

THE STUDIO SCHOOL CHARTER SCHOOL PROPOSAL

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THE STUDIO SCHOOL CHARTER SCHOOL PROPOSAL

A. Vision and Philosophy

Description of Educational Vision and Philosophy

The Studio School will be a technology- and arts-integrated K-5¹ elementary school where children from all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds have an opportunity to become creative, critical thinkers. Children in multi-age classrooms will pose questions, explore concepts, develop theories, and solve problems in collaboration with their teachers, peers, and other adults.

The Studio School will model the democratic principles that are at the foundation of public education by giving children and their families a voice in developing a project-based curriculum supportive of the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) standards. Collaborative, goal oriented, long-term projects will supplement more directive instruction, providing students with multi-modal and innovative learning experiences in addition to traditional subject-based instruction. Children will take an active role in planning their day at school with increased opportunities to experience the arts—

¹ First year of implementation will be grades K-1; second year of implementation, K-3; third year of implementation, K-5

music, dance, drama, and visual arts—and to work with technology. The Studio School curriculum will be based on the MMSD curriculum standards and will be flexibly implemented to meet the needs of diverse learners. Teaching staff, along with family and community members when appropriate will collaborate to design and plan project-based learning experiences with students. When appropriate, family and community members will be invited to take an active role in this process. Curriculum integrated projects will be student-initiated but teacher directed to ensure that important academic standards are met.

The Studio School is inspired by an educational approach that originated in Reggio Emilia, Italy, after WWII had devastated their city and left it without any schools. A group of parents, under the leadership of Loris Malaguzzi, determined that they wanted to develop their own approach to educating children. The innovative and deeply complex educational practice they developed is known as the Reggio Approach.

Reggio Municipal Preschools, designed to offer quality learning opportunities to all children, are based on democratic principles rooted in a high regard for the capabilities and rights of children. Reggio founders felt that children's abilities were often underestimated in traditional educational settings and as a result students' unique strengths and abilities went unrecognized and undervalued. In contrast, Reggio founders embraced an alternative assumption—that children are competent, resourceful, curious, imaginative, inventive, and possess a desire to interact and communicate with others. Instructional practices within the Reggio approach spring from these fundamental beliefs. Another assumption underpinning the Reggio approach is that children learn best in a collaborative learning environment through interaction with peers and adults. In Reggio classrooms, students develop a sense of personal power and competence which enables them to effectively negotiate life's challenges while at the same time nurturing their continuing desire to learn. In many ways, the classroom provides children with a model for the world.

Underlying Theories and Research

“Hailed as the best pre-schools in the world by Newsweek magazine in 1991, the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education has attracted the worldwide attention of educators, researchers and just about anyone interested in early childhood education best practices. Even the National Association for the Education of Young Children’s (NAEYC) revised version of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) guidelines also included examples from Reggio approach.” (Source: <http://www.brainy-child.com/article/reggioemilia.html>)

The Reggio model has inspired educators from around the world. After visiting the schools in Reggio Emilia, Jerome Bruner, one of the best known and influential psychologists of the twentieth century, made the following comment in an Italian newspaper:

It was not just that they were better than anything I'd ever seen...What struck me about the Reggio preschools was how they cultivated imagination and, in the process, how they empowered the children's sense of what is possible. -- la Repubblica, January 14, 1996

Howard Gardner, a researcher at Harvard University, presented his theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) in the mid-1980s, broadening educators’ view of “intelligence”. Gardner originally proposed seven “intelligences” which included logical-mathematical, linguistic, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligence. In his work with “Project Zero” (a Harvard Graduate School of Education research group studying the role of the arts in education), Gardner studied the schools in Reggio Emilia, Italy. In his introduction to *Making Learning Visible: Children as Individual and Group Learners* (2001, Harvard Graduate School of Education) Gardner states:

...multiple intelligences, new forms of assessment, education for understanding...suggest areas in which our Project Zero work overlaps with longstanding concerns in Reggio Emilia...our colleagues in Reggio Emilia are keenly aware of the many ways in which youngsters organize and make sense of experience - not restricted to eight or nine modes of representation, it is they who have celebrated the hundred languages of children. (P.27)

The “hundred languages of children” is a frequently used Reggio phrase that refers to the many symbolic languages through which students develop and express their ideas, interests and understandings. If we consider different forms of art and technology to be “languages”, the learning possibilities are greatly broadened. The arts and technology become tools to assist students as they develop their cognitive, emotional, physical and social competencies. In Reggio-inspired classrooms teachers draw upon “the hundred languages” and present concepts and hypotheses in multi modal formats such as print, art, construction, drama, and music.

The theme of the “hundred languages” is found in much of the literature about the Reggio approach and is best expressed in a poem of the same name written by Loris Malaguzzi (Appendix A). In this poem, Malaguzzi describes children as having “100 languages” they can use to develop and represent their learning. He laments that educational systems ignore most of these symbolic languages placing a much greater emphasis on verbal languages alone. “The Hundred Languages” is also the title of an exhibition about the Reggio Emilia approach that has toured worldwide as well as the title of a book comprised of essays about the Reggio Emilia approach²

Constructivism

² Edwards, Gandini, Forman (1998) The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach—Advanced Reflections, 2nd edition, Ablex Publishing, Westport, Connecticut, London

The Reggio Approach is closely aligned with constructivist learning theory, which holds that individuals construct knowledge rather than receive it from others. (McBrein³, 1997) Constructivist teaching is based on the belief that students learn best when they gain knowledge through exploration, active involvement, and interaction with others. It emphasizes that a prerequisite to learning is that a curriculum's content is meaningful and relevant to the learner. It also suggests that learning can take place in a variety of social situations—individually, in partnership, and collaboratively in groups. In constructivist classrooms students are encouraged to think creatively, theorize and explain their reasoning. Through this process children become aware of their own learning. The role of the teacher is to facilitate learning for understanding by responsively designing the curriculum, to judiciously employ a variety of teaching strategies, and promote reflective practices that deepen understanding.

