



AWARDED APPLICATION PROJECT NARRATIVE

Gem Prep: Meridian

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The world is changing rapidly, and education needs to keep pace with the challenges and advancements students will meet in the real world. Most Idaho students simply are not prepared for success in college, but Gem Prep: Meridian seeks to change that. Through the use of adaptive technology coupled with highly qualified teachers who use data to personalize instruction, Gem Prep is developing students who have the knowledge, characteristics, competencies, and mindsets that they will need in order to be successful in college and the next generation workplace.

Gem Prep is a catalyst for changing education outcomes in Idaho. Gem's education model encompasses a graduate profile developed around the competencies, the skills, and characteristics necessary for tomorrow's leaders. Gem Prep students will graduate with early college success in high school and with the experiences and accomplishments in the areas of real-world communication, rigorous academics, and superior independence and motivation.

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Part II: A. Grant Project Goals

Gem Mission: To prepare students for success in college and professional technical careers by providing a high quality, personalized, relevant and rigorous education through exceptional teaching, innovative uses of technology and partnerships with families.

Gem Vision Gem Prep: Meridian is a K-12, personalized, college and career preparatory school. Through personalization, and by leveraging best practices in technology, blended learning and online learning the school engages students in 21st-century work, using competencies necessary for productive lives as citizens in a dynamic, increasingly competitive global world.

GRANT PROJECT GOAL #1: Increase the number of high quality Idaho K-12 charter school seats.

At full growth Gem Prep: Meridian (GPM) will serve 582 K-12 students. During the 24 months of the grant period, GPM will add 204 students in grades 7-10 and will add students in grades 11 and 12 the following years. Completion of this goal will be tracked through enrollment in GPM's student information system (SIS). Adding secondary grade levels aligns to the mission of preparing students for success in college by ensuring they have instructional rigor from K through 12.

GRANT PROJECT GOAL #2: Sixty percent of GPM's 7th-12th grade students will take one or more advanced opportunities course each school year, setting their trajectory for early college success in high school. It is critical that GPM students take courses which provide both intellectual rigor and meet graduation requirements during their 7th-8th grade years, setting them up to take college-level courses when they reach high school. Students in 9th – 12th grade will take a series of college level courses while in high school. Many of these courses will be online, creating the necessity for a student workspace that is conducive to productivity and collaboration. Completion of this goal will be tracked

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through the SIS, which tracks enrollment data, student schedules and grades. Students receiving coursework in above-grade-level content is part of how GPM fulfills its mission of providing students a rigorous education.

GRANT PROJECT GOAL #3: Seventy-five percent of 7th & 8th grade students will take courses from a

teacher who is physically located in a different building than the student. Through the use of

technology, GPM will connect students with excellent teachers, without regard to location. Using this technology expands the reach of the best teachers and minimizes geographic teacher shortages.

Additionally, students will engage in three types of courses: in-person, online, and send/receive.

Today's students need to obtain skills to collaborate with their colleagues across the country and world in the modern workplace. These three-course types also enable GPM to offer a wider array of course options to students than what may be available from single-location teachers. Completion of this goal will be tracked through the SIS, which tracks enrollment data, student schedules and teacher assignments. As stated in the mission statement, these send/receive courses provide an "innovative use of technology" to ensure students have access to the "exceptional teaching" regardless of their geographic location.

GRANT PROJECT GOAL #4: Students in grades 4th-8th will meet or exceed the state proficiency

and growth average in English Language Arts and math on state standardized assessments.

Student academic outcomes in the 4th-8th grades are a key indicator of their readiness to complete rigorous coursework in subsequent years. GPM will use the Idaho State Standardized Achievement Test (ISAT) to measure both growth and achievement for students in grades 4th - 8th. The GPM mission statement emphasizes high-quality instruction, which is synonymous

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with academic growth and proficiency. GPM believes that exceptional learning and teaching is reflected in growth and proficiency measures.

GRANT PROJECT GOAL #5: GPM will serve students in grades K-12th, mirroring (within a 5%

margin) the student population of local district demographics. GPM believes that a diverse student body enriches the education of all students and is essential to preparing students for a pluralistic world. It is also important to mirror the demographics of the surrounding district to demonstrate that GPM successfully serves all students. GPM's SIS captures the student demographics during enrollment and will be used for comparison to the local student population demographic noted in the CSP Grant. Our mission to prepare students for success includes all students regardless of race, income, and special education status.

