GEM CHARTER SCHOOL PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PLAN NARRATIVE

GEM Charter School is dedicated to the development of well-rounded individuals, who are proficient, self-confident and have ascertained the potential and desire for life-long learning and improved academic performance through the implementation of the Montessori Method of Education.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF MONTESSORI APPROACH TO EDUCATION:

GEM Charter School is an AMI Montessori School. Essentially, the AMI Montessori curriculum is an approach to education directly based on human development. It is characterized by an emphasis on independence, freedom within limits, and respect for a child's natural psychological development which consists of the following universal human tendencies:

- Self-preservation
- Orientation to the environment
- Order
- Exploration
- Communication
- Work, also described as "purposeful activity"
- Manipulation of the environment
- Exactness
- Repetition
- Abstraction
- Self-perfection
- The "mathematical mind"

Students are in multi-aged classrooms that span 3 years or 6 years. This allows the youngest students to imitate and internalize skills prior to receiving a particular lesson because they generally will have observed it being given to another student. The oldest students become leaders and set the example for the younger ones. They also help teach the younger students, which reinforces their knowledge.

In a school that follows the AMI Montessori philosophy, the following components are essential:

1. Mixed age classrooms, typically 3-6 years old, 6-9 years old, 9-12 years old, or 6-12 years old.
2. Student's ability to choose their activity from a prescribed range of options
3. Uninterrupted blocks of work time referred to as work periods
4. An environment where students learn concepts from working with materials, rather than by direct instruction
5. The classroom contains concrete, hands-on manipulative materials.

In the Montessori classroom individual and small group instruction is given. Lessons are given using concrete, hands-on materials that are manipulated enabling the student to visualize a particular concept. The student practices with

the materials and once the student has mastered the intended concept another level is added to expand that concept or the student is moved on to the next lesson, whichever is appropriate. As the student's understanding of a concept increases they are eventually able to abstract and apply the concept to real world situations. A perfect example of this is how the upper elementary students run their pizza fundraising business. Every Wednesday we have pizza day for our entire school. This is the opportunity for students to purchase a pizza lunch rather than bringing their own from home. The older elementary students take care of every aspect of the day-to-day running which includes collecting and recording lunch orders and payments, figuring out the quantity of pizza needed each week and preparing payment when delivery is made. In addition, they are responsible for determining what else is needed to offer a complete lunch. The students prepare a grocery list, arrange a ride, and do the shopping. They have been introduced to QuickBooks to keep track of all the finances and they utilize it to track all income and expenses, prepare bank deposits, and evaluate the overall profitability of the enterprise. Ultimately, this is how in Montessori the concrete concept of math is built upon and eventually abstracted and translated into real-life circumstances.

SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS
2010-2011:

GEM Charter School became a charter school in FY 1999. We are a small school with an average of 57-65 charter students that range from kindergarten to 6th grade. Our average daily membership for 2010-2011 was 57.75 students, 2009-2010 was 65.225, and 2008-2009 was 57.925. There are two multi-age elementary classrooms, one is 1st-3rd grade and the other is 1st-6th grade. Based on this, populations of any one particular grade are small, which means each student's performance on standardized testing can cause our results to fluctuate greatly. Specifically during 2010-2011 there were 12 third graders and 5 fifth graders enrolled, meaning each 3rd grader represents about 8.4% and each 5th grader represents 20% of each of those populations. In the case of 5th grade, each additional student passing the math portion of the AIMS test would increase that percentage by ***20%***, which is an extreme fluctuation but just ***one*** student. Based on our size, our goals are listed in numbers of students rather than percentages.

In reviewing our academic achievement for 2010-2011(graph) the percentage of students passing for Math and Reading are 40% and 60% respectively and the student growth percentages in these same areas were 42.5% and 51.5%. Based on state averages, it is our passing rate for math that isn't meeting the Board's level of adequate academic performance. Our student rates for passing reading and overall student growth percentages (SGP) do meet the Board's level of adequate academic performance, however, there is always room for improvement and our performance management plan outlines both math and reading.

