

Colorado's Unified Improvement Plan for Schools

Mountain Song Community School UIP 2022-23 | **School:** Mountain Song Community School | **District:** Charter School Institute | **Org ID:** 8001 | **School ID:** 5851 | **Framework:** Improvement Plan: Low Participation | **Draft UIP**

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Executive Summary



Priority Performance Challenges

- *Continued high need for behavioral, social, and emotional supports*



Root Cause

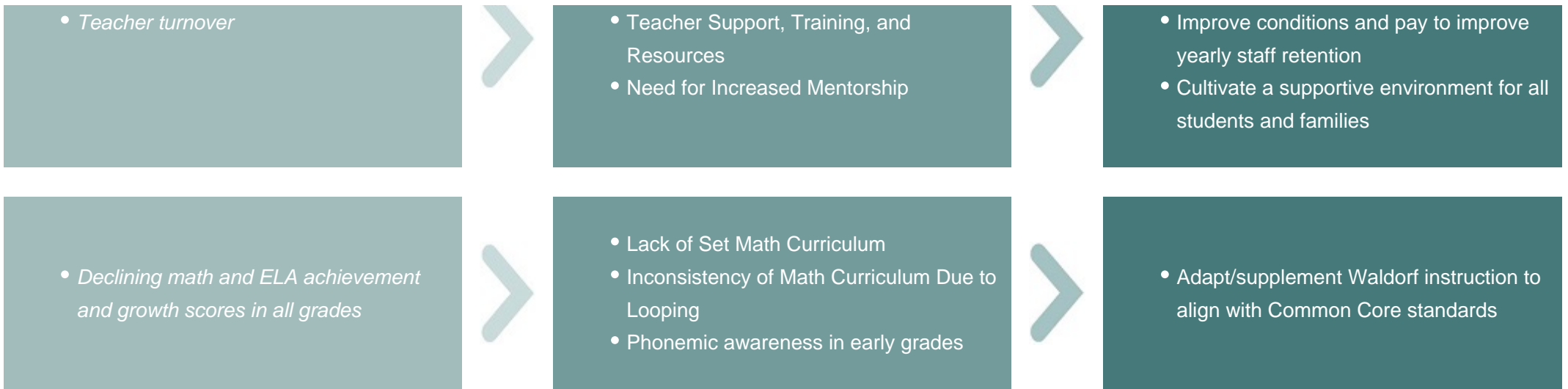
- Teacher Support, Training, and Resources
- Capacity to Address Behavioral, Discipline, and Emotional Needs

- Inadequate Compensation for Teacher Pay



Major Improvement Strategies

- Cultivate a supportive environment for all students and families



Access the School Performance Framework here: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview/performance>

Improvement Plan Information

Additional Information about the school

Mountain Song Community School (MSCS), located in Colorado Springs, CO, is a Waldorf-inspired, charter school authorized by the Colorado Charter School Institute. The mission of MSCS, a member of the Alliance for Waldorf Public Education, is to develop healthy, confident, free-thinking, self-directed children who are passionately engaged with their education and empowered to contribute positively to the world. To achieve this goal, MSCS utilizes Waldorf educational methods and philosophy integrated with Colorado Academic Standards, and evidence-based curriculum.

We are entering our tenth year of operation, serving approximately 400 students in grades K-8, including two Waldorf-inspired homeschool enrichment programs and another non-Waldorf homeschool program in Southern Colorado. According to last year's October Count data, our school's population includes about 32% of students eligible for free/reduced lunch (FRL) and is predominantly White with approximately 62% of students identifying as White or Caucasian, 26% identifying as Hispanic or Latino, and 8% identifying as two or more races. The remaining 4% identify as Asian, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Approximately 13% of the overall student population have disabilities and are on an Individualized Education Plan or a 504 plan. However, we anticipate the number of students needing Special Education Services to go up this year, as we are still undergoing evaluations for a number of students.

Homeschool Enrichment Programs:

Since its beginning, Mountain Song has supported homeschool students with their educational services through a Waldorf-based homeschool enrichment program. In response to the pandemic, we expanded our homeschool enrichment program to include an online program we're calling the Frontier Homeschool Enrichment Program, to support students who are not ready to return to an in-person educational setting. Similar to our in-person program, the students attend their classes online with a teacher who provides synchronous and asynchronous Waldorf enrichment activities and lessons to the students.

Justice and Heritage Academy: In September 2019, Mountain Song entered an agreement with Conejos Clean Water, a non-profit operating out of Antonito, CO to provide educational services to homeschool students in the San Luis Valley. The mission of Conejos Clean Water is to build public awareness and encourage advocacy and education around environmental, social, economic, and food justice issues in the Conejos Land Grant Region. The Justice and Heritage Academy, a program under Conejos Clean Water and with the institutional oversight of Mountain Song, provides justice-oriented (social justice, food justice, environmental justice, economic justice, and educational justice) educational services to a homeschool consortium of 20 students bringing the number of students receiving educational services through Mountain Song to 402.

Program Changes:

At the time that we last provided the state with our Unified Improvement Plan (2020), Mountain Song entered a partnership with Prenda Micro Schools, which is based in Arizona, to support students in the Pikes Peak region who wanted to attend in-person instruction in smaller "pods" or micro schools. This was a unique opportunity that we thought may support families who wanted to enroll their children in a smaller learning environment during this health crisis and we supported 19 students in that program. However, like a canary in the coal mine, we were testing the viability and sustainability of supporting such a program within the auspices of our school. We determined during this period of trial and error that the benefits of adding the additional 19 students did not cover the costs of the professional hours our staff had to provide in order to support another program, especially one that was so experimental and new to the State of Colorado. Therefore, we terminated our partnership with Prenda in SY21/22.

Improvement Status:

This year ushers in a sense of urgency for our school, as we received our first Improvement Rating from the state since our beginning. In its first year, MSCS was given the accreditation rating of Turnaround due to the lower than acceptable performance in Academic Growth and Academic Growth Gap measures based on that year's TCAP scores. The school improved its status in SY15-16 to Performance with Distinction and maintained its Performance rating until this last spring. Although we saw declining scores before the pandemic, we've never seen such low scores since this last spring. According to the Spring 2022 CMAS data, our elementary school students received abysmal reading and math scores with all students meeting the 15 percentile in reading and meeting the 1 percentile in math. Middle school students scored slightly better, but only received 48 percentile in reading and 6 percentile in math. These data indicate that much intervention is needed to change the tide of our student achievement and growth scores in order for

us to achieve a Performance rating again. The reasons for these low scores are multi-faceted and so will be the solutions. Changes to instruction and curriculum are among the first and more immediate solutions, but cannot be implemented in a vacuum. Unless some underlying issues with behavior, classroom management, teacher and staff turnover, and culture are resolved, the academics will continue to suffer.

Governance Changes:

After experiencing administrative turnover in the school's first five years, which led to instability and subsequent faculty turnover, MSCS changed its leadership model to a three-fold governance model in SY17-18. The new governance model provided stability by having three directors (the Executive Leadership Team) sharing the administrative decision making of the school, but it also presented some confusion and expense with having three employees reporting to the Board of Directors as opposed to one. In SY21/22, the MSCS Board of Directors reversed its previous decision to have a three-fold governance model and returned to the model of having one Executive Director being the exclusive employee of the Board. Dr. Teresa Woods, was hired in SY18-19 and served as Principal and a member of the Executive Leadership Team and is now the Executive Director. Sarah Kreger is still the Director of School Performance and still works closely with Dr. Woods to make decisions for the administrative functions of the school. Dan Kurchner, the former Director of Operations, left in summer 2021 and was replaced by Kim Butler. Ms. Butler has transitioned to the role of School Counselor and a new Business Manager has been hired to handle the budget, financials, accounting, building management, and human resource duties as assigned. This year, we are working with a consultant firm, Tatonka Education Services, to help alleviate the human resource burdens and tasks previously supported by the Director of Operations position. A new Pedagogical Director, Karl Johnson, has been hired to mentor and support teachers in implementing quality Waldorf-inspired instruction.

Building Purchase:

Despite our academic and behavior challenges we're currently facing, this is an exciting year for Mountain Song, as we finally purchased our permanent home! Since our beginning, we have been working to find a permanent location for our school and were actively looking at other locations in our area that could support our school and future growth. Last year, we were under contract for another building north of the school, which had some great amenities, but ultimately did not suit our needs and was financially unviable for the school. Fortunately, the Colorado Springs School District 11 who owned our facility that we've been operating at since 2013, agreed for us to purchase our building after years of being told that they wanted the building for other purposes. We closed on our historic school building in April 2022 and have been working closely with architects and our community stakeholders to improve our garden and outside spaces and have plans to renovate the building to accommodate more safety improvements and expansion in the future. Over the next several years, we plan on having a beautiful and safe play area and garden outside of the building and facility improvements that will better support our students' learning and safety.