Part II: B. Educational Philosophy, Instructional Practices, and Curriculum

GPM is a college preparatory school. Every program, K-12, at GPM is designed and aligned to prepare students for success in college and beyond. The philosophical premise is that students need a tailored and rigorous instructional environment to help them develop the knowledge, skills, and competencies that will assist them in their success in college and beyond.

GPM's instructional methodology is to provide instructional access to content designed to prepare students for the rigors of college-level instruction. Because the elementary grade levels include foundational content, GPM utilizes a personalized approach, which leverages technology to adapt instruction to student needs, while simultaneously providing them with real-time feedback and remediation. Teachers also work with students in small group instruction settings to teach key concepts and help students continue to develop their skills. Part of the foundational elementary skill set includes developing the character and behavioral

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attributes that will position students for success as they enter middle and high school. To assist in the development of these skills, teachers meet individually with students in data conferences on a weekly basis to set goals, track progress toward previous goals, and discuss reflections on goals. These meetings assist the teachers in maintaining a culture of high expectations for behaviors and academics by providing a forum for reflection, recognition, and accountability. Elementary students engage in electives such as coding, engineering, art, music, and Spanish, etc. Each course is designed to build upon instruction in core courses, while providing additional depth and application for students.

As students progress to secondary grade levels, the focus of student competency development shifts toward independence, ownership of learning, and exposure to new skills. Students engage in courses in person, online, and through video teleconference to gain skills of professional communication and collaboration with colleagues (other students and teachers) in remote geographic locations. Secondary students also participate in college preparatory courses, which are dedicated to the development of competencies such as mindsets, communication skills, and habits of success. When students enter 11th grade, they take primarily college-level coursework with the objective of completing an associate's degree by high school graduation. Research literature demonstrates that students who access rigorous content while in high school have higher persistence rates in college (*Education Sciences, 2018*). The associate's degree has a number of elective courses, which are required, so students select college level electives that align to their college goals. GPM students are capable of accessing and succeeding in college coursework while in high school because the school provides the

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foundational content knowledge and competencies they need to prepare them for the experience.

GPM believes that access to high-quality learning materials is central to the effective instruction of students. Accordingly, the school seeks to adopt a rigorous, sustainable, evidence-based curriculum that provides students with optimal access to information and learning opportunities. GPM curriculum aligns to national and/or Idaho Content standards, which define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education. GPM has established rigorous performance objectives, and additionally ensures each curricula meets the following qualifications: (a) rigor meets or exceeds common core state standards; (b) curriculum is research and evidence based.

All GPM core academic curriculum undergoes an extensive review process by the curriculum adoption committee. This committee reviews curriculum on an annual basis to ensure core academic content meets or exceeds content standards and maintains research-based efficacy for their specific student demographic (Idaho Administrative Rules IDAPA 08.02.03.102).

GPM's ELA (English Language Arts) curriculum is *ReadyGEN*, which provides many opportunities for rich and rigorous evidence-based discussions and writing about texts to build strong literacy skills. Students build skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening, and they integrate language work throughout. This researched and reviewed curriculum meets rigorous expectations in both alignment and usability ratings (EdReports, 2019).

GPM utilizes *Zearn* math curriculum, which allows students to learn across multiple instructional formats, rotating between learning independently with self-paced digital lessons

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and working with their teacher and classmates in a small group. Research indicates this program successfully increases student understanding and proficiency in mathematics. This curriculum meets rigorous expectations in both alignment and usability ratings (EdReports, 2019; Sharma & Hasim, 2019; Tabrah, 2018).

GPM's science curriculum, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's *Science Fusion*, is designed to use technology to best meet learners' needs—to be flexible, to allow for interaction, to be engaging and motivating, and to reach a wide range of learning styles, employing visual, kinesthetic, auditory, and verbal modes and abilities (Beck, Conner, & Cruse, 2012; Dani & Koenig, 2008; Resendez & Azin, 2013).

GPM has adopted *MyWorld Social Studies* curriculum. In preparing students to be college and career ready, *MyWorld* aligns with the new framework for social studies instruction, known as the C3 Framework, to help educators expand social studies and civic education in the classroom. *MyWorld* aligns with Idaho Content Standards (Pearson, 2013; Smith, 2018).

