



Charter School Application

*Providing high-quality educational opportunities
for students in the state of Indiana*

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Angola, Indiana 46703
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The application questions are organized to solicit information efficiently and to aid quality review and decision making by Education One, L.L.C. **Education One staff reserves the right to reject applications that do not adhere to the application specifications.**

Throughout the application review process, Education One staff will communicate important information to the charter school applicant designee via email.

Notice of Disclosure

All information submitted as part of the application (including financial information) is subject to the Indiana Access to Public Records Act (IC § 5-14-3) and subject to disclosure to the public there-under, including disclosure to the media. **In the event that it is the applicant's position that certain information submitted as part of the application falls within an exception to disclosure under the Public Records Act, the applicant must obtain an advisory opinion from the State of Indiana's Public Access Counselor prior to submitting any application materials.** If the Public Access Counselor's opinion supports the applicant's position, then any such information contained in the application that is considered non-disclosable must be clearly identified in the application as confidential. The application must further be accompanied by (a) a written statement specifying the particular exception or exceptions to disclosure under the Public Records Act applicable to the information sought to be exempted from disclosure, and (b) the written opinion from the Public Access Counselor that supports the applicant's position that the information is exempt from disclosure under the Public Records Act.

The applicant acknowledges that if the foregoing procedure is not followed, and an application is submitted, all information shall be subject to disclosure to the public unless Education One, L.L.C. determines that it must withhold from disclosure certain information in the application pursuant to the Public Records Act. Each applicant, by the submission of an application, acknowledges its understanding that all application materials are subject to disclosure under the Public Records Act and may be subject to review and copying by the public. Each applicant and its representatives, employees and agents acknowledges and agrees that Education One, L.L.C. Board members and staff, Trine University, the Indiana Department of Education, and any official, agent, employee or representative of the State of Indiana shall not be held liable or legally responsible in any way for any such disclosure pursuant to the Public Records Act, and such parties hereby waive any rights to redress or claims of action pursuant to any such disclosure.

Specifications

- The proposal must be typed and single-spaced, on white, 8.5"x 11" paper, with a minimum of 11-point font. Utilize the provided text boxes to answer application questions. If a particular question does not apply to your team or proposal, simply respond "Not Applicable." Questions without text boxes indicate that the response will be incorporated into an application attachment.
- Do not exceed 70 pages for the narrative. Attachments do not count toward the page limit. Applicants completing the optional section on innovations (Section V) may use an additional five pages, in which case the total narrative should not exceed 75 pages total.
- Please do not exceed the page limit specified for each attachment. Templates for each attachment (1-34) required in the application can be found starting on page 30.
- When submitting resumes, please label each document with the individual's affiliation with the proposed school (i.e., Founding Group Member, Board Member, School Leader, Teacher, etc.).
- Complete all pages of the Financial Plan and Charter Application Budget and Staffing Workbooks.
- Review your application for completeness before submitting. Each subsection provides a list of what should be including in an answer(s) to meet expectation standards.

Submission Instructions

- Send an electronic copy of the application as one PDF to lindsay@education1.org.

Education One, L.L.C utilized resources found from the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to create this comprehensive charter school application. Information regarding NACSA and its resources can be found at www.qualitycharters.org.

Application Attachments

Instructions:

- Within the Applicant’s application Google Drive folder is a folder titled “Application Attachments.”
- Save each attachment in the list below that is applicable to the school as one PDF and upload to the “Application Attachments” folder. Attachments should be saved as the attachment number (i.e., Attachment 1).
- To link the attachment in the table below, follow these steps:
 - Right click on the attachment.
 - Click “Get shareable link.”
 - Click the drop down arrow next to ‘Restricted’ and choose ‘Anyone with the link.’
 - On the right, make sure ‘Viewer’ is chosen.
 - Click the blue ‘Copy link.’
 - Paste the link into the table below.
 - Add a space after the link to active for viewers to click and be directed to the attachment.

Attachment	Description	Link
Attachment 1	School’s Leadership Team and Governing Board <i>List the members of the school’s proposed leadership team and governing board, including the role with the school, current job title, and current employer. Include full resumes that contain contact information and professional biographies for each individual listed.</i>	Attachment 1
Attachment 2	Planned Curriculum <i>Provide a sample course scope and sequence for one subject for one grade level for each division (elementary, middle, high) the school would serve.</i>	Attachment 2
Attachment 3	Plan for Development of Curriculum <i>Provide a plan for how the curriculum will be developed between approval and opening, including the person responsible and key stages for completion.</i>	Attachment 3
Attachment 4	Grade Level Learning Standards <i>Provide a complete set of the school’s proposed learning standards for one subject for one grade level for each division (elementary, middle, high) the school would serve.</i>	Attachment 4
Attachment 5	Exit Standards for Graduation <i>Provide the school’s exit standards for graduating students from the last grade served by the school.</i>	Attachment 5
Attachment 6	Proposed School Calendar <i>Provide the proposed school calendar for the first year of operation, including the number number of days/hours of instruction.</i>	Attachment 6
Attachment 7	Proposed Daily & Weekly Schedules <i>Provide a sample daily and weekly schedule for each division (elementary, middle, high school) of the school.</i>	Attachment 7
Attachment 8	Enrollment Policy <i>Provide the school’s proposed enrollment policy.</i>	Attachment 8
Attachment 9	Discipline Policy <i>Provide the school’s proposed discipline policy.</i>	Attachment 9
Attachment 10	Evidence of Community Support <i>Provide evidence of support from community partners (i.e., letters of intent/commitment, memoranda of understanding, and/or contracts).</i>	Attachment 10
Attachment 11	Principal/School Leader Information <i>Provide the qualifications, resume, and professional biography for the proposed principal/school leader.</i>	Attachment 11
Attachment 12	Principal/School Leader Posting Information <i>Provide the job description or qualifications for this position with a discussion of the timeline, criteria, and recruiting/selection process for hiring.</i>	Attachment 12
Attachment 13	Additional Leadership Team Information <i>Provide the qualifications, resume, and professional biography for any identified leadership team members.</i>	Attachment 13
Attachment 14	Non-Profit Status Proof/Board Policies <i>Submit Articles of Incorporation, proof of non-profit status and tax exempt status (or copies of filings), and any governing documents already adopted.</i>	Attachment 14

Attachment 15	Signed Statement of Assurances <i>Submit completed and signed Statement of Assurances for representative. Use the template provided by Education One.</i>	Attachment 15
Attachment 16	Organizational Charts for Governing, Managing & Staffing <i>Submit an organization chart that shows school governance, management, and staffing structure for Year 1 and at full build-out.</i>	Attachment 16
Attachment 17	Board Member Information Sheets <i>Submit completed and signed information sheets for each board member. Use the template provided by Education One.</i>	Attachment 17
Attachment 18	Board Code of Ethics & Conflict of Interest <i>Provide the board's proposed Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest policy.</i>	Attachment 18
Attachment 19	Term Sheet for Contract <i>Provide the term sheet, draft proposed management contract detailing limits and evidence that the service provider is authorized to do business in Indiana.</i>	Attachment 19
Attachment 20	Complete Staffing Chart for School <i>Provide a complete staffing chart with Year 1 positions, administrative, instructional, and non-instructional personnel, the number of classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, and speciality teachers, and operational/support staff.</i>	Attachment 20
Attachment 21	Personnel Policy/Employee Manual <i>Provide a personnel policy or an employee manual if developed.</i>	Attachment 21
Attachment 22	Leadership Evaluation Tool <i>Provide leadership evaluation tools that have been developed.</i>	Attachment 22
Attachment 23	Teacher Evaluation Tool <i>Provide teacher evaluation tools that have been developed.</i>	Attachment 23
Attachment 24	Proof of Secured Facility <i>Provide proof of commitment for the facility.</i>	Attachment 24
Attachment 25	Facility Description <i>Provide supporting documents that detail the facility (10 page limit).</i>	Attachment 25
Attachment 26	Start-up Plan/Timeline <i>Provide a detailed start-up plan for the school, specifying tasks, timelines, and responsible individuals.</i>	Attachment 26
Attachment 27	Completed Budget Workbook <i>Use the workbook provided by Education One.</i>	Attachment 27
Attachment 28	Insurance/Levels of Coverage <i>Provide a list of the types of insurance coverage the school will secure, including a description of the level of coverage.</i>	Attachment 28
Attachment 29	Budget Narrative <i>Provide a detailed description of the assumptions and revenue estimates, including but not limited to the basis for revenue projections, staffing levels, and costs.</i>	Attachment 29
Attachment 30	Summary of Every School in Organization <i>Provide a summary of every school in the organization's portfolio. Use the template provided by Education One.</i>	Attachment 30
Attachment 31	3 Years of Audited Financials for IN Schools <i>Provide the last three years of audited financial statements for the school(s) and the most recent internal financial statements</i>	Attachment 31
Attachment 32	3 Years of Audited Financials for Whole Organization <i>Provide the last three years of audited financial statements for the organization as a whole and the most recent internal financial statements</i>	Attachment 32
Attachment 33	Litigations <i>Provide a summary of the demand, any response to the demand, and the results of the arbitration or litigation.</i>	Attachment 33

COVER SHEET AND ENROLLMENT PROJECTION

Name of proposed school:	The Nature School of Central Indiana
Primary contact person:	Courtney Ke
Mailing address:	11654 Kittery Dr, Fishers, IN 46037
Phone number:	219.384.6501
Email address:	ke.courtney@gmail.com
Fax:	Not applicable

Primary contact for facilities planning:	Joe McDonald/Sherina Lyons
Phone number:	317.501.8133/317.752.1931
Email address:	joe.mcdonald@talktotucker.com/sherina.lyons@gmail.com

Name of team or entity applying:	The Nature School Group
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Names, roles, and current employment of all persons on applicant team (*you may add lines as needed*):

Full Name	Current Job Title and Employer	Position with Proposed School
Courtney Ke	Communications Consultant, Self-employed	Board Chair
Sherina Lyons	Homeschooling Parent, Self-employed	Board Secretary
Karinda Holland	Accountant, Monarch Management and Realty, Inc.	Board Treasurer
Danielle Brain	Director/Lead Teacher, Indy Waldorf	Educator Council (non-voting position)
Alexandra Prassas	Lead Teacher, Montessori Beyond Homeschool Co-Op	Educator Council (non-voting position)
Meagan Messuri	Lead Teacher, Geist Montessori Academy	Educator Council (non-voting position)

Does this application team have charter school applications under consideration by any other authorizer(s) in the United States?

Yes No

If yes, complete the table below, adding lines as needed.

State	Authorizer	Proposed School Name	Application Due Date	Decision Date

Provide the proposed school(s) opening information, adding lines as needed.

Opening Year	New Start or Phase-in/Takeover	*Geographic Community	Opening Grades	Grade Levels at Full Enrollment
2021	New Start	7551 Oaklondon Rd, Indianapolis, IN 46236	1-8	1-8
2021	New Start	7806 North 300 West 46055, McCordsville, IN	K	K

*Please indicate the city/town and, if known, the potential address or neighborhood of location. Virtual operators should indicate the relevant geographies the operator intends to serve.

Model or Focus of Proposed School: (e.g., Arts, College Prep, Dual-Language, etc.)	The Nature School of Central Indiana model is nature-based, student-led, and experiential. We aim to incorporate pedagogies that lend strongly to that model.
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These include predominantly Montessori and Waldorf learning principles, but our innovative approach to the education environment will reinforce the ideology that learning occurs everywhere. Though we (TNS) will have a main campus, we will be partnering with other local community members for farm days, hikes, outdoor study, exploration, and community outreach.

As described by the American Montessori Society, a Montessori education is student-led and self-paced but guided, assessed, and enriched by knowledgeable and caring teachers, the leadership of their peers, and a nurturing environment. The Montessori Method fosters rigorous, self-motivated growth for children and adolescents in all areas of their development—cognitive, emotional, social, and physical.

Within the community of a multi-age classroom—designed to create natural opportunities for independence, citizenship, and accountability—children embrace multi-sensory learning and passionate inquiry. Individual students follow their own curiosity at their own pace, taking the time they need to fully understand each concept and meet individualized learning goals.

Given the freedom and support to question, probe deeply, and make connections, Montessori students grow up to be confident, enthusiastic, and self-directed learners and citizens, accountable to both themselves and their community. They think critically, work collaboratively, and act boldly and with integrity.

Our novel approach aims to synthesize this method with the richness of a Waldorf school. As explained by the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, Waldorf schools offer a developmentally appropriate, experiential, and academically rigorous approach to education. They integrate the arts in all academic disciplines for children from preschool through twelfth grade to enhance and enrich learning. Waldorf education aims to inspire life-long learning in all students and to enable them to fully develop their unique capacities. The principles of Waldorf education evolve from an understanding of human development that address the needs of the growing child.

Music, dance and theater, writing, literature, legends and myths are not simply subjects to be read about and tested. They are experienced. Through these experiences, Waldorf students cultivate their intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual capacities to be individuals certain of their paths and to be of service to the world. Waldorf education is independent and inclusive. It upholds the principles of freedom in education and engages independent administration locally, continentally and internationally. It is regionally appropriate education with hundreds of schools worldwide today. Waldorf education is truly *Inspired Learning*.

Another feature that is important to our model is the prevalent use of outdoor space. As mentioned previously, our model relies on finding learning opportunities within our community and surroundings. While on campus, we will make heavy use of outdoor space. In conjunction with our Montessori works and materials or extensive Waldorf journal drawings or handwork, there will be a seamless transition between indoor and outdoor classrooms. In other words, our

	<p>spaces reflect extensions of our learning.</p> <p>Lastly, in light of current events and recent studies, our leadership is well-equipped to navigate the hurdles and complications that come along with prolonged use of screen technology. Our education philosophies keep our learners' attention without large requirements of screen time. However, it is also thanks to this technology that we have broader opportunities. TNS will offer a balanced approach to online education and offer our learners international connections, foreign languages, and smooth transitions to any necessary online learning components.</p> <p>Through this combination of ideas, we strongly believe that we will be creating a beautiful and innovative school model that will support any learner that chooses TNS. We are ready and eager to offer this to our community.</p>
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Does the school intend to contract with a third party education service provider (ESP) to manage the educational program and operations of the school but not hold the charter directly? Yes No

If yes, identify the ESP or other partner organization:

Does the school intend to partner or be affiliated with an existing or planned charter management organization (CMO) through which a single governing board governs or will govern multiple schools? Yes No

If yes, identify the CMO or other partner organization:

PROPOSED PRINCIPAL/HEAD OF SCHOOL INFORMATION

Name of proposed Principal Candidate:	TBD
Current employment:	TBD
Daytime phone:	TBD
Cell phone:	TBD
Email address:	TBD

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

The School Overview should provide a concise summary of the following:

- The proposed plan for the school;
- The geographic and population considerations of the school environment;
- The challenges particular to those considerations; and
- The applicant team's capacity to successfully open and operate a high quality school given the above considerations.

Mission and Vision

1. State the mission and vision of the proposed school. The mission is a statement of the fundamental purpose of the school, describing why it exists. The vision statement outlines how the school will operate and what it will achieve in the long term. The mission and vision statement provide the foundation for the entire proposal.

The mission and vision statements, taken together, should:

- Identify the students and community to be served;
- Illustrate what success will look like; and
- Align with the purposes of the state charter school law and the authorizer's stated priorities for new schools.

The Nature School of Central Indiana Mission and Vision Statement

Our Mission:

The Nature School of Central Indiana aims to provide central-Indiana areas' learners with an exemplary education in a nature-based setting calling upon several academic principles, heavily focused on, but not limited to, the pedagogical philosophies of Montessori and Waldorf, as well as the concepts of experiential learning. We commit to meeting the needs of each of our students and exceeding the expectations of the families who entrust their children to The Nature School by utilizing highly skilled and trained educators with strong backgrounds in these disciplines.

Our Vision:

The Nature School of Central Indiana believes in addressing the needs of the child holistically and instilling in them a lifelong love of learning, an awareness of their role in and connection to both their local community and the world, and a deep understanding of their individual abilities and potential with the ideal that nature is the best teacher. We hold all of these beliefs and elements as the foundation of learning and aim to build upon this foundation with an individualized approach to presenting curriculum and further scaffold with both local and global partnerships with like-minded organizations.

Our vision is impressive and comprehensive. We strive to create not only an academically successful school that prepares learners for the rigors of higher education, career, and life, but one with a loving, nurturing, welcoming, and empathetic environment that captures the whimsy and wonder of childhood and the inquisition and curiosity of the developing child. The Nature School believes in changing the world for the better, one learner at a time.

Our Beliefs:

In addition to the mission and vision above, we stand by these beliefs as representatives of Education1 and the IDOE:

- We will always put students first and believe that by putting students and families first, schools, and the communities in which they serve, will thrive!
- We believe our mission and vision begin with us. As founders and leaders of TNS, we will model high expectations for ourselves to create a goal of high achievement for our staff and students, both academically and ethically, in adherence with the guidelines set forth by NACSA and our authorizer.

- We believe it takes a village to create a thriving community and foster student success, and will do our utmost to ensure that our families and community are engaged and welcomed through transparency and an overall willingness to work together.
- We believe in progress. Our goal is to innovate on education, whether through the creative use of our facilities, our approach to scheduling, or our plans for remote and hybrid learning.
- We believe in collaboration and partnership at every level of our school from global partners to surrounding community to board and leadership to families and students.
- We believe in continuous improvement and high standards. Each year, TNS aims to reflect on our vision, reaffirming and expanding our goals in the constant pursuit of providing the best educational experience our students and families expect from us.

Leadership and Governance

1. As **Attachment 1**, list the members of the school's proposed leadership team and governing board with the following information:
 - Role with the school;
 - Current job title;
 - Current employer; and
 - Full resumes (including contact information and professional biographies for each individual listed)

Enrollment Summary

1. Complete the following table, removing any rows for grades the school will not serve.

Grade Level	Number of Students					
	Year 1 2021-22	Year 2 2022-23	Year 3 2023-24	Year 4 2024-25	Year 5 2025-26	At Capacity 20
K	30	30	40	40	45	45
1	15	18	20	25	30	30
2	15	18	20	25	30	30
3	15	18	20	25	30	30
4	15	18	20	25	30	30
5	15	18	20	25	30	30
6	15	18	20	25	30	30
7	15	18	20	25	30	30
8	15	18	20	25	30	30
Total	150	174	200	240	285	285

2. Describe the rationale for the number of students and grade levels served in year one and the basis for the growth plan illustrated above.

After our invitation to apply, our team focused heavily on optimal locations that would suit the needs of our learners best. With the rationale that our students would require adequate space both inside and outside our facilities, we found a location within the city of Lawrence that very much lends itself to this task. In order to give our program the best possible outcomes, we decided to focus our attention on our K-8 program first, as the location is not large enough to carry out a capacity that includes the high school division. With the changes made, we project, based upon our research and parent surveys, that the area demographics and public interest related to our school's model will allow for the growth seen above.

Community and Target Population:

TNS will locate on the northern edge of the City of Lawrence, an area offering both population density and prospects for future growth that will ensure demand for educational diversity. Lawrence is a very vibrant community with close proximity to both Geist-area residents and Fishers. The population has grown in the past two decades as Fort Benjamin Harrison, a former military base, was closed by the federal government and transformed, in part, into a very popular 1,700-acre state park that includes dense forests, miles of trails and other outdoor activities. Lawrence is ranked by the U.S. Census Bureau as Indiana's 18th largest city and is within the boundaries of Marion County. Located there is the Defense Finance Accounting Service, a federal government office, which employees nearly 5,000 people. Additionally, a quick commute from Lawrence to downtown Indianapolis also translates into many professionals choosing Lawrence as home due to convenience. In fact, the city's website notes that over 30% of its residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 22% for Indiana as a whole.



While located on the northern edge of Lawrence, it is anticipated that many prospective students will also reside in or near McCordsville. McCordsville has been recognized as one of the fastest growing communities in Indiana by the Kelley School of Business Indiana Business Research Center at Indiana University. It is part of the larger northeast corner of the Indianapolis metropolitan area poised for growth and revitalization. McCordsville is in high demand by housing developers who are seeking to build hundreds of homes in the area over the coming years. Many developments are already underway, incorporating attractive amenities such as trails, playgrounds, and other space for outdoor recreation. The town itself is also initiating a masterplan for its

bike and pedestrian trails, which will seek to better integrate the community, and connect with established trails in Fishers and Lawrence.

Features such as integrated trails are key to attracting residents and economic development, as well as creating enhanced property values. A 2014 study conducted by the Public Policy Institute at Indiana University found that property values near the Cultural Trail increased nearly 150%. McCordsville is a future-thinking community seeking to benefit through such infrastructure and is working to attract new residents interested in active, outdoor lifestyles.

Nearby communities along the State Road 67 corridor also support the site selection for TNS. Pendleton, for example, currently has developments that will bring 750 new homes within the next three years, increasing the town's population by 30%. Both Ingalls and Fortville, located between Pendleton and McCordsville, are experiencing similar booms in population. Young families are in the demographic target for most of these developments, which will lead to a significant increase in the number of school-aged children in the area.

It is also anticipated, based on a parent survey conducted in the summer of 2020, that students residing in communities such as Noblesville and Greenfield will find the location viable due to the reasonable commute time to TNS.

SECTION I: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DESIGN & CAPACITY

Program Overview

1. Summarize the educational program, including primary instructional methods and assessment strategies, and any non-negotiable elements of the school model. Briefly describe the evidence that promises success of this program with the anticipated student population.

The Nature School of Central Indiana is offering an educational program that includes instructional methods based upon the teachings and beliefs of Maria Montessori and the principles of Waldorf education. Our teachers and leaders will carefully design and synthesize a curriculum that will adhere to that goal. Focusing on grades K-8, we predict to have approximately one Kindergarten class, two classes of lower elementary including grades 1-3, two classes of upper elementary including grades 4-6, and one middle school class. Our classroom isn't defined by our building, however. Our educational program will also include farm and garden days as well as hikes and nature exploration.

Instructional methods will follow Montessori and Waldorf principles, as well as experiential learning. These approaches are vastly different from traditional means of teaching that you find in most traditional classrooms. We will be adopting the student-centered instructional methods, scientifically based on Maria Montessori's observations. The fundamental principle of this method is to value a child's naturally inquisitive and developing mind to foster learning in an intuitive and natural way. The Waldorf method, on the other hand, focuses more heavily on imagination and creativity. Children are encouraged to learn to play musical instruments, knit, crochet, and draw. Additionally, elementary school children keep a journal where they record their experiences and what they have learned. Both of these have been noted for their academic success as creating learners with stronger cognitive thinking skills.

While there are several differences, they share many ideals in the holistic approach to education and the intention of creating an interdependence with nature and the world. We plan to integrate both into a student-led, emergent curriculum that addresses all Indiana Academic Standards.

You can expect to see some the following depending on the day and the grade:

- *Environment*

Learning spaces are prepared thoughtfully by trained instructors in a way that encourages learners to explore for themselves. Children in these settings are guided to make their own discoveries, as well as gain a sense of independence. The teacher is there to provide help along the way.

- *Development*

These approaches seek to maximize development at a healthy pace. Younger children may learn and socialize with older children, while the older students help solidify concepts and ideas by teaching them to younger students. This way, no child is limited by his or her age group, and every student has opportunities to learn.

- *Materials*

The materials chosen for instruction are carefully considered, both for fostering peer learning and for providing an aesthetically pleasing environment. The materials are thoughtfully created and leave no details to chance as to best aid learners in understanding various concepts.

- *Instruction*

Teachers present a lesson to the class as a whole, break students into small groups, and allow for individualized blocks of learning time. Students are able to learn at their own pace and seek assistance from their peers or their teachers when needed. Instruction continues in outdoor settings, reinforcing lessons and concepts, and at home through our thoughtful and research-based approach to virtual learning.

- *Assessment*

Students will be assessed using testing as required by Indiana State law to receive a baseline and continual understanding of our learners' needs and inform our decisions in furthering development of our educational strategies and curriculum. Teachers will also perform regular daily assessments through careful observation and questioning within small groups and individual work periods.

After analyzing our demographic data, we believe this program will offer our diverse student population a greater opportunity to succeed. It has this capacity, in large part, because our curriculum and overall program design has the flexibility to meet our students wherever they are in their learning process and address areas requiring extra focus or attention efficiently.

Curriculum and Instructional Design

Meets Standard Expectation

- Framework for a rigorous, quality instructional design that reflects the needs of the school's target population and will ensure all students meet or exceed expectations of the Indiana Academic Standards (IAS).
- Comprehensive, quality curriculum overview that includes a sample course scope and sequence for one subject for one grade for each division (elementary, middle, high school) the school would serve, and demonstrated alignment of course outcomes with applicable standards. Sound curricular choices, by subject, including reason evidence the curriculum will be appropriate and effective for the targeted students.
- Sound instructional strategies and explanation of why they are well suited for the targeted student population, including effective methods and systems for providing differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students.
- Evidence that the proposed educational program has a sound base in research, theory, and/or experience, and has been or is likely to be rigorous, engaging, and effective for anticipated student population.

Propose a framework for instructional design that both reflects the needs of the anticipated population and ensures all students will meet or exceed the state standard.

1. Describe the basic learning environment (e.g., classroom-based, independent study), including class size and structure.