One of The Studio School's primary purposes is to provide opportunities for meaningful student learning. For this to occur, teaching must focus on developing student understanding of **important** concepts, not only on coverage of the curriculum content. In the introduction to the 2nd edition of Understanding by Design (Wiggins and McTighe, 2004⁴), understanding is described as follows:

To understand is to make connections and bind together our knowledge into something that makes sense of things (whereas without understanding we might see only unclear, isolated, or unhelpful facts). To understand is to be able to wisely and effectively use—transfer—what we know, in context; to apply knowledge and skill effectively, in realistic tasks and settings. (P.5)

³ *The Language of Learning: A Guide to Education Terms*, by J. L. McBrien and R. S. Brandt, 1997, Alexandria, VA: ASCD

⁴ Wiggins and McTighe, (2004), Understanding by Design, 2nd Edition, ASCD

The Studio School’s integrated project-based curriculum, while integrating the arts and technology, will encourage students to develop deep understanding of important concepts and to use knowledge in the context of the project.

Diversity

The Studio School will meet the needs of a diverse group of learners through its innovative programs and research-supported practices. Bonnie Benard, senior program associate at WestEd (a nonprofit research, development, and service agency), and contributor to the ASCD book, Closing the Achievement Gap⁵, lists three critical factors in creating a school environment that encourages success for all students—caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for participation / contribution. Benard goes on to say that, “Closing the achievement gap depends on teachers providing these protective factors, no matter what subject, grade, or students they teach.” (Williams, 2003, p.118). Each of Benard’s features is embodied in the pedagogy and structure of The Studio School.

We know that the caring and supportive behaviors of adults can improve student self-esteem and academic achievement (Smith, 1997⁶). Below are just a few of the indicators of caring relationships cited by Benard (Williams, 2003, p. 119) that are most obvious in a Reggio-inspired classroom:

- Actively listens / gives voice
- Gets to know interests
- Creates small, personalized groups
- Creates opportunities for peer-helping
- Uses cross-age mentors (older students, family / community members)
- Aims to meet developmental needs for belonging and respect

⁵ Williams, Belinda, (2003), Closing the Achievement Gap: A Vision for Changing Beliefs and Practices, 2nd Edition, ASCD

⁶ Smith, Vernon, G. *Challenge: A Journal of Research on African American Men*, “The Effects of Caring on the Achievement of African-American Males”, v8 n1 p1-15 Sum-Fall 1997

- Uses community-building process
- Gets to know hopes and dreams / life context

We know that holding high expectations for students increases their achievement⁷ (Ferguson, 1998; Bempechat, 1992). Below are just a few of the indicators of high expectations cited by Benard (Williams, 2003, p. 122) that are readily apparent in a Reggio-inspired classroom:

- Aims to meet developmental needs for mastery and challenge
- Believes in innate capacity of all to learn
- Focuses on whole child (social, emotional, cognitive, physical, spiritual)
- Connects learning to students' interests, strengths, experiences, dreams, goals
- Encourages creativity and imagination
- Recognizes strengths and interests
- Provides clear expectations
- Groups students heterogeneously
- Employs authentic assessment
- Sees students as constructors of their own knowledge and meaning
- Helps family members see students' strengths, interests, goals

Below are just a few indicators of Participation / Contribution cited by Benard (Williams, 2003, p. 124) that are most obvious in a Reggio-inspired classroom:

- Build a democratic, inclusive community
- Practices equity and inclusion

⁷ Ferguson, Ronald F. "Teachers' Expectations and the Test-Score Gap," in C. Jencks and M. Phillips, eds. *The Black-White Test Score Gap*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1998.

^{vii} Ladson Billings, Gloria, (1994), *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*, Jossey Bass

^{viii} Bempechat, Janine, "Fostering High Achievement in African American Children: Home, School, and Public Policy Influences", Trends and Issues No. 16. ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, Institute for Urban and Minority Education, Box 40, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY, 1992

- Aims to meet developmental needs for power / autonomy and meaning
- Provides opportunities for planning, decision-making, problem-solving
- Empowers students to create classroom rules and contribute to physical environment
- Holds regular and as-needed class meetings
- Infuses communication skills into all learning experiences
- Creates opportunities for creative expression (art, music, writing / poetry, storytelling /drama)
- Provides opportunities for collaborative learning
- Provides ongoing opportunities for personal reflection and dialogue / discussion
- Uses small interest-based groups
- Invites participation and contribution of family and community members in meaningful classroom activities

In her well known book on teaching African American children, *The Dreamkeepers*^{vii}, Gloria Ladson-Billings states that in order to effectively teach a diverse student population, there is a need for more “culturally relevant teaching” in our schools. She identifies the following key ideas: conceptions of self and others” (p. 34), social relations (p. 55), and conceptions of knowledge (p. 81), and common practices within these categories to be defining characteristics of the level of cultural relevance in a classroom. The practices that she recommends are an integral part of the Reggio approach.

The Arts and Technology

Researchers from Teachers College Columbia University studied the general effects of the arts on learning and found significant relationships between rich in-school arts programs and creative, cognitive, and personal competencies needed for academic success (Fiske, 1999). Their study involved over 2,000 elementary and middle schools students who were either in a “high-arts exposure

Fiske, Edward, *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*, The Arts Education Partnership and the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. Essay by Burton, Judith, Horowitz, Robert, Abeles, Hal, “Learning In and Through the Arts: Curriculum Implications”, Center for Arts Education Research, Teachers College, Columbia University, July 1999.

group” or a “low-arts exposure group” (determined by the number of years children received in-school arts instruction and the range of different arts they studied during this time). The study found that students in the “high-arts group” were stronger than those in the “low-arts group” in their ability to express their thoughts and idea, exercise their imaginations, and take risks in their learning (p. 39). Students in the “high-arts group” were also much more likely than those in the “low-arts group” to think of themselves as competent in academics (p.40).

