



**MILWAUKEE  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Milwaukee Public Schools

**I.D.E.A.L. Charter School**

*Individualized Developmental Educational Approaches to Learning*

An Instrumentality of Milwaukee Public Schools

(414) 267-1600 PHONE (414) 267-1615 FAX



July 8, 2020

*To Whom It May Concern:*

*This letter is written on behalf of Individualized, Developmental, Educational Approaches to Learning (I.D.E.A.L.) K4-8 Instrumentality Charter School. It is to confirm our intent to engage in the charter renewal process with the Milwaukee Board of School Directors.*

*Sincerely,*

*Shai Wise  
School Engagement Council Chairperson*

*Jennifer Carter  
I.D.E.A.L. Charter School Principal*

## ***I. Response to Current Charter School Performance***

### **Educational Performance**

#### ***1. Provide a description of how the school has been faithful in implementing its educational program outlined in the charter proposal (Appendix A).***

Individualized, Developmental, Educational Approaches to Learning (I.D.E.A.L.) School's educational program is built upon five constructs:

- Multi-aged, inclusive classrooms
- Students actively engaged in meaningful learning
- Assessment by performance, product and demonstration
- Shared Governance model
- Community Involvement

I.D.E.A.L. School has been faithful in implementing our educational program through our consistent and ongoing implementation of our five constructs.

***Multi-aged, inclusive classrooms:*** Students are organized into three multi-aged units led by a team of teachers. Each unit is housed within a large classroom space where flexible grouping is used to address pupil's strengths and needs. Our program focuses on developing strengths and builds upon each child's natural patterns of growth. The teachers work collaboratively to meet the needs of the academically talented as well as those with special education needs within our fully inclusive environment.

***Students actively engaged in meaningful learning:*** The I.D.E.A.L. School learning environment is child-centered, promoting active learning and exploration. All curricular areas are presented in a developmentally appropriate, relevant and rigorous manner. Students practice skills and concepts by integrating them into thematic problem-solving activities and projects using simulation, group investigation and cooperative learning.

We provide a structured program with an integrated science thematic curriculum that spirals over a three-year rotation. The central ideas are built upon in a ladder-like succession as students' progress in each grade level. Central themes are used in our cross-curricular, science based, guided inquiry model that are driven by the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards to reach mastery of necessary concepts and skills.

The Future Problem-Solving Program International (F.P.S.P.I.) is used in our middle school as part of our reading RtI (Response to Intervention) program to challenge our students who exceed grade level expectations. The F.P.S.P.I. is an international educational program that stimulates critical and creative thinking skills and encourages students to develop a vision for the future. Our students use the six-step model of this program to explore challenges and propose action plans to complex global issues. Student teams do qualify yearly for the Wisconsin State Bowl. This program can provide an international competitive component for the middle school as well as the community problem-solving component to promote students' constructive involvement in the community.

We also utilize the ALEKS (Assessment and LEarning in Knowledge Spaces) program to meet the needs of our accelerated math students. ALEKS is a web-based math assessment and learning system that challenges students who are proficient in their grade level expectations. It allows students the opportunity to exceed to advanced levels.

***Assessment by performance, product and demonstration:*** We believe that formative assessment of student learning, thinking and development is a critical part of education. The ways in which children are assessed affects the ways they learn and also influences their motivation to learn. I.D.E.A.L. School will continue to develop assessment practices that support and enrich our students' learning, motivation, create problem-solving skills and long-term development. Assessment will focus on progress and development with respect to the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards. Children have multiple opportunities to present their progress through performance, products, demonstrations and creation of their own rubric. Teacher observation and students' portfolios will be used to evaluate progress. In addition to performance assessments, students will participate in state and district mandated tests.

