



<b>Charter School Renewal Recommendation</b>	
Charter School	<b>Milwaukee Excellence Charter School</b>
Date of Site Visit	<b>October 19, 2020</b>

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

<b>Charter School Performance Summary</b>		
Rating:	Met the Standard	Did Not Meet the Standard
<b>Educational Performance</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>Financial Performance</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>Organizational Performance</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>Summary Comments:</b>		
<p>The mission of Milwaukee Excellence Charter School (MXCS) is through rigorous academics and character education essential for success, Milwaukee Excellence Charter School educates 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students to excel within and graduate from four-year colleges and to pursue the professions of their choice. MXCS was established in fall 2016 serving students in grade 6 and growing a grade level each year where they currently serve grades 6 through 10. Please note that given the growth in grade levels each year, years one and three served as baseline data for the Wisconsin Student Assessment System (WSAS). During year one, MXCS only assessed grade 6 in math and reading. By year three, they added an additional WSAS test for grade 8 in science and social studies. This is the first renewal cycle for MXCS.</p> <p><b>Educational Performance:</b> Milwaukee Excellence Charter School has continued to show gains in mathematics and well surpassing the district after year one. In year two, MXCS showed gains in English Language Arts (ELA) and unfortunately dipped in year three. The school was able to address the rationale for the decline in ELA and have put systems in place to ensure that there is consistent growth in this area. The WSAS science and social studies test in year three, served as the baseline data. Given this baseline, they have analyzed the results and made necessary adjustments for gains in this area. The school is responding intentionally, thoughtfully, and proactively to address the unmet academic standards.</p> <p>Milwaukee Excellence is performing higher than the statewide average for African American students. In the areas of mathematics, the school's outcome for African American students is almost three times higher than the statewide average.</p> <p>For the 2019-20 school year, all federal and state requirements to administer academic assessments were suspended, as a result of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver granted by the Department of Education on March 23, 2020 and the Wisconsin Act 185 enacted on April 15, 2020, there were no WSAS assessments this year.</p>		

Milwaukee Excellence has demonstrated strong academic performance, an ability to consider the whole child in teaching and supporting students and are evolving offerings to include a variety of Advanced Placement (AP) courses. MXCS is striving to deliver a college preparatory education where student voice is included in the decision-making process.

Milwaukee Excellence continues to meet its attendance rate, which averages 94% as well as their mobility rate. MXCS did not meet the stability rate in year four. This was in part due to the increase in grade level to include 9<sup>th</sup> grade as well as the district increase in stability rate for the 2019-20 school year.

Milwaukee Excellence has shown academic achievement as it relates to the state report card. They have significantly exceeded expectations for two consecutive years.

Milwaukee Excellence is a data-driven organization in its approach to demonstrate growth. Data is used to drive decisions and improve its academic performance. They continue to update approaches, implement curriculum and instructional techniques and make staffing decisions based on the needs of the students.

**Financial Performance:**

Milwaukee Excellence has demonstrated that it is a financially sound organization. Milwaukee Excellence has consistently received an unmodified opinion on its audits and no material weaknesses. MXCS is one of three charter schools in the district to be the recipient of the DPI Charter School Grant that totaled \$750,000, for which they are currently in year three of implementation. The contract revenues/expenditures, per the MPS contract funds, illustrates a small surplus and show no budget deficits.

**Organizational Performance:**

Milwaukee Excellence has met the large majority of its organizational performance measures throughout the contract term. The school has an effective organizational structure that engages diverse stakeholders in meaningful and relevant ways.

The one measure they did not meet was health and safety due to immunizations. The school has a plan to address this moving forward to ensure all students receive the proper immunizations and its documented accordingly.

Milwaukee Excellence values parent voice. The school views its parents as their partners. MXCS has created a parent organization which provides feedback to school leadership and board members. As evidenced by the documented parent survey, parents are satisfied with the technology support that has been delivered during the school closure and virtual platform.

Milwaukee Excellence has a diverse board of directors with various backgrounds. The school governance and human resources departments consist of forward-thinking personnel who develop strategies that continue to put the needs of students first.

As Milwaukee Excellence continues to grow through grade 12, the space they currently occupy will need to be addressed to accommodate this growth.

