

MPS CHARTER SCHOOL CONTRACT RECOMMENDATION	
<b>CHARTER SCHOOL</b>	Highland Community School
<b>MISSION</b>	Highland is a community of diverse families and educators working together to offer quality Montessori education in a nurturing environment that enriches, empowers, and inspires children to reach their potential and encourages parents to become responsible for and involved with their children's education.
<b>VISION</b>	Changing the world by nurturing children and their families to be informed, compassionate, life-long learners who are a force for change in education, the community and society.
<b>YEAR OPENED</b>	1996 (established in 1968)
<b>DATE OF SITE VISIT</b>	October 15, 2024

The renewal recommendation is based on a thorough review and analysis of information and data from the following and summarized in this document: Charter School Performance Summary, Application for Renewal, and school site visit.

CHARTER SCHOOL REVIEW TEAM RENEWAL RECOMMENDATION		
	Renewal Terms	Criteria
<b>X</b>	<b>Full-term Renewal</b> Term of five years	<p>To be eligible, schools must be in the last year of the contract term and have achieved the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There is a strong and compelling record of evidence that the school met the performance standards in the areas of Academic Performance, Financial Performance, and Organizational Performance.</li> </ul> <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 Renewal</b> Term of three	To be eligible, schools must be in the last year of the contract term and have achieved the following:

	years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a strong and compelling record of evidence that the school met a considerable number of the performance standards (approaches the standards) in the areas of Academic Performance, Financial Performance, and Organizational Performance and/or shows continuous, meaningful improvement toward meeting the performance standards.</li> </ul> <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> or <i>Approaching 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>To be considered for non-renewal or revocation, the school does not apply for renewal or the school's academic, financial, and/or organizational performance results do not meet the standards and are deemed unsatisfactory. This would result in a recommendation for non-renewal/revocation.</p> <p><u>Guidelines for Recommending Non-Renewal / Revocation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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/ renovation if evidence obtained from the school's Performance Summary, Application for Renewal, and School Site Visit make this a credible recommendation.</li> </ul>

CHARTER SCHOOL PRELIMINARY PERFORMANCE SUMMARY			
	Met the Standard (At least 75%)	Approaches the Standard (Between 50%-74%)	Did Not Meet the Standard (Below 50%)
Academic Performance	X		
Financial Standard	X		
Organizational Standard	X		
CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL			
Met the Standard	Approaches the Standard	Did Not Meet the Standard	

<p>The Application for Renewal provides clear, concise and compelling information in the areas of Academic, 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 provides information in the areas of Academic, Financial and Organizational Performance. The information provided does not fully meet the expectations of the standard. Some of the information provided is developing and there is evidence of growth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provided some evidence of increased student achievement or continuous improvement;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provided some evidence of its financial performance; and</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provided some evidence that it is organizationally sound.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The school's plans for continued success were partially developed and did not provide sufficient evidence to support the plan's for success.</li> </ul>	<p>The Application for Renewal does not provide clear, concise and compelling information in the areas of Academic, 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>
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**CHARTER SCHOOL SITE VISIT**

<b>Met the Standard</b>	<b>Approaches the Standard</b>	<b>Did Not Meet the Standard</b>
<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 provided some evidence that the school is meeting some of the performance standards. The information provided does not fully meet the expectations of the standard. Some of the information provided is developing and the school demonstrated evidence of growth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> School presentation partially communicated information from its Application for Renewal.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> School addressed some of the issues/concerns raised by the MPS Charter School Contract Review Team members.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> School provided some supplementary information to clarify performance results and ratings.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Samples of student work and classroom visits provided some information to support the school's teaching and</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 presentation 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>

learning practices.

## SUMMARY COMMENTS

Highland is a community of diverse families and educators working together to offer quality Montessori education in a nurturing environment that enriches, empowers, and inspires children to reach their potential and encourages parents to become responsible for and involved with their children's education. Highland nurtures children and families to be informed, compassionate, life-long learners who are a force for change in education, community, and society. Highland's mission and vision were evident throughout the academic, financial, and organizational performance standards and observed during the site visit.

### RECOMMENDATION

Based on the evidence provided in the Charter School Application for Renewal, Preliminary Performance Summary, site visit (which included a school presentation, classroom visits, and testimony from students and parents), and additional information from the school team, the Charter School Review Team recommends a full-term charter school contract renewal.

Highland Community School aims to educate children using the Montessori approach, a multisensory 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. Highland Community School strives to create a better world by cultivating creativity and self-confidence in students to become life-long learners and thereby becoming the leaders of their communities.

### ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Highland has consistently met all of its academic performance standards. Through data analysis, Highland recognizes the need for an intentional focus on math to enhance outcomes for students through the use of successful strategies that have been used with the reading and writing initiatives at Highland.

Highland is committed to doing what is best for the whole child. All teachers are Montessori certified and are committed to Highland as noted through their long-tenured faculty and the leader's dedication to growing staff within the community. Through the school's application, it was noted that Highland has many resources and programs that are used to support the development of the whole child. Those examples include: Child Find to identify and support students; Nautilus Approach to support behavior as a proactive means; Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) to support positive relationships throughout the school community as well as hiring a full-time counselor that provides weekly lessons and individual/small group support; Montessori coaching for all staff; adoption of *Learning for Justice* (aligned to Social Justice Standards) to support culturally responsive teaching; and cultivating various clubs, capstone projects, and partnerships.

### FINANCIAL STANDARDS

Highland has continuously met all of its financial performance standards. Highland continues to be in a strong financial position.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STANDARDS**

The school has met all of its organizational performance standards. Highland's family involvement is incredibly strong, with over 7,000 documented volunteer hours each year. Highland prides itself in the commitment on the whole child, which includes the family. Parents are at the forefront of decision-making practices which includes six family-led committees and a board of directors. Parents are involved in clubs and sports, as well as other events throughout the year.

## **SCHOOL SITE VISIT**

Highland's presentation provided additional evidence of the educational program. The mission and vision was woven through the presentation and in alignment to the other components of this renewal. The capstone presentations allowed the team to experience the culminating projects from third through eighth grade. In third grade, students complete a community project related to social justice. In sixth grade, students attend United Nations, which concludes a service project related to a country. In eighth grade, students travel to Costa Rica, where they stay with a host family and are immersed in the culture. Students were able to provide, in detail, the work that led up to these projects. There are camping trips that students get to explore in nature throughout the year in addition to many other family activities. Students in the adolescence program run the student café to raise money for the trip to Costa Rica by selling baked goods and coffee to families and staff.

## **CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS**

The classroom observations allowed the Team to experience the school's educational philosophy. Students were highly engaged in learning. The adolescence program involved student presentations where peers provided thoughtful and precise feedback. 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. In the Children's House, Lower and Upper Elementary rooms, students were working independently, in small groups, or with a teacher to complete various lessons and tasks. Students collaborated with each other in safe and respectful ways. Each classroom displayed learning visuals such as anchor charts, plants, animals, activity boards, and manipulatives that are in alignment to student learning.

## **STUDENT FOCUS GROUP**

The common theme throughout the student focus group was "community". The majority of the students stated that the one thing they really liked about Highland is feeling like they are part of a community. Students appreciate the friendships that have been developed, the support from teachers, how kind everyone is to each other, and the different events and activities that they can participate in.

Students echoed the mission and vision through their testimonies. They clearly articulated the projects that are woven throughout the years from kindergarten through eighth grade. Students were able to share the many clubs and sports that are ran by parents and staff.

## **PARENT FOCUS GROUP**

It was evident that families chose Highland because of the values, focus on social justice, diversity, and the level of parental involvement. Parents expressed their passion for Highland.

- "Highland checked all of the boxes. They want children to know their role in making the

world a better place.”

- “The teachers at Highland are more a guide to learning rather than the holder of all the wisdom.”
- “We stay at Highland for the people and the community that has been built.”
- “What we have going on right now is magical.”

The parents alluded to many ways that they are supported at Highland, such as: responsive administration, valuing parental voice, and collaborative problem-solving. Parents shared in the same sentiment of community with the students, where everyone feels supported and valued.

Highland has been a valued partner with Milwaukee Public School (MPS) for 28 years. The school was developed by parents in 1968 and became the first charter school with MPS in 1996. Through 56 years of serving families, the mission of the school has remained consistent through the lens of social justice and high quality Montessori education in the Milwaukee community.

<b>MPS CHARTER SCHOOL REVIEW TEAM MEMBERS</b>	
Rebecca Alt	MPS Research, Assessment, and Data
Tangela Anderson	MPS Finance
Nate Deans	MPS Director of Black and Latino Male Achievement
Marcela Garcia	MPS Board of Directors
Lolita Harden	Community Member
Jillain Kawala	MPS Office of Board Governance
Henry Leonard	MPS Board of Directors
Marty Lexmond	Community Member
Tracy Wozniak	MPS Specialized Services

**SIGNATURE:** *Bridget Schock*

**DATE:** 10/15/24

**Bridget Schock, Director, Contracted School Services**