/or, to inform the teacher of students' more specific needs. Screening and Diagnostic assessments guide classroom instruction, help to meet children where they are, and to identify children who may require supplemental intervention. WCS will rely on the following kinds of assessments to guide instruction:

- Phonological awareness surveys
- Sight word lists, e.g. Fry and/or Dolch
- Running records
- Checklists
- Student work samples including informal writing samples
- Fact fluency assessments
- Tools for students and families to determine math behaviors
- Pretests prior to new math units
- Interviews or small group conversations
- Parent and teacher observational notes (Reggio teachers take extensive notes)
- Surveys for students and families

Formal & Informal Assessments

Formal and Informal Assessments are both formative and summative in nature. Formal and informal assessments will help us gauge a student's understanding during the learning process (formative) and where their understanding falls at the end of a chapter, unit, project, trimester, end of year, etc. (summative).

Formal Assessments: Each student across every grade level will engage in a variety of assessments to give teachers information for instruction and performance. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Portfolios
- Narrative Reports
- Project Work

- Volunteer and Field Work Reviews and Feedback
- Culminating Events
- Surveys and Questionnaires
- Essays
- Tests and Quizzes

Informal Assessments: Ongoing informal assessments will be used in every classroom to give teachers feedback on student learning and progress. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Teacher observations and documentation of learning
- Tickets to enter and exit: The teacher asks students a question about the lesson. Students then reply on the ticket and hand it to the teacher, either on their way out or way in the following day. The teacher then assesses if there is a need to re-teach or questions that need to be answered.
- Student led presentations
- 3-2-1: Students take notes on 3 concepts presented, 2 examples or applications, and 1 unanswered question or potential misunderstanding.
- Concept Mapping: Create and fill in a concept map after the lesson or reading (partner or individually).

Embedded in the curriculum are assessments for placing students in group work and ongoing assessments in the lessons/units in each subject's curriculum. Screening tools will also be used for determining student placement. Further, students evaluate their own work and move through different phases in projects. Teachers may also develop their own rubrics for project work. Provided at family conferences, teachers will write a narrative report on each child's learning in all core subjects, as well as their social, emotional, physical, and creative domains. Students will work with their family and teachers during the family conferences to set their own goals. A performance scale for each area will be provided in conjunction with the narrative report, to which scoring 0-4 is correlated. Throughout the year improvement in these performance indicators will inform progress towards mastery. Documentation of learning will be the other primary method that we will use to measure student achievement. Forms of documentation include the teacher's observations, notes, photographs, videos, transcribed dialogues, children's drawings, stories, poems, and any other type of work the student authentically produces. Students will advance upon mastery. More about this can be read in Section V Part B.

G. For Schools offering High School grade levels, graduation requirements sufficient to ensure that the school has provided an adequate education for its pupils, RSA 194-B:3, II(i) - Not applicable.

H. Student Performance Data Management System (Cumulative Performance Over Time)

WCS is considering Alma (or something similar, such as PowerSchool, Rediker, Infinite Campus, Aspen, QuickSchools, or Skyward) as a scholar performance data management system based on compatibility with state of NH systems, a user friendly platform that has ability to track and record assessment, curriculum, attendance, and incident reports, and with consideration of affordability.

I. Daily/Weekly Schedule Samples - See Exhibit I.

J. Supplemental Programs

WCS will evaluate and implement supplemental programming based on the unique needs of our K-8 student body. We predict to utilize paraprofessionals and faculty in providing additional supplemental programming capacity if enough of the population requires such types of programs. Title I, Part A of the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) provides financial assistance to schools with high numbers or high percentages of students from low-income families. The purpose of the funding is to help ensure that all children meet high academic standards. (Please note that students do NOT have to be from low-income families to receive support through Title I funded programming.) Services provided are supplemental to instruction that already occur within the school setting. This purpose is accomplished in two ways: (1) by providing children supplemental support through enriched and accelerated education programs; and (2) by providing instructional personnel with substantial opportunities for professional development. Family involvement is critical to the success of students and is encouraged through Title I.

WCS will solidify partnerships with local organizations, such as the Boys & Girls Club, YMCA, and Hampshire Hills, to coordinate after-school care options for students, as well as work to resolve transportation matters to relocate children from WCS campus to their desired location for after-school care. We may consider summer camp for supplemental programs, as well as offer tutoring or set up peer coaching for students that need extra support.

VI. School Operations Plan

A. Admissions Procedures, RSA 194-B:3, II(o)

WCS is dedicated to building and supporting a diverse community of learners and families. As an open enrollment public charter school, any student that resides in the state of New Hampshire may apply for admission. For scholars who reside outside of New Hampshire, the Board of Trustees shall set a tuition annually. Methods of admission will not be designed, intended, or used to discriminate or violate individual rights in any manner prohibited by the law. WCS will follow the basic method of admissions that defines charter schools nationwide: 1) Admissions shall be blind, and 2) Should the number of applicants exceed capacity, students will be chosen by a lottery system with a waitlist developed from the lottery overflow.

Recruitment:

- WCS will conduct outreach and education activities to inform prospective families on the educational opportunities offered, as well as mutual expectations between WCS, students, and families. These sessions will highlight the commonalities and distinctions between WCS and other educational options, highlighting our Mission, Vision, Characteristics, and Methods.
- Informational sessions to be held in host district and neighboring towns in Hillsborough County.
- Informational materials will be disseminated in print and online.
- All informational efforts shall be designed with cultural competence in mind, including translation and other accessibility measures to ensure equitable outreach.
- A pilot program will be created for the 2024-20245 school year using qualifying homeschool students' EFA funds, non-federal grant monies, and private tuition monies to build a student body and parent community that will bridge the gap to the opening of the charter school in 2025.

Application:

- Prospective applicants are encouraged to attend a recruiting event.
- Application packets will be available online, and only made in print upon request. In addition to relevant informational materials, these packets will include signed acknowledgement of WCS' mission and agreement to adhere to the school policies, program, and expectations.
- Application assistance will be made available to families in need of support.

- Completed applications will be processed in the order that they are received.

Admissions & Lottery:

- Available spaces will be organized by both grade levels and schedule types.
- Should applicants exceed the number of spaces available, a blind lottery will be held. Time frame for the initial application deadline and lottery drawing will be 6 months prior to school opening.
- Those not accepted in the lottery will be placed on a waiting list. WCS will admit students from the wait list in the order assigned by the lottery, should space become available after the lottery.
- Completed applications received after the lottery deadline will be added to the waitlist according to time stamp requirements.
- Should a dispute or error in the lottery process occur, applicants will have 4 weeks to notify in writing the WCS Board of Trustees, who will then follow its grievance and complaint policy.
- Within two weeks of the lottery, all accepted and waitlisted students will receive written notification of their admission status.
- Siblings of currently enrolled students shall be exempt from the lottery.
- Children of school faculty, administration, members of the Founding Board of Trustees, and founding members shall be exempt from any enrollment lottery. Under non-regulatory guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Education, the amount of reserved seats must constitute “only a small percentage of the school’s total enrollment.”

Enrollment:

- Accepted students and their families will be required to sign and return a commitment to attend form within three weeks of notification. After three weeks if no form is received, the spot will be offered to the next in line according to the lottery.
- Shortly following completion of the enrollment process, WCS will initiate orientation meetings for admitted students and families.
- WCS will offer automatic re-enrollment to its students pending family submission of letter of intent to re-enroll by a stated date preceding the lottery.