To meet GPM's performance objectives and gain experience communicating and learning in a variety of 3-course formats: (a) in-person classes, (b) online classes, and (c) virtual classes through live video teleconference systems in a send-receive model. Select classrooms are equipped with video teleconference equipment to facilitate send/receive courses. All students interact with digital content using Chromebooks. GPM utilizes the learning management system, Canvas, to design content for all core classes in grades K-12. Canvas provides a consistent framework for instructional delivery, assessment, and access to academic progress for all students in grades K-12.

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In addition to GPM's use of a learning management system, the school also uses computer adaptive technology to provide individualized learning. Computer adaptive programs, such as *Zearn* and *Istation*, assess each individual student and adapt the activities and assessment questions based on the student's response. Based on their assessment results and individual abilities, students are able to individually engage with digital activities daily.

GPM also utilizes technology to support safe, equitable, and positive classroom environments using Class Dojo and GoGuardian. Class Dojo is a digital management program teachers use to communicate with elementary students and their parents. Student behavior is tracked and celebrated, student portfolios and grades are shared with parents, and staff members are able to share daily messages, videos, tutorials, updates, and pictures with students and families in a secured digital application. GoGuardian provides teachers and administrators access to observe student technology use, which facilitates students staying on task to maximize learning time. The program is also a security system to ensure students are only accessing safe and appropriate academic content when they engage with digital learning.

GPM is a tuition-free K-12 Idaho public charter school authorized by the Idaho Public Charter School Commission. GPM has developed specific elements within the elementary and secondary models "in pursuit of a specific set of educational objectives" designed to meet the unique needs of GPM demographics (ESEA 4310 1C, 20 U.S.C. 7221i).

The school chose to utilize autonomies in three central categories: (a) acquisition and retention of high-quality teachers, (b) innovative, individualized instructional models, and (c) development and implementation of college-ready competencies. GPM students deserve the best teachers and staff. Accordingly, GPM developed a thorough hiring process and offers all

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teachers a 1-year contract. This ensures that students have consistent access to teachers who thoroughly support the development of all students in GPM's college preparatory model.

To meet GPM's rigorous performance objectives, the school uses an instructional model with a variety of course formats to meet the individual needs of their unique population. Student learning is additionally enhanced through differentiation via blended learning, adaptive technology, and grade and subject acceleration.

Per ESEA 4310, GPM has identified a specific set of educational objectives, which include the development of the Gem Prep Graduate Profile and implementation of college-ready competencies. All students should have access to a high-quality education built upon a strong academic, social, and emotional foundation. GPM provides all kindergarten students with tuition-free, full-day kindergarten (only half-time K is state funded), to begin laying this critical foundation. All students begin building their college competencies in kindergarten with their K-12 graduate profile focused on the following areas: (a) college planning and saving, (b) evidence of college-ready competencies, (c) college and career coaching, (d) academic growth, (e) social/emotional development, and (f) self-advocacy.

Part II: C. Teaching and Learning

All students should have access to a high-quality education built upon a strong academic, social, and emotional foundation. To meet GPM's rigorous performance objectives, the school uses an instructional model with a variety of course formats and instructional strategies to meet the individual needs of their unique population. GPM uses a variety of standards-based assessments throughout the school year to identify student learning needs.

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These include benchmark assessments, diagnostic assessments, lesson and unit assessments, summative assessments, and formative assessments. At least three times per year, all students are assessed using the Illuminate K-8 reading and math interim and performance task assessments as well as the NWEA MAP reading and math assessments. These benchmark assessments provide student and class growth data, standards-based mastery information, and progress toward annual learning objectives. Benchmark assessment data is used to evaluate the efficacy of overall curriculum, gauge collective and individual teaching practices, and monitor student achievement progress. Teachers use this data to identify students considered for grade or subject acceleration, struggling students, and inform classroom blended learning groups, lesson plans and pacing, and specific instructional strategies. Benchmark assessment data is used at the classroom, grade, and school level to differentiate instruction based on individual skill and content standard mastery.