Experiences in the arts are becoming less and less available to children in many schools. For most elementary students technology is not part of the everyday learning experience. Yet, the pervasive influence of technology is evident throughout our culture and students benefit from early experiences that employ technology as a learning tool and means of self-expression. When combined with constructivist methods, the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) states that technology will help students to develop higher order skills and function effectively beyond the classroom. An emphasis on the integration of the arts and technology into elementary classroom and studio curriculum at The Studio School will offer children more multi modal learning experiences and increase the potential to engage children who are naturally drawn to these opportunities.

The A+ Program (see Appendix B), developed by the University of North Carolina, is a recognized arts integration program that is used in many schools throughout the United States. The Studio School, in partnership with the Sheboygan Elementary School of the Arts and Academics (another developing charter school), plans to partner in bringing their consultants to Wisconsin in June 2007 to provide guidance in developing a standards based arts integration curriculum.

Where are there Reggio-inspired American schools?

While the schools in Reggio Emilia were originally designed for children six years of age and younger, the approach is now moving into the primary grades in Italy and around the world. Over a hundred

Reggio inspired public and private schools serving children from the ages of 6 months through 8th grade can be found throughout the United States. In the past decade, several Reggio inspired public elementary charter schools have been established in the United States. The Child Discovery Center in Grand Rapids Michigan is one of these schools and currently serves children in Kindergarten through 5th grade. According to Susan Lukaart, one of the founders, the school has been successful in implementing this approach in a way that enables children to meet district and state standards. This school, as well as two Reggio-influenced schools in St. Louis, MO, has served as models in developing The Studio School vision.

Nancy Donahue, a member of The Studio School planning group, was a classroom teacher at the previously mentioned Reggio influenced Preschool of the Arts for six years. She has also visited Reggio-influenced schools in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Missouri on several occasions and participated in a study tour of the schools in Reggio Emilia, Italy. Last month she and another member of the planning group visited the Child Discovery Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Reggio collaboratives, as well as the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance (NAREA) and the international organization called Reggio Children, offer additional opportunities to learn from other Reggio inspired schools in the United States and elsewhere.

Why a Charter is Necessary

The innovative and distinctive educational program offered at The Studio School gives parents and students another strong educational option within the Madison school district. Families within the Madison area who feel the Reggio approach is a good match for their children will value this option. Providing this choice could potentially keep families from leaving the MMSD. It will also draw families into the district that would otherwise enroll their children in private schools or opt to home school their children.

In addition to offering Madison families a new educational opportunity The Studio School may provide value to the larger system. The MMSD curriculum vision and the organizing elements of the Educational Framework—engagement, learning and relationships—are very compatible with the philosophy of The Studio School. By demonstrating alternative and unique ways in which the vision articulated by the MMSD school district might be realized, we hope that The Studio School will spur more innovation within the system.

The community of educators within The Studio School (teachers, studio specialist, and pedagogical specialist) will need to diverge from some of the school district’s policies and practices in order to successfully implement the Reggio approach. The Studio School will need to: 1) create a physical environment typical of Reggio-inspired schools, 2) attract constructivist teachers, 3) organize the school schedule for student project work and teacher collaboration, and 4) support the unique quality and kinds of professional practices in Reggio-inspired schools. As a charter school, the governance structure would also differ in form and function in an effort to encourage active involvement of parents and community members

The Studio School is likely to have an entirely different look and feel from most traditional classrooms. A guiding principle in the Reggio Approach is that the environment serves as “the third teacher” along with the children and adults. Attention is given to creating an aesthetic beauty within the school and the classroom itself, designed to provoke student curiosity and invite exploration and problem based investigations.

The role of practitioners changes dramatically in the Reggio approach. Instructors must be educated in and committed to constructivist learning principles and must adopt a way of “being with children” that allows students to take ownership of their own learning. Teachers must be willing to relinquish some control over the curriculum and to skillfully include children and parents in instructional

decision-making, while still insuring coverage of important academic standards. Opportunities to learn about their students must be created in order to identify interests and facilitate learning.

Teachers regularly participate in reflective practices through the use of “documentation”—a technique where samples of students’ work, interactions, and behaviors are studied (e.g., transcribed conversations, photos, drawings, videos) to understand their students’ learning process and determine the next appropriate instructional steps. Documentation can be compiled and reviewed by any combination of educational staff, students, and parents who collaboratively guide the design of future experiences in an ongoing investigation or project. Documentation is typically displayed visually on “panels” or display boards. These panels show the learning process and provide parents with deeper insight into the Reggio approach and their understanding of how children learn. It can also provide information about how the Reggio approach differs from more traditional approaches. It is essential that all of The Studio School’s staff is committed to developing a deep understanding of the documentation process and how it is best implement it.

The professional work described above is best done in an autonomous school setting where a unique school culture can develop and where practitioners can collaborate with students and their families to provide a curriculum that is responsive to each child’s needs and interests.

How this School is Different.

Nontraditional learners will have the choice of attending a school that offers a different educational experience with a curriculum that integrates the arts and technology into classroom learning

experiences that are democratic, relevant, and collaborative. The following elements provide further description of the distinctive qualities of the Reggio-inspired Studio School:

Emergent Curriculum

- Teachers follow the children's interests, reframing them so as to address important skills and knowledge as outlined in the curriculum standards. (Teachers are responsible for ensuring that students acquire the knowledge and skills outlined in the MMSD standards).
- The curriculum has purposive progression but not an established scope and sequence.