B. School calendar and the number and duration of days pupils are to be served

Please see our school calendar for the 2025-2026 school year in **Exhibit J**.

C. Staffing Overview, including qualifications sought for professionals and paraprofessionals: administrators, teachers

WCS shall conduct school employee and volunteer background investigations in accordance with RSA 189:13-a as well as all statutory qualifications for teaching and staffing. Refer to Section D (below) for qualifications for professionals and paraprofessionals. All staff will be highly qualified with diverse backgrounds, skills, teaching and/or administrative experience. Additional desired qualities include a strong connection to the mission and vision of the school, adaptability in a fluid environment, ability to work seamlessly and constructively with all members of the school community, experiences with a variety of teaching and life experiences to enhance project based learning, expertise with working with diverse student populations, and a desire to approach their personal and professional growth with creativity. All teaching contracts will be in accordance with RSA 194-B:8 VII(a).

D. Employee job description/responsibilities - See Exhibit K.

E. The total number of teachers and the average teacher/student ratio for the first 5 years

There will be a total of 17-19 teachers on average for the first five years with a teacher/student ratio on average of 1:15 to 1:17.

F. A description of how the school shall conduct school employee and volunteer background investigations (Criminal Records Check) in accordance with RSA 189:13-a.

In accordance with RSA 189:13-a, WCS will conduct background checks for all staff during the application process. Results will be reviewed by Co-Heads of School prior to extending a final offer of employment to the candidate. All designated volunteers, as well as all parents who are able to commit to monthly volunteering or more often, who will be onsite with students in a one-on-one capacity or with students unsupervised will be required to complete a criminal history records check and fingerprinting. Parents will be asked to cover the background check fee. Those who cannot will be reimbursed after a certain number of volunteer hours/days are completed. Families who experience financial hardship can request the background fee be reimbursed by the school immediately.

G. Personnel compensation plan, including provisions for leaves and other benefits, if any.

WCS is committed to offering a quality experience to faculty and staff, inclusive of competitive salaries and benefits packages. WCS recognizes the need for disciplined spending, coupled with the hidden costs of staff turnover- and has designed a compensation and benefits plan intended to both attract and retain strong teachers and staff. Our investment in the overall wellness and work-life balance of our employees, in the form of salaries, benefits, and time off, will translate to the experience of our students and families.

Full time Administrative, Support, and Teaching roles will be paid a salary. Part time employees will be paid hourly, and independent contractors will be paid based on negotiated rates. The budget is based upon defined salary bands informed by regional compensation analysis, and reflecting individual employee qualifications, credentials, and experience. Teachers will be offered a competitive salary at an estimated 15-20% range from the average public teacher salaries in the surrounding towns. Administration will be offered a fair compensation depending on education and experience at an estimated 10-15% range from the average Leadership salary of other charters in the state of NH. During the planning year before school opens salaries may not follow this model or ranges. WCS will offer full time employees a benefits package inclusive of health, vision, and dental coverage. In addition, we intend to offer a retirement plan.

In addition to instructional days required by law, teachers are expected to work 10-12 staff/professional development days, 5 days prior to the start of school, 5 days following the end of the school year, and 2 days during the school year. First year teachers will be required to work more in the summer preceding their first year teaching with us. Staff will be granted an allotted number of days off per school year of personal time, which can be used for wellness, vacation, or other days of personal significance. Additionally, it is the intention of WCS to provide a modest paid parental leave to our employees.

H. Administration Performance Evaluation

WCS will conduct annual performance evaluations for administration positions. WCS' Co-Heads of School will develop a process for collecting and presenting data to document performance that is based on well-defined job expectations. The Co-Heads of School will be responsible for conducting the evaluations of support administration staff, and will conduct a minimum of one annually. The Board of Trustees is responsible for evaluation of Co-Heads of School. The evaluation model will balance accountability and support, with the intention of encouraging continued growth and development of each administrator by monitoring, analyzing, and applying pertinent data compiled within a system of meaningful feedback.

I. Teacher, Paraprofessional Performance Evaluation

Teacher and paraprofessional performance evaluations will be performed at WCS in compliance with New Hampshire state law RSA 189:1-a(III). Veteran teacher and paraprofessional performance evaluations will be performed once a year with notice. Additional evaluations may be performed as needed with or without notice. New teachers/paraprofessionals may be subject to additional evaluations as deemed necessary.

Teacher evaluations are to provide insight on teacher knowledge, manageability, effectiveness in leading students, parent relationships, adaptability, leadership in the classroom concerning students, parents, and teacher help, team participation with colleagues, and work ethic. Paraprofessional evaluations are to be performed by their classroom teachers with assistance from administration because classroom teachers have the best insight into paraprofessional performance and work. Paraprofessional evaluations will consist of effectiveness in supporting designated teacher(s) and student(s), adaptability based on classroom and/or students, participation in classroom, team participation with colleagues, and work ethic.

Teacher(s) and/or paraprofessional(s) that do not meet appropriate standards of evaluation will be supported and assisted in developing a plan of action to improve areas of challenge and needed development. Evaluations will be resubmitted after a period of time appropriate for improvement to be seen. Evaluators maintain the right to observe classrooms throughout the year. In keeping with the school's collaborative, community-minded vision, 360 evaluations will be integrated into the performance through alternation or combination with more traditional review structures. Self-reflections will also be utilized to evaluate performance and set goals.

J. Professional Development

WCS teachers and staff will take part in ongoing professional development opportunities. A master plan will be created by the Co-Heads of School in accordance with the Department of Education to meet and exceed guidelines. Professional development in the master plan will be provided to the teachers at no cost.

Leading into the school's opening, teachers will utilize their first contracted month, July 2025 or prior, to complete the associated educational resources for each subject curriculum. In addition, teachers will be engaged in theoretical exploration, learning through recommended literature for each subject. The Co-Heads of School will have weekly discussions to foster deeper connections of the material and to gain additional perspectives. Moving into August 2025, the focus of the professional development will shift to include all mandatory training to ensure the physical and emotional well being of each student, e.g., CPR, first aid, AED, trauma-informed, child restraint, and bullying. Throughout the year, there will be a

partnership with professional Reggio alliances. This will serve as a Reggio-inspired coaching and mentoring program for all teachers to utilize. As the school year progresses, teachers will have two scheduled professional development days. At the end of the year there will be a culminating professional development event.

Ongoing professional development will be designed on a yearly basis, factoring in teacher needs and funds available through grants and fundraising. Examples could include training all K-5 teachers in Orton-Gillingham with the Stern Center in Vermont to enhance their approach to reading. Teachers may also be invited to attend the Conference in Reggio Emilia, Italy at the Loris Malaguzzi International Centre. Reggio does not have a formal certification; therefore, by completely immersing teachers in the culture and essence of Reggio, they can truly begin to embody the principles. In turn, this will translate to growth among students, staff, and WCS as a whole.

