



Charter School Renewal Recommendation	
Charter School	Highland Community School
Date of Site Visit	November 4, 2019

The renewal recommendation is based on a thorough review and analysis of information and data from the following:

- Charter School Performance Summary
- Application for Renewal
- School Site Visit

Charter School Performance Summary		
Rating:	Met the Standard	Did Not Meet the Standard
Educational Performance	X	
Financial Performance	X	
Organizational Performance	X	
Summary Comments:		
<p>Highland’s mission is that they are a community of diverse families and educators working together to offer quality education in a nurturing environment that enriches, empowers and inspires the whole child to reach his/her potential. They encourage and support parents to be responsible for, and involved with, their children’s education. The mission was evident throughout the educational, financial and organizational performance and observed during the site visit.</p> <p>Educational Performance: Highland Community School has exceeded the district’s performance in academic areas and implemented a plan to improve further on these results through the addition of instructional coaching resources, goal-setting processes and increased collaboration among educators. Highland maintains an average attendance rate of 95%. Highland consistently maintains a low mobility rate and a high stability rate, which demonstrates that Highland families remain at the school and return each year.</p> <p>While Highland continues to meet its performance metrics, there are some gaps in the student performance. The leadership team recognizes these challenges and has strategies in place to address these gaps in a meaningful way.</p> <p>Financial Performance: Highland has met the standard for financial performance and demonstrated a declining debt ratio and solid financial procedures and performance.</p> <p>Organizational Performance: Highland has met its organizational performance metrics and has a high level of parental involvement. Highland is one of the most racially diverse programs in MPS. The school has met all its performance metrics, with the exception of health and safety due to immunizations; however, the school has a plan in place to address this issue. Highland has a strong leadership and governance structure, active parental engagement and a solid educational program.</p>		

Application for Renewal

Met the Standard	Did Not Meet the Standard
<p>The Application for Renewal provides <i>clear, concise and compelling information</i> in the areas of Educational, Financial and Organizational Performance. The school has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Included ample evidence of increased student achievement or shown continuous improvement; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provided credible examples and documented evidence of its financial performance; and <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illustrated sufficiently and convincingly that it is organizationally sound. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The school's plans for continued success are clearly and effectively outlined with full details, descriptions, and explanations. 	<p>The Application for Renewal <i>does not provide clear, concise and compelling information</i> in the areas of Educational, Financial and Organizational Performance. The school did not satisfactorily address application components. Responses lack details. Descriptions and/or examples are underdeveloped. The school provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient evidence of increased student achievement or continuous improvement; <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear examples and evidence of its financial performance; and <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate evidence that it is organizationally sound. <input type="checkbox"/> The school's plans for continued success are unclear and not fully described or developed.
X	

Summary Comments:

Highland Community School submitted a Letter of Intent that demonstrated they are proud to be a part of the Milwaukee Public Schools community and proud to be a part of the largest public Montessori schools in the nation. Highland shares the same MPS values of rigorous academic standards and parental engagement.

Highland's application for renewal was strong, highlighting the fact that the school has met standards in the areas of academic, financial and organizational performance. A variety of strategies were employed to meet the standards and improve educational outcomes. These included a greater emphasis on data for goal-setting, the implementation of a coaching model and the utilization of comprehensive academic teachers to increase students' fluency in reading and mathematics.

Highland has recognized that there is room for improvement with closing the achievement gap, primarily in math and English Language Arts (ELA). They have restructured the building into four "families", each consisting of a (1) Children's House, (2) Lower Elementary and (3) Upper Elementary classroom that feeds into the Adolescent Program. The purpose of the restructuring is to create a sense of belonging, community engagement and accountability with the smaller families as Highland has grown over time. This restructure will allow an increase in time for teacher collaboration between levels, a decrease in lost instructional time due to transitions, and an increase in the opportunity for student leadership. Highland has incorporated a Comprehensive Academic Teacher (CAT) who supports student who are struggling, both in the classroom and individualized. An academic coach supports the teacher in the classroom for growth in Montessori educational practices. There has been an increase in horizontal and vertical alignment to provide equitable education for all students. Finally, they have implemented Child Study to strengthen its Response to Interventions (Rtl) model. Child Find provides an opportunity and structure to focus on early intervention for academic, social, emotional and behavioral concerns. In addition, Highland has added a full-time social worker to support the needs of its students. Highland has outlined its changes that need to be in place to impact student achievement as well as meeting the social-emotional needs of its students.