Project-Based Learning

- Projects, emerging from children's interests and learning goals, are in-depth, studies of concepts, ideas and interests which arise within the group. They can be short-term (one week) and long-term (throughout the school year).
- Projects are collaborative. Group work, both large and small, is considered valuable and necessary to advance cognitive development.
- Throughout a project teachers help children make decisions about the direction of study, the ways in which the group will research the topic, the representational medium that will demonstrate and showcase learning.
- NOTE: In addition to project work, students will also receive focused instruction in the language arts and mathematics.

Innovative Arts and Technology Integration

Portions taken from an article online at <http://www.brainy-child.com/article/reggioemilia.html>

- Students use the arts as a tool for cognitive, linguistic, and social development and as a symbolic language through which they express their understandings
- Concepts and hypotheses are presented in multiple formats such as print, art, construction, drama, and music
- Hands-on learning experiences utilizing technology emphasize creative and critical thinking

Individual Student Learning and Assessment Plans

- Students, with their teachers, set personalized learning goals based on their strengths and interests
- Students select work samples for their portfolio that show progress toward learning goals
- Student use their portfolios to communicate learning progress to parents and teachers and to strategize next steps in their learning
- Parents and students participate in developing and using rubrics matched to the standards that can be used to track progress towards learning goals

Parent and Community Involvement

- Parents and community members are collaborators, mentors, and experts that co-create the emerging curriculum with students and teachers (Communication and interaction can deepen children's inquiry and theory building about the world around them)
- Programs in Reggio are family centered. An "education based on relationships" focuses on each child in relation to others and seeks to activate and support children's reciprocal relationships with other children, family, teachers, society, and the environment.
- Parents are involved in the governance of the school

Documentation as assessment and advocacy

- Documentation of children's work in progress is viewed as an important tool in the learning process for children, teachers, and parents.
- Teachers act as recorders (documenters) for the children, helping them trace and revisit their words and actions and thereby making the learning visible.
- Pictures of children engaged in experiences; their words as they discuss what they are doing, feeling, and thinking; and the children's interpretation of experience through the visual media are displayed as a graphic presentation of the dynamics of learning.
- Documenting and displaying the children's project work is necessary to help children express, revisit, and construct and reconstruct their feelings, ideas and understandings.

The teacher as researcher

- The role of the teacher is that of a learner alongside the children. The teacher is a teacher-researcher, a resource and guide as she/he lends expertise to children.
- As a teacher-researcher, educators carefully listen, observe, and document children's work and the growth of community in their classroom in order to stimulate and scaffold children's learning and thinking.
- Teachers are committed to reflection about their own teaching and learning.
- Classroom teachers working in pairs and collaboration, sharing information and mentoring between personnel.

The environment-as-teacher

- The aesthetic beauty within the schools is seen as an important part of respecting the child and his / her learning environment

- Teachers organize environments rich in possibilities and provocations that invite the children to undertake extended exploration and engage students through problem solving experiences.
- Common space available to all children in the school includes common areas and studios in which children from different classrooms can come together.

B. Purpose

The Studio School has four fundamental purposes:

- Improve academic achievement (as measured on standardized tests)
- Ensure students have positive perception of learning and school
- Develop children’s critical and creative thinking by providing an arts and technology enriched learning environment
- Strengthen positive connections between families, the school, and the community through collaborative partnerships and governance

The Studio School will fulfill these purposes by taking the following measures:

- Develop an integrated curriculum including the same skills and concepts in other MMSD schools
- Provide more multi-modal learning opportunities that incorporate the arts and technology
- Offer opportunities for children to engage in art experiences on a regular basis
- Offer project based learning to actively engage children in more meaningful and relevant learning
- Reach out to parents and community members as collaborators, mentors, and experts
- Involve parents in the governance of the school and the classroom curriculum

C. Leadership and Governance

Person Establishing The Studio School

The initiative to create The Studio School was started by Nancy Donahue (a constructivist educator) in collaboration with a group of parents, educators, and community members. Several of the parents have children who attended Preschool of the Arts – a west side preschool that offers an innovative, Reggio inspired educational program with an emphasis on the arts. Ms. Donahue and the planning group have been working since May of 2005 to create a Reggio inspired school for children to attend after they move on to Kindergarten. It is also a fundamental objective of the planning group that this innovative educational opportunity be offered in a public school setting so that it is a potential option for all families in the Madison community. The core planning group currently consists of Cliff and Lauren Cunningham (parents), Nancy Donahue (educator), Paul Donahue (community member), Kristin Forde (former teacher and current community member), Sarah Groessl (parent), Lisa McGuffey (parent), Kristina Navarro-Haffner (parent), Kim Stalker-Herron (parent), Sigrid Schoepal (parent), Julie Traxler (educator). (In January, most of these members' roles will also include a seat on The Studio School, Inc. Board of Directors.)

Person in Charge and Administrative Services

The Board of Directors of The Studio School, Inc. will be in charge of and govern the charter school. The charter school's principal will be an employee of the school district and be responsible for leading and directing the day-to-day operations of the charter school. The MMSD will provide administrative services to the charter school in the same manner in which such services are provided to other MMSD schools. At the request of The Studio School, the MMSD will provide administrative services that include, but are not limited to, the following: accounting and business operations, assisting in staff training and curriculum development, providing instructional materials and other administrative services the district provides to support other MMSD schools.

School Governance Structure

The school will be governed by a partnership between members of the MMSD Administration, MMSD Board of Education, the MMSD Bridging Committee (that is currently working with Nuestro Mundo, Inc.), The Studio School, Inc. and The Studio School Site Leadership Council (SLC). Please refer to Appendix C for an organizational chart of the proposed Governance Structure.