***Shared Governance Model:*** I.D.E.A.L. School's Engagement Council consists of the administrator, a staff representative, a community member, six parents and a middle school representative. The School Engagement Council meets monthly and works together to provide continued analysis and improvement of school policies, school budget, the School Improvement Plan goals and general school policies. In representing the interests of all stakeholders, the School Engagement Council members will review and assess school performance with respect to student achievement, parental involvement, expectations, building improvements and disciplinary procedures.

***Community Involvement:*** I.D.E.A.L. School has been fortunate to work with a variety of educational community partners. The University-Milwaukee Education department routinely places field students and student teachers at I.D.E.A.L. School. The UW-Milwaukee Art Department has used our middle school setting for an eight week student teaching placement for their art education students for the past 17 years. I.D.E.A.L. School has been invited to be part of the Junior Docent School Program with the Milwaukee Art Museum for the past 15 years. I.D.E.A.L. School was honored to be invited to participate in the Middle School category of the Milwaukee Debate League. Our middle school participates in Forensics and F.P.S.P.I (Future Problem Solvers Program International) program. Many former middle school students return to be evaluators for this program.

For the past three years I.D.E.A.L. School has participated in our 13<sup>th</sup> Aldermatic activities such as marching in the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade and participating at the annual tree lighting event for the Garden District. We have also regularly participated in the city's downtown tree lighting event by sponsoring and decorating a holiday tree for Cathedral Square.

**2. Explain how the school has met goals and measurable objectives during the term of this contract. Highlight growth in student achievement.**

I.D.E.A.L. School has met many goals and measurable objectives as demonstrated in our annual Pupil Academic Achievement Report as well as our performance audit.

- I.D.E.A.L. School's overall score on the State Report Card has gradually increased over the past five years from 58.8 to 69.4 in the 2018-2019 school year, which places us at Meets Expectations.
- Between the 2016-2019 school years, the percentage of students who scored advanced in math increased from 0.5% to 3.2%.
- During the 2016-2017 school year, the percentage of students who have scored proficient in math has steadily increased by 1%.
- K5 and 1<sup>st</sup> grade Primary age students consistently exceed expectations in closing the gap in Early Literacy. The historical average of proficient and advanced students is 53%.

**3. Provide a description of how the school continued to provide educational and social-emotional support to students and families during an extended school closure. Provide evidence of its success and challenges during this time and any additional steps you might take if a similar closure would occur in the future.**

I.D.E.A.L. School staff utilized technology to connect with students and families to provide remote social/emotional and academic support within days of the initial school closure (this was weeks prior to the district's mandated expectations).

Administration at I.D.E.A.L. School provided consistent communication to staff, students and families via email, phone and U.S. mail to ensure families were aware of school and district happenings and important education supports were provided.

Successes: Connections were made to large groups of students via Google meets, phone calls, Padlet, and GoGuardian consistently. Through personal calls and letters to homes, more families became involved in the virtual learning. The staff at I.D.E.A.L. School provided extra support and availability to meet family needs remotely. Students were provided with paper resource materials, school supplies and chrome books to complete their schoolwork expectations remotely. Our 8<sup>th</sup> grade completion ceremony was done virtually and was extremely successful with multiple families and staff present via Google Meet due to our extra efforts to invite and advertise the "virtual ceremony" procedure.

Challenges: Despite our numerous and consistent methods and efforts to connect with all families, there was still resistance from many families. It was difficult to encourage all families to be accountable for their child's learning in a virtual manner and take it seriously. Attendance for some students became very sporadic despite multiple staff attempts to encourage and promote.

Future plans: At I.D.E.A.L. School we want to ensure all staff are fully trained and knowledgeable regarding technology expectations for teaching within a remote learning environment. Staff surveys will be conducted, and the Learning Team will assess what needs are required to allow all staff to feel successful. We will also continue to educate our families by sending out important information and encouraging them to participate in Google meets to train and inform them on important tips to feel successful in the “virtual world.” Constant and consistent communication is the key.