Although we're excited for our school, the management and oversight of the purchase, financing, and the improvements to the building are taking an enormous amount of administration work, time, and attention. Being a small school with limited staff, we find this to be additionally challenging when we are faced with the whiplash effects of the pandemic, constant fundraising and grant writing, increased mental health and behavioral needs of our students, and continuous staffing shortages of educators. We anxiously

await the day that things will resume more normal school activities and rhythms, so we can focus all our attention on what's best for our students.

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Narrative on Data Analysis and Root Cause Identification

Description of School Setting and Process for Data Analysis

Like many schools around the globe, Mountain Song has endured a great many upsetting circumstances over the past several years that have greatly impacted our school culture, quality of instruction, teacher retention, student enrollment, and academic achievement and growth. Coming out of the shadow of hopefully the worst days of the pandemic, we are trying to assess the full scale of the impacts of the pandemic and subsequent stressors, a difficult task when still performing under continuous fluidity and uncertainty. Although many issues facing our school are may be a result of external pressures or conditions (i.e., covid measures or economic conditions) and therefore not within our ability to fully control, we have challenges and concerns that are unique and specific to Mountain Song that we must fully recognize, understand, and learn from.

The pandemic was revelatory in showing us weaknesses in our literacy and math instruction. It also highlighted areas for improving our responses and methods of handling discipline and behavioral needs along with staff, student, and parent engagement, communication, and culture. In the background of all our academic and school culture

improvement considerations, exists the reality of a heavy mental health strain affecting many of our staff, students, and community members, caused by a myriad of life stressors. The tasks of handling crisis situations, safety assessments, and behavior management continues to play an increasing amount of staff members' time and attention, which consequently takes away time from focusing on instruction.

To help us in our school improvement efforts, we looked at the four domains for rapid school improvement framework system developed by the Center on School Turnaround at WestEd (CST) that describe leadership, talent development, instructional transformation, and culture. We also looked at "Identifying Indicators of Distress in Charter Schools" by the National Charter School Resource Center as a resource for us in reviewing our areas of needed improvement. Although we are in the initial stages of thoroughly analyzing these domains at Mountain Song, we have enough evidence to indicate that we need to initiate efforts to improve our school in the areas of talent development and retention, instruction, and culture. We're using these resources as guideposts and are focusing our strategies around these key areas in our improvement efforts this year and into the future. We hope our early intervention in these areas will stem long-term negative effects on the school.

Talent Development and Retention:

Like many schools throughout the nation, we experienced high turnover of staff, paras, and teachers in SY20-21, which placed great strains on our administration and remaining staff who had to perform additional work to make up for the loss in personnel. Additionally, quarantines and illnesses related to covid-19 caused a lot of our students and staff members to miss work. Because we had so many staff members out of the building at times during the past year, we ended up having to shut down school and our students missed 5 school days of instruction. Our middle school students were able to connect remotely with their teacher during this time, but the quality of online instruction is insufficient in keeping them engaged in their learning, as we've discovered these past few years.

Anytime we lose a classroom teacher, we suffer enrollment losses in that class, since the students develop such strong relationships with their teachers. This was especially true in the middle school classes, which are very low in number compared to previous years. We usually see attrition in the older grades, as many students seek traditional public middle schools for sports or other amenities that we do not provide. However, the lower enrollment in our 7th and 8th grade classes is largely because of teacher turnover and instability in those classes.

In interviewing faculty members, reasons for teachers leaving our school revolve mostly around adequate pay. Although our base salary pay is comparable to many charter schools in the state, we are unable to pay teachers the same competitive rates that school districts in the area can. However, our Board of Directors approved us to pay our staff a bonus at the end of SY21-22. We also secured an Educator Workforce grant through the Colorado Department of Education to provide additional bonuses for our teachers and non-administration staff who continued with us this current school year. The Educator Workforce grant will allow us to focus on three main initiatives to strengthen our recruitment and retention of high-quality educators who can provide the consistency of relationships, academic instruction and interventions, and mental health and SEL support for our students, all of whom have been impacted by the pandemic. 1) Salary bonuses to incentivize staff retention; 2) Increase substitute pay and support; 3) Invest in wrap-around supports for teachers and staff.

Culture:

We pride ourselves for being inclusive, community driven, and for providing a safe and healing environment for our students. That said, the recent instability caused by the pandemic and its subsequent effects on mental health and academic learning costs of isolation and remote learning, have impacted our usually cohesive school culture and environment. Our students, especially younger students, are still adjusting to a full-time, in-person school environment while processing social and emotional strains that the past few years have caused. Many of our families suffered and continue to suffer financial losses, health crises, domestic disputes and divorce, substance abuse, and mental health crises, and some of our students are feeling the effects of these stresses acutely.

Our Care Team, consisting of our Dean of Students, Social Worker, and School Counselor along with a team of paraprofessionals and special education staff, are working hard at supporting our students, some of whom are highly emotionally dysregulated, suicidal or have thoughts of suicide, anxious, socially behind, or simply overwhelmed. Some of our students are also facing food insecurity or homelessness, so focusing on academic learning is difficult for many of our students facing such circumstances. Until the foundation of emotional and social skills are in place for most students, the academic learning will leak out like a sieve. Much of our focus, even pre-pandemic, has been on developing these skills, especially in the early years, as that is usually the focus in Waldorf schools in the early grades. However, we saw increasing behavioral and mental health needs before the pandemic and have been working on building more capacity to support our students in these areas and to create a more consistent approach to discipline. Our Care Team has expanded to create that capacity for support and is building on previous SEL work to create a three-tiered social and emotional learning model with universal classroom instruction, small group services, and individual support for our students. They will also be working to identify and implement a bullying prevention program, as we've received parent feedback to suggest that bullying is an issue in our school.

In addition to the effects the pandemic had on our students, we've also realized that the sense of community in our community school had waned with the loss of in-person festivals, public meetings, parent engagement and learning opportunities. Although much of community discontentment last year related to the pandemic or the schools' response to it, our lower ratings from parents on our climate survey last spring indicated that there is work that the school, administration, and teachers need to do to help create a safe and inclusive environment for all students and families. We will be working on more parent information and enrichment opportunities and develop a more structured and supportive Parent Circle, replacing the Parent Council that existed before. Now that we're back in the normal school rhythm with in-person learning, festivals, assemblies, field trips, volunteer opportunities, and plays, we feel that our community will start to feel whole again this year and into the future.

Instruction:

In previous years, we looked at our declining math scores and determined that a dedicated math instructor would help to ensure fidelity and consistency in math instruction. Because our teachers "loop" with their classes for multiple years, potentially all the way from 1st grade to 8th grade, we realized that the stronger the teacher was in teaching math, the higher the math scores and the pattern was true for teachers with weaker math instruction resulting in lower student math scores. Therefore, we hired a math teacher to help teach math to grades 5-8 to provide consistency and regularity of math instruction in those grades. Mr. Eli Peake, our math teacher for the upper grades, has definitely changed the

way that many of our students feel about mathematics. His after school math and chess clubs are very popular among the students.

Despite bringing on a strong math teacher, our math scores in MAP and CMAS continue to be very low. The biggest contributing factor that we identified for these low scores is the lack of a school wide math curriculum with a clear scope and sequence that helps our teachers make sure they are covering all core concepts needed for students to progress in math. Traditional Waldorf schools often find value in teacher autonomy and relying on individual teachers' skills in formative assessment and adaptability to student needs in teaching mathematics. However, as a public Waldorf-inspired school, we recognize the need for cohesion in scope, sequence, and methodology by using a common math curriculum across our elementary grades to ensure standards are addressed.

Because of our low math scores and because our interventionists have been seeing too many of our students qualify for Tier 2 services for math intervention, we know there must be big changes to the which creates large and untenable caseloads for them. In looking at some of the students' scores, it appears that large gaps exists in their understanding of certain core concepts, especially in math. An ad-hoc committee of our Teacher Leadership Council reviewed different curricula that we could use to supplement our math instruction in 1st through 8th grades. They determined that Reveal Math by McGraw-Hill would be the most adaptable and complimentary to the traditional Waldorf approaches to math instruction.

Until recently, our reading scores generally follow what we refer to as the "Waldorf Curve," meaning that the students in the younger grades generally score lower for reading than their national peers and then generally meet or exceed their national peers in reading in the older grades. However, we've seen much lower ELA CMAS scores in all grades 3-8. This is certainly not an expected outcome for our students. When looking at some of the ELA scores, we realized that writing was affecting the ELA scores and pulling them down. We also realized that reading for many of our 3rd graders was not up to state expectations and that affected the math and ELA scores for that grade. We will focus on reading intervention in the early grades to close the lingering learning gaps from the pandemic. We will also highlight improved writing instruction this year, which we anticipate will improve student achievement outcomes.

UIP review:

The Teacher Leadership Council (TLC) and the School Accountability Committee (SAC) will review the UIP action steps and goals and our 2022 Parent Engagement survey results for making recommendations to instruction and parent engagement through the year. A subcommittee focused on synthesizing data and making instructional recommendations based on the state's school performance data, the school's interim assessment data, and other student and school data, will review this document, as appropriate.

Provide a summary of your progress in implementing the Major Improvement Strategies and if they had the intended effect on systems, adult actions, and student outcomes (e.g. targets).

