

## Charter School Sponsorship: Full Application

### Introduction

The first stage of SLU's charter application process requires all applicants to submit a brief Prospectus to SLU's Director of Charter School Sponsorship. Upon completion of the review by SLU, applicants will be informed in writing of SLU's decision to either reject the Prospectus or invite the applicant to submit a full Application. The requirements of the Application are provided here. As appropriate, elements of the Prospectus can be used in this Application, as well.

It is understood that there is a vast universe of federal, state and local laws that govern the provision of public education and its surrounding programs. In most sections, major sections of law are identified for reference, but it is expected that applicants will know, or seek appropriate guidance in creating an application that meets all relevant laws, and the application will be judged on that basis, even if the laws are not cited herein.

***Note: Applicants seeking to operate "virtual programs" (as defined by DESE and RSMo 162.1250(3)), "career and technical education programs" (as defined under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006), or a school serving "high risk and alternative populations" (as defined by RSMo 160.405.2(5)), must complete additional, program-specific application materials not contained in the application below. Contact SLU in advance for guidance and the additional application requirements. SLU prioritizes applications for schools oriented to high-risk and alternative populations.***

If any instructions are not clear, or there any special situations that seem not to fit law or the sections described below, or additional guidance is needed, please contact SLU's Office of Charter School Sponsorship.

## Application Timing & Related Decision-Making

The schedule for all stages of charter application submission and review is as follows:

***Important: This schedule offers deadlines for the submission of application materials; applicants are strongly encouraged to submit materials to SLU well in advance of these deadlines.***

Action	Timing/Deadline
Prospectus Submitted to SLU	No later than May 15 in the year prior to anticipated opening.
Response to Prospectus to Applicant	30 days following submission
Application Submitted	No later than July 15 in the year prior to anticipated opening
Response to Application to Applicant	60 days following submission
Contract Signed <i>(if application accepted)</i>	No later than October 15 <sup>th</sup> in the year prior to anticipated opening
Fully agreed-upon Charter Submitted to DESE	No later than November 10 <sup>th</sup> in the year prior to anticipated opening
SBOE Decides on charter	No later than January 31 <sup>st</sup> in the year of anticipated school opening
School opens	August 20XX



## Charter School Sponsorship Application

### Table of Contents

<b>A. Overview</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>B. Target Student Population and Need</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>C. Educational Goals, Assessment, and Use of Assessment Data</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>D. Curriculum and Instruction</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>E. Educating Special Populations</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>F. Instructional Staff</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>G. School Calendar and Daily Schedule</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>H. Third Party Educational Service Providers</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>I. Existing School Operators</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>J. Governing Board and Corporate Organization</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>K. Organizational Leadership</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>L. Financial Management and Budgeting</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>M. Operations Management</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>N. Facilities</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>O. Stakeholder Engagement</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>P. Pre-Opening Requirements</b>	<b>112</b>



## Charter School Sponsorship Application

### A. Overview

**Name of Proposed School:** Frontier STEM Academy - Elementary (LEA name Frontier Schools - Columbia)

**Proposed Location (Generally) of the School:** Columbia, MO

**Name of 501(c)3 serving as the School's Corporate Entity:** Frontier Schools, Inc.

**Intended Year of School Opening:** August 2027

**A.1** In no more than 500 words, summarize the school's mission/vision and governing educational philosophy/model.

**Vision:**

Be a vibrant and innovative educational leader.

**Mission:**

Empower students to discover and develop their gifts and talents

- in pursuit of college readiness, productive citizenship and lifelong learning
- within an atmosphere of academic excellence with a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) focus
- to prepare for the jobs projected for American workforce
- meeting the needs of all, including those whose primary interest is non-STEM
- providing flexibility to expand in the future to a STEAM environment by adding an Arts component

The school's mission and vision reflect a commitment to providing a high-quality, future-focused elementary education grounded in innovation, equity, and academic excellence. As a vibrant and innovative educational leader, the school is dedicated to preparing students for success in a rapidly changing world by fostering curiosity, creativity, and a strong foundation in essential academic skills. The mission emphasizes empowering students to recognize and develop their unique gifts and talents while cultivating habits of mind that support lifelong learning and responsible citizenship.

At the core of the school's educational philosophy is a belief that all students can achieve at high levels when provided with rigorous instruction, supportive relationships, and meaningful learning experiences. The school maintains high expectations for academic performance and behavior while implementing intentional supports to ensure that each student is able to meet those expectations. Instruction is student-centered and developmentally appropriate, particularly for learners in Pre-K through second grade, emphasizing foundational literacy, numeracy, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills.

The instructional model places a strong emphasis on STEM education as a driver of innovation and relevance. Through inquiry-based learning, hands-on experiences, and real-world applications, students develop an early understanding and appreciation of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. This STEM-focused approach equips students with skills that align with workforce needs projected for the American economy, while

also nurturing creativity, collaboration, and perseverance. At the same time, the school is intentionally inclusive, meeting the needs of all learners, including those whose interests may not primarily lie in STEM fields. This balanced approach ensures that every student receives a well-rounded education and allows for future expansion into a STEAM model through the thoughtful integration of the arts.

Character development and social-emotional learning are integral to the school's philosophy. The school fosters a peaceful, caring, and safe learning environment where integrity, responsibility, respect, and appreciation for diversity are explicitly taught and modeled. Students are guided to develop strong character and positive relationships, reinforcing the connection between personal growth and academic success.

Family and community engagement further strengthen the school's educational model. The school recognizes families as essential partners in student learning and actively collaborates with parents and community members to support student achievement. Through shared responsibility, high standards, and continuous innovation, the school prepares students not only for academic success, but also to become engaged, ethical, and capable contributors to their communities.

- A.2** Charter schools may seek sponsorship from a wide range of institutions/organizations – each with distinct sponsorship philosophies and motivations. What informs this application for sponsorship from Saint Louis University, specifically? What – *specifically* – about [SLU](#), and our [approach to charter sponsorship](#), drives your interest in our sponsorship?

Charter schools may seek sponsorship from a wide range of institutions and organizations, each with distinct philosophies and motivations. This application seeks sponsorship from Saint Louis University (SLU) because SLU's charter sponsorship framework closely aligns with the proposed school's mission, governance model, and performance expectations, particularly in the areas of academic accountability, organizational stability, and ethical leadership.

A primary factor informing this application is the founding team's existing sponsorship relationship with SLU since 2023, during which the team has operated under SLU's established performance and compliance monitoring system. This includes participation in annual evaluations, submission of board-approved policies and handbooks, regular provision of board agendas and minutes, and engagement in SLU-required board training. These concrete oversight structures have shaped the proposed school's governance design and demonstrate alignment with SLU's expectations for transparency, board independence, and statutory compliance.

The proposed school's board governance model mirrors SLU's sponsorship requirements, including:

- A board composed of unpaid, independent members with fiduciary responsibility for academic, financial, and organizational performance;
- Compliance with Missouri Sunshine Law requirements for open meetings and public records;
- Annual board training aligned to SLU-approved content areas; and
- Clear delineation between board oversight and school-level management, consistent with SLU's emphasis on effective governance and accountability.

Academically, the school's design reflects SLU's performance-based sponsorship philosophy. The school will establish annual academic goals tied to state assessment data, internal benchmark assessments, and subgroup performance, consistent with SLU's use of performance contracts and data-informed renewal decisions. The phased grade-level expansion model (Pre-K through second grade at opening, with one grade added annually) reflects SLU's expectation that growth be deliberate, evidence-based, and fiscally sustainable, rather than rapid or speculative.

From an organizational and financial perspective, the proposed school’s operational plan aligns with SLU’s emphasis on financial controls and long-term sustainability, including:

- Board review and approval of budgets and monthly financial reports;
- Maintenance of positive operating fund balances;
- Adoption of procurement and conflict-of-interest policies consistent with SLU oversight expectations; and
- Annual independent audits submitted to SLU as required.

The school’s commitment to whole-child development, ethical leadership, and community engagement further aligns with SLU’s institutional mission and values. This alignment is evidenced through planned implementation of character education, social-emotional learning structures, and family engagement practices that parallel SLU’s focus on education as a vehicle for social responsibility and community impact.

Finally, the founding team’s familiarity with SLU’s intervention and continuous improvement framework—including probationary standards, corrective action planning, and performance monitoring—demonstrates readiness to operate within a sponsorship model that prioritizes accountability over compliance alone. The team views SLU’s rigorous oversight not as a constraint, but as a mechanism for strengthening school quality and ensuring long-term success.

In summary, this application is informed by demonstrated alignment in governance structure, accountability systems, academic performance expectations, and operational practices, supported by an established sponsorship relationship with SLU. These shared commitments position the proposed school and its board to meet SLU’s standards for high-quality charter authorization and to engage in a transparent, performance-driven partnership in service of students and the broader community.

**Evaluation Criteria: *Satisfactory responses will...***

- evidence a compelling and well-articulated description of the proposed school.
- evidence clear intentionality in and a strong rationale for seeking SLU’s sponsorship
- evidence of alignment between the proposed school, board, and SLU as the potential sponsor.

## B. Target Student Population and Need

**B.1** Describe – quantitatively and qualitatively – the student population for which the school is intentionally designed. Address all of the following:

- geography, gender, race/ethnicity, age, pertinent socio-economic and cultural characteristics, etc.
- what schools the majority of the target students currently attend; current attrition and mobility rates; and results of any pertinent research indicating an interest from target school families to attend the proposed charter school

Frontier STEM Academy is proposed as a new elementary charter school in Columbia, Missouri, intentionally designed to serve a diverse population of young learners by providing equitable access to a high-quality, innovative, and STEM-focused public education. The school’s design is informed by Columbia’s demographic characteristics, student mobility patterns, and an analysis of district Missouri Performance Index (MPI) data, which reveal both gradual overall improvement and persistent achievement gaps across student groups that begin early in students’ educational trajectories.

### **Geography and Age Range**

The school will be located in Columbia, Missouri, and will primarily serve students residing within the city limits and nearby surrounding communities. Columbia is a growing and demographically diverse city with a steady influx of families drawn by employment opportunities, higher education, healthcare, and research institutions. The school is intentionally designed as a neighborhood-accessible option for families across multiple zip codes, ensuring broad geographic accessibility rather than serving a narrowly defined catchment area.

Frontier STEM Academy will open in the 2027–28 school year serving students in Pre-K through second grade, with plans to add one grade level each subsequent year until reaching full elementary capacity. During the first year of operation, the school will primarily serve students ages four through eight. By the end of the initial three-year growth period, when the school is serving Pre-K through fourth grade, the student population is expected to range from approximately four to ten years old. The school’s academic, social-emotional, and instructional structures are intentionally designed to support this full early-childhood-to-upper-elementary continuum, with developmentally appropriate practices that evolve as students progress through each grade level.

### **Race, Ethnicity, and Gender**

Projected enrollment is expected to reflect the overall racial and ethnic diversity of Columbia, rather than targeting or mirroring any single subgroup. Based on local demographic data, the anticipated student population includes approximately 51.9% White students, 21.8% Black students, 8.9% Hispanic/Latino students, 6% Asian students, and approximately 11.4% students identifying as multiracial or other racial or ethnic backgrounds. These projections are consistent with citywide demographics and support the school’s commitment to serving a broad, inclusive, and representative cross-section of the community. Frontier STEM Academy is intentionally designed to ensure that students from all racial and ethnic backgrounds—including those who have historically experienced academic disparities—have equitable access to rigorous instruction, culturally responsive practices, and high-quality early STEM learning opportunities.

Enrollment is expected to be balanced by gender, with approximately equal representation of male and female students. The school will also remain inclusive and responsive to students of all gender identities, ensuring a safe, respectful, and affirming learning environment for every child.

## Academic Performance and Achievement Gaps (MPI Analysis)

An analysis of recent Missouri Performance Index (MPI) data for Columbia Public Schools reveals consistent patterns across **ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies**: while overall district MPI scores have shown gradual improvement from 2022 to 2025, **significant and persistent achievement gaps remain across racial, socio-economic, language, and disability subgroups**. These gaps appear across all core content areas and underscore the need for early, intentional intervention.

### English Language Arts (ELA)

District ELA MPI scores for all students increased steadily from **373.3 (2022)** to **387.6 (2025)**. However, subgroup performance shows substantial disparities.

Student Group	2022	2023	2024	2025
All Students	373.3	378.9	384	387.6
White	405.7	410.8	414.4	418.8
Black	316.4	318.6	324.4	328.6
Hispanic	351.8	353.7	356.8	358.8
Direct Certification	333.3	334.7	338.8	344.4
ELL	355.3	359	354.4	353.8
SPED	337.7	342.4	348.8	354.4

### Observed Gaps:

- White–Black gap: 90 MPI points
- White–Hispanic gap: 60 MPI points
- White–Direct Certification gap: 70 MPI points

These gaps indicate that many students from historically underserved groups are entering later grades with significantly weaker literacy foundations.

### Mathematics

Mathematics MPI scores show similar patterns, with overall improvement but pronounced subgroup disparities. District-wide math MPI increased from **348.8 (2022)** to **372.8 (2025)**.

Student Group	2022	2023	2024	2025
All Students	348.8	355.7	364.4	372.8
White	382	386.1	394.7	402.7
Black	325.1	328.4	336.1	333.8
Hispanic	345.8	349.7	351.3	353.8

<b>Direct Certification</b>	305.4	309.8	315.4	315.8
<b>ELL</b>	334.4	346.1	337	344.8
<b>SPED</b>	268.8	276.4	281.4	281.1

**Observed Gaps:**

- White–Black gap: 70 MPI points
- White–Direct Certification gap: 85–90 MPI points
- White–SPED gap: 120 MPI points

The magnitude of these gaps in mathematics is especially concerning given the subject’s role as a gatekeeper for advanced STEM learning in later grades.

**Science**

Science MPI data reflect steady overall performance but persistent inequities across student groups. District science MPI increased from **371.6 (2022)** to **385.3 (2025)**.

<b>Student Group</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>
<b>All Students</b>	371.6	373.5	377.5	385.3
<b>White</b>	397.4	402	404.4	412.3
<b>Black</b>	325.3	329	334.8	338.4
<b>Hispanic</b>	356.8	360.1	359.4	363.8
<b>Direct Certification</b>	333.9	334.3	338.4	348.8
<b>ELL</b>	338.4	347.7	338.4	352.3
<b>SPED</b>	345.7	349.7	352.4	354.4

**Observed Gaps:**

- White–Black gap: 70–75 MPI points
- White–Hispanic gap: 50 MPI points
- White–Direct Certification gap: 60+ MPI points

These gaps suggest that many students lack consistent access to high-quality, inquiry-based science instruction early in their academic careers.

**Social Studies**

Social studies MPI scores also demonstrate uneven outcomes. District-wide MPI rose modestly from **376.9 (2022)** to **378.1 (2025)**, indicating slower overall growth relative to other subjects.

Student Group	2022	2023	2024	2025
All Students	376.9	379.7	382.3	378.1
White	384.6	387.8	401.5	397.2
Black	323.2	328.8	334.4	335.8
Hispanic	359.2	361.7	364.8	365.6
Direct Certification	339.4	343.8	351.4	353.4
ELL	335.4	358.8	345.2	327.4
SPED	333.4	338.7	347.4	331.5

**Observed Gaps:**

- White–Black gap: 60+ MPI points
- White–ELL gap: 70 MPI points
- White–SPED gap: 85+ MPI points

The relatively flat growth in social studies MPI suggests a need for stronger integration of literacy, critical thinking, and culturally relevant content beginning in the elementary grades.

**Socio-Economic and Cultural Characteristics**

The school is intentionally designed to serve a socio-economically diverse population, including a significant proportion of students from low-income households. Many families in Columbia face challenges related to housing stability, access to affordable childcare, and economic insecurity, particularly those employed in service industries, education, healthcare support roles, and entry-level professional positions.

In addition, the school expects to serve English Learners, students with disabilities, and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Columbia’s cultural landscape is shaped by the presence of a major public university, an expanding immigrant population, refugee resettlement, and a mix of urban and rural influences. These dynamics contribute to a student population with varied languages, traditions, and lived experiences.

Frontier STEM Academy is intentionally designed with culturally responsive teaching practices, inclusive family engagement strategies, and wraparound supports. These include multilingual communication, strong home-school partnerships, inclusive special education services, and social-emotional learning supports that recognize the diverse strengths and needs of students and families. These structures are purposefully embedded in the school’s instructional model to address early academic gaps, support student mobility, and ensure that all learners—regardless of background—can access and benefit from high-quality STEM-focused instruction beginning in the earliest grades.

**How the School Meets the Educational Needs of the Target Population**

Frontier STEM Academy’s instructional model is intentionally designed to meet the specific educational needs of its target student population by focusing on early intervention, foundational skill development, and integrated

STEM learning. Research and district performance data indicate that achievement gaps in literacy and mathematics emerge early and widen over time; therefore, the school prioritizes strong early literacy instruction, structured numeracy development, hands-on science exploration, and problem-solving experiences beginning in Pre-K. Small class sizes, data-informed instruction, and targeted supports will enable educators to identify learning needs early and respond with timely interventions. By integrating STEM concepts across content areas and emphasizing inquiry-based learning, the school is designed to support diverse learners, strengthen engagement, and build the academic foundations necessary for long-term success across all student groups.

### **Current School Attendance Patterns**

The majority of students targeted for enrollment at Frontier STEM Academy currently attend Columbia Public Schools (CPS) elementary schools, district-operated early childhood programs, or a range of private preschools and childcare centers. Columbia Public Schools is a large and geographically dispersed district serving students across 21 elementary schools, 7 middle schools, and 3 high schools, with clearly defined attendance areas throughout the city. As a result, families' elementary school options are largely determined by residence, and many neighborhoods are served by schools with significantly different demographic profiles and academic outcomes.

District data indicate substantial variation among elementary schools in student demographics, socio-economic characteristics, and academic outcomes. Some elementary schools serve student populations with relatively low levels of economic disadvantage and demonstrate strong academic performance, while others serve significantly higher proportions of economically disadvantaged students and historically underperforming subgroups and report considerably lower proficiency levels in core subjects. In several elementary schools, English Language Arts and mathematics proficiency rates fall well below district and state expectations, while other schools in the same district report proficiency rates exceeding 60 percent. This uneven distribution of outcomes suggests that educational opportunity and academic success are not experienced uniformly across the city.

Districtwide academic trends further highlight the need for additional high-quality public options. Across multiple years, fewer than half of students districtwide demonstrate proficiency in English Language Arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, with mathematics and science consistently emerging as areas of particular concern. These patterns indicate that many students progress through the elementary grades without fully mastering foundational skills—especially in STEM-related disciplines that are critical to later academic success.

As Columbia's population continues to grow, particularly among families with young children, demand for high-quality early childhood and elementary seats has increased. The district serves a diverse and mobile population, including a substantial proportion of students from low-income households and other historically underperforming groups. Many families seek additional public-school options that offer specialized instructional models, smaller and more personalized learning environments, and intentional strategies to address early academic gaps.

Frontier STEM Academy is designed to complement rather than duplicate existing educational offerings by providing a STEM-focused, inquiry-based instructional model beginning in the earliest grades. The school will be open to families across Columbia, offering choice beyond neighborhood-based assignment and ensuring that access to a rigorous and coherent program is not determined by attendance boundaries. By emphasizing early literacy, numeracy, problem-solving, and integrated STEM learning in Pre-K through second grade, Frontier STEM Academy directly responds to districtwide performance patterns and provides families with an additional public option focused on strengthening academic foundations before achievement gaps widen in later grades.

### **Attrition and Mobility**

Student mobility in Columbia is influenced by employment changes, housing transitions, and the presence of higher education institutions that attract short- and medium-term residents. Based on Missouri state data and urban district trends, the school anticipates annual attrition rates of approximately 5–10%, with lower mobility in early elementary grades and slightly higher rates as families relocate for work or education-related reasons. The school's enrollment and instructional model are designed to support mobile students through consistent curricular alignment across grades, intentional onboarding for new families, and early diagnostic assessments that allow teachers to quickly identify and address learning gaps when students enter mid-year.

The school's enrollment model is designed to accommodate mobility through rolling admissions, active waitlists, and family-centered retention strategies. Strong school culture, consistent communication, and personalized student supports are expected to promote stability and long-term enrollment.

### **Evidence of Family Interest**

Research at the national and state level demonstrates sustained and growing family demand for innovative, high-quality public school options, particularly charter schools offering specialized academic models such as STEM and college-preparatory programming. Nationally, demand for new charter schools has reached record levels, as evidenced by a significant increase in applications to the federal Charter Schools Program (CSP). The U.S. Department of Education reported that CSP applications doubled in recent cycles, reflecting unprecedented parent interest in new schools designed to deliver rigorous academics, real-world relevance, and specialized instructional approaches, including STEM-focused models. Additionally, federal charter policy recognizes that families increasingly seek schools that provide distinctive academic programs—such as STEM, career preparation, and inquiry-based learning—that may not be widely available in traditional district settings.

A growing body of research also underscores the importance of early STEM exposure, particularly in Pre-K through primary grades, as a critical factor in long-term academic success and workforce readiness. National education research organizations identify early childhood as a pivotal stage for developing foundational skills in mathematics, science, problem-solving, and critical thinking—skills that disproportionately benefit students when introduced early and systematically. Federal initiatives such as the U.S. Department of Education's *You Belong in STEM* further highlight the national priority placed on expanding access to high-quality STEM education for all students, beginning in the early grades, as a strategy to promote equity and future economic opportunity.

At the local level, demographic trends reinforce the need for additional high-quality elementary school options in Columbia, Missouri. Population data indicate that Columbia continues to experience steady growth, driven in part by employment opportunities in higher education, healthcare, and research sectors, which attract young families with school-age children. Recent population estimates show continued increases in the number of residents and households, suggesting rising demand for early childhood and elementary school seats. As the number of young families grows, so does interest in public schools that offer rigorous academics, personalized learning, and specialized instructional focus areas.

In combination, national research on charter school demand, evidence supporting early STEM education, and local population growth trends indicate strong family interest in a new public elementary school option in Columbia. Frontier STEM Academy is intentionally designed to respond to these documented needs by offering a rigorous, STEM-focused, and inclusive educational model that emphasizes early intervention, academic excellence, character development, and meaningful family engagement. By aligning its design with both national education priorities and local demographic realities, Frontier STEM Academy is positioned to serve as a responsive and attractive educational choice for Columbia families seeking innovative, high-quality public schooling.

- B.2** Detail the need for the school to exist within the current/future portfolio of educational options in the City of Columbia. Address your understanding of the challenges – educational, operational,

etc. – of the current neighborhood schools and the target population’s currently unmet educational needs (cite enrollment and/or student achievement data, community-based research, district reports, etc. as appropriate).

### **Current portfolio realities: neighborhood assignment, uneven outcomes, and limited specialized early STEM options**

Most elementary students in Columbia are served through neighborhood-assigned schools within Columbia Public Schools (CPS). CPS provides district enrollment reporting and attendance-area maps that reflect how school access is largely tied to residence and assigned boundaries. While neighborhood assignment can provide stability for some families, it can also lead to uneven access to high-performing instructional environments when school outcomes vary substantially by attendance area.

At the same time, Boone County and Columbia continue to experience population growth and growth in young child age bands, which increases the importance of expanding high-quality early learning seats and ensuring new options are designed for long-term sustainability.

### **Educational challenges: large building-to-building variation in Proficient/Advanced rates**

Building-level assessment results show substantial discrepancies among elementary schools in the percent of students scoring Proficient/Advanced, especially in ELA and Math. Using Columbia building results (MAP Performance Level Report – Public, 2025), elementary schools range from high-performing campuses exceeding 60% Proficient/Advanced in ELA and Math to campuses where fewer than 25–35% of students meet Proficient/Advanced—differences that represent two very different instructional realities within the same city.

This level of variation strongly suggests that students’ academic opportunities and outcomes differ materially by where they live, and that a citywide, choice-based option with a coherent early-literacy and early-math strategy would strengthen the overall portfolio.

### **Persistent subgroup gaps across subjects (ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies)**

District Missouri Performance Index (MPI) trends indicate gradual overall improvement while also showing persistent subgroup gaps across all tested areas—ELA, math, science, and social studies. These patterns align with the building-level variation described above and reinforce the need for a school model intentionally designed to close gaps early through targeted supports and consistent instructional quality. (MPI is used in Missouri’s accountability framework through MSIP/Annual Performance reporting.)

### **Currently unmet needs of the target population**

Frontier STEM Academy is intentionally designed to address unmet needs that are visible in the current portfolio:

Unmet need 1: Strong early foundations before gaps widen.

Many students do not enter grade 3 fully prepared in literacy and math. Because state testing begins in grade 3, early prevention in Pre-K–2 is essential to reduce later remediation. Frontier STEM Academy’s program is built around early reading, numeracy, and problem solving as a core strategy for long-term proficiency.

Unmet need 2: Equitable access to consistently high outcomes across neighborhoods.

Building-level discrepancies indicate that not all students have equal access to high-performing instructional environments through neighborhood assignment alone. A citywide public-school option provides families a pathway to a rigorous model regardless of residence.

Unmet need 3: STEM-rich learning beginning in the earliest grades.

National research and federal priorities emphasize that early grades are a key window for building STEM

identity, math reasoning, and scientific thinking—especially for historically underserved students. Frontier STEM Academy is designed to embed STEM through inquiry, hands-on learning, and integrated literacy and math instruction rather than treating STEM as an add-on.

Unmet need 4: Support for higher-need student groups and mobility.

Columbia’s economy and university-adjacent workforce can contribute to mobility for some families. A school intentionally designed around strong onboarding, consistent school culture, and targeted intervention can improve continuity and outcomes for mobile students.

### **Operational challenges in the current environment and how Frontier STEM Academy adds value**

The district operates a broad set of schools across multiple attendance areas, which increases complexity in ensuring consistent program quality and equitable outcomes citywide. Additionally, statewide accountability reporting (APR/MSIP 6) emphasizes continuous improvement and highlights that performance gains can occur alongside ongoing equity challenges—meaning improvement efforts must be paired with targeted, early strategies that directly address gaps.

Frontier STEM Academy strengthens the overall portfolio by:

- Creating an additional public elementary option accessible beyond neighborhood assignment
- Focusing on Pre-K–2 foundations with a coherent plan to add grades annually
- Delivering a STEM-focused instructional model aligned to early learning science and long-term readiness
- Designing systems for data-driven interventions, inclusion, and family engagement from day one

**B.3** Detail how your school’s philosophy/model (as detailed above) is well-suited to this target population? Be specific. What supports your belief in the efficacy of your school for this target population?

### **Alignment of School Philosophy and Model to the Target Population**

Frontier STEM Academy’s educational philosophy and instructional model are intentionally designed to meet the needs of Columbia’s diverse early elementary population, particularly students who are most impacted by early academic gaps, economic disadvantage, and uneven access to high-quality instructional environments. The school’s emphasis on early intervention, high expectations, STEM-rich instruction, and whole-child development is well suited to the demographic, academic, and socio-economic characteristics of the target population.

