

STEPSTONE ACADEMY
CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

SINGLE AUDIT

FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDED
JUNE 30, 2025





65 East State Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215
ContactUs@ohioauditor.gov
800-282-0370

Board of Directors
Stepstone Academy
2121 East 32nd St.
Cleveland, OH 4115

We have reviewed the *Independent Auditor's Report* of Stepstone Academy, Cuyahoga County, prepared by Rea & Associates, Inc., for the audit period July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025. Based upon this review, we have accepted these reports in lieu of the audit required by Section 117.11, Revised Code. The Auditor of State did not audit the accompanying financial statements and, accordingly, we are unable to express, and do not express an opinion on them.

Our review was made in reference to the applicable sections of legislative criteria, as reflected by the Ohio Constitution, and the Revised Code, policies, procedures and guidelines of the Auditor of State, regulations and grant requirements. Stepstone Academy is responsible for compliance with these laws and regulations.

KEITH FABER
Ohio Auditor of State

Tiffany L. Ridenbaugh, CPA, CFE, CGFM
Chief Deputy Auditor

April 10, 2026

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**STEPSTONE ACADEMY
CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO**

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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Board of Directors
Stepstone Academy
2121 East 32nd Street
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

Report on the Audit of the Financial Statements

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Stepstone Academy, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, (the “School”), as of and for the year ended June 30, 2025, and the related notes to the financial statements, which collectively comprise the School’s basic financial statements as listed in the table of contents.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Stepstone Academy, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, as of June 30, 2025, and the changes in its financial position and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAS) and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States (*Government Auditing Standards*). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are required to be independent of the School and to meet our other ethical responsibilities, in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audit. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, and for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is required to evaluate whether there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about the School’s ability to continue as a going concern for twelve months beyond the financial statement date, including any currently known information that may raise substantial doubt shortly thereafter.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with GAAS and *Government Auditing Standards* will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Misstatements are considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, they would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user based on the financial statements.

In performing an audit in accordance with GAAS and *Government Auditing Standards*, we

- exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements.
- obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the School's internal control. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.
- evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluate the overall presentation of the financial statements.
- conclude whether, in our judgment, there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about the School's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit, significant audit findings, and certain internal control—related matters that we identified during the audit.

Required Supplementary Information

Accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America require that the Management's Discussion and Analysis and pension and other post-employment benefit schedules, as listed in the table of contents, be presented to supplement the basic financial statements. Such information is the responsibility of management and, although not a part of the basic financial statements, is required by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board who considers it to be an essential part of financial reporting for placing the basic financial statements in an appropriate operational, economic, or historical context. We have applied certain limited procedures to the required supplementary information in accordance with GAAS, which consisted of inquiries of management about the methods of preparing the information and comparing the information for consistency with management's responses to our inquiries, the basic financial statements, and other knowledge we obtained during our audit of the basic financial statements.

We do not express an opinion or provide any assurance on the information because the limited procedures do not provide us with sufficient evidence to express an opinion or provide any assurance.

Supplementary Information

Our audit was conducted for the purpose of forming an opinion on the financial statements that collectively comprise the School's basic financial statements. The Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards, as required by *Title 2 U.S. Code of Federal Regulations Part 200*, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards is presented for purposes of additional analysis and is not a required part of the basic financial statements. Such information is the responsibility of management and was derived from and relates directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the basic financial statements. The information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audit of the basic financial statements and certain additional procedures, including comparing and reconciling such information directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the basic financial statements or to the basic financial statements themselves, and other additional procedures in accordance with GAAS. In our opinion, the Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards is fairly stated, in all material respects, in relation to the basic financial statements as a whole.

Other Reporting Required by Government Auditing Standards

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we have also issued our report dated December 30, 2025 on our consideration of the School's internal control over financial reporting and on our tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements and other matters. The purpose of that report is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control over financial reporting and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of the School's internal control over financial reporting or on compliance. That report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* in considering the School's internal control over financial reporting and compliance.

Rea & Associates, Inc.

Rea & Associates, Inc.
Medina, Ohio
December 30, 2025

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

MANAGEMENT'S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025 (UNAUDITED)

The discussion and analysis of the Stepstone Academy (the School) financial performance provides an overall review of the School's financial activities for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2025. The intent of this discussion and analysis is to look at the School's financial performance as a whole; readers should also review the basic financial statements and notes to the basic financial statements to enhance their understanding of the School's financial performance.

The Management's Discussion and Analysis (the MD&A) is an element of the reporting model adopted by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) in their Statement No. 34 Basic Financial Statements – and Management's Discussion and Analysis – for State and Local Governments. Certain comparative information between the current fiscal year and the prior fiscal year is required to be presented in the MD&A

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Key Financial Highlights for the School for the 2024-25 school year are as follows:

- Total assets and deferred outflows of resources increased by \$689,758.
- Total liabilities and deferred inflows of resources decreased by \$78,813.
- Total net position deficit decreased by \$768,571.
- Total operating and non-operating revenues were \$3,744,139. Total operating and non-operating expenses were \$2,975,568.

USING THIS ANNUAL REPORT

This report consists of three parts: the required supplementary information, the basic financial statements, and notes to those statements. The basic financial statements include a Statement of Net Position, a Statement of Revenues, Expenses and Change in Net Position, and a Statement of Cash Flows.

The Statement of Net Position and Statement of Revenues, Expenses, and Change in Net Position reflect how the School did financially during fiscal year 2025. These statements include all assets and deferred outflows of resources and liabilities and deferred inflows of resources using the accrual basis of accounting similar to the accounting used by most private-sector companies. This basis of accounting includes all of the current year revenues and expenses regardless of when cash is received or paid.

These statements report the School's net position and changes in Net Position. This change in net position is important because it tells the reader whether the financial position of the School has improved or diminished. The causes of this change may be the result of many factors, some financial, some not. Non-financial factors include the School's student enrollment, per-pupil funding as determined by the State of Ohio, change in technology, required educational programs and other factors. The School uses enterprise presentation for all of its activities.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

MANAGEMENT'S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025 (UNAUDITED)

Statement of Net Position - The Statement of Net Position answers the question of how the School did financially during 2025. This statement includes all assets, deferred outflows of resources, liabilities, and deferred inflows of resources, both financial and capital, and short-term and long-term using the accrual basis of accounting and economic resource focus, which is similar to the accounting used by most private-sector companies. This basis of accounting takes into account all revenues and expenses during the year, regardless of when the cash is received or paid.

Table 1 provides a summary of the School's Net Position for fiscal years 2025 and 2024.

Table 1 Statement of Net Position			
		2025	2024
Assets			
Current Assets		\$ 1,055,579	\$ 1,017,426
Non Current Assets		1,791,374	1,083,243
Total Assets		2,846,953	2,100,669
Deferred Outflows of Resources		546,952	603,478
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities		1,060,439	1,073,794
Non-Current Liabilities		2,508,159	2,615,017
Total Liabilities		3,568,598	3,688,811
Deferred Inflows of Resources		591,613	550,213
Net Position			
Net Investment in Capital Assets		364,630	225,391
Restricted for OPEB		121,338	117,666
Unrestricted		(1,252,274)	(1,877,934)
Total Net Position		\$ (766,306)	\$ (1,534,877)

Current assets represent cash and cash equivalents, grant receivables, other receivables, and other assets. Current liabilities represent accounts payable, accrued expenses, intergovernmental payables, advances payable to the management company, current portion of long-term obligations at fiscal year-end.

Total assets increased \$746,284 from the prior fiscal year due to increases in cash from operations, capital assets increases due to lease modifications approved during the year offset by decreases in grants receivable. Total liabilities decreased \$120,213 as a result of decreases in net pension liability, notes payable, and loan payables offset by increases in advances payable and lease payables.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

MANAGEMENT'S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025 (UNAUDITED)

The School has adopted GASB Statement 68, "Accounting and Financial Reporting for Pensions—an Amendment of GASB Statement 27," and GASB Statement 75, "Accounting and Financial Reporting for Postemployment Benefits Other Than Pensions," which significantly revises accounting for costs and liabilities related to other postemployment benefits (OPEB). For reasons discussed below, many end users of this financial statement will gain a clearer understanding of the School's actual financial condition by adding deferred inflows related to pension and OPEB, the net pension liability and the net OPEB asset/liability to the reported net position and subtracting deferred outflows related to pension and OPEB and net OPEB asset.

Governmental Accounting Standards Board standards are national and apply to all government financial reports prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. Prior accounting for pensions (GASB 27) and postemployment benefits (GASB 45) focused on a funding approach. This approach limited pension and OPEB costs to contributions annually required by law, which may or may not be sufficient to fully fund each plan's *net pension liability* or *net OPEB asset/liability*. GASB 68 and GASB 75 take an earnings approach to pension and OPEB accounting; however, the nature of Ohio's statewide pension/OPEB plans and state law governing those systems requires additional explanation in order to properly understand the information presented in these statements.

GASB 68 and GASB 75 require the net pension liability and the net OPEB asset/liability to equal the School's proportionate share of each plan's collective:

1. Present value of estimated future pension/OPEB benefits attributable to active and inactive employees' past service
2. Minus plan assets available to pay these benefits

GASB notes that pension and OPEB obligations, whether funded or unfunded, are part of the "employment exchange" – that is, the employee is trading his or her labor in exchange for wages, benefits, and the promise of a future pension and other postemployment benefits. GASB noted that the unfunded portion of this promise is a present obligation of the government, part of a bargained-for benefit to the employee, and should accordingly be reported by the government as a liability since they received the benefit of the exchange. However, the School is not responsible for certain key factors affecting the balance of these liabilities. In Ohio, the employee shares the obligation of funding pension benefits with the employer. Both employer and employee contribution rates are capped by State statute. A change in these caps requires action of both Houses of the General Assembly and approval of the Governor. Benefit provisions are also determined by State statute. The Ohio revised Code permits, but does not require the retirement systems to provide healthcare to eligible benefit recipients. The retirement systems may allocate a portion of the employer contributions to provide for these OPEB benefits.

The employee enters the employment exchange with the knowledge that the employer's promise is limited not by contract but by law. The employer enters the exchange also knowing that there is a specific, legal limit to its contribution to the retirement system. In Ohio, there is no legal means to enforce the unfunded liability of the pension/OPEB plan *as against the public employer*. State law operates to mitigate/lessen the moral obligation of the public employer to the employee, because all parties enter the employment exchange with notice as to the law. The retirement system is responsible for the administration of the pension and OPEB plans.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

MANAGEMENT'S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025 (UNAUDITED)

Most long-term liabilities have set repayment schedules or, in the case of compensated absences (i.e. sick and vacation leave), are satisfied through paid time-off or termination payments. There is no repayment schedule for the net pension liability or the net OPEB asset/liability. As explained above, changes in benefits, contribution rates, and return on investments affect the balance of these liabilities, but are outside the control of the local government. In the event that contributions, investment returns, and other changes are insufficient to keep up with required payments, State statute does not assign/identify the responsible party for the unfunded portion. Due to the unique nature of how the net pension liability and the net OPEB asset/liability are satisfied, these liabilities are separately identified within the long-term liability section of the statement of net position.

In accordance with GASB 68 and GASB 75, the School's statements prepared on an accrual basis of accounting include an annual pension expense and an annual OPEB expense for their proportionate share of each plan's *change* in net pension liability and net OPEB liability, respectively, not accounted for as deferred inflows/outflows.

There was a significant change in net Pension/OPEB liability/asset for the School. These fluctuations are due to changes in the actuarial liabilities/assets and related accruals that are passed through to the School's basic Financial Statements. All components of Pension and OPEB accruals contribute to the fluctuations in deferred outflows/inflows and NPL/NOL/NOA and are described in more detail in their respective notes.

Over time, net position can serve as a useful indicator of a governments financial position. At June 30, 2025, the School's net position deficit totaled \$766,306.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

MANAGEMENT'S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025 (UNAUDITED)

Statement of Revenues, Expenses and Change in Net Position - Table 2 shows the change in net position for fiscal years 2025 and 2024, as well as a listing of revenues and expenses. This change in net position is important because it tells the reader that, for the School as a whole, the financial position of the School has improved or diminished. The cause of this may be the result of many factors, some financial, some not. Non-financial factors include the current laws in Ohio restricting revenue growth, facility conditions, required educational programs and other factors.

Table 2
Change in Net Position

	2025	2024
Operating Revenues		
State Aid	\$ 1,847,271	\$ 1,681,376
Intergovernmental Revenue	12,064	12,593
Total Operating Revenues	1,859,335	1,693,969
Operating Expenses		
Purchased Services	2,445,919	2,538,270
Pension/OPEB Expense	110,520	(120,806)
Depreciation	392,547	336,336
Total Operating Expenses	2,948,986	2,753,800
Operating Income (Loss)	(1,089,651)	(1,059,831)
Non-Operating Revenues/ (Expenses)		
Federal and State Restricted Grants	1,337,403	1,672,299
Other Intergovernmental Revenue	422,135	349,544
Fundraising Revenue	125,266	108,239
Note Interest Expense	(15,455)	(29,194)
Lease Interest Expense	(11,127)	(2,923)
Net Non-Operating Revenues/ (Expenses)	1,858,222	2,097,965
Change in Net Position	\$ 768,571	\$ 1,038,134

State Aid increased during the year as there was a slight increase in enrollment from 185 FTEs in 2024 to 192 FTEs in 2025. Pension/OPEB expense increased due to changes in Pension/OPEB accruals. Depreciation increased due the increase in capital assets from the lease modification entered into during the year. Federal and state grants decreased primarily due to decreases in Federal funding in response to COVID 19. Fundraising revenue increased due increased contributions received by the school.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

MANAGEMENT'S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025 (UNAUDITED)

BUDGET

Unlike other public schools located in the State of Ohio, community schools are not required to follow budgetary provisions set forth in Ohio Rev. Code Chapter 5705 (with the exception section 5705.391 – Five Year Forecasts), unless specifically provided in the community school's contract with its Sponsor.

The contract between the School and its Sponsor does prescribe a budgetary process. The School must prepare and submit a detail budget for every fiscal year to the Board of Directors and its Sponsor. The five-year forecast is also submitted to the Ohio Department of Education, annually.

