

Bright Water Elementary Annual Report

School district #4189-07

2010-2011

Third Operational Year

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Introduction: This was the third operational year of Bright Water Elementary. This year we grew significantly and faced some growing pains. We finished writing a strategic plan and began implementing it to assure that we build on our strengths and minimize challenges. We used the strategic planning process to help us get many areas of the school more defined and to get more policies and procedures in place. We also were evaluated by our Authorizer, Audubon Center of the North woods.

The state funding holdback continues to be a formidable barrier to economic stability. To meet this challenge we set an aggressive fund balance goal and we worked with our preschool program to assure maximum financial stability. It was our last year of the Walton Grant so we tried to maximize the opportunities provided for growth and stability. We were able to secure our building, North Star for another year. However, we are looking for a new location for the 2012-13 school year and onward. We look toward a positive future in North Minneapolis creating a peaceful environment where students are active engaged learners. It is a pleasure to share this report with our families, our employees, our sponsor and the commissioner. We appreciate the support of the state of Minnesota, our families, and our lease holder, Minneapolis Public schools.

We worked to create the best academic and social environments for our diverse group of students and staff. In the school's second year we increased enrollment significantly and added many staff. We used our Walton Grant to enhance educational opportunities for students. We hired teachers to work with our ELL students and students who were behind grade level, but not necessarily eligible for Special education services. We enhanced our language instruction for all students. We reached out to families and enlarged our parent education offerings. We realized 95% parent participation in our social events and 90% participation in Parent Teacher conferences. Our parent satisfaction survey was generally very positive. Most indicated they are very satisfied with the instruction and treatment of their students. A few families expressed the desire for clearer and more consistent communication, and we have worked to improve these areas. At the end of the year our preschool program received a grant from the Sheltering Arms Foundation to promote parent education and student support. This will benefit all of our students.

Mission (adopted May 2010): Bright Water inspires passion for learning in an intentionally diverse Montessori community.

Vision: Bright Water seeks to be a school without an achievement gap and a model for North Minneapolis. Bright Water School is inspired by the educational philosophy of Maria Montessori and sets high expectations for all children. In partnership with parents we guide children to develop their individual gifts while preparing them for life in a cooperative community and a changing world. We nurture independence, a love of learning, cooperation, creative thinking, and respect for self, others and the environment.

Governance:

Bright Water has an active board that provides great oversight of our school in all areas. We have monthly meetings and invite our community to come. We established a committee system to accomplish more. In May 2011 we had our annual meeting and added many members. The following chart indicates our members.

2010-11 Bright Water Elementary Board

Board Member	Term Began	Term to End	Committees	Contact/ phone and e-mail	Affiliation
Ann Luce Head of School	Standing	Standing	Fundraising Finance	612-302-3410 BW 612-432-6243 cell info@brightwatermontessori.org	administrator
Anne Schuerger Chair	1/08	6/11	Personnel Finance	651-695-9270 home 651-497-5775 cell annes@brightwatermontessori.org	Community member Teacher elsewhere
September Luitjens Secretary	8/10	6/10	Staff Liaison Teacher	612-302-3410 BW butterflywoman9@yahoo.com	Teacher
Elizabeth Badillo- Moorman Treasurer	1/08	6/11	Fundraising Finance	612-302-3410 BW 612-203-3378 cell badillomoorman@gmail.com	Parent
DeAnna Cummings	6/10	6/10	Community member Community outreach	612-239-2928 Deanna@juxtaposition.org	Community member
Kim Stout	7/08	6/11	Facilities Charter Teacher	612-202-6842 cell skimstout@juno.com	Parent Charter school teacher
JJ Haywood	5/09	6/11	Facilities Parent	612-554-1955 jj@pizzaluce.com	Parent
Martine Smaller Start up Coordinator	Standing	Standing	Facilities Fundraising	612-302-3410 BW 612-735-5456 cell martinesmaller@gmail.com	Administrator

New members starting in the summer of 2011 include T. Michael Rock, Melissa Lindquist, Larry Tucker, Endel Kallas, Linda Darling, and Nicole Messinger Post.

Administration and Management

Bright Water has a director of school, Ann Luce, who is employed part time and is also the director of the Preschool program, Bright Water Montessori which is housed with the charter elementary school. Ann is responsible for staff education and staff reviews, reporting to the state, compliance, parent engagement and making sure we are living our mission. Martine Smaller was our start-up coordinator and is now known as the Elementary Coordinator. Martine has handled the Federal Grant, MARS reporting, enrollment, transportation and elementary field trips. Our board member, Elizabeth Badillo Moorman does our HR. Bright Water contracts with School Business Solutions to do our financials and UFARS reporting. We also work with SBS to do our budgeting and reporting. At this time, Ann Luce has a teaching license but not an administrator's license. We were a member of MACS and are now entering into a relationship with Charter School Partners. The board has determined that the director will continue to do relevant training and development, but that an administrator's license is not at this time necessary.