### **Early Intervention in Pre-K–2: Addressing Gaps Before They Widen**

District data show that achievement gaps across race, income status, language proficiency, and disability status are already present by the time students reach tested grades and persist across subjects. Frontier STEM Academy’s decision to open as a Pre-K through second grade school is a deliberate response to this reality. Research consistently demonstrates that early literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving skills developed in the primary grades are strong predictors of later academic success. By concentrating resources and instructional expertise in these foundational years, the school is positioned to prevent gaps from becoming entrenched rather than attempting to remediate them later.

The instructional model prioritizes structured literacy, explicit mathematics instruction, and developmentally

appropriate inquiry-based learning. Frequent formative assessments and embedded intervention time allow educators to identify learning needs early and provide targeted supports aligned to each student’s developmental level.

### **STEM-Focused, Inquiry-Based Learning for Diverse Learners**

Frontier STEM Academy’s STEM-focused model is particularly well suited to a population that includes students from varied cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds. STEM instruction emphasizes hands-on learning, collaboration, problem-solving, and real-world relevance—approaches shown to engage learners who may not thrive in traditional, lecture-based classrooms. By integrating science, technology, engineering, and mathematics with literacy and social-emotional learning, the school creates multiple entry points for student engagement and success.

Importantly, the model is inclusive of students whose primary interests may not be STEM-focused. STEM serves as a vehicle for developing critical thinking, perseverance, and creativity rather than a narrow academic track. This flexibility ensures that all students—including English Learners, students with disabilities, and students from historically underserved groups—benefit from rich instructional experiences.

### **High Expectations Paired with Strong Supports**

The school’s philosophy of maintaining high expectations for all students is paired with intentional systems of academic and social-emotional support. This approach directly addresses patterns observed in Columbia, where student outcomes vary significantly by school and neighborhood. Frontier STEM Academy establishes a consistent standard of instructional quality and student expectations regardless of background, while providing differentiated supports such as small-group instruction, intervention blocks, and integrated social-emotional learning.

Educators are trained to use data to inform instruction and to adjust practices in response to student needs. This data-driven approach supports continuous improvement and ensures that instructional decisions are responsive rather than reactive.

### **Family and Community Engagement as a Core Strategy**

Given the diversity and mobility of Columbia’s families, Frontier STEM Academy’s emphasis on family and community engagement is essential to its effectiveness. The school’s model views families as partners in learning and prioritizes regular, two-way communication, culturally responsive engagement practices, and accessible opportunities for family involvement. These strategies are particularly important for supporting students from economically disadvantaged households, English Learners, and families navigating transitions.

### **Evidence Supporting the Model’s Efficacy**

The school’s confidence in this model is grounded in well-established research on early childhood education, STEM pedagogy, and whole-child development. Studies consistently show that early, high-quality instruction combined with strong family engagement and social-emotional supports leads to improved academic outcomes, especially for students from historically underserved populations. Additionally, inquiry-based STEM instruction has been shown to increase student engagement and deepen conceptual understanding across disciplines.

Frontier STEM Academy’s philosophy and model are intentionally aligned to the needs of Columbia’s target population. By focusing on early intervention, inclusive STEM-rich instruction, high expectations with strong supports, and deep family engagement, the school is well positioned to serve a diverse student body and address the academic disparities observed across the community. This alignment supports the school’s belief that its model will be effective in improving outcomes for young learners and contributing positively to

Columbia's broader educational portfolio.

- B.4** Describe how you will recruit students. Discuss publicity, marketing, and strategies to reach all eligible families. Discuss the nature of and extent to which you have engaged target population families and the local community to develop your plans.

### **Student Recruitment, Publicity, and Community Engagement**

Frontier STEM Academy is committed to implementing a student recruitment and enrollment strategy that ensures equitable access for all eligible families in Columbia, with particular attention to reaching students who have historically experienced limited access to high-quality educational options. Recruitment efforts will be inclusive, transparent, and designed to engage families across diverse neighborhoods, socio-economic backgrounds, and cultural communities.

#### **Recruitment Philosophy and Goals**

The school's recruitment strategy is grounded in the belief that all families deserve clear information and meaningful access to public school choices. Frontier STEM Academy will actively seek to enroll a student population that reflects the racial, socio-economic, and cultural diversity of Columbia. Outreach efforts will prioritize families with young children, including those with students entering Pre-K, kindergarten, and early elementary grades, and will be designed to eliminate barriers related to language, transportation, or access to information.

#### **Publicity and Marketing Strategies**

Frontier STEM Academy will implement a multi-pronged publicity and marketing plan to ensure broad community awareness. Key strategies will include:

- **Community-Based Outreach:** Distribution of printed materials such as flyers and brochures in high-traffic, family-centered locations including public libraries, community centers, childcare providers, early learning centers, faith-based organizations, healthcare clinics, and local businesses.
- **Digital and Online Presence:** Development of a school website with clear, accessible information about the school's mission, academic program, enrollment process, and timelines. Social media platforms will be used to share updates, enrollment deadlines, and informational content in a family-friendly format.
- **Language Accessibility:** All outreach materials will be translated into languages commonly spoken in the community, and bilingual staff or interpreters will be available during enrollment events and information sessions to ensure families can fully participate.
- **Media Outreach:** Use of local media outlets, including community newsletters, radio stations, and online community boards, to share enrollment information and upcoming events.

#### **Strategies to Reach All Eligible Families**

To ensure outreach extends beyond families who are already well-connected to school choice networks, Frontier STEM Academy will employ targeted, relationship-based recruitment strategies, including:

- Hosting information sessions and open houses at accessible community locations as well as virtual sessions to accommodate varying family schedules.

- Partnering with early childhood providers, Head Start programs, and childcare centers to reach families with preschool-aged children.
- Collaborating with community organizations and service providers that work directly with low-income families, English Learners, and immigrant or refugee communities.
- Participating in community events, family resource fairs, and neighborhood gatherings to share information and build trust with families.

These strategies are intended to ensure that families who may not typically seek out charter school options are still informed and supported throughout the enrollment process.

### **Community Engagement in School Planning**

Engagement with families and the local community has been an integral part of Frontier STEM Academy’s planning process. School leaders have engaged in informal outreach and conversations with parents, early childhood educators, community leaders, and service organizations to better understand community priorities, educational needs, and desired school features. These conversations have informed key elements of the school’s design, including the emphasis on early intervention, STEM-focused instruction, character education, and strong family engagement practices.

Feedback from families has highlighted interest in:

- Strong academic foundations beginning in the early grades
- Safe, inclusive, and nurturing school environments
- Clear communication and opportunities for family involvement
- Instruction that prepares students for future academic and career success

The school’s recruitment and engagement plan reflects these priorities and will continue to evolve as relationships with families and community partners deepen.

### **Ongoing Engagement and Enrollment Transparency**

Frontier STEM Academy will maintain an open and transparent enrollment process, using a public lottery if applications exceed available seats. Ongoing communication with interested families will be maintained through newsletters, informational updates, and direct outreach to ensure families remain informed and engaged throughout the process.

Through intentional outreach, inclusive marketing strategies, and meaningful community engagement, Frontier STEM Academy will ensure that all eligible families in Columbia are aware of and able to access the school. By building strong relationships with families and community partners from the outset, the school is positioned to enroll a diverse student body and establish trust as a responsive, community-centered public school option.

- B.5** Detail the admission and enrollment processes, admission preference policies, back-filling of open seats (at all grade levels), and enrollment policies invoked when demand exceeds available seats.

Address the school's policy on the validity of attendance of students who do not reside in the district but may be eligible to attend per judicial settlements, and admission statements related to students with disabilities.

### **Admissions and Enrollment Policies**

Frontier STEM Academy will operate as a public charter school open to all eligible students in accordance with Missouri law. The school will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, family income, academic ability, or prior academic achievement. Admission will be based on eligibility criteria defined by state statute and applicable court decisions, and all admissions and enrollment procedures will be transparent, fair, and accessible.

### **Eligibility and Application Process**

Frontier STEM Academy will be open to students eligible to attend public schools in Missouri, including students residing within Columbia and surrounding areas as permitted by law. The application process will be simple and accessible, requiring basic student and family information and will be available in both paper and online formats. Application materials will be provided in multiple languages as needed, and assistance will be offered to families requiring support in completing applications.

The school will conduct outreach to ensure families are informed of application deadlines, enrollment procedures, and lottery processes. Applications will be accepted during a clearly defined enrollment window prior to the start of each academic year, with additional applications accepted on a rolling basis if seats remain available.

### **Admissions Preferences**

In accordance with Missouri charter school law, Frontier STEM Academy will apply only those admission preferences permitted by statute. These may include:

- **Siblings of currently enrolled students**, to promote family continuity.
- **Children of full-time staff members**, as allowed by law and subject to statutory limits.

All preferences will be clearly described in public enrollment materials. No academic, behavioral, or special education-based criteria will be used in determining admission.

### **Lottery Procedures When Demand Exceeds Capacity**

If the number of applications exceeds the number of available seats in any grade level, Frontier STEM Academy will conduct a **random, public lottery** to determine admission. The lottery will be conducted in a transparent manner, following written procedures approved by the governing board and consistent with authorizer requirements.

Applicants not selected through the lottery will be placed on a **waitlist**, ordered according to the lottery results. Families will be notified promptly of lottery outcomes and waitlist status.

### **Backfilling of Open Seats**

Frontier STEM Academy will **backfill open seats at all grade levels** to the maximum extent practicable in order to maintain stable enrollment and ensure efficient use of public resources. Backfilling will occur as seats become available due to student attrition, using the existing waitlist for that grade level.

Backfilling will be conducted through at least the elementary grades, consistent with the school’s mission of providing equitable access and continuity of instruction. Clear timelines for backfilling will be established each year, and families on waitlists will be contacted in order when seats become available.

**Enrollment Policies for Students Residing Outside the District**

Frontier STEM Academy will enroll students in accordance with Missouri charter statutes and applicable judicial settlements governing student eligibility. Students who do not reside within the local school district but are eligible to attend public charter schools under state law or court orders will be considered for admission on the same nondiscriminatory basis as all other applicants. Residency status will not be used to exclude otherwise eligible students when admission is permitted by law.

**Students with Disabilities**

Frontier STEM Academy will fully comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The school will not discriminate against students with disabilities and will not require disclosure of disability status as a condition of admission.

Students with disabilities will be admitted through the same application and lottery process as all other students. Upon enrollment, the school will provide a **free appropriate public education (FAPE)** in the least restrictive environment, consistent with each student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan. The school will ensure that appropriate special education and related services are provided either directly or through contracted providers.

Frontier STEM Academy’s admissions and enrollment policies are designed to ensure fairness, transparency, and equitable access for all eligible students. By implementing clear application procedures, lawful admission preferences, public lottery processes, and inclusive enrollment practices—including backfilling and full compliance with special education law—the school will provide a responsible, accessible, and legally compliant pathway for families seeking a high-quality public elementary education in Columbia.

**B.6** Complete the five-year enrollment projection table below, adding grade columns if necessary:

	Grade: PK	Grade: K	Grade: 1	Grade: 2	Grade: 3	Grade: 4	Grade: 5	Annual Total
Year 1	40	96	24	24	0	0	0	184
Year 2	80	96	96	24	24	0	0	320
Year 3	80	96	96	96	24	24	0	416
Year 4	80	96	96	96	96	24	24	512
Year 5	80	96	96	96	96	96	24	584

**B.7** Provide below any context you feel will help SLU understand your enrollment projections and/or timeline. Address projected attrition (which should be accounted for in your projected annual enrollments). Provide any additional support for the predictive quality of your enrollment projections.

**Enrollment Projections, Timeline, and Supporting Context**

Frontier STEM Academy’s enrollment projections are intentionally designed to balance responsible growth, programmatic quality, and operational sustainability as the school opens as a new elementary charter school in Columbia, Missouri. The enrollment timeline reflects a phased approach that aligns with the school’s academic model, staffing capacity, and facility planning, while also accounting for projected student attrition.

### **Enrollment Timeline and Grade-Level Growth**

The school is proposed to open in Year 1 serving Pre-K, Kindergarten, and Grades 1 and 2, with enrollment expanding incrementally each year by adding one grade level. This approach allows the school to establish strong instructional systems, culture, and family engagement practices in the earliest grades before scaling upward.

Initial enrollment is projected at 184 students in Year 1, with capacity distributed as follows:

- Pre-K: 40 students
- Kindergarten: 96 students
- Grade 1: 24 students
- Grade 2: 24 students

In Years 2 through 5, Frontier STEM Academy gradually expands grade-level offerings and increases enrollment to a projected 584 students by Year 5. The growth model is structured to maintain consistent cohort sizes, support continuity for returning students, and ensure that instructional quality is not compromised by rapid expansion.

This phased model is consistent with best practices for new charter schools, particularly those launching with early elementary grades, where careful attention to curriculum alignment, staff development, and student supports is critical.

### **Attrition Assumptions and Backfilling**

Projected enrollment figures incorporate annual attrition of approximately 5–10%, which is consistent with observed mobility patterns in communities with growing populations and employment-related movement. Attrition is expected to be lowest in early grades, particularly Pre-K and Kindergarten, and may increase modestly in later elementary grades as families relocate or make school transitions.

Frontier STEM Academy plans to actively backfill open seats at all grade levels using grade-level waitlists, ensuring that enrollment remains as close to projected capacity as possible. Backfilling will occur throughout the elementary grades, particularly in Grades 1–5, and will be supported by rolling admissions when seats are available. As a result, the annual enrollment totals reflected in the projection table represent net enrollment after attrition and backfilling, rather than initial enrollment alone.

### **Rationale for Enrollment Capacity by Grade**

The projected class sizes are intentionally designed to support developmentally appropriate instruction and differentiated learning:

- **Pre-K cohorts** are capped at 40 students to allow for smaller group instruction and early intervention.
- **Kindergarten cohorts** reflect higher demand and district-wide enrollment patterns for entry-level grades.
- **Grades 1–5** scale gradually, maintaining manageable cohort sizes as students progress through the

school.

This structure supports a strong student–teacher ratio and aligns with the school’s emphasis on early literacy, numeracy, and STEM-rich instruction.

### **Support for Predictive Quality of Projections**

Several factors support the predictive quality of Frontier STEM Academy’s enrollment projections:

1. **Population and Early Childhood Demand:** Columbia continues to experience growth among families with young children, increasing demand for Pre-K and Kindergarten seats. Entry grades historically demonstrate the strongest enrollment demand, which is reflected in higher projected Kindergarten enrollment beginning in Year 1.
2. **Phased Growth Model:** By limiting expansion to one grade per year, the school minimizes operational risk and allows enrollment growth to be closely monitored and adjusted as needed.
3. **Backfilling and Waitlists:** The use of waitlists and proactive backfilling strengthens enrollment stability and mitigates the impact of attrition on overall student counts.
4. **Programmatic Alignment:** The school’s STEM-focused, early-intervention model is intentionally designed to attract families seeking strong academic foundations beginning in the earliest grades, supporting sustained enrollment as cohorts advance.
5. **Operational Capacity:** Enrollment targets are aligned with staffing, facility capacity, and financial planning to ensure sustainability at each stage of growth.

The enrollment projections for Frontier STEM Academy reflect a conservative, realistic, and well-supported growth plan. By combining phased grade-level expansion, modest attrition assumptions, and active backfilling strategies, the school’s enrollment model is designed to remain stable, predictable, and responsive to community demand. This approach ensures that Frontier STEM Academy can grow responsibly while maintaining high academic standards and a strong school culture, supporting long-term success for students and families in Columbia.

### **Evaluation Criteria: *Satisfactory responses will...***

- evidence a clear understanding of the how the proposed school is designed to meet the specific educational needs of its target student population.
- evidence a well-informed understanding of why the needs of the target population are not currently being met.
- evidence a sound recruitment plan that addresses how community members have been/will be engaged.
- evidence admission and enrollment policies fully compliant with all applicable laws and consonant with SLU’s commitment to equity and justice.
- present realistic enrollment projections based on solid data and analysis.

## C. Educational Goals, Assessments, and Use of Assessment Data

- C.1** Summarize the major, high-level educational goals (academic, affective/social/ emotional, etc.) you have set for your school. For example, you might consider the intended educational outcomes of graduates of the school, or outcomes for those completing a major level of schooling (primary, elementary, etc.).

Frontier Schools – Columbia will establish a rigorous, equitable, and supportive elementary program designed to ensure that students develop the academic foundation, social-emotional skills, and habits of character necessary for long-term success in school and life. Our high-level goals are as follows:

Frontier STEM Academy’s high-level educational goals are grounded in Frontier Schools’ Strategic Plan and Student Success Profile. The school is designed to ensure that students completing the elementary program are firmly on the path to becoming college and career bound achievers, productive leaders and citizens, and resilient lifelong learners.

Academically, the school’s primary goal is that students demonstrate strong foundational mastery and sustained annual growth in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. By the time students complete the elementary grades, they will be performing at levels that are “On Track” with the state’s expectations and progressing at growth rates that are at least “Average” relative to state benchmarks. This dual focus on achievement and growth reflects Frontier’s commitment not only to grade-level proficiency, but also to accelerating learning for students who enter below grade level. Elementary students will leave the program with strong literacy and numeracy skills, prepared to access rigorous middle school coursework and continue progressing toward long-term college readiness indicators embedded in Frontier’s PK–12 pathway.

Equity is central to the school’s goals. Frontier STEM Academy is committed to ensuring that academic achievement and growth for student groups—including students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, English Learners, and students with disabilities—are “On Track” or “Average” with the state, consistent with Frontier’s district-wide equity goals. The school aims to reduce variance in performance across subgroups early in students’ academic careers so that gaps do not widen over time. This commitment is operationalized through data-driven instruction, tiered supports, and continuous improvement cycles focused specifically on subgroup performance.

In addition to academic outcomes, the school has explicit affective and social-emotional goals aligned to Frontier’s Student Success Profile. By the end of the elementary program, students will demonstrate self-regulation, perseverance, and the ability to set and work toward ambitious goals. They will model integrity and respect, collaborate effectively with peers, and engage productively in challenging learning tasks.<sup>1</sup>

### Academic Achievement Goals

- C.2** Given the broad goals summarized above, in the table below, detail how those goals will be operationalized (and on which your school might be evaluated by your sponsor and others). These should not be philosophical statements about learning and lifelong success for students but, rather, very concrete, measurable goals that fairly document student learning and the demonstrable impact of your school’s education. Address state-administered assessments, nationally-normed assessments, and locally-produced assessments as applicable. Add rows to the table if needed.

- *For example, perhaps one goal is that all 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> graders demonstrate at least 1.2 grades of educational growth in Mathematics per school year as measured by the MO Map, NWEA exam, or a locally-development assessment. Or that at least 65% the Black*

*sub-group of 8<sup>th</sup> graders will score at the “Proficient” or “Advanced” level on the MO MAP for English Language Arts. Or that student attitudes about and behavior toward those of other races or genders will evidence a certain type or amount of change over a designated period of time at the school. Or that growth in students’ abilities to self-advocate and exercise self-discipline and responsibility will meet certain targets as evidenced via certain applicable assessments.*

- *Note: We are especially interested in your approach to goals for individual student annual growth and sub-group achievement.*

Educational Goal	Related Primary Assessment(s)
<p><b>All Students:</b> The percentage of Frontier STEM Academy students scoring at the “Proficient” or “Advanced” level on the Missouri MAP English Language Arts assessment will be at or greater than the average percentage of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in Columbia Public Schools at the same grade levels, as reported by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).</p>	<p>MAP Assessment</p>
<p><b>All Students:</b> The percentage of Frontier STEM Academy students scoring at the “Proficient” or “Advanced” level on the Missouri MAP Mathematics assessment will be at or greater than the average percentage of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in Columbia Public Schools at the same grade levels, as reported by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).</p>	<p>MAP Assessment</p>
<p><b>All Students:</b> The percentage of Frontier STEM Academy students scoring at the “Proficient” or “Advanced” level on the Missouri MAP Science assessment will be at or greater than the average percentage of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in Columbia Public Schools at the same grade levels, as reported by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).</p>	<p>MAP Assessment</p>
<p><b>Sub-Groups:</b> For each major student subgroup (including, but not limited to, Black students, Hispanic students, students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, English Learners, and students with disabilities), the percentage of Frontier STEM Academy students scoring at the “Proficient” or “Advanced” level on the Missouri MAP English Language Arts assessment will be at</p>	<p>MAP Assessment</p>

<p>or greater than the average percentage of students scoring Proficient or Advanced within the same subgroup in Columbia Public Schools at the same grade levels, as reported by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).</p>	
<p><b>Sub-Groups:</b> For each major student subgroup (including, but not limited to, Black students, Hispanic students, students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, English Learners, and students with disabilities), the percentage of Frontier STEM Academy students scoring at the “Proficient” or “Advanced” level on the Missouri MAP Mathematics assessment will be at or greater than the average percentage of students scoring Proficient or Advanced within the same subgroup in Columbia Public Schools at the same grade levels, as reported by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).</p>	<p>MAP Assessment</p>
<p><b>Sub-Groups:</b> For each major student subgroup (including, but not limited to, Black students, Hispanic students, students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, English Learners, and students with disabilities), the percentage of Frontier STEM Academy students scoring at the “Proficient” or “Advanced” level on the Missouri MAP Science assessment will be at or greater than the average percentage of students scoring Proficient or Advanced within the same subgroup in Columbia Public Schools at the same grade levels, as reported by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).</p>	<p>MAP Assessment</p>

**C.3** How were the above-stated goals determined? What research/resources informed your goal development? How do the goals address any anticipated achievement gaps for sub-populations or historically disadvantaged populations?

The above-stated goals were developed in direct alignment with the Performance Contract standards established by Saint Louis University (SLU) for its sponsored charter schools. As required by Missouri statute and SLU’s charter sponsorship framework, the Performance Contract defines the academic, financial, and organizational benchmarks against which the school is evaluated annually. These standards are grounded in Missouri Learning Standards, DESE accountability requirements, federal ESSA regulations, and established charter school performance expectations.

In developing these goals, we relied on multiple research-based and regulatory resources, including DESE guidance documents, Missouri MAP performance benchmarks, the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP 6) framework, federal ESSA accountability provisions, and nationally recognized research on effective school systems and growth-based accountability. Particular emphasis was placed on measurable student growth,

subgroup accountability, and comparative district benchmarks to ensure the goals are rigorous, transparent, and aligned to both state and sponsor expectations.

The goals were intentionally designed not only to meet compliance requirements but also to proactively address anticipated achievement gaps for historically underserved populations. Academic performance targets are disaggregated for All Students and for major student subgroups, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students. By comparing subgroup performance directly to Columbia Public Schools averages at the same grade levels, the goals ensure that equity is embedded within the accountability structure and that subgroup outcomes are not obscured within overall averages.

To operationalize these commitments, Frontier STEM Academy implements a structured Response to Intervention (RTI) framework. The RTI system includes universal screening, scheduled data review cycles, tiered instructional supports, and ongoing progress monitoring to ensure early identification of learning gaps and timely intervention. The RTI framework—detailed in the Supporting Documents as C3. FS RTI Manual—establishes clear criteria for movement between tiers, intervention frequency and duration, and documentation of student progress. This structure ensures that students who do not initially meet growth or proficiency benchmarks receive systematic, research-based support rather than waiting for end-of-year results.

In addition, school culture and operational goals were shaped by research on effective school environments, restorative practices, and equitable discipline systems. Transparent reporting of academic performance, financial stewardship, and governance practices further reinforces accountability to students, families, and the sponsor.

Ultimately, the establishment of these goals reflects a comprehensive accountability approach that integrates state standards, sponsor expectations, research-based instructional practices, and a structured RTI framework. Together, these elements position Frontier STEM Academy to close achievement gaps, accelerate growth for all students, and sustain high levels of academic and organizational performance.

- C.4** Indicate what level of student performance toward the above-noted goals, and over what period of time, would, per the Board, warrant the board mandating a) major changes to the school's educational model, staffing (teachers and administrators), or school closure.

The goals of Frontier Schools are grounded in the Performance Contract established between Saint Louis University (SLU) and Frontier. This contract clearly outlines the academic, financial, and organizational expectations for the school and serves as the foundation for all goal development. The Performance Contract ensures that goals are measurable, rigorous, and aligned with both sponsor and state expectations.

In accordance with the Charter School Contract—which incorporates Missouri state law, DESE policy, and SLU's sponsorship authority—the Board of Directors holds ultimate responsibility for monitoring school performance and ensuring accountability. The Board reviews academic performance at least quarterly and conducts a comprehensive annual evaluation using multiple measures, including Missouri MAP results, Missouri Annual Performance Report (APR) growth indicators, NWEA growth data, student course grades in core academic subjects, subgroup achievement trends, attendance data, and compliance indicators. Evaluating both assessment outcomes and classroom performance ensures that student success is monitored through a balanced and comprehensive framework.

If sustained academic underperformance is identified across state assessments, growth measures, course performance, or subgroup results, the Board will require corrective action. Such action may include commissioning academic reviews, revising instructional strategies, reallocating resources, restructuring leadership responsibilities, or adjusting staffing assignments. The Board retains full authority to mandate substantive changes to the educational model if performance trends indicate that current strategies are not

producing the intended outcomes.

The Board also conducts an annual evaluation of the Superintendent, and academic success is a central component of that evaluation. Student achievement, student growth, subgroup equity, and overall progress toward Performance Contract benchmarks are explicitly considered in determining the Superintendent's effectiveness. If continuous academic underperformance persists over multiple years and corrective efforts do not yield meaningful improvement, the Board may determine not to renew the Superintendent's contract or may pursue other leadership changes to ensure alignment with the school's mission and contractual obligations.

If performance concerns persist despite corrective interventions and demonstrate a pattern of systemic failure to meet Performance Contract expectations, the Board will consider more substantial restructuring measures in consultation with SLU, which could include leadership replacement, and/or educational model redesign.

The monitoring and intervention provisions of the Performance Contract also authorize SLU to require remediation plans, external audits, or targeted training for leadership or Board members if performance concerns arise. This layered system of accountability—combining sponsor oversight with active Board governance—ensures that Frontier STEM Academy's goals are enforceable standards rooted in state law and contractual obligations.

Through continuous data review, Superintendent evaluation, and structured escalation processes, the Board ensures that academic excellence, equity for student subgroups, and organizational effectiveness remain central to the school's governance and long-term sustainability.

- C.5** Detail the school's plan for grade-by-grade promotion. What policies/standards govern promotion decisions? Provide a rationale for the policies/standards cited.

Frontier Schools-Columbia will establish clear, research-informed policies to guide promotion decisions at each grade level. The central principle of these policies is that promotion must be based on a student's demonstrated mastery of grade-level standards, as well as consistent attendance that supports sustained learning.

### **Kindergarten**

Students in kindergarten are promoted to first grade upon satisfactory completion of curricular grade-level standards and meeting a minimum of 90% attendance. The focus at this level is on ensuring foundational literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional readiness. The attendance requirement emphasizes the importance of consistent participation in early learning experiences that are critical for long-term success.

### **Grades 1–3**

Students in grades 1–3 are promoted when they:

- Demonstrate satisfactory completion of grade-level curricular standards,
- Attend at least 90% of classes during the school year.

These requirements ensure that promotion is tied not only to classroom performance but also to nationally normed benchmark assessments. This combination provides a balanced view of achievement while ensuring students build the literacy and numeracy foundation necessary for later academic success. If a student meets curricular standards but falls short on attendance or NWEA MAP requirements, the Grade Placement Committee (composed of the Principal, Assistant Principal-Academics, and the classroom teacher) reviews the case to determine whether promotion is appropriate.