2006-2010:

Our approach to education has always been to screen incoming students through the use of the Montessori materials to determine their academic baseline. Typically, upon enrollment the student is invited to come and spend a day in the classroom they have been placed in. Their visits generally occur during April or May of the semester preceding their actual start date. This is beneficial because there is always a large core group of students who remain in the classroom from year to year. This initial visit helps ease the student's anxiety, gives them a chance to become familiar

with their new environment, and possibly begin to form peer relationships. It also allows the teacher to spend time presenting lessons and working with the student to get an idea of where the he or she stands academically and socially. When a new student is enrolled it is important to consider the "whole" child.

Once the student begins attending they receive a variety of lessons in small groups to determine their overall academic level. There are two aspects that require examination. The first is the student's current academic level. Is the student below grade level, at grade level, or above grade level? The second area of examination is the determination of how quickly the student understands concepts presented. Over the first few weeks the teacher makes the determination of the student's academic baseline. If a student is believed to be below grade level he or she is monitored closely. In addition, the teacher will determine if the student is progressing quickly enough to catch up to grade level over the months to come. If the student isn't progressing quickly enough, the teacher will spend extra time presenting remedial lessons to build a solid foundation. Due to the social environment of the Montessori classroom, the student will also have the benefit of working with students who are practicing at the same level or have mastered the concept. This allows the student to receive the concept from a peer point of view. It also enables the "teaching" student to reinforce their knowledge through demonstration. Further, observing this activity allows the teacher to determine which concepts have been mastered, who is ready to move on, and who still requires extra help in a particular area. In the Montessori classroom observation of the student practicing concepts learned is just as important as presenting lessons.

All of this information is documented and monitored by the classroom teacher. If there is a concern an informal meeting occurs to get input from the Director, who is AMI trained in both Primary (Kindergarten) and Elementary (1st-6th grade). A classroom observation by the Director or Assistant Director would take place along with a meeting with the parent. This gives the teacher and administrators an opportunity to understand the student's circumstances and see what the best approach might be to maximizing student progress. One of the benefits to having such a small school is that communication happens regularly, this is illustrated in our horizontal hierarchy. The entire school staff of 10-11 gets to know all the children and their families.

WHERE WE ARE CURRENTLY:

2010-2011 has been the only year our AIMS scores have not met the Board's adequate level of academic performance in the math area for our 3rd and 5th graders; however we have always met AYP and are currently listed as a performing plus school. As noted earlier, the small population within each grade level is indicative of a school with two multi aged Montessori classrooms. A second factor which has affected test scores is the increasing trend of parents who switch schools during the year. During the past couple of years we have enrolled several students in 1st-3rd grade who have been enrolled in a number of schools, have never had any of the Montessori curriculum, and are also somewhat academically behind. This scenario is quickly becoming the reality we must successfully navigate. ***Our challenge is to quickly identify which students need additional help, provide them with as much of the Montessori foundation as possible, and work with them diligently to get them caught up. Ultimately, this will increase the number of students who will pass the AIMS test by meeting or exceeding the standards. Just as importantly, our goal is to enable our students to be confident in their knowledge and well-rounded members of the community. In addition, we hope to build family loyalty through continued parent education of the Montessori Method.***

DATA AND GOALS:

Being such a small school, we are able to look at each individual student's test scores. The following goals and date are listed by numbers of students and percentages due to small populations. **Each year our goal is to increase the number of students who meet or exceed the standards by at least 1 student at the 5th grade level and at least 3 students at the 3rd grade level. In addition, our goal is to not have any of our students fall far below the standards and if they do we must identify them quickly so steps toward their progress can be taken.**

3rd Grade Math: Population 12 students

In 2010-2011:

3 students met or exceeded the standards, 6 students approached the standards, and 3 fell far below the standards. Our goal increases the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standards from 25% to 50% , this equates to 3 more students passing. In addition, the 3 students who are falling far below will at least progress into approaching the standards.