K. Philosophy of Student Governance and Discipline

WCS values each child as an individual in differing stages of development. As such, students will be held to their developmental and age-appropriate expectations. Student governance will have a major impact in allowing students to participate in discussions to define, achieve, and demonstrate classroom expectations. WCS will strive to utilize prevention rather than punishment. In this model, student engagement is a critical component of success. Educators have found a correlation between student-centered learning and decreased disruptive classroom behavior; upon implementing a more student-centered curriculum, students became more invested in the learning environment and behavioral issues decreased dramatically (Schwartz, 2018). Similarly, the integration of student choice, expression through the arts, outdoor time, and physical activity all have positive associations with student emotional regulation and behavior.

Communication is another key component to preventing misconduct. Students will be given many opportunities throughout the day to communicate with peers and teachers around their ideas, feelings, and insights on curriculum, classroom culture, and overall school community. By inviting students to continually express themselves, negative feelings which may have otherwise led to poor behavior can be discussed proactively, and teachers and students have the opportunity to troubleshoot together. By giving students agency over their classroom learning experience, disruptive behaviors are less likely to arise.

While WCS strives to build a community based on mutual respect and consideration between all students, instances of conflict or undesirable behavior may arise and disciplinary action may be necessary. At the beginning of each school year, students will discuss, during community and classroom meetings, the expectations for behavior in our school. These expectations will be guided by the teachers, with a significant influence from the students, and will reflect respect for oneself, others, and the environment. Students will have a voice in discussing logical consequences for their misbehavior, which in turn empowers them. Students and teachers will sign these expectations as a community agreement, and this agreement will be referred to throughout the year and amended as necessary or as unforeseen conflict arises. Individual/small group agreements between a student or group of students involved in misbehavior and a teacher(s) may be utilized for personalized/small group behavior management.

The age of students, the severity of unfavorable behaviors, as well as past instances, if any, of similar situations will be taken into account when deciding on how to proceed with disciplinary action. Please see

Exhibit L for a list of common language and phrases to be used to work with students and manage behavior.

L. Age appropriate due process procedures to be used for disciplinary matters including suspension and expulsion, RSA 194-B:3, II (p)

WCS will adhere to our Philosophy of Student Governance and Discipline in all disciplinary cases, working to utilize prevention rather than punishment, fostering self-determination, clearly stating the school guidelines and expectations whilst equipping and enabling students to make the right and best choices for themselves and the school community.

Disciplinary, suspension and expulsion procedures

WCS will handle negative student behavior as follows:

Disciplinary measures taken by the school will be recorded and shared with the student's parents/guardians. An escalating procedure will be enforced based on the nature of the behavior, frequency, and response of the student, starting with the student, teacher, and parent/guardian(s) working in cooperation with each other, up to the Heads of School if necessary. At all times, students will be involved in this process and help to decide the consequences for their actions.

For lesser negative behaviors (such as minor conflicts between students) each involved party will be supported and expected to respectfully talk through their feelings and perspective of the situation. Students will be encouraged to use "I statements" and guided by teachers to understand each other's perspectives. Teachers and students will defer to the classroom and schoolwide agreements made at the start of the year for a resolution. If a resolution cannot be reached for some reason, a teacher will make a final decision based on observation of the situation as it occurred, and taking into account the insight each student had to offer regarding the conflict. If a conflict reaches this level, parents will be informed at the end of the day (or sooner if more serious), so that they can support the child at home.

In addition to respecting each other, students will be expected to show respect to all teachers and other employees/volunteers in the community, as well as to the property and materials in the environment. In the case of a student showing frequent disrespect to other members of the community (verbal, physical, or otherwise), consistently disrupting class, or repeated failure to follow classroom and schoolwide agreements, teachers may request a meeting with the student's parents/guardians to discuss next steps and create an improvement plan involving the student to move forward.

For more serious behaviors such as aggressive physical conflict or bullying, students will immediately be separated and teachers will ensure that all involved parties are safe, unharmed, and receive any first aid that may be necessary. Anti-bullying and cyberbullying will be handled in accordance with RSA-193F. Significant or repeated behavioral issues will be addressed by the Heads of School in collaboration with the student and the student's parent/guardian(s). Working together, an improvement plan with clearly defined goals and timeframe(s) for improvement will be documented. This will include strategies to assist the student both at school and in the home toward a positive outcome.

In the case of continued problematic behavior, the student will lose privileges at the school in the first instance (such as restriction from activities or excursions) and escalate based on the nature of the situation to possible suspension or expulsion. Any actions that jeopardize the safety of anyone in the school community: students, teachers, other employees, volunteers, families, etc., may lead to suspension and/or expulsion. This includes, but is not limited to, possession or use of weapons, physical violence, threats of violence, bullying, and vandalism. Any dangerous behaviors or assault, will result in notification of law enforcement, and in all cases WCS will comply with all mandated legal requirements. Students who are suspended will work with assigned teachers, parents, and administrators to develop a reintegration program for rejoining school campus learning.

Guidelines specific to technology (computers, cell phones, etc) include:

Computers will be available to students to use for research and specific learning purposes only. Students will be closely monitored and any use of computers for video games, unauthorized visits to youtube, shows, or any other purposes will be strictly prohibited and result in the computer being immediately removed from the student until further notice. Technology is strictly used as a research tool and for engineering and design purposes, not as a playtime device. Students may use computers when instructed to do so only by their teachers and may only use them for instructed projects. Any student that isn't using the computers appropriately will lose computer privileges at their teacher's discretion.

Cell phones will not be used on campus by students. Students must keep their cell phones in their backpacks at all times. They are not allowed to be used at any time, including recess, bathroom, lunch, and other "free" time. They also cannot be used before school and after school when on school property, unless calling or texting a parent/guardian/ride (no mindless scrolling and staring at screens while waiting). The only type of cell phone use will be strongly restricted to specific usage types. They must not be operated without specific permission from the teacher *and* parent/guardian, and only permitted for pre-determined purposes agreed on between the student's family and the school (i.e. medical reason, emergency). Any student that does not comply will first be warned verbally and the infraction reported to the student's family. If the student repeats the behavior, they will lose cell phone privileges at the school, meaning it will not be allowed on campus at all. The cell phone policies for staff will be included in the staff handbook and will explain that cell phones are used only for notes, photographs, videos, or directly school-related issues that are imperative to do at that moment in front of children.

M. Student transportation plan, both inside and outside of district, including reasonable provisions from the charter school's own resources for transportation of pupils residing outside the district in which the charter school is physically located

WCS will comply with the guidelines of 194-B:2,V which states: "Pupils who reside in the school district in which the chartered public school is located shall be provided transportation to that school by the district on the same terms and conditions as provided for non-chartered public schools in the district and utilizing the same regular bus schedules and routes that are provided to pupils attending non-chartered public schools within that district".

Any students who do not reside in the district will be responsible for arranging their own transportation, however in line with our parental involvement ethos, we are committed to supporting all families. WCS will support out-of-district families by facilitating carpool efforts, and we will provide bus(es) with limited

central pickup points in the future. At the time of the application, WCS is evaluating creative ways to ensure capacity for vehicle drivers- e.g. inclusion in the responsibilities of budgeted positions such as Maintenance/Facilities Manager. Additionally, WCS may explore additional grant funding to support at-risk access and/or volunteer support.

N. Student, Staff Handbooks

Please see **Exhibit T** for our Employee Handbook. WCS's Co-Heads of School will develop a student and parent handbook by March 2025.

O. Student Information System

WCS will use Alma or a similar system as our SIS to track all student data.