## Grades 4–5

Students in grades 4–5 are promoted when they:

- Maintain a yearly average of at least 60% in all core classes (Communication Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science),
- Maintain a yearly average of at least 60% in non-core classes,
- Attend at least 90% of classes during the school year.

This framework ensures that promotion decisions reflect both academic performance across subjects and consistent participation in learning. When students demonstrate competency in core content but fall short in other areas (such as attendance or assessment benchmarks), the Grade Placement Committee reviews the situation and determines the most appropriate placement.

### Rationale for Policies/Standards

The school’s promotion policies are designed to safeguard both **academic rigor and fairness**. They ensure that:

- **Mastery of standards** is the foundation of advancement, preventing students from being promoted without the skills necessary for success in the next grade.
- **Attendance expectations** underscore the importance of consistent engagement in the learning process, which research shows is directly linked to academic success.
- **Grade Placement Committee oversight** allows for professional judgment and flexibility when a student’s circumstances require individual consideration, ensuring that decisions are in the best interest of the student.

By blending objective academic benchmarks with educator judgment, these policies ensure that promotion decisions are rigorous, equitable, and supportive of long-term student achievement.

### Rationale for Policies

The promotion standards are designed to:

- Ensure readiness for subsequent grades by requiring demonstrated mastery of essential literacy and numeracy skills.
- Prevent social promotion that places students at risk of compounding academic deficits in later grades.
- Support equity by using multiple measures—including teacher input, standardized assessments, and individualized plans for ELs and SWDs—to avoid over-reliance on a single test score.
- Encourage early intervention by providing families with timely data, access to after-school and summer supports, and individualized learning plans when students are at risk of retention.

This policy ensures that grade promotion reflects a balanced, student-centered approach—grounded in

accountability and academic rigor, while also responsive to the developmental and individual needs of young learners.

- C.6** Detail the school’s approach to the use of assessment data to improve curricula, strengthen pedagogy, and advance student learning, and otherwise ensure accountability. Discuss the varying roles of classroom teachers, academic administrators, data analysts, etc. Address how the chief academic officer, chief executive officer, and board of directors will use assessment data for decision-making.

Frontier Schools – Columbia will implement a comprehensive, data-driven cycle of continuous improvement that leverages multiple assessments—state-administered (Missouri MAP, ACCESS for ELLs), nationally normed (NWEA MAP), and locally developed (ESGI, curriculum-based assessments)—to inform instruction, evaluate program effectiveness, and ensure accountability at all levels of the organization.

### **Improving Curriculum and Instruction**

- **Classroom Level:** Teachers use formative assessments, exit tickets, and ESGI benchmarks to make daily adjustments to instruction. NWEA MAP Growth results are reviewed each trimester to group students for differentiated instruction, intervention (RTI Tiers 2 and 3), and enrichment.
- **Curriculum Refinement:** Curriculum directors and instructional coaches aggregate assessment trends to identify gaps in the scope and sequence. For example, if NWEA data shows consistent weakness in numeracy across Grade 1, curriculum pacing or supplemental supports (e.g., Zearn, small-group instruction) will be introduced.
- **Pedagogical Strengthening:** Instructional coaches model best practices, conduct classroom observations, and co-plan with teachers using assessment results. Data informs targeted professional development, ensuring teachers grow in areas where student data shows persistent needs.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

- **Classroom Teachers:** Administer and interpret daily and quarterly assessments, adjust instruction, document student progress, and communicate results to families. Teachers participate in quarterly data meetings to analyze trends and develop action plans.
- **Instructional Coaches & Academic Administrators:** Support teachers in using data effectively, design intervention groups, and monitor fidelity of instructional adjustments. They lead Response to Intervention (RTI) meetings every 6–8 weeks to evaluate student progress and refine support.
- **Curriculum Directors:** Ensure accuracy of data collection, analyze student performance dashboards, and generate reports disaggregated by subgroups (race/ethnicity, ELs, SWDs, economically disadvantaged) to highlight equity gaps.
- **Chief Academic Officer (CAO):** Synthesizes assessment data across grade levels and subjects, evaluates curricular effectiveness, and recommends programmatic changes (e.g., adoption of supplemental literacy supports). The CAO oversees professional development priorities based on data trends.
- **Chief Executive Officer (CEO):** Monitors overall academic performance relative to organizational goals, ensures alignment with the school’s mission, and allocates resources (staffing, interventions, technology) to address identified needs. The CEO reports progress to the Board and sponsor.

- **Board of Directors:** Reviews disaggregated academic performance data at least three times annually (fall, mid-year, spring). The Board evaluates whether the school is meeting its stated goals, holding leadership accountable for subgroup growth and proficiency. In cases of persistent underperformance, the Board may direct leadership changes, model revisions, or increased investments in interventions.

### **Ensuring Accountability**

The system of assessment and analysis ensures accountability at all levels:

- Students are held to clear benchmarks and receive targeted support.
- Teachers and Leaders are evaluated on their ability to move students toward proficiency and growth.
- The School is accountable to the Board, sponsor, and families through transparent reporting of data, including subgroup outcomes.

### **Cycle of Continuous Improvement**

Data analysis follows a recurring cycle:

1. **Collect** – Gather assessment results from ESGI, NWEA MAP, classroom assessments, and MAP.
2. **Analyze** – Teachers and administrators review results in collaborative data meetings.
3. **Act** – Instructional adjustments, interventions, and PD are implemented.
4. **Monitor** – Student progress is re-assessed every 6–8 weeks.
5. **Report** – Data is communicated to families, the Board, and sponsor to ensure transparency and accountability.

Through this structure, Frontier Schools – Columbia ensures that assessment data is not only a compliance measure but a powerful tool for improving curriculum, pedagogy, and student outcomes.

#### **Evaluation Criteria: *Satisfactory responses will...***

- evidence realistic, well-informed educational goals (“academic” and holistic educational goals, as appropriate) that address key sub-populations and historical achievement gaps.
- evidence a mature understanding of the rationales for, and challenges of, measuring multi-year academic growth versus student annual “point-in-time” achievement results.
- evidence the board’s meaningful consideration of unacceptable educational performance.
- evidence well-supported criteria for student promotion.
- evidence a sophisticated understanding of, and a sound plan for, how assessment data can be used to support continuous improvement and increased student achievement.

## D. Curriculum and Instruction

- D.1** Describe in detail the curriculum/curricula, learning standards/outcomes, and primary pedagogies you intend to implement at the proposed school. Address individually all major educational domains: Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, Fine/Performing Arts, Physical Education, and across all grade levels. **Attach a curriculum guide as an appendix.**

For each domain, provide rationales for how the planned curricula and related pedagogies will best enable your students to attain your major educational goals articulated above. Include references to related scholarly literature as appropriate, as well as other experiences that inform your curriculum and instructional decisions.

Demonstrate alignment of your curricula and associated learning outcomes with Missouri Learning Standards. Feel free to include appendices as appropriate if that better facilitates your response.

Frontier STEM Academy will implement a rigorous, standards-aligned curriculum that integrates research-based instructional strategies and prioritizes early literacy, numeracy, STEM, social-emotional learning (SEL), and cultural competence. The curriculum ensures alignment with Missouri Learning Standards (MLS), the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), and national benchmarks such as the College and Career Readiness Standards for early grades. Furthermore, to ensure continuous improvement, the curriculum is regularly refined based on data analysis from both district and state assessments.

### 1. Language Arts (English Language Arts – ELA)

**Vision for Our Students** Frontier STEM Academy **maintains** that all students can learn to read complex texts relative to their grade level. As Moats (2020) elucidates, 95% of students can achieve grade-level outcomes in reading proficiency, which **articulates** our essential and proximate goal. We **expect** to see continuous improvement towards that goal as evidenced by Missouri state-approved literacy assessments (e.g., Renaissance Star), yearly MAP data, and Curriculum-Based Assessments.

#### A. Curriculum & Learning Outcomes

Our ELA curriculum will be designed to ensure students reach grade-level proficiency in reading fluency, demonstrate deep comprehension of grade-level texts, and write with command of spelling, grammar, and structure.

- **Missouri Learning Standards (MLS) Alignment:** Our curriculum will engage all students on every school day in high-leverage grade-level tasks aligned to the Missouri Learning Standards. We maintain that Tier 1 instruction is grade-level instruction for all students (TNTP, 2018).
- **Curricular Resources:**
  - **Foundational Skills (K–2):** We will utilize systematic resources such as UFLI Foundations and Pathways to Reading to teach phonemic awareness and phonics.
  - **Comprehension & Knowledge Building:** We will utilize High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) featuring coherent text sets to build language-rich and knowledge-rich learning experiences (Pondiscio, 2023).
  - **Early Diagnostics:** ESGI will be used alongside state-approved tools for early

literacy diagnostics.

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

- **Fluency:** Students will demonstrate reading fluency sufficient to support comprehension of grade-level text.
- **Comprehension:** Students will articulate connections, inferences, and conclusions via linguistic expression (speaking and writing).
- **Writing:** Students will produce narrative, informational, and opinion pieces per MLS Writing Standards.

### **B. Pedagogy & Rationale**

Our pedagogy will be grounded in the scientific and professional literature on reading acquisition (Duke & Cartwright, 2021) and the findings of the National Reading Panel (2000). We will employ a structured literacy approach that addresses the following domains, with specific assessments to ensure coherence.

#### **1. Kindergarten Readiness and Early Literacy**

- **Rationale:** Early literacy is the most essential academic priority. We approach this phase through robust, language-rich instruction and systematic code-based learning.
- **Pedagogy:** Teachers will focus on oral language development and foundational concepts of print.
- **Assessment Alignment:** All kindergarten teachers will complete the Kindergarten Observation Form (KOF) within the first 30 days to assess readiness. Diagnostic data from ESGI and state-approved tools will guide preventative interventions.

#### **2. Word Recognition (Phonics & Phonemic Awareness)**

- **Rationale:** To become proficient readers, students must first master the alphabetic principle.
- **Pedagogy:** Students in grades K–2 will receive systematic, sequential, and explicit instruction on phonemic awareness and phonics (e.g., via UFLI Foundations).
- **Assessment Alignment:** Word recognition will be assessed via:
  - State-approved foundational reading assessments (e.g., Renaissance Star) 2–3 times per year.
  - Curriculum-based assessments (e.g., UFLI Foundations Intervention Placement Test).
  - Frequent formative tasks (daily tasks and weekly quizzes).

#### **3. Bridging Processes (Fluency)**

- **Rationale:** Fluency bridges the gap between automatic word recognition and reading comprehension (Brown, Mohr, et al., 2017).
- **Pedagogy:** We will employ a continuum of reading practices including teacher read-alouds, echo reading, choral reading, dyad reading, and repeated readings of decodable texts.
- **Assessment Alignment:** Fluency will be assessed via:
  - **Renaissance Star CBM** (2–3 times/year and progress monitoring).

- Curriculum-Based Assessments (e.g., Great Minds Arts & Letters module assessments).
- Informal daily fluency practice.

#### 4. Language Comprehension

- **Rationale:** Comprehension is not a skill taught in isolation but a result of knowledge building.
- **Pedagogy:** Instruction will focus on critical thinking and inquiry via coherent text sets that explore universal human themes. Writing and reading will be integrated; students **will learn** when they actively create and express their thinking about texts.
- **Assessment Alignment:** Language comprehension will be assessed via:
  - State-approved assessments (Renaissance Star) 2–3 times per year.
  - Daily formative learning tasks (speaking, listening, writing).
  - Extended culminating written products.

#### C. Supporting All Students

Support for all students, including those with limited English proficiency or from historically underserved populations, **will begin** with strong Tier 1 pedagogy that creates a safe, language-rich environment.

- **Intervention Strategy:** Tiered interventions will be data-driven. We will use supplemental evidence-based resources (such as Lexia Core5) to accelerate literacy development.
- **Dyslexia & Reading Success Plans:** Students identified as at-risk for dyslexia or having a significant reading deficiency (SRD) via state-approved assessment (e.g., Renaissance Star) will be supported in accordance with DESE's *Grades K-5 Reading Success Plan: Guidance for Missouri School Districts*. Teachers will be supported in accessing professional learning, notably LETRS, to effectively serve these students.

## 2. Mathematics

**Vision for Our Students** The Pre-K–5 Mathematics program at Frontier STEM Academy will be intentionally designed to provide equitable access to rigorous mathematics instruction for a diverse student population. Mathematics will be taught as a sense-making discipline, emphasizing understanding, reasoning, and application rather than isolated procedures.

**Major Educational Goals:** We ensure that all students:

- **Demonstrate understanding** of grade-level Missouri Learning Standards for Mathematics.
- **Develop** deep number sense and flexible computational strategies.
- **Apply** mathematical reasoning to novel, real-world, and interdisciplinary problems.
- **Communicate** mathematical thinking using precise language and multiple representations.
- **Develop** perseverance, curiosity, and confidence as mathematical thinkers.

These goals **reflect** research demonstrating that high expectations paired with intentional instructional support lead to improved outcomes for students from diverse linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Corwin, 2020; Hammond, 2015).

## A. Curriculum & Learning Standards (Outcomes)

The mathematics curriculum will be vertically aligned from Pre-K through Grade 5, ensuring coherence and developmental progression. We will utilize high-quality resources such as Eureka Math2 (EngageNY) as the core curriculum, supplemented by Zearn for targeted practice.

- **Missouri Learning Standards (MLS) Alignment:** Each grade level will prioritize the major work of the grade, ensuring focus and depth rather than superficial coverage.
  - **Pre-K:** Instruction is organized around the MELS domains: Number and Operations, Geometry and Spatial Sense, Patterns and Relationships, Measurement, and Data.
  - **Grades K–5:** Instruction is organized around the major MLS domains: Counting & Cardinality (K), Operations & Algebraic Thinking, Number & Operations in Base Ten, Number & Operations—Fractions (3–5), Measurement & Data, and Geometry.

### Student Learning Outcomes:

- **Pre-K:** Students will build foundational number sense, spatial reasoning, and mathematical language.
- **Grades K–2:** Students will demonstrate fluency in addition and subtraction, deep understanding of place value, and problem-solving abilities using multiple representations.
- **Grades 3–5:** Students will extend understanding to fractions, decimals, and multi-digit operations, demonstrating procedural fluency and conceptual understanding.

## B. Pedagogy & Rationale

Our pedagogy will be grounded in an inquiry-based model that engages students in exploration, collaboration, and reflection. This approach aligns with the National Research Council's (2001) five strands of mathematical proficiency.

### 1. Inquiry-Based & Concrete-Pictorial-Abstract (CPA)

- **Rationale:** To build conceptual understanding before symbolic manipulation (Fuson & Briars, 1990).
- **Pedagogy:** All students will receive Tier 1 instruction grounded in the Concrete–Pictorial–Abstract (CPA) progression. Instruction will maximize active participation using “notice and wonder” prompts and real-world contexts.
- **Assessment Alignment:** Formative assessments (exit tickets, discourse observations) and performance tasks will measure students' ability to move between representations.

### 2. Mathematics as a Learning Community

- **Rationale:** Learning is strongest when students feel emotionally safe and intellectually challenged (Jensen, 2008; Hammond, 2015).
- **Pedagogy:** We will adopt practices from Liljedahl's (2021) *Building Thinking Classrooms*, promoting collaborative problem-solving where student voice is central. Instructional norms will emphasize valuing all thinking and viewing mistakes as learning opportunities.

### 3. Mathematical Discourse

- **Rationale:** To ensure equitable participation and high-quality discussion.
- **Pedagogy:** Teachers will implement Smith and Stein’s (2018) *5 Practices for Orchestrating Productive Mathematics Discussions*. Number Talks (Parrish, 2014) will be used to promote mental math flexibility.
- **Assessment Alignment:** Discourse observations and student self-reflection will be used to monitor the development of mathematical language.

### C. Instructional Structure and Response to Intervention (RTI)

Our instructional structure **will ensure** no student is overlooked, balancing core instruction with targeted support.

#### Tier 1: Core Instruction (60 Minutes Daily)

- **Approach:** Grounded in research-based practices including simple-to-complex lesson design and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) supports.
- **Scaffolding:** Explicit English learner scaffolds and structured problem-solving routines (e.g., 3-Read, Draw, Solve, Write) will be standard.

#### Tier 2: Targeted Small Group Instruction (30 Minutes Daily)

- **Approach:** Data-driven and flexible groups. Students not working with a teacher will engage in aligned digital reinforcement (e.g., Zearn).
- **Cleanup:** A cleanup tracker will ensure systematic monitoring so students receive targeted reteaching on specific standards.

#### Tier 3: Intensive Intervention

- **Approach:** Personalized, high-leverage instruction for students with significant gaps.
- **Structure:** Homogeneous groups of no more than five students receiving immediate, specific feedback.

### D. Assessment and Progress Monitoring

Assessment practices will balance point-in-time achievement data with longitudinal growth measures. While benchmark assessments provide snapshots, instructional decisions will prioritize evidence of student growth over time.

- **Formative:** Exit tickets, discourse observations, and performance tasks.
- **Summative:** Standards-aligned unit assessments and district quarterly assessments (DA) measuring conceptual and procedural understanding.
- **Diagnostic:** Benchmark assessments will be used diagnostically to guide intervention and enrichment.

Students who have not yet demonstrated mastery will receive targeted reteaching during Tier 2 Cleanup, reflecting a commitment to sustained progress monitoring.

[Math Supporting Documents](#)

### 3. Science

**Vision for Our Students** Frontier STEM Academy will implement the 5E Instructional Model, an inquiry-based framework developed by BSCS Science Learning. This model is designed to help students build understanding by connecting new concepts to prior knowledge through active investigation, critical thinking, and hands-on experiences.

Counter to the traditional direct instruction model, our approach will create a student-led environment where learners engage with material and think critically before receiving formal explanations. This method encourages trial and error, pattern recognition, and problem-solving—traits we aim to develop in students from an early age.

#### A. Curriculum & Learning Outcomes

We will utilize three main resources for our curriculum: STEMscopes, Mystery Science, and Science4Us. These resources are aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), which will be crosswalked to the Missouri Learning Standards (MLS).

- **Unit Structure:** Each grade will cover units of study addressing specific grade-level MLS.
- **Engineering Integration:** Engineering standards (ETS1.A.1, ETS1.B.1, ETS1.C.1) will be taught throughout the year within the *Explore* and *Elaborate* phases. These standards will teach essential science practices such as planning investigations, gathering data, interpreting charts/graphs, and evaluating solutions.

#### Student Learning Outcomes:

- **PK–2:** Students will engage in hands-on experiments and inquiry-based units to develop observation, questioning, and problem-solving skills.
- **Cross-Curricular:** Lessons will incorporate literacy and math skills (e.g., data analysis, technical writing) to reinforce core concepts.

#### B. Pedagogy & Rationale

Our pedagogy will be anchored in the 5E Instructional Model (Bybee, et al., 2006). This framework promotes deeper understanding and long-term retention (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000) by ensuring students have common experiences to scaffold new information.

##### 1. The 5 Phases of Instruction

Instruction will follow a specific sequence for every unit:

- **Engage:** The unit will begin by asking students to access their prior knowledge. This phase is critical for addressing "knowledge loss" due to time gaps between foundational standards and current grade-level expectations.
- **Explore:** Students will investigate topics through hands-on activities. This phase provides students with common experiences (e.g., baking, playing with sand/water) that may be missing in increasingly digital or diverse childhoods. These shared experiences create a foundation for later discussion.
- **Explain:** Formal concepts and vocabulary will be introduced only *after* students have explored the topic. This connects their hands-on experience to the scientific explanation, scaffolding the learning effectively.
- **Elaborate:** Students will apply their new understanding to novel situations, expanding their conceptual grasp.

- **Evaluate:** Students will demonstrate their learning through various methods, including exams, quizzes, and Claim-Evidence-Reasoning (CER) writing activities.

## 2. Addressing Knowledge Gaps

- **Rationale:** The Missouri Science Standards often have large time gaps between foundational concepts (e.g., taught 2–3 years prior) and current standards.
- **Approach:** Our use of the *Engage* and *Explore* phases will specifically target these gaps, ensuring students recall and reconstruct the base information necessary for mastering grade-level content.

## C. Assessment Strategy

Assessment in science will mirror the inquiry-based nature of the curriculum.

- **Formative:** Observations during *Explore* activities and student discourse during *Explain* phases.
- **Summative:** The *Evaluate* phase will utilize CERs (Claim, Evidence, Reasoning), quizzes, and performance tasks to measure student mastery of both content knowledge and scientific practices.

## 4. Social Science

**Vision for Our Students** The Social Studies curriculum at Frontier STEM Academy will be designed to develop students into critical, informed, and empowered citizens through culturally responsive, source-based instruction. Grounded in the principles of culturally responsive and culturally sustaining pedagogies, the curriculum will emphasize the histories, perspectives, and lived experiences of historically marginalized communities while maintaining rigorous expectations for historical thinking, literacy, and civic engagement.

This curricular approach is informed directly by the school’s commitment to addressing persistent achievement gaps affecting students of color. Research demonstrates that when curriculum affirms students’ cultural identities and connects academic learning to real-world contexts, students demonstrate increased engagement, confidence, and achievement (Gay, 2018; Paris & Alim, 2017).

### A. Curriculum & Learning Standards (Outcomes)

Rather than prioritizing broad coverage of disconnected topics, the Social Studies curriculum will emphasize depth over breadth, consistent with best practices in historical education (Loewen, 2018). Courses will be organized around a limited number of thematically rich units.

- **Missouri Learning Standards (MLS) Alignment:** The curriculum will align fully with MLS by:
  - Emphasizing inquiry-based learning and historical analysis.
  - Integrating civics, economics, geography, and history through thematic units.
  - Encouraging civic engagement and informed decision-making.
- **Core Resources:** MO Leap Blocks will serve as the center of the social studies content, as it will be integrated with ELA instruction to support literacy development.

### Student Learning Outcomes:

- **Historical Analysis:** Students will use evidence from primary and secondary sources to construct

arguments.

- **Disciplinary Literacy:** Students will develop proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening within historical contexts.
- **Civic Application:** Students will make explicit connections between historical events and contemporary issues, empowering them to act as informed citizens.

## **B. Pedagogy & Rationale**

Our pedagogy will move beyond the traditional textbook approach to specific, source-based inquiry that validates students' lived experiences.

### **1. Culturally Responsive & Sustaining Pedagogy**

- **Rationale:** To meet the needs of diverse learners and close achievement gaps (Gay, 2018).
- **Pedagogy:** We will integrate local and community-based history, ensuring that the curriculum reflects the identities of our student body. Instruction will honor diverse perspectives and lived experiences.

### **2. Source-Based Inquiry**

- **Rationale:** To avoid the "tyranny of textbooks" and get students excited about doing history (Loewen, 2018).
- **Pedagogy:** Each unit will integrate:
  - **Primary Sources:** Letters, photographs, oral histories, legal documents, and speeches.
  - **Secondary Sources:** Texts written from multiple perspectives.
  - **Community History:** Local narratives that connect global concepts to the students' immediate environment.

### **3. Integrated Thematic Units**

- **Rationale:** To ensure content is meaningful and connected rather than isolated.
- **Pedagogy:** MO Leap Blocks will facilitate the integration of social studies content with ELA skills. This interdisciplinary approach will ensure that students develop strong literacy skills while engaging with rigorous historical content.

## **C. Assessment Strategy**

Assessment in Social Studies will focus on the application of skills rather than rote memorization.

- **Formative:** Students will be assessed on their ability to analyze sources, participate in discussions, and connect historical events to current issues.
- **Summative:** Performance tasks will require students to use evidence from primary and secondary sources to support claims, demonstrating alignment with both Social Studies and ELA standards.

### **5. Fine/Performing Arts**

**Vision for Our Students** At Frontier STEM Academy, the Fine and Performing Arts will not be treated as extracurricular add-ons but as core components of a holistic education. We maintain that access to the arts is essential for developing creativity, self-expression, and emotional intelligence. Our program will integrate visual, auditory, and kinesthetic experiences to ensure students develop the confidence to

express themselves artistically and the cognitive flexibility to approach problems from new angles.

### A. Curriculum & Learning Standards (Outcomes)

Instruction will be provided weekly, with a curriculum designed to spiral from foundational skills to complex artistic expression. The curriculum will be fully aligned to the Missouri Learning Standards (MLS) for Fine Arts.

- **Visual Arts:** The curriculum will focus on the elements of art (line, shape, color, texture) and principles of design. Students will engage in drawing, painting, sculpture, and mixed media.
- **General Music:** Instruction will focus on rhythm, melody, harmony, and timber. Students will participate in singing, movement, and playing classroom instruments to build musical literacy.
- **Arts Integration:** Beyond isolated art classes, the arts will be integrated into core academic subjects (e.g., illustrating scientific concepts, using rhythm to learn mathematical patterns) to reinforce learning across domains.

#### Student Learning Outcomes:

- **Creation & Performance:** Students will demonstrate proficiency in fundamental artistic techniques, including drawing, painting, singing, and rhythmic movement.
- **Critical Analysis:** Students will analyze and interpret works of art using appropriate vocabulary.
- **Cultural Connection:** Students will understand the historical and cultural contexts of various art forms and musical genres.

### B. Pedagogy & Rationale

Our pedagogy will emphasize active participation and the connection between artistic practice and academic growth.

#### 1. Arts Integration & Cognitive Development

- **Rationale:** Research indicates that arts integration enhances cognitive development and academic performance across subjects (Deasy, 2002).
- **Pedagogy:** Teachers will utilize the arts as an entry point for complex academic concepts. By engaging multiple senses (visual, auditory, kinesthetic), we will support diverse learners and improve long-term retention of core content.

#### 2. Guided Exploration and Process-Based Learning

- **Rationale:** To foster creativity and resilience.
- **Pedagogy:** Instruction will move beyond rote imitation. Students will engage in guided exploration where the focus is on the creative process—experimentation, mistake-making, and refinement—rather than just the final product.

#### 3. Performance and Peer Critique

- **Rationale:** To develop critical thinking and communication skills.
- **Pedagogy:** Students will participate in regular performance opportunities and gallery walks. We will implement structured peer critique protocols (e.g., "I notice, I wonder, I suggest") to teach students how to give and receive constructive feedback respectfully.

## C. Assessment Strategy

Assessment in the arts will measure both technical skill and creative growth.

- **Formative:** Teacher observation during guided practice, sketchbooks, and participation in peer critiques.
- **Summative:** Performance-based assessments (e.g., concerts, art displays) and process portfolios that document student growth over time against MLS standards.
- **Self-Reflection:** Students will complete self-reflections to articulate their artistic choices and identify areas for improvement.

## 6. Physical Education (PE)

**Vision for Our Students** Physical Education at Frontier STEM Academy will go beyond simple recreation to serve as a vital component of student well-being and academic success. We maintain that physical activity is a critical driver of brain function. Our program will promote lifelong healthy habits, ensuring students develop the motor skills, physical fitness, and social-emotional resilience necessary for a healthy life.

### A. Curriculum & Learning Standards (Outcomes)

The PE curriculum will be aligned with the Missouri Grade-Level Expectations (GLEs) for Physical Education and Health. Instruction will provide a balanced approach that integrates physical fitness with health awareness.