Basic Learning Environment:

TNS's learning environment can be broken up into the following categories that revolve around our nature-based philosophy:

1. *Indoor Learning Environment*
2. *Outdoor Learning Environment*

3. *Off-sites (including Wilderness Days, Farm Days, and Field Trips)*
4. *Home Learning/eLearning*

Indoor Learning Environment: *TNS aims to present an environment that is homelike, includes natural materials, and provides examples of productive work in which students can take part. The layout of the classroom encourages exploration, communication and the development of relationships on all levels. Everything reflects a dedication to quality, beauty and to the children's abilities to do things for themselves. Montessori saw that careful preparation of the environment is an essential ingredient for the successful development of children. She realised that the child relies completely on the environment for the sensorial impressions through which he or she gains a sense of the world in which he or she lives. Therefore, we will pay a great deal of attention to the way in which our school rooms are laid out. We want the classroom to be a happy, friendly place where our learners feel comfortable, know where everything is and they don't always have to rely on adults to help them. A TNS classroom will be a happy place full of friends where you can be yourself. It will be a place full of interesting things to do, but also a place where you can take time out and just be quiet if that is what our learners desire. It is a place we want our students to grow up knowing that they belong and that they are special.*

Outdoor Learning Environment: *TNS encourages our learners to explore our outdoor learning environment as much as they would their indoor classrooms. Teachers will carefully prepare lots of outdoor activities, accompanied by songs, poems and games. There will be specific times for stories and fairytales to encourage imaginative thinking. There will be areas for imaginative and artistic endeavors so that the child gets an idea of life and the surrounding world and develops their own ideas. Typical activities would involve visual arts, drama, vocal and instrumental music and crafts. The lessons being taught here are not based on standardized textbooks but each child is made to create their own list of coursework. Each child is allowed to learn at their own pace to allow the child to grasp the concepts or learn a skill based on their capabilities.*

Off-sites: *Our school calendar and weekly schedule allow for regular use of our partnerships. These locations and environments offer curriculum within their programming that nicely blends with the curriculum and instructional models at TNS. One week, our students may be volunteering their time with the Indiana Master Naturalists at Fort Benjamin Harrison as a part of their standards-aligned curriculum to earn a Junior Naturalist Badge. Another week, you may find them at Agape Horse Stables learning better communication skills and teamwork in the context of training a horse to follow commands. In one of our most highly anticipated programs, middle schoolers at TNS will have a real-world business project to design from start to finish at a local farmer's market in our community.*

Home Learning/eLearning: *As is customary within the instructional models created by Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner, there is not much emphasis on the use of screen technology within our F2F program. However, we understand and greatly value the educational opportunities that technology presents. eLearning has quickly become a valuable tool and resource for students to continue their learning without interruption whenever weather or other circumstances prohibit students from being in a brick and mortar classroom. TNS will ensure that students and parents are comfortable with the virtual learning experience that we create. Upon enrollment, students and parents will be made aware of the expectations for remote learning days and be provided training and assistance with completing their distance learning in a stress-free way.*

Class Size and Structure: *Classes at TNS are structured to be an environment that allows for our teachers to properly observe their classroom and students. To that end, class sizes will not exceed 30 children and include teachers, assistants, and parent volunteers on a regular basis. In the event that enrollment for one multi-age classroom exceeds this number, another class will be added with students evenly divided to best accommodate the needs and requirements of our program. The features below are examples of environmental attributes that are core to the structure of Montessori practice yet can be successfully exported into our nature-based environment:*

- *Accommodate free movement and voluntary social activity through classrooms that are large and intentionally dynamic, including a variety of furniture arrangements (tables, rugs, and shelves that are accessible to children).*
- *Contain carefully curated sets of hands-on materials designed to isolate key skills, enable exploration, experimentation and self-correction.*
- *Limit visual and aural stimulation, so as to enable extended focus on self-chosen activity.*
- *Contain mixed-age groups of children, usually in cohorts of about 25, so as to:*

- Allow individualized pacing through a multi-year spectrum challenge
- Offer repeated experiences with materials
- Encourage student-to-student support
 - minimizing dependence on adults and peer-to-peer comparison.

2. Provide an overview of the planned curriculum, including, as **Attachment 2**, a sample course scope and sequence for one subject for one grade for each division (elementary, middle, high school) the school would serve. Identify course outcomes and demonstrate alignment with applicable state standards.

TNS intends to adopt elements from both the Montessori and Waldorf curriculums. We will be purchasing Montessori Compass for our school and professionally developing with the guidance of one of the few teachers in Indiana with a Waldorf degree. She is kindly sharing her expertise so that we may better synthesize a curriculum that will meet the needs of students who may prefer or succeed with one model more than the other. We are also receiving assistance from the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education in order to promote best practices for public programs adopting Waldorf into their curriculum. The teachers within our group are excited to see where this process leads and are focused on bringing the best nature-based programming that TNS can offer. The sample scope and sequence is a good example of how we are planning to develop the curriculum this summer by looking at elements of our mixed philosophies that are synchronous and nature-based.

Considering the rich history and thorough scientific development of each of these models respectively, it's not surprising to see that both have beneficial outcomes for learners:

- *A longitudinal study of Milwaukee high school graduates showed that students who had attended Montessori preschool and elementary programs significantly outperformed a peer control group on math/science scores. "In essence," the study found, "attending a Montessori program from the approximate ages of three to 11 predicts significantly higher mathematics and science standardized test scores in high school (Dohrmann, K., "Outcomes for Students in a Montessori Program: A Longitudinal Study of the Experience in the Milwaukee Public Schools" (AMI/USA May, 2003).*
- *Another study describes the positive impact of Montessori manipulative materials on four seventh grade students who qualified for academic intervention services because of previous low state test scores in mathematics. The article presents a brief introduction to the Montessori approach to learning, an overview of Montessori mathematics, and an explanation of the Checkerboard for Multiplication with related multiplication manipulatives. Pretest/posttest results of the four students indicated that all increased their understanding of multiplication. The results of an attitude survey showed students improved in enjoyment, perceived knowledge, and confidence in solving multiplication problems (Donabella, M.A. & Rule, A.C., "Four Seventh Grade Students who Qualify for Academic Intervention Services in Mathematics Learning Multi-Digit Multiplication with the Montessori Checkerboard." TEACHING Exceptional Children Plus, 4(3) Article 2 (January 2008). Retrieved October 4, 2012).*
- *Waldorf views education as a far greater responsibility than simply reading, writing, and arithmetic. In a Waldorf school, children are taught the importance of social responsibility, peace, respect, and compassion. The success of this education philosophy can be seen in various Waldorf campuses around the world, and most poignantly, in areas where tremendous racial tensions exist. During the South African apartheid regime, the local Waldorf school was one of the rare examples where Caucasian and African students attended classes together. Today, at the Harduf Kibbutz Waldorf school in Israel, Jewish and Arab students and faculty learn from each other. In an Australian qualitative and quantitative research study conducted by Jennifer Gidley and published in 2005 in the Futures Journal, about 75% of the students surveyed could envision "positive changes in both the environment and human development," as well as socio-economically.*
- *The Waldorf model infuses the arts with academics all the way through the primary grades and into high school. The arts are part of nearly every lesson, using drama, music, dance (specifically called eurythmy, which is a form of dance that all children and teachers participate in for the purpose of expressing the "art of the soul"), crafts, and visual arts to illustrate what the children are learning. For example, typical textbooks are not found in the Waldorf classroom. Rather, each student draws and creates a personal book that exemplifies the lessons.*

- *The artistic emphasis certainly shines through in the Waldorf students. According to research conducted by Earl Ogletree that analyzed students in both Waldorf and traditional schools, those in Waldorf schools scored higher on the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking Ability. While not all children may thrive in this type of learning environment, this philosophy is a perfect fit for students who have an artistic and creative inclination.*
- *Technology, including television and computers, are frowned upon in Waldorf schools during the early years of education, and parents are encouraged to ban these digital devices at home as well. Instead, children are encouraged to indulge in free play that nurtures the imagination and interactions with other students. The lack of media exposure may also reduce attitudes of consumerism in younger kids.*

In considering these outcomes, TNS strongly believes that our curriculum will be beneficial to all of our learners, regardless of ability, especially when related to nature-based education benefits. Nature-based education has been proven to produce better outcomes for students on the spectrum and with a range of differing education challenges. Thus far, we have found the resources available from both Montessori Compass and the Alliance for Waldorf Education have made the process of aligning our goal with Indiana state standards an interesting and smooth process. They address all required Common Core Standards in ELA and Math from K - 12th grade while maintaining much of the integrity of their namesake programs. For this reason, TNS anticipates that our learners will receive an education that promotes their success long after they've left our school.

3. If the curriculum is fully developed, summarize curricular choices such as textbook selection, by subject, and the rationale for each. Describe the evidence that these curricula will be appropriate and effective for the targeted students.

TNS's target population consists of families looking for a student-centered, nature-based learning environment, and who have already considered educational methods not addressed in traditional public schools. With the anticipated growth surrounding our desired location that is projected, TNS is targeting students in the areas of Lawrence, Fishers, McCordsville, Geist. TNS also seeks to target students beyond this area to include Noblesville, Indianapolis, and Carmel, whose families may have already looked into other available charter options or private programs or are currently enrolled in some of these schools already as a more accessible alternative.

Montessori and Waldorf educational systems are highly sought after in recent years across the country and globally. Therefore, we have chosen to adopt the curriculum from Montessori Compass and the Alliance for Public Waldorf education. Their thorough work allows our teachers to focus on a beneficial cooperation between both philosophies as they share several pedagogical beliefs on which we intend to focus.

Because of our curriculum choice, TNS will not require the purchase of textbooks as it is customary for students to manifest their own as related to their individual level of learning. In lieu of such supplies, TNS will acquire other necessary materials, such as Montessori manipulatives, journals, and art supplies with the guidance and assistance of our Montessori and Waldorf teachers. Furthermore, because both approaches have a heavy emphasis on nature and finding your role in our local community as well as your purpose in the world, our classes will utilize materials found in our natural surroundings whenever possible, as well. Here are some of the rationale that leads TNS to believe that our curriculum is an excellent choice for our targeted students:

- *Montessori and Waldorf are the fastest growing educational systems in the world today.*
- *Both are based on many years of experience, with all kinds of children, the world over.*
- *Both have great respect for the child as an individual, spiritual, creative being.*
- *Both believe in protecting the child from the stresses of modern life, overuse or misuse of technology such as television and computers.*
- *Both emphasize the education of the whole child, spiritual, mental, physical, psychological, over any particular academic curriculum.*
- *Both stress the importance of the natural environment, absence of plastic, keeping in touch with nature and natural materials.*
- *Both systems base their education on the needs of the child, believing that this will lead to meeting the needs of society as a whole. Incidentally, both Montessori and Waldorf schools were shut down by the Nazi regime during W.W.II because they refused to teach the ideology of the state.*
- *Both schools provide a rich variety of art, music, dance, and theater at all ages.*

It is for these reasons that we anticipate many families will be drawn to our school; and it can not be understated how much TNS will work to meet the needs of all of our students, including those who may require high ability or special education access. Nature-based education has great potential at providing these learners with even more variety of learning strategies than in traditional classroom environments. We strongly believe these families will appreciate the instruction style, the pedagogical implications, and the overall curriculum utilized by TNS.

4. If the curriculum is not already developed, provide, as **Attachment 3**, a plan for how the curriculum will be developed between approval of the application and the opening of the school, including who will be responsible and when key stages will be completed.
5. Describe the primary instructional strategies that the school will expect teachers to use and why they are well suited for the anticipated student population. Describe the methods and systems teachers will have for providing differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students.

At TNS, teachers will work within the core principles of both Montessori and Waldorf pedagogies in a nature-based setting. Differentiated instruction is built into these principles as learners are met in a variety of ways depending on their current needs. For example, in the Montessori environment, children are often taught in small group settings or on an individual basis. The effectiveness of teaching a child in smaller groups allows for the teacher/guide to constantly assess the needs of students and form groups and re-group accordingly. The Montessori environment is based on constructivism and discovery, which means that children are creating their own learning opportunities and asking questions throughout all lessons rather than merely being taught processes.

In our evolving synthesis with Waldorf, we can differentiate instruction even further and strongly believe these alternative methods of instruction will resonate with learners who may need more motivation for student-led learning. You would expect to see such methods within our best practices:

- **Story Telling**
 - *The power of stories is used to bring each subject area to life. Subject matter is chosen to meet the emotional needs of each age. Every grade has a theme for the year. Stories illustrate the lessons and live within the students during a three-day cycle of listening, recalling, and recording.*
- **Hands on Activities**
 - *Each lesson offers opportunities for students to feel and experience the subject themselves. In this way, students connect the lesson on a deeper level. Instead of learning math facts at a desk, students go to the garden to calculate how many rows of seeds may be planted. When learning how early civilizations made cloth, students visit a sheep ranch and learn to spin yarn themselves. These experiences are unforgettable. Hands-on activities are an integral vehicle for reaching the school's curriculum objectives.*
- **Movement and Circle Activities**
 - *One key factor of academic success is a child's physical development. Each school day includes a number of opportunities for physical and rhythmic activities that strengthen a child's coordination, movement, and ability to activate their senses. Physical development and movement are intertwined with academic lessons. For example, verses recited in circle time have accompanying movements. Students jump rope to multiplication tables, and practice rhythm stick activities that emphasize movement that crosses the body's midline. Movement strengthens students' connection to each lesson.*
- **Art Expression**
 - *Artistic expression is a part of each day. Music, drawing, painting, sculpting, and handwork are deeply engaging for children. When children are deeply engaged, a sense of creativity flourishes and their conception of beauty grows. Teachers and students celebrate the uniqueness of each student's creation and the accomplishment of completing a project. Art and music enrich every subject studied in school.*
- **Block Rotation**
 - *The curriculum of each school year is divided into a block schedule consisting of two to four week periods that allow for intense focus into each subject. Each morning lesson is dedicated to the designated curriculum area*

(language arts, math, science, etc.) for the duration of the block. When it is time for the next block of the curriculum area, prior blocks are refreshed, reinforced, and taken one step further. This type of schedule allows the teacher and students to dive deeply into the subject matter.

- **Main Lesson Recording**

- Students record and illustrate what they have learned in each subject in main lesson books. Recording is the final step of the learning cycle. In doing so, students reaffirm what has been learned through classroom and hands-on experiences. These books serve as a cumulative record of each child's progress and are often cherished keepsakes of a student's beautiful school experience.

- **Class Plays**

- Class plays are an important part of the Waldorf curriculum. The plays selected annually relate to the year's curriculum theme, and parts are distributed with each student's innate gifts in mind. The short 10-minute skit performed by first grade grows to a complex, multi-scene play by eighth grade. With each production, the class learns to work together - creating their own costumes, backdrops, and learning each part. Students gain confidence as they perform in front of an audience, and the social aspects of a class play strengthen friendships.

Within all of these differentiated methods of instruction at TNS, teachers will work cooperatively with learners on stories, music and songs, theatre, handwork, art, as well as practical life skills, which are built into the curriculum as it evolves into the students needs. The teacher is expected to offer guidance, but the student is ultimately responsible for his or her own individual learning. The learning spaces, both inside and outside of the classroom, will often contain several curated areas, each containing items which allow our learners to observe, explore, and learn. This prepared environment concept allows each student to move to various areas within the classroom, working with specialized learning tools such as grammar symbols and counting beads. Each child is allowed to explore in-depth an area of interest, whether it is dinosaurs, history, or multiplication. Having a prepared environment allows each child to pace themselves and also teaches self-discipline as their developmental needs grow within a structured setting.

Implementing Montessori-Inspired practice depends almost entirely on adults who have been appropriately oriented in both the core precepts of developmental learning and the technical skills required to manage student-centered, personalized learning environments. Below are key skills our teachers will employ as a part of best practices:

- **Student-centered classroom with a sense of community.**
 - The classroom set-up is versatile so that students can work individually or in groups. Teachers teach in a variety of modes: whole class, small group and individual lessons (Feinstein, 2010).
 - Rarely deliver whole-group instruction; rather, they are skilled at offering small-group or one-on-one lessons.
- **Seminar used as a tool for respect, listening skills, the development of insight and understanding, and a building block for community (Roberts & Billings, 1999).**
 - Students in small or large group conversations reference text and respond to one another's comments.
- **Curriculum developed by passionate teachers that encourages both convergent and divergent thinking (Zimmelman, Daniels, Hyde, 2005).**
- **Multi-layered projects that have differentiated assignments and allow for a variety of modes of learning.**
- **Blocks of work time without interruption.**
 - These blocks of time allow for collaborative projects and hands-on activities and are not intended for longer lectures.
- **Variety of instructional and assessment practices including clear objectives, rubrics, and self-evaluation (O'Meara, 2010).**
 - Students are engaged in projects that interweave subject areas. There is evidence of field studies and project work displayed in classrooms and around campus.
 - An observer may peek over the students' shoulders and notice interesting packets of project work they are engaged in.
- **Focus on service learning with the support of instructional lessons.**
 - Meaningful service work happens when students are prepared for the "work of the heart" or "head, heart, and hands".
- **Expert observation of children for constant and continued assessment**

- *Teachers build focused observation into their daily practice, and base all instructional decisions on observed interest and readiness in individual children.*
- *The teacher's critical role of link between child and environment rather than source of knowledge*
 - *Teachers cultivate an intentional speaking register designed to model naturalistic conversation rather than didactic "teacher talk" and speak to children at eye level rather than calling across the room.*
- *Student and teacher interactions that exhibit courtesy and respect.*
 - *Teachers model friendliness with error and cultivate a classroom culture of exploration and experimentation—most often manifest as intentional neutrality with regard to response to student work, e.g. resistance to extrinsic rewards, encouraging risk-taking effort.*

In other words, in concurrence with these instructional strategies and coordinating curated areas, the teacher will observe each child, his/her needs, capabilities and interests, and offer him/her opportunities to work intelligently and with a concrete purpose, to service the care of him/herself and of the small community in the classroom. For our more independent learners, the teacher's final objective is to intervene the minimum amount possible as these children progress in their development. The teacher will allow these learners to act, want and think for themselves, helping them to develop confidence and inner discipline. TNS teachers will not give rewards or punishments. These students find inner satisfaction that emerges from their personal work. For our learners requiring a little more assistance, TNS teachers will allow these students to watch and work with them or their peers, facilitating and developing age-appropriate academics and skills through imitation and modeling.

When the students, based on their evolutionary development, are ready for a lesson, the teacher will introduce the use of new materials and present activities individually or to a reduced group. With older learners, the teacher will help each child make a list of objectives at the beginning of the week and then the child will administer his/her time during the week in order to achieve them. It is not the teacher but the child him/herself who is responsible for his/her own learning and development.

Finally, as TNS believes strongly in the benefits of our nature-based setting, many of our instructional strategies involve broadening the scope of what learning experiences can be and extend outside of our walls and within our community. Through our many blossoming partnerships, our teachers will have the opportunity to utilize their instructional methods based in real-world opportunities and mindful activity within a compassionate community to complete the Montessori and Waldorf principles of "work of the heart" and "head, heart, hands", respectively.

Pupil Performance Standards

Meets Standard Expectation

- Clear, rigorous learning standards (provided for one grade for each division the school would serve) and exit standards aligned with the Indiana Academic Standards (IAS).
- Thoughtful identification of and plan for development and adoption of any additional academic standards beyond state and authorizer that the school would adopt or develop, including explanation and evidence of how those standards would exceed the state standards.
- Clear, rigorous promotion and exit policies and standards.

Responses to the following items regarding the proposed school's pupil performance standards must be consistent with state and authorizer standards.

1. Describe the pupil performance standards for the school as a whole.

Though TNS is working within the core principles of Montessori and Waldorf, we will hold students accountable to the standards set by the state of Indiana. K-8 students must demonstrate a consistent level of competency of the Indiana Academic Standards in conjunction with the content requirements laid out in our curriculum. Students must demonstrate proficiency in all required areas in order to be promoted to the next grade level at the end of the last quarter. TNS will determine if a student has met applicable standards through required testing as determined by the IDOE. With that in mind and because both Montessori and Waldorf

philosophies strongly believe in meeting children where they are in their learning, careful consideration will be given to not only test scores but observed proficiency levels as seen in completed works, literacy, math ability, as well as classroom behaviors and habits.

In grades K-8, data from these assessments will be used to evaluate the student's progress. The data analysis will include student grades; test results, both state and TNS-created assessments; as well as teacher observations. Students may be retained for one year in the same grade. Every effort will be made to ensure that a student is successful. Remediation programs, such as extra lessons and tutoring, will be provided for those students who show a deficiency in attaining the standards.

Assessments will also be made using a team approach. The team, being composed of the teacher, the student, the student's family, and any other necessary members, will create a learning plan to help aid in their progress should that be deemed necessary for their success. These assessments and protocols will be followed in a natural and non-competitive way and are non-negotiable in the context of a Montessori and Waldorf learning approach. Progress will be monitored closely by the team, and every effort will be made to ensure the child is receiving the necessary attention appropriate to his/or her needs.

TNS recognizes that the standards for all of the different methods follow along their own trajectory. Our purpose is to incorporate and make decisions on when to incorporate different methods for different subjects. This process will require ongoing and continuous collaboration with our team and to decide what practices work best for different levels, topics, and content. In the meantime, our focus will be covering and meeting the Indiana Academic Standards by using instructional strategies that are familiar to our teachers. Given that our classrooms will be multiage, teachers will have the opportunity to build relationships over the course of 3 years. Knowing the children means less time that is taken learning what children know each year. This also allows room and flexibility in meeting grade-level standards. The scope and sequence that is created will work within a 3-year cycle, covering content and standards within 3 years, rather than one, as the state standards are written.

2. Provide, in **Attachment 4**, a complete set of the school's proposed learning standards for one grade for each division (elementary, middle, high school) the school would serve. Address the skills and knowledge each student will be expected to attain by the end of that grade. If the school will only serve one division, the exit standards provided in response to the fifth question in this section will suffice.
3. If you plan to adopt or develop additional academic standards beyond the state and authorizer standards, explain these additional standards, including the content areas and grade levels in which they will be implemented. Describe the adoption or development process that has taken place or will take place. Select one grade level and subject area as an example, and explain how these additional standards exceed the state and authorizer standards.

TNS will hold our students to additional standards directly related to our nature-based curriculum. As it is still being developed, we intend to rely on some of the assessment tools and methods provided by public-Montessori and Waldorf educator mentor organizations. We will be speaking with them throughout the period before our Fall 2021 opening and utilizing their guidance in our professional development sessions. They have generously agreed to help us through this process as they are pleased to see this school model grow. Some of these additional standards include areas such as practical life, foreign languages, art, and music.

While not required at all grade levels in the IDOE standards and guidelines, TNS believes this will address the needs of our targeted population and match the curriculum requirements that we are working hard to capture as related to Montessori and Waldorf pedagogies. These additional standards enhance our program by providing our learners more opportunity to satisfy Montessori and Waldorf principles of peace education, global interconnectedness, cosmic purpose, spiritual development, experiential learning, community servitude, and freedom of learning.

For foreign languages, we will be utilizing duolingo.com and relating course outcomes with the IDOE Standards for World Languages. Students from a 6th grade class would be expected to be able to complete the following in a foreign language:

Communication (1C)

Overarching Standard: Communicate effectively in more than one language in order to function in a variety of situations and for multiple purposes.

*Specialized Standard - **Interpretive**: Learners understand, interpret, and analyze what is heard, read, or viewed on a variety of topics.*

Communication - Interpretive (2I)

Proficiency Benchmark: Novice - *I can identify the general topic and some basic information in both very familiar and everyday contexts by recognizing practiced or memorized words, phrases, and simple sentences in spoken, written, or gestured contexts.*

Novice Low (NL)

- *1C.2I.NL.a - In written texts, I can identify memorized or familiar words when they are supported by visuals in informational and/or fictional texts.*
- *1C.2I.NL.b - In conversations and discussions, I can understand memorized or familiar words when they are supported by gestures or visuals in conversation.*
- *1C.2I.NM.a - In written texts, I can identify basic facts from memorized words and phrases when they are supported by visuals in informational and/or fictional texts.*
- *1C.2I.NM.b - In conversations and discussions, I can identify basic facts from memorized words and phrases when they are supported by gestures or visuals in conversations.*

4. Explain the policies and standards for promoting students from one grade to the next. Discuss how and when promotion and graduation criteria will be communicated to parents and students.

TNS will rely on a three-pronged approach to promotion and retention as discussed with teachers at the end of the 180-day school year. These prongs are made up of assessments, such as required or recommended state and local testing; observations, both written and oral; and attendance, all of which focus on mastery of skills and the curriculum material. TNS holds high expectations for all students and believes staff, students, parents, and the community must share accountability for student achievement. Local student standards and performance guidelines are based on the need for students to demonstrate proficiency in the IAS of reading, writing, mathematics, as well as a belief in the need to provide early and ongoing assistance to students who are not performing at expected levels.

Though it is imperative that promotion standards be rigorous enough to provide students with the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to be successful at the next grade level, we must keep in mind the educational needs of the student and understand that all learners achieve mastery and proficiency at varying rates. Recognizing the state's guidelines for retention, the Board of Education acknowledges the necessity of thoughtful decisions regarding retaining students. The complex dimensions of all promotion/retention decisions make clear that each child's placement deserves to be decided on its own merits. The Executive Director has the ultimate responsibility for promotion/retention decisions.

At the end of every quarter, progress reports will be sent out via email to students' families. TNS teachers will also participate in parent-teacher meetings and be expected to keep in regular communication with parents regarding students' progress and achievement. Students who have not demonstrated the required skills and mastery for the current grade level will be discussed by an educational team. An educational team can consist of the Executive Director, lead teacher, classroom assistant, and/or parent/guardian. It will be the job of the education team to review the assessments, documentation, teacher recommendation, Light's Retention Scale, and to align their professional knowledge and opinion to determine the best education decision for the student. The final progress report of the school year shall indicate end-of-year status regarding performance at grade level, attendance, and promotion or retention.