GPM also uses computer-adaptive assessments to frequently monitor student progress in reading via *Istation Reading* and in math via *Istation Math* and *Zearn Math*. Computer-adaptive assessments provide practitioners with specific skill diagnosis and student progress. The assessments evaluate each individual student and adapt the questions based on the student's response. For example, if a student gets a question correct, the next question becomes more challenging. If a student answers a test question incorrectly, the subsequent question becomes more simplified. Computer-adaptive assessments allow teachers to identify and target the specific skills each student needs in their learning progression and measure their goal progress. School-wide classroom data is shared with all practitioners on a weekly basis to identify strengths, areas of opportunity, and learning trends. Each teacher meets with their

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principal at least once per month to review student data and collaboratively design data-informed lesson plans. Teachers also meet with each individual student at least once per month to review student data, growth, and self-selected goals. The computer-adaptive assessments also inform computer-adaptive content so students are able to individually engage with digital activities based on their assessment results and individual abilities. Teachers are able to work with students one-on-one and in small groups and then students are able to work independently at their instructional level, practice new skills, and receive challenging instruction while still in a supportive and individualized environment.

Part II: D. Student Academic Achievement Standards

Through formative assessments, student outcomes are tracked and measured in smaller increments of time and scope. These allow for a constant and consistent gauge of student performance, and they give educators the ability to personalize and adjust instructional practices as needed throughout the school year. By measuring student outcomes through both formative and interim assessments, GPM is able to “keep a finger on the pulse” of where students, classrooms, and teachers are at any given time throughout the year. This enables quick adjustments to instruction and the ability to employ responsive supports where and when they are needed.

The school also uses a series of summative assessments on an annual basis to get a big-picture view of the overall student, classroom, and teacher achievement. Assessment data is shared across the school and across the Gem Prep network of schools for the purpose of (a) tracking where each teacher, each classroom, and each student are succeeding and (b) bringing to light areas where teachers may need additional support to effectively teach students—

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whether it be in areas of pacing, instructional excellence, classroom management, supporting individual students, etc. The assessment data is used in weekly professional development sessions, identifying which students/teachers/classrooms are achieving the most growth; and then leveraging those high achieving teachers to share best practices for the development of other teachers. GPM uses a comprehensive set of assessment tools and framework to facilitate its data-driven culture:

Gem Prep: Meridian Assessment Framework	
GRADE	Formative/Interim/Summative
K	Interim Idaho Standardized Achievement Test (ISAT), Annual ISAT, Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI), Northwest Evaluation Association Assessment (NWEA MAP), WIDA Access 2.0 English Language
1st - 3rd	Interim ISAT, IRI, NWEA MAP, WIDA Access 2.0 English Language, Annual ISAT, Illuminate Interim Assessments
4th - 6th	Illuminate Interim Assessments, Interim ISAT, NWEA MAP, WIDA Access 2.0 English Language, Annual ISAT
7th - 9th	Illuminate Interim Assessments, Interim ISAT, NWEA MAP, WIDA Access 2.0 English Language, Annual ISAT
10th - 11th	Illuminate Interim Assessments, Interim ISAT, NWEA MAP, WIDA Access 2.0 English Language, Annual ISAT, Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT)
12th	Illuminate Interim Assessments, Interim ISAT, NWEA MAP, WIDA Access 2.0 English Language, Annual ISAT, Idaho Civics Exam

The CAO, data manager, and principal work in conjunction with GPM teachers to regularly monitor and evaluate student data. This team provides “wrap around” support for struggling teachers. Areas of concern are quickly identified and effective, measurable plans are implemented in order to further develop the teacher, remedy any areas of struggle (e.g. student comprehension, instruction concerns, content pacing, etc.), and to ultimately ensure student mastery.

GPM believes that excellence and equity are inseparable. The principal ensures that a high percentage of students reach proficiency benchmarks AND that the learning environment is equally conducive for all students to achieve. All student population subgroups (race, income level, special need, etc.) are supported and equally expected to reach proficiency levels.

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During weekly 2-hour professional development, information is provided to the school staff, principal, and teachers, which demonstrates the weekly progress of every student. All formative, interim and summative data is available. Additionally, all aggregate GPM data is shared with all Gem Prep schools. Teachers are paired by grade level across all Gem Prep schools. The group's professional development leader presents each teacher's data and facilitates a group discussion about the various challenges and successes teachers are realizing. Inevitably, some teachers will struggle. For those who struggle, best practices are shared and strategies are put into place to lift all teachers, with the goal to help every GPM teacher become master teachers.