Create/Implement Fall Learning Plan/Model:

This was successfully done as a part of our return to school plan after the lockdown and remote learning during Spring 2020. We offered remote learning options for full-time and homeschool families who were unable to send their children to school. We've continued offering remote learning for homeschool students through our Frontier Homeschool Enrichment Program and provide computers to our middle school students, if there are reasons for the classes to be canceled. However, the current health conditions no longer require us to shut down for positive cases of covid in the school or to quarantine to isolate individuals for long periods of time, reducing the amount of disruptions to the student learning.

Increase Our Math Growth and Achievement Scores for Grades 3-8:

We did not create a scope and sequence for math instruction liked we hoped. Unfortunately, our math scores declined since we developed this improvement strategy. According to our last CMAS results, our elementary school students only achieved the 1st percentile in math and the middle school students only achieved the 6th percentile in math. Our interim assessment data also shows large gaps in our students' math achievement and growth scores. However, we are using a new math curriculum, Reveal Math, for grades 1-8. We anticipate that this new material can help support our teachers to teach math with more consistency.

Support the Well-Being of All Students through Increased SEL:

We have increased our social and emotional learning in grades 1-8. In SY20-21, we piloted a kindness curriculum for social and emotional learning in a few classes that were struggling with classroom management and behavior. Based on the positive feedback we received from students and teachers on the program, we extended that curriculum and are providing weekly sessions of our Kindness Curriculum in grades 1-8. We still experienced disciplinary incidents and a lot of classroom disruptions last year and are seeing high numbers of our students who need additional SEL support this year. We anticipate that our efforts will be able to reduce the amount of behavior incidents, bullying reports, and classroom disruptions for the 2022-23 school year and beyond.

Based on your reflection and evaluation, provide a summary of the adjustments that you will make for this year's plan.

Create/Implement Fall Learning Plan/Model:

We are fully in-person and are not quarantining classes for positive covid cases or mandating mask wearing or social distancing. Although we have the ability and technology to return to remote learning should the current health crisis drastically worsen, we do not anticipate that happening nor are we planning for it this year.

Increase Our Math Growth and Achievement Scores for Grades 3-8:

Unfortunately, our scores have further declined in math growth and achievement. We are also seeing low ELA scores in all grades. Therefore, we are adopting a new math curriculum, Reveal Math, which will provide a scaffolding for our teachers to help plan their math lessons and build on a scope and sequence that is already evidence based. In addition, we are implementing a phonemic awareness curriculum called Heggerty. This was piloted by our 1st grade classes last year and had positive praise from the teachers who used it. It was also recommended by one of our trainers with Amplify, the company that manages DIBELS Next and DIBELS Deep assessments, to support our students in the early grades with the segmenting and blending of sounds in a way that is adaptive for our school and aligns with Waldorf instructional practices. We are also looking into writing curricula that we could supplement with our current instruction, as we've discovered that our students' writing levels are largely not on par with their grade level expectations and may be contributing to our lower than expected ELA CMAS scores.

Support the Well-Being of All Students through Increased SEL:

We've adopted the Kindness Curriculum for grades 1-8 for our Tier 1 classroom SEL instruction. The curriculum provides language for students to use to identify emotions and strategies to handle those emotions, and helps encourage positive behavior and classroom culture. We also expanded our Student Care Team to include a Social Worker, a School Counselor, and our Dean of Students to build capacity for handling the increased SEL needs at the school. We were also one of seven schools in the state to receive \$122,000 this year as a part of K-5 SEL CDE grant pilot program last year (2021-22), which is helping us support our Social Worker, our School Counselor, and SEL curriculum. We were awarded the grant in Jan 2020, but not funded that year due to pandemic. As a part of this grant, we will actually be a case study on social emotional learning and will be rolling out a three-tiered social, emotional, learning model for the school with classroom instruction, small group instruction, and individual work for students who may not qualify for special education services. Our Care Team also looked at the CDE's Bullying Prevention Best Practices and Policy Model released last spring and will be implementing a more effective bullying prevention program.

Current Performance

- **Talent**

Staff retention:

Although we've encountered staff turnover in previous years due to administration turnover or other factors, we have never experienced so many challenges with staffing shortages as we did this past school year (2021-2022). Although not fully calculated for the purposes of this plan, the amount of professional hours devoted to the

recruitment, training, onboarding, and marketing for each position that needed to be filled throughout the last year far exceeded our reasonable expectations for any of our human resources staff members and others to devote towards interviewing, recruiting, training, and onboarding new staff members. Four of 14 general education teachers (29%) and a social worker did not return last year from the previous year due to COVID-related stress coupled with low salary. Since the 2021-2022 school year began, 7 of 31 total teachers (23%) resigned: interventionists, gen-ed, subject, and ELL teachers, resulting in a total loss of 11 teachers (35%) from the previous year. We replaced losses with qualified teachers, long-term substitutes, and combined two classes into one. We were unable to fill 2 para positions vacated last year, and we lost two other paras this year (due to salary and military deployment). We have been unable to find a temporary social worker for ours who started maternity leave in February. Also mid-year, we lost (COVID-related) and replaced our entire front office staff who serve as health technicians, our school nurse, and one custodian. Turnover has impacted our students' social/emotional growth as well as their mental health and academic performance, particularly since MSCS serves a high level of students with disabilities (13% IEPs excluding homeschool). Turnover of health and safety staff have stretched us at a time of high health risk.

The turnover also costs our school in resources, attention, institutional memory, talent, experience, and focus each time a staff member and teacher leaves. If a Waldorf-trained teacher leaves our school, it is an additional cost, as the school provides 100% towards the cost of a Waldorf training program and certification. So it behooves the school, in this way, to retain talented teachers and incentivize tenured staff to stay with the school. We have an amazing environment for teachers that offers more autonomy and freedom to deliver quality and meaningful instruction to students compared to other schools, which is why we have some of the most talented, generous, and dedicated educators in Colorado (one being inducted in the CO Charter Educator Hall of Fame in 2019). That said, it has been hard for us to compete with district schools that receive more funding per student and are able to offer new hires more incentives and money. In order to be competitive, we've offered we've offered retention bonuses based on years at Mountain Song, recruitment bonuses, training, and other incentives to recruit quality educators and staff through an award of a CDE Educator Workforce Grant. Although we are not fully filled as of the date this plan is being written, we are gaining competent and dedicated personnel who we know will be integral to the continual improvement of our school.

Student Retention:

By focusing on teacher development and retention, we'll address subsequent student loss, as well. Waldorf schools place high importance on relationship building between the teachers and the students and most teachers spend multiple school years with their same group of students sometimes leading them from 1st grade all the way to the 8th grade. Consequently, whenever we lose a beloved teacher, we experience a drop in enrollment in that grade. Although this happens every year, as teachers leave for various reasons, last year we experienced more teacher and staff losses that were harder for us to replace including staff losses mid-year and mid-semester, in some cases.

Our unduplicated mobility rate in SY21-22 was 12%, which is not outside of the ranges that we've experienced in non-covid years. However, in addition to the professional hours devoted to teacher recruitment, we expend a great deal of hours and money towards the recruitment of new students. Every time a student leaves, MSCS staff spend many professional hours towards marketing, community outreach, touring, and onboarding new families. The more cost-effective approach to securing full classes and therefore full funding, is to focus on student retention, which requires better retention and recruitment of quality teachers, strategic instruction, and a positive and safe culture.

Student Engagement:

Last year, we reported higher absenteeism rates among our students than we did the previous year with 160 students being reported as having chronic absenteeism compared to the previous year when we reported only 41 students having chronic absenteeism. This is not completely surprising, as we experienced many incidences of quarantines and other non-covid related illnesses. However, we only reported 12 students with habitual truancy compared to 26 habitually truant students the year before. Again, this is not surprising given the amount of students who were disengaged during periods of remote learning in SY20-21, which were more frequent than what we experienced in SY21-22.

Whether the high absenteeism over the past few years was a consequence of covid or other covid-related reasons, it is a priority for our school to prioritize consistent rhythm in our students academic learning and to make up for any content loss as a result of the frequent absences.

Administration:

Part of the difficulty we experienced last year was the enormous and disproportionate workload that the administration was under in dealing with staffing shortages, covid contact tracing, purchasing and finding money for the purchase of the building, on top of our other administrative duties. We were also in a transitional year with a new Director of Operation, who is now transitioning again to a School Counselor. In this transitional year, we decided to seek professional assistance to streamline our administrative workload and to reorganize our structure to be more efficient. We contracted with Tatonka Educational Services to lead us through a "Who Owns What" (WOW) exercise to identify the workload bottlenecks and duplication. Based on the work the administrative team did with Tatonka and their professional feedback, we reorganized our administrative duties and assistant roles to better support our administrative team. Most notably, we contracted with Tatonka to take over some HR responsibilities including recruitment, payroll, insurances, among other duties. Instead of a Director of Operations, we hired a Business Manager, who will continue to assist with accounting, payroll, building management, but we hope that having an outside consultant supporting us will help this new role be more sustainable and tenable. We lost an administrative assistant position, but also hired a Registrar to take over the data entry, enrollment queries, and assist with student data collections. Before the Registrar was hired, the Director of School Performance was exclusively responsible for all student enrollment, data entry, marketing, touring, enrollment queries, student data submissions, and community outreach on top of the other director related duties. With the addition of a Registrar, more focus can be placed on attention on assessment, intervention, and school improvement.