VII. Meeting Student Needs

A. Special Education: Method of coordinating with a pupil's LEA responsible for matters pertaining to any required special education programs or services including method of compliance with all federal and state laws pertaining to children with disabilities

As an open enrollment chartered public school, Wellheart Chartered Public School will accept applications from any student who is a New Hampshire resident. In accordance with RSA 194-B:8, WCS will not discriminate against any child with a disability as defined in RSA 186-C. WCS will cooperate with district decisions and coordinate to ensure the provision of services as identified on the Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Under New Hampshire's charter school statute, RSA194-B:11,III(a), "funding and educational decision- making process for children with disabilities attending a chartered public school shall be the responsibility of the resident district and shall retain all current options available to the parent and to the school district."

WCS recognizes the critical and leading role of the sending district in successful implementation and administration of IEPs. Upon approval of our charter, WCS will reach out to possible feeder districts to introduce the school and start conversations on how the district prefers to provide services. Specifically, WCS will notify and collaborate with the sending district when an enrolled student has an IEP. Please note data regarding IEPs will be collected from parents after the lottery and enrollment is confirmed. Once confirmed, the student's classroom teacher will connect with the sending district to request a meeting.

At the meeting, the IEP team shall determine how to ensure the provision of a free and appropriate education in accordance with the student's IEP. The student's special education and related services shall be provided using any or all of the methods listed below starting with the least restrictive environment. WCS will cooperate with the district decisions and coordinate to ensure the provision of services as identified on the IEPs for the following:

1. The resident district may send staff to the chartered public school; or
2. The resident district may contract with a service provider to provide the services at the chartered public school; or
3. The resident district may provide the services at the resident district school; or
4. The resident district may provide services at the service provider's location; or

5. The resident district may contract with the chartered public school to provide the services;

If the child requires transportation to and/or from the chartered public school before, after, or during the school day in order to receive special education and related services as provided in the IEP, the child's resident district is responsible for transportation of the child.

Once WCS has a better understanding of the preference for each district and its student enrollment, we will review our plan regarding hiring of special educators and paraprofessionals to make any adjustments. Also, we will coordinate with the sending district regarding the student schedule and work with the best interest of the student as the primary objective. Additionally, 504 plans are the responsibility of the chartered school and WCS will work to implement 504 services and accommodations.

B. Other educationally disabled and economically disadvantaged/at risk, Ed 318.07(1)(c)

WCS will work to connect other students who are educationally disabled, economically disadvantaged, or at-risk with support resources. Categories include, but are not limited to:

- Students who are Educationally Disabled (Special Needs),
- Students who are English Language Learners,
- Students experiencing Neglect or Delinquency,
- Students experiencing Homelessness, and
- Students from Migrant and/or Refugee populations.

WCS will collaborate with local social service agencies to ensure all aspects of a student's life that may affect his/her ability to learn and succeed are addressed. WCS will explore development of in-house supports, e.g. supplemental staffing, equipment, or materials, to meet student needs, and expects to seek Federal Title Funds.

C. Additional Academic support and credit recovery:

WCS will incorporate strategies for improving student achievement and closing achievement gaps through ongoing evaluation of student achievement data, available resources, and additional resources, strategies, and actions that may be needed. Federal title programs will be identified for which our school meets eligibility requirements; where Federal title monies are not available, actions will be taken to provide supplemental services like after school support, tutoring, or study buddies or peer mentoring to support student achievement. Specific areas of focus will be based on National Education Association guidelines, and include: A) Enhanced Cultural Competence, B) Comprehensive Support for Students, C) Outreach to Students' Families, D) Extended Learning Opportunities, E) Classrooms that Support Learning, F) Supportive Schools, G) Strong District Support, H) Access to Qualified Staff, I) Adequate Resources and funding.

D. Federal Title Programs

WCS will endeavor to identify students experiencing barriers to learning, and determine those for which Federal Title Programs funding may be applicable and beneficial. In cases where eligibility criteria is met, WCS will seek funding through Federal Title programs including, but not limited to: Title I, Title IIA, and funding through Every Student Succeeds Act. In accordance with the law, Federal Title funding will support at risk students with specialized materials, instruction, and/or staff as permitted by regulations.

VIII. Financial Management

A. Method of Administering Fiscal Accounts and Reporting, including a provision requiring fiscal audits and reports to be performed by an independent certified public accountant

WCS will adhere to the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) and establish internal accounting controls to safeguard its assets and detect and prevent financial statement misstatements. The school will maintain accurate financial records in accordance with the GASB for non-profit corporations. An annual financial report, including an independent audit conducted by a certified public accountant, will be provided. The Board of Trustees of WCS will appoint a Treasurer to oversee the school's financial status and report to the Board on a monthly basis. The school plans to contract with an experienced third-party service that will handle accounting, bookkeeping, payroll, bill payment, grants management, and preparation of reports to the Board and the State. The Board will also implement policies for the financial management of the school, including policies on conflicts of interest for Board members, Administration, and Faculty. All financials and quarterly financial statements will be made publicly available.

The Board of WCS will approve accounting policies and internal controls and procedures to be followed by all employees, contractors, and Board members to ensure proper tracking and use of school funds. A bank account will be established, and the Treasurer, Co-Heads of School and designated Board members will have the authority to write checks. Each individual with check-writing authority will be covered by a fidelity bond in accordance with the guidelines of the New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration. Except for emergency purchases approved by authorized personnel (up to a maximum amount determined by the Board of Trustees), all expenditures and contracts will be processed through an approved system of internal control and procedures to monitor account balances.

WCS will comply with all required reporting requirements specified in the NH charter school section, RSA 194-B:10. This includes issuing an annual report, conducting annual financial audits, program audits, and participating in the annual school budget process. The school will also adhere to all requirements set forth in ED 318 regarding the contents of its annual report.

As mandated by law, the annual report will be provided to the state board and any individual who requests it. Additionally, a summary version of the annual report and periodic reports will be made available to parents or guardians of each student at WCS, as well as the general public. The Board will select an external, independent auditor on an annual basis to perform the required annual audit and prepare a report. The audit will encompass accounting practices and review the school's internal controls, following applicable generally accepted accounting principles. It is anticipated that the annual audit will be completed within four months of the fiscal year's conclusion. The Board of Trustees will review and address the audit report, if necessary, and incorporate the audit results into its annual report.

B. Annual Budget: including all sources of funding (also including a proposed five-year budget containing revenue and expenditures)

Exhibit M is the proposed pre-operations and 5-year budget in line-item detail. The Co-Heads of School and School Accountant, in partnership with the Finance Committee, will develop a balanced yearly budget. The Board of Trustees of WCS will review and approve each budget by June 30th of the prior fiscal year. These annual budgets will aim to include sufficient reserves and will be submitted to the appropriate State

Offices and any other mandated entities. Possible paraprofessional expenditures are built into the budget, as well as income from sending districts to cover paraprofessional expenses.

C. Budget Narrative: providing a justification for the budget

The budget presented in this application is grounded in realistic enrollment and fundraising targets, while maintaining a conservative approach in estimating expenditures. We acknowledge that circumstances beyond our control may result in shortfalls in either fundraising or enrollment. Our operating plan and budget have been developed with a clear understanding that certain components hold higher priority than others. If fundraising or enrollment goals are not met, WCS will identify and eliminate lower priority items from the operating budget, ensuring the provision of a high-quality education within our financial means.