#### **Financial Performance**

***4. Explain how the school has met its financial performance standards. Describe how the school is financially sound.***

I.D.E.A.L. School has successfully met its financial goals. Our budget is overseen by the administrator, School Engagement Council and the Learning Team. I.D.E.A.L. School uses a shared-decision making model therefore all staff have a voice in the budgetary decisions. I.D.E.A.L. School maintains financial records and follows all district, state and federal mandates. Required audits are conducted annually and ensure our financial accountability.

Through diligent and selective financial planning, we have been able to upgrade and increase the technology available for teaching and learning. Technology is an instrumental part of our school’s educational programming and we strive to educate 21<sup>st</sup> century learners with these tools. We have been able to purchase, maintain and support SmartBoards for each classroom, as well as additional Chromebooks to ensure one Chromebook per student to further support student learning.

Additionally, funding is set aside yearly to provide staff development to ensure fidelity of our educational philosophy and program. Professional development topics have included: multi-age classrooms, Special Education/Inclusive practices, Response to Intervention Support, Restorative Practices, Mindfulness training, Instructional Practices as well as technology support. The staff at I.D.E.A.L. School are surveyed throughout the school year to assess needs to assist the Learning Team with effectively planning for professional development.

#### **Organizational Performance:**

***5. Illustrate how the school has a well-functioning organizational structure. Include pertinent information about parental involvement, staffing, health and safety, school enrollment and discipline policies and school facilities. Describe how community partnerships have impacted students.***

I.D.E.A.L. School is an MPS Instrumentality charter School serving students in grades K4 through 8. I.D.E.A.L. School is divided into three multi-age units (Primary: K4 through Grade 2), (Elementary: Grade 3 through 5) and (Middle School: Grade 6 through 8). These units are taught collaboratively by teams of teachers under the direction of a unit leader. The administrator, unit leaders, school support teacher and a special education representative make up I.D.E.A.L. School’s learning team.

Each unit hold a weekly collaborative meeting to discuss individual student needs, curricular matters, data analysis and the overall functioning of the unit. Additionally, the learning team meets monthly to discuss general school and district policies and procedures, curriculum, scheduling, staff development and other school business. All teaching staff are also on one of the schoolwide committees that meet monthly (Behavior Intervention Team, Discipline/PBIS Team, Special Education Team, and Attendance Team). These committees report back to the full staff each month.

### **Parent Involvement**

I.D.E.A.L. School has consistently maintained strong parental support and community involvement. Our school's P.T.A. hosts highly attended monthly family activities such as Movie Night, Art Showcase Night, Trunk-or-Treat Night and Open House. Our P.T.A. and Parent Coordinator have worked together to support our school's parents by providing incentives at Family events/functions to support family participation in their child's education. At Parent/Teacher conferences we communicate with approximately 75% of our families. We send home a weekly newsletter for families in our Wednesday Home/School Communication folder as well as other pertinent information via email, phone, text messages, Google sites, etc. Communication through Class Dojo, SeeSaw, and Google Classroom is actively provided weekly for our families. Our Parent Coordinator encourages and handles recruitment of parent volunteers and assists with communicating information to families.

Our school's School Engagement Council consists of a minimum of four elected parents each year. The parents on this council play an active role in representing the interests of key stakeholders of I.D.E.A.L. School. This council meets monthly to discuss school and district issues, as well as monitor the school budget and School Improvement Plan.

### **Staffing**

The staff at I.D.E.A.L. School strives to work collaboratively to build a learning community that fosters a family like environment. We pride ourselves in the fact the students remain together in a unit with the same team of teachers for three to four years and establish a strong working relationship. Staff members work together and support each other. Staff members participate in yearly transition meetings for students moving to a new unit. Students moving to a new unit spend time in their new unit at the end of each school year to provide a smoother transition. Staff members participate in opportunities to expand their educational practices and enhance their learning. Staff members share their learning with other teachers by leading school based professional development sessions. Time is taken each year to reflect upon our school's mission statement and to educate new staff on our school's multi-age, fully inclusive philosophy.