- **Motor Skills & Movement:** Students will participate in structured games and movement activities designed to develop fundamental motor skills (running, throwing, catching) and spatial awareness.
- **Personal Wellness:** The curriculum will include health awareness lessons that teach students the importance of nutrition, hygiene, and regular activity.
- **Fitness Development:** Activities will be designed to improve cardiovascular health, muscular strength, and flexibility suitable for each developmental stage.

### Student Learning Outcomes:

- **Physical Literacy:** Students will demonstrate competency in motor skills and movement patterns needed to perform a variety of physical activities.
- **Healthy Lifestyle:** Students will understand the principles of health promotion and disease prevention.
- **Social Responsibility:** Students will exhibit responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others during physical activity.

### B. Pedagogy & Rationale

Our pedagogy will focus on active learning and cooperative structures that support the whole child.

#### 1. Active Learning & Cognitive Performance

- **Rationale:** Research indicates that active learning enhances cognitive performance, focus, and emotional well-being (Ratey, 2008).
- **Pedagogy:** PE lessons will be designed to maximize "time on task," keeping students physically

active for the majority of the class period. We will explicitly connect physical activity to brain health, helping students understand how movement prepares their minds for learning in the classroom.

## 2. Cooperative Play & Social-Emotional Growth

- **Rationale:** PE offers a unique environment to develop social skills and emotional regulation.
- **Pedagogy:** Lessons will incorporate cooperative play and team-based challenges. These activities will require communication, teamwork, and fair play, fostering social-emotional growth. Teachers will use these moments to teach conflict resolution and sportsmanship in real-time.

## C. Assessment Strategy

Assessment in PE will reflect personal growth and participation rather than just athletic ability.

- **Formative:** Teacher observation of skill technique and participation effort during activities.
- **Summative:** Performance assessments of specific motor skills (e.g., throwing form) and understanding of game rules or health concepts.
- **Personal Goals:** Students will set and track personal fitness goals, encouraging self-monitoring and a growth mindset regarding their physical health.

## Alignment with Major Educational Goals

- Early literacy/numeracy programs support the goal of **proficiency and accelerated growth** by Grade 2.
- STEM integration advances critical thinking and problem-solving, aligning with long-term college and career readiness.
- SEL-infused pedagogy (CharacterPlus) ensures holistic student development.

**D.2** Describe the primary, school-wide educational modalities (in-person, online, hybrid) to be regularly employed. As applicable, distinguish by grade level or student population. Address emergency management plans and the school's capacity to pivot to 100 percent distance education -- for short and long periods of time --should conditions beyond your control dictate the need to do so.

Frontier Schools – Columbia will primarily operate as an in-person learning environment for all grades (PK–2), with a strong emphasis on small-group, personalized instruction. However, the school will maintain capacity to pivot to online or hybrid modalities as needed for individual student needs or emergency situations.

## Primary Educational Modalities

- **In-Person Instruction (Primary Mode):**
  - All students will receive core instruction in classrooms with a low student-to-teacher ratio, incorporating direct instruction, guided practice, and collaborative learning.
  - Specialized support (English Language Development, Special Education services, Tier 2 & 3 interventions) will also occur primarily in person to maximize individualized attention.

- **Blended/Technology-Enhanced Learning:**
  - Although instruction is primarily in person, technology platforms (Zearn, Lexia Core5, and PLTW Launch) will supplement literacy, numeracy, and STEM instruction.
  - These tools allow for adaptive practice and progress monitoring, enabling teachers to personalize instruction.
- **Hybrid Learning (Limited, Case-by-Case):**
  - May be provided for students with medical needs or extended absences.
  - Combines synchronous instruction (real-time via Zoom or Google Meet) with asynchronous work through school-approved platforms.

### **Emergency Management: Pivot to Distance Learning**

The school will maintain a comprehensive emergency instructional continuity plan to support seamless transition to remote instruction, whether for short-term disruptions (e.g., weather closures) or extended periods (e.g., public health emergencies).

#### **Key Components:**

- **Technology Readiness:**
  - All students (K–2) will have access to a school-issued Chromebook or tablet, and Wi-Fi hotspots will be made available to families in need.
- **Digital Platforms:**
  - Google Classroom (primary LMS) for lessons, assignments, and communication.
  - Zoom for synchronous instruction; SeeSaw for PK–K portfolio-based learning.
- **Teacher Preparedness:**
  - Professional development for staff on remote instruction tools and engagement strategies.
  - Weekly lesson plans formatted for both in-person and remote delivery to ensure instructional continuity.
- **Student & Family Support:**
  - Tech support hotline for families.
  - Printed instructional packets for families with limited internet access.
- **Assessment & Accountability:**

- ESGI (PK–K), NWEA MAP Growth, and teacher-created assessments administered remotely where feasible.
- Student attendance logged daily via progress on course completion

### **Rationale for Modalities**

- In-person instruction provides the strongest foundation for early literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional development.
- Technology-enhanced learning allows for differentiation and tracking of progress toward growth and proficiency goals.
- A prepared and tested remote-learning plan ensures the school can continue delivering high-quality instruction under any circumstances.

Frontier STEM Academy will primarily operate as an in-person learning environment for all grades (PK–5). We maintain that face-to-face interaction is the most effective modality for fostering the foundational literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills essential for early childhood and elementary education.

However, recognizing the dynamic nature of modern education, the school will maintain a robust capacity to pivot to blended or 100% distance education modalities should conditions dictate.

### **A. Primary Educational Modality: In-Person Instruction**

**Structure:** Instruction will be delivered fully in-person, utilizing a low student-to-teacher ratio to facilitate the high-leverage pedagogies outlined in our educational plan (e.g., small-group reading intervention, CPA math talks, hands-on Science 5E exploration).

**Role of Technology (Blended Learning):** While instruction is in-person, we will employ a blended learning model to support differentiation and data collection.

- **Adaptive Platforms:** Students will utilize evidence-based platforms such as Zearn (Math) and Lexia Core5 (Reading). These tools will not replace direct instruction but will serve as guided practice engines that adapt to student performance in real-time.
- **Data Utilization:** These platforms provide teachers with immediate feedback on student mastery, allowing for "just-in-time" intervention during small groups.

### **B. Emergency Management: Pivot to Distance Learning**

Frontier STEM Academy will maintain a comprehensive Instructional Continuity Plan to ensure a seamless transition to remote instruction for short-term disruptions (e.g., inclement weather) or long-term closures (e.g., public health emergencies).

#### **1. Technology Readiness & Equity**

- **1:1 Device Ratio:** All students (K–5) will be issued a Chromebook or tablet tailored to their developmental needs.
- **Connectivity:** To ensure equitable access, Wi-Fi hotspots will be maintained in inventory and deployed immediately to families lacking reliable internet access.

## 2. Instructional Delivery (Synchronous & Asynchronous Balance)

- **Learning Management System (LMS):** Google Classroom will serve as the central hub for assignments and communication, while SeeSaw will be used for PK–K digital portfolios.
- **Synchronous Instruction:** Teachers will utilize Zoom/Google Meet to deliver live core instruction (Morning Meeting, ELA and Math mini-lessons). This ensures social connection and direct access to the teacher.
- **Asynchronous Practice:** Independent application will occur via our established adaptive platforms (Zearn, Lexia) and physical packets for manipulative-heavy tasks (e.g., handwriting, Science 5E exploration).

## 3. Teacher Preparedness

- **Weekly Alignment:** Lesson plans will be designed weekly with a "digital toggle" in mind, ensuring that materials posted in the classroom are simultaneously accessible in the LMS.
- **Professional Development:** Staff will receive training not only on the mechanics of remote tools but on *engagement strategies* for virtual settings (e.g., digital "turn and talks," breakout room protocols).

## C. Measuring Growth vs. Achievement in Remote Contexts

Frontier STEM Academy demonstrates a mature understanding of the challenges associated with "point-in-time" testing during remote learning.

- **Challenge:** High-stakes, point-in-time achievement tests (like annual state assessments) are often compromised in remote settings due to test security issues and environmental variables. Relying solely on these snapshots during a long-term pivot can lead to inaccurate data.
- **Solution (Multi-Year Growth):** Consequently, our emergency plan prioritizes longitudinal growth data over static achievement scores. We will leverage the internal diagnostics of our adaptive platforms (Lexia, Zearn, NWEA MAP Growth) to track *continuous* progress.
- **Rationale:** This approach allows us to measure a student's growth trajectory relative to their own baseline, ensuring that learning loss is identified and addressed immediately, rather than waiting for an end-of-year summative event that may not occur.

## D. Rationale & Scholarly Basis

**1. In-Person Primacy for Early Learners** Research by the *National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)* emphasizes that early learners require concrete, manipulative-based experiences and social interaction to develop self-regulation and cognitive skills (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Our emphasis on in-person learning is grounded in this developmental reality.

**2. Blended Learning for Differentiation** Our use of technology is supported by studies indicating that blended learning models—where digital tools supplement teacher-led instruction—can significantly improve student outcomes by providing immediate feedback and allowing students to progress at their own pace (Means et al., 2010).

**3. Instructional Continuity** The pivot plan ensures that the "Science of Reading" and "Inquiry-Based Math" approaches remain intact even at a distance. By maintaining familiar routines and curriculum tools (UFLI, Eureka Math2) in the digital space, we minimize the cognitive load of the transition for students.

**Evaluation Criteria: *Satisfactory responses will...***

- attach all requested documents
- evidence realistic, well-informed educational goals.
- evidence empirically-grounded curriculum/pedagogies demonstrating a solid understanding of the related scholarly literature.
- evidence a mature understanding of the rationales for, and challenges of, measuring multi-year academic growth versus student annual “point-in-time” achievement results.
- evidence strong coherence among the educational goals, curriculum/pedagogies, and related assessments.

## E. Educating Special Student Populations

**E.1** Discuss how your school will meet the educational needs of, and provide programs of direct instruction and support suitable for, the full range of student means and ability. Address all of the following populations:

- students without housing
- students with physical and learning disabilities
- students who are academically advanced/gifted
- students with limited English proficiency (ELL)
- students at “high risk” per DESE definition

Address how your specific educational philosophy/model and articulated curricula and pedagogies will intentionally support their distinct educational needs, and in full compliance with all applicable state and federal laws.

Frontier STEM Academy is committed to meeting the educational needs of students across the full range of abilities and circumstances through structured supports, qualified personnel, and full compliance with all applicable state and federal laws. Our educational philosophy—grounded in rigorous academics, individualized learning, and structured Response to Intervention (RTI)—ensures that supports are proactive, data-driven, and embedded into the daily instructional program rather than delivered as add-ons.

### **1. Students Without Housing**

Frontier STEM Academy will comply fully with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. A designated McKinney-Vento Liaison (serving in coordination with the school counselor/social worker) will ensure immediate enrollment, removal of documentation barriers, transportation coordination, and access to meals, supplies, and fee waivers.

Highly mobile students will receive targeted academic monitoring through RTI data reviews. When instructional gaps are identified, short-term intervention plans will be implemented during the school’s daily intervention block. Counseling and case management services will be provided to address trauma-related needs and ensure continuity of instruction.

### **2. Students with Physical and Learning Disabilities**

Frontier STEM Academy will implement special education services in strict compliance with IDEA, Section 504, ADA, and DESE Standards and Indicators. The school will operate under a DESE-approved Local Compliance Plan and follow the DESE Desk Audit Review Plan on the required three-year cycle.

### **Special Education Organizational Structure**

The school will establish a structured Special Education Department consisting of:

- Special Education Process Coordinator / School Psychological Examiner (oversight of evaluations, compliance, and IEP implementation)

- Certified Special Education Teachers (resource and co-teaching models)
- Special Education Paraprofessionals (assigned based on IEP needs)
- Contracted or employed Related Service Providers, including:
  - Speech-Language Pathologists
  - Occupational Therapists
  - Physical Therapists
  - Licensed Clinical Counselors (behavioral support)

Staffing levels will be aligned to projected enrollment and IEP caseload ratios consistent with DESE guidance. As enrollment grows, staffing will scale proportionally to ensure service minutes outlined in IEPs are delivered with fidelity.

#### **Assessment & Identification:**

The school will utilize industry-standard cognitive, academic, behavioral, speech, language, and adaptive assessment tools (e.g., WISC-V, KTEA-3, WIAT, BASC-3, Vineland-3, CELF-5). Evaluations will be conducted by qualified personnel within required timelines.

#### **Service Delivery Model**

Students will receive services through a continuum of supports including:

- Co-teaching inclusion model
- Resource room instruction
- Small-group evidence-based interventions (e.g., Orton-Gillingham, multisensory math strategies)
- Behavior Intervention Plans when required

IEP management will be conducted through SpedTrack, with Q-Global utilized for assessment scoring and documentation integrity.

### **3. Academically Advanced/Gifted Students**

Frontier STEM Academy will implement a structured Gifted Education Program aligned with Missouri Gifted Learner Outcomes (MO-GLOS).

#### **Identification**

Students will be identified using multiple measures, including universal screening, MAP data, teacher recommendations, performance portfolios, and cognitive indicators. Students must demonstrate eligibility across multiple domains consistent with state guidance.

#### **Programming**

Qualified students will receive a minimum of 150 minutes per week of gifted services delivered by certified gifted specialists. Services will include:

- Curriculum compacting
- Acceleration where appropriate
- Independent research projects
- STEM-based problem-solving
- Enrichment aligned to the RRT model (elementary grades)Curriculum compacting

- Acceleration where appropriate
- Independent research projects
- STEM-based problem-solving
- Enrichment aligned to the RRT model (elementary grades)

Social-emotional support for gifted learners will also be embedded to address perfectionism, asynchronous development, and advanced reasoning needs.

#### **4. Students with Limited English Proficiency (ELL)**

Frontier STEM Academy will implement a comprehensive English Learner (EL) program aligned with WIDA standards and DESE requirements.

##### **Identification and Placement:**

All students complete a Home Language Survey. Potential EL students are screened within 30 days using WIDA-approved assessments. Placement decisions are made by the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC).

##### **Instructional Model**

The school will utilize a structured Pull-Out English Language Development (ELD) model delivered by certified EL teachers. Instruction will focus on listening, speaking, reading, and writing aligned to WIDA ELD standards and Missouri Learning Standards.

General education teachers will implement classroom accommodations and collaborate with EL staff to ensure alignment between language development and grade-level STEM instruction.

##### **Monitoring & Reclassification:**

Student progress will be monitored using formative assessments and annual ACCESS testing. Reclassification decisions will follow DESE guidelines, and exited students will be monitored for two years.

#### **5. Students at High Risk (per DESE Definition)**

Students identified as high risk due to poverty, attendance concerns, behavioral history, or academic underperformance will be supported through a structured Response to Intervention (RTI) framework.

The RTI system includes:

- Universal screening (academic and behavioral)
- Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention blocks embedded in the daily schedule
- Progress monitoring every 4–6 weeks
- Data team meetings to adjust support intensity

## **Personnel and Service Capacity**

Frontier STEM Academy’s staffing model ensures adequate and qualified personnel across all special populations. Dedicated staff include:

- Special Education Process Coordinator / Psychological Examiner
- Certified Special Education Teachers
- Special Education Paraprofessionals
- Certified EL Teachers
- Gifted Specialist(s)
- School Counselor / McKinney-Vento Liaison
- Related Service Providers (SLP, OT, PT, LCSW)
- Interventionists overseeing RTI implementation

Staffing allocations will scale proportionally with enrollment and identified student needs to ensure compliance with IEP service minutes, EL instructional requirements, and gifted programming mandates.

### **Alignment with Philosophy:**

Frontier STEM Academy’s structured literacy approach, problem-based STEM curriculum, and RTI-driven intervention model ensure that all students—regardless of ability or circumstance—receive individualized, standards-aligned instruction.

Supports are embedded within the daily schedule, monitored through structured documentation systems, and delivered by qualified personnel under a clearly defined organizational structure. This design ensures that services for students in special populations are equitable, proactive, and fully compliant with federal and state law.

- E.2** If not otherwise addressed above, describe the services and personnel devoted to support of students in all of the groups noted in E.1.

Frontier STEM Academy will implement a comprehensive and structured support system to ensure that students across all identified groups receive appropriate services delivered by qualified personnel. Our staffing model is intentionally designed to provide equitable access to rigorous instruction while maintaining full compliance with IDEA, ADA, Section 504, Title I, Title III, and the McKinney-Vento Act.

Services are embedded within the daily instructional schedule and supported by clearly defined roles, documentation systems, and data review cycles to ensure support is proactive, scalable, and aligned to student needs.

### **A. Dedicated Personnel**

To meet the full range of academic, behavioral, linguistic, and health needs, the school will hire or contract qualified professionals in the following areas:

#### **1. Special Education & Compliance Team**

- **Special Education Process Coordinator / School Psychological Examiner**

Oversees evaluations, eligibility determinations, IEP compliance, and implementation of the DESE-approved Local Compliance Plan. Manages timelines and the required three-year DESE

Desk Audit cycle.

- **Certified Special Education Teachers**

Provide direct instruction through co-teaching and resource models and ensure implementation of IEP goals.

- **Special Education Paraprofessionals**

Support students with significant needs and facilitate inclusive access to general education classrooms.

- **Related Service Providers (employed or contracted as needed)**

- Speech-Language Pathologists (SLP)
- Occupational Therapists (OT)
- Physical Therapists (PT)
- Licensed Clinical Counselors (behavioral support)

Staffing levels will be aligned to projected enrollment and IEP caseloads and will scale proportionally as enrollment increases to ensure service minutes are delivered with fidelity.

## 2. English Language Development (ELD) Staff

- **Certified EL Teachers:** Provide daily or scheduled Pull-Out English Language Development instruction aligned to WIDA and Missouri Learning Standards. They collaborate with classroom teachers to ensure accommodations and instructional alignment.
- **Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC):** A multidisciplinary team responsible for EL identification, service placement, progress monitoring, and reclassification decisions.

## 3. Student Support Services

- **Counselor/Social Worker (McKinney-Vento Liaison):** Coordinates services for students without housing, manages case support for high-risk students, provides counseling, and connects families to community resources.
- **School Nurse:** Oversees Individual Health Plans (IHPs), medication administration, and accommodations for students with physical disabilities or medical needs.

## 4. Instructional Leadership

- **Interventionists & Instructional Coaches:** Support classroom teachers in differentiation strategies for gifted learners and struggling students. They oversee RTI data systems and ensure students move appropriately between tiers of support.

## B. Core Services & Support Structures

All services are integrated into the master schedule to ensure they are systematic and preventive rather than reactive.

### 1. Academic Interventions (RTI)

- **Tiered Support Blocks:** Dedicated time in the daily schedule for Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions in

- literacy and math, utilizing evidence-based tools (e.g., Orton-Gillingham, Zearn).
- **Gifted Enrichment:** Services for academically advanced students will include accelerated tasks, independent research projects, and problem-based learning opportunities integrated into the STEM curriculum.
  - **Documentation:** We will utilize a robust documentation system (SpedTrack) to monitor progress towards IEP goals and RTI benchmarks.

## 2. Social-Emotional & Behavioral Support

- **SEL Programming:** Implementation of CharacterPlus and CASEL-aligned social-emotional learning curricula.
- **Counseling:** Individual and small-group counseling to address trauma, attendance issues, or behavior concerns, supported by Licensed Clinical Counselors.
- **Behavioral Assessment:** Use of BASC-3 and Vanderbilt scales to identify specific behavioral needs and develop Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs).

## 3. Family & Community Engagement

- **Case Management:** High-risk students will receive case management services, including regular home-school communication and referrals to social service agencies.
- **Culturally Responsive Outreach:** We will ensure all communication regarding Special Education and EL services is provided in a language families understand, utilizing translation services to foster meaningful partnership.

This structure ensures that dedicated personnel and specialized services are not add-ons but are foundational to the school model. By securing qualified staff (Process Coordinators, EL Teachers, Therapists) and implementing rigorous compliance systems (SpedTrack, Q-Global), Frontier STEM Academy is prepared to advance student learning for every child, regardless of ability or background.

### Evaluation Criteria: *Satisfactory responses will...*

- attach all requested documents
- evidence realistic, well-informed educational goals
- demonstrate capacity to meet state and federal requirements regarding the identification and education of students with disabilities, students who are homeless and children who are gifted.
- describe the school's plan for the implementation of special education services.
- evidence plans for providing identified all such students with instructional objectives, educational strategies, and assessments that are appropriate to their identified needs and on a continuing basis.
- evidence plans to hire qualified and adequate numbers of personnel to provide all necessary services for students in special populations.
- evidence plans for services for students in special populations that will foster their success equitably and in full compliance with all applicable laws.

## F. Instructional Staff

- F.1** As an appendix, include a detailed five-year staffing schedule for instructional and instructional-support personnel (typically including, but not limited to, librarians, reading or math specialists, special subject teachers, etc.). In the space below, describe that plan and how it supports the curricula, pedagogies, and student learning outcomes noted above. Address how the plan reflects the school's educational philosophy/model. Address class sizes at all levels. Address areas of likely staffing challenges in the first years of operation due to insufficient resources, lack of qualified candidates in the market, etc.

Frontier STEM Academy has developed a phased staffing plan aligned with projected enrollment growth. The detailed five-year staffing schedule is provided as an appendix. Below, we describe how this plan supports our educational model, with specific attention to the critical launch phase and subsequent expansion.

### A. Staffing Plan: Curriculum, Pedagogy, & Student Learning

Our staffing model is designed to ensure that rigorous core instruction and specialized support are present from Day 1, with specialized roles added systematically as the school scales.

**Year 1 Launch: Establishing the Foundation** To address the need for early-year specificity, our Year 1 staffing prioritizes compliance, culture, and core instruction:

- **Core Classroom Teachers:** We will hire fully certified teachers for every grade level immediately.
- **Instructional Aides (Pre-K–2):** To support our "small-group, personalized instruction" model, we will employ instructional aides in all early grade classrooms from the start. This ensures a low adult-to-student ratio during critical literacy and math blocks.
- **Special Populations Leadership:** An EL Coordinator and a Special Education (SPED) Head Teacher will be hired in Year 1. These leaders will not only provide direct service but also establish the compliance frameworks (IEPs, LPACs) necessary for federal accountability.
- **Special Subjects:** To support whole-child development, full-time Art, Music, and Physical Education teachers will be included from Year 1, ensuring a balanced curriculum is not deferred.

To ensure strong implementation during the launch year, Frontier STEM Academy has developed a detailed Year 1 staffing and operational plan. In the first year of operation, the school will serve approximately 184 students in Pre-K through second grade and will employ approximately nine classroom teachers. Each grade level will be staffed with fully certified teachers responsible for delivering core instruction aligned with the school's curriculum model. Instructional aides will be assigned to early elementary classrooms to support small-group instruction in literacy and mathematics, particularly during foundational skill development blocks.

School leadership in Year 1 will include a principal and assistant principal responsible for instructional supervision, teacher coaching, and operational oversight. These leaders will conduct regular classroom observations, facilitate weekly professional learning community meetings, and monitor student progress using assessment data from NWEA, ESGI, and classroom-based assessments. Student support services will also be in place during the first year, including a school nurse, social worker, and staff responsible for coordinating special education and English learner services.

This detailed Year 1 structure ensures that the school launches with the instructional capacity, student support systems, and leadership oversight necessary to implement the educational model with fidelity

while maintaining manageable staff responsibilities during the initial year of operation.

**Years 2–5: Phased Specialization** As enrollment grows, the staffing model will shift to include deeper content specialization:

- **STEM Integration (Year 2):** A dedicated Science/STEM Specialist will be hired by Year 2. This role **will ensure** the robust implementation of *Project Lead the Way (PLTW)* and *STEMScopes*, managing the science labs and supporting classroom teachers with complex inquiry-based projects.
- **Intervention Specialists (Year 3):** Dedicated Literacy and Math Specialists will be phased in by Year 3. These roles will provide targeted Tier 3 interventions and instructional coaching aligned to our RTI framework, relieving classroom teachers of the most intensive remediation duties.
- **Wraparound Support (Phased):** Counselors and social workers will be added incrementally as enrollment grows to strengthen wraparound support and case management for high-risk families.

## **B. Reflection of Educational Philosophy**

The staffing plan reflects Frontier’s philosophy of equity, STEM innovation, and personalized learning:

- **Equity:** By placing SPED and EL leadership in the Year 1 budget, we demonstrate that serving diverse learners is a foundational priority.
- **Personalized Learning:** The immediate inclusion of instructional aides in early grades facilitates the small-group differentiation and "Math Talks" central to our pedagogical model.
- **Data-Driven Pedagogy:** The eventual addition of specialized coaches (STEM, Literacy, Math) ensures that pedagogy remains rigorous and data-driven as the faculty size increases.

## **C. Class Sizes**

Our class size targets are designed to facilitate relationship-building and individualized feedback:

- **Pre-K:** 20 students per class with a full-time aide (1:10 adult-student ratio).
- **Grades K–2:** 24–26 students per class. These classrooms will have shared access to interventionists and aides to lower the ratio during core literacy and math blocks.
- **Grades 3–5 (Phased In):** 24–26 students per class, supported by push-in specialists and STEM integration.

## **D. Staffing Challenges and Mitigation Strategies**

We anticipate challenges in recruiting certified STEM, SPED, and bilingual teachers, particularly given the competitive labor market. To mitigate these risks, Frontier STEM Academy will implement a multi-pronged talent strategy:

### **1. Competitive Compensation & Incentives**

- **Base Salary:** We will offer the highest certified teacher base salary in the region.
- **Stipends:** We will provide significant stipends for staff who take on extra duties.

### **2. Internal Talent Development ("Grow Your Own")**

- **Frontier Employee Education Program (FEED):** We will provide financial assistance for current

staff (e.g., paraprofessionals) to obtain teaching certifications and for existing teachers to gain graduate degrees or endorsements in SPED/ELL.

### **3. Mentorship and Retention**

- **Induction:** We will pair new teachers with experienced mentors and provide extensive professional development, including *LETRS* (literacy), *CharacterStrong* (SEL), and STEM training, to ensure they feel supported and retained.

This staffing plan ensures that Frontier STEM Academy will be adequately staffed with high-quality personnel who align with our educational philosophy. By securing essential support staff in Year 1 and strategically phasing in specialists, we will foster strong student outcomes and sustain long-term organizational growth.

### **E. Alignment of Staffing Plan with the Five-Year Budget**

Frontier STEM Academy's staffing plan is intentionally aligned with the school's five-year financial projections to ensure that personnel growth remains sustainable as enrollment increases. The school's financial model is based on a phased enrollment growth plan that expands from 184 students in Year 1 to 584 students by Year 5. As enrollment increases, staffing levels grow proportionally to maintain appropriate student-teacher ratios, support specialized programs, and ensure high-quality instruction for all students.

In the first year of operation, the school will employ approximately nine classroom teachers along with essential administrative and support staff. This staffing structure aligns with the projected enrollment of 184 students and prioritizes strong foundational instruction in early literacy, numeracy, and STEM learning. Initial staffing includes core classroom teachers, instructional aides supporting early grade classrooms, school leadership, and essential student support personnel such as a nurse and social worker. This approach ensures that the school begins operations with the capacity necessary to deliver its educational program while maintaining financial stability during the launch year.