WCS's budget projections include revenue from the State of New Hampshire Charter School Per Pupil Aid for the 2025-26 academic year, which is currently set at \$9,180 for grades K-12. These figures are accurate as of the time of application submission and will be updated annually in compliance with RSA 194-B:11.

The budget reflects the growth of staff over the initial five years of operation and includes what we believe are realistic fundraising, development, and enrollment goals. Accounting, Payroll, Benefits, IT and Legal services will be contracted through third-parties. Initially we plan to offer health benefits, as well as vision, dental, and ST and LT disability. As the budget allows, we will offer retirement benefits and will increase our health benefits package whenever possible.

WCS plans to secure a suitable building for the school's needs through leasing. Costs for the lease of the facilities are based upon an acceptable industry standard assuming a 10-year lease agreement with options to renew. The operational costs are based upon expenses from other charter school facilities similar in size. We intend to minimize cash expenditures during initial setup by seeking donated equipment and furnishings whenever possible. We expect to be able to provide further support to faculty, staff, and students with the efforts of community volunteers. For comprehensive details, please review WCS's detailed 5-year budget.

IX. School Culture

A. School Environment: Culturally Inclusive

WCS embraces and celebrates differences in experiences, backgrounds, and ways of thinking. Our school commits to encouraging curiosity, exploration, and expression, and we want our students to participate in decision making for themselves, their class, and/or the school every day. We imagine our school space and culture much like a blank canvas. Metaphorically, the school is gathering the tools: the paint, canvas, cloths, water, brushes, etc. as we lay the foundation for the school, and then we invite the children to bring their ideas, values, desires, families, and lived experiences and use our tools to create a masterpiece. This may take much practice and effort of playing and exploring the materials, but over time a masterful piece of artwork would result. We will prove to the children from the start that we are a collaborative model with components like student-teacher created classroom and schoolwide expectations and inviting them to help add to and decorate the space with their work and projects. We will create a welcoming and inclusive environment in which all students feel like valued members of the school.

At Wellheart, we strive to build a culture around respect, community partnership, and teamwork. Our classrooms will be culturally inclusive by representing the students and teachers in the space, as well as having materials and books that represent family lifestyles and cultures from around the world. For example, in Kindergarten we will have dolls with different skin colors and facial structures, as well as picture books with characters from various places around the world that share stories from distinct cultures. Older students will understand different styles of dress, foods, religions, lifestyle, language, and the history and lived experiences of many people from all over the world.

Other ways we celebrate the culture that lives within our school, is by giving students continuous opportunities to share more about themselves with their peers by partaking in various activities such as bringing in family photos to keep in the classroom, sharing about their home-life, bringing in books to share, etc. Parents are expected to volunteer in the school and this can include opportunities to share more about their family's culture with the rest of the class. We welcome and encourage families and students to share things that are important to them such as holiday traditions, foods they enjoy, important words in their language, and anything else they would like to offer that is developmentally appropriate. Teachers will ensure that each student feels represented and that each voice is heard when it comes to decision making, classroom rules, topics of ideas to study, classroom materials, and even aesthetics of the environment. Each child should feel welcome and comfortable in the school space. Students will be expected to respect their peers at all times and any deviation of that will be dealt with immediately.

B. Establishment and Maintenance of School Culture

Establishing a strong school culture begins with leadership and staff in the school. All team members will have a strong sense of the school's core beliefs and will whole-heartedly believe in the school's mission and vision, thus, implement its values. Beginning with a strong teaching staff and leadership, the positive culture of WCS will be deeply embedded in each and every interaction with students, parents, volunteers, and other community members. Students will quickly learn what it means to be a part of the Wellheart community. To read about the foundational elements of our culture in more detail and the research behind these 11 characteristics, please see **Exhibit B**.

Through the cohort style learning, focus on family participation, and project based approach, students will feel a strong sense of belonging from their very first day at Wellheart. This along with the values of respect and teamwork that teachers will instill in their classroom, the students will continue to carry on the positive culture of the school. Through our open-ended Reggio-inspired curriculum and focus on the whole child, students will learn to be inquisitive, curious, respectful of themselves and others, and to be a socially competent citizen of the school community.

Our school model of multi-age classrooms and numerous opportunities daily for students to work and learn with children in a wide age range, help students to mature in a way that maintains respect for the young child. Our middle schoolers will feel a sense of pride and ownership in lending their skills and support to the youngest in our community. They will grow up honoring the child as our teachers and leaders do, as in return they feel honored as learners, thinkers, and doers by the adults in the environment. Our model will also deepen learning and understanding for all children as they work together and build leadership skills.

Further, our school welcomes a diverse student population with our unique model and family partnership. Classrooms will be inclusive of children with a variety of physical, mental, emotional, and social skills and

needs, and where they reach out to support and care for each other, as modeled by the adults in the space. Our school philosophy is built around equity and equality, where each child gets what they need to succeed, and that looks uniquely different for each person. With extensive group work and closely working parent-teacher partnerships, our schools will get to know families on a more intimate level, which will also allow us to better serve their child. An inclusive space where we are able to make as many modifications as we can responsibly manage for each child to learn and feel safe is of utmost importance to us at WCS.

The robust outdoor education and farm to table food programs will cultivate stewards of the earth, a culture of respect for all living things, and an understanding of cycles of life. ED 306.02(j) explicitly outlines nutrient dense foods as a requirement for school lunches. In order to successfully ensure a school lunch program that works with the National School Lunch and National Farm-to-Table program, WCS has established guidance from another charter school in California that has implemented this program with success to their 150 charter students. Students will come to know their own bodies and minds, developing a strong core of self love and confidence in what they bring to and can learn from the community, including plants and animals. As students develop their relationship with the natural world on our campus, they in turn develop deeper compassion and understanding for each other.

X. Stakeholder Engagement

A. Philosophy of Parent (Family) Involvement and related plans and procedures

WCS is based on a philosophy of “families as partners,” values the family-teacher partnership, and recognizes that the parent/guardian/primary caretaker is the child’s first teacher. For the sake of repetition, we will refer to the parent/guardian/primary caretaker as “parent” in this section, but we as a community understand that this person varies in different family structures. Our goal is to support the family unit and research shows when there is a supported connection between parents, students, and the school, that children not only succeed at higher levels academically, but they are also better off socially, emotionally, physically, and mentally (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005). Therefore, the school/family partnership is an integral aspect of our vision. Together, teachers and parents contribute to student tailored learning plans, and both the parent and teacher guide the child’s learning and document the process. Through this approach, a culture of family involvement, on-site and off-site, is essential for the school to thrive.

Parents will participate in and/or organize various committees to support the school, as schedules allow. These committees may include a garden committee, fundraising committee, animal husbandry committee, school lunch committee, cafe/school store committee, etc. Parents will have opportunities to volunteer in the kitchen, classroom, school cafe/store, as well as volunteer to prepare campus for students at the start of the year and clean up at the end of year, accompany students on field trips, and other organizational tasks. Parents will help with project work and will communicate their child’s learning in place-based environments (home, parks, museums, other classes, etc.) with their child’s primary teacher. A yearly parent survey will be implemented to learn any special interests, talents, and skills possessed by each family, along with ideas on how each family would like to support WCS or how they would like to be supported by the school (e.g. parent education topics, parent/family gathering themes), **see Exhibit N** for survey.