### **Health and Safety**

I.D.E.A.L. School has a nurse on-site half a day every day. Our nurse works collaboratively with the teachers to promote good health in all students. The nurse provides information to our families through our weekly newsletter and she provides resources during family nights as well. Through our school nurse we've been able to be a part of the Marquette Dental sealant program for our students the past several years and an asthma education program for identified students.

Our school has also been fortunate to be awarded the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable grant for the past several years that provides healthy snacks to our students three times a week. We also were awarded a grant for Physical Education equipment: The American Cancer Society Wellness Grant. This provided us with numerous additional healthy, teambuilding, and fun recess options for our students.

To ensure the safety of all I.D.E.A.L. School students, we hold monthly fire drills as well as emergency (Code Red) drills and safety (Code Blue) drills. During the month of April a tornado drill is conducted. The school's crisis plan is updated yearly and gone over with all staff members during the month of September.

### **School Enrollment**

I.D.E.A.L. School is constantly recruiting and promoting our school within our community. We heavily utilize our families to promote our school and encourage others to enroll.

### **Discipline Policies**

The staff at I.D.E.A.L. School works very hard with our students and families to provide a safe and positive learning experience for all students following all the MPS disciplinary expectations and directives. I.D.E.A.L. School consistently has a low office referral rate and school suspensions. The staff has embraced the Restorative Practices model, and during August of 2019 the majority of staff were all trained together in this model for a week prior to school starting. We were able to continue to monitor and review the Restorative Practices model monthly throughout the school year as a staff at our meetings. We also utilize SEL (Social Emotional Learning) practices and Mindfulness techniques. We have a team of staff that have regularly met with a Mindfulness coach over the past two school years to discuss and monitor effective strategies for I.D.E.A.L. School. We also have created Mindful Mentors with our Middle School students to have them support younger students during recess and lunchroom procedures, as well as leading Mindfulness sessions to entire classrooms two times a week. The staff is committed to working with children to promote a safe learning environment and to be responsible for their actions and honor the value of intrinsic motivation. Our Check-in, Check out system for behavior accountability is regularly monitored by our BIT (Behavior Intervention Team) and we strive to assign children to mentors that will really relate to them in a personal way and take the time to help promote the positive. We also have a very strong "Buddy Classroom" program that works well at I.D.E.A.L. School to give students and staff a calm and "safe" space to take time away and help diffuse a situation and get students back on track and back to learning. Our staff really works hard to promote a strong and safe culture that embraces all learners and promotes everyone to find what they need to be successful.

### **School Facilities**

I.D.E.A.L. School's large open classroom spaces accommodate our unique unit structure and allow students to move about within their different learning groups. We have additional space for a library, school resource room, before/after school camp room (utilized as a classroom space during school day), workspaces for Special Education personnel as well as a multi-purpose room that is utilized throughout the learning day.

### **Community Partnership Impact**

We strive to provide the best possible opportunities for all students at I.D.E.A.L. School. Our partnerships such as the Junior Docent School Program with the Milwaukee Art Museum impacts almost 100 students each year. It is a three-year cycle that allows all students in grades 3, 4 and 5 to learn about the history, vocabulary and interpretation strategies in the visual arts. During their final year of study (grade 5) the students complete an integrated project and presentation including a recreation of a work of art from the museum, an analysis of the work of art and artist and an aesthetic response. The students deliver their presentations in front of a small audience and the tour concludes with a graduation ceremony where they are introduced as Junior Docents. The students are exposed to a variety of artwork, culture and overall art history and research as they study various artists and different works. The students visit the Milwaukee Art Museum three times a year throughout each year of the three-year program.