Instruction

K-3 Reading Skills:

Because we are a Waldorf school, our approach to early literacy skills is very different from those of traditional public school models, primarily focusing on oral and aural skills and comprehension before decoding. Our READ scores for our K-3 students, although much lower than traditional public schools in the state, are consistent with what we expect for our grades K-3. This was anticipated and explicitly explained in our Charter Application. Our approach to reading is a slower approach with foci on oral, aural, and comprehension skills through oral recitation and storytelling in the early grades. In Waldorf schools, letters and their phonetic sounds and writing aren't taught until the 1st grade. In 3rd grade, our students should start to approach the reading and writing averages compared to other public schools, but then continue to surpass those averages in 4th grades and up.

Our 5th graders compete in the "Battle of the Books" competitions every year and have always scored high compared to other schools. In previous years, before the pandemic, our 5th grade students scored in the 4th and 5th places out of approximately 100 other public schools. Last year in SY21-22, one group of our 5th graders scored 8th place out of 112 other schools and the other group placed 2nd place! We're very proud of our 5th grade students, but are not surprised at their level of comprehension and love of reading.

That said, we are seeing troubling signs in our reading data that counter our expected results for reading. In fact, looking at our past year's data, it seems that students *lose* reading skills over the course of the year. That could be because our school doesn't hit certain concepts that are tested at certain times of the year (e.g., our students learn reading and writing skills in 1st grade, not in kindergarten so their scores are generally lower for the MOY and EOY tests). However, most of our students should be improving their reading scores over the course of the year and retaining learned skills.

Our new Reading Specialist is reviewing the specific concepts that most of our students are struggling with and examining why reading instruction may not be retained for some students in the younger grades. She'll be working with small groups to help them with reading and will also work with teachers to teach specific reading concepts and skills in Tier 1 instruction.

We will also be introducing a phonemic awareness curriculum called Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum in Kindergarten and 1st grade. We recognize that our approach to early literacy is behind the state standards, but we can do more to help our early readers by having more phonemic awareness introduced earlier. The Heggerty Curriculum is adaptable to our approach to education, which focuses on movement, auditory, and hands-on learning. Our 1st grade classes piloted the curriculum last year and it was received well. We did not see a noticeable increase in our students' phonemic awareness in their scores, but we anticipate that this will be evident in this year's scores, especially with a Reading Specialist who will be more focused on these areas of improvement.

Although our school always strives to remain in compliance with all state and federal requirements and regulations, our school was unable to assess our 3rd grade students in reading at the end of the year in SY21-22 due to staffing shortages and other factors. Because of this, our school was issued a Notice of Concern by our state authorizer, the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI) and had to develop a plan for assessing these 54 students in reading during their 4th grade year in SY22-23. The number of students who were identified as having a significant reading deficiency (SRD) reported last year were lower than previous years because we did not report our 3rd grade EOY scores. Our new Reading Specialist assessed our 4th graders who were missed in the READ testing in the spring semester and is paying more attention and focus on READ Act compliance, progress monitoring, training, and early screening for students with learning disabilities.

SY21-22 DIBELS EOY Percentiles for Grades K-2; MOY Percentiles for Grade 3*

| Grades | Above Benchmark | At Benchmark | Below Benchmark | Well Below Benchmark |
|--------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| K | 2% | 1% | 4% | 88% |
| 1st | 15% | 9% | 0% | 76% |
| 2nd | 10% | 13% | 13% | 64% |
| 3rd | 37% | 25% | 18% | 20% |

*3rd Grade was not tested for EOY in SY21-22

Our SRD numbers from the SY21-22 READ Submission are listed below:

| Grade | Students Evaluated for Literacy Skills (Number) | Students Not Identified as Having an SRD (Number) | Students Not Identified as Having an SRD (Percentage) | Students Identified as Having an SRD (Number) | Students Identified as Having an SRD (Percentage) |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | |
|------|----|----|------|----|------|
| 006 | 4 | 2 | 50.0 | 2 | 50.0 |
| 007 | 45 | 3 | 6.7 | 42 | 93.3 |
| 010 | 34 | 8 | 23.5 | 26 | 76.5 |
| 020 | 30 | 11 | 36.7 | 19 | 63.3 |
| 030* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

SY22-23 BOY DIBELS Percentiles*

| Grades | Above Benchmark | At Benchmark | Below Benchmark | Well Below Benchmark |
|--------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| K | 21% | 21% | 31% | 27% |
| 1st | 12% | 6% | 0% | 82% |
| 2nd | 28% | 4% | 6% | 62% |
| 3rd | 30% | 11% | 14% | 45% |
| 4th | 38% | 25% | 14% | 23% |

*Because 3rd grade was not tested in EOY 21-22, we assessed the 4th graders for BOY SY22-23

Math in Grades 3-8:

Our main academic improvement continues to be on improving math scores. Our math scores have been significantly lower than the state standards over the past 7 years and are not consistent with our expectations for our students. Our math CMAS scores from Spring 2022 for all grades were far below most schools in the state with our elementary school students only attaining the 1st percentile, which is extremely alarming. Most Waldorf schools have higher math scores and we have tried to identify the reasons why we do not see the same progress in our students. When looking at our historic data, we realized that our model of teachers looping with their classes may be working against our math growth, especially if teachers are not proficient in math throughout the grades. To address the inconsistency in math instruction among our teachers, we hired a dedicated math teacher two years ago to work with our 5th through 8th graders. He also provides math intervention for some of our struggling students in those grades. Although his presence has certainly helped our students learn the love of math, we are still seeing very low math scores and are having to assist more students in Tier 2 intervention than should be required. In fact, we saw almost half of our 4th and 5th grade students needing math intervention in SY21-22 and are facing similar numbers this school year. We realized that because of the amount of students going into Tier 2 services for math intervention in the 4th and 5th grades especially, we needed more consistency in Tier 1 math instruction. Therefore, our Teacher Leadership Council decided to adopt a new math curriculum to be taught in grades 1-5, called Reveal Math. This curriculum is adaptable to our approaches to math instruction and not overly prescriptive making it far more palatable for our teachers to supplement in their daily instruction.

Below are the Beginning of Year, Middle of Year, and End of Year NWEA MAP interim assessment data for reading and math for SY21-22 and the Beginning of Year MAP data for SY22-23.

SY22-23 BOY NWEA MAP Math Percentiles

| Grade | >80th Percentile | 61 - 80th Percentile | 41-60th Percentile | 21-40th Percentile | <21st Percentile |
|--------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 3rd | 6% | 17% | 8% | 28% | 42% |
| 4th | 2% | 11% | 16% | 36% | 36% |
| 5th | 12% | 4% | 31% | 31% | 23% |
| 6th | 8% | 12% | 35% | 19% | 27% |
| 7th | 0% | 7% | 27% | 33% | 33% |
| 8th | 0% | 36% | 27% | 27% | 9% |

SY22-23 BOY NWEA MAP Reading Percentiles

| Grade | >80th Percentile | 61 - 80th Percentile | 41-60th Percentile | 21-40th Percentile | <21st Percentile |
|--------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 3rd | 20% | 6% | 11% | 31% | 31% |
| 4th | 19% | 28% | 28% | 14% | 12% |
| 5th | 19% | 19% | 23% | 15% | 23% |
| 6th | 28% | 36% | 12% | 20% | 4% |
| 7th | 7% | 20% | 13% | 40% | 20% |
| 8th | 45% | 27% | 18% | 0% | 9% |

SY21-22 Beginning of Year NWEA MAP Math Percentiles

| Grade | >80th Percentile | 61 - 80th Percentile | 41-60th Percentile | 21-40th Percentile | <21st Percentile |
|--------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 3rd | 0% | 10% | 20% | 15% | 56% |
| 4th | 3% | 8% | 18% | 32% | 39% |
| 5th | 0% | 19% | 30% | 22% | 30% |
| 6th | 5% | 9% | 27% | 27% | 32% |
| 7th | 0% | 31% | 25% | 31% | 13% |
| 8th | 4% | 8% | 21% | 54% | 13% |

SY21-22 Beginning of Year NWEA MAP Reading Percentiles

| Grade | >80th Percentile | 61 - 80th Percentile | 41-60th Percentile | 21-40th Percentile | <21st Percentile |
|--------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 3rd | 15% | 13% | 20% | 23% | 30% |
| 4th | 17% | 14% | 23% | 9% | 37% |
| 5th | 26% | 33% | 22% | 4% | 15% |
| 6th | 14% | 18% | 27% | 14% | 27% |
| 7th | 21% | 36% | 21% | 14% | 7% |
| 8th | 26% | 39% | 35% | 0% | 0% |