The Site Leadership Council will be comprised of the school principal, staff members, parents, members of The Studio School, Inc. Board of Directors and/or Advisory Board, and members of the Madison community. The District will oversee key operational aspects such as busing, lunch programs, before and after school programs, facilities, and support services as well as monitor compliance with local policies and practices. The Studio School Site Leadership Council will be responsible for many of the site-based decisions and functions such as school/family events, fundraising activities, staff development, curriculum development, student assessment, scheduling, and equipment; while The Studio School Board of Directors will be responsible for developing and overseeing adherence to the mission and vision of the school. Decisions will be made by consensus or vote if the Site Council cannot meet consensus. Decision making by The Studio School, Inc. Board will follow the same protocol.

We have researched underutilized schools in Madison and wish to recommend that The Studio School be located in Lapham, Emerson, or Lowell Elementary Schools. Our long-range vision is to partner with other community organizations for Madison youth and potentially create a downtown site to house all of these organizations. This could be modeled after the recently constructed Milwaukee Youth Arts Center (see <http://www.youthartscenter.org/> for more information) and would offer children attending The Studio School more opportunities to participate in enriching educational programs outside of the regular school attendance hours or days.

Relationship of The Studio School to MMSD

The Studio School will function as an instrumentality of the Madison Metropolitan School District.

D. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Description of Educational Program

Children are naturally curious. They want to find out about people, the world, things in the world, how they relate to each other, how things happen and why they happen. The role of the teacher is to support this curiosity and facilitate learning through carefully designed experiences that emerge out of the children's interests and experiences. The curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices of The Studio School emerge from the fundamental belief that teaching and learning should be organized in a way that encourages student curiosity and supports their will to learn.

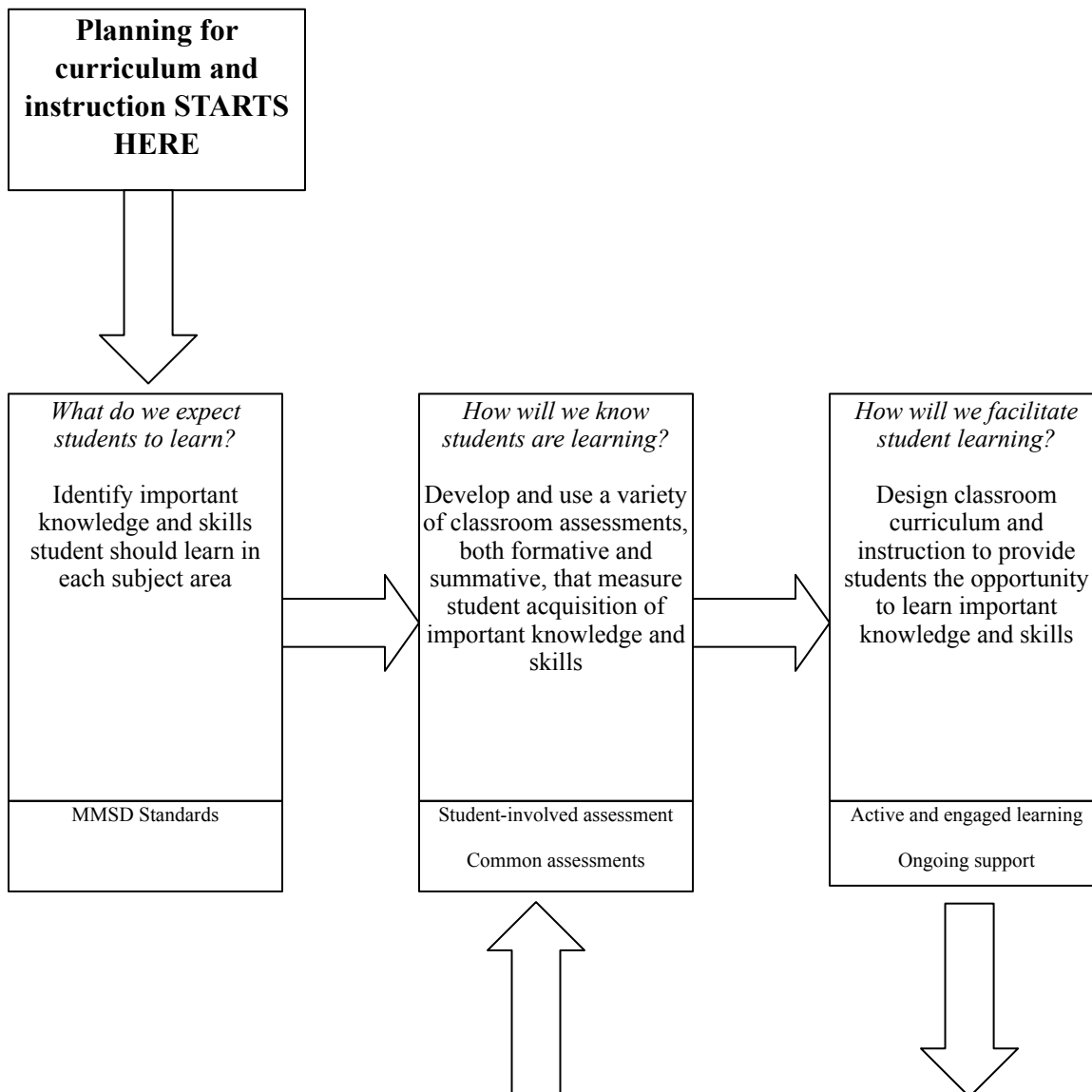
Curriculum and Instructional Planning

Teachers in Reggio-inspired classrooms approach curriculum and instructional design differently than teachers in more typical educational settings. The typical approach to planning curriculum and instructional begins with identifying the curriculum standards for which teachers are responsible. Classroom assessments are then designed to evaluate the level at which students are meeting those curriculum standards. Finally, classroom curriculum and instructional activities are developed in order to provide students with the opportunity to learn the curriculum standards. Classroom activities are often outlined, month-by-month, and written in a curriculum sequence well in advance of instruction. Throughout the instructional process teachers collect formative and summative assessment data to determine how well students are learning, and use this data to adjust instruction. The curriculum scope and sequence may fluctuate from the original plan in order to meet learning needs of students, but for the most part the curriculum is established and will unfold as planned.