5th Grade Math: Population 5 students

In 2010-2011:

3 students met or exceeded the standards, 1 student approached the standards, and 1 fell far below the standards. Our goal increases the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standards from 60% to 80% , this equates to 1 more student passing. In addition, the 1 student who falls far below will at least progress into approaching the standards.

3rd Grade Reading: Population 12 students

In 2010-2011:

5 students met or exceeded the standards, 6 students approached the standards, and 1 fell far below the standards. Our goal increases the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standards from 42% to 67% , this equates to 3 more students passing. In addition, the 1 student who falls far below will at least progress into approaching the standards.

5th Grade Reading: Population 5 students

In 2010-2011:

4 students met or exceeded the standards, 1 student approached the standards, and 0 fell far below the standards. Our goal increases the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standards from 80% to 100% , this equates to 1 more student passing.

HOW WILL GOALS BE MET IN THE YEARS TO COME?

STRATEGY I: Provide and implement a curriculum that improves student achievement.

Montessori is the comprehensive curriculum that is provided, which consists of small group and individual lessons utilizing the Montessori materials. The Montessori materials are concrete, hands-on manipulatives. Basically, the teacher gives the lesson, observes the student as they practice and eventually master the concept. The teacher then

adds the next step to the lesson or moves the student on to the next lesson. This continues until eventually, the student is able to demonstrate their level of understanding through being able to abstract the concept using real world examples. The teacher spends time planning lessons and giving presentations, observing for mastery and inputting student progress into record keeping software.

Action Step 1. The teachers will use their comprehensive Montessori Albums, which serve as grade level appropriate curriculum guidelines to plan appropriate grade level Montessori lessons. Lessons will be presented by the teacher and practiced by the student to increase student understanding of concepts. This will increase student achievement for each grade/academic level.

Lessons are documented in the teacher's monthly prepared lesson plans which are adjusted weekly or more often as needed. Lesson plans are reviewed twice per month by the Director or Assistant Director. The teachers will also be responsible for understanding which Core Curriculum Standards correlate to lessons given. Training, review, and teacher assignments/monthly presentations will give evidence of the teacher's understanding.

Action Step 2. In addition to the teacher presenting core lessons along with lesson extensions, we will have the ability to provide a Reading/Math Specialist to work specifically with the students who need extra help learning specific core concepts. Areas of need will be identified through review and analysis of student AIMS test scores and a regular evaluation of student work portfolios and teacher observation. Our goal is to begin 8/12, FY2013 and have this available a minimum of 2 days per week. Success of the program will be identified through the documentation of student progress by the Teacher and Specialist in student progress reports which are issued 3 times per year.

Action Step 3. The Montessori curriculum provides a solid, well-balanced core curriculum of concepts along with many lesson extensions which are used to further student understanding, provide additional practice, or to demonstrate a concept in a different way. Students are instructed through hands-on materials, real world practice (going-outs), and the integration of technology (classroom computers). Evidence can be found in teachers' lesson plans and record keeping that purposeful activities support the desired objectives and allow for the delivery of supplemental extensions of lessons.

Action Step 4. In Montessori, in order to be AMI (**A**ssociation **M**ontessori **I**nternationale) Accredited, which is very important for a school that is truly following the Montessori curriculum, a school must have an independent consultant observe and evaluate each classroom once every 3 years. During this time the consultant makes the determination if the accreditation will be renewed. The AMI Consultant observation and critique provides objective evidence of appropriate curriculum delivery to students. In addition, the AMI Consultant meets with each teacher separately and with administration to provide feedback and recommendations on how to run a truly AMI classroom. The consultant provides a report documenting all findings and recommendations. Our most recent consultation took place at the end of January 2012. Our next consultation will be scheduled for January 2015.

STRATEGY II: Develop and implement a plan for monitoring the integration of the Arizona Academic Standards into instruction.