SY21-22 Middle of Year NWEA MAP Math Percentiles

| Grade | >80th Percentile | 61 - 80th Percentile | 41-60th Percentile | 21-40th Percentile | <21st Percentile |
|--------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 3rd | 0% | 7% | 5% | 34% | 54% |
| 4th | 6% | 6% | 19% | 14% | 56% |
| 5th | 4% | 20% | 20% | 20% | 36% |
| 6th | 5% | 5% | 10% | 48% | 33% |
| 7th | 0% | 0% | 42% | 42% | 17% |
| 8th | 5% | 10% | 30% | 35% | 20% |

SY21-22 MOY NWEA MAP Reading Percentiles

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|

| Grade | >80th Percentile | 61 - 80th Percentile | 41-60th Percentile | 21-40th Percentile | <21st Percentile |
|-------|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 3rd | 9% | 9% | 15% | 12% | 56% |
| 4th | 11% | 17% | 14% | 9% | 49% |
| 5th | 16% | 36% | 20% | 4% | 24% |
| 6th | 15% | 25% | 10% | 40% | 10% |
| 7th | 17% | 50% | 25% | 0% | 8% |
| 8th | 21% | 42% | 26% | 11% | 0% |

SY21-22 End of Year NWEA MAP Math Percentiles

| Grade | >80th Percentile | 61 - 80th Percentile | 41-60th Percentile | 21-40th Percentile | <21st Percentile |
|-------|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 3rd | 0% | 3% | 14% | 33% | 50% |
| 4th | 3% | 12% | 15% | 27% | 42% |
| 5th | 4% | 15% | 15% | 27% | 38% |
| 6th | 0% | 5% | 16% | 42% | 37% |
| 7th | 8% | 15% | 46% | 15% | 15% |
| 8th | 5% | 15% | 30% | 45% | 5% |

SY21-22 End of Year NWEA MAP Reading Percentiles

| Grade | >80th Percentile | 61 - 80th Percentile | 41-60th Percentile | 21-40th Percentile | <21st Percentile |
|-------|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 3rd | 3% | 17% | 11% | 26% | 43% |
| 4th | 9% | 24% | 9% | 18% | 41% |
| 5th | 23% | 31% | 12% | 15% | 19% |
| 6th | 5% | 5% | 42% | 26% | 21% |
| 7th | 23% | 23% | 31% | 15% | 8% |
| 8th | 15% | 45% | 25% | 15% | 0% |

Culture:

Disciplinary supports and actions:

Our Dean of Student and student care team have worked hard over the past couple of years to address the demand for mental, behavioral, and emotional support, which had been increasing even before the pandemic. Last year, we reported 79 (duplicated) students or 52 (unduplicated) students had incidents resulting in 7 out of school suspensions and 3 in-school suspensions. This shows that around 13 percent of our students exhibit behavior that results in reportable, disciplinary actions. This was much higher than the previous year, when we reported only 5 students with disciplinary incidents and 5 out of school suspensions. These numbers were artificially low, because we were mostly in remote learning during SY20-21.

We were granted \$122,000 from the CDE K-12 SEL grant to expand our services to support our students in these areas before the pandemic because of the increased mental, behavioral, and emotional needs of our students, but those funds were not allocated until this year because of the pandemic. This grant, which comes at a very opportune time, pays for our Social Worker and School Counselor positions and our Kindness Curriculum."Our expanded Care Team will be rolling out a three-tiered data-based SEL MTSS model as part of this grant effort. The Kindness Curriculum, which our 1st grade classes piloted last year, will be our Tier 1 SEL instruction for grades 1-8. We will also provide more small group and individual support for students needing help with social and emotional issues.

Our Student Care Team is also working on a bullying prevention program and are working to better identify incidents of bullying. About forty percent of our parents who responded to our parent engagement survey last spring reported that their child experienced bullying during that school year. However, we showed no bullying incidents in our discipline data from last year. This year, we're working to better educate our students and staff members about what bullying looks like and how to respond using the CDE's Bullying Prevention and Best Practices Policy Model as a guiding document.

Student Engagement/Attendance:

Last year, we showed a 5% decrease in our attendance rate compared to the year before. We had a 90.44% attendance rate and a 1.43% truancy rate. The truancy rate the year before in SY20-21 was higher at 1.83%. However, the number of chronically absent students last school year was about four times higher than the previous year. We had 160 chronically absent students in SY21-22 compared to 41 chronically absent students in SY20-21. This could also be because of the number of quarantines and illness-related absences last year, which were higher than SY20-21 when we were mostly in remote learning or hybrid learning.

Chronic absenteeism is a constant issue that affects our academic performance. Before the pandemic, we had many students who were absent much of their school year. We normally work with families to develop strategies in an attendance plan to support their students maintain positive attendance and provide them with educational resources about the importance of attendance. A portion of our families struggle with finding reliable transportation and without a transportation system in place for the school, we may continue to see tardies and absent students. Many of our students who were frequently absent last year expressed severe anxiety about going back into the classroom setting which resulted in either classroom behavior issues or absences when those students could not come into school. Administration, teachers, and the Dean of Students worked with many of these students integrate back into the classroom or work on handling their anxiety. We also experience many illness related attendance issues that were covid-related or not covid-related. This affected our teaching staff, as well. Some of the truancy and chronic absenteeism stemmed from a level of disengagement or even a lackadaisical attitude from the parents who may not understand or value the importance of regular attendance for their student. More parent education and clear communication about attendance concerns may help those families support their students in attending school regularly. We anticipate the return of a normal school year will reduce the amount of truant and chronically absent students.

School Climate:

Since SY18-19, the school has partnered with School Perceptions, a third-party firm that assists schools with data gathering and analysis, to develop, disseminate, and analyze data from the yearly climate survey to our community members. Based on the parent responses to the SY21-22 School Perceptions Climate Survey, our parents rated our school much lower in the areas of safety, inclusion, leadership, and overall satisfaction. Some of this is not surprising, as the school dealt with repercussions of mask mandates and other health mitigations strategies that some families objected. There was also dissatisfaction because of the teacher turnover and school closures due to covid or staffing shortages. That said, we did see in our results that more could be done at the school to support a more inclusive, positive, transparent, and safe school environment for our students. The more noteworthy ratings the parent respondents gave the school from 2019 through 2022 in areas of leadership, inclusion, school culture, and overall satisfaction are listed below:

- I am comfortable contacting the principal/executive leadership team. (2019 = 4; 2020 = 4.15; 2021 = 3.74; 2022 = 3.28)
- A climate of openness and trust exists between School administration and parents. (2019 = 4.12; 2020 = 4.04; 2021 = 3.59; 2022 = 3.04)

- School staff treats everyone with dignity and respect. (2019 = 4.42; 2020 = 4.45; 2021 = 4.23; 2022 = 3.78)
- I am satisfied with how our school responds to reported incidents of bullying. (2019 = 3.85; 2020 = 3.89; 2021 = 3.89; 2022 = 3.06)
- My child feels safe at School. (2019 = 4.42; 2020 = 4.5; 2021 = 4.38; 2022 = 4.07)
- I would recommend this School to a friend. (2019 = 4.45; 2020 = 4.52; 2021 = 4.26; 2022 = 3.88)
- Overall, how satisfied are you with the School? (2019 = 4.31; 2020 = 4.3; 2021 = 4.04; 2022 = 3.81)
- The School is heading in the right direction. (2019 = 4.14; 2020 = 4.24; 2021 = 3.8; 2022 = 3.33)

In addition, 41% of our parent respondents indicated that their child experienced bullying within that school year. Our Care Team is working to develop a bullying prevention program at the school and is exploring ways to get more accurate data for reporting bullying incidents. The SEL curriculum in the classrooms will also hopefully reduce bullying, as well.

Based on these results, we are focusing on improving community-school relations, communication, and transparency. We will be providing more opportunities for families to engage and volunteer with the school, which we hope will improve our overall school climate. We are also working to ensure all students feel included and safe at our school. We started a LGBTQ+ after school club, which has been well attended and very well received by our students so far. We have always embraced our LGBTQ+ students and staff members, but this club is a wonderful way for our LGBTQ+ students and allies be visibly supported by the school and for them to learn how to accept themselves and others.

Parent Circle:

Mountain Song originally had a Parent Council to help the school with fundraising, festivals, volunteerism, hospitality, and parent engagement and representation in school decision making. However, this entity was without any formal accountability, as the original charter application did not assign any Board or school oversight of this committee. Although, the Parent Council operations were usually handled with professionalism and without issue, there was confusion surrounding the funds the Parent Council raised and with the adherence to school policy and governance structure. To make sure we were in compliance with our governance structure and finances, the Parent Council faced a decision to either become its own 501(c)(3) and control its fundraising money outside the school oversight or become a committee of the MSCS Board of Directors. The pursuit of a non-profit status was not tenable and so the group became a committee under the MSCS Board of Directors in SY19-20. However, ongoing issues existed as some of the parents thought of the committee as a parent advocacy group that had influence over school operations and some members publicly disparaged the school while representing the school's Parent Council, which led to some conflict between the school and some Parent Council members. The Parent Council

had also struggled to get enough volunteers to support all the festivals, as they were primarily responsible for the seasonal festivals at the school, which led to burn out among our valued volunteers. To improve parent and school relations and to help ease the stress of the parent volunteers, the Parent Council and the MSCS Board met throughout the summer of 2022 to re-envision the role of the Parent Council. What resulted was the creation of the Parent Circle to help support the school through hospitality and volunteerism. The new Parent Circle does not have class representatives like the Parent Council did and its main function is to support the school with fundraising and festivals, but it is not responsible for running the festivals or handling funds. The group has a robust group of parent volunteers who meet regularly to discuss parent engagement, education, and support. We hope that this new group will continue to flourish and help to create a positive and supportive community and school culture.