Annually, the CEO, CAO, data manager, and principal work together to review student data and adjust goals and plans accordingly. This review includes a disaggregation of student data to ensure that subpopulations are performing well and that any discrepancies in their performance are addressed. Academic benchmarks are reviewed and re-evaluated. The assessment data is leveraged to craft or revise policies and to make leadership decisions for areas of emphasis the following school year.

Part II: E. Student Demand and Community/Local Support

GPM has developed a student recruitment plan that intentionally enrolls a diverse student population. Branding was created by a professional designer, and messaging was created with the help of an experienced consultant to balance high expectations with robust support. GPM uses a variety of recruitment tools including social media, mailers, door-to-door campaigns, public forums, local preschools, and community events and groups. Student recruitment materials (also available in Spanish) feature students who represent racial diversity

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and a range of age levels. These materials make it abundantly clear that GPM serves students at all academic levels, including special education students. Door-to-door efforts and mailers include a variety of neighborhoods, including those most likely to yield enrollment from students of color and of low-income. Social media parameters are narrowed to target these same neighborhoods and demographics. During the summer, GPM staff attend free lunch at the parks (which are intended for low-income families) to inform families about school choice options. Strong demand currently exists for enrollment at GPM from a regionally diverse student population. GPM includes \$5,000 per year for student recruitment efforts in the annual budget.

By the year 2023, the school will serve 582 students in grades K-12. In just the first year, GPM seats are over 95% filled with a waitlist of over 100 students. For the 2019-2020 school year, GPM seats are 96% filled with a waiting list of 449 students.

Gem Prep: Meridian Anticipated Enrollment

Grade	Y1/2018-19	Y2/2019-20	Y3/2020-21	Y4/2021-22	Y5/2022-23	Y6/2023-24
K	48	48	48	48	48	48
1	48	48	48	48	48	48
2	48	48	48	48	48	48
3	24	48	48	48	48	48
4	30	30	60	60	60	60
5	30	30	30	60	60	60
6	60	60	60	60	60	60
7		45	45	45	45	45
8		45	45	45	45	45
9			30	30	30	30
10			30	30	30	30
11				30	30	30
12					30	30
	288	402	492	552	582	582

Effective recruitment strategies have enabled GPM's student demographic population to exceed the West Ada school district's combined percentage of non-white, English Language

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Learner, economically disadvantaged (low income), and special education by 12.91%. GPM serves an especially higher percentage of low-income students compared to the district (see below data).

Comparison: At-Risk Students	<i>Local</i> DISTRICT*	<i>Actual 2018-19</i> GPM
Non-White	19.55%	16.24
Low Income	24.05%	49.95%
Special Education	10.48%	8.80%
English Language Learners	4.00%	0.00%
Total:	58.08%	70.99%

**Per Bluum*

In addition to volunteer activities during school hours, the school intentionally seeks to engage families in activities that fall outside of normal schools hours—given the busy schedules of many parents. Each school year, families are encouraged to engage in the school community through a variety of activities such as back-to-school night, parent/teacher conferences, attending student performances, educational fairs, marketing events, helping in the classrooms, playgrounds and lunchroom, participating in social functions, after-school activities, fundraising, committees, etc. GPM families have recorded over 1,400 volunteer hours in the first semester of the first year alone. Additionally, the school has a variety of committees established for advisory, feedback, and participation, such as the Principal’s Advisory Committee, the Parent Teacher Organization, etc.

Even before the school opened, GPM began to encourage local business partners such as the local library, government organizations, local colleges and universities, as well as children's dental offices and medical practitioners to partner with the school in development and in support of student success, health, and growth. By nurturing relationships with a large

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variety of community partners, GPM strengthens and promotes an interactive and thriving community.