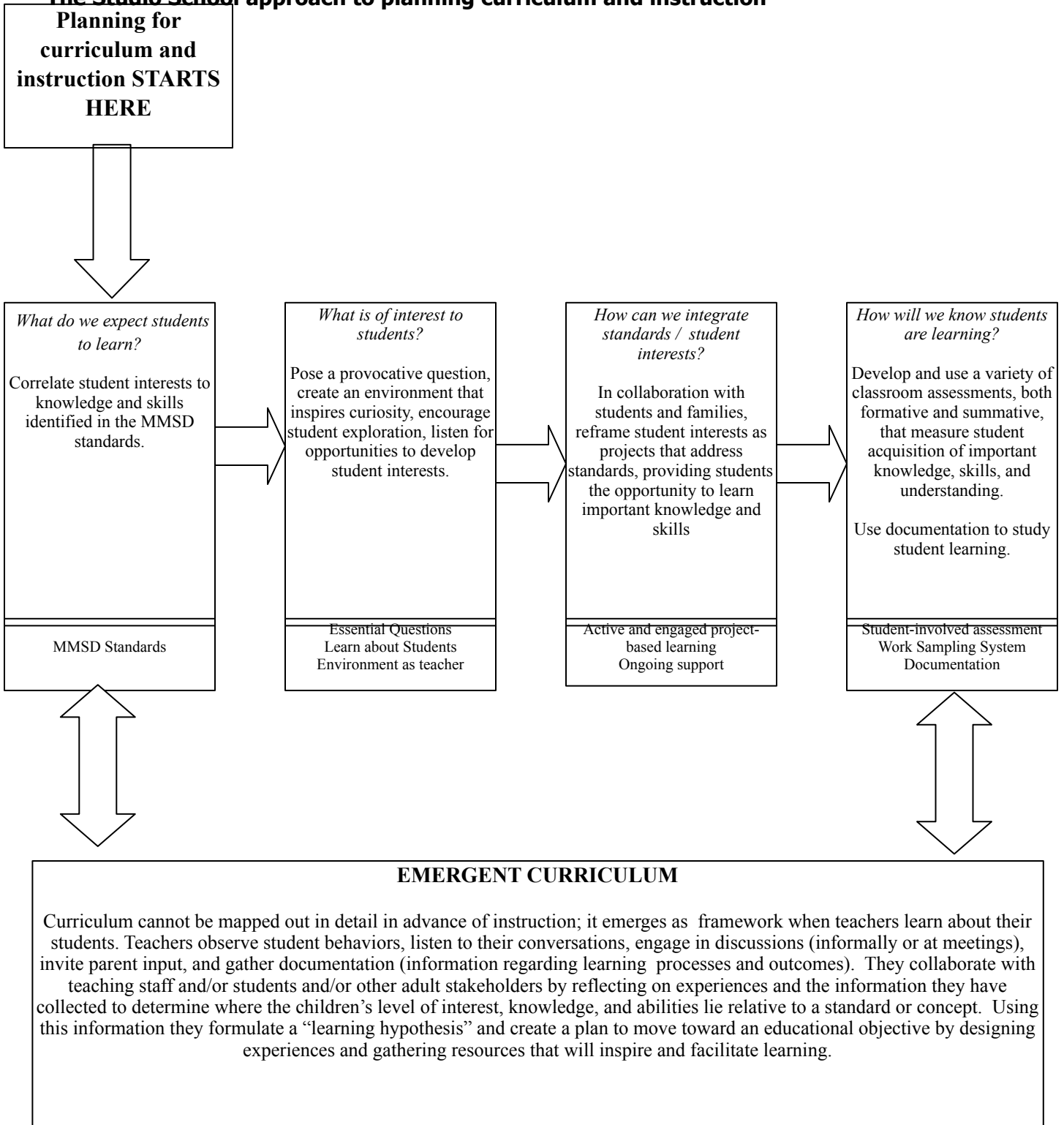
The Studio School approach to curriculum and instructional planning also begins with a review of the curriculum standards for which teachers are responsible. With these standards in mind, teachers create a classroom environment that encourages student exploration of ideas. They present “provocations”—learning situations that incite student curiosity—and observe students’ as they respond to these provocations to identify interests that may lead to a deeper exploration of the curriculum standards. Teachers, students, and when possible, their families, collaboratively reframe student interests into projects that incorporate standards. Because curriculum projects emerge from student interests, some of the curriculum cannot be mapped in advance of instruction but rather evolve, as student interests are uncovered. To ensure that standards are being met, teachers regularly evaluate student learning in relationship to the standards and adjust class work accordingly.