Trend Analysis



Trend Direction: Decreasing

Performance Indicator Target: Academic Achievement (Status)

Since 2016, our middle school students' achievement scores in math have decreased yearly. In 2016, the mean scale score for middle school math was 741 and has decreased to 711.2 in Spring 2022, which is close to the 6th percentile.



Trend Direction: Increasing

Performance Indicator Target: Academic Achievement (Status)

We are seeing a continuous increase in students needing Tier 2 services for math in the upper grades. Last year, almost 50% of our 4th and 5th grade students were identified as needing Tier 2 intervention services for math.



Trend Direction: Decreasing

Performance Indicator Target: Academic Achievement (Status)

Since 2016, our elementary school students' math achievement scores increased slightly and then have since decreased every year. Our mean scale score for elementary math was 722 in 2016 and then improved slightly in 2017 with a MSS of 726. Since then, our scores have decreased dramatically and our elementary school students only received a MSS of 702.7 in math in Spring 2022, which is hovering around the 1st percentile.



Trend Direction: Decreasing

Performance Indicator Target: Academic Growth

Since 2016 when our school received a Performance with Distinction rating, our middle school students growth scores in ELA have steadily declined (2016 = 90 MGP; 2017 = 51.0 MGP; 2018 = 46.0 MGP; 2019 = 49.5 MGP; 2022 = 46.5 MGP)



Trend Direction: Increasing

Performance Indicator Target: Student Engagement

We had an increase of chronically absent students in SY21-22 which was 160 students missing 10% of their school year compared to the previous school year when we reported 41 chronically absent students.



Trend Direction: Decreasing

Performance Indicator Target: Disaggregated Achievement

Minority students in middle school have historically performed better than our non-minority students in ELA and Math since 2017. Based on the Spring 2022 CMAS results, our minority students' ELA and Math achievement scores in elementary and middle school have been lower than those of non-minority students. The MSS for ELA among minority students was 738.1 in 2019 compared to the non-minority students' MSS of 736.6 that same year. In Spring 2022, our minority students received a MSS of 719.5 in elementary ELA and 701.7 MSS in elementary math compared to the overall elementary mean scale scores of 722.8 in ELA and 702.7 in math. In middle school, minority students received a MSS of 736.1 in ELA and 704.4 in math compared to the overall middle school mean scale scores of 739.7 in ELA and 711.2 in math.



Trend Direction: Stable then decreasing

Performance Indicator Target: Disaggregated Achievement

Students who qualify for free or reduced lunches (FRL) have historically received comparable scores to our students who do not qualify for FRL. However, based on our Spring 2022 CMAS data, our FRL students received lower achievement scores in elementary and middle school math and reading than our non-FRL students. FRL

students received 721.4 MSS in compared to the overall 722.8 MSS in elementary ELA and 700.0 MSS in elementary math compared to the overall 702.7 MSS for elementary math. FRL students in middle school achieved 733.9 MSS in middle school ELA compared to the overall 739.7 MSS and achieved 700.4 MSS compared to the overall MSS of 711.2 in middle school math.



Trend Direction: Increasing

Performance Indicator Target: Student Behavior

We've seen an increase of threats of suicide or students expressing suicidal thoughts, even in the early grades.



Trend Direction: Decreasing

Performance Indicator Target: Other

Parent and community trust in school leadership, direction, and school's responses to incidents of bullying has declined since 2019 based on the Spring 2022 School Perceptions Parent Engagement Survey.

Additional Trend Information:

Parent Climate Survey Ratings Decreasing in some Areas:

We've seen a significant decrease in how parents/guardians rate the school in areas of areas of leadership, inclusion, school culture, and overall satisfaction. The more noteworthy ratings the parent respondents gave the school from 2019 through 2022 are listed below:

- I am comfortable contacting the principal/executive leadership team. (2019 = 4; 2020 = 4.15; 2021 = 3.74; 2022 = 3.28)
- A climate of openness and trust exists between School administration and parents. (2019 = 4.12; 2020 = 4.04; 2021 = 3.59; 2022 = 3.04)
- School staff treats everyone with dignity and respect. (2019 = 4.42; 2020 = 4.45; 2021 = 4.23; 2022 = 3.78)
- I am satisfied with how our school responds to reported incidents of bullying. (2019 = 3.85; 2020 = 3.89; 2021 = 3.89; 2022 = 3.06)
- My child feels safe at School. (2019 = 4.42; 2020 = 4.5; 2021 = 4.38; 2022 = 4.07)
- I would recommend this School to a friend. (2019 = 4.45; 2020 = 4.52; 2021 = 4.26; 2022 = 3.88)
- Overall, how satisfied are you with the School? (2019 = 4.31; 2020 = 4.3; 2021 = 4.04; 2022 = 3.81)
- The School is heading in the right direction. (2019 = 4.14; 2020 = 4.24; 2021 = 3.8; 2022 = 3.33)

Priority Performance Challenges and Root Causes



Priority Performance Challenge: Continued high need for behavioral, social, and emotional supports

In the past few years, we've experienced more severe student behavioral needs and the number of disciplinary actions and personnel required to handle disciplinary actions, including for students with disabilities, has increased. Largely because of the pandemic and the disruption it caused our families and students, we have seen a significant amount of students needing mental health and behavioral supports, especially in the early grades.



Root Cause: Teacher Support, Training, and Resources

Although the school has dedicated its professional development dollars to Waldorf certification training for all its teachers, there is still a great need to provide the teachers with more classroom management assistance, training, and resources to better support them and their students.



Root Cause: Capacity to Address Behavioral, Discipline, and Emotional Needs

The recent increase in behavioral, social, and emotional needs among our students requires additional qualified staff to support our students.



Priority Performance Challenge: Teacher turnover

Although we worked on improving school stability and teacher retention through monetary incentives and other strategies, the fallout of the pandemic over the past couple of years and heightened tension between the parent community and school have dramatically affected our teaching staff members' moral leading to dissatisfaction and turnover.



Root Cause: Inadequate Compensation for Teacher Pay

During the lockdown, our school was faced with a large budget shortfall. To balance our budget, the school cut salaries by around 5%. That caused a backlash from our staff and some staff left due to the inadequate salary base.



Root Cause: Teacher Support, Training, and Resources

Although the school has dedicated its professional development dollars to Waldorf certification training for all its teachers, there is still a great need to provide the teachers with more classroom management assistance, training, and resources to better support them and their students.

Root Cause: Need for Increased Mentorship



Although the school had a part time Pedagogical Director to support teaching staff for years, teachers need for more mentorship, observations, and feedback is needed, especially for our new teachers.



Priority Performance Challenge: Declining math and ELA achievement and growth scores in all grades

From 2016 to 2019, our Middle school level Academic Achievement in CMAS English Language Arts fluctuated with Math . Middle school level Academic Growth in both ELA and Math have decreased since 2016. Although our middle school students are performing above the state average on CMAS, this decreasing growth trend must be addressed systematically and collaboratively in order to help our students continue to grow.



Root Cause: Lack of Set Math Curriculum

In Waldorf education, there are curriculum guides and frameworks in which we instruct math, but no set of math curricula. Teachers are given autonomy in how they deliver the content to the students and prepare their lesson plans, but there are no text books, worksheets, or set curricula that they use.



Root Cause: Inconsistency of Math Curriculum Due to Looping

Our practice of teachers "looping" with their students, although very effective in creating cohesion in the classroom and reducing behaviors, has resulted in inconsistencies in the frequency and fidelity that teachers instruct math.



Root Cause: Phonemic awareness in early grades

Although our kindergarten and 1st grade literacy instruction focuses on oral and aural skill building, many of our students in grades K-3 struggle with segmenting, identifying, or blending sounds.