This strategy would involve assisting the teachers in updating their knowledge of the Common Core Standards through required professional development and teacher assignments. This will include attending classes which explain the standards supplementing with documentation that explains which Arizona Academic Standards are met by which Montessori lessons. Each teacher will also be given a monthly assignment to present the first Thursday of each month at their regular teacher's meeting. Each teacher will present a Common Core Standard and explain which Montessori material or materials meet the standard.

The teachers will continue to develop lesson plans based on the incorporation of the Common Core Standards and the aligned Montessori curriculum and give presentations accordingly. They will also document all lessons planned and given using their student record keeping software. The lesson plans and record keeping software will be reviewed twice a month by the Director and/or Assistant Director. The monitoring component will be also be achieved through regular observations by administration.

Action Step 1a. In particular, we will obtain an updated copy of the "Correlation between State Core Standards and the Montessori Curriculum". This is currently being researched and we are hoping to combine orders with Montessori Education Center so it won't be quite so expensive.

Action Step 1b. Administration will review with the teachers on how to utilize the correlation books and give them the opportunity for regular demonstrations of knowledge.

Action Step 2. In Montessori the curriculum plan comes directly from the teacher's comprehensive albums, which contain the complete Montessori curriculum (lesson by lesson) in academic order. Using the current Core Standards for each grade, the teacher will develop a plan of presentations/lessons that align Core Standards to the Montessori presentations to the student's grade level.

Action Step 3. Our teacher's use MontessoriRx for their lesson planning and record keeping. There are features within this software that allow for analysis of a student's overall academic picture. It can be used for planning and evaluation of a student's academic level based on mastery of concepts, and also to evaluate the balance of instruction within a particular academic area or overall.

In order to really monitor the record keeping, observations will give the opportunity for the Director and/or Assistant Director to analyze several aspects of curriculum and instruction. For instance, can the teaching objective be identified? Is the objective on target for the specific grade level? What level of thinking is needed to understand the objective being taught and is it appropriate for the grade level receiving the instruction? Are the materials used aligned to achieving the objective? Other considerations to be evaluated would be the student learning environment (SLE), engagement of students in their learning (LE), and are the most appropriate instructional strategies (IS) being utilized.

STRATEGY III: Develop and implement a plan for monitoring and documenting student proficiency.

Student proficiency will be monitored through the process of initially screening each student to determine their academic level. This will involve developing a baseline for the student's current academic level and observing how quickly they progress through and understand the curriculum. At this point, the rate of academic development is

taken into consideration. If the rate of learning is not quite where it needs to be the student will receive extra help in those areas. The teacher will provide the extra help and if deemed necessary, the Reading/Math specialist will provide supplemental help in the areas of concern.

The main source of documentation of student proficiency will come through the actual work produced by the student. Each student keeps a record book which lists all the lessons they have been given or are practicing on any given day. The teacher reviews this to make sure it is accurate. The teacher also spends time observing what each student is practicing to determine when they have mastered it and can move on to the next level or lesson. Another source of documentation is the student record keeping software where all lessons given are recorded.

Action Step 1. In Montessori many works are hands on materials so in addition to reviewing the output (i.e. the math problem and answer written on paper), the teacher must spend time observing the student completing the process with the material itself. This is what the teacher evaluates to determine the student's level of understanding. A structured progress monitoring schedule consists of the day-to-day observations of activity, review of student journals, and review of student work portfolios. Daily journaling by students of all planned and completed work enables students to be accountable for how they spend their school day. Teachers review student journals daily to be sure what is listed is actually what is being completed. Teachers compare lessons given with lessons planned and make adjustments where necessary. Teachers regularly review and evaluate the students work portfolio

Action Step 2. Review and evaluation of each student's progress is something that occurs on a daily basis. Meetings will be scheduled every 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month to discuss student progress and determine if any adjustments in the delivery of the curriculum need to happen to further increase student growth. If necessary, services of Math/Reading Specialist will be reassessed and adjusted.