In the circumstance that the educational team believes that retention is in the best interest of the student, but parents are found to be in disagreement with this professional opinion, the parent will assume full and entire responsibility for student success at the next grade level to which the student has been assigned. In making this choice, the parent agrees to assume this educational responsibility and therefore relinquishes any educational claims to the contrary against TNS, teachers, and/or administrators.

Should the student display consistent competency in required standards with no more than one non-performing grade and adequate achievement in all other standard subject areas, meet expected outcomes as deemed by our required and formative assessments, and have attended enough school days to satisfy instructional requirements by the end of the school year, the student will be promoted to the next grade level. However, that learner may still find themselves within the same classroom setting and with the same classroom teacher as is expected in the multi-age classrooms and looping that are present in Montessori and Waldorf-inspired programs.

5. Provide, in **Attachment 5**, the school's exit standards for graduating students. These should clearly set forth what students in the last grade served will know and be able to do.

High School Graduation Requirements (High Schools Only)

Meets Standard Expectation

- Sound plan for meeting state and authorizer graduation requirements (including credits, GPA calculation, transcripts, electives) and compelling explanation of any additional requirements beyond the state's and authorizer's requirements.
- Clear, persuasive explanation of how the school's graduation requirements will ensure student readiness for college and other post-secondary opportunities (trade school, military service, or entering the workforce).
- Effective systems and structures for students at risk of dropping out or not meeting graduation requirements.

High schools will be expected to meet the state and authorizer graduation standards.

1. Describe how the school will meet these requirements. Explain how students will earn credit hours, how grade-point averages will be calculated, what information will be on transcripts, and what elective courses will be offered. If graduation requirements for the school will exceed state and authorizer standards, explain the additional requirements.

Not applicable

2. Explain how the graduation requirements will ensure student readiness for college and other postsecondary opportunities (trade school, military service, or entering the workforce).

Not applicable

3. Explain what systems and structures the school will implement for students at risk of dropping out and/or not meeting the proposed graduation requirements.

Not applicable

School Calendar and Schedule

Meets Standard Expectation

- School calendar and sample daily and weekly schedules that meet minimum Indiana requirements, align with the educational program, and are conducive to significantly improving student learning.

1. Discuss the annual academic schedule for the school. Explain how the calendar reflects the needs of the educational program. In **Attachment 6**, provide the school's proposed calendar for the first year of operation, including total number of days/hours of instruction.

While we are still working out the final details of our calendar, we hope to offer programming throughout the year. Our academic school year calendar will follow the local schools' balanced calendar to better meet the needs of the community in which we are serving and to maintain our vision. School will be in session 180 days each year, either in-person or via remote learning. For our Kindergarten students, school will be in session Monday - Thursday from 9am-3pm, and Friday each week from 9am-1pm. On Fridays, instruction will take place offsite at a local forest or park. We consider this a "Wilderness Day." Grades 1-8 will attend Monday - Thursday from 8:30am-3:30pm and 8:30am-1:30pm on campus on Fridays, with 1-2 hours of remote learning at home. Our Lower Elementary (1st-3rd) will have a Farm or Wilderness Day on Monday each week, and our Upper Elementary will have their Farm or Wilderness Day on Thursday each week. We are still working out logistics for our students to be able to travel off-site, and these plans are contingent on being able to offer transportation provided by the school. If TNS is unable to offer transportation, then a form of Farm/Wilderness Days will be done on our property. Each Friday, grades 1-8 will have a Community Day, which families and parents will be encouraged to attend focused on creating and maintaining our school environment, presentations, special projects, etc. In the event of inclement weather, students will remain on campus for instruction on their Wilderness/Farm Days.

Kindergarten students will receive 19 hours of instruction per week (76 hrs/month), Grades 1 through 6 will receive 26 hours of instruction each week (104 hrs./month), Grades 7 and 8 will receive 30 hours of instruction every week (120 hrs./month), and every teacher will have four hours per month of Professional Development time. This schedule will allow ample time for instruction, outdoor exploration in a variety of settings, and professional development for the staff.

2. Describe the structure of the school day and week. Include the number of instructional hours/minutes in a day in core subjects such as language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Note the length of the school day, including start and dismissal times. Explain why the schools daily and weekly schedule will be optimal for student learning. Provide the minimum number of hours/minutes per day and week that the school will devote to academic instruction in each grade. Your response should include, in **Attachment 7**, a sample daily and weekly schedule for each division (elementary, middle, high school) of the school.

The day will begin at TNS for grades 1-8 at 8:30am with a Morning Circle to welcome all students and to strengthen our community culture. The students will then go with their class for their first 90 minute work session, which will be Math or Language Arts focused. Following this work session, the students and staff will enjoy a snack together and practice mindfulness through an activity of their choosing. They will subsequently have their second 90-minute work session of the day (Math or LA focused). After this work session, classes will break for lunch and recess, which will consist of unstructured play time in our green schoolyard. After lunch, students will have a 30-minute (Elementary) or 60-minute (Middle School) work session with a focus in Social Studies or Science. Next, students will have their "Special Courses" which will be a rotation of Foreign Language, Music/Art, and Handwork. The day will end with a school-wide Closing Circle, followed by dismissal at 3:30pm.

One day each week, each grade (1 through 8) will have a Wilderness or Farm Day (regular school hours) during which instruction will take place in a local forest/wooded area. All core subject areas will still be addressed during the scheduled work sessions in a creative, nature-based method. Students will also have the opportunity to explore their location and further the Place-based learning. Every other Friday, each class will have what we call a Community Day (8:30am-1:30pm). During Community Days, parents and families will be invited to join their students at school for a day spent caring for and investing in our school environment. This may involve handwork, tending to the garden, or working with other classes/students on special projects. Again, in this setting a variety of academic subjects will be addressed both directly and indirectly. Following our Community Day, students will have 1-2 hours of remote learning activities, including foreign language instruction through duolingo.com and PenPalSchools.

At TNS, we believe that the early childhood (birth to age seven) is a unique period of life that deserves respect, guidance, nurture and time. We believe that children have not only a physical nature, but an individual and spiritual one as well. Meaningful work and creative play in a structured environment are the pillars upon which a healthy life can be built. Of utmost importance is the development of social skills, which serve the children in one day realizing their potential in relation to others. The goal of kindergarten is to integrate young children into their individual physical body, the social body of the classroom, and life as a whole. Thus, the children's education takes place primarily through an active participation in the "Living Arts." These include:

- *benefiting from the nurturing arts, such as well-structured and consistent daily, weekly, and yearly routines, healthy nourishment, daily rests, and clearly-held boundaries*
- *imitating and partaking in meaningful, purposeful, practical work, such as cooking, woodworking, cleaning, and gardening*
- *exploring the creative arts, such as imaginative play, watercolor painting, puppetry, handwork, and storytelling*
- *developing social/ relational skills– learning to share with, wait for, ask, thank, help and work with others in a mixed-age environment*
- *experiencing daily, extended time in nature, the seasonal cycles, the earth and the elements first-hand*

In our classrooms, a multi-sensory, experiential foundation is laid for abstract learning to come in grade school and beyond. Keys to our approach for children ages 4-6:

- *Young children have a natural awe and reverence for the world and the adults who care for and teach them; thus, children readily imitate what they experience in their environment. Consequently, the teacher embodies and demonstrates the behaviors, knowledge, attitudes, and habits for the children to learn and acquire through imitation.*
- *Young children develop a sense of security and confidence in the world that leads to clear thinking and emotional stability later through consistent relationships with their primary adult caregivers and teachers and through rhythm in their daily, weekly and yearly life.*
- *Young children’s bodies are in an intense process of forming inner organs, growing bones and brain tissue, and developing physical gross and fine motor coordination, which should be honored and actively supported. Consequently, young children will ideally be purposefully given a significant amount of time for free play that encourages a variety of physical activities, imitative make-believe play acting, and imaginative and social problem solving.*
- *Young children do not have the filters adults do with regard to their sensory experiences; they are like sponges absorbing everything in their environment. Consequently, the classroom environment is rich with healthy sensory experiences incorporating natural materials, texture, warmth, and the fragrances of cooking and baking. In addition, outdoor time in nature immerses children in the sights, sounds, colors, smells, and tactile experiences of the ever-changing seasons.*

Unlike grades 1-8, the kindergarten does not teach in main lesson subjects. There are 3-6 week seasonally-oriented themes that infuse the content of each day, but literacy and language arts, mathematics, science, social skills, social studies, music and the arts are integrated into each theme. Any standards that are not covered in Kindergarten will be met in 1st grade. Our kindergarteners will attend , Monday-Thursday on their campus (9am-3pm), with a Wilderness Day each Friday (9-1pm).

The above daily and weekly schedules will provide our staff and students with optimal time and settings to align with our vision and educational goals at TNS. The slight differences in the kindergarten and grades 1-8 schedule, allows time for families to make it to both locations easily. As mentioned previously, Kindergarten students will receive 19 hours of instruction per week (76 hrs/month), Grades 1 through 6 will receive 27.5 hours of instruction every other week and 25.5 hours of instruction the opposite week (106 hrs/month), Grades 7-8 will receive 30 hours of instruction every other week and 28 hours of instruction on the opposite week (116 hrs/month), and every teacher will have four hours per month of Professional Development time.

School Culture

Meets Standard Expectation

- *Vision for school culture or ethos that will promote high expectations, a positive academic environment and intellectual and social development for all students, including those with special needs, English Learners, and students at risk of academic failure.*
- *Coherent plan for establishing and maintaining the intended culture for students, teachers, administrators, and parents from the first day of school, and for enculturating students who enter the school mid-year.*

1. Describe the culture or ethos of the proposed school. Explain how it will promote a positive academic environment and reinforce student intellectual and social development.

As is critical to our vision, TNS aims to change the world for the better through the education we will provide to our learners. This equally applies to our culture. It is the goal of TNS to promote and instill a culture of mutual respect, nurturing, love, acceptance, and tolerance toward the world and learning that is bound by a common purpose of providing our students and their families with an exemplary and holistic education experience based around the world around us. TNS does not take lightly that our students are with us during their formative years. In cooperation with their families, we will be relied upon to shape our learners character, knowledge, and relationship towards learning.

We gratefully accept this responsibility and want to steep our learners in a culture that allows them to thrive and cultivate their self-worth while also increasing their awareness and appreciation of the differing versions of success for others. TNS believes that this ethos will promote a very positive academic environment and awareness of their community and the larger world. This will not only encourage our community to celebrate each student but also reinforce their intellectual and student development by removing any conforming expectations and instead asking that they aim to achieve their highest potential.

2. Explain how you will create and implement this culture for students, teachers, administrators, and parents starting from the first day of school. Describe the plan for enculturating students who enter the school mid-year.

Even before the first day of school, our policies and procedures manual will be electronically distributed to all enrolled students' families. Among these policies is an agreement to further the culture and philosophy of TNS as student and family representatives. TNS leadership and staff will model the words, actions, and behaviors that coincide with our school culture and, through mutual respect, expect our learners and community members to do the same. For students joining mid-year, our established culture, which stems from our Montessori and Waldorf-guided principles, will allow us to help them smoothly transition into TNS and assist them in finding their potential to thrive among their peers. This occurs very naturally in our setting as new students, or even teachers or staff for that matter, will be paired with a mentor or cognitive apprentice -- something that is commonplace within our classrooms in the form of partners or small groups. Through that pairing, questions or concerns can easily be raised and answered to help students harmoniously enculturate to their new school home. It is also TNS's goal to provide a brief orientation to facilitate that process and distribute necessary any other information new families may need.

3. Explain how the school culture will take account of and serve students with special needs, including students receiving special education services, English Learners, and any students at risk of academic failure.

It is expected, through data from INVIEW on the IDOE, from Lawrence Township Schools, Mt. Vernon Township Schools, and Geist Montessori Academy, that TNS will have 12-17% of students with special needs; and an average of 31% of students will be economically disadvantaged. TNS is prepared to meet the academic, physical, mental, and emotional needs of each of our students through our well educated and prepared classroom teachers, staff, and Special education teachers, as well through a multitude of community partnerships and resources. The culture that we will strive to promote looks at the unique and special contributions of every learner in our community. Though it is unlikely that we will have a high percentage of ELL, TNS's school culture means that we welcome and celebrate each student, regardless of need or ability. These students will have ample opportunity to engage in learning with their peers, and we will foster a deep love and appreciation of each learner in every classroom throughout TNS.

Supplemental Programming

Meets Standard Expectation

- Sound plan, design, schedule, and funding for summer school that will meet anticipated student needs *(if applicable)*.
- Well-designed plans and funding for extracurricular and co-curricular activities, programs, and services that will meet anticipated student needs and provide enrichment experiences.
- Thoughtful, well-supported description of programs or strategies to address student mental, emotional, and social development and health, and any other student-focused activities and programs that are integral to the schools educational and student-development plans.
- Sound plan for implementation of remote learning, such as eLearning and/or extended learning.

1. If summer school will be offered, describe the program(s). Explain the schedule and length of the program including the number of hours and weeks. Discuss the anticipated participants including the number of students and the methods used to identify them. Identify the anticipated resource and staffing needs for this program.

The Nature School will offer summer school in a way that aligns with our vision and goals. Our summer school will consist of four optional, "Summer Camp" sessions lasting one week each. These sessions will be from 9am-12pm, and provide students the opportunity to work in local farms and gardens at the prime season. We will also have once a week Community Days, in which students and their families will be invited to the school to participate in tending to the garden, creating and caring for the school environment, and handiwork. Students and families will also participate in yoga, eurythmy, and other activities, as our goal remains to address the needs of the whole child. As always, academic goals will be interwoven throughout all activities; but for any students that are noted as struggling by their classroom teachers or who would like a little more practice, there will be a one hour "Extra Lesson" from 12-1 each day. The focus of each "Extra Lesson" will change with each session.

Our Summer Camp sessions, and Community Days will continue to build upon the sense of community that we will establish and strengthen throughout the school year. We anticipate that 2 paid staff members on site will be sufficient, though all teachers and staff will be encouraged to attend the Community Days or Summer Camp Session. We hope to partner with local universities to offer teaching experience through our summer camp sessions. Our funding sources include budgeted teacher stipends as well as possible partnerships with local farmers.

2. Describe the extra- or co-curricular activities or programming the school will offer, how often they will occur, and how they will be funded.

We hope to establish several extra-curricular activities for the students of TNS, such as Yoga and Mindfulness Club (1st-8th) and International Club (4th-8th) meeting bi-weekly throughout the school year. We plan to partner with Indiana Futsal to offer Intramural Futsal in the Spring/Summer (K-8th). Orchestra will be offered after school once a week for students in grades 4-8, and we plan to partner with local parks to offer monthly Nature Club for families. We also plan to give our older learners the option of creating clubs with a sponsoring teacher and to create a funding plan for themselves. TNS will also offer volunteer opportunities for our students and families, so that they have an opportunity to serve others within our community. These activities will be funded by budgeted teacher/coach stipends, fundraising, and community partnerships and support.

3. Describe the programs or strategies to address student mental, emotional, and social development and health.

At TNS, we will focus on the whole child, with an understanding that each student brings his/her own strengths and weaknesses to our community. Both Waldorf and Montessori philosophies take a holistic approach to education, focusing not only on academics but the mental, physical, and emotional well being of students. Waldorf education, by design, is a curative education; so many healing modalities, such as yoga, meditation, mindfulness, healthy living, and eurythmy are interwoven in our approach and will be a part of each school day.

TNS will implement mindfulness practices throughout the school day. Mindfulness practices offer a host of benefits for both students and staff. Studies find that youth benefit from learning mindfulness in terms of improved cognitive outcomes, social-emotional skills, and well being. In turn, such benefits may lead to long-term improvements in life. When teachers learn mindfulness, they not only reap personal benefits such as reduced stress and burnout, but their schools do as well. Studies show that mindfulness helps teachers have better classroom organization, create more emotionally supportive classrooms, and greater efficacy in doing their jobs.

TNS will also utilize Art and Equine Therapy, and possibly Music Therapy, to address student needs. Additionally, we plan to add a School Counselor and possibly a homeschool-community specialist, to further meet the needs of our students. Our learning will be nature-based, and students will have an opportunity to learn in a green schoolyard, farm, and forest settings. Studies have proven

that time in nature can improve health and well-being, academic outcomes, as well as expanding students' capacity to care for the earth. All of which are of utmost importance to The Nature School.

4. If applicable, describe any other student-focused activities and programs that are integral to the educational and student-development plans.

The Nature School will blend together Montessori and Waldorf, and Place-based Education principles and philosophies. These will each play an integral role in our educational development and approach. Students will have a wide variety of ways and places to learn. Another very prominent aspect of TNS will be developing and maintaining a strong sense of community. Through our weekly Community Days, we will offer students and families a chance to partake in a variety of handwork. Handwork is an integral part of Waldorf education and will be a part of not only our Community Days, but each day at TNS.

Neuroscientific research has shown that textile crafting, such as sewing, weaving, crocheting, and knitting offers a positive therapeutic impact on brain health and emotional wellness. Author and Waldorf teacher, Elizabeth Seward said, "The value of handwork extends well beyond the ability to make a cute little decorative item. Pairing thinking with action, beauty, function, and service in the work of our hands brings innumerable benefits. The place of handwork in education is to integrate and address, and hopefully also to nourish and stimulate, the whole human being – head, heart, and hands – and to challenge and support the development of the full potential of each child – physical, emotional, social, and intellectual – in a way that affirms and empowers them as a productive member of their community."

5. Describe how the school will incorporate remote learning into the regular school calendar or in place of inclement weather days that would cause a school cancellation. For the applicant's reference, Education One defines eLearning as learning conducted via digital and electronic media and resources. Extended learning would be implemented by schools who do not have the capacity to continue instruction with technology due to lack of school or family resources needed for eLearning, but provide students and families with paper/pencil resources and support. Further guidance on Indiana's eLearning department can be found here: <https://www.doe.in.gov/elearning>

With regards to our educational beliefs, some may find the use of technology and eLearning questionable. Because screen time is not a primary source of instruction in most Montessori, Waldorf, or nature-based programs, we want to be mindful in our approach. Studies show that the increasing amount of screen time is attributed to negative effects on learners, especially in light of COVID. Therefore, we are going to do our best to mitigate the necessary screen time associated with remote learning and utilize tech in a healthier, research-driven manner.

TNS plans to fully incorporate our curriculum into a virtual learning space by utilizing distance learning software, such as Blackboard, Canvas, or the like and aims to provide necessary devices or equipment to our learners. By fully incorporating our curriculum into a virtual setting, we can seamlessly transition from in person to eLearning in the event of professional development days, inclement weather, illness, or other extenuating circumstances. TNS teachers, then, will be able to spend more time one-on-one or in small group lessons with students in order to deliver the adequate amount of instructional time as required by the IDOE.

TNS is very excited to develop and deploy this approach to our learners and their families and hopes that it will alleviate much of the stress and fatigue associated with remote learning.

- Summarize the types of resources and/or programs the school will utilize to ensure instruction continues.

TNS will utilize email, online meeting software, virtual classroom software in conjunction with our online curriculum, and duolingo for continued foreign language instruction.

- Identify the professional development needed in order to support teachers in implementing the school's plan.

TNS teachers will receive online training and certification offered by Google and the associated software companies to be completed at their own pace by the beginning of the school year set for July, 2021.

- Describe how the school would communicate with parents for scheduled and unscheduled remote learning days.

TNS will communicate our unexpected closures using an alert or Communications software, such as Bloomz or OneCallNow, in order to email, text, or call parents and notify them of our plans. This information will also be posted on our website, social media, and local news stations. Families will also have access to our calendar on our website, have the option to subscribe to our school Google calendar, and be sent our official school calendar via email after enrollment in order to stay informed about planned closures. Even in the event of planned remote learning days, reminders will be sent to families via email and text notification.

- Outline the expectations for teachers on a remote learning day, including planning of activities, lesson delivery, communication with students and families, office hours, etc.

With our plan to utilize virtual learning software, we hope to free up teachers' time to focus more on our learners. Activities and lessons will be deployed in our virtual learning space as prepared in coordination with our curriculum development. Teachers will be available via email, chat, or video conference software during regular operating or "office" hours.

- Outline the expectations for students on a remote learning day, including possible daily schedules, time spent on tasks based on grade level, etc.

TNS wants to smoothly transition our students into a remote learning day by using a similar daily rhythm as our F2F classes. This includes dedicated blocks of time in which the students will receive lessons, either individually, in small groups, or as a class, depending on the lessons requirements, and time away from the computer in which to complete their works. TNS would encourage the following rhythm:

- morning virtual check-in
- outdoor time, if allowed
- work time (60-90 minutes)
- a break for stretching and a snack
- an individual or small group virtual lesson, if needed
- lunch
- work time (60-90 minutes)
- outdoor time, if allowed
- enrichment, depending on the day
- rest

Depending on the duration of remote learning, it's likely that our learners may simply be able to hand in completed work at school the following day.

- If the school is to count a remote learning day as one in which school is open, services provided to Special Education students and English Learners must continue based on the language found in Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and/or Individualized Language Plans (ILPs). Describe how the school will provide continued services, track compensatory hours should they be needed, or create IEPs and ILPs with specific language surrounding remote learning days.

TNS will ensure that all students who have accommodations for instruction will be provided with or have access to those accommodations. We will address all of the issues as written in the IDOE guide on Continuous Learning and Accommodations and relating to the following areas:

- *Presentation—how students receive information,*
- *Responding—how students show what they know,*
- *Setting—how the environment is made accessible for instruction and assessment, and*
- *Scheduling—how time demands and schedules may be adjusted.*• *Scheduling—how time demands and schedules may be adjusted.*

For students with disabilities who do not use an online platform for learning or for whom an online platform is not appropriate, teachers will provide parents/caregivers with appropriate educational materials and learning activities for student use.

For limited English proficient students, teachers will provide parents/caregivers appropriate educational materials and learning activities for student use per the Individual Learning Plan.

TNS will collaborate with the Special Ed Team to create a sound plan for remote learning before our first remote day and prepare families and learners with further information as deemed necessary. As in our general remote plan, we want to provide all of our learners with continuity. If students have been using support in the classroom, and this can be replicated in the home environment, this is the recommended practice. If not, alternative methods to support student learning must be determined.

Special Populations and At-Risk Students

Meets Standard Expectation

- Demonstrated understanding of – and capacity to fulfill – state and federal obligations and requirements pertaining to students with disabilities, students identified as intellectually gifted, and English Learners (ELs), including appropriate discipline procedures for students with disabilities.
- Sound explanation of evidence from which the projection of anticipated special populations was derived.
- Comprehensive and compelling plan for appropriate identification of students who are performing below grade level or at risk of academic failure or dropping out and a detailed plan for providing services to such students.
- Comprehensive and compelling plan for appropriate identification of students with special needs to ensure they are served in the least restrictive environment possible, have appropriate access to the general education curriculum and school wide educational, extra-curricular, and culture-building activities in ways that support their development, receive required and appropriate support services as outlined in their IEPs and/or 504 plans, and participate in standardized testing.
- Comprehensive and compelling plan for providing services to ELs, including methods for appropriate identification, specific instructional programs, practices, and strategies the school will employ to ensure academic success and equitable access to the general education curriculum and core academic program for these students, plans for monitoring and evaluating student progress and success of ELs and for exiting them from services, and plan for including ELs in standardized testing and school wide educational, extra-curricular, and culture-building activities
- Plans describe evidence-based instructional programs and practices; effective design or adaptation of the educational program; qualified staffing; and support strategies and resources.

Schools are responsible for hiring licensed and endorsed special educators pursuant to law. School personnel shall participate in developing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs); identify and refer students for assessment of special education needs; maintain records; and cooperate in the delivery of special education instruction and services, as appropriate.

1. Describe the overall plan to serve students with special needs, including but not limited to students with IEPs or Section 504 plans; English Learners (EL); students identified as intellectually gifted; and students at risk for academic failure or dropping out. Identify the special populations and at-risk groups the school expects to serve, whether through data related to specifically targeted school or neighborhood or more generalized analysis of the population served. Discuss how the course scope and sequence, daily schedule, staffing plans, and support strategies and resources will meet or be adjusted for the diverse needs of students.

TNS learners will have the incredible benefit that Montessori and Waldorf-inspired programming includes within their curriculums. Both pedagogies have a deep understanding of the varying strengths and abilities of children individually. As such, the process of transitioning already multi-layered works to meet the needs of students requiring IEPs and/or for gifted learners requiring special

considerations to meet their abilities is smooth and organic. Our model will allow for students to participate in the curriculum to the degree necessitated by their learning plans by making accommodations that maintain the integrity of the standards which they are required to learn within each learning block. Some of the expectations that exist within these philosophies include similar ability cohorts, individualized learning experiences, and differentiated pace. While this is the case, TNS will do so in a manner that adheres to all requirements set by the IDOE as is outlined below.

Students with exceptional needs at TNS will be supported by a variety of evidence-based practices that best suit their individual needs. These supports include, but are not limited to the MTSS process for academically at risk students, the special education process, the ELL process, and supports for gifted students. Based on information from the IDOE about the population of schools in the area (<https://inview.doe.in.gov/>), we expect the population of our school to be made up of diverse students with an array of needs.

With the data from Lawrence Township Schools, Mt. Vernon Township Schools, and Geist Montessori Academy, our estimates are that 20-40% of students will be economically disadvantaged, 1-3% will be English learners, and 12-17% will have some form of disability. We are aware that our unique approach to learning will attract a large variety of students, and we will be prepared to meet these needs by adhering to all SPED licensure requirements and ensuring through continued education that all SPED staff are knowledgeable of best practices. The Nature School will be offering great support to our students in its approach to learning. Studies continue to show the benefits of nature-based schooling, for all students. Nature's rejuvenating effects on attention have been found in students 5-18 with ADHD. (<https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/pdfplus/10.2105/AJPH.94.9.1580>) In children, nature contact has been tied to greater self-discipline and impulse control. These benefits have been shown for neurotypical students as well as those with ADHD (<http://aiota.org/temp/ijotpdf/ibat14i2p49.pdf>) and learning difficulties (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2331186X.2017.1334430>).