Part II: F. Effectively Serving All Students

GPM believes that all students deserve and can succeed in an atmosphere of high expectations. However, many students need additional support to succeed in such an environment. A Response to Intervention (RTI) system is in place at GPM to identify and intervene with students who struggle academically or behaviorally while the challenges are still relatively small. Teachers are trained in and expected to utilize interventions for students who need additional support. Further, secondary students meet with their college preparatory advisory class in a small group (15 students or less) to learn non-academic competencies such as goal setting, mindsets, and habits of success. The teacher for the class also meets individually with students to review their future goals, their progress toward previous goals, and to reflect on progress since the last meeting. During this time, the teacher checks key indicators with the students (such as grades, behavior data, and attendance) and provides assistance or direction for the student. This is another place where students who face unique contextual challenges can get help or can be referred for additional help. The teacher's role is to intervene and assist before problems have snowballed, but also to provide a place for the student to reflect and improve.

Teachers norm around a definition of rigor and what it looks like in the classroom. Teachers are trained in equitable instruction to ensure that students from educationally disadvantaged circumstances are provided the same intellectual rigor as every other student, even if they need additional support. If an assignment, question, or activity would be given to a

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classroom of gifted and talented students at a high-priced private school, then it might be worthy of GPM students as well. With this visualization, GPM teachers are asked to hold the bar high for all students, but provide robust support for students who struggle. Some students may even need behavioral or academic intervention plans, and teachers, parents, and administrators are expected to fully integrate these plans.

The school provides a full continuum of services for students who require special education services. Students in need of intervention services are identified as outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Once identified, the student's Individualized Educational Program (IEP) team establishes the necessary intervention strategy. The IEP team consists of the classroom teacher, special education teacher, parents, and administrator. The team first considers support options, which allow students to spend as much time as possible with peers who do not receive special education services (LRE: Least Restrictive Environment).

After determining what appropriate services and supports can be provided within the regular classroom, supplementary aids and interventions may be provided within the special education classroom, based on each student's unique needs. GPM's special education focus is always on the student's abilities and not their disabilities. GPM provides services for students as determined by the IEP, such as speech and language services, counseling, behavioral intervention, school-based occupational therapy, psychological services, etc. GPM's special education staff meet, or exceed, the requirements as outlined by the Idaho State Department of Education. They undergo continuous professional development to persist in meeting the needs of students with disabilities at a high level.

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GPM participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). The school contracts with a local school district to provide meal planning, hot lunches, and NSLP reimbursable meals that meet the NSLP nutritional guidelines. The school operations manager oversees the nutrition program and is responsible for completing all reporting to the state, oversees audits of the program, and manages staffing of the lunchroom. Free and reduced priced meals are provided to students who are certified as eligible. Full pay meals are provided for those who do not qualify for either free or reduced meals. The school receives reimbursement for meals served based on the latest federal NSLP reimbursement rates.

GPM contracts with Brown Bus Company to provide busing to students within its attendance boundary. During the annual registration process, families who wish to utilize busing fill out a busing form. Brown Bus uses a program that analyzes the location of GPM students and creates bus stops that best serve those who request busing. GPM currently has four bus routes. Additional routes may be added as the school grows to better serve the increased number of students and the locations of those families. The school has a lift accessible bus to provide students with disabilities access to busing services. Door service transportation is available for students who may be homeless, in a foster home, or whose disability necessitates such service. Busing is also available for extracurricular activities as needed through the Brown Bus Transportation contract.

Part II: G. Staffing and Professional Development

GPM's staffing structure was designed to deliver the educational model with all appropriate associated support services. The student to teacher ratio is 23:1 with the student to adult ratio at 14:1. In addition to teachers, GPM student support staff includes

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paraprofessionals, school counselor, receptionist, and an operations manager. The roles and responsibilities of each staff member have been clearly identified to ensure students are well supported.

In regard to staff recruitment, GPM takes a “cast a wide net approach”. The school advertises early (in January) and widely, to ensure a deep candidate pool and adequate time to vet potential employees. Recruitment efforts include social media, teacher fairs, and leveraging personal contacts of both parents and staff. GPM attracts an average of 40 candidates for each open position. Potential teachers complete a four-phase application process (facilitated through RIVS, an online recruitment management program) consisting of

- 1) the application: screening for qualifications,
- 2) video and written response: screening for knowledge of instructional practices, verbal and written communication skills,
- 3) a live interview: gauging functional competencies through scenarios
- 4) a teaching demonstration: measuring the candidate’s intellectual preparation for instruction as well as their ability to manage and instruct students effectively.