CAPITAL ASSETS

At fiscal year end, the School's net capital asset balance was \$1,670,036 net of accumulated depreciation of \$2,499,084. For more information on capital assets, see Note 5 of the Basic Financial Statements.

DEBT

At fiscal year end, the School's building lease obligations balance was \$803,457, with \$169,304 due within one year. In addition the School had \$501,949 outstanding in leasehold improvement loans, with \$147,806 due within one year. Additionally, the School has an outstanding Note Payable of \$425,268 all of which is due within one year. For more information on lease obligations and leasehold improvement loans, see Note 6 and Note 7 of the Basic Financial Statements.

CURRENT FINANCIAL ISSUES

The School is a community School and is funded through the State of Ohio Foundation Program. The School relies on this, as well as, other State and Federal funds as its primary source of revenue. In 2022, the State replaced the existing funding formula with a new formula that was implemented in January 2022 as a result of changes in Ohio law under the passage of HB110. Under the new formula, community schools are funded directly with no deductions or transfers from the student's district of residence. The funding calculation for community schools uses several concepts and formulas, some of which also apply to traditional school districts. These primarily include Base Cost, Special Education, Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid, English Learners and Career Technical Education. Combined, these elements make up the Core Foundation Funding and the change in calculated amounts compared to the funding received in Fiscal Year 2020 are being phased-in at 16.67% per year until fully implemented. In June 2025, the State Legislature passed the 26-27 biennial budget which included the continued phase-in of the new formula, reaching full implementation in Fiscal Year 2027.

In addition, facility funding remained the same as the last budget cycle and the student equity grant was reduced from \$650 per student to \$500 per student for Fiscal Year 2026. Most all schools had liquidated their remaining ESSER funds during (or prior to) Fiscal Year 2025. Moving forward, all schools will need to continue to be vigilant about growing enrollment and monitoring expenses in order to build sustainable budgets for the future.

Overall, the School will continue to provide learning opportunities and apply resources to best meet the needs of students.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

**MANAGEMENT'S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025 (UNAUDITED)**

CONTACTING THE SCHOOL'S FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

This financial report is designed to provide our citizen's, taxpayers, investors and creditors with a general overview of the School's finances and to demonstrate accountability for the money it receives. If you have questions about this report or need additional information contact C. David Massa, CPA, of Massa Financial Solutions, LLC, 2121 East 32nd Street, Cleveland, Ohio 44115 or e-mail at dave@massasolutionsllc.com

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO
Statement of Net Position
June 30, 2025

Assets:

Current Assets:

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 798,782
Grants Receivable	80,864
Other Receivable	162,299
Other Assets	13,634
Total Current Assets	1,055,579

Noncurrent Assets:

Net OPEB Asset	121,338
Capital Assets, net of Accumulated Depreciation	1,670,036
Total Non-Current Assets	1,791,374

Total Assets	2,846,953
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Deferred Outflows of Resources:

Pension (STRS & SERS) Outflows	466,133
OPEB (STRS & SERS) Outflows	80,819
Total Deferred Outflows of Resources	546,952

Liabilities:

Current Liabilities:

Accounts Payable	4,491
Accrued Expenses	67,751
Intergovernmental Payable	937
Advance Payable	244,882
Current Portion of Note Payable	425,268
Current Portion of Lease Improvement Loan	147,806
Current Portion of Lease Obligations	169,304
Total Current Liabilities	1,060,439

Noncurrent Liabilities:

Non-Current Portion of Lease Improvement Loan	354,143
Non-Current Portion of Lease Obligations	634,153
Net Pension Liability	1,472,339
Net OPEB Liability	47,524
Total Noncurrent Liabilities	2,508,159

Total Liabilities	3,568,598
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Deferred Inflows of Resources:

Deferred Fundraising Revenue	122,838
Pension (STRS & SERS)	267,799
OPEB (STRS & SERS)	200,976
Total Deferred Inflows of Resources	591,613

Net Position:

Net Investment in Capital Assets	364,630
Restricted Net Position - OPEB	121,338
Unrestricted Net Position	(1,252,274)
Total Net Position	\$ (766,306)

See Accompanying Notes to the Basic Financial Statements

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO
Statement of Revenues, Expenses and Changes in Net Position
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2025

Operating Revenues:	
State Aid	\$ 1,847,271
Other Revenue	<u>12,064</u>
Total Operating Revenues	<u><u>1,859,335</u></u>
Operating Expenses:	
Purchased Services	2,445,919
Pension/OPEB Expense	110,520
Depreciation	<u>392,547</u>
Total Operating Expenses	<u><u>2,948,986</u></u>
Operating Income (Loss)	(1,089,651)
Non-Operating Revenues and (Expenses):	
Federal and State Restricted Grants	1,337,403
Other Intergovernmental Revenue	422,135
Fundraising Revenue	125,266
Interest Expense	(15,455)
Lease Interest Expense	<u>(11,127)</u>
Net Non-Operating Revenues and (Expenses)	<u><u>1,858,222</u></u>
Change in Net Position	768,571
Net Position - Beginning of Year	<u>(1,534,877)</u>
Net Position - End of Year	<u><u>\$ (766,306)</u></u>

See Accompanying Notes to the Basic Financial Statements

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO
Statement of Cash Flows
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2025

CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES

Cash Received from State of Ohio	\$ 1,705,999
Other Receipts	12,064
Cash Payments to Suppliers for Goods and Services	<u>(2,682,517)</u>
Net Cash Provided By (Used For) Operating Activities	<u>(964,454)</u>

CASH FLOWS FROM NONCAPITAL FINANCING ACTIVITIES

Cash Received from Federal Grant	1,542,922
Cash Received from Fundraising	125,266
Cash Received from Cleveland Municipal School District	422,135
Interest on Note Payable	(15,455)
Principal Payments on Note Payable	<u>(460,833)</u>
Net Cash Provided By Noncapital Financing Activities	<u>1,614,035</u>

CASH FLOWS FROM CAPITAL & RELATED FINANCING ACTIVITIES

Purchase of Assets	(208,566)
Leasehold Improvement Loan Principal Payments	(147,804)
Lease Interest Payments	(11,127)
Lease Principal Payments	<u>(175,414)</u>
Net Cash Provided By (Used For) Capital and Related Financing Activities	<u>(542,911)</u>

Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents	106,670
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Cash and Cash Equivalents - Beginning of the Year	692,112
Cash and Cash Equivalents - Ending of the Year	<u>\$ 798,782</u>

Non Cash Transaction: The School remeasured the building lease and has increased an intangible right to use asset building and corresponding lease payable in the amount of \$888,440 during fiscal year 2025.

See Accompanying Notes to the Basic Financial Statements

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO
Statement of Cash Flows
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2025
(Continued)

Reconciliation of Operating Income (Loss) to Net Cash Provided By (Used For) Operating Activities	
Operating Income (Loss)	\$ (1,089,651)
Adjustments to Reconcile Operating Income (Loss) to Net Cash Provided By (Used For) Operating Activities:	
Depreciation	392,547
Changes in Assets, Liabilities, and Deferred Inflows and Outflows:	
(Increase)/ Decrease in Intergovernmental Receivable	11,295
(Increase)/ Decrease in Other Assets	(10,699)
(Increase)/ Decrease in Other Receivables	(137,599)
(Increase)/ Decrease in Net OPEB Asset	(3,672)
(Increase)/ Decrease in Deferred Outflows Pension/OPEB	56,526
Increase/(Decrease) in Accounts Payable	1,661
Increase/(Decrease) in Accrued Expenses	(94,475)
Increase/(Decrease) in Intergovernmental Payable	937
Increase/(Decrease) in Advances Payable	35,215
Increase/(Decrease) in Deferred Revenue	2,518
Increase/ (Decrease) in Net Pension/OPEB Liability	(167,937)
Increase/ (Decrease) in Deferred Inflows Pension/OPEB	38,882
Net Cash Provided By (Used For) Operating Activities	<u>\$ (964,454)</u>

See Accompanying Notes to the Basic Financial Statements

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

NOTE 1 - DESCRIPTION OF THE ENTITY

Stepstone Academy, (the School) is a nonprofit corporation established pursuant to Ohio Revised Code Chapters 3314 and 1702. The School's mission is to provide an orderly and supportive environment whereby students experience preparations for college, career and life. The School operates on a foundation, which fosters character building for all students, parents and staff members. The School, which is part of the State's education program, is independent of any school district and is nonsectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and all other operations. The School may acquire facilities as needed and contract for any services necessary for the operation of the School.

The School was approved for operation under a contract with Ohio Council of Community Schools, ("OCCS") (the Sponsor) for a five-year period commencing on July 1, 2012. The Sponsor renewed the contract for an additional five-year period beginning July 1, 2017. The Sponsor is responsible for evaluating the performance of the School and has the authority to deny renewal of the contract at its expiration or terminate the contract prior to its expiration. Effective July 1, 2022 the School agreed to a five year agreement with St. Aloysius Orphanage to sponsor the school.

The School operates under the direction of a Board of Directors (the Board). The Board is responsible for carrying out the provisions of the contract which include, but are not limited to, state mandated provisions regarding student populations, curriculum, academic goals, performance standards, admissions standards, and qualifications of teachers. The Board controls the School's instructional and administrative staff. The School contracts with Ohio Guidestone, a local not for profit, as a management company to provide daily operations of the School (See Note 12).

NOTE 2 - SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The basic financial statements of the School have been prepared in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) as applied to governmental nonprofit organizations. The Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) is the accepted standard-setting body for establishing governmental accounting and financial reporting principles. The more significant of the School's accounting policies are described below.

Basis of Presentation - The School's basic financial statements consist of a Statement of Net Position, a Statement of Revenues, Expenses and Change in Net Position, and a Statement of Cash Flows. Enterprise fund reporting focuses on the determination of the changes net position, financial position and cash flows.

The Government Accounting Standards Board identifies the presentation of all financial activity to be reported within one enterprise fund for year-ending reporting purposes. Enterprise accounting is used to account for operations that are financed and operated in a manner similar to private business enterprise where the intent is that the cost (expense) of providing goods and services to the general public on a continuing basis be financed or recovered primarily through user charges.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

Measurement Focus and Basis of Accounting - The accounting and financial reporting treatment is determined by measurement focus. Enterprise accounting uses a flow of economic resources method. Under this measurement focus, all assets and deferred outflows of resources and all liabilities and deferred inflows of resources are included on the balance sheet. The operating statement presents increases (e.g., revenues) and decreases (e.g., expenses) in net position.

Basis of accounting refers to when revenues and expenses are recognized in the accounts and reported in the financial statements. The accrual basis of accounting is used for reporting purposes. Revenues are recognized when they are earned, and expenses are recognized when they are incurred.

Budgetary Process – Community Schools are statutorily required to adopt a budget by ORC 3314.032(c). However, unlike other public schools located in the state of Ohio, community schools are not required to follow budgetary provisions set forth in the Ohio Revised Code Chapter 5705 (with exceptions section 570.391- Five Year Forecasts), unless specifically provided for in the School's sponsorship agreement. The contract between the School and Sponsor does not require the School to follow the provisions of ORC 5705; therefore, no budgetary information is presented in the basic financial statements.

Cash and Cash Equivalents - All cash received by the School is maintained in a demand deposit account. The School did not have any investments during the period ended June 30, 2025.

Estimates - The preparation of financial statements in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported in the financial statements and accompanying notes. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

Capital Assets and Depreciation - Capital assets are capitalized at cost. Donated capital assets are recorded at their acquisition values as of the date received. The costs of additions are capitalized and expenditures for repairs and maintenance are expensed when incurred. When property is sold or retired, the related costs and accumulated depreciation are removed from the financial records and any gain or loss is included in additions to or deductions from net position. Capital assets were \$1,670,036 as of June 30, 2025, net of accumulated depreciation. Depreciation of capital assets, except for land and construction in progress, is calculated utilizing the straight-line method over the estimated useful lives of the assets which are as follows:

<u>Asset Class</u>	<u>Useful Life</u>
Computers & Technology Assets	3 years
Leasehold Improvements	5 years
Furniture, Fixtures, & Equipment	5 years
Textbooks	3 years
Building	40 years or lessor of lease term

The School's policy for asset capitalization threshold is \$10,000. Assets or certain asset groups not meeting the capitalization threshold are not capitalized and are not included in the assets represented in the accompany statement of net position.

The School is reporting an intangible right to use assets related to leased buildings, structures, and improvements. These intangible assets are being amortized in a systematic and rational manner over the shorter of the lease term or the useful life of the underlying asset.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

Intergovernmental Revenues - The School currently participates in the State Foundation Program. Revenues received from this program are recognized as operating revenues in the accounting period in which all eligibility requirements have been met.

Grants and entitlements are recognized as non-operating revenues in the accounting period in which eligibility requirements have been met.

Eligibility requirements include timing requirements, which specify the year when the resources are required to be used or the fiscal year when use is first permitted, matching requirements, in which the School must provide local resources to be used for a specified purpose, and expenditure requirements, in which the resources are provided to the School on a reimbursement basis.

The School also participates in various federal programs passed through the Ohio Department of Education.

Also, during the fiscal year, the School received prorated shares of property tax distributions from the Cleveland Municipal School District (CMSD) as part of a partnership agreement executed between the School and CMSD.

Under the above programs the School recorded \$1,847,271 this fiscal year from the State Foundation Program, \$1,337,403 from Federal and State Grants, and \$422,135 from CMSD property taxes distributions.

Accrued Liabilities - Obligations incurred but unpaid at June 30 are reported as accrued liabilities in the accompanying financial statements.

Exchange and Non-Exchange Transactions - Revenue resulting from exchange transactions, in which each party gives and receives essentially equal value, is recorded on the accrual basis when the exchange takes place. Non-exchange transactions, in which the School receives value without directly giving equal value in return, include grants, entitlements and donations. Revenue from grants, entitlements and donations is recognized in the fiscal year in which all eligibility requirements have been satisfied. Eligibility requirements include timing requirements, which specify the year when the resources are required to be used or the fiscal year when use is first permitted, matching requirements, in which the School must provide local resources to be used for a specified purpose, and expenditures requirements, in which the resources are provided to the School on a reimbursement basis.