The Nature School SPED team, which will include a licensed special education teacher and a special education assistant, will work to identify and meet all student needs through in-class support and one-on-one instruction, in order to create an optimal learning environment for each and every student with the following considerations:

- Accommodations are adjustments made to the way skills and concepts are taught and assessed but do not affect the expected outcomes in relation to the IAS
- Accommodations should facilitate an accurate demonstration of what the student knows or can do:
- Accommodations should remove or neutralize the limiting effects of the student's handicapping condition by altering the test administration in appropriate ways:
- Accommodations should not change the intent of the test; i.e., the educational goal or skill measured by the test:
- Accommodations should not be used to compensate for lack of achievement:
- Accommodations should not provide the student with unfair advantage or interfere with the validity of the test. They must not change the underlying skills that are being measured by the test:
- Test accommodations must be the same or nearly the same as accommodations used by the student in completing the classroom instructional and assessment activities.
- Accommodations must be necessary to allow the student to demonstrate knowledge, ability, skill, or mastery required by the assessment
- Curricular modifications should be considered only after all types of accommodations have been exhausted.
- The IEP team must consider the long-term impacts of lowering the expectations for students.
- Students with a disability who are not challenged to reach the same level of achievement as the non-disabled classmates in elementary or middle school may find that they are not ready for a program that leads to a standard diploma in high school.
- A student's priority educational needs may be different from the general curriculum specific in the IAS for the academic subject areas. For example, a student with a moderate or severe disability may need to learn how to care for personal needs and develop interpersonal communication skills. The student's annual goals would reflect the student's needs in personal care, socialization, and interpersonal communication, and not the academics of the regular school program.

- *Students who require modified standards or an alternate curriculum may meet the criteria for exemption from otherwise required academic testing*

Our high-ability learners will receive the same consideration and services to address their needs to lead to the greatest achievement gains and include the following guidelines gathered from the National Association for Gifted Children and the IDOE which match well with the Montessori and Waldorf principles as mentioned above:

- *Ability Grouping: Opportunities for high ability learners to socialize and to learn with like-ability peers*
- *Daily Challenge: Opportunity for daily challenge in identified areas of high ability*
- *Acceleration: Opportunities for various forms of content, subject and grade acceleration as needed*
- *Differentiation: Differentiation in pace, amount of review and practice, focus on larger concepts, and interdisciplinary connections*
- *Independent Work: Opportunities to work independently in areas of passion and talent*

2. Explain more specifically how you will identify and meet the learning needs of students with mild, moderate, and severe disabilities in the least restrictive environment possible. Specify the programs, strategies, and supports you will provide, including the following:

- Methods for identifying students with special education needs (and avoiding misidentification);
- Specific instructional programs, practices, and strategies the school will employ to provide a continuum of services; ensure students' access to the general education curriculum; and ensure academic success for students with special education needs.
- Plans for monitoring and evaluating the progress and success of special education students with mild, moderate, and severe needs to ensure the attainment of each student's goals as set forth in the IEP; plans for promoting graduation for students with special education needs (high schools only); and plans to have qualified staffing adequate for the anticipated special needs population.

At the Nature School, we will take a holistic approach to addressing all students' needs and will apply the best practices to address the mental, physical, behavioral, and educational needs of each student. All students will be provided with differentiated instruction to meet individual needs. Students who are struggling will be given support to increase student achievement through interventions provided both by the classroom teachers and interventionists who will work intensively with small groups, and if needed a team of Special Education teachers. When a student is identified by a parent/guardian or a teacher as needing support, the teacher will put accommodations into place and begin interventions to support student learning. This is considered the "Pre-referral Phase".

Progress will be monitored and documented by the classroom teachers to determine if this approach is working, if not then the student will begin working with the intervention teachers who are specially trained in working with struggling students. The interventionist will monitor and document the student's progress. If the student is still in need of more support, then a referral for a Special Education evaluation may be written by either the teachers or the parents/guardians, this is the "Referral Phase".

During the Referral Phase, students will be evaluated by staff that are trained to do the assessments and interpret the results. This will be done in a variety of ways including written tests, classroom observations, and parent/teacher input. The staff will follow all state and federal guidelines in adherence with the process of special education identification. An IEP team made of the parents/guardians, special education teacher, classroom teacher, the school leader, and others that may provide services to the student, will establish short-term objectives and annual goals, and the amount of special education and related services the student will receive in the classroom and for state-mandated assessments.

The IEP team will also determine the specialized instruction will be delivered. Each student will be served in the Least Restrictive Environment appropriate for the child in accordance with federal law. Each year the IEP team will meet to review the student's IEP and develop a new IEP with new annual goals and services. Every student with an IEP must be reevaluated at least every three years to determine if the students still qualify for special education services. If the student no longer applies for an IEP, the IEP team will work with the Interventionists and classroom teachers to ensure that the student maintains any necessary support to further the student's growth and achievement. (<https://www.doe.in.gov/specialed/laws-and-resources>)

3. Explain how the school will meet the needs of EL students, including the following:
 - Methods for identifying EL students (and avoiding misidentification);
 - Specific instructional programs, practices, and strategies the school will employ to ensure academic success and equitable access to the core academic program for these students;
 - Plans for monitoring and evaluating the progress and success of EL students, including exiting students from EL services;
 - Means for providing qualified staffing for EL students.

During enrollment, the Home Language Survey will be completed by new families as is required by Indiana Law. In the event of transfer, we will procure the student's HLS file if one exists. With the results of that survey, TNS will conduct the WIDA English Language Proficiency Assessment. All applicable Federal Laws and regulations relating to the education of language minority students as stated under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Education Opportunities Act of 1974 will be followed. TNS will proactively identify and support ELLs and provide targeted, individualized plans to ensure proficiency at the same high level as their peers and on the same academic programs and opportunities provided to all students.

TNS will comply with the requirements of Indiana State Law and assure that the following will occur:

- *schools must provide limited English proficient students with equal educational opportunity with the appropriate level of English language development (Lau v. Nichols, 414 U.S. 563 (1974) through the implementation of appropriate classroom instruction modifications and the appropriate level of English language development (ESL, ENL, sheltered content courses, structured immersion, bilingual education etc.) for each LEP student, documented on an Individual Learning Plan (ILP), to allow for meaningful participation in the district's educational program;*
- *implementation of specific criteria to safeguard against inappropriate identification and placement into special education or speech services;*
- *provision of instruction from properly certified, licensed teachers 511 IAC 6.1-3-1(d); ensuring that instructional aides work under the direct supervision of a certified teacher and not having the sole responsibility of teaching units of study 511 IAC 1-8-7.5; and that the ratio of the number of LEP students to qualified teachers in a class shall not exceed the state mandated student/teacher ratio for all classrooms;*
- *implementation of reclassification to fluent English proficient (FEP) status, exiting from services, and monitoring policies; and communication between the school and the home, whether about LEP students' progress or school activities, is conducted, to the extent possible, in the native/preferred language*

TNS will follow these steps to identify ELLs that should receive English language instruction and support.

1. *Identification of a Potential ELL Student. Staff will use the Student Testing Number (STN) site to see if the enrolled student has a pre-existing Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State (ACCESS) score from a previous school in Indiana or another World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) state. If no previous record of Home Language Survey exists, staff will inquire to see if there is a language other than English spoken by the student at home.*
2. *Evaluating Potential ELL students. The ELL certified staff member will administer the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (WAPT) to assess the four language domains of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Based on the results and observation using the WIDA Can Do Descriptors, the ELL teacher will determine the ELL status. To avoid misidentification, TNS will rely on teacher observations to identify whether or not an ELL may have been misidentified with an IEP or vice versa. TNS will convene a qualified team with experience in ESL or ELL and with knowledge in Second Language Acquisition to analyze the data and discuss with teachers regarding observations to confirm that the ELL is not misidentified as a learning disability.*
3. *Student is identified as ELL. ELL students will be provided Sheltered English Immersion (SEI)²⁹ instruction and developmentally appropriate instruction aligned to the WIDA English language development Standards Framework.*

4. *Communicating with Parents. The Executive Director will notify the student's parents or legal guardians in writing in the parents' preferred language that states:*

- a. *The reason the child was identified as ELL, a description of the child's current level of English proficiency,*
- b. *A description of the program placement and method of instruction,*
- c. *The manner in which the program will meet the child's educational needs,*
- d. *A description of how the program will help the child to learn English,*
- e. *The requirements for exiting the program and*
- f. *The parent's right to waive ELL services.*

TNS leadership will continue to follow-up with the learner's family in coordination with a qualified ELL instructor. TNS will also screen and monitor progress, provide reading intervention, if needed; teach vocabulary, develop Academic English, and schedule extra peer learning. These processes will be placed into daily instructional practices through discourse, pushing-in vocabulary, small group instruction, and cooperative learning.

Any students identified as ELLs will be assessed annually to determine improvement in English Language Proficiency (ELP) and exit those learners who have demonstrated English proficiency. We will use the WIDA and ACCESS Placement Tests to screen the English language proficiency of enrolling students identified as potential ELLs. We will work to identify ELLs as quickly as possible and will make this determination using ACCESS exam scores, input from the general education teacher, and data from general education progress.

Finally, TNS will provide learners with ELL services, as needed. Teachers will receive training from the special education teacher(s) and ELL certified teacher during professional development throughout the school year to ensure best practices for meeting the needs of all students are implemented by staff. TNS will ensure ELL service providers have a background and certification in ELL or ESL and the principals of SLA for our learners.

4. Explain how the school will identify and meet the learning needs of students who are performing below grade level and monitor their progress. Specify the programs, strategies, and supports you will provide to these students.

At TNS, our Montessori and Waldorf-guided philosophy is to meet students where they are in their learning development; and we strongly believe that students can achieve the same depth of mastery on various subject matters at differing rates. Therefore, it's unlikely that most of our learners will require great change in our programming. However, we also understand that sometimes there may be cause for concern and intervention. Students performing below grade level will be identified by parent/teacher observations, required state testing, NWEA, work assessment, and data analysis. In the event any of these methods and tools should indicate that a learner isn't meeting grade-level standards over a sustained period of time we will begin the MTSS process. For students showing they are below grade level on NWEA assessments, we will use NWEA Skills Navigator to identify the areas/skills that children need and compare this with our other observation and assessment strategies. NWEA Skills Navigator uses the child's NWEA scores and allows teachers to see which skills are lacking in specific areas (e.g., geometry, computation, measurement, grammar, phonics, etc.) Using this tool, we will be better equipped to use the materials in the classroom, form small groups of children needing the same interventions and target instruction. All of these tools and methods will allow teachers to determine what target instruction should be.

The classroom teacher will use that information to put accommodations into place and begin informed interventions to support student learning that include but are not limited to the following intensive instructional services:

- *90 minutes of daily uninterrupted instruction using a scientifically research-based program, and other strategies prescribed by the school district*
- *Small group instruction*
- *Reduced teacher-student ratio*
- *More frequent progress monitoring, tutoring, or mentoring*

- *Extended school day, week, or year*
- *Summer Learning Camps*
- *Supplemental tutoring in scientifically research-based services in addition to the regular instruction*
- *A "Learn at Home" plan*
- *A mentor or tutor with specialized training*
- *An Intensive Acceleration Class*
- *Have a reduced student-teacher ratio*
- *Provide uninterrupted and personalized instruction for the majority of the student contact time each day*
- *Include weekly progress monitoring*

Progress will be monitored and documented by the classroom teachers to determine the validity of this approach. If progress is not attained, the student will begin working with the intervention teachers who are specially trained in working with struggling students. The interventionist will monitor and document the student's progress and share this information with administrators and parents on a regular basis. Continuous review will take place throughout the year in an attempt to achieve student success and avoid retention.

5. Explain how the school will identify and meet the needs of the intellectually gifted students, including the following:
- *Specific research-based instructional programs, practices, strategies, and opportunities the school will employ or provide to enhance their abilities;*
 - *Plans for monitoring and evaluating the progress and success of intellectually gifted students;*
 - *Means for providing qualified staffing for intellectually gifted students.*

Many parents may be surprised that the pedagogies TNS intends to follow can exceedingly meet the needs of such a great degree of exceptional learning needs. Maria Montessori said, "the successive levels of education must conform to the successive personalities of the child.", and the nature school will do just that to address the needs of gifted students. Instruction will be differentiated, and we will allow gifted learners access to above-grade-level work in any subject, bringing in materials from the next level. Gifted students could also move up to the next class level when appropriate. Both of these options are quite easy in our mixed-age classrooms and with multi-layer works. According to the IDOE, the environment that nurtures the development of advanced potential is differentiated in at least 5 ways and are naturally occurring in our program:

Learner - learner needs and characteristics influence all areas of learning

- *The pace is appropriate for those who rapidly assimilate content, but also allows for reflective responses*
- *Opportunities exist for the student to pursue areas of in-depth interest*
- *Consideration is made for student level of intensity and sensitivity*

Environment

- *The teacher - licensed or in-depth training in how to alter the learning experience specifically for gifted learners*
- *The classmates - achievement gains are the greatest when gifted learners are grouped with ability peers and provided differentiated curriculum and instruction.*

Curriculum (Content)

- *What is taught - best determined at the district level in a Scope and Sequence or using curriculum mapping*
- *This includes the subjects and topics to be taught*
- *This will be above grade level and/or in greater depth - accelerated and enriched*
- *The materials used will be at a more advanced reading level and level of complexity*
- *Interdisciplinary when possible*
- *Whole-to-part approach for a conceptual focus*

Instruction (Process)

- *This is how the content is presented*
- *This includes differentiation based upon different levels of previous knowledge; it also may be further differentiated by student interests, or learning styles*

- *This includes activities primarily directed at the highest cognitive levels of thinking*
- *This emphasizes problem solving and extending learning in creative ways*
- *The pace of instruction is faster than for average learners*
- *Students use information to construct their own knowledge and to make connections across disciplines*
- *Students develop the approaches and habits of experts in the field of study*

Assessment (Product)

- *Pre-assessment for prior knowledge is included so that instruction can be planned accordingly*
- *Products will demonstrate the student's ability to communicate effectively in oral, written, and visual formats*
- *Assessments are authentic and for real audiences when possible*
- *The level of understanding should demonstrate the highest levels of thinking*
- *Products will demonstrate problem solving and extension of content*

In addressing all student needs, we will strive to use best practices so Project-Based Learning will also be an option for our gifted students. The student's progress will be monitored and documented by teachers and shared with parents throughout the year. As The Nature School recruits staff, we plan to hire at least one teacher certified in Gifted and Talented, in order to ensure that we are equipped to meet all students' needs.

Student Recruitment and Enrollment

Meets Standard Expectation

- Enrollment Policy complies with state law and ensures that the school will be open to all eligible students.
- New-Start Models: Sound and thoughtful student recruitment and marketing plan, timeline, and Enrollment Policy that will provide equal access to all interested students and families, including those in poverty, academically low-achieving students, students with disabilities, and other youth at risk of academic failure.
- Phase-In or Takeover Models: Plans for engagement of students, families and the community that are realistic and likely to foster student retention and community support.

1. For New Start model schools: Explain the plan for student recruitment and marketing that will provide equal access to interested students and families. Specifically describe the plan for outreach to families in poverty; academically low-achieving students; students with disabilities; and other youth at risk of academic failure.

TNS has a robust and multifaceted plan for reaching parents in the marketing of our school. Part of that plan has already been enacted. Parent surveys were sent out to families who were dissatisfied with their children's current school direction and/or had verbally expressed interest in a new school. TNS requested those parents to continue forwarding the survey to their contacts. We had 102 responses to that initial survey in July, 2020. With the results showing that 72% were interested in a new potential school, TNS created a Facebook group to keep families in contact with one another in order to build a sense of community. We continue to update families regularly via Facebook group, Facebook messenger, and Google Groups on a weekly basis. TNS intends to continue using this format and expanding to other marketing options. To promote student recruitment, we will ensure that our information is easily and equally accessible by members of the local community by utilizing some of the following:

- *Attending/Sponsoring local events, festivals, and markets*
- *Promoting at parks through garments, apparel, or other branded items*
- *Placing advertisements in newspapers, child and family focused publications*
- *Listing on nature-based, Montessori, and Waldorf education websites*
- *Launching a social media advertisement campaign*
- *Requesting parent shares/recommendations via social media*

Based on the research of local school populations and demographic data, it is likely that TNS will attract several students of either families in poverty, low-achieving students, and/or students with disabilities. However, we will make great effort to further reach out to these families using websites such as enrollindy.org and ads placed on websites aimed toward underserved and underprivileged

families. TNS also has the benefit of having a school model that is gaining traction in the media. We intend to capitalize on the momentum stemming from recent documentaries and media coverage to promote our school through the methods mentioned above. Ideally, TNS would like to be featured in local magazines or newspapers and will attempt to seek a connection through our parent and community networks.

For Takeover model schools: Explain the plan for student and parent investment in the school turnaround, especially how the school plans to ensure parents and students do not opt out of the new school. Describe how this plan will successfully transition and retain students who currently attend or are zoned to attend the school being replaced. Provide a detailed description of the plan to gain parent and community support.

Not applicable

2. Provide, as **Attachment 8**, the school's Enrollment Policy, which should include the following:
 - Tentative dates for application period; and enrollment deadlines and procedures, including explanation of how the school will receive and process Intent to Enroll forms;
 - A timeline and plan for student recruitment/engagement and enrollment;
 - Policies and procedures for student waiting lists, withdrawals, re-enrollment, and transfers; and
 - Explanation of the purpose of any pre-admission activities for students or parents.

Student Discipline

Meets Standard Expectation

- Student discipline policy that provides for appropriate and effective strategies to support a safe, orderly school climate and fulfillment of educational goals, promoting a strong school culture while respecting student rights. Legally sound policies for student discipline, suspension and expulsion, as well as appeals, including proper processes for students with disabilities.
- Appropriate plan for disseminating the discipline policy to teachers, parents, and students.

1. Describe in detail the school's approach to student discipline. Provide as **Attachment 9** the school's proposed discipline policy. The proposed policy must comply with any applicable state laws and authorizer policies. The description of the school's approach and the proposed policy should address each of the following:
 - Practices the school will use to promote good discipline, including both penalties for infractions and incentives for positive behavior;
 - A list and definitions of the offenses for which students in the school must (where non-discretionary) and may (where discretionary) be suspended or expelled, respectively;
 - An explanation of how the school will take into account the rights of students with disabilities in disciplinary actions and proceedings; and
 - Procedures for due process when a student is suspended or expelled as a result of a code of conduct violation, including a description of the appeal process that the school will employ for students facing expulsion and a plan for providing services to students who are expelled or out of school for more than ten days.

The word "discipline" is derived from the word "disciple". The disciple is one who follows the teachings and examples of another. Thus, discipline is something adults do with and for children, rather than something done to children to help them make desirable choices.

"Freedom within limits" is the core of the philosophy regarding discipline in our environment. TNS children, following the principles set forth by Montessori and Waldorf education principles, enjoy considerable freedom of movement and choice; however, their freedom always exists within carefully defined limits on the range of their behavior. They are free to do anything appropriate within the ground rules of the school community, but they are redirected promptly and firmly if they cross over the line.

The central tenets of our school discipline policy are safety, respect, and responsibility. School rules and consequences will be developmentally appropriate. They should maintain a balance between respecting individual freedom and having clearly defined standards that serve our educational environment. Discipline actions are proactive and provide opportunities for learning healthy

social interaction skills. Consequences should be logical, non-shaming, and foster opportunities for restitution, learning, and forgiveness.

The ultimate goal of our behavior/discipline policy and procedures is the development of self-discipline in our students, fostering the emerging ability of our students to recognize and demonstrate respectful, non-disruptive, and responsible behavior, to monitor their own actions, and to behave in ways that promote a safe, healthy, and peaceful school community.

There are certain rights and responsibilities that contribute to maintaining a positive school environment. Teachers at all age levels provide conduct strategies based on three key guidelines that are communicated in each room: Respect for Self, Respect for Others, and Respect for Environment. Teachers will model appropriate behavior in and out of classrooms to further enforce established classroom conduct and do not, at this time, intend on incentivizing good behavior. We strongly believe in modeling the creation of a cooperative and peaceful learning environment is enough incentive.

Any issues that arise are handled individually with that person first. Out of respect for each student, these conversations are done privately, and it is not unusual for one learner to be unaware of the consequences of another. TNS strives to develop students that make every effort to make good choices that benefit the entire school. When discipline issues occur, students are given the tools to solve the problem and they are coached on ways to succeed in the future. When disputes arise, they are handled through peace table conversations, peer mediation, and conflict resolutions techniques that follow our peaceful philosophy.

TNS Teachers and Staff are expected to:

- *Develop reasonable classroom ground rules consistent with the mission and beliefs of TNS.*
- *Post clearly established ground rules in each classroom that are developed with student input.*
- *Explain through group meetings, modeling, and dialogue what the values for behavior are for both the classroom and school.*
- *Maintain appropriate behavior in their classroom and the school through redirection and dialogue with the student and their family.*
- *Report and record school discipline situations to the required staff and family using the proper documentation.*

2. Discuss how students and parents will be informed of the school's Discipline Policy. If already developed, provide as is.

Parents will receive a copy of TNS policies upon enrollment. These policies will include our code of conduct and discipline policy in accordance with Indiana laws. These policies will also be made available to the general public on our website, and agreement with our code of conduct and disciplinary policy will be required in our enrollment materials.

Parent and Community Involvement

Meets Standard Expectation

- Effective strategies for informing parents and the community about the school's development.
- Sound pre- and post-opening parent engagement plan, including family-school partnerships, that is welcoming and accessible to all parents.
- Community resources and partnerships that will benefit students and parents and that include a) description of the nature, purposes, terms, and scope of services of any such partnerships; and b) evidence of commitment from identified community partners.

1. Describe the role to date of any parents and community members involved in developing the proposed school.

Near the end of the 2018 school year, a few like-minded parents began imagining other educational opportunities for our children. At that moment, the idea for TNS was born. With the efforts from our group, supported by a growing number of like-minded parents, we began to explore the idea further. Eventually, a small network of parents began reaching out to one another over email and social media connections, resulting in a Facebook group for parents to join and share their education concerns and ideas. That led our Board Chair to explore available avenues in which to facilitate the growth of the idea into a concrete and viable learning option that

would provide the education options for which an increasing number of families were searching. Shortly after, a Google Group was created and is regularly maintained and updated regarding our current school environments and our charter plans.

2. Describe what you have done to assess and build parent and community demand for your school and how you will engage parents and community members from the time that the school is approved through opening.

An online survey was distributed via email and social media and conducted before the 2020 school year to ascertain interest in our potential school. After a period of about three days, we received 102 responses, analyzed the data and came to the conclusion that parents had a lot of interest in a school with involved family community and well-maintained and transparent communication. With 72% of families reporting interest and willingness to volunteer their time, skills, and expertise, TNS welcomes and encourages the involvement of our learners' families and local community and is committed to empowering their voices for the continued improvement of our school.

3. Describe how you will engage parents in the life of the school (in addition to any proposed governance roles described in Section II below). Explain the plan for building family-school partnerships that strengthen support for learning and encourage parental involvement. Describe any commitments or volunteer activities the school will seek from, offer to, or require of parents.

Parents and Families will play a huge role in the community and culture at The Nature School. We will offer a wide variety of ways for families to get involved. Part of our leadership board consists of The Family Council, which will be made up of one parent from each classroom. The Family Council will not only assist in advising the Board on school matters, but they will also handle many of the social aspects at TNS such as welcoming new families, recruiting and coordinating volunteers for our festivals and events, assisting in New Parents welcome events, and planning Open houses amongst other things. Family events will be an integral part of TNS throughout the school year and beyond. During the summer months, TNS will host once a week Community Days in which parents and Families can connect while caring for our school environment. We will also have four "Summer Camp Sessions" throughout the summer, and will encourage parents to volunteer their time and talents to assist during these sessions. Mandatory Volunteering at Summer Camp sessions may be required of Family Council members. For grades 1-8, every other Friday will be a Community Day at the school, where students, staff, and families will work alongside one another in handwork, tending the grounds, and other projects. Our Kindergarten parents will be highly encouraged to join students on their weekly Wilderness Day. We also plan to utilise part of our grounds as a Community Garden, not only to serve our families and staff but for the community at large as well. Creating a true sense of community amongst every individual involved with TNS is of utmost importance.

4. Discuss the community resources that will be available to students and parents. Describe any partnerships the school will have with community organizations, businesses, or other educational institutions. Specify the nature, purposes, terms, and scope of services of any such partnerships including any fee-based or in-kind commitments from community organizations or individuals that will enrich student learning opportunities. Include, as **Attachment 10**, existing evidence of support from intended community partners, such as letters of intent/commitment, memoranda of understanding, and/or contracts.

We plan for The Nature School to become an important and meaningful part of our local community. Many of our partnerships are in preliminary stages. However, we have reached out to a multitude of organizations that are eager to collaborate with a school offering such an exciting, new approach to education in our area. From Equine, Music, and Art Therapies, local Farmers Markets, International Organizations, Parks and Recreation Departments, Universities, and even the Department of Natural Resources; we have had an incredibly positive response. We are hopeful that our list of partnerships will only continue to grow as TNS flourishes.