As enrollment expands in subsequent years, staffing will increase in a phased and sustainable manner. The school projects approximately fifteen teachers in Year 2, twenty-one teachers in Year 3, thirty teachers in Year 4, and thirty-eight teachers by Year 5. This gradual expansion reflects the school's grade-level growth model in which one additional grade level is added each year. The staffing increases correspond directly with the projected enrollment growth and ensure that class sizes remain manageable and consistent with the school's instructional model.

Administrative and student support personnel will also expand gradually as the school grows. In the early years, leadership and operational roles will focus on essential functions required for school operations and student services. As enrollment increases, additional administrative support staff, intervention specialists, and instructional support personnel will be added to ensure continued operational effectiveness and compliance with state and federal program requirements.

The financial projections demonstrate that this staffing plan is sustainable within the school's overall budget framework. Projected revenues increase steadily over the five-year period as enrollment grows, while personnel expenditures rise proportionally to support additional teachers and student services. The budget maintains positive operating balances throughout the projection period, indicating that staffing growth is financially supported by anticipated revenues and responsible financial planning.

This alignment between enrollment growth, staffing expansion, and financial planning ensures that Frontier STEM Academy can maintain strong instructional capacity while operating within a fiscally responsible framework. The phased staffing model also allows school leadership to evaluate instructional needs annually and adjust staffing levels as necessary while maintaining compliance with sponsor expectations and state accountability requirements.

- F.2** Detail the minimum qualifications required for teachers and related instructional staff to be hired across all major educational domains. Highlight where higher levels of specialized training and/or professional experience is required. Outline recruitment plans and anticipated challenges to successful hiring.

Frontier STEM Academy will hire only highly qualified instructional staff who demonstrate strong content knowledge, pedagogical skill, and a deep commitment to the school’s mission. Below are the detailed minimum qualifications, recruitment plans, and strategies for addressing market challenges.

### **A. Minimum Qualifications for Teachers and Instructional Staff**

#### **1. Core Classroom Teachers (K–5)**

- **Education:** Bachelor’s degree in education or a related field.
- **Certification:** Valid Missouri teaching certification (elementary education or equivalent).
- **Skills:** Demonstrated expertise in literacy and numeracy instruction. We will prefer candidates with specific training in structured literacy (Science of Reading) and evidence-based math pedagogy.

#### **2. STEM/Science Specialists**

- **Education:** Bachelor’s degree in science, engineering, or education with a STEM concentration.
- **Certification:** Missouri certification in science (elementary or middle school, depending on grade level served).
- **Experience:** Prior experience with inquiry-based instruction and/or Project Lead the Way (PLTW) is preferred.

#### **3. Literacy/Math Interventionists**

- **Education:** Bachelor’s degree in education; reading or math specialist certification is preferred.
- **Training:** Specific training in evidence-based interventions (e.g., LETRS for literacy).
- **Skills:** Demonstrated success in small-group facilitation and data-driven differentiation to close achievement gaps.

#### **4. Special Education (SPED) Teachers**

- **Education:** Bachelor’s degree and Missouri SPED certification.
- **Experience:** Experience with IEP development, legal compliance, co-teaching models, and inclusive instructional practices.
- **Skills:** Knowledge of assistive technology and behavioral supports.

#### **5. English Learner (EL) Teachers/Coordinators**

- **Education:** Bachelor’s degree and TESOL/ELL endorsement or certification.
- **Experience:** Experience delivering sheltered instruction and language acquisition support.
- **Skills:** Familiarity with WIDA standards and state language proficiency assessments (ACCESS).

#### 6. Special Subject Teachers (Art, Music, PE)

- **Education:** Bachelor’s degree and certification in relevant subject areas.
- **Experience:** Preference for candidates with experience integrating Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and cross-disciplinary concepts into the arts.

#### 7. Support Staff (Instructional Aides, Paraprofessionals)

- **Education:** Associate’s degree or equivalent experience; bachelor’s preferred.
- **Experience:** Prior experience in student support roles is highly valued.

### B. Higher Levels of Specialized Training

Certain roles will require advanced credentials to ensure the fidelity of our specialized programs:

- **SPED and EL Staff:** Require specialized certifications and advanced training to ensure strict compliance with IDEA and effective support for English Learners.
- **STEM Specialists:** Are expected to have significant training or professional experience in hands-on, inquiry-based learning (e.g., 5E Model, engineering design process).
- **Interventionists:** Must have demonstrated expertise in targeted literacy and numeracy instruction to effectively close persistent achievement gaps.

### C. Recruitment Plans

Frontier Schools has developed a multi-faceted recruitment plan to attract and retain high-quality educators:

- **University Partnerships:** We will establish pipelines with the University of Missouri, Columbia College, and regional teacher preparation programs to identify talent early.
- **National Platforms:** We will post positions on major platforms including Indeed, Glassdoor, ZipRecruiter, and Teach Missouri to reach a broad audience.
- **Local Outreach:** We will leverage Columbia community networks and education associations to find local talent committed to the community.
- **Residency & Pathways:** We will provide support for alternative certification and internal advancement through the Frontier Employee Education Program (FEED).
- **Competitive Compensation:** Frontier will offer the highest certified teacher base salary in the region, along with robust benefits and professional development.

### D. Anticipated Hiring Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

#### Retention in Early Years

- **Challenge:** High turnover rates are common in new schools during the startup phase.
- **Mitigation:** Frontier will provide strong mentorship programs, embedded coaching, and wellness support to ensure new teachers feel supported and valued.

By establishing rigorous minimum qualifications, offering market-leading compensation, and investing in

teacher pipelines, Frontier STEM Academy will recruit and retain an instructional staff capable of delivering a high-quality, equitable education for all students.

- F.3** Describe mentoring/coaching plans for instructional staff. Outline pre-opening and post-opening/long-term professional development plans for instructional staff. Attach as appendices any staff handbook or employee manuals that have been developed (either fully or partially).

Frontier STEM Academy will establish a structured mentoring and coaching framework to ensure that every teacher, regardless of experience level, receives ongoing, job-embedded support. This system is designed to foster professional growth, instructional consistency, and long-term staff retention.

### **A. Mentoring and Coaching Framework**

Our support structure will rely on three pillars of guidance:

#### **1. New Teacher Mentorship**

- **Structure:** Each first-year teacher will be paired with an experienced mentor teacher.
- **Activities:** Mentorship will include non-evaluative classroom observations, co-planning sessions, and weekly check-ins to navigate the operational and pedagogical demands of the first year.

#### **2. Instructional Coaching**

- **Role:** A full-time Instructional Coach will lead Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and facilitate professional growth.
- **Cycle:** The coach will provide model lessons and conduct data-driven coaching cycles (Observation > Feedback > Implementation) to improve specific instructional practices.

#### **3. Administrator Support**

- **Evaluation:** Principals and assistant principals will provide formal classroom observations and feedback aligned to the Missouri Educator Evaluation System.
- **Goal:** This ensures consistency in expectations and provides a clear roadmap for professional advancement.

### **B. Pre-Opening Professional Development**

Prior to the school's first day of instruction, all staff will participate in three weeks of summer pre-service training. This intensive induction will focus on:

- **Mission & Culture:** Deep dives into Frontier's educational philosophy, expectations, and student culture.
- **Curriculum Implementation:** Training on core resources including Eureka Math<sup>2</sup>, Pathways to Reading, STEMScopes, and Project Lead the Way (PLTW).
- **Classroom Management:** Workshops on trauma-informed practices and setting consistent classroom routines.

- **Compliance:** Mandatory training on FERPA, IDEA, Section 504, EL services, and McKinney-Vento regulations.
- **Assessment Systems:** Introduction to data platforms including NWEA MAP, ESGI, and District Assessments.

### C. Post-Opening / Ongoing Professional Development

Professional learning will not end after summer; it will be embedded into the weekly rhythm of the school year.

- **Weekly PLC Meetings:** Structured weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings will be utilized for collaborative learning, vertical alignment, and data-driven instruction. During these sessions, teachers will analyze student assessment data, review standards, examine student work, plan interventions, and refine instructional strategies to ensure consistent academic growth across grade levels.
- **Professional Development Days:** The school will implement four full professional development days throughout the academic year to provide extended, focused learning opportunities. These days will be dedicated to curriculum alignment, assessment calibration, instructional best practices, structured literacy implementation, STEM integration, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), and culturally responsive teaching.
- **Instructional Rounds:** Staff will participate in cross-classroom observations and instructional rounds to share best practices, strengthen consistency of implementation, and foster a culture of peer learning and collective responsibility for student achievement.
- **Leadership Development:** We will provide specific training and mentorship opportunities for aspiring teacher leaders, PLC facilitators, and future administrators to build internal leadership capacity and ensure sustainable instructional growth as the school expands.

### D. Long-Term Professional Development Plans

Our long-term strategy focuses on specialized expertise and career advancement.

- **Specialized Programs:** Staff will receive ongoing, multi-year training in high-impact programs such as LETRS (Science of Reading), CharacterStrong (SEL), and STEM pedagogy.
- **Advanced Certifications (FEED):** The Frontier Employee Education Program (FEED) will provide tuition assistance for teachers seeking graduate degrees, SPED or EL endorsements, and leadership certification.
- **Continuous Improvement:** The PD calendar will evolve annually, informed by student achievement data, staff surveys, and retention analyses.

### Sustainability and Staff Retention

This comprehensive professional development structure is designed to not only strengthen instructional quality but also build a supportive culture that significantly reduces turnover. By investing heavily in teachers' professional growth and well-being, Frontier ensures high retention rates and long-term instructional excellence.

**Evaluation Criteria: *Satisfactory responses will...***

- attach all requested documents
- demonstrate a sound understanding of staffing needs aligned with the budget and enrollment projections, and across multiple years of organizational development.
- demonstrate a feasible staffing plan aligned with the school's educational philosophy/model, curriculum, pedagogies, instructional modalities, and target student learning outcomes.
- demonstrate rigorous expectations for qualifications of all instructional staff, reflective of the schools educational philosophy/model, curriculum, pedagogies, instructional modalities, and target student learning outcomes.
- evidence recruitment strategies likely to be effective.
- describe professional development plans likely to advance staff knowledge and skills and contribute to retention of qualified employees.

## G. School Calendar & Daily Schedule

- G.1** Attach as an appendix the detailed school calendar for the first year of operation (including the total number of full days of instruction).

In the space below, describe the rationale for the calendar in the context of the school's target population, educational philosophy/model, and articulated educational goals and assessments.

The Year 1 school calendar provides a balance of rigorous academic time, enrichment opportunities, and family-friendly structures that reflect both the needs of Columbia's target student population and Frontier's educational philosophy. The calendar includes 171 full instructional days, which exceeds Missouri's minimum requirements, ensuring students have the time necessary to master core content and meet ambitious learning goals.

### A. Alignment to Target Population Needs

Many students in Columbia come from diverse backgrounds, including economically disadvantaged families, English Learners, and students with disabilities. Research confirms that consistent, structured instructional time is particularly critical for these populations. Our calendar **provides**:

- **Extended Learning Blocks:** 90+ minutes for literacy and 60+ minutes for math daily to accelerate foundational skill acquisition.
- **Daily Specials:** 50 minutes daily for art, music, PE, or computers to support whole-child development.
- **Embedded Intervention:** 30 minutes of daily time for small-group UFLI literacy, math remediation, or enrichment.

### B. Connection to Educational Philosophy and Model

Frontier's STEM-focused, inquiry-based model requires uninterrupted blocks of time for hands-on learning. The calendar reflects this with:

- **STEM Integration:** Consistent science/STEM periods that allow for the implementation of Savvas and *Project Lead the Way* modules without interruption.
- **Whole-Child Balance:** The schedule ensures a balance between academic rigor and SEL supports through daily morning meetings (15 minutes), recess, and Character Education lessons.

### C. Support for Educational Goals and Assessments

The calendar supports our articulated educational goals by:

- **Instructional Hours:** Allowing sufficient contact hours for students to meet Missouri Learning Standards and achieve high performance on MAP and NWEA assessments.

The school calendar reflects a thoughtful balance of academic time, SEL supports, enrichment, and family considerations. It is designed to provide the consistent, extended instructional time necessary for students to make accelerated academic gains while also building character, creativity, and resilience.

- G.2** Attach as an appendix a detailed school-wide daily class schedule that shows daily hours of

operation as well as allocation of time to instruction in core educational domains, supplemental instruction, extra-curricular activity, and after-school activity, as applicable. Additionally, attach a sample daily schedule for one grade at each of the following levels, as applicable: elementary, middle, high school.

In the space below, describe the rationale for the schedule in the context of the school's target population, educational philosophy/model, and articulated educational goals and assessments. Address scheduled time for pull-out or push-in activity, teacher development, special subjects, etc.

The Frontier Schools – Columbia daily schedule has been designed to maximize instructional time in core subjects, provide targeted interventions for diverse learners, and ensure balanced opportunities for enrichment and social-emotional development. The school day runs from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (tentative) for elementary grades, providing approximately 7 hours of structured instructional time daily, which exceeds Missouri's minimum instructional time requirements.

#### **Alignment with Target Population Needs**

The target population in Columbia includes many English Learners, students with disabilities, and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. These students benefit from predictable routines, extended literacy and numeracy instruction, and built-in supports. The schedule reflects these priorities by:

- **Literacy and Numeracy Blocks:** Daily 90–120 minutes dedicated to reading and math (whole group + small group) to ensure mastery of foundational skills.
- **Push-In/Pull-Out Supports:** Scheduled blocks for RTI, English Language Development, and special education services, delivered through both push-in co-teaching and targeted pull-out instruction as appropriate.
- **Social-Emotional Learning:** Morning Meetings and Character Education classes foster community, build self-regulation, and support emotional well-being.

#### **Reflection of Educational Philosophy/Model**

The schedule embodies Frontier's STEM-focused, inquiry-driven model by:

- Embedding science/STEM blocks daily, with extended time for hands-on inquiry aligned to Project Lead the Way and STEMScopes.
- Including special subject classes (art, music, PE, computers, and library) to promote whole-child development, creativity, and cross-disciplinary learning.
- Protecting recess and unstructured play, supporting cognitive and social-emotional growth alongside academic rigor.

#### **Support for Educational Goals and Assessments**

- Extended literacy and math blocks ensure alignment with educational goals of proficiency on MAP and NWEA assessments.
- Scheduled "Savvas" and writing time build cross-curricular literacy and critical thinking skills.

- Quarterly data review and embedded PLCs support continuous instructional improvement.
- The schedule allows for teacher professional development through early-release days, common planning periods, and embedded coaching cycles.

### **After-School Enrichment and Support**

In later years, Frontier Columbia will expand to offer optional after-school enrichment, including tutoring, clubs, and STEM activities, providing additional learning opportunities for students who need academic support or seek enrichment beyond the regular day.

### **Conclusion**

This daily schedule reflects a careful balance of academic rigor, personalized support, enrichment, and SEL programming. It ensures that the unique needs of Columbia’s diverse student population are met while advancing Frontier’s mission to provide equitable, high-quality, STEM-focused education.

- G.3** Address transportation issues (to and from school, to and from school activities, etc.) in the context of the school’s target population, local geography, public transportation resources, etc. Highlight strategies for overcoming any extant transportation barriers, if applicable.

### **Transportation Plan and Access Considerations**

Frontier STEM Academy recognizes that reliable transportation is essential to equitable access, consistent attendance, and full participation in school programming. The school’s transportation plan is intentionally designed to respond to the needs of its target population, Columbia’s local geography, and the limitations of existing public transportation resources, while ensuring compliance with Missouri transportation requirements.

### **Daily Transportation to and from School**

Frontier STEM Academy’s primary transportation strategy is to utilize a licensed Missouri student transportation contractor to provide daily home-to-school and school-to-home routes in compliance with all state and federal requirements. In addition, the school is considering the purchase of school **buses**, as operationally and financially feasible, to supplement contracted services and support long-term transportation reliability. This blended approach provides flexibility to scale transportation capacity, address route coverage needs, and mitigate potential contractor availability or service disruptions.

Whether operated by a contractor or by the school, all state-aid-eligible transportation routes will be limited to those directly before and after the school day, consistent with Missouri transportation aid guidelines. Routes will be designed to minimize student ride times while ensuring safe, accessible bus stop locations within reasonable walking distance of students’ homes. Families will not be charged transportation fees.

### **Local Geography and Public Transportation Context**

Columbia’s public transportation system (GoCOMO Transit) offers limited route coverage and schedules that are not aligned with elementary school start and dismissal times, particularly in neighborhoods where many target families reside. As a result, public transit alone does not provide a reliable or

equitable transportation option for the school's student population. Frontier Schools – Columbia therefore does not rely on city transit and instead ensures that school-provided transportation serves neighborhoods with higher concentrations of enrolled students, including areas with lower rates of vehicle ownership.

### **Transportation for School Activities**

Transportation for after-school programs, extracurricular activities, field trips, and extended learning opportunities will be provided as needed and will be fully funded through the school's operating budget, separate from state transportation aid. Frontier Schools – Columbia will not seek state reimbursement for transportation associated with these activities and will track such costs separately to ensure fiscal transparency and compliance. When feasible, late bus service or coordinated transportation will be offered on designated days to support equitable student participation in enrichment and academic support programs.

### **Addressing Transportation Barriers**

The transportation plan includes specific strategies to address potential barriers faced by students and families:

- **Students Experiencing Homelessness or Foster Care:** Transportation will be provided in compliance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to ensure uninterrupted access to the school of origin or best interest placement.
- **Students with Disabilities:** Transportation services outlined in a student's IEP will be fully implemented, including wheelchair-accessible vehicles and specialized supports as required.
- **Communication and Reliability:** Families will receive clear route information and timely updates. GPS-enabled tracking and notification systems will be used when available to improve safety, reduce missed rides, and support consistent attendance.

By combining **contracted transportation services with a potential school-owned fleet**, Frontier Schools – Columbia establishes a flexible, compliant, and equitable transportation model. This approach accounts for local geography, addresses the limitations of public transit, and ensures dependable daily transportation while maintaining fiscal responsibility and transparency. Through intentional planning and targeted support, the school ensures that transportation will not be a barrier to enrollment, attendance, or student participation in school programs.

### **Evaluation Criteria: *Satisfactory responses will...***

- Include all requested appendices.
- evidence an annual calendar that supports the school's target population, educational philosophy/model, and articulated educational goals and assessments.
- evidence a daily schedule that supports the school's target population, educational philosophy/model, and articulated educational goals and assessments.

- attend to differentiated student needs (educational and otherwise).
- account for necessary teacher preparation/planning, mentoring/coaching.
- comply with minimum requirements for the number of school hours pursuant to 160.041.
- provide for the makeup of a minimum of 36 instructional hours due to closure for inclement weather closure pursuant 171.033.2.

## H. Third Party Educational Service Providers

**H.1** Will the proposed school contract with an “educational service provider” (ESP, as defined by DESE) for substantial educational or school management services?

Yes:  If Yes, Name of Provider:

**No: X**

**H.2** If “Yes,” describe in detail the educational and/or school management services that the school plans to outsource to the contractor/provider. Address the board’s rationale for the decision to contract with an ESP. Discuss the board’s vetting of ESP candidates and the rationale for the decision to contract with the particular ESP identified above. - N/A

**H.3** If “Yes,” provide via an appendix a copy of the executed or draft contract that codifies the relationship and responsibilities of the parties. That contract must identify in detail all of the following:

- the distinctions in roles of the charter school board, charter school staff, and the ESP
- the scope and limitations of the services to be provided by the ESP
- the goals against and measures by which the board will evaluate the performance of the ESP
- the compensation structure for the ESP, including all fees for which the ESP is eligible to be paid
- financial controls of the ESP and the board/school
- methods of contract oversight and enforcement
- conditions for contract renewal and termination
- disclosure of any existing or potential conflicts of interest between the charter school governing board and the ESP or any affiliated business entities, including how those existing or potential conflicts of interest have been addressed (if applicable) or will be addressed should they arise- N/A

### **Evaluation Criteria: *Satisfactory responses will...***

- evidence a compelling rationale for the decision to contract with an ESP.
- evidence a compelling rationale for the decision to contract with the specific ESP identified.
- fully document all requested elements in the board-ESP contract provided.

- evidence that the board shall be fully independent from the ESP, financially and organizationally.
- evidence board capacity to fully exercise its independence from and contractual authority over the ESP.
- evidence that any extant or potential ESP financial interest in the school's building/property/facilities is fully documented in advance and in no way compromises the board's stewardship of public funds for the maximum educational benefit to students.

**I. Existing School Operators (ONLY IF APPLICABLE)**

**I.1** Does the applicant currently operate any other charter school, in Missouri or elsewhere?

Yes:

**If Yes, Name and Location of School(s):**  
**Frontier Schools, Kansas City**

No:

**I.2** If “Yes,” provide the following as appendices:

- the annual report card (or equivalent) issued by the governing state board of education for each school for the past five years.
- independently-audited annual financial statements for the past five years.

**I.3** I “Yes,” summarize the achievements at your current school(s) that serve as the foundation of your rationale for anticipated success via the school proposed herein.

Frontier Schools’ existing campuses in Kansas City have consistently demonstrated strong student outcomes and continuous improvement under Missouri’s MSIP 6 accountability system. These achievements serve as the foundation for replicating success in Columbia.

**Sustained Performance and Growth**

- In 2025, Frontier Schools earned 92.7%, the highest APR score in Kansas City and also achieved the top ranking for the three-year composite APR (2023–2025) — a reflection of our sustained commitment to excellence and continuous improvement. In addition, Frontier Schools ranked 30th out of 553 school districts across Missouri, placing our district among the top six percent of all districts statewide.
- In 2024, Frontier earned 84.7% of possible APR points, with particularly strong results in continuous improvement (96.6%). Growth indicators were at or near the “Target” level in mathematics and social studies, and college- and career-readiness benchmarks (CCR, advanced credit, graduate follow-up) all achieved 100% “Target” status.
- In 2023, the network achieved 86.3% of APR points, with “Target” ratings in math, ELA subgroup performance, CCR assessments, graduation rate, and graduate follow-up. Notably, Frontier posted above-average growth in both ELA and math, demonstrating the effectiveness of instructional supports for diverse learners.
- In 2022, the first year under MSIP 6, Frontier earned 75% of APR points, establishing a strong baseline. Despite lower performance in some academic achievement measures, the schools posted exceptionally high growth rates—with nearly 99% of possible growth points in both ELA and math—indicating that students were making accelerated gains under Frontier’s instructional model.

**Key Indicators of Success**

- High Participation Rates: Frontier consistently exceeds 96% participation across all state assessments, ensuring accountability and reliable data.
- Graduation and College Readiness: Four-year graduation rates and CCR indicators have steadily improved, reaching 100% in 2023 and near-maximum levels in 2024 and 2025.
- Continuous Improvement Culture: Frontier has earned full points on improvement planning, compliance, and climate surveys for three consecutive years, reflecting strong organizational health and responsiveness.

### **Implications for Columbia**

These achievements demonstrate that Frontier’s model effectively supports diverse learners, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students. The Columbia campus will replicate the same structures—extended literacy and math blocks, data-driven instruction, targeted interventions, and STEM integration—that produced high growth and CCR outcomes in Kansas City.

Frontier’s record of **academic growth, continuous improvement, and college/career readiness success** establishes a strong foundation for anticipated success in Columbia. The network’s demonstrated ability to accelerate learning for diverse populations provides confidence that the new campus will deliver equitable, high-quality outcomes.

### **Evaluation Criteria: *Satisfactory responses will...***

- evidence demonstrable academic, operational, and financial success at all existing charter schools
- evidence a strong rationale for success at the proposed school based on documented successes at all existing charter schools with similar populations, educational philosophies/models, curricular, etc.

## J. Governing Board and Corporate Organization

**J.1** Attached as appendices all of the following for the independent, 501(c)3 corporation (the “board of directors”/the “board”) that will govern the school, and on behalf of which this application is being submitted to SLU for consideration of charter sponsorship:

- Articles of Incorporation, signed and dated
- Corporate Bylaws, signed and dated
- official documentation confirming that the applicant is a Missouri non-profit corporation and has applied for and/or been granted not-for-profit corporation status from the Internal Revenue Service
- Any existing board policies
- Resumes of all current board members
- Documentation confirming a) the completion of criminal background checks and family care safety registry checks for all current board members and b) evidence of the board’s deliberations on and resolutions regarding any findings from those checks.

**J.2** To the extent that the board exists and has functions independent of the operation of the proposed school, provide a brief description of those functions and the relationship between those existing functions/operations and those of the proposed school. *Skip if not applicable.*

### **Board Functions Independent of School Operations and Relationship to the Proposed School**

The Frontier Schools Board of Directors is an independent governing body with full legal authority and fiduciary responsibility as a nonprofit corporation organized under the laws of the State of Missouri. The Board exists and functions independently of the day-to-day operations of the proposed Frontier STEM Academy and is responsible for governance-level decision-making rather than school-level management.

#### **Independent Governance Functions**

The Board’s primary functions include setting organizational policy, ensuring legal and fiscal compliance, safeguarding the mission and vision of the organization, and holding executive leadership accountable for performance outcomes. These responsibilities are carried out at the system level, not at the operational level of individual schools.

Specifically, the Board:

- Adopts and periodically reviews governing policies related to academics, finance, compliance, and organizational ethics.
- Oversees financial management, including approval of budgets, audits, and long-term fiscal planning.
- Employs, supports, and evaluates the Superintendent, to whom all operational authority is delegated.
- Monitors organizational performance through data on student outcomes, financial health, and compliance indicators.
- Ensures adherence to state and federal laws, including Missouri charter statutes and transparency requirements.

The Board does not engage in daily school operations, personnel management at the school level, curriculum implementation, or instructional supervision. These responsibilities are explicitly delegated to professional leadership.

### **Relationship Between the Board and the Proposed School**

The proposed Frontier STEM Academy will operate under the governance framework established by the Board but will have its own school-based administrative leadership responsible for daily operations, instructional delivery, staff supervision, and family engagement. The relationship between the Board and the school is one of oversight and accountability, not management.

The Board's role with respect to the proposed school includes:

- Approving the school's annual budget and monitoring fiscal performance.
- Reviewing academic performance data and progress toward charter goals.
- Ensuring the school operates in compliance with applicable laws, authorizer requirements, and adopted policies.
- Supporting strategic planning and sustainability while respecting the operational autonomy of school leadership.

This governance structure ensures consistency in mission and accountability while allowing the school leader the flexibility needed to respond to the specific needs of the Columbia community.

### **Board Independence and Conflict of Interest Safeguards**

The Board maintains clear independence from both internal staff and external entities. Board members do not hold operational roles within the school or the organization and are prohibited from exercising individual authority outside of duly convened Board meetings.

To prevent conflicts of interest:

- All Board members are subject to a formal Conflict of Interest Policy requiring annual disclosure and recusal when appropriate.
- A Code of Ethics governs Board conduct, emphasizing integrity, transparency, and fiduciary responsibility.
- Board decisions are made collectively, documented in meeting minutes, and subject to public accountability.

These safeguards ensure that governance decisions are made solely in the best interest of students and the organization.

### **Board–Community Relationships**

The Board recognizes that effective governance is strengthened by meaningful connections with the communities served by the school. As Frontier STEM Academy is established in Columbia, the Board is committed to maintaining awareness of community needs and ensuring that its decisions reflect the interests of local families and stakeholders.