Net Position - Net position represents the difference between assets, deferred outflows of resources, liabilities, and deferred inflows of resources. Net position is reported as restricted when there are limitations imposed on their use through external restriction imposed by creditors, grantors, or laws and regulations of other governments. The School applies restricted resources when an expense is incurred for purposes for which both restricted and unrestricted net position is available. Net position invested in capital assets consist of capital assets, net of accumulated depreciation, reduced by the outstanding balances of any borrowings used for the acquisition, construction, or improvement of those assets.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

Operating Revenues and Expenses - Operating revenues are those revenues that are generated directly from the primary activities of the School. For the School, these revenues are primarily the State Foundation program. Operating expenses are necessary costs incurred to provide the good or service that is the primary activity of the School. All revenues and expenses not meeting this definition are reported as non-operating.

Pensions and Other Postemployment Benefits (OPEB) - For purposes of measuring the net pension/OPEB liability, net OPEB asset, deferred outflows of resources and deferred inflows of resources related to pensions/OPEB, and pension/OPEB expense, information about the fiduciary net position of the pension/OPEB plans and additions to/deductions from their fiduciary net position have been determined on the same basis as they are reported by the pension/OPEB plan. For this purpose, benefit payments (including refunds of employee contributions) are recognized when due and payable in accordance with the benefit terms. The pension/OPEB plans report investments at fair value.

Deferred Outflows/Inflows of Resources - In addition to assets, the statements of financial position will sometimes report a separate section for deferred outflows of resources. Deferred outflows of resources represent a consumption of net position that applies to a future period and will not be recognized as an outflow of resources (expense/expenditure) until then. For the School, deferred outflows of resources are reported on the statement of net position for pension and OPEB. The deferred outflows of resources related to pension and OPEB are explained in Notes 9 and 10.

In addition to liabilities, the statements of financial position report a separate section for deferred inflows of resources. Deferred inflows of resources represent an acquisition of net position that applies to a future period and will not be recognized until that time. For the School, deferred inflows of resources include pension and OPEB. These amounts are deferred and recognized as an inflow of resources in the period the amounts become available. Deferred inflows of resources related to pension and OPEB plans are reported on the statement of net position. (See Note 9 and 10)

Deferred Fundraising Revenue – Deferred revenue results from various fundraising activities. It represents amounts received from various sponsors, donors, vendors received in advance. Deferred revenue is recognized as revenue in the period that the fundraising activity actually occurs.

Implementation of New Accounting Principles – For the fiscal year ended June 30, 2025, the School has implemented GASB Statement No. 101, *Compensated Absences* and GASB Statement No. 102, *Certain Risk Disclosures*.

GASB Statement No. 101 updates the recognition and measurement guidance for compensated absences to promote consistency and better meet the information needs of financial statement users. The unified recognition and measurement model in this Statement will result in a liability for compensated absences that more appropriately reflects when a government incurs an obligation. The implementation of GASB Statement No. 101 did not have an effect on the financial statements of the School.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

GASB Statement No. 102 provides users of governmental financial statements with essential information about risks related to a government's vulnerabilities due to certain concentrations or constraints as concentrations and constraints may limit a government's ability to acquire resources or control spending. The implementation of GASB Statement No. 102 did not have an effect on the financial statements of the School.

NOTE 3 - CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

The following information classifies deposits by category of risk as defined in GASB Statement No.3 "Deposits with Financial Institutions, Investments (including Repurchase Agreements) and Reverse Repurchase Agreements," as amended by GASB Statement No.40, "Deposit, and Investment Risk Disclosures".

The School maintains its cash balances at one financial institution, Key Bank, located in Ohio. The balances are insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) up to \$250,000, per qualifying account. At June 30, 2025, the book amount of the School's deposits was \$798,782 and the bank balance was \$798,782 of which \$548,782 was not insured at June 30, 2025 and exposed to custodial credit risk, while \$250,000 was covered by FDIC.

NOTE 4 - RECEIVABLES

Grant Receivable - The School has grant receivables of \$80,864 at June 30, 2025. These receivables represented monies earned, but not received as of June 30, 2025.

Other Receivable - The School has other receivables of \$162,299 at June 30, 2025. These receivables represented monies earned, but not received as of June 30, 2025.

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STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO**NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025****NOTE 5 - CAPITAL ASSETS**

For the period ending June 30, 2025, the School's capital assets consisted of the following:

	Balance 06/30/24	Additions	Deletions	Balance 06/30/25
Non Depreciable Capital Assets:				
Construction in Progress	\$ 39,750	\$ 49,550	\$ (89,300)	\$ -
Capital Assets:				
Leasehold Improvements	1,349,752	89,300	-	1,439,052
Computers & Technology Assets	482,145	108,498	-	590,643
Furniture, Fixtures, & Equipment	575,128	50,518	-	625,646
Intangible Right to Use Asset - Building	613,240	888,440	-	1,501,680
Textbooks	12,099	-	-	12,099
Total Capital Assets	3,032,364	1,136,756	-	4,169,120
Less Accumulated Depreciation:				
Leasehold Improvements	(553,000)	(156,611)	-	(709,611)
Computers & Technology Assets	(471,998)	(35,673)	-	(507,671)
Furniture, Fixtures, & Equipment	(546,631)	(20,988)	-	(567,619)
Intangible Right to Use Asset - Building	(522,809)	(179,275)	-	(702,084)
Textbooks	(12,099)	-	-	(12,099)
Total Accumulated Depreciation	(2,106,537)	(392,547)	-	(2,499,084)
Net Depreciable Capital Assets	925,827	(392,547)	-	1,670,036
Total Capital Assets, Net	\$ 965,577	\$ (342,997)	\$ (89,300)	\$ 1,670,036

NOTE 6 – LEASE AND LEASEHOLD IMPROVEMENT OBLIGATIONS

On July 1, 2020, the School entered into a sublease with OhioGuidestone for 36,400 square feet of space located at 3328 Carnegie Avenue Cleveland, Ohio 44115. The term of the lease is for a period of four years with the option to renew for three additional terms of five years each, pending the approval of the primelease between OhioGuidestone and the landlord. Base rent will be \$15,166 with a common area charge of \$3,000. In December 2024 the School agreed an addendum through June 2030 in which the monthly lease payment was increased to \$15,924 per month. The incremental borrowing rate on the lease is 8%. At year end, accumulated depreciation on the leased buildings totaled \$702,084, with a net book value of \$799,596.

The School has outstanding agreements to a lease building. Due to the implementation of GASB Statement 87, these lease has met the criteria of leases thus requiring them to be recorded by the School. The future lease payments were discounted based on the interest rate implicit in the lease or using the School's incremental borrowing rate. This discount is being amortized over the life of the lease.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

In addition to the lease, the School also entered into a leasehold loan for improvements to the gym, and additional classroom renovations on the premises with OhioGuidestone effective July 1, 2020. There is no interest due on the loan. A monthly payment of \$12,318 is due with the monthly rent for these improvements through June 30, 2027, and then the payment will be reduced to \$5,439 through December 31, 2029.

The table below discloses the current year activity on the School's lease payable and leasehold improvement loan.

	Balance 6/30/24	Additions	Reductions	Balance 6/30/2025	Due Within One Year
Building Lease Payable	\$ 90,431	\$ 888,440	\$ (175,414)	\$ 803,457	\$ 169,304
Leasehold Improvement Loan	649,753	-	(147,804)	501,948	147,806
Total Long-Term Obligations	<u>\$ 740,184</u>	<u>\$ 888,440</u>	<u>\$ (323,218)</u>	<u>\$ 1,305,405</u>	<u>\$ 317,110</u>

Future minimum payments for principal and interest on the building lease are as follows:

Year	Principal	Interest	Total
2026	\$ 169,304	\$ 21,788	\$ 191,092
2027	174,453	16,639	191,092
2028	179,759	11,333	191,092
2029	185,226	5,865	191,091
2030	94,715	831	95,546
Total	<u>\$ 803,457</u>	<u>\$ 56,456</u>	<u>\$ 859,913</u>

Future minimum payments for principal on the leasehold improvement loan are as follows:

Year	Principal
2026	\$ 147,806
2027	147,806
2028	82,535
2029	82,535
2030	41,267
Total	<u>\$ 501,949</u>

NOTE 7 - NOTE PAYABLE

On July 1 2021, the School signed a 10 year promissory note agreement with Ohio Guidestone in the amount of \$2,100,000 for outstanding advances payable owed to Ohio Guidestone. Terms of the note provide for semi-annual installment payments of \$60,000 in January and July commencing on January 1, 2022, at an interest rate of 3.0% until said principal balance is paid in full. Additionally, any excess cash above \$50,000 at June 30 each year is to be remitted to Guidestone and applied against the remaining note balance. A final installment for any remaining balance is due on July 1, 2031. The table below discloses the current year activity on the School's note payable.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO**NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025**

	Balance 6/30/2024	Additions	Reductions	Balance 6/30/2025	Due with in One Year
Direct Borrowing:					
Ohio Guidestone	\$ 886,101	\$ -	\$ (460,833)	\$ 425,268	\$ 425,268
	<u>\$ 886,101</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ (460,833)</u>	<u>\$ 425,268</u>	<u>\$ 425,268</u>

Future minimum payments for principal and interest on the note are as follows:

Year	Principal	Interest	Total
2026	\$ 425,268	21,709	\$ 446,977
Total	<u>\$ 425,268</u>	<u>\$ 21,709</u>	<u>\$ 446,977</u>

NOTE 8 – RISK MANAGEMENT

Property & Liability - The School is exposed to various risks of loss related to torts; theft of, damage to, and destruction of assets; errors and omissions; injuries to employees; and natural disasters. During the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, the School contracted with The Cincinnati Insurance Company for nonprofits and maintained general liability insurance with a \$1,000,000 single occurrence limit and \$2,000,000 annual aggregate and a combined policy aggregate coverage for various liability coverage in the amount of \$10,000,000.

There were no settlements in excess of the insurance coverages over the past three years, nor has there been a significant reduction in coverage from the prior year.

NOTE 9 - DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION PLANS

The Statewide retirement systems provide both pension benefits and other postemployment benefits (OPEB).

Net Pension Liability/Net OPEB Liability (Asset)

Pensions and OPEB are a component of exchange transactions—between an employer and its employees—of salaries and benefits for employee services. Pensions/OPEB are provided to an employee—on a deferred-payment basis—as part of the total compensation package offered by an employer for employee services each financial period.

The net pension/OPEB liability (asset) represent the School's proportionate share of each pension/OPEB plan's collective actuarial present value of projected benefit payments attributable to past periods of service, net of each pension/OPEB plan's fiduciary net position. The net pension/OPEB liability (asset) calculation is dependent on critical long-term variables, including estimated average life expectancies, earnings on investments, cost of living adjustments and others. While these estimates use the best information available, unknowable future events require adjusting these estimates annually.

Ohio Revised Code limits the School's obligation for this liability to annually required payments. The School cannot control benefit terms or the manner in which pensions/OPEB are financed; however, the

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

School does receive the benefit of employees' services in exchange for compensation including pension and OPEB.

GASB 68/75 assumes the liability is solely the obligation of the employer, because (1) they benefit from employee services; and (2) State statute requires funding to come from these employers. All pension contributions to date have come solely from these employers (which also includes pension costs paid in the form of withholdings from employees). The retirement systems may allocate a portion of the employer contributions to provide for these OPEB benefits. In addition, health care plan enrollees pay a portion of the health care costs in the form of a monthly premium. State statute requires the retirement systems to amortize unfunded pension liabilities within 30 years. If the pension amortization period exceeds 30 years, each retirement system's board must propose corrective action to the State legislature. Any resulting legislative change to benefits or funding could significantly affect the net pension/OPEB liability (asset). Resulting adjustments to the net pension/OPEB liability (asset) would be effective when the changes are legally enforceable. The Ohio revised Code permits, but does not require, the retirement systems to provide healthcare to eligible benefit recipients.

The proportionate share of each plan's unfunded benefits is presented as a long-term *net pension/OPEB liability*. Any liability for the contractually required pension contribution outstanding at the end of the year is included in *accrued expenses*.

The remainder of this note includes the required pension disclosures. See Note 10 for the required OPEB disclosures.

Plan Description - School Employees Retirement System (SERS)

Plan Description – The School non-teaching employees participate in SERS, a cost-sharing multiple-employer defined benefit pension plan administered by SERS. SERS provides retirement, disability and survivor benefits, and death benefits to plan members and beneficiaries. Authority to establish and amend benefits is provided by Ohio Revised Code Chapter 3309. SERS issues a publicly available, stand-alone financial report that includes financial statements, required supplementary information and detailed information about SERS' fiduciary net position. That report can be obtained by visiting the SERS website at www.ohsers.org under Employers/Audit Resources.

Age and service requirements for retirement are as follows:

	Eligible to Retire on or before August 1, 2017 *	Eligible to Retire on or after August 1, 2017
Full Benefits	Any age with 30 years of service credit	Age 67 with 10 years of service credit; or Age 57 with 30 years of service credit
Actuarially Reduced Benefits	Age 60 with 5 years of service credit Age 55 with 25 years of service credit	Age 62 with 10 years of service credit; or Age 60 with 25 years of service credit

* Members with 25 years of service credit as of August 1, 2017, will be included in this plan.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

Annual retirement benefits are calculated based on final average salary multiplied by a percentage that varies based on years of service; 2.2 percent for the first thirty years of service and 2.5 percent for years of service credit over 30. Final average salary is the average of the highest three years of salary.

An individual whose benefit effective date is before April 1, 2018, is eligible for a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on the first anniversary date of the benefit. New benefit recipients must wait until the fourth anniversary of their benefit for COLA eligibility. The COLA is added each year to the base benefit amount on the anniversary date of the benefit. The COLA is indexed to the percentage increase in the CPI-W, not to exceed 2.5 percent and with a floor of 0 percent. A three-year COLA suspension was in effect for all benefit recipients for the years 2018, 2019, and 2020. The Retirement Board approved a 2.5 percent COLA for calendar year 2024.

Funding Policy – Plan members are required to contribute 10 percent of their annual covered salary and the School is required to contribute 14 percent of annual covered payroll. The contribution requirements of plan members and employers are established and may be amended by the SERS' Retirement Board up to statutory maximum amounts of 10 percent for plan members and 14 percent for employers. The Retirement Board, acting with the advice of the actuary, allocates the employer contribution rate among four of the System's funds (Pension Trust Fund, Death Benefit Fund, Medicare B Fund, and Health Care Fund). For the fiscal year ended June 30, 2025, the allocation to pension, death benefits, and Medicare B was 14.0 percent. For fiscal year 2025, the Retirement Board did not allocate any employer contribution to the Health Care Fund.