The school's financial performance is demonstrably stable, having focused on developing and implementing a five-year financial plan. Highland has had a clean audit of its financial practices and is performing well against annual budget targets.

Highland's plans for ongoing success include continuing the tradition of parental engagement and building staff from within its community. Highland's governing body is solely made up of parents who make key decisions for the school community. There is a focus on developing additional community

partnerships to strengthen what the school currently offers for its students and families. The degree of parental involvement is such that parents are always in the building helping where needed and to the strengths of what they can offer, some of these examples include: building and maintenance repairs, art classes, classroom volunteers, carpentry, donations, and camping trip chaperones.

School Site Visit

Met the Standard	Did Not Meet the Standard
<p>Charter school site visit provided excellent further evidence that the school is meeting performance standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> School presentations clearly and effectively communicated information from its Application for Renewal. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> School sufficiently addressed any issues/concerns raised by the MPS Charter School Contract Review Team members. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> School (if appropriate) provided sufficient supplementary information to further clarify performance results and ratings. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Samples of student work and classroom visits reflected strongly and positively the school's teaching and learning practices. 	<p>Charter school site visit did not provide compelling evidence that the school is meeting performance standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> School presentations insufficiently communicated information from its Application for Renewal. <input type="checkbox"/> School did not adequately address issues/concerns raised by the MPS Charter School Contract Review Team members. <input type="checkbox"/> School did not provide ample supplementary information to clarify performance results and ratings. <input type="checkbox"/> Samples of student work and classroom visits did not necessarily positively reflect the school's teaching and learning practices.
X	

Summary Comments:

Highland Community School provided excellent further evidence that the school is meeting performance standards. Teachers, parents, governing board members and administrators answered questions around equity and opportunities for those students of color that are not yet performing at grade level.

It was evident that the school's mission and vision are the guiding principles and foundations of the educational program as demonstrated in the level of parental involvement, classroom instruction, student performance and social-emotional support for students. Highland's focus on the environment was illustrated in the aquaponics lab as well as the community garden and children's play area. Highland's passion for social justice is displayed throughout the classrooms and hallways. Students are empowered and inspiring as they expand their horizons by traveling to Montessori Model United Nations Conferences that are held around the world as well as the Association Montessori International Conference in Amsterdam to present on the Highland Way and how to build a strong community to over 300 people from 59 countries. Highland Community School has been building a peaceful community since December 1968.

The Montessori curriculum, parental involvement and sense of community were strong at Highland. The parents and staff prided the school in social justice. It was evident that students valued the sentiment of the social justice mission of the adults as they demonstrated the principle throughout the day through communication, assisting peers and caring for the environment. It was a community that provided a sense of belonging. Over 90% of parent's volunteered or attended conferences or events at Highland.

The classroom observation allowed for an opportunity to experience the school's philosophy and outcomes. Students were highly engaged in the adolescence program offering thoughtful and precise feedback to their peers. It was a respectful and engaging learning environment, in which students were not only developing their research, writing and presentation skills, but were also honing their interpersonal skills. The Children's House classrooms provide students with a safe, challenging yet nurturing learning environment. Students working independently, in small groups, or with the teacher were consistently in all classrooms during the visit. Each class displayed learning visuals around the

classroom.

Highland is staffed with an experienced team of educators that are trained in the Montessori practices. Parents are active in their child's entire educational journey. This involvement demonstrates that students' academic success and the excitement shown by students, parents and staff. The students are well adapted to the program and have strong relationships with both staff and parents.

The testimonials from parents and students were compelling and there is strong parental and staff commitment to the success of each student. The student focus group clearly articulated the rapport they have with their teachers, administrators and peers. The students shared their engagement outside the academic environment, explaining the opportunities to travel within the country and abroad.

Some of these testimonies included the following statements:

"We are a family; have each other's back. Teachers make everyone feel welcome. They are preparing us for high school."

"Everyone has bad days...teachers are trustworthy and you can talk to them about anything."

"We feel empowered to continue the work that we have learned about. For example, last week we got to listen about someone who had a positive change in the world, community and I researched more about it."

"I love that at Highland you can make friends with people from different backgrounds and religions. Highland is my home and I love it."