GPM is hyper-focused on retaining the best teachers, with the highest performing being awarded retention bonuses. Teachers with a demonstrated track record of success may mentor new teachers, run professional development, and hold shared leadership responsibilities (all of which come with stipends). When these teachers indicate the possibility of leaving GPM, the CEO personally contacts the teacher to find ways to keep them with the school.

GPM plans for both the time and support necessary to ensure that instructional excellence is the norm in every classroom. Teacher contracts include 20 extra days for

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professional development, in addition to a weekly 2-hour training. Most of this time is spent in professional learning activities, which is coordinated by a Curriculum, Assessment and Professional Development Director. Beginning in the 2019 school year, much of the actual learning will be led by teachers who have a track record of success.

All teachers (K-12) and staff attend training prior to the beginning of the school year. This training outlines the school's vision for instructional excellence and allows all teachers to observe the same teaching videos and norm on a shared vision. New teachers attend Summer Bridge Academy to learn and practice effective implementation of the instructional model.

The principal is considered the instructional leader of the school and spends time in every classroom every week. The principal uses an online tool (called Whetstone) which allows the principal to provide immediate feedback and coaching to teachers. Additionally, the program facilitates the ability for the principal to both record a lesson and narrate feedback on the recording for the teacher. Coaching and feedback are grounded in individual professional learning plans for the school year, which focus all teachers on mastering essentials for effective instruction. If a student is identified with needs not fully met, master teachers may be given the autonomy to innovate and try new instructional strategies, as they see fit.

Part II: H. Financial Management and Monitoring Plan (See Budget Narrative)

Part II: I. Board Capacity and Governance Structure

The GPM Board of Directors is comprised of a talented and seasoned group of professionals and civic leaders. Board expertise and strength covers all necessary governance areas such as education, law, real estate, strategy, finance, management and community relations, etc. Further strengthening the board, the current board chair has five

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years of governance experience with Gem Prep schools, and the vice-chair has 10. *See Board and Leadership Bio attachment for board expertise profile.*

Recruitment and nomination of potential new board members is the responsibility of the board's Governance Committee. When recruiting, the committee leverages professional networks, as well as the connections of GPM staff, teachers, parents, and community members. When less than two board members possess any categorized skills set, the committee identifies that skill as the recruitment priority. Further, if board members cannot be identified who possesses the necessary skills set, the Committee recommends board training in order to develop expertise in that skill within existing board members. Board members must share a commitment to the mission of the school, and be willing to volunteer their expertise to ensure the school's success in fulfilling its mission.

The Gem Prep: Meridian Board of Directors is responsible for:

– Hiring the CEO.
– Holding the mission & vision of Gem Prep: Meridian in clear focus. Monitoring & strengthening the school's program.
– Developing and reviewing school policy.
– Ensuring Open Meeting and Open Record Laws are being adhered to at all times.
– Ensuring adequate resources and managing resources effectively.
– Ensuring Gem Prep: Meridian's financial health.
– Adopting, advocating for, and overseeing a school budget, which is responsive to school goals and meets the needs of all students.
– The legal affairs of Gem Prep: Meridian: ensuring legal and ethical integrity, and maintaining accountability.
– Ensuring that members adhere to the ethical standards as set forth in the <i>Ethical Standards Agreement</i> signed by each board member.
– Conducting an annual self-evaluation of its own leadership, governance, and teamwork.
– Recruiting and orienting new board members.

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The Board Handbook clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of the board are to govern the school, working to establish effective board policies and delegate authority for the administration of the school to the CEO. The board chair has the responsibility of ensuring all board members understand and adhere strictly to their roles. The CEO may bring any concern about board members (individually or collectively) to the board chair, who ensures that the board is in compliance with agreed upon roles and standards. The board has four committees: finance, academics, governance, and facilities. Board committees provide in-depth insights to the whole board, as needed.

To ensure monitoring of performance, academics, financial operations, general operations, and legal compliance, a data dashboard of the school is included in the regular monthly board meeting packet. The data dashboard presents a monthly and 'year-to-date' snapshot of the school's academic, financial, and operational performance, and is reviewed by the board at each regularly scheduled board meeting. Also included in the monthly board packet are expenditure reviews and approvals, various contracts, etc., as necessary for board review and oversight.