The School's contractually required contribution to SERS was \$17,579 for fiscal year 2025.

Plan Description - State Teachers Retirement System (STRS)

Plan Description – The School licensed teachers and other faculty members participate in STRS Ohio, a cost-sharing multiple employer public employee system administered by STRS. STRS provides retirement and disability benefits to members and death and survivor benefits to beneficiaries. STRS issues a stand-alone financial report that includes financial statements, required supplementary information, and detailed information about STRS' fiduciary net position. That report can be obtained by writing to STRS, 275 E. Broad St., Columbus, OH 43215-3771, by calling (888) 227-7877, or by visiting the STRS Web site at www.strsoh.org.

New members have a choice of three retirement plans; a Defined Benefit (DB) Plan, a Defined Contribution (DC) Plan, and a Combined Plan. Benefits are established by Ohio Revised Code Chapter 3307.

The DB plan offers an annual retirement allowance based on final average salary multiplied by a percentage that varies based on years of service. The calculation is 2.2 percent of final average salary for the five highest years of earnings multiplied by all years of credited service. Effective August 1, 2023, any member can retire with unreduced benefits with 34 years of services credit at any age; or five years of service credit and age 65. Effective June 1, 2025 - July 1, 2027, any member can retire with unreduced benefits with 33 years of service credit at any age; or five years of service credit and age 65. Effective on or after August 1, 2027, any member can retire with unreduced benefits with 34 years of service credit at any age; or five years of service credit and age 65.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

In April 2017, the Retirement Board made the decision to reduce COLA granted on or after July 1, 2017, to 0 percent upon a determination by its actuary that it was necessary to preserve the fiscal integrity of the retirement system. Benefit recipients' base benefit and past cost-of living increases are not affected by this change. Effective July 1, 2022, an ad-hoc COLA of 3 percent of the base benefit was granted to eligible benefit recipients to begin on the anniversary of their retirement benefit in fiscal year 2023 as long as they retired prior to July 1, 2018. Effective July 1, 2023, a permanent 1 percent COLA of the base benefit was granted to eligible benefit recipients to begin on the anniversary of their retirement benefit in fiscal year 2024 as long as they retired prior to July 1, 2019.

Eligibility changes for DB Plan members who retire with actuarially reduced benefits effective August 1, 2023, can retire with 29 years of service credit at any age; or five years of service credit and age 60. Effective June 1, 2025 - July 1, 2027, retirement eligibility for reduced benefits is 28 years of service credit at any age; or five years of service credit and age 60. Effective on or after August 1, 2027, retirement eligibility for reduced benefits is 29 years of service credit at any age; or five years of service credit and age 60.

The DC Plan allows members to place all their member contributions and 11.09 percent of the 14 percent employer contributions into an investment account. The member determines how to allocate the member and employer money among various investment choices offered by STRS. The remaining 2.91 percent of the 14 percent employer rate is allocated to the defined benefit unfunded liability. A member is eligible to receive a retirement benefit at age 50 and termination of employment. The member may elect to receive a lifetime monthly annuity or a lump sum withdrawal.

The Combined Plan offers features of both the DB Plan and the DC Plan. In the Combined Plan, 12 percent of the 14 percent member rate is deposited into the member's DC account and the remaining 2 percent is applied to the DB Plan. Member contributions to the DC Plan are allocated among investment choices by the member, and contributions to the DB Plan from the employer and the member are used to fund the defined benefit payment at a reduced level from the regular DB Plan. The defined benefit portion of the Combined Plan payment is payable to a member on or after age 60 with five years of service. The defined contribution portion of the account may be taken as a lump sum payment or converted to a lifetime monthly annuity at age fifty and after termination of employment.

New members who choose the DC plan or Combined Plan will have another opportunity to reselect a permanent plan during their fifth year of membership. Members may remain in the same plan or transfer to another STRS plan. The optional annuitization of a member's defined contribution account or the defined contribution portion of a member's Combined Plan account to a lifetime benefit results in STRS bearing the risk of investment gain or loss on the account. STRS has therefore included all three plan options as one defined benefit plan for GASB 68 reporting purposes.

A DB or Combined Plan member with five or more years of credited service who is determined to be disabled may qualify for a disability benefit. New members on or after July 1, 2013, must have at least ten years of qualifying service credit to apply for disability benefits. Members in the DC Plan who become disabled are entitled only to their account balance. Eligible survivors of members who die before service retirement may qualify for monthly benefits. If a member of the DC Plan dies before retirement benefits begin, the member's designated beneficiary is entitled to receive the member's account balance.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

Funding Policy – Employer and member contribution rates are established by the State Teachers Retirement Board and limited by Chapter 3307 of the Ohio Revised Code. The 2025 employer and employee contribution rate of 14 percent was equal to the statutory maximum rates. For 2025, the full employer contribution was allocated to pension.

The School's contractually required contribution to STRS was \$151,048 for fiscal year 2025.

Pension Liabilities, Pension Expense, and Deferred Outflows/Inflows of Resources Related to Pensions

The net pension liability (asset) was measured as of June 30, 2024, and the total pension liability used to calculate the net pension liability was determined by an actuarial valuation as of that date. The School's proportion of the net pension liability was based on the School's share of contributions to the pension plan relative to the contributions of all participating entities. Following is information related to the proportionate share and pension expense:

	SERS	STRS	Total
Proportion of the Net Pension Liability:			
Current Measurement Date	0.00472000%	0.00639698%	
Prior Measurement Date	0.00535490%	0.00605008%	
Change in Proportionate Share	-0.00063490%	0.00034690%	
Proportionate Share of the Net			
Pension Liability	\$241,457	\$1,230,882	\$1,472,339
Pension Expense	\$38,493	\$118,078	\$156,571

Other than contributions made subsequent to the measurement date and differences between projected and actual earnings on investments; deferred inflows/outflows of resources are recognized in pension expense beginning in the current period, using a straight-line method over a closed period equal to the average of the expected remaining services lives of all employees that are provided with pensions, determined as of the beginning of the measurement period. Net deferred inflows/outflows of resources pertaining to the differences between projected and actual investment earnings are similarly recognized over a closed five-year period.

At June 30, 2025, the School reported deferred outflows of resources and deferred inflows of resources related to pensions from the following sources:

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

	SERS	STRS	Total
Deferred Outflows of Resources			
Differences between Expected and Actual Experience	\$ 9,219	\$ 77,515	\$ 86,734
Net Difference between Projected and Actual Earnings on Pension Plan Investments	-	-	-
Changes of Assumptions	2,160	56,725	58,885
Changes in Proportion and Differences between School Contributions and Proportionate Share of Contributions	38,512	113,375	151,887
School Contributions Subsequent to the Measurement Date	17,579	151,048	168,627
Total Deferred Outflows of Resources	\$ 67,470	\$ 398,663	\$ 466,133
Deferred Inflows of Resources			
Differences between Expected and Actual Experience	\$ -	\$ 674	\$ 674
Net Difference between Projected and Actual Earnings on Pension Plan Investments	15,103	105,832	120,935
Changes of Assumptions	-	42,699	42,699
Changes in Proportion and Differences between School Contributions and Proportionate Share of Contributions	25,020	78,471	103,491
Total Deferred Inflows of Resources	\$ 40,123	\$ 227,676	\$ 267,799

\$168,627 reported as deferred outflows of resources related to pension resulting from the School contributions subsequent to the measurement date will be recognized as a reduction of the net pension liability in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026. Other amounts reported as deferred outflows of resources and deferred inflows of resources related to pension will be recognized in pension expense as follows:

	SERS	STRS	Total
Fiscal Year Ending June 30:			
2026	\$ 1,956	\$ (22,445)	\$ (20,489)
2027	21,865	99,093	120,958
2028	(9,612)	(45,127)	(54,739)
2029	(4,441)	(11,582)	(16,023)
Total	\$ 9,768	\$ 19,939	\$ 29,707

Actuarial Assumptions - SERS

SERS' total pension liability was determined by their actuaries in accordance with GASB Statement No. 67, as part of their annual actuarial valuation for each defined benefit retirement plan. Actuarial valuations of an ongoing plan involve estimates of the value of reported amounts (e.g., salaries, credited service) and assumptions about the probability of occurrence of events far into the future (e.g., mortality, disabilities, retirements, employment termination). Actuarially determined amounts are subject to continual review and potential modifications, as actual results are compared with past expectations and new estimates are made about the future.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

Projections of benefits for financial reporting purposes are based on the substantive plan (the plan as understood by the employers and plan members) and include the types of benefits provided at the time of each valuation and the historical pattern of sharing benefit costs between the employers and plan members to that point. The projection of benefits for financial reporting purposes does not explicitly incorporate the potential effects of legal or contractual funding limitations. Future benefits for all current plan members were projected through 2137.

Actuarial calculations reflect a long-term perspective. For a newly hired employee, actuarial calculations will take into account the employee's entire career with the employer and also take into consideration the benefits, if any, paid to the employee after termination of employment until the death of the employee and any applicable contingent annuitant. In many cases actuarial calculations reflect several decades of service with the employer and the payment of benefits after termination.

Key methods and assumptions used in calculating the total pension liability in the latest actuarial valuation, prepared as of June 30, 2024, are presented below:

Inflation	2.40 percent
Future Salary Increases, including inflation	3.25 percent to 13.58 percent
Investment Rate of Return	7.00 percent net of System expenses
Actuarial Cost Method	Entry Age Normal (Level Percent of Payroll)
COLA or Ad Hoc COLA	2.0 percent, on or after April 1, 2018, COLAs for future retirees will be delayed for three years following commencement

Mortality rates were based on the PUB-2010 General Employee Amount Weight Below Median Healthy Retiree mortality table projected to 2017 with ages set forward 1 year and adjusted 94.20 percent for males and set forward 2 years and adjusted 81.35 percent for females. Mortality among disabled members were based upon the PUB-2010 General Disabled Retiree mortality table projected to 2017 with ages set forward 5 years and adjusted 103.3 percent for males and set forward 3 years and adjusted 106.8 percent for females. Future improvement in mortality rates is reflected by applying the MP-2020 projection scale generationally.

The most recent experience study was completed for the five-year period ended June 30, 2020.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

The long-term return expectation for the Pension Plan Investments has been determined by using a building-block approach and assumes a time horizon, as defined in SERS' *Statement of Investment Policy*. ORC 3309.15 and the SERS Board-adopted Investment Policy govern investment activity. A forecasted rate of inflation serves as the baseline for the return expectation. Various real return premiums over the baseline inflation rate have been established for each asset class. The long-term expected nominal rate of return has been determined by calculating a weighted average of the expected real return premiums for each asset class, adding the projected inflation rate, and adding the expected return from rebalancing uncorrelated asset classes. As of June 30, 2024:

Asset Class	Target Allocation	Long-Term Expected Real Rate of Return (geometric)
Cash	3.00 %	0.97 %
US Equity	22.00	4.68
Non-US Equity Developed	12.00	4.96
Non-US Equity Emerging	6.00	5.66
Fixed Income/Global Bonds	18.00	2.38
Private Equity	14.00	7.10
Real Estate	13.00	3.64
Infrastructure	7.00	4.80
Private Debt/Private Credit	5.00	5.86
Total	100.00 %	

Discount Rate The total pension liability for 2024 was calculated using the discount rate of 7.00 percent. The discount rate determination did not use a municipal bond rate. The projection of cash flows used to determine the discount rate assumed that employers would contribute the actuarially determined contribution rate of projected compensation over the remaining 20-year amortization period of the unfunded actuarial accrued liability. The actuarially determined contribution rate for fiscal year 2024 was 14 percent. Projected inflows from investment earnings were calculated using the long-term assumed investment rate of return (7.00 percent). Based on those assumptions, the plan's fiduciary net position was projected to be available to make all future benefit payments of current plan members. Therefore, the long-term expected rate of return on pension plan investments was applied to all periods of projected benefits to determine the total pension liability. The annual money-weighted rate of return, calculated as the internal rate of return on pension plan investments, for fiscal year 2024 was 9.31 percent.

Sensitivity of the School's Proportionate Share of the Net Pension Liability to Changes in the Discount Rate Net pension liability is sensitive to changes in the discount rate, and to illustrate the potential impact the following table presents the net pension liability calculated using the discount rate of 7.00 percent, as well as what each plan's net pension liability would be if it were calculated using a discount rate that is one percentage point lower (6.00 percent), or one percentage point higher (8.00 percent) than the current rate.

	1% Decrease (6.00%)	Discount Rate (7.00%)	1% Increase (8.00%)
School's Proportionate Share of the Net Pension Liability	\$ 369,394	\$ 241,457	\$ 133,739

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

Actuarial Assumptions – STRS

Key methods and assumptions used in the June 30, 2024, actuarial valuation are presented below:

Inflation	2.50 percent
Salary Increases	From 2.5 percent to 8.5 percent, based on service
Investment Rate of Return	7.00 percent, net of investment expenses, including inflation
Discount Rate of Return	7.00 percent
Payroll Increases	3.00 percent
Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA)	0.00 percent, effective July 1, 2017

Post-retirement mortality rates are based on the Pub-2010 Teachers Healthy Annuitant Mortality Table, adjusted 110 percent for males, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020. Pre-retirement mortality rates are based on Pub-2010 Teachers Employee Table adjusted 95 percent for females, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020. Post-retirement disabled mortality rates are based on Pub-2010 Teachers Disable Annuitant Table projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020.

Actuarial assumptions used in the June 30, 2024, valuation are based on the results of an actuarial experience study for the period July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2021. An actuarial experience study is done on a quinquennial basis.