Phase-In/Takeover Planning

Meets Standard Expectation

- Effective strategies, programming, and support services—and demonstrated capacity (including prior takeover/turnaround experience)—to transform a failing school culture into a positive, inclusive, high-performing culture and to significantly raise student achievement among at-risk populations currently attending a low-performing school.
- Solid understanding of and ability to establish strong partnerships with the targeted community, including a robust community engagement

plan for the pre-opening year.

- Sound understanding of the challenges and plan for working effectively with the existing school(s) and community during the transition or co-location period. (Phase-In)
- Sound plan—including specific parent and community engagement strategies—to successfully recruit, transition, and retain students who would be assigned to the school being replaced. (Takeover)

To be completed only by applicants proposing a school Phase-In or Takeover. If you are not proposing a Phase-In or Takeover, mark "Not Applicable."

1. Describe your organization's prior experience in taking over or turning around an underperforming school.

Not applicable

2. Describe specific ways that you will engage and transform the existing school culture as you prepare to open and during the first year of operation.

Not applicable

Educational Program Capacity

Meets Standard Expectation

- Evidence that school leadership and management team have the collective qualifications to implement the school design successfully, including capacities in areas such as school leadership, administration, and governance; curriculum, instruction, and assessment; performance management; and parent and community engagement.
- Evidence that organizations, agencies, or consultants that are essential to successful implementation of the plan are committed to have an ongoing role with the school.
- Evidence of the leader's experience in/ability to design, launch, and lead a school that effectively serves the target population, as well as evidence that the proposed leader is well qualified to implement the specific educational program being proposed.
- Evidence of the Board and/or network's preparation and plan to recruit and retain a leader with the ability to lead a school that effectively serves the target population.
- Appropriate responsibilities and qualifications of the school's leadership/management team (beyond the school leader).
- Individuals who demonstrate the qualifications, capacities, and commitment to carry out the designated leadership roles to ensure the success of the proposed school.
- Sound timeline, criteria, and process for recruiting and hiring leadership team members *(if applicable)*.
- Sound plan for leading the development of the school from post-approval to opening, including identification of a capable individual or team to lead the planning and start-up, as well as a viable plan for compensating this individual or team that is aligned with the budget.

1. Identify the key members of the school's leadership team. Identify only individuals who will play a substantial and ongoing role in school development, governance and/or management, and will thus share responsibility for the school's educational success.

Courtney Ke - Board Chair

Sherina Lyons - Board Secretary

Karinda Holland - Board Treasurer

Danielle Brain - Teacher Council

Alexandra Prassas - Teacher Council

Meagan Messuri - Teacher Council

Describe the teams individual and collective qualifications for implementing the school design successfully, including capacity in areas such as:

- School leadership, administration, and governance;
- Curriculum, instruction, and assessment;

- Performance management; and
- Parent and community engagement.

TNS's leadership group has excellent qualifications to implement our school design successfully. We have vast knowledge of education administration, leadership, and governance; deep knowledge of our curriculum and how to utilize it; extensive management experience within the context of an education setting; and an impressive network of connections within the target community, as well as the area at large. This is evidenced individually below:

Courtney Ke - Ms. Ke is currently working as a Communications Consultant and assists businesses in client communication, retention, and engagement strategies. Previously, she has worked as a virtual-certified and F2F Communications instructor at Ivy Tech, a master/lead teacher in the Intensive English Program at Indiana University, an ESL teacher trainer for TESOL certification courses, a GED grader, host of International Saturday Morning Classes at IU, founder of the English Conversation Exchange Program at IU, and a private tutor. She also had the pleasure of serving on the Board of Trustees of Nature's Pointe Cooperative Preschool located in Noblesville, Indiana as both President and Vice-President for one term each, respectively. During that time, she implemented new best practices to create a smoother and more efficient onboarding experience, assisted in securing the school's first director, and facilitated the growth of the program. Ms. Ke looks forward to sharing her knowledge and expertise with TNS in a variety of forms and is well-poised to implement similar successful strategies from her various professional experiences to help the Nature School of Central Indiana succeed and prosper.

Sherina Lyons - Ms. Lyons holds a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education with a focus in Family, School, and Community Relations from Ball State University. She is a mother of seven and has worked as a teacher in both public and charter school settings, as well as homeschooling her own children. She understands the importance of strong guidance and support for staff, family, and students within any successful educational setting. She has also worked as a Community Coordinator for the Catholic Charities Refugee Program. She understands how to utilize local resources and agencies, and has a strong desire to foster an interconnectedness within not only our local community, but also the world. She brings strong organizational skills, a wide variety of experiences within traditional and non-traditional educational settings, and a passion for serving our community and positively impacting our world.

Karinda Holland - Ms. Holland is an Accountant for Monarch Management & Realty, Inc. With over thirty years of experience, including Property Management, Not for Profit and Financial Services, Ms. Holland is responsible for the daily accounting activities and financial reporting for Monarch Properties. She works closely with each of the properties to assure that accounting controls are in place and the results are accurately reported. Ms. Holland's responsibilities in the corporate office include reporting property results to owners and property managers, account reconciliation, payroll, budgeting, financial statement preparation and audit preparation. Prior to working for Monarch Management, she worked as the controller of a Charter Montessori school in Indiana for five years. Ms. Holland has a Bachelor of Arts in Accounting from Anderson University.

Danielle Brain - Ms. Danielle is a homeschooling mother to her 9 and 11 year olds and has a 13 year old who has transitioned to a Montessori school. She recently completed her M.Ed. studying Waldorf Education at Antioch University focusing on how outdoor learning is developing in American Waldorf schools. She has been a developing member of IndyWaldorf for 12 years and is excited to help bring Waldorf Education to Indiana. Prior to this, she received Herron's Art Education degree to teach K-12 and her first undergraduate degree in History and Studio Art at DePauw University. She has also taught yoga and dance for several years to both children and adults and would love to study more Eurythmy. Living with her family on their Biodynamic farm, she is passionate about connecting children to nature and their creative potential.

Alexandra Prassas - Ms. Prassas holds a Bachelor of Science in Education and has seven years of experience teaching in the Montessori environment. She is currently staying at home with her son, offering tutoring, and writing Montessori curriculum for the Montessori Beyond Co-op. Her experience in the Montessori environment has covered ages from first grade to sixth grade. She has taught children with special needs and has a passion for fostering inclusive environments where all children receive the education they need to grow and be successful. She is passionate about parent education and holding education nights to invite parent participation in children's learning.

Meagan Messuri - Mrs. Messuri is a Lower Elementary Teacher at Geist Montessori Academy. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and is MACTE certified with a Montessori Certification for ages 6-12. She absolutely loves the Montessori philosophy and creating a learning environment that stays true to those beliefs and values. She has taught in a Public Montessori School her entire career, and is very well versed in Indiana State Standards, Montessori Philosophy and how they can work together. Most recently she has taken the Associate Level Orton-Gillingham course that proves to be a strong asset for an elementary classroom. She is also passionate about theatre in the classroom, focusing on confidence and teamwork. Montessori is her passion and she welcomes all opportunities to share her excitement with children and families.

Describe the group's ties to and/or knowledge of the target community.

The Nature School of Central Indiana Board of Trustees and Leadership Team are all residents of the surrounding area of the proposed school location. Therefore, each member has extensive knowledge of the target community. Furthermore, many of our leadership are also educators within the TNS target community and already have a broad knowledge of the learners who reside within it.

2. Identify any organizations, agencies, or consultants that are partners in planning and establishing the school, along with a brief description of their current and planned role and any resources they have contributed or plan to contribute to the school's development.

Susan Fries has very generously offered her guidance and assistance in helping us achieve our goals of establishing our charter and taking the proper steps to ensure that it succeeds and grows by following best practices. Due to her many years of experience with running a successful Montessori charter as an Executive Director and working within charter organizations, she has served as an excellent resource when questions have arisen and has agreed to continue to assist us as needed in the future. Should TNS feel that we require her counsel and expertise on a more regular basis, we intend to work with her on a contractual basis as a consultant in establishing the school, accessing grants, evaluation strategies, etc. TNS values her greatly values her support in this new venture.

TNS has also requested the services of Alexandra Curlin of Curlin and Clay Law for her legal guidance and expertise in education law and vast experience working with charter schools. We intend to seek her assistance in the process of creating our policies and contracts and ensuring that they are in compliance with all Indiana laws.

3. Identify the principal/head of school candidate and explain why this individual is well-qualified to lead the proposed school in achieving its mission. Summarize the proposed leader's academic and organizational leadership record. Provide specific evidence that demonstrates capacity to design, launch, and manage a high-performing charter school. If the proposed leader has never run a school, describe any leadership training programs that (s)he has completed or is currently participating in. Also provide, as **Attachment 11**, the qualifications, resume and professional biography for this individual. Discuss the evidence of the leader's ability to effectively serve the anticipated population.

TBD

If no candidate has been identified, provide as **Attachment 12** the job description or qualifications, and discuss the timeline, criteria, and recruiting and selection process for hiring the school leader.

4. Describe the responsibilities and qualifications of the school's leadership/management team beyond the principal/head of school. If known, identify the individuals who will fill these positions and provide, as **Attachment 13**, the qualifications, resumes, and professional biographies for these individuals. If these positions are not yet filled, explain the timeline, criteria, and process for recruitment and hiring.

TNS will be looking to recruit a few key individuals to assist on the start-up process of the school. We are looking for an Administrative Assistant to be hired and to assist our Interim Director in January 2021 with the following responsibilities in summation:

Administrative assistant duties and responsibilities include providing administrative support to ensure efficient operation of the office, supporting TNS Executive Director and employees through a variety of tasks related to organization and communication, and responsible for confidential and time sensitive material. They should also be familiar with a variety of the public school concepts, practices and procedures.

The Administrative Assistant must also have the ability to effectively communicate via phone and email ensuring that all Administrative Assistant duties are completed accurately and delivered with high quality and in a timely manner. May direct and lead the work of others. They must rely on experience and judgment to plan and accomplish goals and a wide degree of creativity and latitude is expected. Typically reports to a manager or head of a unit/department.

A Business Manager will also be required to assist in the regular financial tasks associated with the school and essentially function as school treasurer and will be hired in March 2021:

The Business Manager shall have the duties and responsibilities of School Treasurer. The Business Manager keeps regular books of account for the school that set out business transactions of the school, such books to be at all times open to inspection at their place of keeping to any Board of Trustee member.

The Board Treasurer shall ensure that the Business Manager deposits all monies and other valuables in the name and to the credit of the school with such depositories as shall be designated by the Board of Trustees. The Board Treasurer shall provide oversight to the Business Manager in the investment and reinvestment of funds of the school and the disbursement of funds of the school as may be ordered by the Board of Trustees. The Board Treasurer shall render to the Board of Trustees the families of the school, and the employees of the school, at the Annual Meeting, statements evidencing the current financial condition of the school. The Board Treasurer shall ensure that the Business Manager establishes a system of adequate financial recording showing quarterly income, expenditures, and balance and shall, at the first meeting following the end of each quarter, submit to the Board of Trustees a detailed written financial report in compliance with the Indiana statutes and regulations relating to charter schools. The Board Treasurer, as chair of the Finance Committee, annually shall recommend an auditing firm to be hired by the Board of Trustees to review the books of the school and provide a report on them to the Board of Trustees

Initially, TNS seeks to acquire two Lead Teachers, identified as Danielle Brain and Alexandra Prassis, to facilitate curriculum development and school plan alongside the Executive Director. Their duties will include some of the following due to their high qualifications and relevant work experience:

Lead teachers are critical to our start-up plans to synthesize the curriculum and will be hired in January 2021 at the same time as the Administrative Assistant. They will evaluate and track the progress of our program before our opening. They are responsible for professional development meetings as related to our curriculum planning. In our case, lead teachers will also select appropriate materials and manipulatives for the program. They will also communicate with parents when necessary or help parents gain access to outside educational resources for their children. Lead teachers must ensure the confidentiality of all student and family information. Educational and experience requirements for lead teachers vary, but they need a minimum of a bachelor's degree and a valid teaching certificate or license. With experience in lead teaching, one might move on to hold a position as a school administrator or another advanced education position, such as instructional coordinator.

5. Explain who will work on a full-time or nearly full-time basis following assignment of a location to lead development of the school and the plan to compensate these individuals

Without knowing our enrollment numbers, TNS anticipates hiring a full-time Executive Director, Administrative Assistant, Business Manager, three Lead Teachers, Three Teachers and an Office Manager. TNS will also secure six Teachers Assistants as part-time staff. In terms of leading the development of the program, TNS will look to first secure an Executive Director and an Administrative Assistant with the backgrounds required to address our new charter needs and requirements in accordance with the IDOE and the terms of our authorization. We intend to seek grant funding and secure a loan through some of the capital agencies, banks, and organizations recommended to us in order to compensate these individuals before the school year begins and have already sought a quote and Letter of Intent from Charter School Capital that will allow us to pay individuals before public funding is received.

SECTION II: OPERATIONS PLAN & CAPACITY

GOVERNANCE

Legal Status and Governing Documents

Meets Standard Expectation

- Proposed school's legal status and structure are in compliance with state law.
- Governing bylaws, policies, and procedures are comprehensive and sound.

Describe the proposed school's legal status, including non-profit status and federal tax-exempt status. Submit Articles of Incorporation, proof of non-profit status and tax exempt status (or copies of your filings for the preceding items), and any governing documents already adopted, such as board policies, in **Attachment 14**. Submit, as **Attachment 15**, the completed and signed Statement of Assurances.

The Nature School of Central Indiana is currently obtaining its non-profit status and federal and state tax-exempt status to be completed within the next 2-3 months. Though our governing documents and policies are not yet complete, we have identified and gathered a handful of examples from similar organizations which we would like to emulate in accordance with Indiana Law.

Organization Charts

Submit, as **Attachment 16**, organization charts that show the school governance, management, and staffing structure in: a) Year 1; and b) at full build-out.

- The organization charts should clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of – and lines of authority and reporting among – the governing board, staff, any related bodies (such as advisory boards or parent/teacher councils), and any external organizations that will play a role in managing the school.
- The organization charts should also document clear lines of authority and reporting within the school.

Governing Board

Meets Standard Expectation

- Effective governance structure for network and school governance, whether each school will have an independent board or there will be one or more boards overseeing multiple schools. Well-planned board(s) size, powers, duties, and current and desired composition that will foster school(s)/network success.
- Clear division of duties if there will be multiple boards serving multiple schools.
- Clear, appropriate plans for the board(s) to evaluate the success of the school(s) and school leader(s).
- Proposed board members who demonstrate: (a) will, capacity, and commitment to govern the school(s)/network effectively; and (b) shared vision, purposes, and expectations for the school(s)/network
- Evidence that the proposed governing board members will contribute the wide range of knowledge, skills, and commitment needed to oversee a successful charter school including educational, financial, legal, business, and community engagement expertise.
- Sound, timely plan for creating or transitioning to the school governing board (*if applicable*).
- Sound plan for transforming existing board to assume its new duties or forming a new board (*if applicant is an existing not-for-profit organization other than a charter school governing board*).
- Other effective governance procedures, including planned frequency of meetings and standing committees.
- Appropriate proposed Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest policy/procedures that will minimize real or perceived conflicts.
- Sound plan and timeline for board recruitment, expansion, orientation of new members, and ongoing training for members. Plan should include a thoughtful identification of desired experience and capacities.
- If there will be a network-level board, plan for clear identification and plan for addressing board development needs relative to growth.

1. Explain the governance philosophy that will guide the board, including the nature and extent of involvement by key stakeholder groups.

The Nature School of Central Indiana Governing Board adheres to the philosophy that the ability of the school to carry out its mission and meet its goals depends heavily on the Governing Board's ability to provide strategic direction, select and support strong school leaders, and ensure the financial stability of the school. To accomplish this goal, members of the Governing Board should possess personal qualities that can be summarized as: (1) the ability to see the "big picture" and the conviction to set the proper course to achieve the TNS mission; (2) the integrity to continually serve the interests and pursue the goals of TNS; (3) knowledge of the school, its stakeholders, its organizational structure, and its managerial acumen; and (4) possession of a respectful and professional attitude toward colleagues and the TNS community. The role of TNS Governance is to ensure that school districts are responsive to the values, beliefs and priorities of their communities. Boards fulfill this role by performing five major responsibilities:

- *Setting direction*
- *Establishing an effective and efficient structure*
- *Providing support*
- *Ensuring accountability*
- *Providing community leadership as advocates for children, the school district and public schools*

In addition to the many duties/responsibilities of the Governing Board, one of its key responsibilities is to ensure TNS is meeting and/or exceeding the benchmarks and goals established throughout its charter. For this reason, we plan to involve stakeholder groups heavily in helping us to maintain our vision, best serve all students in our community, and to keep us accountable. These groups can generally be identified as our immediate community: students, families, teachers, administrators, board members, as well as our community and local partners. You will see them within our Family and Education Councils, non-voting branches of our school leadership team, and in the many committees that TNS intends to have to promote the healthy functioning of our school. These groups will always have a voice and are aimed at promoting as much community and/or stakeholder involvement as possible.

2. Describe the governance structure of the proposed school, including the primary roles of the governing board and how it will interact with the principal/head of school and any advisory boards. Describe the size, current and desired composition, powers, and duties of the governing board. Identify key skills, areas of expertise, and constituencies that will be represented on the governing board. Explain how the governance structure and compositions will help ensure that a) the school will be an educational and operational success; b) the board will evaluate the success of the school and school leader; and c) there will be active and effective representation of key stakeholders, including parents.

The Nature School of Central Indiana will follow all guidelines and requirements as set forth by our authorizer and Indiana State Law and intends to govern alongside its community. Our organization will be composed of the Board of Trustees, Teacher/Educator Council, and Family Council, together considered a Leadership Council. We will allow a size minimum of three members but would prefer at least five to allow for multiple perspectives and a wide range of knowledge. The Board, however, should be no greater than nine members for time and logistical reasons. At the time of this submission, TNS is actively recruiting. It is important for our governance that 1/3 members be part of the school with children in active attendance. Furthermore, TNS is actively seeking medical, law, mental health, and steam professionals to be a part of our leadership. As importantly, TNS will require at least one member to have a background in education, though two is preferred. Lastly, and most critically, TNS values diversity, equity, and inclusion and seeks to create a well-rounded board to better reflect and maintain our vision, mission, and beliefs.

The Executive Director will be considered a non-voting board member. In other words, though the Board of Trustees will retain the ability to make governing decisions, the Executive Director, concurrently with Family and Teacher/Educator Councils, will have a voice in all matters pertaining to the healthy functioning of TNS and keep the Board accountable to the will of our entire community. TNS will ascertain the success of our school, and its governing body, based upon feedback received from families; councils and committees; and self-evaluation tools, such as those provided by the Indiana School Board Association, enrollment numbers, waitlists, and various educational assessments. TNS will evaluate the success of the Executive Director based on the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model. This model consists of six domains containing twenty-one elements that align well with our vision and allow for objective evaluation by our governance:

- *A Data-Driven Focus on School Improvement*

- *Instruction of a Viable and Guaranteed Curriculum*
- *Continuous Development of Teachers and Staff*
- *Community of Care and Collaboration*
- *Core Values*
- *Resource Management*

We will also have a Teacher/Educator Council and Family Council. The Educator Council will advocate for teacher and learner needs and requirements within the school to keep us accountable and informed regarding our school-wide decisions. The purpose of the Family Council is to develop community and facilitate parental involvement in our school life and culture. The Family Council consists of the parent coordinator for each class and other members who wish to participate. This organization includes, and is available to, all parents and other family members of students attending TNS. Monthly meetings provide a means for families to be informed of and involved in festivals, fundraisers, staff appreciation, new family support, and other activities as needed.

3. List all current and identified board members and their intended roles. Summarize members' interests in and qualifications for serving on the school's board. In **Attachment 17** provide a completed and signed Board Member Information Sheet for each proposed Board member. Include resumes and professional biographies where needed. If a board member's resume is attached elsewhere in this application, state so on the Information Sheet.

TNS governance and leadership will be composed of the following members:

Courtney Ke - Board Chair

- *Board experience, teaching experience, virtual technology background, ESL degree and teaching experience*

Sherina Lyons - Board Secretary

- *Charter experience, Leadership experience, teaching degree and experience, special education experience*

Karinda Holland - Board Treasurer

- *Charter experience, controller background, accounting experience*

Danielle Brain - Teacher Council

- *Waldorf degree, Program Director experience, K-12 art degree and experience, farming and agriculture experience*

Alexandra Prassas - Teacher Council

- *Montessori certified, teaching degree and experience, remote learning experience*

Meagan Messuri - Teacher Council

- *Montessori certified, teaching degree and experience, remote learning experience*

Our summarized interests involve creating a nature-based school environment, furthering and promoting these alternative education models, and fostering a progressive and loving school community consisting of diverse populations of families with like-minded ideals. We have collectively had our hearts in education for decades and strongly believe, based upon our varied experiences in several different roles within education, that we can create TNS to be a school that encompasses our vision, is welcomed by the community, and makes our associated partners and authorizers proud.

4. If the current applicant team does not include the initial governing board, explain how and when the transition to the formal governing board will take place.

Not applicable

If this application is being submitted by an existing non-profit organization respond to the following:

- Will the existing non-profit board govern the new school, or has the school formed a new non-profit corporation governed by a separate board?

Not applicable

- If the non-profit's current board will govern the charter school, what steps have been taken to transform its board membership, mission, and bylaws to assume its new duties? Describe the plan and timeline for completing the transition and orienting the board to its new duties.

Not applicable

- If a new board has been formed, describe what, if anything, its ongoing relationship to the existing non-profit board will be.

Not applicable

5. Explain the procedure by which board members have been and will be selected. How often will the board meet? Discuss the plans for any committee structure.

As mentioned previously, the current TNS Board was formed through connections with like-minded community members. However, in the future, members will be selected based upon background, passion, and interest. Equity and diversity are also extremely important to TNS, so that will also be a major consideration in the selection of future board members. Seasoned board members will mentor newer board members on how to appropriately cultivate interest in the board as a means for identifying potential board candidates. Part of the mentoring process will involve training in how to vet the best candidates and weed out ones that just won't work out. TNS recognizes how difficult this process can be. The challenge to forming a well-rounded, highly skilled board is in recruiting candidates with skill sets and perspectives that closely match TNS's goals and strategies to advance our mission now, and in the future.

Just as existing board members mentor newer board members, all board members will cultivate interest in the organization by inviting their connections to volunteer or join committees, such as those listed below. Getting potential candidates invested in TNS often draws out some of the best future board candidates. The Leadership Council will make a plan to create a highly skilled board. Continual recruitment to various branches of our leadership is the process that brings that plan to fruition. The annual strategic planning meeting is a periodic tool that will include a section about evaluating the current board and planning for the future board. Part of this process is identifying gaps in the current board with regard to leadership, skills, and diversity. Using tools like a board matrix or board self-evaluation questionnaire can move the process along. Questions will include identifying board talent and knowledge in the areas that line up with our mission and growth.

During the annual strategic plan, board members will review the prior year's goals regarding board recruitment as a means for actively monitoring and developing an effective board. Part of this process will be forming an outline and timeframe for a potential governance committee to complete work in recruiting new board members. This should include reviewing issues such as current vacant seats, current board member expiring term dates, and any successive term limits as stated in the bylaws. Setting goals for this governance committee may include timeframes for developing or revising current board member candidate packets or orientation packets. The organization's strategic plan focuses on current needs and trends, as well making a plan for strategic growth. Part of the strategy will include forecasting the organization's future needs for candidates with specific board expertise. That planning needs to dovetail into the succession planning as it relates to term expiration dates of the current board.

TNS Board Members intend to meet once per month to conduct board meetings in accordance with Indiana Open Door Laws in order to keep the public abreast of ongoing decisions and developments within the school. While that regular date has yet to be decided, it will be live-streamed and recorded. This does not include executive sessions and regular day-to-day communications.

TNS committees will include at least one member of our Leadership Council in an appropriate committee, i.e. The TNS Board Treasurer will head the Finance Committee. TNS envisions having the following committees with members from our board, administration, and the TNS community, but this list is not exhaustive:

Fundraising Committee:

Fundraising is their primary activity. We need a fundraising committee to manage and coordinate fundraising efforts. Fundraising committee will coordinate events like raffles, parties, themed-events, silent auctions, 5k or 10K runs, and other events with the main goal of raising money for the TNS. The fundraising committee will also seek out opportunities for gaining corporate sponsors, philanthropists, large donors, grants and endowments, as well as other ways of generating funds for the organization.

Grants Writing Committee:

A strong grants committee will be able to understand our most pressing school problems, gather and analyze data, develop solutions, understand finance concerns, develop a budget, and research and find potential grant opportunities. A good grants committee can quickly focus on major problems, bring new perspectives to discussions, and produce quality grant applications by working together. This committee will be necessary and extremely advantageous for TNS's initial funding.

Membership Committee:

Membership committee members also create strategies to keep their current members active and involved in order to preserve their retention numbers. Current members perform such duties as organizing membership drives or campaigns, setting up marketing campaigns and conducting membership surveys. The membership committee keeps members notified of how their membership benefits them. The Board may also set some strategic goals for the membership committee, such as gaining a certain number of new members per year.

Marketing Committee:

Marketing committees often go hand-in-hand with fundraising committees because it's difficult to raise funds if no one knows the nonprofit exists. Marketing committees create awareness of the good work that nonprofits do by creating marketing campaigns, promoting events, creating advertising and posting on social media platforms. Some nonprofits opt to combine the marketing committee and the public relations committee into one committee, as they often work closely together.

Public Relations Committee:

The public relations committee manages all printed publications, such as brochures, flyers, leaflets and whitepapers. This committee will also manage the website directly or oversee someone who does. The public relations committee chair often shares the responsibility of being the organization's spokesperson with the board president.