Magnitude of Performance Challenges and Rationale for Selection:



Declining math and ELA achievement and growth scores in all grades:

Our low scores from Spring 2022 depict historically low achievement and growth scores which do not match our expectations of our students' outcomes. Our new Improvement Plan rating with the state makes this a top priority, second to keeping our students safe. With so many of our students missing key concepts in their learning, we are experiencing very high numbers of students qualifying for Tier 2 interventions or Tier 3 services. We're seeing both new students and returning students who are missing very fundamental literacy skills like segmenting phonemes or struggling with basic numeration. Differentiation in instruction for such a wide difference in ability levels in a class, especially in the middle school grades, is very difficult for our teachers who lead their students in whole group instruction. More support and understanding about how to differentiate for such large academic differences is needed. Our Reading and Math Interventionist had to support almost 50% of the students in the 4th and 5th grades, which indicates a Tier 1 issue with instruction, although our excellent teachers work very hard in providing quality education to their students. We also recognized in our data analyses that students were

not being identified soon enough for some learning disabilities. Because of our slower approach to literacy in early grades, we normally have lower reading scores in the younger grades, which usually pick up around 3rd and 4th grade. We've usually accepted the lower reading scores and high numbers of READ Plans, because of our slower approach to literacy. However, it is too late to identify students in the 3rd and 4th grades who may have learning or reading disabilities, like dyslexia. This is the case for some of our students, which has impacted their ability to read and understand other subjects like math. Our new Reading Specialist is trained in identifying and working with students with dyslexia and will be screening students earlier and more regularly in the early grades.

Teacher Turnover:

Waldorf schools place high value on establishing deep connections between the teachers and the students. This is why Waldorf schools have teachers "loop" with their same students for multiple years. At Mountain Song, some of our teachers have looped with their classes for many years, even all the way from 1st grade to 8th grade. Looping is very effective in lessening classroom management issues, as teachers know the students and how to help them. This is the magic ingredient in keeping our students engaged, happy, and learning. However, it is a bit of a double-edged sword, as the relationships can be so strong that when a teacher leaves, the loss can be extremely difficult for students. This is what we saw last year when a few very beloved teachers left.

Continued high need for behavioral, social, and emotional supports:

We are still seeing the impacts that the pandemic had on our students, especially in some of our younger students in kindergarten and 1st grade this year, who may have not had much social or educational experience to handle conflict. We are also seeing an increase in the amount of suicidal ideation, violent outbursts, depression, and negative self-talk among students throughout the grades. These issues are multi-faceted and may not be caused by the pandemic itself, but certainly any family, financial, and health stressors have been exacerbated by the pandemic. This is evident in both students who've been with us for multiple years and also in students who are new to our school this year. Our Student Care Team is working very hard to support our students' mental, behavioral, social, and emotional health and we are grateful that we have expanded our staffing capacity to better support these students. However, the amount of need affects many aspects of our students' lives, including academics, and we anticipate that these issues, whether caused or exacerbated by the pandemic or not, will continue to grow. We hope our Care Team's efforts this year and the next couple of years will help us be able to accommodate and support our growing students needs. We, like most schools these days, are more than an educational institution for our students and we are becoming more than just educators. We are counselors, nurses, caregivers, food providers, coaches, crisis interventionists, therapists and so much more. In addition, our own staff have experienced the same stressors as our students and families have, and it takes an increasing toll on our professional staff to try to be everything to everybody at the school. Staff and family self care are equally as important to us as the care of the students, as we must ensure our own health and well-being in order to properly attend to the care of our students.

Action Plans

Planning Form



Adapt/supplement Waldorf instruction to align with Common Core standards

What will success look like: Despite the current challenges and historic learning loss, the majority (65-75%) of our students in grades 3-8 will get back on track for meeting math standards for their grades and will continue to make gains in math through a more rigorous and standards-aligned academic program at MSCS.

Describe the research/evidence base supporting the strategy and why it is a good fit: Our school's latest math and ELA CMAS scores were so low that the school has an Improvement Plan rating with the state. Our interim reading and math assessment scores also show large gaps in some of our students' understanding of key concepts in math and reading.

Associated Root Causes:



Inconsistency of Math Curriculum Due to Looping:

Our practice of teachers "looping" with their students, although very effective in creating cohesion in the classroom and reducing behaviors, has resulted in inconsistencies in the frequency and fidelity that teachers instruct math.



Inadequate Classroom Differentiation:

We have historically offered inadequate and/or inconsistent differentiation for the range of student ability levels within each classroom.



Lack of Set Math Curriculum:

In Waldorf education, there are curriculum guides and frameworks in which we instruct math, but no set of math curricula. Teachers are given autonomy in how they deliver the content to the students and prepare their lesson plans, but there are no text books, worksheets, or set curricula that they use.




Phonemic awareness in early grades:

Although our kindergarten and 1st grade literacy instruction focuses on oral and aural skill building, many of our students in grades K-3 struggle with segmenting, identifying, or blending sounds.

Implementation Benchmarks Associated with MIS

| IB Name | Description | Start/End/Repeats | Key Personnel | Status |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|---|--------|
|  Tier 2 Screening | Screen grades 3-8 students who perform in the 25th percentile or below for intervention supports and develop learning goals to assist those students in math | 09/02/2020 05/26/2023 Quarterly | Math and Reading Interventionist/Classroom Teachers | |
|  GT Screening | Screen students who perform at the 95th percentile or above in math or reading for giftedness | 09/02/2020 05/26/2023 | Gifted and Talented Teacher, Classroom Teachers | |
|  Math Curriculum | Adopt and utilize a new math curriculum for grades 1-5 | 10/04/2022 05/26/2023 | Classroom Teachers, TLC members | |
|  Phonemic Awareness | Adopt and implement curriculum to support and increase phonemic awareness in grades K-3 | 10/04/2022 05/26/2023 | Classroom teachers, Reading Specialist, TLC | |
|  Writing Curriculum | Research and review writing curricula for grades 3-8 students that are aligned with Common Core and complimentary to Waldorf instruction | 10/04/2022 05/26/2023 | Math and Reading Interventionist/ Reading Specialist/ Pedagogical Director/ Executive Director/ Teacher Leadership Council | |

Action Steps Associated with MIS

| Name | Description | Start/End Date | Resource | Key Personnel | Status |
|--|---|----------------|--------------|----------------------------------|--------|
|  After-school math club | Create a weekly math club for grades 5-8 with the Math Specialist | 09/03/2019 | General Fund | Middle School Math Specialist | |



Full-time math teacher

Hire a full-time math specialist to teach math to grades 5-8

07/01/2020
08/01/2020

General Fund

Principal, Director of Operations, ELT



Tier 2 Supports

Provide Tier 2 supports for students in grades 3-8 struggling in math and reading

09/02/2020
06/09/2021

General Fund, SRD funds

Math and Reading Interventionist, Reading Specialist, Classroom Teachers



Curriculum realignment

Develop a MSCS framework for reading and math for grades 1-8 that aligns with state standards and Waldorf curriculum

09/02/2020
05/31/2024

General Fund; SRD funds

Principal, Middle School Math Specialist, Reading Specialist



Curriculum Review

Create a process for identifying, implementing, and reviewing curricula that aligns with Common Core and Waldorf Standards

08/17/2022
05/26/2023

General Fund

TLC leadership, Executive Director, Director of School Performance, Interventionists



Improve conditions and pay to improve yearly staff retention

What will success look like: 90% of our teaching staff and 75% of our staff, including para professionals, support staff, custodians, and administrative staff, will continue with the school from year to year.

Describe the research/evidence base supporting the strategy and why it is a good fit: Staff turnover, especially for classroom teachers, has always been very expensive for the school in terms of professional hours devoted to recruiting and training new staff and because it impacts enrollment, as well.

Associated Root Causes:



Inadequate Compensation for Teacher Pay:

During the lockdown, our school was faced with a large budget shortfall. To balance our budget, the school cut salaries by around 5%. That caused a backlash from our staff and some staff left due to the inadequate salary base.



Need for Increased Mentorship:

Although the school had a part time Pedagogical Director to support teaching staff for years, teachers need for more mentorship, observations, and feedback is needed, especially for our new teachers.

Implementation Benchmarks Associated with MIS

| IB Name | Description | Start/End/ Repeats | Key Personnel | Status |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|---|--------|
|  Mentorship | Provide more mentor support and classroom observations | 08/17/2022 05/26/2023 Monthly | Pedagogical Director, Executive Director | |
|  Support Staff | Increase support staff, substitutes, and paraprofessionals | 08/17/2022 05/26/2023 | | |
|  Training | Provide quality Waldorf Training to all classroom and specials teachers | 08/17/2022 05/26/2023 | Pedagogical Director, Executive Director | |
|  Mental Health & Culture | Stand up a committee consisting of members of Dean of Students, Social Worker, School Counselor, and others to support the mental health and wellbeing of staff. | 08/17/2022 05/26/2023 Monthly | Social Worker, Dean of Students, School Counselor, Executive Director | |

Action Steps Associated with MIS

| Name | Description | Start/End Date | Resource | Key Personnel | Status |
|---|---|--------------------------|---|--|--------|
|  Waldorf Training | Underwrite tuition for an additional new teacher in a full external Waldorf training at the Gradalis Teacher Education center in Denver, including a 3 week intensives for 3 summers, and ongoing mentoring, webinars, and PD days throughout the two school years. | 06/01/2022 07/31/2024 | CDE Educator Workforce Grant/ General Funds | Executive Director/ Pedagogical Director/ Business Manager | |
|  Supporting Teachers | Increase Pedagogical Director position from 0.4 FTE to 0.6 FTE | 07/01/2022 06/30/2023 | CDE Educator Workforce Grant/ General Funds | Executive Director/ Pedagogical Director/ Business Manager | |
|  Teacher Mentors | Change salary scale to provide stipends for teachers to be mentors for new teachers | 07/01/2022 06/30/2022 | CDE Educator Workforce Grant/ General Funds | Executive Director/ Business Manager/ TLC | |
|  Increase Substitutes | Increase substitute pay to \$250/day to be more competitive with area districts | 07/01/2022 05/26/2023 | General Fund/ CDE Educator Workforce Grant | Executive Director/ Pedagogical Director/ Business Manager | |
|  Stipends | Provide stipends to all employees (except for executive administrators) based on years at MSCS and committee services | 07/01/2022 05/26/2023 | CDE Educator Workforce Grant/ General Funds | Executive Director/ Business Manager | |
| | Support seasonal celebrations, workplace mental health practices, and provide guidance from the UCCS Greater Resilience | | General Fund/ | TLC/ Executive Director/ Pedagogical | |



Care for Teachers

Information Toolkit (GRIT) and/or the Workplace Mental Health Module in partnership between CO School of Public Health and University of CO's Depression Center.