Staff

Bright Water is fortunate to have a talented and diverse staff. All our staff have 4 year degrees, teaching certificates completed or in process, and Montessori training. Staff are observed continually and evaluated twice yearly by administrators.

2010-11 Teaching Faculty Information

Name	File Folder Number	Assignment/ Subject	Left During 10-11	Not Returning 11-12
Andrews, Megan	449515	Elementary Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anway, Karen	459019	Elementary Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hickman, Anne	318226	Special Education teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Johnson, Susan Block	318226	Spanish Teacher and ELL	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kubat, Amoke'	323825	Special Education Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hickman, Anne	387509	Special Education Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leon, Alma Leticia	998108	Kindergarten Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Luce, Ann	277710	Administrator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Luitjens, September	998235	Montessori Specialist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marchwick, Kelly	452445	ELL Teacher	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Secor, Tonia	383793	Kindergarten Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Udomah, Melissa	433659	Special Education Teacher	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Waller, Lisa	450631	Elementary Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

Innovative Practices and Implementation

Bright Water is a high quality Montessori school and all classroom teaching staff have 4 year degrees and Montessori training as well as teaching certificates. Our curriculum is unified as is our goal to reach under-served communities. We are committed to helping all children reach their potential. We believe that the child and his or her needs are the central and commanding focus of the learning process. It is the role of the school to observe, to know and to defend the child as he or she proceeds through the stages of development. We see in each child the future of our society, of our nation and of our planet. The child in the process of fundamental development has unlimited possibilities and the future rests on our ability to cultivate these potentials.

The Montessori program is a highly structured classroom in which children have the freedom to move about and choose work relating to lessons they have been given. Materials are beautiful and concrete, but purposeful. Abstract language, geometric, geographic, language and grammar concepts are presented in a concrete manner with manipulative materials. The teacher or guide is trained in giving lessons, evaluation through observation, and setting up the learning environment.

In the 2009-2010 school year we worked to assure that all students were achieving at or near their ability by offering a Montessori trained specialist to work with children behind grade level in reading and math. We also continued work using our Work Sampling system and aligning it with both state standards and our Montessori materials to develop a comprehensive evaluation system.

In 2010-2011 we also addressed reading and math discrepancies through Lexia, individual tutoring, the Read Naturally program and our Montessori Trained Learning Specialist . We had several students who transferred from other schools with low skill levels and worked to bring them close to their potential.

Student Enrollment and Attrition Rates

This table identifies the number of students enrolled at the school during the 2008-09, 2009-10, and 2010-2011 enrollment. We also have our 2011-12 enrollment. Data is based on October 1 Average Daily Membership.

School Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Attrition Rate
2008-09	19	19	6											3
2009-10	20	18	20	6										3
2010-11	22	15	20	19	6									4
2011-12	28	29	18	19	15	9								

For the 2011-12 school year we have expanded an upper elementary classroom and opened a new K-1 classroom. We hope to add another upper elementary classroom in 2012-13 and also add a toddler classroom to our preschool program. Our targeted enrollment is about 300 students (Charter School and preschool combined) which we hope to accomplish in the 2014-15 school year.

Academic Program and Performance

In Spring 2010 we had our first MCA testing with a small sample of students. Six students took the MCA tests of achievement and the overall score was 50% proficient in math and 67% proficient in reading. Of these students, 4 of 6 qualified for free or reduced lunch, and two of six had special needs. Our sample size was too small to be published by the state.

Bright Water uses two standardized assessments to evaluate the progress of our students. The Work Sampling System is an embedded assessment that looks at the whole child. It is based on on-going teacher observation in the areas of social development, language arts, math, science, social studies, the arts, and physical development. Each child is evaluated three times a year in November, March and June. All students who are three years of age or older on September 1 are assessed with the Work Sampling System. Students who are in Grade 3 or higher also take the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments in April of each year. Last year we had 18 third graders and 6 fourth graders who were assessed by both the Work Sampling Assessment and by the MCA tests. The results are in the table below.

	Work Sampling: Year-End (% proficient)		MCA (% proficient)	
	Reading	Math	Reading	Math
Grade 3	78%	79%	33%	11%
Grade 4	50%	42%	50%	33%

As you can see, there is a huge discrepancy between the scores of the two assessments at Grade 3. We are unsure what caused this discrepancy and are dismayed by the results of our students on the MCA tests. We strongly believe that the Work Sampling scores are a more accurate representation of our students' abilities but we realize these MCA scores are not acceptable. Therefore, we are putting into place a number of steps to address the discrepancy and raise the MCA scores. After the individual test scores come out in mid-October, we will also have an opportunity to analyze our results more closely and share our findings. In addition, within the next two months we will put in place another assessment tool to best analyze the individual needs of each child.

The Bright Water faculty is resolved to eliminate the discrepancy between these assessments while still maintaining the integrity of our Montessori program. Through an active partnership with our parent and extended family community, we are inaugurating a series of initiatives that will refocus our energy and allow us to address needs at all levels. This includes a school-wide reading initiative and goals, more cross level mentor reading, instituting MCA's, dedicated after-school reading and math programs and instituting another standardized test, such as the NWEA's.