STRS' investment consultant develops an estimate range for the investment return assumption based on the target allocation adopted by the Retirement Board. The target allocation and long-term expected rate of return for each major asset class are summarized as follows:

<u>Asset Class</u>	<u>Target Allocation *</u>	<u>Long-Term Expected Rate of Return **</u>
Domestic Equity	26.00%	6.90%
International Equity	22.00	7.70
Alternatives	19.00	9.10
Fixed Income	22.00	4.50
Real Estate	10.00	5.10
Liquidity Reserves	1.00	2.40
Total	<u>100.00%</u>	

**Final target weights reflected at October 1, 2022.*

***10-Year annualized geometric nominal returns, which include the real rate of return and inflation of 2.25 percent and is net of investment expenses. Over a 30-year period, STRS investment consultant indicates that the above target allocations should generate a return above the actuarial rate of return, without net value added by management.*

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

Discount Rate The discount rate used to measure the total pension liability was 7.00 percent as of June 30, 2024. The projection of cash flows used to determine the discount rate assumes that member and employer contributions will be made at the statutory contribution rates in accordance with rate increases described above. For this purpose, only employer contributions that are intended to fund benefits of current plan members and their beneficiaries are included. Based on those assumptions, STRS' fiduciary net position was projected to be available to make all projected future benefit payments to current plan members as of June 30, 2024. Therefore, the long-term expected rate of return on pension plan investments of 7.00 percent was applied to all periods of projected benefit payment to determine the total pension liability as of June 30, 2024.

Sensitivity of the School's Proportionate Share of the Net Pension Liability to Changes in the Discount Rate The following table presents the School's proportionate share of the net pension liability calculated using the current period discount rate assumption of 7.00 percent, as well as what the School's proportionate share of the net pension liability would be if it were calculated using a discount rate that is one-percentage-point lower (6.00 percent) or one-percentage-point higher (8.00 percent) than the current rate:

	1% Decrease (6.00%)	Current Discount Rate (7.00%)	1% Increase (8.00%)
School's proportionate share of the net pension liability	\$ 1,985,629	\$ 1,230,882	\$ 592,496

NOTE 10 - DEFINED BENEFIT OPEB PLANS

See Note 9 for a description of the net OPEB liability (asset).

Plan Description - School Employees Retirement System (SERS)

Health Care Plan Description - The School contributes to the SERS Health Care Fund, administered by SERS for non-certificated retirees and their beneficiaries. For GASB 75 purposes, this plan is considered a cost-sharing other postemployment benefit (OPEB) plan. SERS' Health Care Plan provides healthcare benefits to eligible individuals receiving retirement, disability, and survivor benefits, and to their eligible dependents. Members who retire after June 1, 1986, need 10 years of service credit, exclusive of most types of purchased credit, to qualify to participate in SERS' health care coverage. The following types of credit purchased after January 29, 1981, do not count toward health care coverage eligibility: military, federal, out-of-state, municipal, private school, exempted, and early retirement incentive credit. In addition to age and service retirees, disability benefit recipients and beneficiaries who are receiving monthly benefits due to the death of a member or retiree, are eligible for SERS' health care coverage. Most retirees and dependents choosing SERS' health care coverage are over the age of 65 and therefore enrolled in a fully insured Medicare Advantage plan; however, SERS maintains a traditional, self-insured preferred provider organization for its non-Medicare retiree population. For both groups, SERS offers a self-insured prescription drug program. Health care is a benefit that is permitted, not mandated, by statute. The financial report of the Plan is included in the SERS Annual Comprehensive Financial Report which can be obtained on SERS' website at www.ohsers.org under Employers/Audit Resources.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

The Health Care program is financed through a combination of employer contributions, recipient premiums, investment returns, and any funds received on behalf of SERS' participation in Medicare programs. The System's goal is to maintain a health care reserve account with a 20-year solvency period in order to ensure that fluctuations in the cost of health care do not cause an interruption in the program. However, during any period in which the 20-year solvency period is not achieved, the System shall manage the Health Care Fund on a pay-as-you-go basis.

Access to health care for retirees and beneficiaries is permitted in accordance with Section 3309 of the Ohio Revised Code. SERS' Retirement Board reserves the right to change or discontinue any health plan or program. Active employee members do not contribute to the Health Care Plan. The SERS Retirement Board established the rules for the premiums paid by the retirees for health care coverage for themselves and their dependents or for their surviving beneficiaries. Premiums vary depending on the plan selected, qualified years of service, Medicare eligibility, and retirement status.

Funding Policy - State statute permits SERS to fund the health care benefits through employer contributions. Each year, after the allocation for statutorily required pensions and benefits, the Retirement Board may allocate the remainder of the employer contribution of 14 percent of covered payroll to the Health Care Fund in accordance with the funding policy. For fiscal year 2025, no allocation was made to health care. An additional health care surcharge on employers is collected for employees earning less than an actuarially determined minimum compensation amount, pro-rated if less than a full year of service credit was earned. For fiscal year 2025, this amount was \$30,000. Statutes provide that no employer shall pay a health care surcharge greater than 2 percent of that employer's SERS-covered payroll; nor may SERS collect in aggregate more than 1.5 percent of the total statewide SERS-covered payroll for the health care surcharge. For fiscal year 2025, the School's surcharge obligation was \$2,180.

The surcharge, added to the allocated portion of the 14 percent employer contribution rate is the total amount assigned to the Health Care Fund. The School's contractually required contribution to SERS were equal to the surcharge amount for fiscal year 2025.

Plan Description - State Teachers Retirement System (STRS)

Plan Description – The State Teachers Retirement System of Ohio (STRS) administers a cost-sharing Health Plan administered for eligible retirees who participated in the defined benefit or combined pension plans offered by STRS. Ohio law authorizes STRS to offer this plan. Benefits include hospitalization, physicians' fees, prescription drugs and partial reimbursement of monthly Medicare Part B premiums. Health care premiums were reduced by a Medicare Part B premium credit beginning in 2023. The Plan is included in the report of STRS which can be obtained by visiting www.strsoh.org or by calling (888) 227-7877.

Medicare Part D is a federal program to help cover the costs of prescription drugs for Medicare beneficiaries. This program allows STRS Ohio to recover part of the cost for providing prescription coverage since all eligible STRS Ohio health care plans include creditable prescription drug coverage.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

Funding Policy – Ohio Revised Code Chapter 3307 authorizes STRS to offer the Plan and gives the Retirement Board discretionary authority over how much, if any, of the health care costs will be absorbed by STRS. Active employee members do not contribute to the Health Care Plan. All benefit recipients pay a portion of the health care costs in the form of a monthly premium. Under Ohio law, funding for post-employment health care may be deducted from employer contributions, currently 14 percent of covered payroll. For the fiscal year ended June 30, 2025, STRS did not allocate any employer contributions to post-employment health care.

Net OPEB Liability (Asset)

The net OPEB liability (asset) was measured as of June 30, 2024, and the total OPEB liability used to calculate the net OPEB liability (asset) was determined by an actuarial valuation as of that date. The School's proportion of the net OPEB liability (asset) was based on the School's share of contributions to the respective retirement systems relative to the contributions of all participating entities. Following is information related to the proportionate share and OPEB expense:

	SERS	STRS	Total
Proportion of the Net OPEB Liability (Asset):			
Current Measurement Date	0.0046661%	0.00639698%	
Prior Measurement Date	0.0054043%	0.00605008%	
Change in Proportionate Share	-0.0007382%	0.00034690%	
Proportionate Share of the Net			
OPEB Liability (Asset)	\$ 47,524	\$ (121,338)	
OPEB Expense	\$ (23,079)	\$ (38,886)	\$ (61,965)

Other than contributions made subsequent to the measurement date and differences between projected and actual earnings on investments; deferred inflows/outflows of resources are recognized in OPEB expense beginning in the current period, using a straight-line method over a closed period equal to the average of the expected remaining services lives of all employees that are provided with pensions, determined as of the beginning of the measurement period. Net deferred inflows/outflows of resources pertaining to the differences between projected and actual investment earnings are similarly recognized over a closed five-year period.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

**NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025**

At June 30, 2025, the School reported deferred outflows of resources and deferred inflows of resources related to OPEB from the following sources:

	SERS	STRS	Total
Deferred Outflows of Resources			
Differences between Expected and Actual Experience	\$ -	\$ 5,274	\$ 5,274
Net Difference between Projected and Actual Earnings on OPEB Plan Investments	231	-	231
Changes of Assumptions	20,398	14,938	35,336
Changes in Proportion and Differences between School Contributions and Proportionate Share of Contributions	35,043	2,755	37,798
School Contributions Subsequent to the Measurement Date	2,180	-	2,180
Total Deferred Outflows of Resources	<u>\$ 57,852</u>	<u>\$ 22,967</u>	<u>\$ 80,819</u>
Deferred Inflows of Resources			
Differences between Expected and Actual Experience	\$ 51,244	\$ 13,075	\$ 64,319
Net Difference between Projected and Actual Earnings on OPEB Plan Investments	-	5,210	5,210
Changes of Assumptions	21,831	54,724	76,555
Changes in Proportion and Differences between School Contributions and Proportionate Share of Contributions	45,211	9,681	54,892
Total Deferred Inflows of Resources	<u>\$ 118,286</u>	<u>\$ 82,690</u>	<u>\$ 200,976</u>

\$2,180 reported as deferred outflows of resources related to OPEB resulting from the School contributions subsequent to the measurement date will be recognized as a reduction/addition to the net OPEB liability/asset in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026. Other amounts reported as deferred outflows of resources and deferred inflows of resources related to OPEB will be recognized in OPEB expense as follows:

	SERS	STRS	Total
Fiscal Year Ending June 30:			
2026	\$ (25,079)	\$ (25,757)	\$ (50,836)
2027	(15,509)	(8,042)	(23,551)
2028	(8,365)	(10,319)	(18,684)
2029	(3,274)	(9,651)	(12,925)
2030	(3,205)	(7,798)	(11,003)
Thereafter	(7,182)	1,844	(5,338)
Total	<u>\$ (62,614)</u>	<u>\$ (59,723)</u>	<u>\$ (122,337)</u>

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

Actuarial Assumptions - SERS

The total OPEB liability is determined by SERS' actuaries in accordance with GASB Statement No. 74, as part of their annual actuarial valuation for each retirement plan. Actuarial valuations of an ongoing plan involve estimates of the value of reported amounts (e.g., salaries, credited service) and assumptions about the probability of occurrence of events far into the future (e.g., mortality, disabilities, retirements, employment terminations). Actuarially determined amounts are subject to continual review and potential modifications, as actual results are compared with past expectations and new estimates are made about the future.

Projections of benefits for financial reporting purposes are based on the substantive plan (the plan as understood by the employers and plan members) and include the types of benefits provided at the time of each valuation and the historical pattern of sharing benefit costs between the employers and plan members to that point. The projection of benefits for financial reporting purposes does not explicitly incorporate the potential effects of legal or contractual funding limitations.

Actuarial calculations reflect a long-term perspective. For a newly hired employee, actuarial calculations will take into account the employee's entire career with the employer and also take into consideration the benefits, if any, paid to the employee after termination of employment until the death of the employee and any applicable contingent annuitant. In many cases, actuarial calculations reflect several decades of service with the employer and the payment of benefits after termination.

Key methods and assumptions used in calculating the total OPEB liability in the latest actuarial valuation date of June 30, 2024, are presented below:

	June 30, 2024
Inflation	2.40 percent
Future Salary Increases, including Inflation	3.25 percent to 13.58 percent
Investment Rate of Return	7.00 percent net of investment expense
Actuarial Cost Method	Entry Age Normal (Level Percent of Payroll)
Fiduciary Net Position is Projected to be Depleted	2059
Municipal Bond Index Rate	
Measurement Date	3.93 percent
Prior Measurement Date	3.86 percent
Single Equivalent Interest Rate	
Measurement Date	4.88 percent
Prior Measurement Date	4.27 percent
Health Care Cost Trend Rate	
Medical Trend Assumption	
Measurement Date	7.00 to 4.40 percent
Prior Measurement Date	6.75 to 4.40 percent

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

Mortality rates among healthy retirees were based on the PUB-2010 General Employee Amount Weighted Below Median Healthy Retiree mortality table projected to 2017 with ages set forward 1 year and adjusted 94.20 percent for males and set forward 2 years and adjusted 81.35 percent for females. Mortality among disabled members were based upon the PUB-2010 General Disabled Retiree mortality table projected to 2017 with ages set forward 5 years and adjusted 103.3 percent for males and set forward 3 years and adjusted 106.8 percent for females. Mortality rates for contingent survivors were based on PUB-2010 General Amount Weighted Below Median Contingent Survivor mortality table projected to 2017 with ages set forward 1 year and adjusted 105.5 percent for males and adjusted 122.5 percent for females. Mortality rates for actives is based on PUB-2010 General Amount Weighted Below Median Employee mortality table. Mortality rates are projected using a fully generational projection with Scale MP-2020.

The most recent experience study was completed for the five-year period ended June 30, 2020.

The long-term expected rate of return on plan assets is reviewed as part of the actuarial five-year experience study. The most recent study covers fiscal years 2016 through 2020, and was adopted by the Board on April 15, 2021. Several factors are considered in evaluating the long-term rate of return assumption including long-term historical data, estimates inherent in current market data, and a long-normal distribution analysis in which best-estimate ranges of expected future real rates of return (expected return, net of investment expense and inflation) were developed by the investment consultant for each major asset class. These ranges were combined to produce the long-term expected rate of return, 7.00 percent, by weighting the expected future real rates of return by the target asset allocation percentage and then adding expected inflation. The assumption is intended to be a long-term assumption and is not expected to change absent a significant change in the asset allocation, a change in the inflation assumption, or a fundamental change in the market that alters expected returns in future years.