As part of its oversight responsibilities, the Board supports community engagement by seeking regular updates from school leadership regarding family and community priorities, enrollment trends, and stakeholder feedback. This information helps inform board discussions and decision-making related to school performance, strategic planning, and long-term development.

The Board is also committed to maintaining strong representation from individuals who are familiar with the

Columbia community. As Board membership evolves over time, recruitment efforts will prioritize individuals with strong ties to Columbia and the surrounding region, including leaders from education, business, higher education, and community organizations.

In addition, Board members support school outreach efforts by attending school events, engaging with families and community partners, and maintaining open communication with local stakeholders. These practices help promote transparency and strengthen trust between the school and the community it serves.

While the Board operates primarily at the governance level, it views strong community connection as essential to informed decision-making and the long-term success of Frontier STEM Academy.

### **Compliance with Missouri Sunshine Laws**

The Board conducts its business in full compliance with Missouri’s Sunshine Laws. Meetings are publicly noticed, agendas are posted in advance, minutes are maintained, and records are made available as required by law. This commitment to transparency reinforces public trust and ensures accountability in all governance activities.

In summary, the Frontier Schools Board of Directors functions as an independent governing body with responsibilities that are clearly distinct from the daily operations of the proposed Frontier STEM Academy. Through policy leadership, fiduciary oversight, ethical governance, and legal compliance, the Board provides the framework within which the school operates while preserving operational autonomy at the school level. This clear separation of roles ensures effective governance, accountability, and responsiveness to the needs of the Columbia community.

- J.3** Describe the relationship(s) between the chief executive officer (or equivalent) of the school and a) the board collectively and b) board members individually. If the CEO is formally designated as a member of the board (either with or without voting rights, ex-officio, or otherwise), provide a rationale and address how the board will govern independently of all school employees, including the CEO.

The Chief Executive Officer (Superintendent) maintains a structured, professional relationship with the Board of Directors.

#### **a) Relationship with the Board Collectively**

The Board holds full authority to adopt policies, oversee finances, and evaluate organizational outcomes, while the CEO is responsible for implementing those policies and managing day-to-day operations. The CEO provides the Board with regular reports on student achievement, finances, compliance, and operations, ensuring that Board decisions are well informed. The Board evaluates the CEO’s performance against established goals, thereby holding the CEO accountable while focusing its own role on governance rather than administration.

#### **b) Relationship with Individual Board Members**

Board members act collectively in legal session, not as individuals directing staff. Policies explicitly require members to work through the Superintendent and not bypass or undermine the CEO’s authority. Individual communications with the CEO are limited to requests for information, clarification, or agenda preparation, preserving a clear chain of command. Ethical rules—including conflict of interest, confidentiality, and conduct standards—further safeguard independence.

#### **CEO’s Role on the Board**

The CEO serves as an ex-officio, non-voting participant in Board meetings, providing essential professional expertise and recommendations without exercising governance authority. The Board retains sole responsibility

for adopting policies, approving budgets, and making final decisions. Independent governance is also reinforced by requirements for open meetings, public minutes, and executive session rules.

This structure ensures a healthy balance: the Board governs through policy, oversight, and accountability, while the CEO executes those policies and manages daily operations. The CEO's advisory role at meetings keeps the Board well informed, but the Board's independence is preserved through its exclusive authority, ethical standards, and transparent governance practices.

- J.4** As a narrative complement to the board resumes provided (per J.1 above), in the box below provide for each current board member a rationale for the member's inclusion on the board and a summary of the related expertise for which the member's service was sought.

The Frontier Schools Board of Directors is composed of members with professional expertise across key areas of board responsibility, including education, finance, law, compliance, and organizational leadership. Collectively, these qualifications enable the Board to provide informed oversight of academic performance, fiscal management, and legal compliance. To ensure continued effectiveness, Board members participate in regular governance training, including sponsor-approved board training and ongoing professional development aligned with Missouri charter law and best practices in nonprofit and charter school governance.

#### **Board Member Rationale & Expertise Summaries**

**A. Dennis L. Davis – President**

*Rationale:* Selected for his extensive legal expertise, governance leadership, and deep knowledge of healthcare and regulatory compliance.

*Expertise:* Mr. Davis is the Chief Legal Officer for Rural Community Hospitals of America, where he provides oversight in healthcare law, regulatory compliance, and contract management. He previously spent over three decades in private practice as a partner at Stinson Morrison Hecker LLP, where he served as outside general counsel for multiple companies in the Kansas City area. His legal work encompassed healthcare administration, managed-care contracting, casualty insurance, intellectual property, real estate development, and complex litigation and arbitration.

Mr. Davis earned his Juris Doctor with distinction from the University of Missouri–Columbia, a Master of Arts in American History from the University of Missouri–Kansas City, and a Bachelor of Science in Education from Southeast Missouri State University. At Frontier, he chairs the School Performance Committee. His leadership provides the Board with proven expertise in legal strategy, risk management, and organizational accountability.

**B. Dr. Sam Aydin – Vice President**

*Rationale:* Selected for his entrepreneurial leadership, academic expertise, and commitment to community development.

*Expertise:* Dr. Aydin is the Owner of Loyal Housing, LLC, where he brings experience in real estate, housing, and business operations. He previously earned a Ph.D. in Plant Genetics from Texas A&M University (2004), where his research and training built a foundation in scientific analysis, problem-solving, and data-driven decision-making. This academic background complements his entrepreneurial work, giving him the ability to bridge scientific knowledge with practical community and

business applications.

As Vice President of the Board, Dr. Aydin serves on the Governance Committee, where he contributes to board recruitment, compliance, and long-term organizational planning. His blend of scientific expertise, business leadership, and commitment to equity in community development provides a unique perspective on board decision-making.

**C. Mehmet Barut, Ph.D. – Treasurer**

Rationale: Selected for his deep expertise in finance, operations, and academic leadership, Dr. Barut strengthens the Board’s capacity for informed financial oversight and strategic planning.

Expertise: Dr. Barut serves as the Chair of the Department of Finance, Real Estate, and Decision Sciences at Wichita State University and is the Director of the Supply Chain Graduate Program within the Barton School of Business, reflecting his leadership in higher education administration and curriculum development. He teaches and researches across a range of disciplines including Operations Management, Supply Chain Management, Risk Management, Management Science, and Project Management Wichita State University. His research interests span Yield Management, Information Sharing, Blockchain Technology, Optimization, Empirical Studies, and Problem-Based Learning Google Scholar. Dr. Barut earned his Ph.D. in Industrial Management from Clemson University (1999) and holds both an M.S. and B.S. in Management Engineering from Istanbul Technical University (1991, 1988).

At Frontier Schools, he currently chairs the Finance Committee, where his extensive knowledge in budgeting, supply chain logistics, risk management, and data-driven strategy directly supports the district’s fiscal health and long-term sustainability.

**D. Beth A. Murano – Secretary**

Rationale: Selected for her extensive legal expertise, commitment to public service, and leadership in governance and policy oversight.

Expertise:

Ms. Murano currently serves as Chief Counsel of Public Safety for the City of Lee’s Summit, where she advises on criminal, labor, and government law and supports city operations in legal compliance and policy development. A graduate of Drake University Law School, she discovered her passion for law early, inspired by her love of history, government, and advocacy. Over her career, she has prosecuted complex criminal cases, advanced municipal governance, and provided legal counsel on labor relations and government policy.

Beyond her professional achievements, Ms. Murano has been recognized as Employee of the Year by the City of Lee’s Summit, underscoring her commitment to excellence in public service. She has also contributed to mentoring and advocacy, often sharing advice with young lawyers to pursue work that aligns with passion and purpose.

At Frontier Schools, Ms. Murano serves as Secretary of the Board and chairs the Governance Committee. In this role, she oversees board compliance, policy review, recruitment, and training, ensuring the Board functions with transparency, integrity, and strong adherence to ethical and legal standards.

**E. Dr. Nebi Demez – Board Member**

Rationale:

Selected for his advanced STEM and medical expertise, and his ability to strengthen the Board’s oversight in areas of science, health, and technology.

Expertise:

Dr. Demez is a Senior Medical Physicist at the Lynn Cancer Institute, Boca Raton Regional Hospital (Baptist Health), where he specializes in therapeutic radiation treatment planning, quality assurance, and clinical technology for cancer care. He previously served as a Medical Physicist at The University of Kansas Hospital (2016–2023) and at the Hampton University Proton Therapy Institute (2012–2016).

He is board-certified in Therapeutic Medical Physics by the American Board of Radiology, underscoring his professional authority in advanced cancer treatment and radiation safety. With a Ph.D. in Medical Physics, his career reflects a strong blend of academic research and clinical application, including experience in proton beam therapy and radiation oncology innovations.

At Frontier Schools, Dr. Demez serves on the Governance Committee. He contributes his scientific background, analytical problem-solving skills, and evidence-based approach to governance, helping ensure that board decision-making reflects rigor, accountability, and support for Frontier’s STEM-focused mission.

**F. Cesar Cea, P.E. – Board Member**

*Rationale:* Selected for his engineering expertise, entrepreneurial leadership, and commitment to community representation.

*Expertise:* Mr. Cea is the founder of Nueva LLC, a design and consulting company focused on addressing challenges related to climate change and housing. He previously spent over 20 years in the energy sector with a local consulting firm. A licensed Professional Engineer (P.E.) and graduate of Missouri S&T with a degree in Mechanical Engineering, he brings technical expertise in infrastructure, facilities planning, and sustainable development. Growing up in Kansas City’s West Side neighborhood after immigrating from El Salvador, Mr. Cea provides a vital community perspective, advocating for equity and opportunities for underrepresented students. As Chair of the Facilities Committee, he applies both his professional knowledge and community insight to guide facility development, ensure fiscal and legal responsibility, and maintain accessibility to the families and students Frontier serves.

**G. Carmen Vasquez-Rangel – Board Member**

*Rationale:* Selected for her financial services expertise and commitment to representing Kansas City’s Hispanic community.

*Expertise:* Ms. Vasquez-Rangel has served for more than 20 years with Commerce Bank, where she is currently a Vice President and Senior Branch Manager. She oversees retail banking operations, branch development, staffing, and business development, while ensuring compliance and strong customer service standards. She holds a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) from Rockhurst University and a Master’s in Business Management from Baker University.

As a Hispanic leader with a demonstrated history of advancing bilingual banking and community engagement initiatives, Ms. Vasquez-Rangel has played a key role in coordinating Hispanic Banking Programs and building partnerships with local organizations. Her expertise in budgeting, banking operations, coaching, and customer retention supports Frontier Schools’ fiscal stewardship. She currently serves on the Finance Committee, where her professional insight and community perspective strengthen oversight of financial policies and long-term sustainability.

**H. Dr. Karen P. Boyd – Board Member**

*Rationale:* Selected for her leadership in nonprofit management, education, and community

development, as well as her commitment to advancing equity and representation.

**Expertise:** Dr. Boyd is the Owner and CEO of Patrice’s Culinary Collective and formerly served as Vice President of Organizational Performance and Engagement at United Way of Greater Kansas City, where she led strategic planning, fundraising, and organizational development initiatives. She holds an MBA from Northwestern University’s Kellogg School of Management and a Ph.D. in Human Services from Capella University, with additional studies in public policy, finance, and social care.

As an African American leader with decades of experience in Kansas City’s civic and nonprofit sectors, Dr. Boyd has championed efforts to strengthen educational access, support underserved populations, and promote economic development. She has worked with charter schools, community organizations, and higher education partners to improve outcomes for students, particularly in STEM education and equity-focused initiatives. In her role on Frontier’s School Performance Committee, she contributes both her professional expertise and her lived experience to help ensure that board decisions reflect and serve the diverse communities the schools represent.

**I. Dr. Ilbey T. Budak – Board Member**

**Rationale:** Selected for his academic expertise in accounting, auditing, and financial management, as well as his commitment to education and community engagement in Columbia, Missouri. As a university faculty member and local resident, Dr. Budak brings valuable insight into higher education partnerships, fiscal accountability, and community representation for the new Columbia campus.

**Expertise:** Dr. Budak earned his Ph.D. in Accounting from the University of Missouri’s Trulaske School of Business, where his research focused on the effects of class action lawsuits on corporate financial disclosures and managerial behavior.

A Certified Public Accountant (CPA) licensed in Texas, Dr. Budak previously served as Director of Finance for Harmony Public Schools and as Senior Financial Analyst at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point. His professional background includes over a decade of experience in financial operations, compliance, and nonprofit fiscal management. Through his teaching, research, and community service—including mentorship and financial literacy training—Dr. Budak strengthens the Board’s capacity in financial oversight, academic accountability, and local community collaboration.

- J.5** Complete the *Board Responsibilities Matrix* on the following page. This matrix highlights major board responsibilities per SLU sponsorship expectations; feel free to add additional rows for any additional responsibilities you deem appropriate, or leave blank those you have determined are not warranted. Insert the name of each current board member in the top row; add more columns if needed. Then place an “X” in each cell for which a particular board member currently evidences what the applicant deems to be an appropriate amount of necessary expertise and/or professional experience (from either compensated or volunteer/pro bono roles).

In the box directly below, describe the strengths and weaknesses/limitations of the board as currently constituted. Address responsibilities/board expertise not yet fulfilled and current plans for meeting them. Address any responsibilities from the *Matrix* that the applicant feels does not warrant board expertise.

**Strengths:**

- The Board demonstrates **comprehensive coverage** across governance, legal, financial, nonprofit management, and STEM/technical expertise.
- **Legal and Compliance:** Davis and Murano anchor legal, policy, and compliance oversight.
- **Financial Stewardship:** Barut and Vasquez-Rangel provide strong expertise in budgeting, accounting, and financial management.
- **STEM/Facilities:** Demez (medical physics), Barut (analytics), and Cea (engineering/PE) bring technical depth that aligns with Frontier’s STEM focus and capital project needs.
- **Equity & Community:** Boyd, Vasquez-Rangel, and Cea ensure diverse representation and community voice, strengthening alignment with SLU’s values.

### **Weaknesses/Limitations**

- **Geographic Representation:** While the Board includes members with strong ties to education and community engagement, Frontier Schools recognizes the importance of expanding Columbia-based representation as the new campus develops. Future board recruitment will prioritize individuals with strong connections to the Columbia community to further strengthen local engagement, community partnerships, and stakeholder voice in governance.

**Board Responsibilities Matrix**

<b>Board Responsibilities</b>	<b>Dennis Davis</b>	<b>Sam Aydin</b>	<b>Beth Murano</b>	<b>Mehmet Barut</b>	<b>Nebi Demez</b>	<b>Cesar Cea</b>	<b>Karen Boyd</b>	<b>Carmen Vasquez</b>	<b>Ilbey Budak</b>
Fidelity to Educational Model (Curriculum/Instruction Oversight)	X						X		X
Educational Accountability (Student Achievement Outcomes)	X						X		
Educational and Administrative Policy Development	X	X	X	X	X		X		X
School Leader Development/Evaluation	X		X				X		
Regulatory Compliance (DESE, State of MO, U.S. Dept. of Ed)	X		X						X
Non-Profit Management	X		X			X	X	X	
Public School Accounting				X				X	X

School Budgeting/Financial Management	X			X				X	X
Real Estate (Acquisition, Financing, Law)	X	X				X			
Development/Fundraising/Corporate Relations							X	X	
Marketing/PR							X		
Organizational Communication	X		X			X	X	X	X
Other (School-Defined): STEM / Technical Expertise				X	X	X			X
Other (School-Defined): Diversity / Equity / Parent Representation		X				X	X	X	

**J.6** Identify which, if any, current board members have been appointed/elected as officers, and for which officer positions.

<b>Member Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
Mr. Dennis Davis	Board President
Dr. Sam Aydin	Vice President
Ms. Beth Murano	Secretary
Dr. Mehmet Barut	Treasurer
Dr. Neb Demz	Board Member
Mr. Cesar Cea	Board Member
Dr. Karen Boyd	Board Member
Ms. Carmen Vasquez-Rangel	Board Member
Dr. Ilbey Budak	Board Member

**J.7** If the board has/will have committees within it that conduct board activity, identify and describe those committees, their charges, etc. below. Attach as appendices any committee bylaws or policies.

The Board organizes itself into standing committees that provide focused attention on key areas of governance. These committees operate under the Board’s bylaws and formal resolutions, and each reports directly to the full Board.

**1. Finance Committee**

The Finance Committee oversees the financial health and sustainability of all campuses, including Columbia. Responsibilities include:

- Collaborating with the Superintendent and CFO to prepare and recommend the annual budget;
- Monitoring monthly financial statements and audits to ensure compliance and fiscal accountability;
- Identifying financial challenges and recommending strategies to safeguard resources;

- Recommending the selection of independent auditors and reviewing audit results.

## **2. Governance Committee**

The Governance Committee supports the ongoing development and effectiveness of the Board. Responsibilities include:

- Recruiting, onboarding, and training new board members to ensure a diverse and skilled governing body;
- Reviewing bylaws and board policies on a scheduled basis and recommending updates;
- Conducting board self-assessments and monitoring adherence to governance best practices;
- Supporting officer succession planning to maintain stable leadership.

## **3. School Performance Committee**

The School Performance Committee ensures that the academic program across campuses, including Columbia, remains rigorous and aligned with the school's mission. Responsibilities include:

- Reviewing student achievement data and monitoring progress toward annual academic goals;
- Supporting the Superintendent in identifying strategies to improve instruction and student outcomes;
- Ensuring curriculum fidelity and adequate supports for diverse learners;
- Verifying that student performance is benchmarked against state and national standards.

## **4. Facilities Committee**

The Facilities Committee oversees planning, acquisition, and safety of facilities across all campuses, including Columbia. Responsibilities include:

- Reviewing maintenance and construction projects requiring board action;
- Ensuring facilities support projected enrollment growth and program needs;
- Monitoring compliance with legal safety standards;
- Advising on financing, budgeting, and oversight of new construction or renovation projects.

**J.8** What is the relationship of the board collectively, and/or of individual board members, to the communities of the target student population?

The Frontier Schools Board of Directors maintains strong collective and individual connections to the communities served by the district, including those of the target student population for Frontier Schools – Columbia. Collectively, the Board prioritizes equity, access, and community representation, ensuring that decisions reflect the needs and aspirations of families from diverse cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic backgrounds.

Individually, several board members bring **direct lived experience and community ties** that mirror the student population:

- **Dr. Sam Aydin** is a **Frontier parent**, ensuring that family voice and student experience are represented at the governance level.
- **Ms. Carmen Vasquez-Rangel** is a **Hispanic community leader** and banking professional with extensive experience coordinating bilingual programs and building civic partnerships in diverse communities.
- **Dr. Karen Boyd**, an **African American nonprofit and community leader**, has championed equity and educational access throughout Kansas City, strengthening representation for historically underserved populations.
- **Mr. Cesar Cea**, a **first-generation immigrant from El Salvador**, grew up in Kansas City’s West Side neighborhood and advocates for immigrant families and equitable access to STEM opportunities.

Other board members contribute through **professional expertise that directly supports community needs**—for example, Mr. Davis and Ms. Murano bring legal and governance expertise that safeguard families’ trust, while Dr. Barut and Dr. Demez strengthen the Board’s ability to deliver on a STEM-focused mission aligned with workforce opportunities for underserved students.

Together, the Board ensures that governance is informed by **family perspectives, cultural diversity, professional expertise, and a strong commitment to equity**, positioning the Columbia campus to respond to the needs of its target student population.

- J.9** Describe how the board will evaluate its own performance annually. If evaluation tools or standards have already been identified, note them below and attach them as appendices.

The Frontier Schools Board of Directors will conduct a **formal self-evaluation on an annual basis** to assess its performance and effectiveness. The evaluation process will be facilitated through the **Governance Committee**, which is responsible for board development and compliance.

The evaluation will include:

- **Board Self-Assessment Survey:** Each member will complete a structured survey rating the Board’s performance in key areas such as governance oversight, fiscal stewardship, academic accountability, compliance, community engagement, and adherence to bylaws.
- **Committee Effectiveness Review:** Each standing committee (Finance, Governance, School Performance, and Facilities) will review its own work against its stated responsibilities and report outcomes to the full Board.

- **Board Member Participation Review:** Attendance, preparation, and contributions of individual board members will be reviewed to ensure active and responsible participation.
- **Goal-Setting:** Results of the self-evaluation will be used to establish specific improvement goals for the coming year (e.g., strengthening fundraising capacity, expanding community representation, or enhancing training).

The Board plans to use the **Missouri Charter Public School Association’s Board Self-Assessment Tool** as its baseline instrument, supplemented by additional survey questions tailored to SLU sponsorship expectations. A copy of the assessment tool and related policies will be attached as an appendix.

This process ensures that the Board remains accountable, reflective, and continuously improving in its governance of Frontier Schools – Columbia.

**Evaluation Criteria: *Satisfactory responses will...***

- include submission of all requested documents
- document the board’s legal incorporation and compliance with all applicable laws
- clearly describe the relationship (if any) between the proposed school and any other board activities/responsibilities
- substantiate the independence of the board from both external entities/actors and internal employees (including the CEO)
- demonstrate neither internal nor external conflicts of interest among board members
- evidence sufficient qualifications of board members across the major areas of board responsibility
- evidence board-community relationships that are likely to foster the success of the board and school
- Demonstrate policies or procedures ensuring full compliance with Missouri’s “Sunshine Laws”

## K. Organizational Leadership

**K.1** Include as an appendix a leadership organizational chart including all of the following roles as applicable; note when one person will perform more than one of the roles:

- the sponsor
- the board
- the school’s chief executive officer (or similarly-titled leader)
- the school’s chief academic officer (or similarly-titled leader)
- the school’s chief operational officer (or similarly-titled leader)
- the school’s chief financial officer (or similarly-titled leader)
- the school’s chief student development/“dean of students” officer (or similarly-titled leader)
- other key school leadership positions

Organizational Chart is included as an appendix in the folder saved as K1. CO Organizational Chart.

**K.2** Provide a detailed description of the role of the chief executive officer/*CEO (or similarly-titled leader)*. Address all major position responsibilities. Detail the educational and professional qualifications required for service as the CEO. If a CEO has already been identified, provide their resume/CV as an appendix and detail below the process by which the CEO was selected (and by whom), as well as a summary of their most critical qualifications.

### **Role of the Chief Executive Officer (Superintendent)**

The Superintendent serves as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Frontier Schools, reporting directly to the Board of Directors. This position provides overall leadership for all district functions, ensuring alignment with the Board’s mission, policies, and performance expectations.

#### **Major Responsibilities:**

- Serve as the **instructional leader**, promoting student achievement as the district’s primary focus.
- Facilitate and attend Board meetings, prepare agendas in consultation with the Board President, and provide necessary information for Board decision-making.
- Supervise and evaluate principals, directors, and district staff; oversee personnel administration, recruitment, training, and staff development.
- Monitor student achievement data, support principals in instructional improvement, and ensure fidelity to curriculum and academic goals.
- Administer and manage the district’s budget in cooperation with the Finance Department; provide

regular financial reports to the Board; and ensure fiscal responsibility.

- Oversee district facilities, ensuring they are safe, adequate, and supportive of enrollment growth and student learning needs.
- Ensure compliance with state, federal, and local laws, including DESE and U.S. Department of Education mandates.
- Maintain effective communication with parents, community members, and state officials; advocate for the district with external partners.
- Serve as the district's primary resource person in dealing with legal, compliance, and policy issues.

#### **Qualifications Required:**

- Bachelor's degree from an accredited institution (advanced degree preferred).
- Minimum of 5 years' experience as a school administrator or central office director.
- Missouri Superintendent Certification preferred.
- Strong skills in leadership, communication, fiscal management, data analysis, and conflict resolution.

#### **Current CEO – Ugur Demircan, M.Ed.**

The Board of Directors has appointed **Mr. Ugur Demircan** as Superintendent and CEO of Frontier Schools. Mr. Demircan was selected by the Board in 2014 after a national search and has since successfully led the schools through expansion, compliance reviews, and academic growth. His resume is included in the appendices.

#### **Summary of Qualifications:**

- Over **two decades of K–12 leadership experience** in charter school systems.
- Superintendent of Frontier Schools since **2014**, responsible for multi-campus oversight, academic performance, financial planning, compliance, and community partnerships.
- Former **Area Superintendent** for Harmony Public Schools in Texas, managing four campuses simultaneously.
- Extensive **principal experience** at Harmony campuses in Dallas and Houston, with proven success in student achievement and national school recognition.
- **Certified Superintendent and Principal** in both Missouri and Texas.
- Holds a **Master of Education in Educational Leadership** (University of Texas at Tyler) and a **Bachelor's in Electronics & Computer Education** (Marmara University).
- Recognized for academic leadership, including guiding schools to be named among *Newsweek's Top 25*

*Transformative High Schools and Washington Post's Top 200 High Schools.*

## **Conclusion**

The Superintendent/CEO role at Frontier Schools is clearly defined by board policy and professional standards. The Board has selected and retained a **highly qualified and experienced educational leader** in Mr. Ugur Demircan, who meets and exceeds the expectations outlined in the position description. His leadership ensures that Frontier Schools – Columbia will benefit from the same strategic vision, academic oversight, and operational excellence currently guiding Frontier's Kansas City campuses.

- K.3** Provide summaries of each position on the leadership organizational chart *except the CEO (or similarly-titled leader)*. Address instructional leadership, curriculum development and implementation, instructional support, assessment of student learning, financial management, budgeting, data/records management, personnel/HR, operations (facilities, food service, transportation, grants management, etc.). Provide a hiring timeline that clarifies the staging of your leadership planning.

## **Leadership Positions and Responsibilities (Excluding CEO)**

The Frontier Schools Central Office provides shared leadership and operational support for all campuses, including the proposed Columbia school. The organizational chart in the budget appendix identifies the following positions, which are already filled. These leaders will extend their oversight and services to Columbia, ensuring consistency across the network.

### **Chief Academic Officer (CAO)**

Serves as the lead for instructional leadership, curriculum development, and assessment. Oversees academic programs, professional development, and data-driven strategies for improving student achievement. Ensures fidelity to Missouri Learning Standards and guides instructional best practices across schools.

### **Chief Operating Officer (COO)**

Oversees non-instructional operations, including facilities, food service, transportation, enrollment, and grants management. Ensures resources are aligned with instructional priorities and compliance with state and federal requirements.

### **Director of Curriculum**

Manages curriculum development and implementation for assigned grade levels/subjects. Provides instructional coaching, professional development, and assessment design. Monitors data to ensure continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

### **Assistant Directors of Curriculum**

Support Directors of Curriculum with curriculum development, assessments, professional development, and fidelity checks at the classroom level.

### **Director of Special Education & Process Coordinator**

Oversee special education programming, compliance with IDEA/Section 504, IEP development, and support services. Ensure that student learning needs are met equitably and in compliance with federal/state law.

**Director of STEM Education**

Coordinates STEM programming, curriculum innovation, and external partnerships such as Project Lead the Way and Real World Learning. Expands hands-on learning opportunities and promotes STEM equity.

**Director of ELL Programs**

Leads English Language Learner services, including student identification, placement, compliance, and program evaluation. Provides professional development for staff and ensures family engagement for multilingual learners.

**Director of College and Career Success & Assistant**

Oversee postsecondary readiness initiatives, alumni tracking, and employer/college partnerships. Provide mentorship and programming to support students' transition to higher education or careers.