## 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"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Included ample evidence of increased student achievement or shown continuous improvement;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provided credible examples and documented evidence of its financial performance; and</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illustrated sufficiently and convincingly that it is organizationally sound.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The school's plans for continued success are clearly and effectively outlined with full details, descriptions, and explanations.</li> </ul>	<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"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient evidence of increased student achievement or continuous improvement;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Unclear examples and evidence of its financial performance; and</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate evidence that it is organizationally sound.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The school's plans for continued success are unclear and not fully described or developed.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Milwaukee Excellence Charter School has met all components of its application for renewal based on the above criteria.</b></p>	

### Summary Comments:

Milwaukee Excellence Charter School was established as a non-instrumentality charter school in 2016 with Milwaukee Public Schools with the vision that every student can and will succeed when given rigorous, college preparatory education regardless of their economic background, race, zip code, or home life. MXCS develops students academically, socially, and emotionally and they prepare students to embrace the promise of their futures, allowing students to access and thrive within some of the nation's best universities and most prestigious colleges across the country. Milwaukee Excellence's educational philosophy is built on the following seven beliefs: literacy and math are foundational to all learners; strong character education is essential for success in college and a life of opportunity; highly-skilled teachers that care about the growth of every student are needed to produce dramatic results in student achievement; a joyful and respectful culture is the foundation for a strong learning environment; a longer school day helps close the achievement gap for at-risk students; and families and community partners are critical for success.

Milwaukee Excellence has demonstrated commitment to its partnership with Milwaukee Public Schools. The application provided evidence of growth, achievement, and also set forth specific ideas and plans for moving forward to improve. MXCS uses data to strategically plan for the success of all students. The founder, as well as the leadership at MXCS, are native of Milwaukee (and proud MPS alumni) and dedicated to developing youth in this city with high expectations and opening pathways for future careers.

The application included ample evidence of increased student achievement and continued improvement. Milwaukee Excellence has received "significantly exceeding expectations" on the state report cards after year two and three of opening its doors. Currently, all sophomores are engaged in the AP computer science course offered by the school. As a result, Milwaukee Excellence will triple the number of African American students taking the AP Computer Science exam in spring 2021.

Milwaukee Excellence has moved to a zero-suspension policy and has shown favorably in its suspension rates, recognizing zero suspension in the 2019-20 school year. The school believes that the students need to remain in school and work with them to improve behaviors. Milwaukee Excellence has instilled three pillars: efficient data-driven systems; student voices matter; and results show us the light.

Milwaukee Excellence prides itself as being a data driven school. It uses data to drive focus for improvement. MXCS listens to students and families to identify their needs. They use data to guide efforts towards corrective action that impacts student outcomes. Milwaukee Excellence offers advanced placement courses, debate and national student organizations. They have launched a new STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) class in grades 6 through 10 to support the conditions of the changing world. Milwaukee Excellence offers students double reading and math. The goal is that by the time students graduate high school they will have completed four AP courses.

The application provided credible examples and documented evidence of its financial performance. Milwaukee Excellence provided evidence as to the financial and organizational soundness, not only in the past, but for the future.

The application provided sound and organized plans for moving forward with continued success for both virtual and in-person models. Every student that attends Milwaukee Excellence receives a Chromebook. When schools closed in March 2020, the school was able to seamlessly continue educational services to students. In addition to instructional support, MXCS has conducted virtual events with both students and families such as weekly trivia, townhall meetings, homecoming dance, lock-in, and talent shows. Milwaukee Excellence strongly believes that the family partnerships are critical for student success. They have developed multiple communication systems to ensure that families are partners in their student's education.

Milwaukee Excellence has demonstrated that they have developed some great partnerships with different community organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club Grad-Plus Program, Pearls for Teen Girls, UW-Milwaukee Future Success Program, Marquette Talent Search, Beyond STEM MKE, and Jet Constellations. These partnerships have demonstrated positive impact on students.

The renewal application provided evidence of growth, achievement, and also set forth specific ideas and plans for moving forward to improve in areas of concern. One concern was the decline in teacher retention rate and in the enrollment stability rate. This was addressed as Milwaukee Excellence is working towards a recruitment plan for teachers beyond the Teach for America model that was in place. The addition of ninth grade impacted the stability rate. As a new school, they have difficulties offering the full programming at this time that other, more comprehensive high schools are able to offer which has resulted in some students moving on to other high schools. The school is working on expanding the enrichment and extracurricular programs that are offered and will be working on concerns relating to space.