The long-term expected nominal rate of return has been determined by calculating a weighted average of the expected real return premiums for each asset class, adding the projected inflation rate, and adding the expected return from rebalancing uncorrelated asset classes. As of June 30, 2024:

Asset Class	Target Allocation	Long-Term Expected Real Rate of Return (geometric)
Cash	3.00 %	0.97 %
US Equity	22.00	4.68
Non-US Equity Developed	12.00	4.96
Non-US Equity Emerging	6.00	5.66
Fixed Income/Global Bonds	18.00	2.38
Private Equity	14.00	7.10
Real Estate	13.00	3.64
Infrastructure	7.00	4.80
Private Debt/Private Credit	5.00	5.86
Total	100.00 %	

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

Discount Rate The discount rate used to measure the total OPEB liability at June 30, 2024, was 4.88 percent. The discount rate used to measure total OPEB liability prior to June 30, 2024, was 4.27 percent. The projection of cash flows used to determine the discount rate assumed that contributions will be made from members and the System at the contribution rate of 1.50 percent of projected covered payroll each year, which includes a 1.50 percent payroll surcharge and no contributions from the basic benefits plan. Based on these assumptions, the OPEB plan's fiduciary net position was projected to be depleted in 2059 by SERS' actuaries. The Fidelity General Obligation 20-year Municipal Bond Index Rate was used in the determination of the single equivalent interest rate for both the June 30, 2023, and the June 30, 2024, total OPEB liability. The Municipal Bond Index Rate is the single rate that will generate a present value of benefit payments equal to the sum of the present value determined by the long-term expected rate of return, and the present value determined by discounting those benefits after the date of depletion. The Municipal Bond Index Rate was 3.93 percent at June 30, 2024, and 3.86 percent at June 30, 2023.

Sensitivity of the School's Proportionate Share of the Net OPEB Liability to Changes in the Discount Rate and Changes in the Health Care Cost Trend Rates The net OPEB liability is sensitive to changes in the discount rate and the health care cost trend rate. The following table presents the net OPEB liability of SERS, what SERS' net OPEB liability would be if it were calculated using a discount rate that is 1 percentage point lower (3.88%) and higher (5.88%) than the current discount rate (4.88%). Also shown is what SERS' net OPEB liability would be based on health care cost trend rates that are 1 percentage point lower (6.00% decreasing to 3.40%) and higher (8.00% decreasing to 5.40%) than the current rate.

	1% Decrease (3.88%)	Current Discount Rate (4.88%)	1% Increase (5.88%)
School's proportionate share of the net OPEB liability	\$63,372	\$47,524	\$34,931

	1% Decrease (6.00% decreasing to 3.40%)	Current Trend Rate (7.00% decreasing to 4.40%)	1% Increase (8.00% decreasing to 5.40%)
School's proportionate share of the net OPEB liability	\$32,124	\$47,524	\$67,765

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

Actuarial Assumptions – STRS

Key methods and assumptions used in the June 30, 2024, actuarial valuation compared to the prior year are presented below:

	June 30, 2024	June 30, 2023
Projected salary increases	Varies by service from 2.5 percent to 8.5 percent	Varies by service from 2.5 percent to 8.5 percent
Investment Rate of Return	7.00 percent, net of investment expenses, including inflation	7.00 percent, net of investment expenses, including inflation
Payroll Increases	3 percent	3 percent
Discount Rate of Return	7.00 percent	7.00 percent
Health Care Cost Trends		
Medical		
Pre-Medicare	7.50 percent initial 3.94 percent ultimate	7.50 percent initial 4.14 percent ultimate
Medicare	-112.22 percent initial 3.94 percent ultimate	-10.94 percent initial 4.14 percent ultimate
Prescription Drug		
Pre-Medicare	8.00 percent initial 3.94 percent ultimate	-11.95 percent initial 4.14 percent ultimate
Medicare	-15.14 percent initial 3.94 percent ultimate	1.33 percent initial 4.14 percent ultimate

Projections of benefits include the historical pattern of sharing benefit costs between the employers and retired plan members.

Healthy retirees post-retirement mortality rates are based on the Pub-2010 Teachers Healthy Annuitant Mortality Table, adjusted 110 percent for males, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020; pre-retirement mortality rates are based on Pub-2010 Teachers Employee Table adjusted 95 percent for females, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020. For disabled retirees, mortality rates are based on the Pub-2010 Teachers Disabled Annuitant Table projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020.

Actuarial assumptions used in the June 30, 2024, valuation are based on the results of an actuarial experience study for the period July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2021. An actuarial experience study is done on a quinquennial basis.

STRS' investment consultant develops an estimate range for the investment return assumption based on the target allocation adopted by the Retirement Board. The target allocation and long-term expected rate of return for each major asset class are summarized as follows:

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

Asset Class	Target Allocation *	Long-Term Expected Rate of Return **
Domestic Equity	26.00%	6.90%
International Equity	22.00	7.70
Alternatives	19.00	9.10
Fixed Income	22.00	4.50
Real Estate	10.00	5.10
Liquidity Reserves	1.00	2.40
Total	100.00%	

*Final target weights reflected at October 1, 2022.

**10-Year annualized geometric nominal returns, which include the real rate of return and inflation of 2.25 percent and is net of investment expenses. Over a 30-year period, STRS investment consultant indicates that the above target allocations should generate a return above the actuarial rate of return, without net value added by management.

Discount Rate The discount rate used to measure the total OPEB liability was 7.00 percent as of June 30, 2024. The projection of cash flows used to determine the discount rate assumed STRS continues to allocate no employer contributions to the health care fund. Based on these assumptions, the OPEB plan's fiduciary net position was projected to be available to make all projected future benefit payments to current plan members as of June 30, 2024. Therefore, the long-term expected rate of return on health care plan investments of 7.00 percent was applied to all periods of projected health care costs to determine the total OPEB liability as of June 30, 2024.

Sensitivity of the School's Proportionate Share of the Net OPEB Asset to Changes in the Discount and Health Care Cost Trend Rate The following table represents the net OPEB asset as of June 30, 2024, calculated using the current period discount rate assumption of 7.00 percent, as well as what the net OPEB asset would be if it were calculated using a discount rate that is one percentage point lower (6.00 percent) or one percentage point higher (8.00 percent) than the current assumption. Also shown is the net OPEB asset as if it were calculated using health care cost trend rates that are one percentage point lower or one percentage point higher than the current health care cost trend rates.

	1% Decrease (6.00%)	Current Discount Rate (7.00%)	1% Increase (8.00%)
School's proportionate share of the net OPEB asset	(\$98,663)	(\$121,338)	(\$141,077)

	1% Decrease	Current Trend Rate	1% Increase
School's proportionate share of the net OPEB asset	(\$142,410)	(\$121,338)	(\$95,997)

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

NOTE 11 - CONTINGENCIES

Grants - The School received financial assistance from federal and state agencies in the form of grants. Amounts received from grantor agencies are subject to audit and adjustment by the grantor. Any disallowed costs may require refunding to the grantor. Amounts which may be disallowed, if any, are not presently determinable. However, in the opinion of the School, any such adjustments will not have a material adverse effect on the financial position of the School.

Litigation - There are currently no matters in litigation with the School as defendant.

NOTE 12 - SPONSOR AND MANAGEMENT CONTRACTS

Sponsor - The School contracted with St. Aloysius Orphanage as its sponsor and oversight services as required by law effective July 1, 2022 for a five year agreement. Sponsorship fees are calculated as a three percent of state funds received by the School from the State of Ohio. For the fiscal year ended June 30, 2025, the total sponsorship fees paid totaled \$57,175.

Management Company - The School entered into an agreement with Ohio Guidestone, a local nonprofit management company, to provide legal, financial, and other management support services for fiscal year 2012. The agreement was for a period of five years beginning July 1, 2012. The agreement renewed for an additional one-year period ending on June 30, 2019 and renewed for an additional year through 2020. The Management fee is ten percent of state aid. In June 2020, the School and Ohio Guidestone agreed to a five year management agreement beginning July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2025, which shall renew annually unless intent to terminate is given by either party no later than December 31 prior to the end of the renewal term. The management fee will be 10 percent of state and federal foundation funding. At June 30, 2025 the School had outstanding payables to the management company of \$244,882 and paid \$2,402,707 for salaries and benefits and \$191,018 in management fees included in professional fees during the year.

NOTE 13 - PURCHASED SERVICES

For the period of July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025, the School made the following purchased services expenses.

<u>Purchased Services</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Salaries and Benefits	\$1,449,021
Facility Costs	219,198
Professional Fees	400,362
Marketing	303
Insurance	15,203
Office Expenses	187,624
Student Support	174,208
Total	<u>\$2,445,919</u>

STEPSTONE ACADEMY - CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

NOTES TO THE BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

NOTE 14 – MANAGEMENT COMPANY EXPENSES

As of June 30, 2025, Guidestone and its affiliates incurred the following expenses on behalf of the School:

Stepstone Academy	Regular Instruction (1100 Function codes)	Special Instruction (1200 Function codes)	Support Services (2000 Function Codes)	Non-Instructional (3000 through 7000 Function Codes)	Total
<i>Direct expenses:</i>					
Salaries & wages (100 object codes)	\$ 1,137,696	\$ 123,300	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,260,996
Employees' benefits (200 object codes)	276,174	7,391	14,979	-	298,544
Professional & technical services (410 object codes)	17,979	-	382,383	-	400,362
Property services (420 object codes)	-	-	162,916	-	162,916
Utilities (450 object codes)	-	-	56,282	-	56,282
Contracted craft or trade services (460 object codes)	-	-	23,737	172,058	195,795
Supplies (500 object codes)	142,103	-	20,415	-	162,518
All other capital outlay (650 through 690 object codes)	-	-	-	392,547	392,547
Principal (810 object code)	-	-	-	26,582	26,582
Other direct costs (All other object codes)	2,150	-	16,874	-	19,024
Overhead	-	-	446,335	-	446,335
Total expenses	\$ 1,576,102	\$ 130,691	\$ 1,123,921	\$ 591,187	\$ 3,421,901

Guidestone allocates indirect cost (overhead) based on a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement based on 20% of base expenditures as defined in the agreement. These charges represent the indirect cost of services provided in the operation of the School. Such services include, but are not limited to facilities management, equipment, operational support services, management and management consulting, board relations, human resources management, training and orientation, financial reporting and compliance, purchasing and procurement, education services, technology support, marketing and communications.

**STEPSTONE ACADEMY
CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO**

*Required Supplementary Information
Schedule of the School's Proportionate Share of the Net Pension Liability
Last Ten Fiscal Years*

<u>Year</u>	<u>School's Proportion of the Net Pension Liability</u>	<u>School's Proportionate Share of the Net Pension Liability</u>	<u>School's Covered Payroll</u>	<u>School's Proportionate Share of the Net Pension Liability as a Percentage of its Covered Payroll</u>	<u>Plan Fiduciary Net Position as a Percentage of the Total Pension Liability</u>
<i>School Employees Retirement System (SERS)</i>					
2025	0.0047200%	\$ 241,457	\$ 197,807	122.07%	78.52%
2024	0.0053549%	295,885	212,443	139.28%	76.06%
2023	0.0037896%	204,970	141,564	144.79%	75.82%
2022	0.0036154%	133,398	124,793	106.90%	82.86%
2021	0.0054340%	359,178	190,379	188.67%	68.55%
2020	0.0060459%	361,737	207,407	174.41%	70.85%
2019	0.0076075%	435,695	274,237	158.88%	71.36%
2018	0.0079896%	477,361	238,464	200.18%	69.50%
2017	0.0088949%	651,025	369,621	176.13%	62.98%
2016	0.0056236%	320,888	169,302	189.54%	69.16%
<i>State Teachers Retirement System (STRS)</i>					
2025	0.0063970%	\$ 1,230,882	\$ 887,871	138.63%	82.55%
2024	0.0060501%	1,302,882	817,171	159.44%	80.02%
2023	0.0066645%	1,481,517	866,414	170.99%	78.90%
2022	0.0060684%	775,893	748,793	103.62%	87.80%
2021	0.0053327%	1,290,011	643,414	200.49%	75.50%
2020	0.0053271%	1,178,062	625,429	188.36%	77.40%
2019	0.0129837%	2,854,816	1,476,021	193.41%	77.31%
2018	0.0138641%	3,293,450	1,524,186	216.08%	75.29%
2017	0.0120986%	4,049,756	1,237,836	327.16%	66.80%
2016	0.0110331%	3,049,234	1,151,121	264.89%	72.10%

The amounts presented for each fiscal year were determined as of the measurement date, which is the prior fiscal year.

See accompanying notes to the required supplementary information.

**STEPSTONE ACADEMY
CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO**

*Required Supplementary Information
Schedule of the School's Proportionate Share of the Net OPEB Liability (Asset)
Last Nine Fiscal Years (1)*

<u>Year</u>	<u>School's Proportion of the Net OPEB Liability (Asset)</u>	<u>School's Proportionate Share of the Net OPEB Liability (Asset)</u>	<u>School's Covered Payroll</u>	<u>School's Proportionate Share of the Net OPEB Liability (Asset) as a Percentage of its Covered Payroll</u>	<u>Plan Fiduciary Net Position as a Percentage of the Total OPEB Liability</u>
<i>School Employees Retirement System (SERS)</i>					
2025	0.0046661%	\$ 47,524	\$ 197,807	24.03%	44.50%
2024	0.0054043%	89,033	212,443	41.91%	30.02%
2023	0.0038646%	54,259	141,564	38.33%	30.34%
2022	0.0035569%	67,317	124,793	53.94%	24.08%
2021	0.0051733%	112,432	190,379	59.06%	18.17%
2020	0.0057233%	143,929	207,407	69.39%	15.57%
2019	0.0075547%	209,588	274,237	76.43%	13.57%
2018	0.0081407%	218,474	238,464	91.62%	12.46%
2017	0.0090334%	257,485	369,621	69.66%	11.49%
<i>State Teachers Retirement System (STRS)</i>					
2025	0.0063970%	\$ (121,338)	\$ 887,871	-13.67%	158.01%
2024	0.0060501%	(117,666)	817,171	-14.40%	168.52%
2023	0.0066645%	(172,566)	866,414	-19.92%	174.73%
2022	0.0060684%	(127,945)	748,793	-17.09%	174.73%
2021	0.0053314%	(93,699)	643,414	-14.56%	182.13%
2020	0.0053271%	(88,230)	625,429	-14.11%	174.74%
2019	0.0129837%	(208,634)	1,476,021	-14.13%	176.00%
2018	0.0138641%	540,926	1,524,186	35.49%	47.11%
2017	0.0120986%	647,035	1,237,836	52.27%	37.30%

The amounts presented for each fiscal year were determined as of the measurement date, which is the prior fiscal year.

(1) Information prior to 2017 is not available.

See accompanying notes to the required supplementary information.