08/17/2022
05/26/2023

CDE Educator
Workforce Grant

Director/ Mental Health & Culture Committee members



Cultivate a supportive environment for all students and families

What will success look like: Our school culture and environment will be positive, consistent, and predictable with explicit expectations and where all students, staff, families, and community partners are active participants in improving school and student outcomes.

Describe the research/evidence base supporting the strategy and why it is a good fit: Based on our latest climate survey data, there needs to be more focus on fostering a positive relationships with families and creating a more inclusive and safe school culture for all students.

Associated Root Causes:



Capacity to Address Behavioral, Discipline, and Emotional Needs:

The recent increase in behavioral, social, and emotional needs among our students requires additional qualified staff to support our students.



Teacher Support, Training, and Resources:

Although the school has dedicated its professional development dollars to Waldorf certification training for all its teachers, there is still a great need to provide the teachers with more classroom management assistance, training, and resources to better support them and their students.

Implementation Benchmarks Associated with MIS

| IB Name | Description | Start/End/ Repeats | Key Personnel | Status |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|--|--------|
|  Parent Engagement | Create more parent engagement and learning opportunities to help support students | 03/01/2022 05/26/2023 Quarterly | TLC, Pedagogical Director, Communication Specialist | |



Expand the Student Care Team to meet growing demands of students

07/01/2022
05/26/2023

Dean of Students, Social Worker,
School Counselor

Increase Capacity



Adopt a bullying prevention model for all grades

07/01/2022
05/26/2023

Dean of Students, Social Worker,
School Counselor

Bullying



Reengage our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee to focus on supporting all learners

08/17/2022
05/26/2023

Director of School Performance, Board of Directors members, TLC

DEI





Provide students with Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 instruction in SEL

08/17/2022
05/26/2023

Dean of Students, Social Worker,
School Counselor, Executive Director

Multi-Tiered
Approach to SEL

Action Steps Associated with MIS

| Name | Description | Start/End Date | Resource | Key Personnel | Status |
|---|--|--------------------------|---------------------|--|--------|
|  Risk Assessment Training | All key personnel who work with social, emotional, behavioral, or mental health needs of students will receive threat assessment and suicide risk assessment training. | 07/01/2022 05/26/2023 | CSSRC/ General Fund | Social Worker, Dean of Students, School Counselor, Executive Director, Administrative Team | |
|  Friendship Club | Create a LGBTQ+ after school club to support LGBTQ+ students and allies. | 08/17/2022 05/26/2023 | | School Counselor, classroom teachers, Social Worker | |



Simplicity Parenting

Re-engage and partner with Simplicity Parenting author, Kim John Payne, to provide training, lectures, webinars, and other resources to parents, teachers, and community members related to parenting methods and discipline.

08/17/2022
05/26/2023

General Funds

Executive Director, Pedagogical Director, TLC



Parent Enrichment Conferences

Continue engaging current and interested community members through Waldorf-inspired parent enrichment conferences, information sessions, and community talks.

10/26/2022
05/26/2023

General Fund

Pedagogical Director, Communication Specialist, Director of School Performance, TLC

School Target Setting



Priority Performance Challenge : Continued high need for behavioral, social, and emotional supports



PERFORMANCE INDICATOR: Student Behavior

MEASURES / METRICS:

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE TARGETS

2022-2023: By the end of 2022-2023, the number of reportable behavioral incidents, referrals, and in-school and out-of-school suspensions will remain the same as reported in SY21-22.

2023-2024: By the end of 2023-2024, the number of reportable behavioral incidents, referrals, and in-school and out-of-school suspensions will decrease by 25% compared to SY21-22.

INTERIM MEASURES FOR 2022-2023: The percentage of parents reporting that their child has experienced bullying in SY22-23 will be reduced by half compared to SY21-22 according to the yearly School Perceptions Parent Engagement Survey.



Priority Performance Challenge : Teacher turnover



PERFORMANCE INDICATOR: Student Engagement

MEASURES / METRICS:

ANNUAL
PERFORMANCE
TARGETS

2022-2023: By October Count of 2023, we will have positive enrollment growth and will have the same number of students as we did in 2022

2023-2024: By October Count of 2023, we will have positive enrollment growth and will grow the number of students to 420.

INTERIM MEASURES FOR 2022-2023: By the end of SY22-23 will see attrition rates halved from SY20-21



PERFORMANCE INDICATOR: Other

MEASURES / METRICS:

ANNUAL
PERFORMANCE
TARGETS

2022-2023: By January 15, 2023, MSCS will have retained 80% of our teachers who were offered positions based on SY21-22 performance evaluations completed by May 30, 2022. By January 15, 2023, MSCS will have retained 70% of our student support staff who were offered positions based on SY21-22 performance evaluations completed by May 30, 2022.

2023-2024:

INTERIM MEASURES FOR 2022-2023: By November 1, 2022, MSCS will have a pool of at least 5 quality substitute teachers who accept daily assignments at least 75% of the time they are asked.



Priority Performance Challenge : Declining math and ELA achievement and growth scores in all grades



PERFORMANCE INDICATOR: Academic Achievement (Status)

MEASURES / METRICS: R

2022-2023: By the end of SY22-23, the number of students in grades 2 reported to have a significant reading deficiency will be

ANNUAL
PERFORMANCE
TARGETS

reduced by 35% compared to the end of SY21-22. The number of students in grade 3 having significant reading deficiency will be less than a quarter of the number of 3rd grade students.

2023-2024: By the end of SY22-23, the number of students in grades 2 and 3 reported to have a significant reading deficiency, will be less than a quarter of the total number of grades 2 and 3 students.

INTERIM MEASURES FOR 2022-2023:



PERFORMANCE INDICATOR: Academic Achievement (Status)

MEASURES / METRICS: ELA

ANNUAL
PERFORMANCE
TARGETS

2022-2023: When measured by CMAS, our Elementary School Students will achieve at Mean Scale Score of 735 or above in ELA and our Middle School will achieve a Mean Scale Score of 745 or above in ELA.

2023-2024: When measured by CMAS, our Elementary School Students will achieve at Mean Scale Score of 745 or above in ELA and our Middle School will achieve a Mean Scale Score of 750 or above in ELA.

INTERIM MEASURES FOR 2022-2023: As measured and observed through student portfolios, local assessment data (e.g NWEA MAP, DIBELS, SIPPS), 75% of elementary and middle school students will show growth in language usage in the 2022-23 school year.



PERFORMANCE INDICATOR: Academic Achievement (Status)

MEASURES / METRICS: M

ANNUAL
PERFORMANCE
TARGETS

2022-2023: When measured by CMAS, our students in Elementary School will achieve at Mean Scale Score of 725 or above in math and our Middle School students will achieve a Mean Scale Score of 735 or above in math.

2023-2024: When measured by CMAS, our students in Elementary School will achieve at Mean Scale Score of 735 or above in math and our Middle School students will achieve a Mean Scale Score of 745 or above in math.

INTERIM MEASURES FOR 2022-2023: As measured and observed through local assessment data (e.g NWEA MAP), 75% of elementary and middle school students will show growth in Math in the 2022-23 school year.



PERFORMANCE INDICATOR: Disaggregated Achievement

MEASURES / METRICS: M

ANNUAL
PERFORMANCE
TARGETS

2022-2023: When measured by CMAS, our minority students and students eligible for FRL will in Elementary achieve at Mean Scale Score of 725 or above in math and our our minority students and students eligible for FRL in Middle School will achieve a Mean Scale Score of 735 or above in math.

2023-2024: When measured by CMAS, our minority students and students eligible for FRL will in Elementary achieve at Mean Scale Score of 735 or above in math and our our minority students and students eligible for FRL in Middle School will achieve a Mean Scale Score of 745 or above in math.

INTERIM MEASURES FOR 2022-2023: As measured and observed through local assessment data (e.g NWEA MAP), most of our minority students and students eligible for FRL will achieve the same growth as the rest of our student population in elementary and middle school.