The UW-Milwaukee Art program for our Middle School students also impacts students for three years. For nine weeks every Spring for the past 17 years the UW-Milwaukee Art Department literally takes over I.D.E.A.L. School and our Middle School staff and students. The students are allowed to freely express themselves artistically through different mediums and are exposed to different artistic styles. It is an incredible hands-on opportunity that transfers down to the whole school as we end the program with a whole school family night celebration in the Spring where all families are invited to partake. The UW-Milwaukee staff and students come in and create hands-on learning stations, they promote the artwork of the I.D.E.A.L. students and we socialize with a large family meal to celebrate all of the learning and the overall partnership. Afterschool sports programming is offered through the Milwaukee Recreation Department to give all students an opportunity to be involved in afterschool activities.

***4. Provide evidence that parents and students are satisfied with the school.***

I.D.E.A.L. School has good attendance at all school and P.T.A. sponsored activities (during the school day and afterschool). We have a high percentage of families who attend Parent/Teacher conferences both in Fall and Spring (approximately 75%).

We conduct surveys with our families periodically throughout the school year to assess parental satisfaction as well as ways we can further support our family needs. Our Parent Coordinator also conducts informal surveys with families by making “check-in” phone calls with parents. This process has resulted in much positive feedback in some cases we have been able to improve student attendance and provide resources for families that need more support. Teachers consistently make phone calls and send notes/post cards to our families to build and maintain that strong home/school connection.

The staff at I.D.E.A.L. School strives to build and maintain a strong sense of community among our families. We work hard to establish a welcoming and safe culture that makes families feel secure and at ease when in our school. During morning/afternoon pick-up/drop-off times all families are met and greeted by a staff member, students are safely escorted to and from the buses and they are walked to their respective vehicles at pick-up time. There is a strong staff presence at all times that allows families to make individual connections. All staff take some ownership of our community and how it is effectively run to best suit our family needs.

***5. Demonstrate that the school has an active and effective school governance structure. Provide examples and explain.***



The I.D.E.A.L. School Engagement Council consists of an active group of parents, staff, administration, students and community members. The council meets monthly on the third Wednesday of each month from September to June. This council works together to review, discuss and implement school policies, monitor the School Improvement Plan (SIP), approve the school's budget and to make decisions that represent the interests of all stakeholders.

An example of the I.D.E.A.L. School Engagement Council's decision-making process was the discussion regarding the district's uniform policy and the school's decision on whether or not to continue with the policy. The School Engagement Council had numerous discussions, sent out surveys, letters, etc. to families. After much discussion and much opportunity for parental input, the council decided to continue with the policy and has decided to review again with families yearly. Our student representatives on the School Engagement Council also create and execute school wide school spirit and theme weeks.

## ***II. Plans for Continued Success***

### **Educational Performance**

#### ***1. Describe any proposed changes to the school's educational program for the term of the next charter school contract (up to five years).***

The mission of I.D.E.A.L. School is to ensure the healthy development and high academic success of all students through our unique multi-age program. We will continue with this mission for all staff and students.

I.D.E.A.L. School will follow district recommendations for implementing a successful virtual and hybrid learning platform for all students as mandated by the global pandemic. The staff at I.D.E.A.L. School will be trained in appropriate virtual teaching platforms. Students and families will be provided tools necessary to be successful (including a chrome book issued from school).

#### ***2. Provide the proposed enrollment and grade levels for the term of the next charter school contract.***

I.D.E.A.L. School proposes to maintain an enrollment of 285 students in grades K4 through grade 8. We will continue to have three multi-age units instructed by teams of highly qualified teachers and support staff.

#### ***3. Outline the school's goals and measurable objectives for the term of the next charter school contract and describe how the school intends to meet these goals.***

I.D.E.A.L. School continues to implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and cultivate the implementation and understanding of those standards with our staff, students and families. We have been proactive in establishing a culture of learning among our staff by offering professional development in this area. Collaboration among staff members is key to the successful implementation of our multi-age program while instituting the CCSS. We will continue to offer staff professional development opportunities in this area. We will also provide families with information regarding the CCSS to further develop their understanding.