Highland has provided the Team with evidence that the community partnerships are valued and have impacted students. Highland has received letters of support from the following organizations: Amaranth Bakery and Café; Kohl's Wild Theater; Montessori Institute of Milwaukee; Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful; Marquette University High School; To Solution, Girl Scouts of Wisconsin Southeast; Marquette University; Quorum Architects, Inc.; University of Wisconsin Milwaukee; Reflo Sustainable Water Solutions; University of Wisconsin River Falls; Urban Ecology Center; National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector; The Green Team of Wisconsin, Inc.; and Milwaukee Art Museum.

Charter School Review Team Renewal Recommendation

X	Full-Term Term of 5 Years	<p>To be eligible, schools must be in the last year of the contract term and have achieved the following: <i>There is a strong and compelling record of evidence that the school met or exceeded the performance standards in the areas of Educational Performance, Financial Performance, and Organizational Performance.</i></p> <p><u>Guidelines for Recommending Five-Year Renewal:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Team determines that a school primarily merits <i>Met the Standard</i> ratings in the performance areas. • A school that receives mixed ratings may be recommended for a full five-year renewal term if sufficient additional evidence obtained from the school's Application for Renewal and School Site Visit make this a credible recommendation.
	Short-Term Term of 3 Years	<p>To be eligible, schools must be in the last year of the contract term and have achieved the following: <i>There is a strong and compelling record of evidence that the school met or exceeded a considerable number of the performance standards in the areas of Educational Performance, Financial Performance, and Organizational Performance and/or shows continuous, meaningful improvement toward meeting the performance standards.</i></p> <p><u>Guidelines for Recommending Three-Year Renewal:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Team determines that a school primarily merits <i>Met the Standard</i> ratings or demonstrates continuous and meaningful improvement in the performance areas. • A school that receives mixed ratings may be recommended for a three-year renewal term if evidence obtained from the school's Application for Renewal and School Site Visit make this a credible recommendation.
	Non-Renewal / Revocation	<p><i>The school does not apply for renewal or the school's educational, financial, and/or organizational performance results do not meet defined standards and are deemed unsatisfactory. This would result in a recommendation for non-renewal/revocation.</i></p> <p><u>Guidelines for Recommending Non-Renewal / Revocation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school receives a <i>Did Not Meet the Standard</i> in all three areas of performance. • A school that receives mixed ratings may be recommended for non-renewal/ revocation if evidence obtained from the school's Performance Summary, Application for Renewal, and School Site Visit make this a credible recommendation.

Summary Comments:

Highland Community School has a strong and compelling record of evidence that the school met the performance standards in the areas of educational, financial and organizational performance. The Highland community aims to educate children using the Montessori approach, a multi-sensory curriculum that allows for individualized teacher planning and for students to learn and be challenged at their own pace as they develop academically. It was clear that students are a part of the community that fosters self-confidence, leadership, and respect for self and others. The Team observed how teachers encourage students to grow as self-motivated, intellectually engaged learners who will serve their larger communities as both accomplished students and ambassadors of social justice.

It is critical that Milwaukee Public Schools continues to offer a program that is providing amazing opportunities for our students. Highland is a diverse community that mirrors our communities in the city of Milwaukee. Students and families have selected to move to Highland; their satisfaction and high parental involvement was evident from their personal testimonies.

Highland's partnership has brought value to the Milwaukee Public Schools community. More than 75% of its 8th graders attend an MPS high school, such as King IB. Highland has been an MPS school since 1996 and continues to offer high quality education to our students in Milwaukee Public Schools. The overwhelming parental engagement, the diversity of the student population, the Montessori education, and the emphasis on social justice have upheld the mission and vision of Highland's educational program.

Highland's vision illustrates that changing the world by nurturing children and their families to be informed, compassionate, and life-long learners who are a force for change in education, the community and society. Highland continues to provide students and families a high-quality Montessori education that emphasizes holistic development of all children. Highland values and celebrates all members of the community as equal and integral partners in its mission and services. Highland teaches and practices social justice as a core component of classroom lessons, co-curricular life and

student experience. They build the capacity of staff and teachers to better serve student learning and leadership. Finally, Highland aligns resources to support its plan to ensure a stable and thriving future for children and families.

Based on the evidence provided in the Charter School Application for Renewal; Performance Summary; Site Visit, which included classroom visits, testimony from students, staff and parents; along with additional data and artifacts the Charter School Review Team recommends a full-term charter school contract renewal.

MPS Charter School Review Team Members

Richard Anderson	MPS Contracted School Services
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Marva Herndon	Milwaukee Board of School Directors
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Signature: *Bridget Schock*
Bridget Schock, Contracted School Services

Date: November 4, 2019