Finance Committee:

Members of finance committees keep track of the organization's assets and liabilities. The committee prepares the annual budget and makes recommendations to the board. The financial report appears on all board meeting agendas and the finance committee should be prepared to answer questions about it. The finance committee also has many oversight duties, including overseeing work of employees and contractors, overseeing endowments and other significant financial assets, and overseeing investments and tax strategies. All members of the finance committee should have some degree of financial expertise, and at least one person should have major expertise in the area of finance.

Technology Committee:

The purpose of the Technology Committee is to evaluate technology needs for the school as well as their usage. The committee should track technology progress and prioritize initiatives, in addition to identifying training needs, budgeting and overall IT forecasting. Additional functions include reviewing and presenting to the Board plans for major IT projects and decisions, providing strategic planning and input on school projects. Furthermore, they will provide input on the financial resources allocated to technology, communicate technology issues to TNS administrators, stay informed of major projects and initiatives and communicate information to TNS students and families as necessary, and address budgeting and overall progress of initiatives.

Health and Safety Committee:

Safety Committees will be composed of staff members from administration, nursing, medical, and other such backgrounds. The main purpose of the committee is to help TNS improve safety and health in the school. It will meet on a regular basis, usually monthly, to

address and investigate safety issues and concerns and to ensure we are following appropriate health and safety guidelines and recommendations.

6. Describe the board's ethical standards and procedures for identifying and addressing conflicts of interest. Identify any existing relationships that could pose actual or perceived conflicts if the application is approved; discuss specific steps that the board will take to avoid any actual conflicts and to mitigate perceived conflicts. Provide, as **Attachment 18**, the board's proposed Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest policy.

In overseeing The Nature School of Central Indiana, Board Members shall at all times act with honor, integrity and full commitment to ensuring public trust. The TNS Board shall at all times act in the best interest of students. All Board members are expected to have a student-first mindset and make all decisions to further the goal of providing a nurturing, effective and inspiring school environment.

All directors, officers, and employees of TNS shall carry out their respective duties in a fashion that avoids actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest. Further, the directors, officers and employees of TNS shall have the continuing, affirmative duty to make disclosure of any personal ownership, interest, or other relationship that might affect their ability to exercise impartial, ethical, and business-based judgments in fulfilling their respective responsibilities. Exceptions and further course of actions are explained in detail in our proposed Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest Policy.

TNS promises to prevent conflicts of interest from occurring in the first place by maintaining transparency and avoiding roles and responsibilities that are in direct conflict or incompatible with our existing interest and ethics. In times where a conflict of interest may be perceived, either by the authorizer or the public, TNS Board Members will mitigate these concerns by offering full disclosure and transparency at all times.

For the intents and purposes of acquiring suitable spaces for our learners, TNS fully discloses that the location for TNS kindergarteners classes was sought by our board from a member of our Teacher Council. The Teacher Council is a non-voting entity, and the terms of use related to this location have yet to be decided. Once an agreement is reached, all information and documentation will be made available to both the authorizer and the public on our website. Furthermore, in our attempt to secure a facility for acquisition, the TNS Board retained a relative of one of our voting members. This relative has only served to assist us in gaining more knowledge about the facility and to assist us in sharing our interest to the sellers. TNS will seek other real estate professionals if his assistance is deemed a Conflict of Interest.

7. Describe plans for increasing the capacity of the governing board. How will the board expand and develop over time? How and on what timeline will new members be recruited and added, and how will vacancies be filled? What are the priorities for recruitment of additional board members? What kinds of orientation or training will new board members receive, and what kinds of ongoing development will existing board members receive? The plan for training and development should include a timetable, specific topics to be addressed, and requirements for participation. If there will be a network-level board, identify any board development requirements relative to the organization's proposed growth and governance needs.

For the sake of equity, which is of critical importance to TNS, we are actively recruiting other Board Members in the endeavor to create a more diverse and well-rounded governance for our school. In an election year or when upcoming resignation or vacancy demands, board members will be tasked with finding suitable replacements that will adhere to the standards put in place by our by-laws (in process) and ensure they will maintain the mission and vision of TNS.

This candidate must be voted upon by 2/3s majority by our enrolled families or parents/guardians (maximum of 1 vote per family). Training will include mentoring from the departing board member from the time the new candidate is voted in to active leadership at the end of the school year until the start of the next school year, as a part of our Board Policies. This means that previous leadership is essentially "on call" and available for questions. TNS also intends to utilize services and training webinars provided by such organizations as the Indiana School Board Association. Welcome and Orientation will take place throughout the summer, beginning in May, to address pertinent questions related to leadership and assist new members to:

- *Take on their roles in the organization both quickly and comfortably*
- *Feel more connected to one another*
- *Feel more connected to the organization*
- *Better understand their role on the Board -- why they were asked to join, and what is expected of them as members*
- *Operate from the same "script" -- that is, to understand the vision, mission, and their roles in the organization in the same way*
- *Feel more motivated to do a better job*

Before this meeting, new members will receive:

- *A Board manual, also available on our website*
- *Minutes of previous meetings*
- *Relevant news or feedback written about the organization*
- *Materials developed about the organization and its programs (such as brochures and pamphlets)*

Finally, the TNS Board strongly believes in continued education; and we plan to hold our own professional development and training opportunities 3-4 times per year, ideally once per quarter. These may coincide with teacher professional development days as found on our academic calendar. We have come up with a list of relevant ideas that include the following topics:

- *Board responsibilities and legal issues (liability, conflict of interest, etc.)*
- *More on legal issues (indemnification, tax issues, lawsuits)*
- *Discussion of the organization's vision, mission, philosophy, etc. - where they came from, what's the foundation (theoretical, political, or otherwise), etc.*
- *The actual work of the organization - program or other activities: what do people actually do every day, in their interactions with the target population and others?*
- *The Board's relationship to the organization*
- *How Boards work*
- *How to be a productive Board member*
- *Financial issues - how the organization's finances work, where the money comes from, current status, etc.*
- *How to argue productively in meetings*
- *Interpersonal relations/conflict resolution*
- *Problem solving*
- *Strategic planning - why you'd want to and how to do it*
- *Needs, concerns, demographics, etc. of the target population*
- *Fundraising*
- *PR*
- *Relations with the community*
- *Relations with staff*
- *Staff compensation and benefits*
- *Program/school evaluation, leader evaluation, and self-evaluation*

Advisory Bodies

Meets Standard Expectation

- Clear roles, duties, and composition of any advisory bodies/councils, and effective relationship to the school governing board and leadership.

1. Describe any advisory bodies or councils to be formed, including the roles and duties of that body.

The Nature School will have a three-pronged Leadership Council: The Family Council, the Educational Council (Teachers), and the Governing Board (Board of Trustees).

The purpose of the Family Council is to develop community and facilitate parental involvement in the school life and culture. The Family Council consists of the parent coordinator for each class and other members who wish to participate. This organization includes and is available to all parents and other family members of students attending The Nature School. Monthly meetings provide a means for families to be informed of and involved in festivals, fundraisers, staff appreciation, new family support, and other activities as needed.

The Educational Council will consist of at least one lead teacher from each level (Kindergarten, Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, and Middle School), as well as any other teachers or staff members that would like to participate. As the direct link to students' days at TNS, they will offer invaluable guidance and advice in all matters. They will also be responsible for relaying and clarifying any needed information to their teams. The third prong is the Board of Trustees, which will be responsible for mostly legal and financial matters. Each prong of the Leadership Council will be viewed as equally important, and will work collaboratively in all matters though any final decisions shall be made by the Governing Board.

2. Describe the planned composition of the advisory body; the strategy for achieving that composition; the role of parents, students, and teachers (if applicable); and the reporting structure as it relates to the school's governing body and leadership.

The Nature School's advisory board will consist of the Family and Educational Councils as described above. These councils shall meet independently each month. Each council will have one elected Leadership Chair. This chair serves as the main contact for their council with the Governing Board and will also attend all Board Meetings.

Grievance Process

Meets Standard Expectation

- Fair, accessible grievance process for parents and students.

1. Explain the process that the school will follow should a parent or student have an objection to a governing board policy or decision, administrative procedure, or practice at the school.

While The Nature School will encourage resolution of grievances through informal means, we recognize that a formal process may be necessary for certain complaints or if the informal process did not produce satisfactory results. A final decision has not been made by the Governing Board at this time, but the grievance process will be fair and accessible for all students and parents. The grievance process is tentatively planned as follows:

A Complainant who wishes to avail himself/herself of this grievance procedure may do so by filing a complaint on our website or in writing via email with the Executive Director. An alternate will be designated in the event it is claimed that the Executive Director committed the alleged discrimination or some other conflict of interest exists. Complaints shall be filed within 30 days of the event giving rise to the complaint or from the date the Complainant could reasonably become aware of such occurrence. The Complainant will state the nature of the complaint and the remedy requested. The Executive Director shall assist the Complainant as needed. Should a Complainant wish to file a grievance about the Board of Trustees or school, access to our authorizer's grievance process will be made easily accessible on our website.

Within fifteen (15) working days, the Executive Director will begin the investigation of the complaint or appoint a qualified person to undertake the investigation. If the Complainant is under 18 years of age, the Executive Director shall notify his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) that they may attend investigatory meetings in which the Complainant is involved. The complaint and identity of

the Complainant, Respondent, or witnesses will only be disclosed as reasonably necessary in connection with the investigation or as required by law or policy.

Executive Director shall notify the Complainant and Respondent of the decision within 5 working days of completing the written report. Notification shall be by U.S. mail, first class.

School Management Contracts

Meets Standard Expectation

- Compensation is clearly articulated and includes a detailed description of the management fee, as well as all pass-through expenses.
- Clear process for choosing the identified ESP/CMO
- Effective relationship between the school governing board and the ESP/CMO to support the mission, vision, and educational programming of the proposed school.
- Includes a term sheet and draft of proposed contract detailing roles and responsibilities of the school governing board, the school staff, and the service provider; scope of services and resources to be provided by the service provider; performance evaluation measures and mechanisms; detailed explanation of compensation to be paid to the provider; financial controls and oversight; methods of contract oversight and enforcement; investment disclosure; and conditions for renewal and termination of the contract.

If applicant does not intend to contract with an ESP or CMO, mark “Not Applicable” and move to the next section.

1. Describe the ESP/CMO founding year, mission, leadership team, and current geographic footprint.

Not applicable

2. Explain how and why the ESP/CMO was selected and the due diligence conducted (including a list of other entities assessed during the diligence process, if any).

Not applicable

3. Provide, **Attachment 19**, the following:
 - Term sheet setting forth a proposed duration of the contract that aligns with the charter term; roles and responsibilities of the school governing board, the school staff, and the service provider; scope of services and resources to be provided by the service provider; performance evaluation measures and mechanisms; detailed explanation of compensation to be paid to the provider (both management fees and all pass-through expenses, such as for curriculum licensing or technology); financial controls and oversight; methods of contract oversight and enforcement; investment disclosure; and conditions for renewal and termination of the contract;
 - Draft of the proposed management contract detailing all the above limits; and
 - Evidence that the service provider is authorized to do business in Indiana.
4. Summarize the relationship between the school governing board and the ESP/CMO, specifying how the governing board will monitor and evaluate the performance of the provider, the internal controls that will guide the relationship, and how the governing board will ensure fulfillment of performance expectations.

Not applicable

5. Disclose and explain any existing or potential conflicts of interest between the school governing board and proposed provider or any affiliated business entities.

Not applicable

STAFFING

Staff Structure

Meets Standard Expectation

- Sensible five-year network staffing that will support high-quality replication at the scale proposed, while continuing success at existing schools (*if applicable*).
- Sensible staffing rollout plan for the school model(s) aligned with the educational program and conducive to school success.
- Effective structure and strategies for managing the administration-staff relationship.

1. Provide, as **Attachment 20**, a complete staffing chart for the school. The staffing chart and accompanying notes or roster should identify the following:
 - Year 1 positions, as well as positions to be added in future years;
 - Administrative, instructional, and non-instructional personnel;
 - The number of classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, and specialty teachers; and
 - Operational and support staff.
2. Explain how the relationship between the school's senior administrative team and the rest of the staff will be managed. Note the teacher-student ratio, as well as the ratio of total adults to students for the school.

The senior administration, which includes the Executive Director and Administrative Assistant, at The Nature School will work to foster meaningful relationships with staff in alignment with our goals of creating a culture of community at TNS. The administration will be highly visible throughout typical school days, as well as playing an integral role at any special events, celebrations, etc. It is important that the staff at TNS have faith in the administrative staff to lead our school down the right course, and feel comfortable openly discussing any and all concerns.

The students to teachers ratios will be as follows based on our estimated first year enrollment:

- Kindergarten - 1/15
- Lower EL (1-3) - 1/12
- Upper EL (4-6) - 1/12
- Middle School (7-8) - 1/15

The adults to teachers ration based on our estimated first year enrollment will be roughly 1/10.

Staff Plans, Hiring, Management, and Evaluation

Meets Standard Expectation

- Compensation packages, systems, and strategy that are likely to attract and retain strong staff.
- Recruitment and hiring strategy, criteria, timeline, and procedures that are likely to result in a strong staff that meet ESEA requirements for being "Highly Qualified" and are well suited to the school
- Plan for supporting, developing, and annually evaluating school leadership and teachers that is likely to produce and retain a successful staff.
- Sensible allocation of school vs. network responsibilities for staffing.
- Leadership and teacher evaluation tools that are likely to be effective.
- Effective planning for unsatisfactory leadership/teacher performance and turnover.

1. Explain the relationship that will exist between the proposed charter school and its employees, including whether the employees will be at-will and whether the school will use employment contracts. If the school will use contracts, explain the nature and purpose of the contracts. Provide, as **Attachment 21**, a personnel policy or an employee manual, if developed.

At this time, TNS intends on using at-will employment contracts with our employees. Because of the nature of our school model, teachers are generally expected to remain with students for a duration of three years within the Planes of Development. TNS would like to secure teachers for said terms to allow for the continuity and relationship building that occurs in such learning environments, but we understand that it may be difficult to do so as a start-up school. Our contracts will specify the required start date, amount of days and the number of hours in the school year to be worked, possible ancillary job requirements, and salary and payment schedule. Contracts for certified staff will serve to keep continuity in the school and minimize disruption to instruction. There will be two other professional staff categorizations. Professional staff will be paid on a twelve-month calendar year at a salary rate inclusive of fringe benefits. Support staff will be paid an hourly wage specified at time of employment. The hourly wage will be paid at or above the minimum federal minimum wage according to Section 6(a)1 of the Fair Labor Act. Overtime will be subject to the Fair Labor Act as well.

2. Outline the proposed school's salary ranges and employment benefits for all employees, as well as any incentives or reward structures that may be part of the compensation system. Explain the school's strategy for retaining high-performing teachers.

The salary range will be \$38,000 for a beginning teacher and \$63,000 for a master teacher. Salary increases will be determined in accordance with IC 20-28-9-1.5. Full-time teachers will be offered a competitive compensation package that will include health insurance, participation in 403b, dental, vision, and life insurance. TNS compensation system (in compliance with I.C. 20-28-9-1) will be based on a combination of the following factors:

1. *The number of years of a teacher's experience*
2. *The attainment of additional content area credits or degrees [The combination of these two factors (i.e. #1 and #2) may account for no more than 33% of the calculation to determine a teacher's increase or increment]*
3. *Teacher evaluation results conducted under IC 20-28-11.5*
4. *The assignment of instructional leadership roles, including conducting evaluations*
5. *The academic needs of the students in the school corporation Teachers who are rated "improvement necessary" and "ineffective" are not eligible for an increase.*

Strategy for retaining high-performing teachers:

School leaders are often faced with teacher burnout, low morale and staff turnover. In order to retain the best teachers and staff, it is vital to develop a positive school climate. In 2007, the National School Climate Council spelled out specific criteria for what defines a positive school climate, including:

- *Norms, values, and expectations that support social, emotional, and physical safety.*
- *People are engaged and respected.*
- *Students, families, and educators work together to develop and live a shared school vision.*
- *Educators model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits gained from learning.*
- *Each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.*

To address these criteria, TNS will work to ensure that our school climate meets these five standards also from the National School Climate Council:

1. *The school community has a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing and sustaining a positive school climate.*
2. *The school community sets policies specifically promoting (a) the development and sustainability of social, emotional, ethical, civic and intellectual skills, knowledge, dispositions and engagement, and (b) a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage students who have become disengaged.*
3. *The school community's practices are identified, prioritized and supported*

to (a) promote the learning and positive social, emotional, ethical and civic development of students, (b) enhance engagement in teaching, learning, and school-wide activities; (c) address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged; and (d) develop and sustain an appropriate operational infrastructure and capacity building mechanisms for meeting this standard.

4. The school community creates an environment where all members are welcomed, supported, and feel safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically.

5. The school community develops meaningful and engaging practices, activities and norms that promote social and civic responsibilities and a commitment to social justice.

Thus, in establishing these components, it is intended for teacher turnover to be minimized. In order to recruit and retain high-performing teachers, TNS would also like to institute merit pay programs, tenure reform, financial incentives, special mentoring help, and other means to make teaching at TNS attractive to mid-career professionals and others with special knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm; and encourage the district's most effective teachers not only to start at TNS, but to teach stay at our school. TNS will also develop and implement strategies and activities to recruit, hire, and retain effective and highly effective teachers and school leaders by providing monetary incentives, such as scholarships, signing bonuses, or differential pay for teachers in high-demand.

3. Describe your strategy, plans, and timeline for recruiting and hiring the teaching staff, including the school's plan for hiring "Highly Qualified" staff in accordance with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Explain other key selection criteria and any special considerations relevant to your school design.

TNS has outlined a plan for hiring our first round of teaching staff starting in January, 2021. This early recruitment and hiring strategy will give the Lead Teachers adequate time to develop the curriculum that TNS intends on presenting to learners in our first year of operations. The next rounds will be hired in March and April. This includes our Special Education teacher. TNS fully intends on hiring highly qualified and passionate teaching staff. As defined by the Department of Education, to be deemed highly qualified, teachers must have:

- 1) a bachelor's degree,
- 2) full state certification or licensure, and
- 3) prove that they know each subject they teach

Demonstration of Competency: Teachers (in middle and high school) must prove that they know the subject they teach with:

- 1) a major in the subject they teach,
- 2) credits equivalent to a major in the subject,
- 3) passage of a state-developed test,
- 4) HOUSSE (for current teachers only, see below),
- 5) an advanced certification from the state, or
- 6) a graduate degree.

TNS is modeled as a nature-based school focusing on the pedagogies of Montessori and Waldorf. Therefore, it is imperative that our teachers either have a degree or certification with such a focus, a background teaching in such a focus, or a strong desire and willingness for adopting these elements into their practicum. To find such teachers, our strategy is to advertise openings on our website, the IDOE website, and Montessori and Waldorf Certification websites and job boards. In accordance with our school model, we will require that teachers be certified or able to obtain licensure and have a Montessori, Waldorf, or nature-based

education background or a strong willingness to passionately incorporate our principles into their teaching. Candidates will be interviewed and selected by a committee that includes educators who are already Montessori or Waldorf-certified teachers and administrators.

4. Outline the school's procedures for hiring and dismissing school personnel, including conducting criminal background checks.

Employment Process

A. The Executive Director will recruit and select qualified and suitable candidates for position vacancies, and ensure compliance with Federal, State and local laws, policies, and procedures concerning employment.

B. The Executive Director has the authority to offer employment.

- The School will recruit and select qualified applicants available, without discrimination as to age, sex, race, color, religious belief, marital status, national origin, disability, or any other protected class.
- The School will promote and transfer employees whenever possible so as to enable employees to develop and grow. Employees may apply for posted positions.
- The objective of The Nature School of Central Indiana's Employment Process is to attract and retain highly qualified and committed employees.
- The Executive Director will coordinate: recruitment, screening, orientation of candidates for employment, maintenance of an accurate application, and resume data bank.

C. The following procedures are part of the Employment Process at The Nature School of Central Indiana.

- Applicants must submit a completed application, resume and minimum of three (3) references.
- The Executive Director will serve as the central repository for all applications and resumes.
- All requests for employment applications and employment information must be directed to the Executive Director.
- The Executive Director will draft the posting for open positions.
- The Executive Assistant shall post vacant positions internally prior to posting any such positions externally.
- The Executive Assistant will assist the Executive Director with the applications/resumes on file to determine if it is necessary to initiate the external recruitment process.

D. The Executive Director shall review the applications/resumes and select applicants to interview. The interview format will include a group interview and a minimum of two school representatives will always sit on the interview panel.

Internal and external applicants will be interviewed by the The Nature School of Central Indiana Interview Team. The composition of this team is to be determined by the Executive Director. The team will not exceed six (6) members. The Executive Director will be present at all interviews. Interviews that are conducted by a group process may include up to three (3) staff members, a member of the TNS governing board, a parent representative and a student representative. It will be the responsibility of the Executive Director to select the members of the hiring team and decide the format of the interview.

The Executive Director shall screen the information submitted by the applicants to determine which candidates possess the skills, knowledge and abilities, required and preferred qualifications necessary, based on criteria from the Job Description, to make them eligible for an interview.

The Executive Director will establish that a potential hire has a minimum of three (3) satisfactory references prior to an offer of employment.

- *When a teaching vacancy occurs, the interview team will include two (2) members of the academic faculty when possible. The interview shall be scheduled and an interview question guide shall be prepared.*
- *Interview guides containing the same job-related questions to be asked of each applicant shall be utilized by the School to avoid the possibility of disparate treatment of applicants.*
- *The Executive Director shall conduct interviews according to the preferred interview format. The following shall be given to each candidate at the final interview:
Job Description Salary Schedule Certificated Handbook*
- *Each Finalist Shall Also sign and Complete Application, which allows the School to conduct additional background checks. This form must be completed prior to the interview and left with the Executive Director.*
- *The Executive Director shall select from the "finalist pool" the best candidate for the position after completing the appropriate reference checks.*

7. The Executive Director shall contact the finalist and offer the position. Upon acceptance of the position, the Executive Assistant shall be notified so that he/she may prepare the new hire packet.

- *Once the finalist has accepted the position, the Executive Assistant shall return the following to a secure administrative file.*
 - 1. Resumes/Applications For Finalists*
 - 2. All Interview Questions Guides*
 - 3. Reference Forms*
- *New employees may not report for the first day of employment until all necessary paperwork, including documentation of a cleared criminal background check and tuberculosis test as indicated below, is completed with the Executive Assistant.*
- *The official hire date for employment shall be determined by the Executive Director and is dependent upon the submittal of all required paperwork by the employee.*
- *As a condition of employment, each employee working with minors must receive a complete background check clearance prior to employment and must provide proof that they do not have tuberculosis.*

Equal Opportunity Employer

A. In support of this policy, the Executive Director will ensure that:

The School will strive to create an environment, which supports its policy of Equal Employment from a moral, social, and legal point of view.

- *TNS recruits, hires, trains, and promotes persons in all job classifications without regard to race, creed, color, sex, religion, age, national origin, disability, marital status, or veteran status;*
- *TNS considers the principle of equal employment opportunities by imposing only those requirements for advancement which are job related;*
- *Personnel actions in all areas, including compensation, benefits, promotions, transfers, demotions, layoffs or terminations, returns from layoffs, training, education, tuition assistance, and social and recreational programs, will be administered without regard to race, creed, color, sex, religion, age, national origin, disability, marital status, or veteran status;*
- *Working environments are free of any form of harassment or intimidation.*

B. It requires a maximum of cooperation between all employees in the School to carry out this policy successfully:

- *Management will lead this effort by effectively establishing and implementing procedures and practices resulting in equitable employment opportunities for all employees.*
- *All employees are expected to participate in activities leading to this equal opportunity.*
- *The School will make reasonable accommodations to enable the disabled to function as employees within the School environment including, but not limited to, such actions as provisions of telephone amplifiers for the hearing*

impaired, providing access to wheelchair users, and making accommodations, where possible, for those with trained animal assistance for sight, hearing, and other physical needs.

C. Responsibility for establishing and monitoring procedures to ensure compliance and continued implementation of this policy is assigned to the Executive Director. The Executive Director is also responsible for implementing and auditing the reporting system which will keep management informed of the status of this program.

D. TNS expects all employees to be thoroughly familiar with this policy and to be active and responsible agents of the School in ensuring the implementation of this policy.

New Hire Documentation

TNS requires the completion and return of all legally required documents prior to the commencement of employment. All candidates hired will meet qualifications stated within the job description and provide the best student environment.

- *No prospective employee may begin work without confirmation by the Executive Director that all required documentation has been provided and is satisfactory.*
- *All employees shall submit to an examination within the past sixty (60) days to determine that he or she is free of active tuberculosis. This examination shall consist of an approved intradermal tuberculin test.*
- *All employees must be cleared through the Department of Justice with live scan fingerprint clearance.*

Employee Renewal

- *It is imperative that TNS plan conservatively in order to meet each year's budget constraints. In order to practice sound fiscal planning it is necessary to review the employment of teachers for each subsequent school year.*
- *The employment offered will be based on the needs of the school. Consequently, TNS shall provide teachers notice regarding any change in their level of employment for the following school year.*
- *The Executive Director will send a letter prior to the end of June informing each teacher when there is an expected change in their employment.*

Outside Employment

A. Employees shall not engage in any outside employment, activity or enterprise for compensation, which is inconsistent, incompatible, or in conflict with his/her duties with TNS. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- *Use of School time, facilities, equipment, supplies, prestige or influence in a manner clearly for private gain or advantage.*
- *Receipt or acceptance of money or other consideration from other than the School for an activity which an employee is expected to render in the regular course or hours of his/her employment with the School, i.e., student instruction.*
- *Any activity which results in the employee's service to the School being less than satisfactory.*

B. Employees shall inform the Executive Director of his/her intent to engage in any outside activity or employment. The Executive Director shall advise employees in writing regarding the appropriateness of any such outside activity.