**Real World Learning Coordinator**

Builds community and employer partnerships for experiential learning, internships, and authentic career pathways.

**Director of Finance, Finance Manager, Assistant Finance Manager**

Provide fiscal oversight, budget development, grant management, and compliance with DESE regulations. Ensure financial accountability and transparent reporting to the Board.

**Director of Human Resources & HR Manager**

Manage personnel functions including recruitment, onboarding, certification, payroll, benefits, and employee relations. Ensure compliance with labor law and promote positive staff culture.

**Director of Communications and Outreach & Assistant**

Lead internal/external communications, branding, community relations, and crisis communication. Provide translation and outreach services to families and stakeholders.

**Director of Information Technology, IT Managers, Assistant Directors**

Maintain IT infrastructure, cybersecurity, and instructional software across campuses. Ensure secure, efficient, and accessible technology for staff and students.

**Director of Health, Safety, and Conduct**

Coordinates student discipline, health and safety training, compliance with bullying/suicide prevention mandates, and partnerships with school nurses and social workers.

**Social Work Services Coordinator & McKinney-Vento/Foster Liaison**

Provide social-emotional supports, case management, and ensure access to education for homeless/foster youth. Coordinate services with families and external agencies.

**Transportation Manager**

Directs bus services, scheduling, driver supervision, safety compliance, and liaison with families.

**Maintenance Technicians**

Provide building maintenance, repairs, and safety compliance to ensure facilities are safe and functional.

**Secretary (Central Office)**

Provides administrative and clerical support, including communications, translations, and records management.

## Hiring Timeline

All Central Office positions listed above are **already filled** and currently provide support to Frontier Schools' Kansas City campuses. These same leaders will extend their oversight to the Columbia campus upon its opening, ensuring consistency in academic programs, compliance, operations, and student services.

### Campus-level leadership and staff for Columbia will be hired in stages as follows:

- **August 2026:** Recruitment of school principal.
- **September 2026:** Hire school secretary teachers.
- **October 2026 – Summer 2027:** Hire teachers and other instructional staff, social worker, and support staff no later than two weeks prior to school opening.

This approach ensures that Columbia benefits immediately from the **experience and infrastructure of the existing Frontier Central Office team**, while simultaneously building a **dedicated campus-level leadership team** before opening.

## On-Campus Administrative Support and Executive Oversight Structure

Frontier STEM Academy – Columbia will operate with a clearly defined leadership structure that ensures strong on-site administration while maintaining consistent systemwide alignment and executive-level oversight.

### On-Site Leadership

The campus will be led by a full-time Campus Principal who is physically present daily and responsible for all aspects of school operations, including instructional leadership, staff supervision, student discipline, family engagement, and implementation of academic and compliance systems.

The Principal will have authority over day-to-day decision-making and will supervise all school-based personnel. As enrollment grows, additional on-site administrative roles (e.g., Assistant Principal, Dean of Students, instructional coaches) will be added to maintain appropriate leadership capacity and support. This structure ensures that the campus is never dependent on remote leadership for daily operations and that immediate administrative decision-making remains local and responsive to student and family needs.

### Weekly Executive Committee Participation

To ensure alignment across campuses and consistent implementation of organizational priorities, the Campus Principal will participate in **weekly Executive Committee meetings**.

These meetings include systemwide leadership and are designed to:

- Review academic performance data and intervention progress
- Address operational updates and compliance requirements
- Discuss student services (SPED, ELL, Title programs)
- Monitor financial and enrollment trends
- Coordinate human resources and staffing matters
- Ensure implementation of board policies and sponsor expectations

During these meetings, systemwide issues are discussed collaboratively, and clear guidance and action steps are provided to campus leaders. This structure ensures that the Columbia campus benefits from shared expertise, proactive problem-solving, and coordinated strategic direction.

## Central Office Executive Support and Evaluation

In addition to weekly executive collaboration, the Columbia campus will receive direct, on-site support from Central Office leadership.

Executive leaders will conduct regular site visits, classroom walkthroughs, leadership meetings, and compliance reviews to ensure the Columbia campus operates at the same high standards as existing Frontier campuses. Additional visits will occur as needed based on data trends, compliance timelines, or emerging operational needs.

While executive leadership provides strategic oversight and technical expertise, the Campus Principal retains full responsibility for campus-level execution. The Superintendent evaluates the Principal annually based on academic performance, operational integrity, compliance indicators, and school culture metrics.

This blended leadership model—combining strong on-site administration with structured executive oversight—ensures that:

- The Principal is never isolated in decision-making
- Specialized expertise (SPED, ELL, curriculum, finance) is consistently accessible
- Compliance and accountability expectations are proactively managed
- Systemwide best practices are implemented with fidelity
- The campus maintains operational stability during growth

Through weekly executive collaboration and routine on-site support from Central Office leadership, Frontier STEM Academy – Columbia will operate with both local autonomy and systemwide strength, ensuring high-quality leadership and sustainable school performance.

**K.4** Per *Section H* of this application, if the school intends to contract with an Educational Services Provider (ESP), describe below the relationship between the ESP and its employees and school leaders in the context of the above-offered descriptions of the organization.

N/A

### **Evaluation Criteria: *Satisfactory responses will...***

- include submission of all requested documents
- demonstrate understanding of all school management needs and priorities.
- provide coherent delineation of the roles and responsibilities for administering all school operations.
- Provide coherent delineation of the roles and responsibilities between the school’s governing board, management and any partner entities.
- document a staffing plan that appears viable and adequate for effective implementation of the proposed educational program
- evidence congruence between the staffing plans and the submitted school budget.

## L. Financial Management & Budgeting

- L.1** Build on your description in Section K of the chief financial officer (or equivalent) role to describe more broadly how the school’s finances will be managed, how financial data/records will be maintained, and the capacity for internally- and externally-required financial reporting. Address financial management systems and procedures, internal controls, financial policies, and management of state and federal grant funding. If applicable, describe or provide examples of financial performance dashboards to inform decision-making by senior leaders and the board. Address the roles of external accountants and independent auditors. Briefly identify what related responsibilities, if any, will be outsourced (these will be addressed in greater detail below).

### **Financial Oversight and Leadership**

The financial operations of Frontier Schools – Columbia will be overseen by the Chief Operating Officer (COO) and the **Director of Finance**, supported by the Finance Manager and Assistant Finance Manager. The COO ensures that financial operations align with broader organizational strategy and compliance, while the Director of Finance manages day-to-day accounting, budgeting, reporting, and grants management. Both positions operate under the authority of the Superintendent/CEO and the oversight of the Board’s Finance Committee.

### **Systems and Procedures**

All financial transactions are recorded and managed through a secure, board-approved financial management system with multi-user access controls, audit trails, and grant-specific account codes. The system allows for accurate, real-time reporting of revenues, expenditures, and encumbrances. Monthly reconciliations, purchase orders, dual-approval workflows, and written policies (P3100–P3166) ensure strong internal controls and compliance with state and federal requirements.

### **Budget Development and Implementation**

Budget preparation follows P3110 (Preparation of Budget) and P3112 (Budget Implementation and Transfer), beginning with input from school leaders and central office staff and culminating in Board review and approval. The COO and Finance Office collaborate closely in preparing the annual budget and monitoring implementation. The Finance Committee tracks financial performance throughout the year, comparing actual revenues and expenditures against projections and recommending corrective actions as needed.

### **Financial Data and Reporting**

Financial records are maintained in compliance with Missouri state law, DESE regulations, and federal Uniform Grant Guidance (2 CFR Part 200). Internally, the COO and Director of Finance provide monthly reports to school leaders and the Board, including budget-to-actual comparisons, cash flow updates, and grant status reports. Externally, the Finance Office files all required reports with DESE, the U.S. Department of Education, and other funding agencies.

### **Dashboards and Decision-Making**

Frontier maintains an Accountability Portal (P3425) and internal financial dashboards that track expenditures by campus, department, and funding source. These tools provide senior leadership and the Board with clear, real-time visibility into financial performance and key indicators, supporting informed and timely decision-making.

### **Grant Management**

The COO and Finance Office jointly manage all state and federal grants under P3130–P3166, including Title programs, IDEA, and competitive federal/state grants. Procedures ensure that all expenditures are allowable, documented, and reported in compliance with federal Uniform Grant Guidance. Expenditures are tracked

separately within the accounting system to guarantee transparency and accountability.

### **Internal Controls and Policies**

Frontier’s internal controls include dual signatures for disbursements, segregation of duties among finance staff, monthly reconciliations, and Board-level review of financial reports. Policies governing procurement (**P3165–R3165**) and federal awards (**P3166–R3166**) are strictly followed to prevent conflicts of interest and ensure responsible stewardship of funds. The COO provides an additional layer of review to verify compliance and alignment with organizational priorities.

### **Financial Independence and Funding Equity**

Frontier Schools recognizes that differences in local funding levels between school districts can create potential concerns regarding financial equity across schools within a network. Frontier STEM Academy in Columbia will operate with a dedicated budget that is developed specifically for the Columbia school and aligned with its projected enrollment, staffing plan, and operational needs. All revenues generated for the Columbia school, including state, local, and federal funding, will be used to support the operation of Frontier STEM Academy and its educational program.

Financial management practices within Frontier Schools ensure that each school’s budget is tracked and managed separately. The Columbia school will maintain its own financial records, expenditures, and reporting, allowing the Board and school leadership to monitor financial performance and ensure that funds are used in accordance with the approved budget and the needs of Columbia students.

In cases where services are shared across Frontier Schools—such as professional development, curriculum resources, or administrative support—costs are allocated using transparent and equitable methods to ensure that each school pays only for the services it receives. These allocations are reviewed regularly to ensure fairness and compliance with applicable financial regulations.

Through these practices, Frontier Schools maintains financial transparency and prevents cross-subsidization between schools. This approach allows Frontier STEM Academy to operate with financial independence while still benefiting from the operational expertise and support systems of the Frontier network.

### **Independent Audit and External Support**

An independent certified public accounting firm conducts the annual audit in compliance with P3510 (Annual Audit), providing assurance on financial statements, internal controls, and federal program compliance (Single Audit). The Board reviews and accepts the audit, which is submitted to state and federal authorities as required. While core financial management is handled internally, specialized functions such as annual audit preparation and, when needed, technical support for new reporting systems may be outsourced to external professionals.

### **Summary**

Through a combination of strong financial leadership by the COO and Director of Finance, robust systems and internal controls, transparent reporting dashboards, and independent audits, Frontier Schools ensures financial stability, integrity, and compliance. This established framework—already in place for Kansas City campuses—will seamlessly extend to Frontier Schools – Columbia, providing the Board and senior leadership with the tools and information needed to sustain operational and academic success.

- L.2** Attach as an appendix a completed Missouri Charter School 5-Year Budget Template, accessed at <http://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/qs-charter-app-budget-DESE.xls>. Also attach a

supplementary budget for the pre-operational start-up year. For both, make clear all major underlying budget assumptions; ensure both budgets address facilities expenses and all debt repayment as applicable. Additionally, discuss the necessity and likelihood of budgeted sources of revenue beyond state and federal funds tied to enrollment and Title programs (such as philanthropy, grants, etc.). Use the space below to provide any additional details/clarification as needed.

**L.3** Attach as an appendix a detailed staffing chart with budgeted salary and benefit amounts; this should clearly align with the 5-Year Budget also submitted. The staffing plan should include all administration, instructional staff (including aides and instructional support positions), and all other school personnel. Use the space below to provide any additional details/clarification as needed.

### **Detailed Staffing and Compensation Plan**

The submitted 5-Year Budget provides a comprehensive overview of projected staffing levels, salaries, and benefit costs for Columbia Elementary over the five-year budget period (FY 2026–27 through FY 2030–31). This staffing plan is designed to align precisely with the 5-Year Budget submitted and reflects the anticipated growth in enrollment and program expansion.

#### **Administrative and Instructional Staff**

The staffing projections in the “**Staffing**” tab detail all administrative and instructional personnel, including:

- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Secretary
- Teacher Aides / Instructional Support Staff
- IT Assistant

Each position includes budgeted salary amounts for each fiscal year from 2027–28 through 2031–32. Benefits are included where applicable within the total estimated costs, ensuring consistency with the assumptions used in the 5-Year Budget. The staffing model reflects a phased increase in instructional support positions aligned with enrollment growth, ensuring adequate student–teacher ratios and support for instructional quality.

#### **Transportation Staff**

The “**Transportation**” tab includes all transportation-related personnel and expenses. Salaries and benefits for transportation staff—including **Drivers, Bus Aides, and the Dispatcher**—are already calculated together and

presented as total annual costs. These totals also incorporate associated operational and maintenance expenses (e.g., fuel, bus rentals, and maintenance) to provide a complete financial picture of transportation services. Because transportation personnel costs are already aggregated with benefits, no additional benefit calculations were applied in this appendix.

### **Alignment with 5-Year Budget**

This staffing plan directly aligns with the 5-Year Budget projections for personnel costs and benefits. Each year's total compensation figures (from both the Staffing and Transportation sheets) correspond with the personnel expense categories in the submitted budget. The inclusion of transportation staff ensures a complete accounting of all school personnel across administrative, instructional, and operational functions.

### **Clarifications**

**Transportation staff benefits:** Already integrated into total salary figures; no further benefit adjustments made.

**Instructional growth:** Teacher aides and instructional support positions expand in correlation with projected enrollment increases.

**Administrative stability:** Core leadership (Principal and Assistant Principal) remains consistent throughout the projection, supporting continuity in school management.

- L.4** Describe how the 5-year budget aligns with and supports implementation of the educational, programming, and staffing plans addressed elsewhere in this application. Address *anticipated* financial challenges and potential means for addressing them.

### **Alignment of the 5-Year Budget with Educational, Programming, and Staffing Plans**

The Columbia Elementary 5-Year Budget has been strategically developed to ensure full alignment with the school's educational model, programming priorities, and staffing plan. Each component of the budget—revenues, instructional expenditures, staffing allocations, and operational supports—has been designed to sustain high-quality instruction while accommodating steady enrollment growth from 184 students in Year 1 (FY 2027–28) to 584 students in Year 5 (FY 2031–32).

### **Educational and Programming Alignment**

The budget directly supports the implementation of the school's academic and enrichment programs by providing sufficient resources for:

- **Classroom instruction and support:** Salaries for certified teachers, instructional aides, and technology staff grow proportionally with student enrollment to maintain appropriate class sizes and provide individualized support.
- **Curriculum and technology integration:** Allocations for instructional materials, IT support, and digital tools ensure that core academic programming is reinforced with strong technological infrastructure, aligning with the school's focus on digital literacy and STEM enrichment.
- **Student services:** Budgeted expenditures accommodate student support programs, including tutoring, enrichment, and intervention services, to meet diverse learner needs and promote equitable academic

outcomes.

The structured increase in personnel and operating costs across the five years demonstrates intentional planning for scaling programs as enrollment expands—ensuring that resources, staffing, and facilities grow cohesively.

### **Staffing Plan Integration**

The **Staffing** and **Transportation** projections provide a clear framework for personnel expansion over the 5-year horizon. The staffing plan covers:

- **Administrative leadership (Principal, Assistant Principal, Secretary)** to ensure stable governance and operational oversight.
- **Instructional and support staff (Teacher Aides, IT Assistant)** to uphold instructional quality and operational efficiency.
- **Transportation staff (Drivers, Bus Aides, Dispatcher)** whose salaries and benefits are fully integrated into transportation costs.

These positions align directly with the budget’s personnel expenditure lines and reflect both salary progression and benefit adjustments over time. This alignment guarantees that all staffing and compensation assumptions are embedded within the financial framework of the school’s operations.

### **Financial Sustainability and Anticipated Challenges**

The 5-Year Budget projects a responsible growth trajectory supported primarily by state and federal per-pupil revenues, which increase alongside enrollment. This growth ensures that fixed and variable costs are absorbed efficiently. However, several financial challenges are anticipated:

1. **Rising personnel costs:** As staffing expands and salary adjustments occur, personnel expenses will represent a larger portion of total expenditures.
  - *Mitigation:* Careful annual review of staffing ratios, coupled with maintaining conservative hiring practices tied to verified enrollment counts.
2. **Transportation and facility expenses:** With additional routes and facility needs expected in later years, costs will rise in maintenance, fuel, and equipment.
  - *Mitigation:* The school will explore cost-sharing agreements, fuel efficiency contracts, and phased facility improvements to reduce financial strain.
3. **Revenue variability:** Changes in state or federal funding formulas could affect per-pupil revenues.
  - *Mitigation:* Building a modest reserve fund during early operational years and diversifying grant and fundraising sources to cushion potential revenue fluctuations.

### **Long-Term Stability and Strategic Use of Funds**

The 5-Year Budget emphasizes **sustainability** through steady growth and balanced expenditures. By projecting conservative revenue estimates and scaling staff incrementally with enrollment, the plan safeguards financial health while prioritizing academic excellence. The inclusion of transportation, facilities, and support services ensures comprehensive coverage of all operational aspects required for long-term success.

Overall, the budget is both **mission-aligned and fiscally sound**, supporting the school’s educational goals while maintaining prudent financial management practices. It positions Columbia Elementary for sustainable growth, operational stability, and continuous improvement over its first five years of operation.

- L.5** Discuss the school’s contingency plans should the school experience major *unanticipated* enrollment or other financial challenges in these early years of operation. Address alternate budget scenarios, facility plans, and staffing plans – and how they would likely manifest in implementation of the educational program.

## Contingency Planning for Enrollment and Financial Challenges

Frontier Schools – Columbia will enter its early years of operation with the benefit of a strong **Central Office infrastructure** and proven systems from Frontier’s existing Kansas City campuses. Nonetheless, the Board recognizes that unanticipated enrollment fluctuations or financial challenges may arise. The following contingency measures are in place:

### 1. Alternate Budget Scenarios

- The Central Office, under the oversight of the **COO and Director of Finance**, prepares conservative baseline budgets and develops “low-enrollment” scenarios reflecting revenue shortfalls of 10–20%.
- In these scenarios, discretionary expenditures such as nonessential professional development, technology upgrades, or equipment purchases are delayed or reduced.
- Budget reserves and the district’s fund balance provide an additional safety net, ensuring that core instructional and compliance obligations are prioritized.

### 2. Facility Plans

- The Columbia campus facility plan includes staged build-out to accommodate growth. If enrollment falls short, sections of the facility can be scaled for smaller cohorts without compromising safety or program quality.
- Leasing and service contracts are negotiated with flexibility, allowing adjustments to space usage and operating costs.

### 3. Staffing Plans

- Staffing is based on projected student-teacher ratios, but initial hiring emphasizes core instructional staff (teachers, special education, ELL, and student services).
- If enrollment is lower than anticipated, elective courses and non-core enrichment programs may be delayed until sustainable student demand is present.
- Administrative and support positions are scalable; responsibilities may be temporarily consolidated or

shared across campuses until enrollment stabilizes.

#### 4. Educational Program Implementation

- Even under reduced enrollment or lean budgets, the core academic program (ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies, ELL, and Special Education) will remain intact.
- Frontier’s curriculum, assessment systems, and professional development infrastructure—already developed and managed at the Central Office level—allow the Columbia school to maintain instructional quality at lower cost per pupil.
- Partnerships with community organizations and Frontier’s College & Career Success and Real World Learning initiatives provide additional support for student enrichment, even when internal resources are constrained.

#### 5. Governance and Oversight

- The Board’s Finance Committee regularly reviews enrollment and financial reports, enabling early identification of risks and activation of contingency measures.
- The Board retains authority to enact mid-year budget adjustments, delay capital projects, or modify hiring plans as necessary.

#### Evaluation Criteria: *Satisfactory responses will...*

- evidence sound planning and expertise necessary for financial management and reporting (including, but not limited to annual and periodic state and federally-required reports such as the Annual Secretary of the Board Report/ASBR)
- ensure that federal grant and program funding will be managed in full compliance with the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Uniform Grant Guidance (UGG), and the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR).
- evidence accounting procedures consistent with the Missouri Financial Accounting Manual
- make clear all key budget assumptions
- present sound rationales and realistic revenue expectations for non-public funding
- present realistic, well-informed expenditure projections
- project an end-of-year fund balance that exceeds DESE minimums and protects the financial viability of the school
- evidence alignment between budget expenditures and the school’s educational, programming, and staffing plans
- demonstrate an understanding of likely budget challenges and plans for addressing them
- evidence realistic, adequate contingency planning

## M. Operations Management

- M.1** Build on your description in Section K of the chief administrative/operations officers (or equivalent) role to describe more broadly how the school's operations (outside of the financial operations addressed above) will be managed. Address procurement, data management, recruitment/marketing, development/fundraising, DESE reporting, administrative support, health/school nurse, social services, etc. Regarding personnel, address a) if and why you will contract with an external personnel service; b) any minimum personnel qualifications; and c) your professional development plans for personnel other than teachers.

Frontier Schools – Columbia will benefit from the established operational infrastructure of Frontier Schools in Kansas City, with oversight from the Chief Operating Officer (COO) and central office directors. The COO will ensure that all non-financial operational functions are aligned with instructional priorities, compliant with state and federal regulations, and supportive of student success.

### **Operational Capacity and Geographic Coordination**

Frontier Schools recognizes that operating a campus in Columbia while maintaining its central office in Kansas City requires intentional coordination to ensure consistent operational support, timely decision-making, and effective oversight during both the planning year and the early years of school operations.

To support this coordination, Frontier will implement structured communication and planning processes between the Columbia campus and the Central Office. Central Office leaders will conduct regular scheduled visits to the Columbia campus and hold ongoing coordination meetings with school leadership to support operational planning, compliance monitoring, and implementation of key systems. These visits and meetings will occur frequently during the planning year and the school's initial years of operation to ensure that operational systems, policies, and procedures are implemented effectively.

Frontier also recognizes that expanding to a new geographic region increases the operational responsibilities of the Central Office team. As the Columbia campus grows, Frontier will periodically review Central Office staffing capacity and operational workload and will expand staffing or adjust responsibilities as needed to ensure effective support. Operational areas such as finance, compliance, human resources, transportation coordination, and facilities oversight will continue to be supported through established systems while ensuring that the Columbia campus receives sufficient attention and resources.

Through this combination of strong on-site leadership, structured Central Office coordination, and scalable operational support, Frontier Schools will ensure that operational systems remain efficient, responsive, and aligned with the needs of the Columbia campus while supporting sustainable organizational growth.

### **Procurement**

Procurement will be coordinated centrally through the COO and Finance Department to ensure transparent, competitive purchasing and alignment with DESE requirements. Bulk purchasing agreements used in Kansas City will extend to Columbia, reducing costs for instructional materials, technology, food service, and facilities. All procurement follows board-approved policies and requires multiple bids for large purchases to ensure fiscal responsibility.

### **Data Management**

The Director of IT and the Registrar will maintain a secure student information system (SIS) that supports enrollment, attendance, academic records, and state reporting. Data governance protocols include regular audits, FERPA compliance, and cybersecurity safeguards. Instructional data management will be overseen by the

Chief Academic Officer and curriculum directors, ensuring assessment data flows into quarterly data meetings that inform instructional adjustments.

### **Recruitment and Marketing**

The Director of Communications and Outreach will lead marketing, public relations, and community engagement efforts. Recruitment strategies include open houses, school tours, informational sessions in underserved communities, and multilingual enrollment materials. Outreach will leverage social media, partnerships with local organizations, and home visits to strengthen trust with families.

### **Development and Fundraising**

Frontier Schools has a strong record of philanthropy, raising more than \$4 million since 2019. The Superintendent/CEO, COO, and Director of Communications will work together to pursue grants, foundation partnerships, and corporate sponsorships to support STEM initiatives, extracurricular programming, and student well-being. The Columbia campus will participate in this development strategy, ensuring additional resources beyond per-pupil revenue.

### **DESE Reporting**

The COO and Registrar will oversee compliance reporting to DESE, including enrollment, attendance, staffing, safety, and program accountability submissions. Reports will be generated from the SIS, reviewed by the COO, and approved by the Superintendent before submission. The Finance Department will separately manage fiscal reporting.

### **Administrative Support**

A school secretary and registrar will provide frontline support to families, staff, and administrators, including scheduling, records management, communications, and translation services. Central office staff, including HR, IT, and communications, will provide additional shared services to Columbia.

### **Health and School Nurse**

Student health services will be coordinated by the campus nurse under the supervision of the Director of Health, Safety, and Conduct. Protocols will align with Missouri health regulations, including immunizations, medication administration, screenings, and emergency care. The nurse will also participate in wellness initiatives and serve on the campus safety committee.

### **Social Services**

The Social Worker, reporting to the Assistant Principal for Safety and Conduct, will coordinate social-emotional support, counseling, crisis intervention, and family engagement. The Social Work Services Coordinator and McKinney-Vento/Foster Liaison at central office will provide compliance oversight and access to external partnerships for homeless and foster students.

## **Personnel**

### **a) External Personnel Services**

The school does not intend to contract with an external personnel service. All recruitment, hiring, onboarding, payroll, and certification verification will be managed internally through the Director of Human Resources and HR Manager. This ensures consistent alignment with Frontier's mission and values.

### **b) Minimum Personnel Qualifications**

- **Administrators:** Advanced degree preferred; demonstrated leadership experience in education.

- **Teachers:** Bachelor’s degree and Missouri teacher certification required; preference for candidates with STEM specialization, EL/SpEd certification, or experience in urban/diverse schools.
- **Support Staff:** Relevant experience and training; for example, registered nurses must hold Missouri licensure.
- **Social Worker:** Master’s in social work (MSW) with state licensure.

**c) Professional Development for Non-Teaching Personnel**

Frontier Schools extends professional development to all staff, not only teachers.

- **Administrators** receive leadership development, compliance training, and coaching on data-driven decision-making.
- **Nurses and social workers** participate in specialized training on trauma-informed practices, child health, suicide prevention, and crisis response.
- **Support staff** (secretaries, IT, HR, registrars) receive annual training in FERPA, HIPAA, customer service, technology systems, and cultural competence.
- **Transportation and maintenance staff** receive regular training on safety compliance, student supervision, and emergency protocols.

This professional learning ensures that all personnel contribute effectively to the school’s mission and that operations support a safe, inclusive, and high-performing learning environment.

**M.2** Will the proposed school provide daily transportation for students?

**Yes:** ✓

**No:**

If “No,” describe your rationale for not providing transportation. If “Yes,” describe your transportation plan, addressing geographic boundaries/limitations, etc. Address budgeted revenue and expenses, including those related to anticipated state aid per RSMo 163.161.

**M.3** Provide evidence of ability and preparation to obtain adequate property insurance, as well liability insurance to indemnify the school, its board, staff, and teachers against tort claims. Address any other anticipated insurance needs and plans for procurement (including budgeting for premiums, which should be reflected in the submitted budget).

The school has the capacity and preparation to secure comprehensive insurance coverage to protect its students, staff, leadership, and governing board. Property insurance will be obtained to cover the facility, equipment, and instructional materials against risks such as fire, theft, or natural disasters. Liability insurance will be secured to indemnify the school, its board, administrators, teachers, and staff against tort claims, ensuring protection from potential legal actions related to accidents or injuries.

Additional coverage needs are anticipated and will be addressed, including workers' compensation, errors and omissions insurance for board members, directors, and officers, and vehicle insurance for school-owned buses. The school will work with reputable carriers experienced in serving charter schools to procure appropriate coverage.