I.D.E.A.L. School will continue to support a Response to Intervention (RtI) program in the areas of math and reading for all students. Teachers will continue to work collaboratively within their units to plan, organize, assess and monitor students. Our School Support Teacher will provide coaching and resources to staff. The School Support Teacher will also train support staff to help facilitate a successful RtI program for all students. Having a full-time School Support Teacher is instrumental in the cohesive teaching of themes and supporting teachers not only in the classroom but by sharing district initiatives and building upon teacher best practices.

I.D.E.A.L. School has implemented the use of the Envision and CMP math curriculum within its math classes. Teachers will continue to participate in professional development as well as participate in the district training all the while being supported by a full-time School Support Teacher.

I.D.E.A.L became a STEM School in 2018. Our middle school team and administrator participated in the district wide implementation of STEM which included monthly curriculum writing sessions. We revamped our school-wide science curriculum to reflect the standards at each level. We will continue to collaborate with staff in all units to ensure fidelity. We will continue to educate families on our STEM program.

I.D.E.A.L. School will continue to equip staff and students with the most updated and advanced technology equipment. We have been fiscally responsible each year and will continue to budget to make the necessary updates.

I.D.E.A.L. School will continue to utilize programs such as F.P.S.P.I (Future Problem Solvers Program International) and ALEKs math to enhance higher critical thinking skills for students in the middle school grades who require further challenge with their learning.

I.D.E.A.L. School continues to close the gap. We have an annual goal of closing the achievement gap by 5 percent performance increase in both reading and math through close monitoring of RtI groupings, professional support, alignment to the Framework of Teaching and the Framework for Learning. It is our overall goal to improve test scores to meet or exceed state proficiency percentages for similar students.

Using the Framework for Teaching all I.D.E.A.L. School teachers are developing and growing with the Educator Effectiveness model. Through much collaboration and discussion within staff and unit meetings, teachers are working together to implement successful plans. The teachers will continue to use self-reflection and professional practice goals. In this area we will continue to provide professional development, peer coaching opportunities and resources for staff.

I.D.E.A.L. School's Parent Coordinator will work with families to promote and encourage a greater volunteer presence at our school. The Parent Coordinator will work to increase membership within our P.T.A. and School Engagement Council.

I.D.E.A.L. School's Parent Coordinator will work with staff to seek out and build new community partnerships that increase opportunities for our students.

### **Financial Performance**

#### ***4. Explain the school's financial plans and forecast***

I.D.E.A.L. School has been successful at maintaining a balanced budget each year that usually has a small carryover. Through our careful planning we have been able to upgrade and increase the technology available for teaching and learning for our staff and students (SmartBoards and Chromebooks). Any minor recommendations that have been found during our biannual financial audits have been implemented immediately.

It is our goal to maintain, retain and replace all technology on a consistent basis that keeps our staff and students current with expectations that allow them to be successful.

### **Organizational Performance**

#### ***5. Illustrate plans for strengthening parental and community involvement in the school's educational mission.***

I.D.E.A.L. School plans to maintain our community partnerships with UW-Milwaukee Art Department and the School of Education for student teacher placements, as well as the Milwaukee Art Museum's Junior Docent School Program. We would like to continue to participate in the 13<sup>th</sup> Garden District's annual activities throughout the year (4<sup>th</sup> of July, Winter programs, etc.) and our participation with our neighborhood McDonald's restaurant that sponsors a fundraiser night and other incentives for I.D.E.A.L. School.

It is our goal to have our parent coordinator continue to develop community partnerships for I.D.E.A.L. School as well as build upon our parental involvement through active and consistent communication with our families. We will continue to survey families to find out their specific needs and we want to host workshops for families to further educate and support them based on their needs.

#### ***6. Describe any changes to the school's governance structure.***

I.D.E.A.L. School will continue to follow all MPS guidelines for the School Engagement Council with 51% parental representation. There are no changes to our school's governance structure.