C. Employees shall not obligate themselves to accept responsibilities for activities prior to the end of the required workday.

When an employee cannot avoid obligating themselves to accept responsibilities for activities prior to the end of the required workday (e.g., enrollment in a college class not offered at any other time), the Executive Director may approve an exception for compelling reasons.

Dismissal

Due to possible fluctuations in student enrollment and funding, employees at TNS are hired at-will and may be dismissed at any time at the school's discretion without prior notice or hearing. The Executive Director will send a letter prior to the end of June informing each teacher when there is an expected change in their employment. Changes in employment based on Indiana Statute may be grounds for immediate dismissal. Reasons include:

- Immorality
- Insubordination, which means a willful refusal to obey the state school laws or reasonable rules prescribed for the government of the school corporation
- Justifiable decrease in the number of teaching positions
- Incompetence, including receiving (a) an "ineffective" designation on 2 consecutive performance evaluations or (b) an "ineffective" designation or "improvement necessary" rating in 3 years of any 5-year period
- Neglect of duty
- A conviction for any of the 31 felonies enumerated in § 20-28-5-8
- Other good and just cause.

In the event of immediate dismissal, employees will be tasked with the return of all school property, equipment, work materials, tools, keys, etc. and supervised removal of all personal property. The Business Manager will authorize the preparation and release of the final pay, typically in the form of a live check instead of direct deposit. The final paycheck will be issued no later than the next normal pay period.

5. Explain how the school leader will be supported, developed, and evaluated each school year. Provide, in **Attachment 22**, any leadership evaluation tool(s) that you have developed already.

TNS plans to utilize evaluation tools made available by the IDOE in the RISE evaluation tool and the Marzano Center School Leader Evaluation Model and to adapt them with our core principles to better match our school model as has been instructed in some of the guidance we have received from similar schools and through our research into nature-based and Montessori and Waldorf-inspired schools. Through the evaluation process conducted by our governing body that will take place twice per year, at the end of the fall semester and at the end of each school year, TNS leadership will hold the Executive Director accountable to performance standards and take into account parent and teacher feedback and evaluations, self-evaluation, and student data. The TNS Board of Trustees will unanimously support the school leader in every capacity in order to ensure that needs are exceedingly addressed at every level by analyzing the data received through our evaluations and providing our Executive Director with pertinent and essential opportunities for growth and professional development. The TNS Board will oversee the school leader and offer appropriate professional development to ensure that the Executive Director and other leadership maintain best practices in addressing the needs of TNS as a whole. Ideally, TNS will also use the guidance of other schools within the United States who are also functioning in a similar nature-based, Montessori, and/or Waldorf public charter to learn their methods of maintaining accountability, development, and support for their school leadership.

6. Explain how teachers will be supported, developed, and evaluated each school year. Provide, in **Attachment 23**, any teacher evaluation tool(s) that already exist for the school.

TNS plans to support teachers in the same fashion as outlined above and to perform teacher evaluations twice per year, at the end of the fall semester and at the end of every school year with implications on the potential professional development plans for the summer and following school year. However, there is another tier of support coming from our Executive Director. Utilizing the RISE evaluations for teachers and adapting them with input from similar schools, teachers will be held accountable to the same standards of maintaining the vision and achieving the mission of TNS is their teaching. We will focus on student outcomes, feedback, surveys, and self-evaluations to determine the best development exercises appropriate for their needs after our data analysis. The Executive Director, in coordination with TNS Leadership Council, will fully support our teachers and leave most personnel issues in the capable hands of the hired school leadership.

7. Explain how the school intends to handle unsatisfactory leadership or teacher performance, as well as leadership/teacher changes and turnover.

In the event of unsatisfactory leadership or teacher performance, TNS will hold an unbiased investigation as to the causes of these issues. While we desire unanimous support for teachers and staff, TNS is accountable to our student body, their families, and other stakeholders. TNS will take appropriate action in accordance with Indiana Law to ensure that, in the event of unsatisfactory leadership or teacher performance, the leader is held accountable. The results of which will be determined by the board in accordance with our policies and bylaws and abide by the following guidelines:

- *If in any year the Executive Director's performance or conduct is assessed as being unsatisfactory, the TNS Leadership Council will be required to make an appropriate intervention and/or provide counseling, such as:*
 - *Further professional development and training managed by the school; or*
 - *Further professional development and training managed with the assistance of the IDOE; or*
 - *Counseling (advice and guidance) and Discipline*
 - *In all instances of unsatisfactory performance the first action to be taken involves the Leadership Council meeting with the Executive Director to discuss the area(s) of concern. The Executive Director may receive professional development, be placed on an advice and guidance program, and/or receive disciplinary action.*
 - *The Leadership Council must take detailed records, provide adequate notice in terms of time and subject matter, and allow the Executive Director to have a support person of their choosing or be able to supply one for meetings. Both the Executive Director and Leadership Council must sign off on agreed upon plans, terms, and conditions.*

- *Unsatisfactory teacher performance will be addressed by the Executive Director and utilize the following policy guidelines and interventions:*
 - *All teachers are to be treated professionally, equitably, fairly and in accordance with our core principles at all times.*
 - *Of paramount importance are the learning interests and well-being (both physical and emotional) of students together with the integrity of colleagues.*
 - *Counseling (Implementation of a Performance Improvement Action Plan)*
 - *In all instances of unsatisfactory performance the first action to be taken involves the Executive Director meeting with the teacher to discuss the area(s) of concern. Teachers may receive professional development, be placed on an advice and guidance program, and/or receive disciplinary action.*
 - *The Executive Director must take detailed records, provide adequate notice in terms of time and subject matter, and allow the teacher to have a support person of their choosing or be able to supply one for meetings. Both the teacher and Executive Director must sign off on agreed upon plans, terms, and conditions.*

While it is expected that steps would be taken during the year to address areas of performance that are identified as being unsatisfactory, the previous guidelines are provided so as to ensure a consistent approach across all leadership levels where a complaint and/or formal assessment or evaluation of unsatisfactory performance has been made.

TNS also fully expects, due to teacher shortages, that leadership and teacher changes may be an issue. We will do our part to offer teachers and leadership positions valuable reasons to stay. This includes a supportive and unbiased governance and, potentially, bonuses for positive performance reviews and evaluations. We trust that, in the event of sudden change or turnover, we will be able to adapt and retain the services of para-professionals until adequate replacements can be retained. Otherwise, we will request at least two weeks notice, preferable to thirty days.

Professional Development

Meets Standard Expectation

- Sensible allocation of school vs. network responsibilities for professional development, including demonstrated understanding of and preparation for professional development needs that are common to all schools in the network.
- Professional development standards, opportunities, leadership, and calendar/scheduling that effectively support the education program and

are likely to maximize success in improving student achievement, including an induction program that will prepare teachers to deliver any unique or particularly challenging aspects of the educational program.

1. Describe the school's professional development expectations and opportunities, including the following:
 - Identify the person or position responsible for professional development.

Before TNS opens, there will be a great deal of professional development starting in March 2021 after the hiring of our Lead Teachers. These are important to the program and involve familiarizing teachers with the vision and mission of the program and curriculum, Montessori Compass and data analysis software, self-evaluation and evaluation strategies, and virtual learning best practices. TNS values the needs of our learners and teachers beyond just the topics related to our school model and intends to add professional development topics and opportunities based on their needs and interests. For the remainder of our pre-opening period, TNS intends on having weekly PD sessions each month from March 2021 until the start of school.

The calendar for The Nature School was designed with on-going, accessible professional development for teachers in mind. Every teacher has 4 hours of professional development built into their school day each month. Teachers from each division of TNS (Kindergarten, Lower and Upper El., and Middle School) will have their professional development at different times. However, each division will have that time together to make group training more accessible as well as to encourage collaboration.

Our Executive Director will be in charge of professional development, taking into consideration the advice of the Educational Council. As we are blending Waldorf and Montessori philosophies, there will be one teacher that specializes in each area, known as the Waldorf or Montessori Director, elected to offer ongoing in-house training and advice in their respective specialties to teachers and staff. Teachers will also be able to utilize this time to attend virtual or in-person training as desired or required by the Executive Director to ensure proper state licensing requirements are maintained.

- Discuss the core components of professional development and how these components will support effective implementation of the educational program. Discuss the extent to which professional development will be conducted internally or externally and will be individualized or uniform.

Just as The Nature School will work to meet individual student needs, we plan to do the same for our teachers. Teachers will have an opportunity to complete professional development led by specialized TNS staff, as well as attend external events to further their growth and knowledge in our philosophies and mission. We will have external professional development for teachers focusing on areas as related to our nature-based curriculum such as gardening, local flora and fauna, farm operations, etc. As we are merging two very specialized approaches to education (Waldorf and Montessori), much of our early professional development time will be devoted to training and acclimating staff to our approach to blending and utilizing these philosophies in the classroom. We plan to offer each division professional development time as a whole group, as well as offering individual sessions as needed or desired with our specialized teachers to further growth and knowledge for our staff.

- Provide a schedule and explanation of professional development that will take place prior to school opening. Explain what will be covered during this induction period and how teachers will be prepared to deliver any unique or particularly challenging aspects of the curriculum and instructional methods.

Our program and curriculum are being carefully designed, with the help of highly-skilled professionals with backgrounds and certifications in Montessori and Waldorf education, to create a peaceful, natural environment that allows for learning to take place organically for every type of learner that TNS may encounter, including high-ability learners and those requiring IEPs and Section 504 Plans. In this model, standards will be met, and we strongly believe exceeded, without heavy reliance on worksheets and printables. In their place, you will find learners instead crafting their own works and utilizing available tangible materials to better understand abstract concepts and foster a maintained curiosity and continued love of learning. It is our focus for each TNS student to leave as well-rounded and interdependent individuals having a better understanding of themselves and their roles in both our local community and beyond.

- Describe the expected number of days/hours for professional development throughout the school year, and explain how the school's calendar, daily schedule, and staffing structure accommodate this plan. Include time scheduled for common planning or collaboration and how such time will typically be used.

Each teacher will have 4+ hours of professional development time each month, totalling 40+ hours each year. Teacher professional development days will take place each Friday for a different division of TNS on rotation. Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary/Middle school will be released at 1:30pm every other Friday, respectively. Our Kindergarten will be released each Friday at 1pm. The Kindergarten teachers will utilize the first two weeks of each month as professional development time so that they are able to join in with our group training as applicable, and the other two weeks they will be working with students in grades 1-8 as needed or desired to best suit the needs of our students and school. We plan for one professional development session each month to be used as time for common planning or group training, and the other to be utilized to fit individual teacher needs.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Meets Standard Expectation

- Quality interim assessments that are aligned with (each) school's curriculum, performance goals, and state standards.
- Effective plan and system for measuring and evaluating academic progress – of individual students, student cohorts, and the school as a whole – throughout the school year, at the end of each academic year, and for the term of the charter contract.
- Comprehensive, effective plan and system for collecting and analyzing student academic achievement data, using the data to refine and improve instruction, providing training and support for school personnel, and reporting the data to the school community. This should include identification of the student data system to be used, as well as qualified personnel who will be responsible for managing and interpreting the data for teachers and leading or coordinating data-driven professional development.
- Thoughtful, appropriate corrective actions the school and network will take if either falls short of goals at any level, including explanation of what would trigger such actions and who would implement them.
- Sound plan for monitoring performance of the portfolio as a whole and thoughtfully considering portfolio performance in decisions regarding continued growth and replication.

1. In addition to all mandatory assessments, identify the primary interim assessments the school will use to assess student learning needs and progress throughout the year. Explain how these interim assessments align with the school's curriculum, performance goals, and state standards.

At this time, TNS intends to utilize NWEA testing to assess student progress throughout the year. NWEA will provide the necessary guide to growth that TNS plans to execute at each level. This assessment will be taken three times a year to compare and evaluate student growth. While NWEA does not necessarily measure the effectiveness of instruction within the Waldorf environment, nor the Montessori environment, as related to the content areas outside of the IAS, it allows educators to assess student needs and guide their instruction to ensure mastery and guide instruction at each level. Within the education model that TNS aims to provide, interim and other forms of assessment will continue to be developed and utilized within each classroom to guide and track the learning of content areas not measured by NWEA.

2. Explain how the school will measure and evaluate academic progress – of individual students, student cohorts, and the school as a whole – throughout the school year, at the end of each academic year, and for the term of the charter contract. Explain how the school will collect and analyze student academic achievement data, use the data to refine and improve instruction, and report the data to the school community. Identify the person(s), position(s), and/or entities that will be responsible and involved in the collection and analysis of assessment data.

The Nature School will utilize a variety of approaches to measure and evaluate academic progress, in order to ensure that we are getting the most accurate representation possible, so that we can successfully use that data to drive instruction and improve student achievement. The Nature School will have an "All Staff Meeting" prior to the start of each school year. The purpose of this meeting will be to address any identifiable needs found from previous data, prepared by the Executive Director, for the entire school such as IRead and ILearn, and for teachers to collaborate across grade levels to discuss best practices to be used in order to ensure that all students' needs are met.

Each division (Lower El., Upper El., and Middle School) will have a Beginning of the Year, Middle of the Year, and End of the Year meeting independently to discuss and analyze NWEA scores. These scores will be used to assist teachers in identifying students

that may be in need of remediation, continuing RTI, or Special Education evaluation and services. The Special Education team and Executive Director will be a part of each of these meetings as well. The NWEA scores may also identify areas in which our curriculum needs further support, and teachers will use this information to create and drive classroom curriculum and the RTI process. All NWEA scores will be shared with parents/guardians.

Our school calendar features four quarters, and at the end of each quarter, each grade level division will meet independently to analyze and discuss student progress report data. Students skills will be reported by classroom teachers as either Mastery, Progressive, or Emergent Level based on on-going classroom observations and assessments of content. Teachers will utilize this information to drive the grade level/classroom curriculum for the next quarter, continuation of the RTI process, and address individual student needs. This data for each classroom will be compiled by the head teacher of each division, and shared with the Executive Director and Special Education team if necessary. Progress Reports will be sent to parents/guardians for each student.

Classroom teachers and SPED staff will document data for students involved in the RTI process throughout the year. RTI data will be analyzed by teachers every 4-6 weeks, and meetings including classroom teachers and special education teachers will happen in the same time frame, if applicable.

Montessori Compass will be used to track and store data, observations, and student progress for all grade levels; and data analysis software will be utilized to assist us in seeing trends and areas on which to focus with our learners.

3. Identify who will be responsible for managing the data, interpreting it for classroom teachers, and leading or coordinating professional development to improve student achievement.

NWEA Data will be analyzed and interpreted by the Executive Director and Special Education teacher to be shared with teachers for the BOY, MOY, and EOY meetings. The Executive director will also analyze mandated test scores, grade level progress reports submitted by the head teachers. All of this data will be tracked and stored in Montessori Compass by the staff and Executive Director. The Executive Director and the Teacher Council will use all of these data points to coordinate necessary professional development for the school, grade level divisions, and/or individual teachers.

4. Explain the training and support that school leadership and teachers will receive in analyzing, interpreting, and using performance data to improve school learning.

The Executive Director, Special Education teachers, and classroom teachers will attend detailed online training for the core features of Montessori Compass. Each Headteacher, Special Education teacher, and the Executive Director will also attend an in-depth training session so that they are equipped to assist other staff as needed. This software will greatly assist in the process of data collection and analysis. If the data at any point throughout the year shows that there are deficits, the Executive Director and teachers will work together to implement any necessary changes to ensure student success. If necessary, each grade level division will collaborate to change classroom curriculum as needed to address student needs.

Currently, Montessori Compass does not have an API or third-party integration for data analysis. However, TNS is reaching out to Montessori Compass to inquire about the future integrations they intend to create and suggestions for analyzing data entered into their system and will use this as a professional development opportunity should their advice sound feasible for the needs of our program. TNS recognizes how important data analysis and disaggregation is for our teachers' instruction and to the success of our learners; so we are seeking out other software, such as PowerSchool and other SIS products to see which best fits our model.

5. Describe the corrective actions the school will take if it falls short of student academic achievement expectations and goals at the school-wide, classroom, or individual student level. Explain what would trigger such corrective actions and who would be responsible for implementing them.

The Nature School will identify performance as unsatisfactory under these conditions: a student is exhibiting less than 60% Progressive mastery in all assessed areas and/or formal assessment scores (such as NWEA, ILearn, and IRead) when appropriate, if a classroom is exhibiting less than 60% Progressive mastery in all assessed areas and/or formal assessment scores, or if the

school collectively is exhibiting less than 70% Progressive mastery in all assessed areas and/or formal assessment scores. If it is found that a student, classroom, or the school are not meeting appropriate achievement expectations, immediate and swift action will be taken.

At the student level, classroom teachers will utilize ongoing observations and assessment for content to document student performance. If at any point whether that be through testing data, progress data, or classroom observations. If it is noted that a student is struggling the RTI Process will be initiated by the classroom teacher, and if necessary the Special Education team will assist to ensure that all student needs are being met.

If it is found that a classroom population is not meeting academic achievement expectations, through NWEA data or Progress data, the Head Teacher of that grade division will work with the classroom teacher to create and implement an improvement plan. If the classroom shows no improvement by the next appropriate data meeting, then the headteacher shall report this to the Executive Director and the Teacher Council. The Teacher Council (including the Head Teacher) will create a classroom improvement plan for the classroom teacher, which may include required professional development courses. The classroom data will be analyzed and reviewed by the Teacher Council following the next appropriate data meeting. If necessary, another improvement plan may be created by the Teacher Council and the Executive Director, and/or professional development courses assigned. If the class shows no improvement at the third consecutive data meeting, then the Executive Director and the Teacher Council shall decide how to proceed in order to ensure that students are receiving high quality instruction.

If the school is not meeting satisfactory academic achievement, the Executive Director under the advice of the Teacher and Family Councils, shall create and implement a school wide improvement plan for the staff as well as the Executive Director, and assign professional development courses as deemed necessary. If the school achievement level has not improved within the next school year, the Leadership Council (Board of Trustees, Teacher Council, and Family Council) and the Executive Director will collaborate to decide necessary next steps to ensure the success and continuation of TNS.

FACILITIES

If you are seeking an existing public school facility made available by the authorizer, complete Part A and Part B. If you intend to identify and operate in an independent facility, complete only Part B.

Part A: Existing Public Facilities (If available)

Meets Standard Expectation

- Complete a compelling response to the facilities needs assessment aligned with the educational program and anticipated student population.

1. Describe the basic facilities requirements for accommodating your school plan, including number of classrooms, square footage per classroom, common areas, overall square footage, and amenities.

Not Applicable

2. List your anticipated specialty classroom needs, including the number of each type and the number of students to be accommodated at one time. Specialty needs may include but are not limited to the following:
 - Science labs, art room (with or without kiln), computer labs, library/media center, performance/dance room, auditorium

Not Applicable

3. List your anticipated administrative/support space needs, including anticipated number of each. Administrative/support space needs may include but are not limited to the following:
 - Main office, satellite office, work room/copy room, supplies/storage, teacher work rooms

Not Applicable

4. List which, if any, of the following are essential to fulfillment of the core athletic program:
- Gymnasium, locker rooms, weight rooms, field(s) (football, soccer, multipurpose), baseball/softball field

Not Applicable

5. Identify any other significant facilities needs not already specified, including:
- Playground, large common space for assemblies and other large group meetings

Not Applicable

6. Does the applicant have a specific desired location(s) from those being made available by the authorizer?

Yes No

If yes and the applicant has a specific facility under consideration, identify by current school name and/or neighborhood.

Desired Location(s):

7. Is the applicant willing to share the facility with another school?

Yes No

8. Discuss contingency plans in the event you do not receive a facility from the authorizer.

Not Applicable

Part B: Independent Facilities

Meets Standard Expectation

- Sound plan and timeline for identifying, financing, renovating, and ensuring code compliance for a facility that will meet the requirements of the educational program and anticipated student population.

1. If you intend to operate in an independent facility, describe the process for identifying and securing a facility, including any brokers or consultants you are employing to navigate the real estate market, plans for renovations, timelines, financing, etc.

Thanks to a connection from one of our Board members, TNS has secured an agent to help us acquire property that was previously functioning as a church. This large facility was brought to our attention by parents within our interested-parent community network. It rests on the corner of 75th street and Oaklandon Rd. in Indianapolis. Considering TNS's target population, this is an optimal location due to its over 16,000 square foot interior, which provides large common areas, administrative offices, and classrooms. It also rests on several acres of land, giving the TNS community an open canvas of possibilities in which to develop and cultivate in conjunction with some of our nature-focused and community partnerships. We are looking to find the property and have requested the seller's representatives to complete an MOU. It has not yet been received at the time of this submission. Our MOU is contingent on our approval status and financing, but we are hopeful that this will function as our main campus. Our Kindergarten, on the other hand, will be in a smaller space that is currently the home to Indy Waldorf. Through a Letter of Intent, we have already expressed our interest in working together.

In terms of renovations, our timeline begins with the successful acquisition of the property mentioned above. We are hopeful that this will take place by March 2021. If successful, we have been advised by the safety specialist at the IDOE to contact the local fire marshals and government agencies to go over compliance and accessibility issues to inform our renovation and contractor decisions and schedule necessary inspections in May 2021 and again before opening in July 2021 to verify that we are in full compliance with all applicable requirements. Outside of necessary renovations for compliance issues, we plan on any further renovations to take

place as learning opportunities for our learners throughout the year. Montessori and Waldorf pedagogies integrate practical life, handwork, woodworking, and community service into the curriculum; and TNS intends on giving our learners and families as many of these opportunities as possible to see the effect of their renovations on the community within and outside of our school. The Indiana Master Gardeners Association and 4-H division have offered to partner with TNS and to tailor programming that would allow us to have their guidance and assistance in renovating our outdoor learning spaces. As always, TNS will check with all necessary agencies to ensure compliance with safety guidelines and applicable laws and consider this a wonderful and unique learning opportunity.

2. If you currently hold a facility or have an MOU or other proof of intent to secure a specific facility, please provide proof of the commitment as **Attachment 24**.
3. Briefly describe the facility including location, size, and amenities. You may provide, as **Attachment 25**, up to 10 pages of supporting documents providing details about the facility. Charter school facilities must comply with applicable state, local, and authorizer health and safety requirements. In addition, the charter school applicants must be prepared to follow applicable city planning review procedures.

TNS's program is based upon acquiring the facility located at 7551 Oaklondon Rd, Indianapolis, IN 46236-9797, Marion. This location, previously Gateway Church, is in an optimal location for our intended goal as a nature-based school. It sits on over 11 acres of land and has approximately 16,000 total sf. The amount of land space provides us with great opportunity for cultivation and outdoor learning, and the indoor areas will provide large common areas, classrooms (12), and offices. We are in process of completing an MOU and hope to receive funding approval promptly.

We have already begun the process of securing a secondary location for our youngest learners by Letter of Intent to be held at Blue Sky Farmhouse, located at 7806 N 300 W, McCordsville, IN 46055-9690, Hancock. It is a peaceful farm with over 130,000 sq ft of outdoor learning space and just over 1600 sq ft of indoor space for our class. TNS will have the facility assessed by the appropriate government agencies to comply with health and safety requirements at all levels of oversight in order to achieve use agreement. Should all requirements be met, we believe it possible for us to finalize plans within approximately 45 days out from health and safety and any other applicable evaluation.

START UP & ONGOING OPERATIONS

Meets Standard Expectation

- Detailed start-up plan specifying tasks, timelines, and responsible individuals, which is aligned with sound Start-Up Budget.
- (If the school will provide transportation) Sound plan for student transportation, including both daily and special-event transportation.
- Sound plans for school and student safety and security, including security personnel, technology, equipment, and policies.
- Plan to secure comprehensive and adequate insurance coverage, including workers' compensation, liability, property, indemnity, directors and officers, automobile, and other.

1. Provide, as **Attachment 26**, a detailed start-up plan for the school, specifying tasks, timelines, and responsible individuals. This plan should align with the Start-Up (Year 0) Budget in the Financial Plan Workbook (be sure to complete all pages in the Financial Plan Workbook) and provide it as **Attachment 27**.
2. If the school will provide transportation, describe the transportation arrangements for prospective students. In addition to daily transportation needs, describe how the school plans to meet transportation needs for field trips and athletic events.

TNS will rely on parent facilitated transportation rather than providing school transportation. In the event of field trips, TNS may charter bussing services. TNS is aware that the ESSA requires local education agencies' point of contact (POC) and child welfare agencies' POC to collaborate on providing transportation for foster children who attend their school of origin but have been placed outside of the district. TNS will comply with all Indiana laws, specifically code IC 20-50-3, and provide transportation for a foster youth removed from his or her home and placed outside of the school of origin when it is determined to be in the child's best interest for the child to remain enrolled at TNS. Best interest determinations, including a plan for transportation, between TNS and the child

welfare POC are expected to be finalized within five (5) instructional days after receiving the request from the child welfare POC. In some situations the collaboration process may take more time to deliberate.

DCS is responsible for arranging transportation until the best interest determination is completed. If the resource parent is able and willing to provide transportation for the child, in collaboration with TNS, this is a suitable option to fulfill the school of origin's obligations to ensure transportation is provided. In unique situations, DCS may pay for transportation. TNS will ask to work with resource parents to provide transportation for children placed in their home.

3. Provide the school plan for safety and security for students, the facility, and property. Explain the types of security personnel, technology, equipment, and policies that the school will employ.