We find that the earlier we work with children, the more promising the results. We have a preschool program that begins at 16 months. For children who are in the school for an extended period, their ability to perform and to stay engaged is greatly increased. We are working with the North side Achievement Zone to provide quality preschool programs to needy families. About 85% of the families who go through our preschool program apply to our Charter elementary. This is a way in which we hope to address the achievement gap in our community.

Program Challenges

Bright Water is first and foremost a high quality Montessori school committed to serving low income and challenged families. We have a slow growth pattern which is challenging in terms of having the amount of students needed to have a significant fund balance. The hold back of state funding has been very challenging to our small school. It is nearly impossible for a small school to create a 40% fund balance, and while we have had federal and Walton grant funding for the past few years, we face difficult budget decisions in the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years. The North Minneapolis neighborhood that we are in can also be challenging as it is a high crime neighborhood. It is a deterrent for families in safer neighborhoods to send their children.

Our last year test scores are also a challenge. We do not feel they reflect the abilities of our students or their skills. We will work to make sure we engage children and families in the importance of working hard and reading daily. We are also encouraging families to limit screen time and engage more in language and math with their children. We have started doing more frequent parent education. We are starting an all school reading program and initiative for all our families. We also have a social worker who is assisting families in dealing with difficult behavior at home and at school.

Finding a permanent location for our small school is a challenge. We are committed to staying in North Minneapolis, but the choices are few. We are exploring building options and hope to settle on a location by the end of October 2011. Bright Water has signed with Northmarq to assist us in our search for a new location. We are also working with our boards and a host of community partners.

Authorizer Information

Authorizer name	Contact information	Sponsor liaison	Contract Termination date
Audubon Center of the North Woods	charter@audubon-center.org 888-404-7743 651-260-3782	Steve Dess and Mary Donaldson	6/30/2014

Bright Water has a positive relationship with the authorizer, Audubon Center of the North woods. Our representative, Steve Dess, is available when we need him and comes to board meetings several times a year. Steve has been available at many crucial times in our school development. BWE staff have attended several events and informational charter conferences at Audubon Center of the North woods. We have a new liason, Mary Donaldson from Concordia Learning Academy. Mary is delightful and an excellent mentor. We look forward to continuing a positive relationship with our sponsor.

As part of the expectation of our Authorizer, Bright Water started their self-evaluation and strategic planning in the 2009-10 school year. This year we finalized our documents and submitted them to our community and to Audubon Center of the Northwoods.

Financials

In the 2009-10 and the 2010-11 school year Bright Water Elementary won a School Finance award. We also expect to win one this year. We are doing our best to staff well and still be able to have a sizable fund balance. We have moved our accounts to US Bank and have secured a \$90,000 line of credit for this year.

These are the financial statements prepared by School Business Solutions for our Annual Report:

Bright Water Elementary
Balance Sheet Statement
Fiscal Year 2011
As of June 30, 2011

Descriptions	General Operating Fund	Food Service Fund	Fixed Assets	Total
Current Assets				
Cash Accounts	23,384	(3,764)	-	19,620.41
Receivables	248,320	-	-	248,320
Prepaid Expenditures	5,104	-	-	5,104
Total Current Assets	276,808	(3,764)	-	273,044
Equipment	-	-	9,701	9,701
Accum. Depreciation - Equipment	-	-	(970)	(970)
Total Fixed Assets	-	-	8,731	8,731
<hr/>				
	276,808	(3,764)	8,731	281,775
Current Liabilities				
Salaries Payable	40,389	-	-	40,389
Payroll Liabilities	8,720	-	-	8,720
Accounts Payable	40,635	2,421	-	43,056
Deferred Revenue	39,183	-	-	39,183
Total Current Liabilities	128,927	2,421	-	131,348
Investment Fixed Assets	-	-	8,731	8,731
Pre-Audited Fund Balance	147,881	(6,185)	-	141,696
Total Fund Balance	147,881	(6,185)	8,731	150,427
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	276,808	(3,764)	8,731	281,775

These financials were compiled from preliminary year end accruals. This is pre-audit information

Future Plans

We are engaged in a search for the most perfect possible building starting in the next school year. At this time we have engaged Northmarq to assist us in our search. We are a small school, so we need it to be affordable as well as suitable for our community. We wish to stay on the north side of Minneapolis. Although we know finding a permanent home for our small school is a challenge, we are committed to making the best for our students and families.

We are looking at an extended school year or learning year for our school. We want to assure that all students are working well and achieving to their best ability. The summer is too long for many of our students and they lose some of the academic gains they have made.

We hope to grow our school to 300 in the next few years. We want to work closely with the North side Achievement Zone to assure all children in this area finish school and are college ready. We wish to positively influence the future of our families. We have been asked to start a middle school. At this time we are not ready to commit, but we hope our students find the right fit when they are ready to move on.