The school's plans for continued success are clearly and effectively outlined with full details, descriptions, and explanations. Milwaukee Excellence has raised a concern on the facility space as they expand to serve grades 6 through 12 over the next few years. The current space may not allow for this desired growth. However, the school leadership has indicated that it has and will continue to explore options with regard to this issue.

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

### Summary Comments:

Milwaukee Excellence's site visit included presentations and testimony from school leadership, staff, parents, current students, and alumni. The presentation clearly and effectively communicated information from its application for renewal, but also provided additional information above and beyond that contained in the application including information on upcoming courses, programs, and other developments for school. During the site visit, Milwaukee Excellence provided supplemental information demonstrating success, achievement and plans for continued growth moving forward.

Milwaukee Excellence develops the whole child and strongly believes in relationships and that all students can reach their true potential academically as well as social-emotional outcomes. The school's focus on minimizing punitive actions and instead focusing on building restorative connections between students when conflict occurs seems effective. They hold high expectations for students and staff. The academic expectations are rigorous and results are strong.

Parents expressed their gratitude to the school community for the support their students have received while at Milwaukee Excellence. It was clear that the school not only provides academic growth, but social-emotional growth by wrapping supports around the students to meet their needs. Parents expressed that curriculum, safety, student interest, and social development are important to them and that's why they chose Milwaukee Excellence for their young person. One parent stated "I love what we are doing together". This provides evidence of the strong parental partnership that is one of the tenants to Milwaukee Excellence.

Milwaukee Excellence's team openly and sufficiently addressed any concerns raised by the community, specifically those relating to difficult issues such as student academic performance, enrollment, stability rate, teacher retention, and building space. While it is clear these issues are important, Milwaukee Excellence took in feedback and addressed how they continue to develop moving forward.

The school provided samples of student work and classroom visits that reflected strongly and positively on the school's teaching and learning practices. The Review Team had an opportunity to visit classrooms during the synchronous virtual learning instructional time. Classes were well structured and organized. There were consistent messages throughout all classrooms. Students were engaged and actively participated in the lessons. The teachers effectively used breakout rooms for

additional small group instruction. The Review Team was able to listen to students and teachers engage in productive discourse and effective use of technology. Although class sizes were large, there were multiple staff members monitoring student engagement and reinforcing expectations. Objectives and norms were clearly established and communicated often. Teachers provide additional office hours to support the individual needs of students.

It was clear that the teachers have developed meaningful relationships with students and they care about their students. This was communicated by several students during the focus groups as well as the testimony provided in the presentation. Students spoke of how Milwaukee Excellence was like a family and provided testimony of how they feel supported by the staff. Some of the student testimonials are below:

*Personally, I have gone through some personal issues during this pandemic, my father died. I was an emotional wreck, I didn't feel right. My teachers and administrators knew something was wrong and each one of them started to check on me. My school community were the only people I was able to count on. They helped me get support and conducted a fund raiser to help me and my mother to help pay for the funeral. You don't see this that often. We got help from them, when nobody would help us. I was at my weakest and my school was there. They are talking about difficult issues that concern us. They are talking about Black Lives Matter movement. They even created a course Black Arts Matter to educate us on the history of African Americans and their contributions to our society. For the first time, I'm learning about my history and reading books relevant to my history by black authors. Previously we were uninformed and now we have professionals teach us about our lives. This does not happen often. As a fifteen-year-old child, I felt that I am under-represented, as illustrated on television and social media. My school opens up and talks about why our lives matter, they let us tell our stories. Milwaukee Excellence has helped me be comfortable with who I am, be confident in who I am today and provided me with recognizing my strengths as a great writer.*

*- Jehail's Personal Testimony*

*I matured a lot after coming to Milwaukee Excellence. Previously, I was suspended a lot expelled from other schools a lot. Milwaukee Excellence has helped me express my anger in creative and not negative ways. Milwaukee Excellence has prepared me to be interested in untapped potentials that were previously overlooked and it gives me an advantage of others. Milwaukee Excellence has prepared me beyond my peers and instilled an interest in coding, which I never thought I would be interested in.*