Action Step 3. Strategically analyze data through the use of the "Instructional Analysis Tool" and "33 Minute Data Dialogues" to help identify individual student instructional needs to determine specific areas of student growth that should be targeted. Due to the small size of our grade level populations the "Instructional Analysis Tool" will be modified so the data gathered will be more useful for monitoring student proficiency. The "33 Minute Data Dialogue" protocol will be very useful in setting a specific focus, taking time to look at the relevant data, and leaving the meeting with clear tasks that need to be followed up on. This protocol will allow the analysis of student progress and any areas of concern to be achieved much more efficiently due to the specificity of the protocol template. It will also allow for fairly easy facilitation. In addition, this format can be used for other goals that need to be focused on such as specific teaching and instructional goals. Bimonthly meetings (2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month) will be scheduled to analyze and review various data including student growth and particular areas of concern.

STRATEGY IV: Develop and implement a professional development plan that supports effective implementation of the curriculum.

Our teachers are currently required to do 20 hours of professional development; we will increase this to 25 hours for the upcoming school years. We will implement a requirement that part of that professional development be spent continuing to learn about the Arizona State Standards and reviewing how the Montessori curriculum aligns with the standards. Our instructional support staff is required to do 18 hours of professional development. This was increased from 12 hours required in 2010-2011.

Evidence of meeting our requirements will happen through obtaining certificates of completion for courses/workshops attended, meetings including teachers and administration to discuss any questions or confusion in interpretation, and administration review of all professional development completed.

Action Step 1. Teachers, instructional support staff, and administration will register for and attend professional development that includes coverage of the current Common Core Standards. Teachers will have a better understanding of how the Montessori curriculum meets the Common Core Standards. Improved understanding will be evidenced by Teacher assignment and monthly presentation of the Core Standards correlation to the Montessori Curriculum and overall progress of students. Evidence will also be shown through certification of completion for workshops, classes, and conferences completed.

Action Step 2. Teachers and administration will review the principles of student data analysis. Teacher's currently review student's individual AIMS scores, ELL scores, and any SPED information if applicable, to see where students need extra help. Analytical skills will be reviewed and tools will be presented to enable teachers to better determine areas of student need. Additional instruction will be provided for targeted areas either by the Teacher or the Reading/Math Specialist, whichever is deemed appropriate.

Action Step 3. Teachers and instructional staff are required to complete continued educational professional development each year. Teachers must complete a minimum of 25 hours and instructional support staff is required to complete 18 hours each school year. This was increased from 12 hours required in FY2011 for instructional support staff and Teachers requirements will increase from 20 hours beginning in FY2013.

Teachers will meet with administration and discuss professional development options that would be the most beneficial. Teachers will come away from professional development classes with more knowledge and a better understanding of the particular topic. Teachers will obtain proof of completion and submit it to administration.

As a Montessori School we try to have at least one of our teachers/administrators attend the Annual AMI Montessori Refresher Course each year. The AMI Montessori Refresher Course allows Teachers and Administration to expand their current Montessori knowledge and deepen their understanding. One of our teachers was able to attend the AMI Refresher Course in February 2012.

Action Step 4. In addition to the continued professional education on Common Core Standards other key areas of need will be identified for ongoing teacher and administrative professional development. Areas of focus can be determined by the particular needs of the teacher/administrator and also based on student needs/progress. Examples may include additional SEI training, early childhood education, and additional Montessori Education.

Parent Involvement

Over the last 13 years we have had a lot of experience with parent involvement and because we are a small school parents tend to be more involved. We believe parents choose our school because of the small community feel in addition to the Montessori Curriculum. We educate the parents in Montessori by having them participate with their children in the classroom, offering parent education nights and observing their child's classroom on a regular basis.

We do realize that all changes integrated this year and next year will continue and be evaluated on a yearly basis and might need to be adjusted when necessary.