Studio school teachers develop and use a variety of classroom assessments, both formative and summative, to measure student acquisition of important knowledge and skills. An important component of the assessment system is the “work sampling system”, which is a portfolio approach where students and teacher collect evidence of student mastery of important standards. Students are also encouraged to reflect, review and make decisions regarding the work they would like to place in their portfolios. In addition to examining student assessment data teachers use “documentation” to study student learning. Diagrams of the typical instructional approach and The Studio School’s instructional approach follow:

Typical approach to planning curriculum and instruction



The Studio School approach to planning curriculum and instruction



In the initial year of implementation The Studio School will use curriculum materials already adopted by the District and will augment student learning with project work. After the first year, the adoption alternative programs will be considered if it is determined that they are a better fit with The Studio School philosophy and instructional approach. The Studio School will provide teachers with professional development opportunities to deepen their understanding of the Reggio approach and other related pedagogical practices. In addition, the integrative nature of The Studio School curriculum will require ongoing collaboration between specialists (art, music, physical education, library / media, etc.) in addition to classroom teachers and assistants. When appropriate or needed, teachers will also collaborate with parents, community members, or colleagues to enhance and deepen learning experiences.

Methods to Ensure Standards are Met and Student Progress will be Assessed

Pupil progress in attaining the education goals under Wisconsin Statutes, Sec. 118.01, will be measured by a variety of classroom assessments, and other assessments as deemed appropriate by the educators of the charter school and other MMSD staff.

Authentic assessments of children's progress will be provided through the use of portfolios and rubrics. The Work Sampling System offered by Best Practices, Inc. may be used as a template for student portfolios. (The previously mentioned A+ Program also uses a portfolio system.) The work sampling portfolio, compiled by teachers and students, will contain examples of student work and other documentation to provide evidence of how student are progressing toward meeting standards. Other forms of documented work samples might include transcribed conversations, photos or electronic files. Teachers will create individualized developmental rubrics with input from the students and their families. Standards based checklist will also be used to track progress and achievement levels. Students will receive report cards and participate in standardized testing in accordance with current MMSD practices.

Manner in which Annual Audits of Programmatic Operations will be Performed

An ongoing internal assessment process will be developed and performed by the charter school's staff and the governing board of the charter school. Included in the assessment criteria will student academic achievement information, attendance data, and feedback provided by students, staff and parents. This information will be incorporated into The Studio School's improvement plan.

A task force will be formed to develop tools for assessing how well The Studio School is fulfilling its stated purpose in addition to meeting the conditions of the charter contract. Parents of students will be surveyed to obtain feedback on how effective they perceive the school to be in following its vision and fulfilling its mission. A survey will be handed out in late September, in late January and again in May to monitor progress and make improvements.

E. Personnel

The ability to work collaboratively with a variety of people, flexibility, creativity, openness to new ideas, along with a desire to actively involve family and community members in the curriculum are essential to carrying out the vision and mission of The Studio School.

Accordingly, The Studio School will seek staff members that understand, support and promote constructivist learning theory and practices. These practices would include the creation of learner-centered classroom environments, open-ended techniques in students and designing activities, using student focus groups, learning with the students, reflective practices, documenting the learning process and products, and negotiating curriculum with other stakeholders.

Approximate Staffing Level

2 – Full time certified teachers

1 – part or full time Studio Specialist (FTE's to be determined by enrollment)

1 – part or full time Pedagogical Specialist (FTE's to be determined by enrollment)

In its initial year, The Studio School will require at least two full-time certified classroom teachers who have knowledge and experience in constructivist learning theory and practice. Knowledge and/or experience in one or more of the arts and/or technology are also strongly preferred. In addition, a Studio Specialist with experience working with children and a background in the arts (especially dance or drama) and/or technology will also be hired. The Studio Specialist will collaborate closely with the classroom teachers and Pedagogical Specialist in an effort supporting and facilitating children's work in focus groups, conduct activities involved in project work, and compiling documentation.

A part-time pedagogical specialist will be hired to facilitate and oversee the ongoing integration of content areas, application of constructivist learning theory and practice, and collaboration and outreach to family members and community resources. The primary responsibility of the specialist is to facilitate and coordinate pedagogical integrity. This person will not have direct authority over the teachers but will provide them with feedback, collaborate on project development, coach them in areas of implementation and documentation, and help in developing resources to support project work. Another major aspect of this position will be to support teachers in their designing and planning curriculum, choosing instructional strategies, and developing assessment tools. The pedagogical specialist will also play a critical role in overseeing and assessing how well The Studio School is meeting its objectives through participation in the development of periodic surveys to be given to the parents and other means of improving program implementation. Qualified candidates must have prior experience teaching in a constructivist classroom. Experience working with the Reggio Approach as well as experience with mentoring or training adults is strongly preferred. Additional qualifications for

this position will be determined in accordance with The Studio School needs and MMSD job classification practices.

Process for Recruitment, Supervision and Evaluation of Staff

Staff will be hired by the Madison Metropolitan School District in conjunction with input from The Studio School, Inc. Board of Directors. Direct supervision and evaluation of the staff will be the responsibility of the school Principal.

Qualification of Individuals Employed by THE STUDIO SCHOOL

Individuals employed in the charter school will be required to hold current licenses or permits that are required by state law or the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, including licenses and permits that are specifically applicable to charter schools. The MMSD shall employ all personnel for The Studio School and, therefore, the MMSD's employment requirements and standards, as well as applicable collective bargaining agreements will apply to such employees.

The Studio School will function as an instrumentality of the Madison Metropolitan School District and as such intends to comply with the MTI collective bargaining agreement and MMSD personnel policies and practices.

F. Students

Number of Students to be Enrolled

The Studio School will open in fall 2007 with two multi-age classrooms serving Kindergarten and First Grade students. The classes will each have between 15 and 22 students with students at each grade level and age level divided equally between the classrooms. Classrooms and levels will be added as

determined by need in subsequent years. (See Appendix E for Projection of Student Enrollment and Staffing)

Procedures The School Will Follow To Ensure The Health And Safety Of Pupils

The charter school will comply with and follow local, state and federal laws and regulations, codes and the MMSD policies and procedures as they relate to the health and safety of pupils. The Studio Schools' pupils will have access to the MMSD's health services.