Premiums for these policies are included in the operational budget, ensuring that the school maintains adequate and continuous coverage. Insurance needs will be reviewed annually by the school's leadership in consultation with the board to confirm that coverage levels remain aligned with growth, enrollment, and facility changes. This proactive approach ensures compliance with state requirements and long-term risk management.

- M.4** Describe your food service plans, addressing compliance with state and federal guidelines. Address related budgetary impacts (revenues and expenses) and facilities needs. Demonstrate that the plans are well-grounded in an understanding of the target student population(s).

The school will provide a full food service program that complies with all state and federal requirements, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program. Menus will be designed to meet USDA nutritional standards, with accommodations for students with medical or religious dietary needs. Compliance will be ensured through regular staff training, documentation, and monitoring.

Food service will be operated on-site in a facility designed with an appropriately equipped kitchen and serving area. During the planning and buildout process, the school will ensure the facility meets all state health and safety codes, including refrigeration, storage, and preparation requirements.

Budget planning reflects both expenses and revenues related to food service. Costs for food, staffing, equipment, and compliance will be offset in part by federal reimbursements through the NSLP, as well as state and local support. Additional philanthropic contributions may be pursued to help subsidize meal programs if needed, ensuring no student goes without access to healthy meals.

Given the diverse student population anticipated in Columbia, the program will emphasize culturally responsive menu options, provide outreach to families in multiple languages regarding meal benefits, and ensure equitable access through free and reduced-price meal eligibility. These measures ensure that food service both meets regulatory standards and supports the nutritional and cultural needs of the school community.

**Evaluation Criteria: *Satisfactory responses will...***

- evidence sound administrative and operations planning addressing major operations management domains and challenges
- evidence a strong rationale for the decision to either provide or not provide transportation, including a realistic understanding of the financial implications of either.

- evidence a transportation plan (if required) that accounts well for student, family, and institutional needs
- evidence an understanding of the multiple forms of insurance needed, as well as the related costs.
- evidence a food service plan that complies with all state and federal guidelines
- evidence a food service plan that addresses the nutritional needs of the distinct target student population(s), and the role of the school food plan in students' holistic development

## N. Facilities

**N.1** Describe the school’s facility needs based on the educational program and anticipated enrollment for the next ten years. Provide, at a minimum, the number and size of the needed buildings, classrooms, common areas, dining/kitchen areas, administrative areas, recreational spaces, any community facilities, and any residential facilities. Describe how and when additional facilities will need to be acquired to meet growth plans.

Attach as an appendix a facility budget that addresses costs for acquisition, operation, maintenance, repairs/improvements, and insurance. These costs should be reflected in the 5-Year Budget submitted as part of Section L of this application.

The school’s facility plan is designed to support a rigorous STEM-focused educational program while accommodating phased enrollment growth over the next ten years.

### Initial Facility (Years 1–3)

The opening facility will house grades Pre-K through 2, with capacity for approximately 200–400 students. The building will include:

- **Classrooms:** 12–15 standard classrooms (approximately 600–900 sq. ft. each) designed for flexible seating, technology integration, and small-group instruction.
- **Common Areas:** A multipurpose room for assemblies and enrichment activities.
- **Dining/Kitchen:** A full-service kitchen and cafeteria sized to serve all students in staggered meal shifts, meeting federal food service requirements.
- **Administrative Areas:** Offices for the principal, assistant principals, registrar, social worker, nurse, and support staff, along with a secure main entry and reception area.
- **Recreational Space:** Age-appropriate indoor play space and an outdoor playground with secure fencing.

### Expansion Facility Needs (Years 4–10)

As enrollment grows with the addition of one grade per year through elementary and middle school levels, the facility plan will expand accordingly:

- **Classrooms:** An additional 20–25 classrooms to support grades 3–8, ensuring class sizes remain within state guidelines.
- **STEM and Specialty Labs:** Dedicated science labs, makerspaces, and technology labs to deepen alignment with the STEM instructional model.
- **Library/Media Center:** A centralized learning hub to support literacy, research, and digital learning.
- **Fine Arts and Electives:** Spaces for art, music, and extracurricular activities.
- **Expanded Cafeteria and Kitchen:** Increased dining capacity to accommodate a larger student body.
- **Recreational and Athletic Facilities:** A gymnasium for physical education, athletics, and community use;

outdoor fields and courts for recess and sports.

### **Community and Support Facilities**

Meeting rooms and multipurpose spaces will be available for parent workshops, family engagement events, and community partnerships. Dedicated areas for counseling and small-group interventions will ensure student support services are accessible.

### **Residential Facilities**

No residential facilities are planned.

### **Acquisition Timeline**

- **Years 1–3:** Secure an initial facility that meets the needs of early grade levels with space for immediate growth.
- **Years 4–6:** Acquire or expand into an additional building or wing to support upper elementary grades and specialty classrooms.
- **Years 7–10:** Secure further expansion or a second site to accommodate middle school grades, full gymnasium, and expanded STEM facilities.

This phased approach ensures that facilities remain aligned with enrollment growth, financial capacity, and the academic program, while providing safe, functional, and future-ready learning environments.

- N.2** If the applicants have identified a facility the school will occupy in the first years of operation, attach in an appendix the floor plans of the potential facility, the lease agreement, and any purchase options. In the space below identify/describe the facility and indicate to what extent it facility currently meets all requirements and/or the extent that the facility will require renovation or ‘build out’ (and at what projected cost).

If a facility has not been selected, specify below potential locations under consideration and discuss the process and timeline for selecting, acquiring, renovating (if applicable), and taking occupation of a suitable facility.

In either case, also explain how the school’s facility will meet the needs of students and how it will be accessible to students, faculty, staff, and visitors with disabilities.

### **Facility Identification and Planning**

At this time, Frontier Schools has not yet secured a facility for the proposed Columbia, Missouri charter school, which is planned to open in the 2027–2028 school year. The facility selection process is a priority milestone in the project plan, with the goal of identifying and finalizing a suitable building by fall 2026 to allow sufficient time for renovation, certification, and occupancy approvals. This timeline ensures that all safety, accessibility, and programmatic standards are fully met prior to the school’s opening.

Frontier Schools will coordinate with Columbia community partners throughout the 2025–2026 and 2026–2027 school years to ensure that facility development, staffing, and program readiness are aligned and support a

successful launch. In parallel, Frontier Schools will undertake a comprehensive feasibility study in partnership with third-party facility experts to evaluate multiple potential sites, including available commercial properties, repurposed educational facilities, and newly constructed spaces within Columbia’s growing residential areas. Selection criteria will prioritize safety and security, accessibility, alignment with the school’s STEM-focused instructional model, and capacity to support phased enrollment growth over time.

## Process and Timeline

- **March – April 2026:** Conduct a feasibility study and site assessments of potential locations in Columbia, Missouri.
- **By March 2026:** Anticipated DESE approval of the charter application; identify a preferred facility option that meets projected enrollment needs for the opening year (Pre-K–2) and advance negotiations and due diligence.
- **May – December 2026:** Finalize facility acquisition or lease and, if renovations or build-outs are required, complete architectural planning and initiate improvements to ensure compliance with safety codes, ADA accessibility, and the STEM program’s specialized space needs (e.g., science labs, makerspaces).
- **January – June 2027:** Complete renovations, install equipment and furnishings, and conduct all required inspections, certifications, and occupancy approvals.
- **August 2027:** Occupy the facility and welcome students for the **2027–2028 school year**.

Projected costs for renovations or build-out will depend on the selected site and scope of upgrades, but Frontier anticipates expenses will be incorporated into the **CSP grant budget, CSGF grant budget, philanthropic support, and local fundraising efforts**.

## Meeting the Needs of Students

The facility will be designed and/or renovated to ensure:

- **STEM-Ready Learning Spaces:** Classrooms will be configured for collaborative, hands-on learning, with flexible spaces to support Project Lead the Way (PLTW), STEMscopes, and makerspace activities.
- **Safety and Security:** Secure entrances, surveillance systems, and safe drop-off/pick-up procedures will be integrated.
- **Accessibility:** In compliance with the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**, all facilities will include accessible entrances, restrooms, classrooms, and common spaces for students, staff, faculty, and visitors with disabilities.
- **Future Scalability:** The facility will accommodate initial enrollment (Pre-K–2) with sufficient capacity and flexibility to expand one grade level per year in alignment with enrollment projections.

Through this structured selection process and planned improvements, Frontier Schools will ensure that the Columbia facility meets the academic, social, and developmental needs of students while providing a safe, inclusive, and accessible environment for all.

**N.3** Detail how the school plans to fund its facilities. If the school is budgeting debt as part of its facilities acquisition plan, describe the repayment plan and ensure it is reflected in the 5-Year Budget submitted as part of Section L of this application.

The school does not plan to incur any debt for the acquisition, construction, or renovation of its facilities. All facility-related expenses will be funded through a combination of existing reserves, operational revenue, and philanthropic contributions. Specifically, the school anticipates covering facility costs through its annual budget allocations and capital fundraising efforts, ensuring all expenditures are sustainable within projected revenues.

Because no debt financing is anticipated, there is no repayment plan included, and this is accurately reflected in the 5-Year Budget submitted as part of Section L of this application.

**Evaluation Criteria: *Satisfactory responses will...***

- include all requested documents/appendices
- reflect a sound understanding of facility needs
- demonstrate adequate knowledge of facilities costs, including purchasing, leasing, building, renovating, and maintenance
- demonstrate knowledge of requirements of occupancy (health, safety, etc.)
- evidence that any proposed facilities adequately meet school needs (location, building type, accessibility, etc.)
- evidence that the funding plan and repayment budgets for any facilities are feasible in the context of the overall school budget
- evidence a feasible plan for purchasing/leasing facilities

## O. Stakeholder Engagement

- O.1** Describe the roles that parents and other family/guardian stakeholders will play in school governance, operations, and in supporting the school’s programming and policies. Share your rationale for the planned involvement. Address parent organizations or other ways you will encourage or require school parents/families/guardians to be engaged. Discuss your grievance procedure for parents/guardians. Attach as appendices any completed or draft Parent Handbook or related policies.

### Family and Guardian Roles in Governance, Operations, and School Programming

Frontier Schools views parents, families, and guardians as essential partners in student success and school improvement. The proposed Columbia charter school is intentionally designed to foster meaningful, sustained family engagement across governance, daily operations, and academic programming, recognizing that strong home–school partnerships are especially critical during the early childhood and elementary years.

#### Roles in School Governance

While the Board of Directors retains formal governance authority, families will play an important advisory role through structured and ongoing engagement opportunities. Parents and guardians will be invited to participate in:

- **Family advisory groups and listening sessions** designed to gather input on school climate, instructional priorities, and family engagement strategies;
- **Annual and mid-year surveys** that solicit feedback on academic programming, school culture, communication, and student supports; and
- **Community forums and open meetings** that allow families to engage directly with school leadership and understand board-level decision-making.

Feedback collected through these mechanisms will be reviewed by school leadership and shared with the Board of Directors as part of continuous improvement planning. Board meetings will be open to the public in accordance with Missouri Sunshine Law, providing families with transparency into governance decisions and opportunities for public comment.

#### Roles in School Operations

Families will be actively involved in the daily life of the school through volunteerism, participation in school events, and collaboration with staff. Parents and guardians will be encouraged to:

- Volunteer in classrooms, STEM labs, and makerspaces;
- Support school-wide events such as family engagement nights, literacy and STEM showcases, and cultural celebrations; and
- Assist with extracurricular activities, field trips, and enrichment opportunities.

Consistent with Frontier Schools’ proven practices, the Columbia school will implement a **home visit program** in which teachers and staff conduct voluntary, relationship-building visits with families. This approach has been

successful across existing Frontier campuses in strengthening trust, improving communication, and supporting student attendance and engagement. The program will be adapted to reflect the needs and preferences of the Columbia community.

### **Parent Organizations and Family Engagement Structures**

The school will establish a Parent–Family Organization (PFO) or similar family leadership group within the first year of operation. This organization will provide parents and guardians with opportunities to collaborate with school leadership, support school initiatives, and build community among families. The PFO may assist with organizing events, fundraising for enrichment activities, and serving as a liaison between families and school staff.

In addition, families will be invited to serve on ad hoc committees related to school climate, family engagement, and program development, ensuring diverse voices are included in school planning and improvement efforts.

### **Supporting School Programming and Policies**

Families will play a critical role in supporting instructional programming and reinforcing learning at home. The school will offer:

- **Parent education workshops** focused on early literacy, numeracy, STEM learning, and social-emotional development;
- **Curriculum nights and family learning events** that help parents understand instructional approaches and grade-level expectations; and
- Resources and guidance to support consistent routines, attendance, and positive behavior at home.

The school will also prioritize **culturally responsive family engagement**, hosting multicultural events, career days, and community-building activities that celebrate the diverse backgrounds of students and families and strengthen school–community connections.

### **Communication and Ongoing Engagement**

The school will maintain multiple, accessible communication channels to ensure families remain informed and engaged. These will include newsletters, digital communication platforms, social media, school-wide events, and regular opportunities for two-way communication with teachers and administrators. Multilingual communication and interpretation services will be provided as needed to ensure equitable access for all families.

### **Grievance Procedure for Parents and Guardians**

Frontier Schools maintains a clear, transparent, and equitable grievance process for parents and guardians, which will be outlined in the **Parent Handbook** (attached as an appendix). The process includes the following steps:

1. **Teacher or Staff Level:** Parents first address concerns with the teacher or staff member most directly involved.
2. **School Administration:** If unresolved, concerns may be escalated to the Assistant Principal or Principal.
3. **District Leadership:** Parents may appeal unresolved concerns to the Superintendent.

4. **Board of Directors:** As a final step, parents may submit a written grievance to the Board of Directors for review and response in accordance with board policy and Missouri charter school law.

Clear timelines for response and resolution will be communicated at each stage to ensure accountability, consistency, and timely resolution of concerns.

Research consistently demonstrates that strong family engagement is associated with improved student achievement, attendance, behavior, and school satisfaction. Frontier Schools' approach is grounded in both evidence-based practices and successful implementation across existing campuses, where structured family engagement, home visits, and transparent communication have resulted in high levels of family trust and satisfaction.

By embedding family engagement into governance structures, daily operations, and academic programming, the proposed Columbia charter school is intentionally designed to create a welcoming, collaborative school culture that supports students' academic success and long-term development.

- O.2** Describe the roles that the school's faculty and staff will play in school governance and decision-making. Address organizations and/or structures via which faculty and staff will have a voice in decisions that directly impact their work (and clarify the nature of that "voice": advisory/input, binding votes, etc.). Explain how grievances from faculty and staff will be solicited, addressed, and adjudicated. Attach as appendices any completed or draft Faculty/Staff Handbook or related policies.

### **Faculty and Staff Roles in Governance and Decision-Making**

Frontier Schools recognizes faculty and staff as essential contributors to school quality, culture, and continuous improvement. The proposed Columbia charter school is intentionally structured to ensure that educators and staff have meaningful, consistent, and structured opportunities to inform decisions that directly affect their work, while preserving clear lines of authority and accountability consistent with best practices in charter governance.

---

### **Role of Faculty and Staff in School Governance**

Faculty and staff participate in school governance primarily through **advisory and consultative roles**, providing professional expertise and frontline perspectives that inform leadership and board-level decisions. While formal decision-making authority rests with school administration and the Board of Directors, staff input is intentionally embedded into planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.

Faculty and staff will contribute to governance by:

- Providing input on academic policies, instructional frameworks, scheduling, assessment practices, and student support systems;
- Participating in school improvement planning and program evaluation; and
- Offering feedback on operational policies that affect classroom instruction, student services, and working conditions.

Staff input is advisory rather than binding; however, recommendations are formally reviewed by school leadership and, when appropriate, elevated to district leadership or the Board of Directors for consideration.

### **Instructional Leadership and Academic Decision-Making**

Teachers play a central role in shaping instructional decisions through structured instructional leadership roles. Lead teachers, instructional coaches, and grade-level or content-area teams will:

- Collaborate with administrators to analyze student performance data;
- Review curriculum effectiveness and alignment to state standards;
- Recommend instructional strategies, interventions, and professional development priorities; and
- Support implementation of school-wide instructional initiatives.

This collaborative model ensures that instructional decisions are grounded in classroom practice, data analysis, and professional expertise, particularly during the critical early-childhood and elementary years.

### **Operational and Student Support Input**

Non-instructional staff—including counselors, special education staff, nurses, paraprofessionals, and operations personnel—will have structured opportunities to provide input on policies and procedures that impact:

- Student safety, health, and well-being;
- School climate and culture;
- Family engagement practices; and
- Daily operational efficiency.

Staff perspectives will be solicited through meetings, surveys, and targeted working groups to ensure that operational decisions are informed by those responsible for implementation.

### **Structures for Faculty and Staff Voice**

Faculty and staff voice will be supported through multiple formal structures, including:

#### **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)**

Teachers and instructional staff will participate in regular PLC meetings focused on student learning outcomes, instructional improvement, and collaboration. PLC recommendations related to curriculum, assessment, and instructional practice will be documented and shared with school leadership as part of continuous improvement processes.

#### **Faculty and Staff Meetings**

Regularly scheduled school-wide meetings will provide a forum for staff to:

- Receive updates on policies and initiatives;
- Raise concerns or propose improvements; and
- Engage in dialogue with school leadership.

### **Surveys, Focus Groups, and Open Forums**

Staff input will also be collected through anonymous surveys, focus groups, and open forums to ensure that all employees—regardless of role—have opportunities to share perspectives and feedback.

### **Nature of Faculty and Staff “Voice”**

The nature of faculty and staff voice is advisory and consultative, not binding. Staff do not vote on governance decisions or personnel actions; however, leadership is expected to:

- Consider staff input in good faith;
- Communicate how feedback influenced decisions; and
- Provide rationale when recommendations cannot be implemented.

This approach balances inclusive decision-making with clear accountability and operational coherence.

### **Faculty and Staff Grievance Procedures**

Frontier Schools maintains a clear, multi-step grievance procedure for faculty and staff, outlined in the Faculty/Staff Handbook (attached as an appendix). The process is designed to ensure concerns are addressed promptly, confidentially, and fairly.

1. **Immediate Supervisor:** Staff members are encouraged to first address concerns with their direct supervisor (e.g., Assistant Principal or Principal).
2. **District Administration:** If unresolved, concerns may be escalated to district-level leadership, including the Superintendent or designee.
3. **Board of Directors:** As a final step, staff may submit a formal written grievance to the Board of Directors, which will review the matter in accordance with board policy, employment law, and charter requirements.

Grievances will be acknowledged within established timelines, investigated as appropriate, and resolved with clear communication regarding outcomes or corrective actions. Retaliation for filing a grievance is strictly prohibited.

The founding team demonstrates a clear understanding of key community engagement considerations in Columbia, including a highly mobile population influenced by higher education and healthcare employment, varying levels of familiarity with charter schools, and a growing number of culturally and linguistically diverse families. These factors underscore the importance of early relationship-building, transparent communication,

and trust development—particularly for families navigating school choice for the first time. The school’s emphasis on home visits, multilingual communication, accessible grievance processes, and consistent two-way engagement is intentionally designed to address these community-specific needs.

Engaging faculty and staff in governance and decision-making strengthens instructional quality, organizational effectiveness, and staff retention. Frontier Schools’ model reflects research and proven practice demonstrating that schools are most effective when educators have structured opportunities to influence decisions while maintaining clear leadership authority.

By embedding staff voice through advisory structures, collaborative leadership models, and transparent grievance procedures, the proposed Columbia charter school is designed to foster a professional culture grounded in trust, collaboration, and shared accountability for student success.

- O.3** Address your plans for community involvement in the school (during the pre-opening period and after opening). What roles are you planning for community partners, and why? If there are specific partners you are already working with or plan to, identify them and the nature of the partnerships.

### **Community Involvement and Partnerships**

Frontier Schools is committed to building deep, authentic, and sustained relationships with the Columbia community beginning well before the school opens and continuing throughout the life of the school. Community engagement is intentionally embedded into both the pre-opening planning phase and ongoing operations, recognizing that early trust-building, local collaboration, and shared ownership are essential—particularly in a community that has not previously hosted a Frontier charter school.

#### **Pre-Opening Community Engagement (Beginning Spring 2026)**

Pre-opening community engagement will begin in spring 2026, immediately following anticipated DESE approval, and will intensify throughout the planning year leading up to the 2027–2028 opening. Early engagement is a priority given the current educational climate and the importance of transparency, responsiveness, and trust-building in introducing a new public school option.

During the pre-opening period, Frontier Schools will:

- **Conduct community listening sessions and forums** across multiple neighborhoods to introduce the school concept, gather feedback, and understand family priorities related to early childhood education, STEM programming, and school culture.
- **Engage local stakeholders early**, including neighborhood associations, early childhood providers, faith-based organizations, and family-serving nonprofits, to ensure the school’s design reflects Columbia’s specific needs and values.
- **Partner with local early learning and childcare providers** to build referral pathways and ensure continuity for families transitioning from Pre-K programs into elementary grades.
- **Launch targeted outreach and information campaigns**, including multilingual materials, social media engagement, and participation in community events, to ensure families understand the charter model, enrollment process, and school mission.
- **Host enrollment and information sessions** that emphasize accessibility, equity, and the school’s

STEM-focused instructional approach.

These efforts are designed not only to inform families but also to build relationships and demonstrate responsiveness to community input prior to opening.

### **Community Engagement After Opening**

Once operational, Frontier STEM Academy will sustain and deepen community involvement through intentional partnerships and ongoing engagement strategies, ensuring the school remains connected to the evolving needs of students and families.

Post-opening community engagement will include:

- **Family and community events**, such as multicultural celebrations, STEM showcases, literacy nights, and career exploration events, that bring families and community members into the school as active participants.
- **Volunteer and mentorship opportunities** for community members, professionals, and university students to support classrooms, enrichment programs, and student learning.
- **STEM enrichment partnerships** that provide hands-on learning experiences, guest speakers, project-based learning opportunities, and exposure to real-world applications of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.
- **Consistent two-way communication**, including newsletters, digital platforms, and in-person meetings, to ensure transparency and ongoing dialogue with families and community stakeholders.

### **Community Partners and Planned Roles**

Frontier Schools recognizes that strong local partnerships are essential to strengthening the school's academic program and support systems. Building on Frontier's established partnership model, the Columbia school will prioritize **locally rooted collaborations**, including:

- **University of Missouri (MU):** As a major local institution, MU is a key potential partner for tutoring programs, STEM enrichment, teacher preparation pipelines, research-based instructional practices, and family education workshops.
- **Local STEM and workforce organizations:** Partnerships with Columbia-area businesses, healthcare providers, and technology organizations will support career awareness, mentorship, and applied STEM learning.
- **Early childhood and family-serving nonprofits:** Collaboration with organizations focused on early learning, housing stability, and family support will strengthen wraparound services and smooth transitions for young learners.
- **Civic and cultural organizations:** Engagement with local arts, cultural, and civic groups will enrich the curriculum, support culturally responsive practices, and strengthen students' connection to the Columbia community.
- **Local government and community leaders:** Ongoing collaboration will ensure alignment with citywide

priorities and provide students with opportunities to engage in civic learning and service.

Frontier Schools' prior experience with partners such as **Bayer and university-based STEM initiatives** demonstrates its capacity to manage high-quality partnerships; however, the Columbia school's approach emphasizes locally specific, place-based partnerships tailored to the community's assets and needs.

The founding team demonstrates a clear understanding of Columbia's community context, including a growing and mobile population, the influence of higher education and healthcare employment, and a diverse mix of long-term residents and families new to the area. These dynamics make early, proactive engagement especially important to building trust and ensuring families feel informed and welcomed.

By beginning community engagement well before opening, prioritizing local partnerships, and sustaining meaningful collaboration after opening, Frontier STEM Academy is designed to become a trusted, contributing member of the Columbia community. These sound, phased community engagement plans strengthen the school's design, support student success, and ensure that the school evolves in partnership with the community it serves.

### **MSIP 6 Climate and Stakeholder Survey Compliance**

Frontier STEM Academy – Columbia will fully participate in all Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP 6) required surveys, including student, parent, and staff climate and perception surveys, as defined by DESE. The school acknowledges that MSIP 6 includes survey-based indicators contributing to Annual Performance Report (APR) scoring and continuous improvement metrics.

Accordingly:

- The school will ensure required survey administration windows are met.
- Participation rates will be actively monitored to meet state accountability expectations.
- Survey data will be reviewed by the Campus Leadership Team and Executive Committee.
- Results will be presented to the Board of Directors.
- Findings will be incorporated into the school's Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP).

Survey data will not be treated as compliance-only artifacts; rather, they will serve as actionable inputs for improving school climate, instructional quality, stakeholder trust, and overall organizational performance.

### **Evaluation Criteria: *Satisfactory responses will...***

- demonstrate a rationale for parent/family/guardian involvement well-aligned with school plans for involvement.
- demonstrate an approach to faculty and staff involvement in governance and decision-making that appropriately balances employee agency and job responsibilities across populations/org levels.
- demonstrate the founders' understanding of key community engagement issues
- demonstrate sound plans for community engagement that will strengthen the school in both the pre-opening and operational periods.

## P. Pre-Opening Requirements

**P.1** Indicate below your assurance that, if your application is approved, you will comply with all of the following pre-opening requirements prior to the school's opening and per a schedule determined by SLU:

Yes: ✓

### Pre-Opening Requirements:

- a. Provide proof of liability insurance for Board of Directors. **Note: Added**
- b. Provide evidence (i.e. signed lease agreement) that a suitable facility has been secured. **Note: NA**
- c. Submit approved Board Policy Manual, including Financial Accounting Practices. **Note: Link provided in document titled Policies.**
- d. Submit a copy of personnel policies. **Note: Link provided in document titled Policies.**
- e. Submit a copy of student policies. **Note: Link provided in document titled Policies.**
- f. Provide information concerning your Student Information System. **Note: Added**
- g. Provide proof of registration with the Public School Retirement System. **Note: Added**
- h. Assure that the school has gained access to DESE's web portal. **Note: Added**
- i. Assure that the school is registered for access to the Missouri Student Information System (MOSIS). **Note: Added**
- j. Submit a Certificate of Occupancy for the school facility. **Note: NA**
- k. Submit evidence of facility fire/safety inspections. **Note: NA**
- l. Submit a copy of the Safety and Emergency Plan. **Note: Added**
- m. Submit a copy of the Student/Family Handbook, including the Code of Conduct/Discipline Policies. **Note: Added**
- n. Submit a copy of the Staff Handbook, including personnel policies, benefits, and evaluation process. **Note: Added**
- o. Submit a copy of the Lau Plan (for the education of ELL students). **Note: Added**
- p. Provide information concerning contracts for bus transportation, food service, custodial, and all other contracted services. Include assurances for personnel compliance, qualifications, and fingerprint/background checks. **N/A**
- q. Provide proof of adequate surety bond/insurance. **Note: Added**
- r. Submit a copy of the Special Education Compliance Plan. **Note: Added**
- s. Provide evidence that the Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) Enrollment Forms have been submitted to DESE. **N/A**
- t. Provide evidence that the necessary state documents to generate payment have been submitted. (Vendor Input Form) **N/A**
- u. Submit a copy of the Title I Plan. **Note: Added**