STEPSTONE ACADEMY
CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO
Required Supplementary Information
Schedule of School Contributions
Last Ten Fiscal Years

<u>Year</u>	<u>Contractually Required Contribution - Pension (1)</u>	<u>Contractually Required Contribution - OPEB (1)(2)</u>	<u>School's Covered Payroll</u>	<u>Pension Contributions as a Percentage of Covered Payroll</u>	<u>OPEB Contributions as a Percentage of Covered Payroll (2)</u>
<i>School Employees Retirement System (SERS)</i>					
2025	\$ 17,579	\$ 2,180	\$ 125,564	14.00%	1.74%
2024	27,693	2,528	197,807	14.00%	1.28%
2023	29,742	3,379	212,443	14.00%	1.59%
2022	19,819	2,471	141,564	14.00%	1.75%
2021	17,471	1,496	124,793	14.00%	1.20%
2020	26,653	1,139	190,379	14.00%	0.60%
2019	28,000	2,316	207,407	13.50%	1.12%
2018	37,022	4,728	274,237	13.50%	1.72%
2017	33,385	5,293	238,464	14.00%	2.22%
2016	51,747	4,654	369,621	14.00%	1.26%
<i>State Teachers Retirement System (STRS)</i>					
2025	\$ 151,048	\$ -	\$ 1,078,914	14.00%	0.00%
2024	124,302	-	887,871	14.00%	0.00%
2023	114,404	-	817,171	14.00%	0.00%
2022	121,298	-	866,414	14.00%	0.00%
2021	104,831	-	748,793	14.00%	0.00%
2020	90,078	-	643,414	14.00%	0.00%
2019	87,560	-	625,429	14.00%	0.00%
2018	206,643	-	1,476,021	14.00%	0.00%
2017	213,386	-	1,524,186	14.00%	0.00%
2016	173,297	-	1,237,836	14.00%	0.00%

(1) The contributions in relation to the contractually required contributions are equal to the contractually required contributions, resulting in zero contribution deficiency/excess.

(2) SERS contributions include surcharge.

See accompanying notes to the required supplementary information.

**STEPSTONE ACADEMY
CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO
NOTES TO THE REQUIRED SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025**

There were no changes in assumptions or benefit terms for the fiscal years reported unless otherwise stated below:

NOTE 1 - NET PENSION LIABILITY

Changes in Assumptions - SERS

Amounts reported in 2022 incorporate changes in assumptions used by SERS in calculating the total pension liability in the latest actuarial valuation. These assumptions compared with those used in prior years are presented as follows:

	<u>Fiscal Years 2025-2022</u>	<u>Fiscal Years 2021-2017</u>	<u>Fiscal Years 2016 and Prior</u>
Wage Inflation	2.40%	3.00%	3.25%
Future Salary Increases, including inflation	3.25% to 13.58%	3.50% to 18.20%	4.00% to 22.00%
Investment Rate of Return	7.00% net of system expenses	7.50% net of investment expenses, including inflation	7.75% net of investment expenses, including inflation

Beginning in 2022, amounts reported use mortality rates based on the PUB-2010 General Employee Amount Weighted Below Median Healthy Retiree mortality table projected to 2017 with ages set forward 1 year and adjusted 94.20 percent for males and set forward 2 years and adjusted 81.35 percent for females. Mortality among disabled members were based upon the PUB-2010 General Disabled Retiree mortality table projected to 2017 with ages set forward 5 years and adjusted 103.3 percent for males and set forward 3 years and adjusted 106.8 percent for females. Future improvement in mortality rates is reflected by applying the MP2020 projection scale generationally.

Beginning in fiscal year 2018, on each anniversary of the initial retirement, the allowance of all retirees and survivors may be increased by the annual rate of increase in the CPI-W measured as of the June preceding the beginning of the applicable calendar year. The annual rate of increase shall not be less than 0 percent nor greater than 2.5 percent.

Amounts report for 2017 through 2021 use mortality rates that are based on the RP-2014 Blue Collar Mortality Table with fully generational projection and a five-year age set-back for both males and females. Amounts reported for fiscal year 2016 and prior, use mortality assumptions that are based on the 1994 Group Annuity Mortality Table set back one year for both men and women. Special mortality tables were used for the period after disability retirement.

Changes in Benefit Terms - SERS

For fiscal year 2022, COLA was increased from 2.00 percent to 2.50 percent.

For fiscal year 2021, COLA was reduced from 2.50 percent to 2.00 percent.

For fiscal year 2018, the cost-of-living adjustment was changed from a fixed 3.00 percent to a cost-of-living adjustment that is indexed to CPI-W not greater than 2.50 percent with a floor of zero percent beginning January 1, 2018. In addition, with the authority granted the Board under HB 49, the Board has enacted a three-year COLA suspension for benefit recipients in calendar years 2018, 2019 and 2020.

**STEPSTONE ACADEMY
CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO
NOTES TO THE REQUIRED SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025**

Changes in Assumptions – STRS

Beginning with fiscal year 2022, amounts reported incorporate changes in assumptions and changes in benefit terms used by STRS in calculating the total pension liability in the latest actuarial valuation. These new assumptions compared with those used in fiscal years 2018-2021 and fiscal year 2017 and prior are presented as follows:

	<u>Fiscal Years 2025-2022</u>	<u>Fiscal Years 2021-2018</u>	<u>Fiscal Years 2017 and Prior</u>
Inflation	2.50%	2.50%	2.75%
	Varies by service from	From 12.50% at age 20 to	From 12.25% at age 20 to
Projected Salary Increases	2.50% 8.50%	2.50% at age 65	2.75% at age 70
Investment Rate of Return, net of investment	7.00%	7.45%	7.75%
Payroll Increases	3.00%	3.00%	3.50%

Beginning with fiscal year 2022, post-retirement mortality rates are based on the Pub-2010 Teachers Healthy Annuitant Mortality Table, adjusted 110 percent for males, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020. Pre-retirement mortality rates are based on Pub-2010 Teachers Employee Table adjusted 95 percent for females, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020. Post-retirement disabled mortality rates are based on Pub-2010 Teachers Disabled Annuitant Table projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2020.

Beginning with fiscal year 2018, post-retirement mortality rates for healthy retirees were based on the RP2014 Annuitant Mortality Table with 50 percent of rates through age 69, 70 percent of rates between ages 70 and 79, 90 percent of rates between ages 80 and 84, and 100 percent of rates thereafter, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2016. Post-retirement disabled mortality rates are based on the RP-2014 Disabled Mortality Table with 90 percent of rates for males and 100 percent of rates for females, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2016. Pre-retirement mortality rates are based on RP-2014 Employee Mortality Table, projected forward generationally using mortality improvement scale MP-2016.

For fiscal year 2017 and prior actuarial valuation, mortality rates were based on the RP-2000 Combined Mortality Table (Projection 2022—Scale AA) for Males and Females. Males' ages are set-back two years through age 89 and no set back for age 90 and above. Females younger than age 80 are set back four years, one year set back from age 80 through 89, and no set back from age 90 and above.

Changes in Benefit Terms - STRS

For fiscal year 2023, the Board approved a one-time 3 percent COLA effective on the anniversary of a benefit recipient's retirement date for those eligible during fiscal year 2023 and eliminated the age 60 requirement to receive unreduced retirement that was scheduled to go into effect August 1, 2026.

For fiscal year 2018, the COLA was reduced to zero.

**STEPSTONE ACADEMY
CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO
NOTES TO THE REQUIRED SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025**

Fiscal year 2017 and prior, COLA was 2 percent simple applied as follows: for members retiring before August 1, 2013, 2 percent per year; for members retiring August 1, 2013 or later, 2 percent COLA commences on fifth anniversary of retirement date.

NOTE 2 - NET OPEB LIABILITY (ASSET)

Changes in Assumptions – SERS

Amounts reported incorporate changes in assumptions and changes in benefit terms used by SERS in calculating the total OPEB liability in the latest actuarial valuation. These new assumptions compared with those used in fiscal year 2021 and prior are presented below:

	<u>Fiscal Years 2025-2022</u>	<u>Fiscal Years 2021-2017</u>
Inflation	2.40%	3.00%
Future Salary Increases, including inflation	3.25% to 13.58%	3.50% to 18.20%
Investment Rate of Return, net of investment expenses, including inflation	7.00%	7.50%

Amounts reported incorporate changes in key methods and assumptions used in calculating the total OPEB liability as presented as follows:

	<u>Fiscal Year</u>								
<u>Assumption</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2017</u>
Municipal Bond Index Rate	3.93%	3.86%	3.69%	1.92%	2.45%	3.13%	3.62%	3.56%	2.92%
Single Equivalent Interest Rate, net of plan investment expense, including price inflation	4.88%	4.27%	4.08%	2.27%	2.63%	3.22%	3.70%	3.63%	2.98%

Changes in Assumptions – STRS

For fiscal year 2023, the projected salary increases were changed from age based (2.5 percent to 12.50 percent) to service based (2.5 percent to 8.5 percent).

For fiscal year 2022, the discount rate was decreased from 7.45 percent to the long-term expected rate of return of 7.00.

For fiscal year 2019, the discount rate was increased from the blended rate of 4.13 percent to the long-term expected rate of return of 7.45.

For fiscal year 2018, the blended discount rate was increased from 3.26 percent to 4.13 percent. Valuation year per capita health care costs were updated, and the salary scale was modified. The percentage of future retirees electing each option was updated based on current data and the percentage of future disabled retirees and terminated vested participants electing health coverage were decreased. The assumed mortality, disability, retirement, withdrawal and future health care cost trend rates were modified along with the portion of rebated prescription drug costs.

**STEPSTONE ACADEMY
CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO
NOTES TO THE REQUIRED SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025**

Changes in Benefit Terms – STRS

For fiscal year 2025, healthcare trends were updated to reflect emerging claims and recoveries experience.

For fiscal year 2024, healthcare trends were updated to reflect emerging claims and recoveries experience as well as benefit changes effective January 1, 2024.

For fiscal year 2023, health care trends were updated to reflect emerging claims and recoveries experience

For fiscal year 2022, there was no change to the claims costs process. Claim curves were updated to reflect the projected fiscal year ending June 30, 2022, premium based on June 30, 2021, enrollment distribution. The non-Medicare subsidy percentage was increased effective January 1, 2022, from 2.055 percent to 2.1 percent per year of service. The non-Medicare frozen subsidy base premium was increased effective January 1, 2022. The Medicare Part D Subsidy was updated to reflect it is expected to be negative in calendar year 2022. The Part B monthly reimbursement elimination date was postponed indefinitely

For fiscal year 2021, there were no changes to the claims costs process. Claim curves were updated to reflect the projected fiscal year 2021 premium based on June 30, 2020 enrollment distribution. The non-Medicare subsidy percentage was increased effective January 1, 2021 from 1.984 percent to 2.055 percent per year of service. The non-Medicare frozen subsidy base premium was increased effective January 1, 2021. The Medicare subsidy percentages were adjusted effective January 1, 2021 to .1 percent for the AMA Medicare plan. The Medicare Part B monthly reimbursement elimination date was postponed indefinitely.

For fiscal year 2020, there was no change to the claims costs process. Claim curves were trended to the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020 to reflect the current price renewals. The non-Medicare subsidy percentage was increased effective January 1, 2020 from 1.944 percent to 1.984 percent per year of service. The non-Medicare frozen subsidy base premium was increased effective January 1, 2020. The Medicare subsidy percentages were adjusted effective January 1, 2021 to 2.1 percent for the Medicare plan. The Medicare Part B monthly reimbursement elimination date was postponed to January 1, 2021

For fiscal year 2019, the subsidy multiplier for non-Medicare benefit recipients was increased from 1.9 percent to 1.944 percent per year of service effective January 1, 2019. The non-Medicare frozen subsidy base premium was increased effective January 1, 2019 and all remaining Medicare Part B premium reimbursements will be discontinued beginning January 1, 2020.

For fiscal year 2018, the subsidy multiplier for non-Medicare benefit recipients was reduced from 2.1 percent to 1.9 percent per year of service. Medicare Part B premium reimbursements were discontinued for certain survivors and beneficiaries and all remaining Medicare Part B premium reimbursements will be discontinued beginning January 2019. This was subsequently extended, see above paragraph.

**INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT ON INTERNAL CONTROL OVER
FINANCIAL REPORTING AND ON COMPLIANCE AND OTHER MATTERS
BASED ON AN AUDIT OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS PERFORMED
IN ACCORDANCE WITH *GOVERNMENT AUDITING STANDARDS***

To the Board of Directors
Stepstone Academy
2121 East 32nd Street
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

We have audited, in accordance with the auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States (*Government Auditing Standards*), the financial statements of Stepstone Academy, Cuyahoga County, Ohio (the "School"), as of and for the year ended June 30, 2025, and the related notes to the financial statements, which collectively comprise the School's basic financial statements, and have issued our report thereon dated December 30, 2025.

Report on Internal Control Over Financial Reporting

In planning and performing our audit of the financial statements, we considered the School's internal control over financial reporting (internal control) as a basis for designing audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances for the purpose of expressing our opinion on the financial statements, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the School's internal control. Accordingly, we do not express an opinion on the effectiveness of the School's internal control.

A *deficiency in internal control* exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent, or detect and correct, misstatements on a timely basis. A *material weakness* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control, such that there is a reasonable possibility that a material misstatement of the entity's financial statements will not be prevented, or detected and corrected, on a timely basis. A *significant deficiency* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control that is less severe than a material weakness, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance.

Our consideration of internal control was for the limited purpose described in the first paragraph of this section and was not designed to identify all deficiencies in internal control that might be material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. Given these limitations, during our audit we did not identify any deficiencies in internal control that we consider to be material weaknesses. However, material weaknesses or significant deficiencies may exist that were not identified.

Report on Compliance and Other Matters

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether the School's financial statements are free from material misstatement, we performed tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the financial statements. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our audit, and accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of the school's internal control or on compliance. This report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* in considering the school's internal control and compliance. Accordingly, this communication is not suitable for any other purpose.

Rea & Associates, Inc.

Rea & Associates, Inc.
Medina, Ohio
December 30, 2025

**INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT ON COMPLIANCE FOR EACH MAJOR FEDERAL
PROGRAM AND REPORT ON INTERNAL CONTROL OVER COMPLIANCE
REQUIRED BY THE UNIFORM GUIDANCE**

To the Board of Directors
Stepstone Academy
2121 East 32nd Street
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

Report on Compliance for Each Major Federal Program

Opinion on Each Major Federal Program

We have audited the Stepstone Academy's, Cuyahoga County, Ohio (the "School") compliance with the types of compliance requirements identified as subject to audit in the OMB *Compliance Supplement* that could have a direct and material effect on each of the School's major federal programs for the year ended June 30, 2025. The School's major federal programs are identified in the summary of auditor's results section of the accompanying schedule of findings and questioned costs.