We will work to accommodate the different needs and circumstances of families within our community. WCS will have an open door policy, welcoming parents to spend time in the classroom as they and their child(ren) deem beneficial, ensuring that "everyone gets what they need." This means some students who

are younger with separation anxiety or who have special needs may thrive and adjust in a way that feels comfortable and safe, and that reduces stress and trauma for the child and family. This may look like parents of these students spending more time in the classroom at the start of the year and adjusting the transition as their child acclimates. It may also look like some students attending half days if there are reasons that make a full day of school overwhelming, unpreferred, or unrealistic. At WCS, the parent will be supported by the teacher and school when learning in a place-based setting. Although we will have a drop off line where teachers help to walk students from their parent's car into the building, parents will not have to drop-and-go, instead they can park and walk their child into school if they choose.

In addition to being welcome in the classroom, parents will also have the opportunity to spend time in the school communal area where they can meet one another, building a supportive community. Parent representatives on the Board of Trustees will have a direct voice on organizational decision-making and parents will have access to regular office hours with administrators. Communication will occur through: A) In-person meetings, B) Education app to share updates on school happenings and individual updates on child's progress with the parents/guardians, C) Email/newsletter/surveys, D) Thrice yearly conferences with narrative reports and/or checklists.

All designated volunteers who will be onsite with students in a one-on-one capacity or with students unsupervised will be required to complete a criminal history records check and fingerprinting in accordance with RSA 189:13-a. See **Exhibit N** for a sample survey to gather information on special interests, talents, and skills possessed by each family, along with ideas how each family would like to support the school.

B. Community Involvement Plan including Partnerships

WCS is actively fostering community connections through outreach and awareness activities, and will continue to do so once the school is established. The founding team is currently building relationships with the Milford Boys & Girls Club, the YMCA of Greater Nashua, Milford and Amherst Public Libraries, other NH Charter Schools, et al. WCS has been hosting Q&A sessions pertaining to the school. In addition, local farms and businesses in proximity to the school's final location will also become an integral part of our community involvement plan. Upon establishment, WCS will continue community outreach by holding information sessions and having literature and written materials available both in print and on our website, as well as in local establishments such as libraries, doctors offices, preschool, and other community areas where appropriate. An open house, scheduled private tours, curriculum exhibition, and workshops will also be available for the community. Field trips will be arranged as students, teachers, and parents collaborate to find activities that will support children's interests, provoke new ideas for learning, and/or connect to the mission of the school.

WCS will be actively involved with the NH Charter School Foundation and work with them to create professional development opportunities that potentially multiple charters can join in together. We will work closely with the resident districts of students with special needs to help make accommodations for their learning, offer support services where we are qualified, and help to support the student's IEP objectives. We will continuously seek partnerships with communities that share in mission and philosophy, such as Plowshare Farm, Temple Wilton Community Farm, The Root Cafe, Keyes Park, Hampshire Hills, and other nearby farms, locally owned businesses, parks and recreation facilities, conservation areas and community spaces, local preschools, public libraries, and other nonprofits.

C. LEA Partnerships

WCS welcomes the opportunity to partner with public schools in an effort to enrich the lives of students and families in Hillsborough County. Said partnerships shall be grounded in the common goals that we all share, in mutual recognition of the distinct complexities faced by every educational institution, and in our deep respect for the tremendous work done by the LEAs. We aspire to form symbiotic relationships with the LEAs to support the needs of all students in the districts that attend WCS. This especially includes the relationship required to support Special Education students to provide the support required for each student's IEP. WCS will reach out to key LEA stakeholders including Superintendents, Principals, and Faculty to identify partnership opportunities that will benefit WCS, the LEA, and the community as a whole- as well as to identify barriers to successful partnership, and to collaborate on strategies to resolve said challenges. These communications will initiate prior to school opening, and remain an open and ongoing dialogue. Prospective opportunities include cross-participation in extracurricular activities, including sports teams, and collaboration on aligned professional development investments. Finally, WCS administrators will contact the local school district's transportation office once the school site is secured to ensure the town in which the school resides provides transportation for the students that attend WCS.

XI. Facilities

A. Whether the applicant has access to a facility suitable for the school and, if not, how the applicant intends to provide a physical location for the school

WCS will enter into contractual agreement with a property that has been selected once the charter is approved. Initial steps are underway for site surveillance, traffic studies, driveway permits, lead and asbestos remediation, fire inspections, ADA compliance, certifications, and working with engineers and architects for these purposes as well as renovations required for health and safety. The sellers have agreed for WCS to file permits and do other work on a case-by-case basis before closing.

B. Description of school requirements

WCS recognizes the role of environment as the third teacher and, as such, places particular emphasis on facility selection and design. The chosen location will support optimal health and safety, be functional for the school's distinct classroom composition and schedule design, and will provide a warm and engaging learning setting- inside and out. WCS requires large classroom spaces to accommodate multi-age class groupings and large and small group work, as well as specialty spaces to house the atelier and workshop. In fulfilling health and wellness goals, the school seeks a property with land to support the outdoor education curriculum, ideally also inclusive of a school garden and animal husbandry (caring for animals) program. The ideal location will include a commercial teaching kitchen to allow for immersive learning through communal food preparation.

In accordance with RSA 194-B:8, II, the school requires a property that is either in compliance currently, or can within reason be renovated to comply with all state and federal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations meeting the requirements of ED 321.23(u) and (v), including but not limited to fire safety, HVAC, plumbing, and electrical. WCS is actively collaborating with local code enforcement and fire code personnel to assess potential locations, with support from consulting engineering and architectural firms. WCS is seeking a property with adequate existing indoor space to support growth projected in the five year model, and/or land to support construction of additional structures in the future. The unique scheduling

model offers flexibility in growth patterns based on occupancy recommendations for properties under current evaluation. Partnerships with local landowners (farms, recreational spaces) can also support flexibility in the school's acreage requirements to support outdoor education curriculum, if necessary. WCS has identified a property in Milford with the potential to fulfill most if not all of the school's location requirements. WCS Founders have initiated dialogue with the owners with the intent of buying or leasing the facility, and engaged consultants (engineering, code enforcement, financial, et al.) to evaluate and plan for procurement of said property.

C. Classroom, Offices, Athletics, Outdoor Needs Plan

WCS is seeking a property on 3+ acres of approximately 6000-10000 square feet with space for building yurts and outdoor classrooms. This will allow for sufficient space for indoor and outdoor classrooms with space to differentiate learning in various types of peer groups.

D. Plans for facilities lease or purchase

In May 2023, WCS Founders selected a property in Milford that meets the school's ideal location requirements as described directly above, with consultation and support from our founding members, real estate agents, Milford Fire Department's Deputy Chief, civil and traffic engineers, attorney, financial advisors, and current and former planning and zoning board representatives. The facility offers adequate indoor and outdoor space, parking, water, sewer, and zoning requirements for a school. WCS has engaged architectural engineers and code enforcement experts in planning renovations for ADA, fire code, and building inspector requirements. The school has confirmed three financial options for securing the property, which are being presented to the owner and their agent. Funding for the facility may be sourced through investment partners who have expressed interest in purchasing with the intent of leasing to the school, and/or a capital campaign in Fall 2023 to support the school's direct purchase of the facility. When our charter is granted, WCS will take appropriate action to finalize the lease or purchase of a location suitable for the school's needs.