The board seeks legal advice and legal review of contracts prior to approval and purchases Model Board Policy updates from legal counsel. Annually, the board's Governance Committee reviews board policy and makes recommendations to the full board. The full board reviews and approves school policies, the annual school audit, evaluates the school's director, and completes and reviews conflict of interest forms, as well as anti-fraud statements. Board members understand their responsibility to conduct board business without conflict of interest.

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GPM school board members are committed to continued development. The board believes strongly in seeking out relevant board training opportunities to assist in making GPM a high performing, personalized learning school which prepares students for college, career, and citizenship.

Board members identify the greatest needs for professional learning. Once needs are identified, the board develops a professional development plan which provides opportunities for board members to advance their expertise, and to strengthen and deepen the board as a whole. The annual school budget includes \$5,000 for board training and development opportunities, which is fully reimbursable by the state. Board members attend regular training such as the Idaho School Board Association's annual convention. They also attend the State Department of Education charter school workshops, which provide information about best practices and common challenges of charter boards. These workshops and training opportunities also provide critical networking connections for board members.

A New Board Members packet is provided to new board members. This packet contains information to help them understand what is involved in being a board member. Packets include, but are not limited to, the GPM Board Handbook, GPM Charter, roles and responsibilities, open meeting and record laws, state statute for charter schools, ethical standards, conflict of interest information, board policies, financial reports, and budgets. New members are also provided with educational materials relative to GPM's educational model, such as webinars, books, and conferences, prior to appointment, and during their service on the board.

Part II: J. School Leadership and Management

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The school's management plan provides the school support from an executive team with a demonstrated track record of preparing students for success in college and beyond. The executive team is comprised of a CEO, CFO, CAO, COO, special education director, and operations officer. The executive team manages human resources, legal matters, facilities, federal programs, purchasing, payroll, accounts payable, operations and financial management. This allows the principal to focus on the instructional leadership of the school. The principal's responsibilities include student academic success, building school community and culture, providing teacher mentoring and coaching, conducting staff evaluations, student discipline, and facilitating parent and community relations.

The board reviews key indicators on the school's data dashboard each month. Key indicators include enrollment, academic growth and achievement, financial stability, student demographic diversity, stakeholder satisfaction, and teacher turnover. Monthly reviews allow the board to proactively address concerns as they arise. If concerns arise, administrators may provide context or additional information to address those concerns. If the concern warrants additional action, the board may either send the concern to one of the committees or ask the administration to make a recommendation at the next meeting concerning a resolution. In addition, the CEO is evaluated annually on the performance of the school, which is informed by indicators outlined in the data dashboard.

Charter specific requirements are managed by the CEO, CAO, and CFO, all of whom have over 10 years of charter sector experience. Operations are managed collaboratively by the COO (with 15 years charter sector experience) and the school site operations manager. Finances are managed by the CFO (who also has 15 years of charter school experience). Legal matters are

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handled by the CEO in collaboration with the school attorney. *See leadership profile chart in board and leadership bio attachment.*

The greatest operational challenges for GPM's growth are ensuring that facilities' logistics are thoroughly planned, schedules are conducive to rigorous instruction, technology is well planned to meet the instructional needs of students, and sufficient academic leadership is provided to support teachers and students. A secondary instructional model team has been formed to address questions, challenges, and iterate on the model to ensure its success.

The team is responsible for solutions to the operational challenges and has created master schedules to ensure that the facilities and schedules work together to provide a conducive learning environment. The team has outlined a plan to provide the technology that will meet the students' instructional needs—including video teleconference equipment and computers. Finally, the roles and responsibilities of administrative support have been realigned and clearly defined to ensure robust support for new teachers and students during this growth phase.

The biggest risk factors are centered on effective, uniform instructional excellence in the context of a rapidly expanding school. Because these teachers and many of the students will be new to GPM, proactive planning and intentionality are key. A secondary instructional model handbook has been developed to share the vision of instructional excellence and codify expectations for students and staff. Further, principals have been trained in the implementation of the instructional model and provided an outlet for questions or challenges they may face.

The school's leadership team has a strong track record of success operating high-performing Idaho charter schools. GPM is founded on principles learned from these experiences. The school's leadership team developed a portfolio of communication tools to share the vision

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of a GPM college preparatory education to stakeholders including parents, students, and staff.

This portfolio also outlines the ideological framework and strategies that the school uses to provide an exemplary college preparatory education.