TNS takes the safety and well-being of our community very seriously. TNS plans to work with local law enforcement and officials to ensure that TNS has a complete and comprehensive safety plan for our students, staff, and properties. A Safety and Security Plan shall be created by our Leadership Council, and approved by the Board of Trustees, to be submitted for approval by the IDOE, prior to opening or as soon thereafter as reasonably practicable. Our plan will meet or exceed all school safety requirements per Indiana code or Board of Education Rule. We will address all the policies as recommended by the State of Indiana as found in the Indiana School Safety Recommendations and secure funding to do so through the Secured School Fund Safety Grants. These include the following required, recommended, and optional safety policies and best practices as found [here](#) and outlined below:

SECTION 1 LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR INDIANA SCHOOLS

SCHOOL SAFETY SPECIALIST TRAINING

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN REQUIREMENTS PER BOARD OF EDUCATION RULE

1. PLAN DEVELOPED IN CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCIES
2. APPROPRIATE WARNING SYSTEMS
3. PROCEDURES FOR NOTIFYING OTHER AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS
4. POSTING OF EVACUATION ROUTES
5. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS INSTRUCTION FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS
6. PUBLIC INFORMATION PROCEDURES

SPECIFIC EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS RESPONSE PROTOCOLS REQUIRED BY BOARD OF EDUCATION RULE

1. FIRE
2. NATURAL DISASTERS/ADVERSE WEATHER
3. NUCLEAR CONTAMINATION
4. EXPOSURE TO CHEMICALS
5. MANMADE OCCURRENCES

ADDITIONAL INDIANA CODES REGARDING SCHOOL SAFETY

1. SAFE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
2. COUNTY COMMISSION MAY BE ESTABLISHED
3. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS DRILLS
4. PROVIDE FLOOR PLANS TO FIRST RESPONDERS
5. SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS/STAFF
6. DISCIPLINE RULES PROHIBITING BULLYING
7. CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS
8. CPR CERTIFICATION FOR STAFF/LICENSING
9. CHILD ABUSE TRAINING
10. SUICIDE AWARENESS/PREVENTION TRAINING

SECTION 2 SUGGESTED PRACTICES NOT REQUIRED BY CODE

1. THREAT ASSESSMENT
2. MORNING AND AFTERNOON PROCEDURES
3. ACCESS CONTROL

4. DEVICES/TECHNOLOGY (Reframed from CAMERAS/RADIOS)

- The prevalence of mobile devices and technology and social media apps are rapidly evolving which often creates challenges and safety issues to the school environment. This block of instruction will provide tools to address incidents, criminal or noncriminal, which originate or intersect on social media.

5. MOBILE OFFICE/CRISIS KITS

6. RELOCATION PROTOCOL

7. DEATH OF STUDENT OR STAFF

8. AFTER SCHOOL EVENTS INVOLVING COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS/SPORTING EVENTS

9. SCHOOL AS COMMUNITY SHELTER

10. PLAYGROUNDS

11. FACILITIES REVIEW/SITE SURVEY

12. LAW ENFORCEMENT PRESENCE

SECTION 3 ADDITIONAL SCHOOL SAFETY RESOURCES

1. BULLYING

- Cyberbullying

2. BUILDING DESIGN

3. CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION/GANG INFORMATION

4. LAWS FOR REFERENCE

5. TORNADO PREPAREDNESS

SECTION 4 INDIANA SPECIFIC AGENCIES / SCHOOL SAFETY RESOURCES

1. INDIANA CRIMINAL JUSTICE INSTITUTE

2. INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

3. INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

4. INDIANA SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

5. INDIANA STATE POLICE

- School Walk-Through Initiative; State Police initiative prompting Troopers to provide safety presentations and visit the schools during school hours. More information available online: www.in.gov/isp/2966.htm
- Unarmed Response to Active Shooter Program; State Police have created a program including a PowerPoint, lesson plan, presenter notes, and videos featuring active shooter scenarios in classroom and school bus settings. Designed to assist local school officials in presenting active shooter staff development training, this resource is available online: <http://www.in.gov/isp/3191.htm>

TNS will offer regularly scheduled offsite programming with many of our community partners. Therefore, we have this policy in mind:

Field Trip and Offsite Safety Policy

1. TNS will select field trips and offsite locations that are appropriate for students and enrich the academic learning in the classrooms.

2. Teachers will plan for and be prepared for minor emergencies. Teachers will have available:

- A portable first aid kit
- Emergency contact numbers for each child

3. Teachers will monitor and instruct students on appropriate behavior when boarding, exiting and riding transportation

4. Teachers will monitor and instruct students on appropriate behavior for the specific area and experiences that they will encounter: attentive audience member, respecting other people present, respecting surroundings, respectfully handling plants and animals, etc.

5. Students will be supervised by a responsible adult, including parent chaperones and teachers, at all times. No student should be allowed away from the group by his/herself.

6. Students will abide by all school rules and procedures while traveling to/from and at offsite and field trip locations. Teachers have the authority to enforce any necessary discipline to ensure safety policies are followed.

7. In the event of an injury, a teacher will call for assistance from another adult. Adults will tend to injuries, maintain order and keep other students calm and away from injured student. An "Accident Report" form will be completed upon return to school and parents will be informed of the injury.

8. In the event of an emergency, the teacher will seek immediate help. Teachers will determine whether parents should be called to meet the injured student at the site or whether emergency services are needed. School administration and parents will be informed whenever there is an emergency situation. An "Accident Report" form will be completed upon return to school and parents will be informed of the extent of the injury.

TNS intends on utilizing safety training for our staff as provided through Indiana State Law Enforcement officials but will not require any Resource Officers or other security personnel at this time. We will use any recommended security technology and equipment based on the guidance of the IDOE School Safety Specialist, Ryan Steward, and the resources he has offered to share as a part of our pre-opening period.

4. Provide, as **Attachment 28**, a list of the types of insurance coverage the school will secure, including a description of the levels of coverage. Types of insurance should include workers' compensation, liability, property, indemnity, directors and officers, automobile, and other.

OPERATIONS CAPACITY

Meets Standard Expectation

- Individual and collective qualifications for implementing the Operations Plan successfully, including capacity in areas such as staffing, professional development, performance management, school start-up, general operations, and facilities management.
- (If proposing an independent facility) Demonstrated experience in facilities acquisition and management, including managing build-out and/or renovations.

1. Describe the applicant team's individual and collective qualifications for implementing the Operations Plan successfully, including capacity in areas such as the following:
 - Staffing, professional development, performance management, general operations, and facilities management

TNS members carry the skills and knowledge to implement our Operations Plans successfully due to our collective backgrounds and qualifications. In terms of staffing, two members of our Education Council, Alexandra Prassas and Meagan Messuri, have the Montessori backgrounds, certifications, and degrees needed to properly interview and assess a candidate's skills and qualifications. Furthermore, another of our Educator Council members, Danielle Brain, is an expert in her field as one of the few Waldorf teachers in Central Indiana. Our Board of Trustees has the needed knowledge of finances, through the experience of Karinda Holland, to keep the financial stability of TNS in mind while still budgeting for our teachers compensation and facility requirements. Our Board Chair, Courtney Ke, having had extensive education board experience is familiar and comfortable in recruiting and hiring TNS leadership, having hired the first Director at the preschool location in which she served. Sherina Lyons, our Board Secretary has the qualifications necessary in her various roles in education, especially as a Special Education Teacher, will be able to assist TNS in hiring the highly-qualified educators necessary to address all of our learners needs. Aside from this collective and individual capacity, TNS plans to hire an Executive Director that aligns with the overarching desires and direction of our school and its future community. By doing so, TNS leadership feels confident that we can delegate much of the responsibility of recruitment and retention to this person.

Regarding professional development and performance management, TNS Leadership will ensure that we address the needs of staff in making research-based and ongoing professional development opportunities available to our staff. We will take the ongoing individualized and school-wide steps necessary to grow in all areas geared to the school. Should TNS feel that our expertise is not adequate in any of these domains as related to school operations, we have Susan Fries, who has offered to serve as our consultant on a contractual basis to fill in any gaps. With her leadership and experience in various forms of education, administration, public charters, and Montessori, TNS feels confident that we will succeed in establishing our school and see its vision and mission come to fruition.

2. Describe the organization's capacity and experience in facilities acquisition and management, including managing build-out and/or renovations, as applicable.

TNS has, thanks to Sherina Lyons, Board Secretary, and Danielle Brain, Teacher Council Member, a large capacity to acquire and manage our property. Sherina Lyons has connections to local real estate agents who can assist us in the acquisition process. The same can be said for Danielle Brain. Having established Indy Waldorf, she along with her husband, acquired land for the expressed purpose of opening a Waldorf school. She has successfully grown Indy Waldorf into a large and committed community of learners that are able to utilize that space. When faced with growth and COVID issues, she was able to quickly pivot and arrange for the prompt renovation of the Indy Waldorf space to allow for social distancing and continued learning.

TNS Treasurer, Karinda Holland, also has extensive knowledge of the finances associated with financial acquisition and management. She assisted in the process of budgeting and managing millions of dollars in school related funding for the procurement of school buildings as controller of another local Montessori charter school. With these qualifications, and the assurance that someone with further qualifications, Susan Fries, is available and willing to offer her guidance in facilities acquisition and management, TNS believes that we have the collective capacity and experience to make the right choices for our school facilities.

SECTION III: FINANCIAL PLAN & CAPACITY

FINANCIAL PLAN

Meets Standard Expectation

- Draft financial procedures, policy, or other reasonable assurance that the operator will have sound systems, policies and processes for financial planning, accounting, purchasing, and payroll, including a description of how it will establish and maintain strong internal controls, ensure compliance with all financial reporting requirements, and conduct independent annual financial and administrative audits.
- Evidence that the school's leadership has a strong understanding of the appropriate delineation of roles and responsibilities among the administration and governing board regarding school finance.
- Evidence that the school will ensure financial transparency, including plans for public adoption of the school's budget and public dissemination of its annual audit and an annual report.
- Sound criteria and procedures for selecting contractors for any administrative services and the acquisition of liability insurance.
- Complete, realistic, and viable start-up and five-year operating budgets.
- Detailed budget narrative that clearly explains reasonable, well-supported revenue and cost assumptions, including grant/fundraising assumptions, including identifying the amount and sources of all anticipated funds, property, or other resources (noting which are secured vs. anticipated, and including evidence of firm commitments where applicable).
- Sound contingency plan to meet financial needs if anticipated revenues are not received or are lower than estimated.

1. Describe the systems, policies and processes the school will use for financial planning, accounting, purchasing, and payroll, including a description of how it will establish and maintain strong internal controls and ensure compliance with all financial reporting requirements.

TNS Board of Trustees, Finance Committee, led by the Treasurer of the Board and working collaboratively with the Business Manager and Executive Director, will be responsible for the oversight and management of TNS finances. The TNS Board has created the budget for this application and the outlying 5 years of operation. The Executive Director will hire a Business Manager, with an anticipated start date of full-time employment by March 1, 2021. While the Board of Trustees and Executive Director will be responsible for adopting the preliminary and final budget and will have the ultimate responsibility for oversight and appropriate financial reporting, the Business Manager will manage revenue and spending to the 5-year budget and handle the day-to-day financial operations including bookkeeping, accounts payable, purchasing, payroll preparation, and management of receipts.

Purchasing:

The Finance Committee, composed of the Board Treasurer, Business Manager, and Executive Director will be involved in carrying out all financial transactions. All financial transactions (including checks, drafts, purchase orders or contracts for the payment of funds, notes, or other debt for LCIS) will be signed off on by the Business Manager. Any financial transactions in excess of \$10,000 require an affirmative vote for approval by the Board of Trustees. Any financial transactions in excess of \$5,000 require a second signature by the Board Treasurer.

Accounting:

Upon his/her hire, the Business Manager will determine the best accounting software for use to maintain TNS's financial records and procure the software immediately. The Board Treasurer, Executive Director, and Business Manager will have access to the software selected to ensure transparency in tracking and reporting revenues and expenditures, and the overall management of TNS's finances. The Business Manager will generate checks, monitor cash, create journal entries, manage payroll, reconcile monthly bank statements, and generate monthly financial status reports for the Board of Trustees. All reports will be created and maintained using generally accepted accounting principles established by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB).

Payroll:

The Business Manager will submit payroll reports to Automatic Data Processing, Inc., more commonly referred to simply as ADP. ADP will manage the distribution of checks, benefits, and other risk management concerns.

Financial Reports:

The Business Manager is responsible for generating monthly financial reports for review by the Board Treasurer and the Executive Director. After their review, this report will be provided first to the Finance Committee and then to the full Board of Trustees at their regularly scheduled meetings. The board Treasurer is responsible for implementing TNS's approved financial policies and established compliance procedures that have been agreed upon and approved by the Board of Trustees. Any exceptions, changes, or other amendments to their policies shall be proposed and written by the Finance Committee and Fundraising Committee and approved by the Board of Trustees.

Annual Budget Preparation:

The Business Manager, with the support of the Board Treasurer and Executive Director will prepare the annual budget of revenues in comparison with prior year and expenses, projection of cash flows, and a capital budget. In preparation for this, the Business Manager and Executive Director will prepare all preliminary reports based upon projected student enrollment, class size projections, staff and faculty salary structure, facility costs, and more long-term financial aims. The Business Manager will report current financial data in comparison to the prior year budget and actual revenue and expense reports. The Board Treasurer and the Executive Director will review figures submitted for completeness and reasonability. The Finance Committee will make any required changes prior to presenting to the Board of Trustees for approval. The approved budget will be entered into the general ledger by the Business Manager for the upcoming fiscal year and will be used to prepare subsequent budget-to-actual reports.

2. Describe the roles and responsibilities of the school's administration and governing board for school finances and distinguish between each.

The Business Manager shall be the chief financial officer of TNS and shall oversee the employee serving as Office Manager as well as take responsibility for the financial records, investments, other evidence of school properties and assets, and contracted payroll and financial companies. The Business Manager shall have the duties and responsibilities of School Treasurer. The Business Manager shall ensure that regular books of account for TNS that set out business transactions of TNS are responsibly kept and that such books to be at all times open to inspection to any Board of Trustee member or authorizing body. The Board of Trustees Treasurer shall be the chair of the Financial Committee, which shall prepare an annual budget, in conjunction with the Executive Director and the Business Manager, for the consideration and approval of the Board of Trustees.

The Business Manager will responsibly deposit all monies and other valuables in the name and to the credit of TNS with such depositories as shall be designated by the Board of Trustees. The Financial Committee shall provide guidance to the Business Manager in the investment and reinvestment of funds of TNS and the disbursement of funds of the school as may be ordered by the Board of Trustees. The Board Treasurer shall render to the Board of Trustees, the families of the school, and the employees of the school at the Annual Meeting, statements evidencing the current financial condition of TNS. The Financial Committee shall ensure that the Business Manager establishes a system of adequate financial recording showing quarterly income, expenditures, and balance and shall, at the first meeting following the end of each quarter, submit to the Board of Trustees a detailed written financial report in compliance with the Indiana statutes and regulations relating to charter schools. The Board Treasurer, as chair of the Finance Committee, annually shall recommend an auditing firm to be hired by the Board of Trustees to review the books of the Corporation and provide a report on them to the Board of Trustees.

3. Describe the school's plans and procedures for conducting an annual audit of the financial and administrative operations of the school.

TNS will use contracted services to hire an approved auditor. This auditor will provide annual reviews and reports of TNS's financial status and management thereof in accordance with policies and requirements of the Indiana State Board of Accounts.

4. Describe how the school will ensure financial transparency to the authorizer and the public, including the anticipated costs and criteria for selecting such services.

As discussed in question 2, the Board Treasurer, Executive Director, and the Business Manager will work closely together within the Financial Committee. They will meet at least monthly to prepare the monthly financial summary which will include budget plan, actual expenditures and revenues to date, and projections for the remainder of the school year. The financial health of TNS will be shared with the authorizer and the public via our website and/or email with the release of each month's board meeting minutes.

5. Describe any services to be contracted, such as business services, payroll, and auditing services, and include the anticipated costs and criteria for selecting such services.

TNS will hire a payroll company to do payroll. We will also hire an independent CPA firm to perform the financial audit and the Form 990. The budget of these items is included in Attachment 27.

6. Describe the school's plans for liability insurance to indemnify the school, its board, staff and teachers against tort claims.

We are in process with securing a package with substantial indemnity protections for TNS, the Board of Trustees, Staff, and Teachers. TNS has received an insurance quote from EPIC Charter Schools Practice Group. Their agency handles insurance policies for many Indiana Charter Schools, and all insurance carriers that they provide must be rated "A" or better. Upon the receipt of our charter authorization, EPIC Insurance will write and quote a new policy that will be tailored to our needs as a charter school to include (but not limited to): Property, Liability, Automobile Liability, Inland Marine, Crime, Workers' Compensation, Umbrella (Excess) Liability and Accident Insurance.

7. Submit the Charter Application Budget and Staffing Workbook (provide the completed workbook as **Attachment 27**, and be sure to complete all sheets in the Workbook). In developing your budget, please use the per-pupil revenue projections provided by the authorizer.
8. Budget Narrative: As **Attachment 29**, present a detailed description of the assumptions and revenue estimates, including but not limited to the basis for revenue projections, staffing levels, and costs. The narrative should specifically address the degree to which the school budget will rely on variable income (e.g., grants, donations, fundraising). Include the following in the narrative:
 - Per-Pupil Revenue
 - Anticipated Funding Sources: Indicate the amount and sources of funds, property or other resources expected to be available through banks, lending institutions, corporations, foundations, grants, etc. Note which are secured and which are anticipated, and include evidence of commitment for any funds on which the school's core operation depends.
 - Discuss the school's contingency plan to meet financial needs if anticipated revenues are not received or are lower than estimated.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

Meets Standard Expectation

- Individual and collective qualifications for implementing the Financial Plan successfully, including capacity in areas such as financial management, fundraising and development, accounting, and internal controls.

1. Describe the applicant team's individual and collective qualifications for implementing the Financial Plan successfully, including capacity in areas such as the following:
 - Financial management;
 - Fundraising and development;
 - Accounting and internal controls.

TNS has a great capacity to implement our financial plan. Our Board Treasurer has 5 years of experience imperative to our successful startup and continued growth. Having worked as a controller for five years for another local Montessori charter school and

with several more years of relevant degree and professional experience, she is extremely knowledgeable and prepared to see our plans through and assist us in hiring the highly-qualified staff necessary to maintain our financial health and growth.

Our Board Chair also has extensive experience in finances as related to an education setting. She has served as both Board President and Vice-President and led committees over a span of several years. These included committees for the ongoing fundraising necessitated in a non-profit, pre-K education setting. Fundraising initiatives included 5Ks, Flower Sales, Craft Shows, and other activities to supplement the school's income and earn averages of approximately \$700 - \$1500 per fundraiser. Through these supplemental funds, the program was able to secure enough monies for enrichment programs and playground improvements.

SECTION IV: PORTFOLIO REVIEW & PERFORMANCE RECORD

Education One, L.L.C. will base qualification decisions, in substantial part, on the organization's past performance. Provide the following information about all schools operated by the organization, including any ESP or CMO partner. Education One may request additional information from applicants at any time during the review process.

1. As **Attachment 30**, provide a summary of every school in the organization's portfolio (including every charter school managed by the proposed partner, if applicable). Include the following information for every school:
 - Year opened;
 - City/location;
 - School contact information;
 - Authorizer contact information;
 - Number of students;
 - Grade levels served;
 - Student data including: free/reduced lunch status, ethnicity population percentages, Special Education percentages, and English Language Learner percentages;
 - Year in which contract with ESP/CMO commenced and/or ended (if applicable);
 - State assessment achievement results for the past five years by grade level in ELA and Mathematics; and
 - State assessment growth results for the past five years by grade level in ELA and Mathematics.
 - *For High Schools Only:*
 - Past five years of 4-year graduation rates;
 - Past five years of college and career readiness percentages;
 - Number and percent of graduating students who have enrolled in post-secondary institutions. If the school has not historically collected such data, please briefly explain.
2. Select one of the consistently high-performing schools that the organization operates and discuss the school's academic performance. If possible, select a school with similar demographics to the targeted student population in the application.
 - Describe the primary causes to which you attribute the school's distinctive performance.

Not Applicable

- Identify any notable challenges that the school has overcome in achieving results.

Not Applicable

- Explain the ways in which the school's success has informed or affected how other schools in the network operate, including how the effective practice, structure, or strategy was identified and how it was implemented elsewhere in the network.

Not Applicable

3. Select one of the organization's schools whose performance is relatively low or not satisfactory and discuss the school's academic performance. If possible, select a school with similar demographics to the targeted student population in the application.
 - Describe the primary causes to which you attribute the school's performance.

Not Applicable

- Explain the specific strategies that are being employed to improve performance.

Not Applicable

- Identify how you know when performance is satisfactory. Include the expectations for satisfactory performance in terms of levels and timing.

Not Applicable

4. For all schools operating in the state of Indiana, provide as **Attachment 31** (a) the last three years of audited financial statements for the school(s) and (b) the most recent internal financial statements, including balance sheets and income statements for the organization and any related business entities. Be sure that the school level, ESP/CMO level, and the overall operations are distinctly represented.
5. For the organization as a whole and any related business entities, provide the following as **Attachment 32**: (a) the last three years of audited financial statements and management letters; and (b) the most recent internal financial statements including balance sheets and income statements. Be sure that the ESP/CMO level and the overall operations are distinctly represented.
6. List any contracts with charter schools that have been terminated by either the organization or the school, including the reason(s) for such termination and whether the termination was for “material breach.”

Not Applicable

7. List any and all charter revocations, non-renewals, shortened or conditional renewals, or withdrawals/non-openings of schools operated by the organization and explain.

Not Applicable

8. Explain any performance deficiency or compliance violations that have led to formal authorizer intervention with any school operated by the organization in the last three years, and how such deficiencies or violations were resolved.

Not Applicable

9. Identify any current or past litigation, including arbitration proceedings, by the school, that has involved the organization or any charter schools it operates. Provide, as **Attachment 33**, a summary of the following information: (a) the demand, (b) any response to the demand, and (c) the results of the arbitration or litigation.

Not Applicable

SECTION V: INNOVATION

Education One is particularly interested in applicants that propose school models with strong potential to accelerate student success through dramatically different school designs, instructional strategies, use of technology, staffing models, governance arrangements, family and community engagement strategies, and other approaches.

Summarize the innovation(s) embodied in the proposed school design. The summary should include, at a minimum, the following:

- An explanation of how the proposed model is fundamentally different than typical school models, specifically those found in the district or community in which the charter school will be located
- Any available evidentiary basis for the efficacy of the model or for the ideas underlying the model
- An explanation of how the model will still permit Education One to hold the operator to the same high accountability standards to which it holds all authorized schools

From our research, The Nature School of Central Indiana would be the first of its kind in the area. Lawrence, McCordsville, Fishers, Noblesville, Indianapolis and surrounding areas and school districts have several other options for public, charter, and independent schools. Several of those even have the Montessori method as a focus, but TNS is the only school in Central Indiana that is applying Montessori philosophy in the manner of a nature-based school. Furthermore, there is no public or private K-8 school in Indiana that focuses on Waldorf education in any substantial capacity. Despite the existence of these other Montessori and Waldorf-inspired schools or programs, there is no local public school offering this synthesized education model in a nature-based setting with the kind of real-world experiential learning and implications this provides and targeting our population of families. TNS strives to extend beyond a school community and to become a beneficial member of the Central Indiana and global education community at large.

These two education philosophies are growing in popularity for the beneficial learning outcomes, such as increased college-graduation rates, ability to organically and holistically address a variety of learner needs, and more rapid advancement in math and literacy, experienced by students within such programs. Unfortunately, their access is often limited to private institutions. When coupled with the benefits of nature-based learning, especially in learners with special education needs, we are confident in the success of our innovative program. Our innovative scheduling, use of community partnerships, and use of technology are especially noteworthy in that we are keeping abreast of current local and global issues while still maintaining our mission and vision, as well as the integrity of our program.

Our approach to governance is also innovative within the area. It is our goal to have a three-to-four pronged governing body consisting of the Board of Trustees, a Family council, an Educator council, and a potential Special Education council, depending on our enrollment numbers. While other schools have successfully utilized such a model around the US, we were unable to find, despite our concerted efforts, a school in Indiana that has adopted this model. This also includes respectfully addressing communication, accountability, and transparency. TNS understands that our families are our most important stakeholders, and we want to ensure that their voices are heard and valued in our community. We will, therefore, take a cooperative and collaborative approach to governance following in the footsteps of those aforementioned schools who have successfully enacted similar practices.

To maintain a high level of accountability to our authorizer, Education One, we intend to rely on the models and methods that align with our vision and mission of The Nature School. This means that we will ensure transparency by sharing with the authorizer information and data on an ongoing basis. All documents, policies, contracts, financials, etc. shall be uploaded on our website where the authorizer has access. We will address any questions, concerns, or complaints promptly within 48 business hours and aim to have a relationship that is built on a transparent, beneficial, collaborative, and cooperative relationship. TNS desires to serve as a role model for other charter organizations, and this includes fostering a healthy relationship with our authorizer.

Our vision is great and vast, and our model is one of a kind. We strive to create not only an academically successful school that prepares learners for the rigors of higher education, career, and life, but one with a loving, nurturing, welcoming, and empathetic environment that captures the whimsy and wonder of childhood and the inquisition and curiosity of the developing child. The Nature

School believes in changing the world for the better, one learner at a time. It is our sincere hope to bring this new vision of education to our learners at the Nature School of Central Indiana.