XII. School Safety Management Plan

A. Emergency Operations Plan- Statement of assurance that this plan will be completed and submitted to the NH Homeland Security and Emergency Management portal prior to school opening

Prior to the school opening, WCS will submit an Emergency Operations Plan that is compliant with regulations to the appropriate authorities (New Hampshire Homeland Security and Emergency Management). The Emergency Operations Plan will educate staff, faculty, students, and other key stakeholders on their roles and responsibilities before, during, and after an incident. The plan will empower employees to act quickly and effectively in case of an incident. WCS will work with local law enforcement and the fire department to design plans specific to our facility. Before the start of classes, and at least annually thereafter, all teachers and staff will participate in emergency preparedness training with the state and local authorities, and private vendors as needed. The plan will be annually reviewed and updated as needed.

B. A statement that, the school facilities shall comply with all federal and state health and safety laws, rules, and regulations, RSA 194-B:8,II; Ed 318.07 (b)(4)

WCS facilities shall comply with all federal and state health and safety laws, rules, and regulations including, but not limited to: A) Fire Safety; B) Heating, Ventilating, and Air Conditioning (HVAC); C) Plumbing; D) Electrical; E) Food Services, F) Americans with Disabilities Act - ADA, G) Removal of Hazardous Materials, etc.

XIII. Communication Plan

A. A plan to develop and disseminate information to assist parents and pupils with decision-making about their choice of school

WCS intends to utilize multiple tools to best disseminate information to the local and surrounding communities, school personnel, businesses, foundations, programs, as well as any interested students/families. To educate these groups, we intend to disperse information about our educational philosophy, curriculum, and what they can expect to experience at the school. We will offer workshops and events, share the enrollment process, and set up open houses and small group tours. The tools/sources in which we will design this information may include the following: a website, brochures, application packets, open houses, tours, Q&A sessions, information sessions, and other resources.

WCS will participate in regular community outreach events/programs on at least a yearly basis. In this participation we will have appropriate spokespeople and materials to disseminate information about the Charter School and present the opportunity for any interest to be further explored. Students and/or parents who are enrolled in WCS will be able to receive any necessary additional information through our website, through school leader appointments, assessment reports, informal teacher and parent meetings, formal family conferences, school newsletters, and other forms of communication that will emerge as the school becomes established.

B. A plan to develop and disseminate best practices to charter schools, LEAs, and wider community

To share successful programs and/or practices with other local charter schools and public schools, WCS will create a culture of research and exposition by offering open houses, workshops, and end of year events- as well as thorough documentation of student learning. Events and communications will be designed by the Co-Heads of School and faculty to disseminate best practices. The team will evaluate and record practices used within the school and make ongoing adjustments suggested during team meetings. At a minimum of once a year, a member from the designated team will compile a report of best practices and submit it to the NH DOE. Additionally, the report will be made publicly available. Throughout the school year, the designated team will share any improved practices with the NH DOE Charter School Administration.

C. A plan for timely and regular communication with families and school stakeholders about ongoing school business, events, and student performances

WCS prioritizes frequent, honest, and transparent communication. We will communicate on a regular basis with families and school stakeholders about ongoing school business, events, student performance, and any other necessary topics through, but not limited to the following practices: A) Monthly board meetings, B)

Weekly/Biweekly/Quarterly newsletters, C) Weekly updates, D) School website/education app/information system, E) Trimesterly assessment, F) Parent/teacher/student conferences thrice a school year, G) Surveys, H) Open communication with parents via emails, written letters, and/or agreed upon meetings, I) Check ins at drop off or pick up, or at the office. For information regarding school closures due to inclement weather, families will be contacted by but not limited to: text, phone call, and email. We will make every effort to make inclement weather days virtual learning days instead of canceling learning those days.

XIV. Assurances, Provisions, Policies

A. A global hold-harmless clause, RSA 194-B:3,II(x)

WCS, its successors and assigns, covenants and agrees at all times to indemnify and hold harmless the home SAU, any other school district which sends its students to the charter school, and their school boards, officers, directors, agents, employees, all funding districts and sources, and their successors and assigns, (the “indemnified parties”) from any and all claims, demands, actions and causes of action, whether in law or in equity, and all damages, costs, losses, and expenses, including but not limited to reasonable attorney’s fees and legal costs, for any action or inaction of the charter school, its board, officers, employees, agents, representatives, contractors, guests and invitees, or pupils.

B. Severability provisions and statement of assurance that any provision of the charter school contract found by competent authority to be contrary to applicable law, rule, or regulation shall not be enforceable, RSA 194-B:3, II(y)

In accordance with RSA 194-B:3,II(y), if any part of the charter contract is determined to be invalid or illegal by a court of competent jurisdiction, such invalidation or illegality shall not affect the remaining portions of the charter contract, which shall remain in full force and effect. Any provision of the charter school contract found by competent authority to be contrary to applicable law, rule, or regulation shall not be enforceable.

C. Statement of assurances related to nondiscrimination according to relevant state and federal laws, RSA 194-B:3, II(m)

WCS values a diverse and dynamic student body and staff. In accordance with RSA 193-B:3, III(m), WCS does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, ethnicity, national origin, intellectual or physical disability, religion, socioeconomic status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, veteran status, genetic information, pregnancy, or pregnancy-related medical conditions in admission of students and access to its educational programs or activities, in selection of staff and with respect to employment terms and conditions, in the administration of the school, or in any other way that is prohibited by law.

D. Provision for providing continuing evidence of adequate insurance coverage, RSA 194-B:3,II(t)

WCS, in accordance with RSA 194-B:1,III, will be a “Chartered Public School” that is subject to the same protections as any public school under RSA 507(b) which provides for Limited General Liability for the charter school and its agents. WCS will procure and maintain current policies of each form of insurance required for the operation of a Chartered Public School. All formal documents related to the maintenance of insurance (including insurance policies and evidence of continuing insurance) will be kept on file within the business offices of the school.

E. Identity of consultants to be used for various services, if known, or the qualifications or certifications of consultants not identified by name, RSA 194-B:3,II(u)

During the period of startup and development, WCS may require tasks addressed and/or conducted by specialists in select fields. WCS anticipates contracting with individuals or companies that provide services such as: A) CPA for account reviews, reporting, fiscal accounting, and fiscal audits; B) Attorney for review of all policies and procedures, handbooks, and contracts; C) IT consultant for technology and communications setup, D) general contractor, civil engineer, and architects for meeting land use and building codes. All candidates will be expected to demonstrate evidence of experience and expertise in the specified role, including, but not limited to formal education, work history, and references.

Individuals providing paid consultation or pro bono guidance at time of application include (alphabetically):

- Robert (Bob) Best, Attorney, Sulloway and Hollis, PLLC.
- Caitlin Blundell, CPA, Blundell Accounting Services
- Matt Karlsen, Reggio Educator, Center for Playful Inquiry
- Kimberly Lavalley, Founder, The Founders Academy Foundation
- Heather Leach, SVP Senior Lender, Millyard Bank
- Susan Harris MacKay, Reggio Educator, Center for Playful Inquiry
- Jason Plourde, Traffic Engineer, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin
- Riley Stanchina, Milford Fire Department Deputy Chief
- Gary Thomas, Northpoint Construction Management

F. A policy and procedure that either sets forth the guidelines for the optional contracting of services with the host school district in sharing transportation, athletic, maintenance, and other services and facilities, or states how and why the school declines to choose the option, ED 318.07(b)(2);RSA 194-B:5, V; RSA 194-B:8, VII

WCS will, in good faith, negotiate a contract with the host district for transportation to meet the requirements of Ed 318.07(b)(2). Students attending WCS who reside in the host school district shall have the option to ride transportation provided by that host district. As WCS anticipates that students may come from different communities in the region, the school will assist to connect families who wish to coordinate personal shared transportation to and from school, e.g. arrange carpools. Students wishing to participate in athletic or extracurricular activities have the option to do so in the district where they reside.