In our opinion, the School complied, in all material respects, with the compliance requirements referred to above that could have a direct and material effect on each of its major federal programs for the year ended June 30, 2025.

Basis for Opinion on Each Major Federal Program

We conducted our audit of compliance in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAS); the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States (*Government Auditing Standards*); and the audit requirements of Title 2 U.S. *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 200, *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* (Uniform Guidance). Our responsibilities under those standards and the Uniform Guidance are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of Compliance section of our report.

We are required to be independent of the School and to meet our other ethical responsibilities, in accordance with relevant ethical requirements relating to our audit. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion on compliance for each major federal program. Our audit does not provide a legal determination of the School's compliance with the compliance requirements referred to above.

Responsibilities of Management for Compliance

Management is responsible for compliance with the requirements referred to above and for the design, implementation, and maintenance of effective internal control over compliance with the requirements of laws, statutes, regulations, rules and provisions of contracts or grant agreements applicable to the School's federal programs.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of Compliance

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether material noncompliance with the compliance requirements referred to above occurred, whether due to fraud or error, and express an opinion on the School's compliance based on our audit. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with GAAS, *Government Auditing Standards*, and the Uniform Guidance will always detect material noncompliance when it exists. The risk of not detecting material noncompliance resulting from fraud is higher than for that resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Noncompliance with the compliance requirements referred to above is considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, it would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user of the report on compliance about the School's compliance with the requirements of each major federal program as a whole.

In performing an audit in accordance with GAAS, *Government Auditing Standards*, and the Uniform Guidance, we

- exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- identify and assess the risks of material noncompliance, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the School's compliance with the compliance requirements referred to above and performing such other procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances.
- obtain an understanding of the School's internal control over compliance relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances and to test and report on internal control over compliance in accordance with the Uniform Guidance, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the School's internal control over compliance. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and any significant deficiencies and material weaknesses in internal control over compliance that we identified during the audit.

Other Matters

The results of our auditing procedures disclosed an instance of noncompliance which is required to be reported in accordance with the Uniform Guidance and which is described in the accompanying schedule of findings and questioned costs as item 2025-001. Our opinion on each major federal program is not modified with respect to this matter.

Government Auditing Standards requires the auditor to perform limited procedures on the School's response to the noncompliance finding identified in our compliance audit described in the accompanying schedule of findings and questioned costs. The School's response was not subjected to the other auditing procedures applied in the audit of compliance and, accordingly, we express no opinion on the response.

Report on Internal Control over Compliance

Our consideration of internal control over compliance was for the limited purpose described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of Compliance section above and was not designed to identify all deficiencies in internal control over compliance that might be material weaknesses or significant deficiencies in internal control over compliance and therefore, material weaknesses or significant deficiencies may exist that were not identified. We did not identify any deficiencies in internal control over compliance that we consider to be material weaknesses. However, as discussed below, we did identify certain deficiencies in internal control over compliance that we consider to be significant deficiencies.

A deficiency in internal control over compliance exists when the design or operation of a control over compliance does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent, or detect and correct, noncompliance with a type of compliance requirement of a federal program on a timely basis. A *material weakness in internal control over compliance* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control over compliance, such that there is a reasonable possibility that material noncompliance with a type of compliance requirement of a federal program will not be prevented, or detected and corrected, on a timely basis. A *significant deficiency in internal control over compliance* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control over compliance with a type of compliance requirement of a federal program that is less severe than a material weakness in internal control over compliance, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance. We consider the deficiency in internal control over compliance described in the accompanying schedule of findings and questioned costs as item 2025-001 to be a significant deficiency.

Our audit was not designed for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control over compliance. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.

Government Auditing Standards requires the auditor to perform limited procedures on the School's response to the internal control over compliance finding identified in our compliance audit described in the accompanying schedule of findings and questioned costs. The School's response was not subjected to the other auditing procedures applied in the audit of compliance and, accordingly, we express no opinion on the response.

The purpose of this report on internal control over compliance is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control over compliance and the results of that testing based on the requirements of the Uniform Guidance. Accordingly, this report is not suitable for any other purpose.

Rea & Associates, Inc.

Rea & Associates, Inc.
Medina, Ohio
December 30, 2025

**STEPSTONE ACADEMY
CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO
SCHEDULE OF EXPENDITURES OF FEDERAL AWARDS
FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025**

Federal Grantor/ Pass-Through Grantor/ Program Title	Assistance Listing Number	Grant Year	Expenses	Total Provided to Subrecipients
U. S. Department of Education				
<i>Passed Through Ohio Department of Education and Workforce:</i>				
Title I	84.010A	2025	\$ 197,456	\$ -
Title I - Expanding Opportunities for Each Child	84.010A	2025	51,987	-
Title I - School Quality Improvement	84.010A	2025	119,440	-
<i>Total Title I</i>			368,883	-
<i>Special Education Cluster:</i>				
IDEA Part B - Special Education	84.027A	2025	54,391	-
IDEA Part B - Early Childhood Special Education	84.173A	2025	1,651	-
<i>Total Special Education Cluster</i>			56,042	-
Title IV-A Student Support and Academic Enrichment	84.424A	2025	16,698	-
COVID-19: ARP Education Stabilization Fund	84.425U	2025	609,002	-
Title II-A Improving Teacher Quality	84.367A	2025	17,494	-
<i>Total U.S. Department of Education</i>			1,068,119	-
U. S. Department of Agriculture				
<i>Passed Through the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce:</i>				
<i>Child Nutrition Cluster:</i>				
<i>Cash Assistance:</i>				
School Breakfast Program	10.553	2025	63,015	-
National School Lunch Program	10.555	2025	109,044	-
<i>Total Child Nutrition Cluster</i>			172,059	-
<i>Total U.S. Department of Agriculture</i>			172,059	-
TOTAL FEDERAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE			<u>\$ 1,240,178</u>	<u>\$ -</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of this schedule.

**STEPSTONE ACADEMY
CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO
NOTES TO THE SCHEDULE OF EXPENDITURES OF FEDERAL AWARDS
2 CFR 200.510(B)(6)
FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025**

NOTE A - BASIS OF PRESENTATION

The accompanying Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards (the Schedule) includes the federal award activity of Stepstone Academy, Cuyahoga County, Ohio (the School) under programs of the federal government for the year ended June 30, 2025. The information on this Schedule is prepared in accordance with the requirements of Title 2 U.S. Code of Federal Regulations Part 200, *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* (Uniform Guidance). Because the Schedule presents only a selected portion of the operations of the School, it is not intended to and does not present the financial position, changes in net position, or cash flows of the School.

NOTE B - SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Expenditures reported on the Schedule are reported on the accrual basis of accounting. Such expenditures are recognized following the cost principles contained in the Uniform Guidance, wherein certain types of expenditures may or may not be allowable or may be limited as to reimbursement. The School has elected not to use the de minimus indirect cost rate as allowed under the Uniform Guidance.

NOTE C - CHILD NUTRITION CLUSTER

The School commingles cash receipts from the U.S. Department of Agriculture with similar State Grants. When reporting expenditures on this Schedule, the School assumes it expends federal monies first.

NOTE D - TRANSFERS

The School generally must spend Federal assistance within 15 months of receipt. However, with Ohio Department of Education and Workforce(ODE) approval, an School can transfer (carryover) unspent Federal assistance to the succeeding year, thus allowing the School a total of 27 months to spend the assistance. During fiscal year 2025, the ODE authorized the following transfers:

AL Number / Grant Title	Grant Year	Transfer Out	Transfer In
84.010A Title I	2024	\$ 16,292	
84.010A Title I	2025		\$ 16,292
84.424A Title IV-A Student Support and Academic Enrichment	2024	724	
84.424A Title IV-A Student Support and Academic Enrichment	2025		724
84.173A IDEA Part B - Early Childhood Special Education	2024	768	
84.173A IDEA Part B - Early Childhood Special Education	2025		768
		<u>\$ 17,784</u>	<u>\$ 17,784</u>

**STEPSTONE ACADEMY
CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO
SCHEDULE OF FINDINGS AND QUESTIONED COSTS
2 CFR §200.515
JUNE 30, 2025**

1. SUMMARY OF AUDITOR'S RESULTS

(d) (1) (i)	Type of Financial Statement Opinion	Unmodified
(d) (1) (ii)	Were there any material weaknesses in internal control reported at the financial statement level (GAGAS)?	No
(d) (1) (ii)	Were there any significant deficiencies in internal control reported at the financial statement level (GAGAS)?	None Reported
(d) (1) (iii)	Was there any reported material noncompliance at the financial statement level (GAGAS)?	No
(d) (1) (iv)	Were there any material weaknesses in internal control reported for major federal programs?	No
(d) (1) (iv)	Were there any significant deficiencies in internal control reported for major federal programs?	Yes
(d) (1) (v)	Type of Major Programs' Compliance Opinion	Unmodified
(d) (1) (vi)	Are there any reportable findings under 2 CFR § 200.516(a)?	Yes
(d) (1) (vii)	Major Programs (list): COVID-19: American Rescue Plan Education Stabilization Fund	ALN # 84.425U
(d) (1) (viii)	Dollar Threshold: Type A/B Programs	Type A: > \$750,000 Type B: All others
(d) (1) (ix)	Low Risk Auditee under 2 CFR §200.520?	No

**2. FINDINGS RELATED TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
REQUIRED TO BE REPORTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH GAGAS**

None were noted.

**STEPSTONE ACADEMY
CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO
SCHEDULE OF FINDINGS AND QUESTIONED COSTS
2 CFR §200.515
JUNE 30, 2025
(Continued)**

3. FINDINGS AND QUESTIONED COSTS FOR FEDERAL AWARDS
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Finding Number: 2025-001

Federal Program: COVID-19 ARP – Education Stabilization Fund

Federal Award Identification Number and Year: N/A

Assistance Listing Number (ALN): 84.425U

Federal Awarding Agency: U.S. Department of Education

Compliance Requirement: Special Tests and Provisions – Wage Rate Requirements

Pass-through Entity: Ohio Department of Education and Workforce

Repeat Finding: Yes

Prior Audit Finding Number: 2024-001

Significant Deficiency and Noncompliance – Wage Rate Requirements

Criteria: All prime construction contracts in excess of \$2,000 awarded by non-Federal entities must include a provision for compliance with the Davis-Bacon Act (40 U.S.C. 3141-3144, and 3146-3148) as supplemented by Department of Labor regulations (29 CFR Part 5, “Labor Standards Provisions Applicable to Contracts Covering Federally Financed and Assisted Construction”). In accordance with the statute, contractors must be required to pay wages to laborers and mechanics at a rate not less than the prevailing wages specified in a wage determination made by the Secretary of Labor.

In addition, contractors must be required to pay wages not less than once a week. The non-Federal entity must place a copy of the current prevailing wage determination issued by the Department of Labor in each solicitation. The decision to award a contract or subcontract must be conditioned upon the acceptance of the wage determination. (2 CFR 200 Appendix II (d)).

Condition: There was no documentation to support compliance with wage rate requirements or documentation showing that the School required contractors to comply with prevailing wage requirements for any of the construction work. Total costs for various building improvements, renovations & repairs were \$29,625 during fiscal year 2025.

Questioned Costs: None.

Identification of How Questioned Costs Were Computed: N/A

Context: The School provided assurances to the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce's Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Plan (CCIP) that it would comply with wage rate requirements when it communicated its plan to use federal ESSER funds for improvements to its building.

Cause and Effect: The School did not comply with the special test of wage rate requirements on the various renovation, repair and improvement projects to its building that were funded with federal grants.

**STEPSTONE ACADEMY
CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO
SCHEDULE OF FINDINGS AND QUESTIONED COSTS
2 CFR §200.515
JUNE 30, 2025
(Continued)**

Recommendation: The School should implement processes to review federal grant compliance requirements and implement procedures to help ensure the School complies with applicable requirements.

Views of Responsible Officials and Corrective Action Plan: See Corrective Action Plan.



**STEPSTONE ACADEMY
CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO
CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN
2 CFR §200.511 (C)
JUNE 30, 2025**

Finding Number: 2025-001: ARP Education Stabilization Fund – Wage Rate Requirements

Planned Corrective Action: Summary of corrective action to be taken

Anticipated Completion Date: December 31, 2025

Responsible Contact Person: Dave Massa, Treasurer

As recommended, the School will perform existing controls and establish new controls to ensure that contractors and subcontractors are in compliance with all labor standards by conducting on-site inspections and collecting the required certified payroll documentation in a timely manner. Specifically, the School will add an Affidavit of Compliance Form to the contracts that will be required to be submitted by the grantee before closing. A project will not be considered closed until the School has received an executed copy of the form. Upon notification of construction commencement, the School will immediately begin monitoring for Wage Rate Requirements in the form of both on-site inspections and review and approval of certified payroll reports.



SUMMARY SCHEDULE OF PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS
2 CFR Section 200.511(b)
June 30, 2025

Finding Number	Finding Summary	Status	Additional Information
2024-001	Significant Deficiency and Noncompliance: Special Tests and Provisions – Wage Rate Requirements. Lack of documentation to support compliance with wage rate requirements or documentation showing that the School required contractors to comply with prevailing wage requirements for any of the construction work.	Not corrected – these were the final payments on the contracts that were previously signed and not in compliance with the prevailing wage requirements when originally signed.	Reissued as finding number 2025-001.

OHIO AUDITOR OF STATE KEITH FABER



STEPSTONE ACADEMY

CUYAHOGA COUNTY

AUDITOR OF STATE OF OHIO CERTIFICATION

This is a true and correct copy of the report, which is required to be filed pursuant to Section 117.26, Revised Code, and which is filed in the Office of the Ohio Auditor of State in Columbus, Ohio.



Certified for Release 4/21/2026

65 East State Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215
Phone: 614-466-4514 or 800-282-0370

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at
www.ohioauditor.gov