Means by which the School will Achieve Racial And Ethnic Balance Among Its Pupils that is Reflective of the School District Population

The charter school will achieve a racial and ethnic balance among its pupils that is reflective of the MMSD student population by actively recruiting students from diverse student populations. To ensure this balance, concentrated outreach efforts will be made by planning group members to potential families within the school's attendance area with information about this educational option as soon as a site has been determined. Literature about the school will be translated into Spanish (and other languages, if needed) and planning group members will meet with parents in the attendance area at school meetings, community meetings or in parents' homes. In accordance with DPI policy and common charter school practice, a small number of spaces will be made available to children of members of the Founding Board but they are not to exceed five children or 10% of the maximum potential student population, whichever is greater.

Requirements for Admission into the Charter School and Procedures for Admission

The requirement for admission into the charter school is that a student resides in the attendance area of the MMSD high school in which The Studio School is located, or with the written agreement of the MMSD and THE STUDIO SCHOOL is otherwise enrolled or eligible to be enrolled in another MMSD school. We are also proposing that children of founding family members are admitted for the first

year and that siblings of current students are admitted in subsequent years. A lottery will be conducted if the number of applications exceeds the authorized student enrollment. If necessary, applications from under represented ethnic or income may be given preferential weighting in the lottery in an effort to ensure a ratio of diversity that is representative of the Madison community. There are no prerequisites for admission other than the submission of an application.

Procedures for Disciplining Pupils

The pupils who are enrolled in The Studio School shall be subject to the MMSD policies and procedures related to disciplined as well as disciplinary actions will be in accordance with the MMSD policies and practices.

Public School Alternatives for Pupils Who Reside in the School District and Do Not Wish to Attend or Are Not Admitted to the Charter School

A pupil who does not wish to attend or who is not admitted into the charter school will be entitled, pursuant to the MMSD Board of Education's policy, to attend their home school, transfer to another MMSD school if space is available and depending on space availability and the criteria for admission, attend MMSD's alternative programs.

G. Business Facilities and Operations

Proposed Financial Relationship

In accordance with an annual budget approved by the MMSD Board of Education, the charter school will be allocated funds, including discretionary funds, in a manner consistent with how the MMSD allocates funds to other MMSD schools. A basic five-year projected budget based on the initial

enrollment of 44 in fall 2007 is provided in Appendix F. This budget is based on information provided by the MMSD administrative staff and attendance projections.

Business and Support Services to be Provided by the District

The MMSD will collaborate with and assist the charter school, when requested by THE STUDIO SCHOOL, in order to ensure the successful implementation and operation of the charter school consistent with the terms of a charter contract.

Annual Audits of Financial Operations

The MMSD Board of Education, or its designee, will conduct an annual audit of the financial operations of the charter school in the same manner in which a financial audit is conducted for other schools in the MMSD.

Description of School Facilities

The Studio School will be embedded in a current MMSD elementary school and will require three contiguous or nearby classrooms – a separate room for each of two classes and one additional room that will be shared by the classrooms. Because The Studio School is based on children’s ongoing opportunities to work on projects in a studio setting, the extra classroom will be set up as a studio. It will contain visual art supplies and other materials to support drama, dance and vocal music experiences. The technology vision will continue to be developed by Studio School staff, Board members, and MMSD administrative staff and technology equipment and software (e.g. laptop computers, software, SmartBoards, cameras, video and sound equipment, costumes and props will also be added to the studio as they are purchased. It is anticipated that a substantial amount of the studio equipment and supplies will be made available through additional grant awards and contributions.

H. Exemptions from Statutes Policies or Contracts

The Studio School requests waivers in the following areas of Curriculum and Instruction:

1. Integrated fine arts/technology/yoga taught by both certified and non-certified staff (educational assistants or other experts such as "artists in residence," "drama coaches," would work with students on specific projects)
2. Possible adaptations of DPI mandated instructional minutes and curriculum standards (e.g., some of the Phys Ed minutes may be met through dance or yoga).

At this time The Studio School requests waivers in the following areas: Mandatory, collaborative, interdisciplinary teacher planning and study meeting times 3x a week which may occur during the student day or an extended work day;

- 1) Mandatory monthly events/meetings to be attended by students, staff and parents;
- 2) Integrated fine arts/technology/yoga curriculum taught by certified or non-certified staff;
- 3) Variation on the delivery of services within the MMSD Instructional Design.

I. Involvement and Input

The Studio School planning group has been holding public meetings on at least a monthly basis since May 2005. Committee meetings and outreach efforts have taken place throughout the Madison Community in addition to the regular meetings. The planning group has made an ongoing and concerted effort to reach out to the entire Madison community through email messages, brochures, the media, attending festivals, phone calls, private meetings, and a website that has been visited over 1700 times.

Several community organizations have indicated an interest in collaboratively partnering with The Studio School. Some of these organizations have written letters of support that can be provided upon request. The names of these organizations are:

Centro Hispano,

DANEnet,

Madison Arts Council,

Madison Youth Choir,

Madison Youth Symphony Orchestra,

Overture Center for the Arts,

Arts Incubator Project.

We currently have a contact list of close to 200 individuals who support The Studio School initiative - many of whom have been directly involved in planning efforts in some capacity. Over the past year, we have also consulted with a group of advisors who have contributed their expertise in a variety of areas related to developing The Studio School. Many of them have agreed to serve on our Advisory Board and are available for consultation on an as needed basis (see Attachment B). In addition to the families of students enrolled in the school, Madison is home to a wealth of individuals and organizations with the potential to serve as partners and resources for The Studio School. We have been encouraged by the overwhelmingly positive response from members of the Madison community. The Studio School planning group looks forward to enriching the lives of its students, families, and community members as well as to making a positive contribution to the Madison Metropolitan School District and the City of Madison.