Transportation to and from athletic or other extracurricular activities is the responsibility of the family. WCS will either employ directly or contract with a local maintenance and custodial services provider, and therefore declines to contract with the host SAU for these services. All contracted services shall be defined by purchase order or written contract in advance of such service being provided. Any contractor shall provide proof of adequate professional liability insurance.

G. Statements that the school will develop, prior to opening, policies regarding the following: records retention; promoting school safety including: reporting of suspected abuse or neglect; sexual harassment; pupil safety and violence prevention; limiting the use of child restraint practices; and developmentally appropriate daily physical activity

Prior to opening, WCS will develop policies regarding: records retention; promoting of school safety including: reporting of suspected abuse or neglect, sexual harassment; pupil safety and violence prevention,

limiting the use of child restraint practices, and developmentally appropriate daily physical activity in accordance with Ed 318.08(j)(7).

H. Provisions for dissolution of the charter school including disposition of its assets or amendment of its program plan, and a plan for the education of the school's pupils after the charter school may cease operation, RSA 194-B:3,II(z)

In the event that WCS should cease operations for whatever reason, including the non-renewal or revocation of its Charter, the Board of Trustees shall consult with an attorney and the New Hampshire Department of Education to assure that contractual and financial obligations are met. Dissolution will follow all applicable state and federal law applicable to Non-profit dissolution and work with the NH Charitable Trust and Department of Education as part of that process. The planned sale and distribution of any assets shall assure first, that any financial obligations of the school are met. When possible, items of in-kind donation will be returned to their donor. Any remaining assets will be distributed among the charter schools or other non-profits supporting charter schools as determined by the Board. Transcripts will be kept on file and disseminated to students upon request, and/or given out to all students upon school closure, or another plan developed by the Board at the time of closure will be created to handle transcripts.

I. In the case of the conversion of a public school to a chartered conversion school, provision for alternative arrangements for pupils who choose not to attend and teachers who choose not to teach at the charter school, RSA 194-B:3,II(aa) - Not applicable.

J. A plan for the education of the school's pupils after the charter school may cease operation, RSA 194-B:3,II(bb)

In the event that WCS shall have cause to cease operations, the Co-Heads of School, in conjunction with the Board, will provide written notice to families. When possible, families will be informed of the dissolution of the school at least 90 days in advance. A plan for each student's continued education will be determined individually with each student and his/her family. Likely options include: reintegration into student's assigned public school, application to a different chartered public school, or other available options based on parent and student priorities. The staff and Board will work with receiving schools, parents, and students to assure a smooth and timely transition.

School transfer procedures will include:

- Convening a committee of school faculty and parents to create a list of researched educational options for students.
- A plan for each student's continued education will be determined individually with each student and his/her parent or legal guardian.
- WCS will secure written releases of information from parents/guardians.
- WCS will notify receiving schools for each student and forward files.
- WCS will advise receiving schools that WCS personnel are available for consultation.
- WCS will mail student information, including all appropriate student records, to each home.
- The Board Chair and Treasurer will remain engaged, and responsible to oversee that records are kept for the required number of years.

- K. A statement that a chartered public school providing the only available public education services at a specific grade level in a school district shall offer those educational services to all resident pupils of that grade**

If WCS provides the only available public education services at a specific grade level within its resident school district, WCS shall offer those educational services to all resident pupils of the grade level in accordance with RSA-B:8, IV and Ed 318.07(b)(5).

- L. An outline of the proposed accountability plan which clarifies expectations for evaluating the school's program, and which contains an acknowledgment that a full accountability plan shall be developed and ready to implement prior to the date of opening, RSA 194-B:3,II(dd)**

In accordance with RSA 194-B:3, II (dd), WCS will create, and be prepared to utilize, an outlined accountability plan prior to the opening date of the charter school. To review a comprehensive draft of the proposed accountability plan, see **Exhibit O**. This accountability plan will clarify expectations for evaluation of the school's educational goals/objectives, school improvement, enrollment, graduation and college matriculation rates, financial operations/use of public funds, and governance on an annual basis. Data will be collected from students, parents, faculty, staff, and alumni to track the school's educational impact. The school will provide one copy of its annual report to the state board and to its local school board. This report will also be available to anyone who requests it.

Once per year, the WCS Co-Heads of School will perform an evaluation to determine the school's success and performance. It is imperative that this evaluation tool provides structure/organization as well as creativity to maintain an effective environment for growth. The intent is to provide accurate analysis of finances, operational compliance, development, academic performance, et al - as well as to ensure creative, individual solutions in a positive environment. Upon completion of the evaluation, discussion will be scheduled at the next WCS Board of Trustees meeting. Any necessary adjustments will be discussed at this meeting.

- M. An outline of the proposed policy to adopt and implement the code of conduct for New Hampshire educators, as required by RSA 194-B, II(ee).**

In accordance with RSA 194-B, II(ee), WCS will adopt and implement the Code of Conduct for New Hampshire educators Employee Performance, Conduct, and Disciplinary Action ([Ed 510](#)). Formal adoption will be conducted by the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees and Co-Heads of School will jointly oversee implementation and enforcement, which includes updating the WCS Employee Handbook to reflect the Code of Conduct in **Exhibit T**.

XV. Letters of Support

See **Exhibit P** for letters of support from business and community leaders, elected officials, local school districts, parents, and community members.

XVI. Charter School Opening

Please see our Charter School Opening timeline in Section III Part G in this document.

XVII. Signed and Certified Application

This application is respectfully submitted by Dream AcadeME, Inc. a registered non-profit entity in the State of New Hampshire. This application has been prepared using the criteria set forth in the 'New Hampshire Department Application Rubric 5' and evaluation guidelines set forth in the 'New Hampshire Department of Education Charter School Evaluation Scoring Guide For Proposed Charter School Applications' as provided by the State of New Hampshire at the time of receipt and acceptance of the 'Letter of Intent' as dated February 28, 2023. We certify that we have the authority to submit this application and that all information contained herein is complete and accurate, realizing that any misrepresentation could result in disqualification from the application process or revocation of award. We understand that incomplete applications will not be considered. The people named as contact persons for the application are so authorized to serve as the primary contacts for this application.



Kyle Morse



Alison Sanchez



Amy Marcum (Hindmarsh)



Rich Lowney



Kimberly Bellemore



Gabrielle LeBlanc -Winch



Kim Ballantyne



Peggy Hafenberg



Megan Carignan



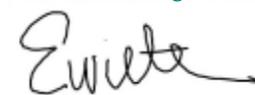
Michelle Flynn



Nicole Sousa



Brooke Santiag



Emily Wiete



Dr. Traci Korhonen, Ed.D.