*- William's Personal Testimony*

## Charter School Review Team Renewal Recommendation

<b>X</b>	<b>Full-Term</b> Term of 5 Years	<p>To be eligible, schools must be in the last year of the contract term and have achieved the following: <b><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></b></p> <p><u>Guidelines for Recommending Five-Year Renewal:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Team determines that a school primarily merits <i>Met the Standard</i> ratings in the performance areas.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
	<b>Short-Term</b> Term of 3 Years	<p>To be eligible, schools must be in the last year of the contract term and have achieved the following: <b><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></b></p> <p><u>Guidelines for Recommending Three-Year Renewal:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Team determines that a school primarily merits <i>Met the Standard</i> ratings or demonstrates continuous and meaningful improvement in the performance areas.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
	<b>Non-Renewal / Revocation</b>	<p><b><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></b></p> <p><u>Guidelines for Recommending Non-Renewal / Revocation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school receives a <i>Did Not Meet the Standard</i> in all three areas of performance.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>

### Summary Comments:

The Charter School Review Team recommends a full-term charter contract renewal for Milwaukee Excellence Charter School. The school demonstrated strong and compelling evidence that the school met or exceeded the performance standards in the areas of educational, financial and organizational performance. Milwaukee Excellence has an administration and staff that is passionate about their work and committed to the school's mission, vision, and core values. Milwaukee Excellence offers a unique and much needed program for our students and families, especially as it relates to coding and computer science.

Since Milwaukee Excellence has opened its doors in the fall of 2016, it has shown itself to be passionately committed to its community and students. Their dedication to the three pillars (efficient data-driven systems, student voices matter, and results show us the light) is demonstrated by their willingness to adapt and improve their program as they grow. If they fall short of meeting a goal, they intentionally shift their methods to ensure that the goals are met. It is evident, based on the information reviewed and testimonies of parents and students, that the students are at the center of the decisions made at Milwaukee Excellence and that the students are receiving a quality education that develops academics and character.

Most of the school leaders are proud and vocal Milwaukee Public School alumni. Milwaukee Excellence's values are modeled by their students, who appreciate the dedication the school has shown to their education. The school is making an effort (and having results) in changing the perception of young, African American students. They require all sophomores to engage in AP Computer Science where they will nearly triple the number of African American students taking the AP computer Science exam in spring 2021.

Milwaukee Excellence is organizationally and financially sound and has met the vast majority of its academic, organizational, and financial performance measures. In areas where there are concerns, Milwaukee Excellence has acknowledged these areas and has demonstrated plans for making improvements and continuing to grow.

One concern was expressed by both the students and the school leadership for a desire for additional space as they expand their programming through high school. The Review Team and school leadership recognizes this challenge and the school will continue to address the issue moving forward.

The visit was inspiring and uplifting. The students, parents/guardians, staff, and school leadership demonstrated the strength of collective responsibility, efficacy, professionalism, and culturally and linguistically responsive practices. Milwaukee Excellence, in its first years, has dispelled myths and created powerful, lifelong opportunities for students, families and staff. Based on the evidence received from the renewal, there are several future leaders developing among its students.

Lastly, the testimony provided by students and families confirmed that this is an important and much needed program for Milwaukee. The students and families care deeply for the school. They love their staff and feel they are approachable and fair. The students feel safe and feel that Milwaukee Excellence is like a family. Most importantly, the students and parents feel that Milwaukee Excellence is preparing them for their future.

**MPS Charter School Review Team Members**

Richard Anderson	MPS Contract Law Coordinator
Mickell Daniels	Community Member
Patricia Ellis	MPS Equity and Access
Lisa Haar	MPS School Performance Coordinator
Marva Herndon	Milwaukee Board of School Director
Ashley Hughes	MPS Finance
Suzanne Maldonado	Community Member
Megan O'Halloran	Milwaukee Board of School Director
Marc Sanders	MPS Research and Assessment
Tracy Wozniak	MPS Specialized Services

Signature:     *Bridget Schock*     Date:     October 19, 2020      
Bridget Schock, Contracted School Services