



Charter School Renewal Recommendation	
Charter School	Milwaukee Environmental Sciences Academy (MESA)
Date of Site Visit	Tuesday, November 16, 2021

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>Milwaukee Environmental Sciences Academy (MESA), a Milwaukee Teacher Education Center (MTEC) Charter School, is dedicated to creating a safe, nurturing, and rigorous learning environment that supports the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional growth of all its students. MESA engages students in active learning, real-world problem solving, and decision making, with a focus on environmental stewardship and community involvement.</p> <p>Academic Performance: MESA is in the last year of its short-term non-instrumentality charter school contract. Given the circumstances, MESA has met some of its academic performance measures during the first year of this contract term. There was limited comparison data to analyze due to the Wisconsin State Assessment System (WSAS) waiver in the 2019-20 school year and then a participation waiver in the 2020-21 school year. MESA continued to implement its Expeditionary Learning curriculum for ELA, which is aligned to the Common Core State Standards, and instituted the use of a new math curriculum to support instruction. MESA continued to monitor growth of its students through classroom-based assessments, which has demonstrated slight growth in this area. MESA has hired an instructional coach to collaborate with teachers and provide coaching and instructional support.</p> <p>MESA continues to meet expectations on the State Report Card.</p> <p>Financial Performance: MESA has met its financial performance standards over the term of its contract. There have been no budget deficits. Funds are spent consistently with federal and state guidelines. It continues to have a balanced budget and a clean audit.</p> <p>Organizational Performance: MESA has continuously met 80% of its organizational performance standards. In spring of 2020, there</p>		

was a change in leadership which was restructured to focus on instructional support, climate and culture, and family engagement. There has been consistency in staff which has allowed for improved staff development through professional learning using the MESA adopted resources and curriculum. This has allowed for growth of its programming and increased academic performance of the students. Due to the current circumstances, the school has purposefully embedded an increased focus on social emotional learning.

MESA continues to work towards compliance with the health and safety of its students to ensure that inoculation requirements are met.

MESA continues to partner with the Families and Students Together (FAST) organization to increase resources and strategies aimed at providing supportive assistance to the school community. MESA intentionally focused on support to students and families by facilitating opportunities to increase parental involvement and student enrollment.

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 Academic, Financial and Organizational Performance. The school has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input 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 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"> <input checked="" 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:

MESA's application for renewal provided clear, concise, and compelling information in the areas of educational, financial, and organizational performance. The school provided examples to show academic performance over the term of its contract. Some of these examples include assessments that are used during the focused skills time with an emphasis on phonemic awareness and phonics as part of its EL curriculum.

The school provided sufficient documentation as to its financial performance and systems. MESA has met the performance standards and continuously demonstrates a balanced budget and clean audits. MESA remains financially strong through close oversight by the MTEC Board Chair, treasurer, Executive Director, principal, and finance director.

MESA provided compelling evidence relating to its organizational performance. The application demonstrates an effective governing structure and collaboration with MTEC. The MTEC board of directors is diverse in professional backgrounds which contributes to the ongoing success of the school.

MESA continues to focus on strengthening its parental partnerships. MESA implemented the Parent Leadership Team (PLT) to collaborate and discuss curriculum data, achievement and plan school

community events. By empowering families, MESA is building a mutually beneficial partnership and collective effort to maximize resources that promote greater student achievement. The community partners are essential to the support of the students and families at MESA. Some of its partners include: Smart Smiles (School Based Oral Health Program), FAST Institute (Families and Schools Together), ACTS Housing and FIIT financial literacy.

MESA provided plans for continued success which focus on the continued implementation of the educational programming. It will continue to implement the EL curriculum and strive to become EL accredited. The implementation of an instructional coach to support the development of its teachers will impact academic achievement. Family Engagement is always a large part of what MESA focuses on and the organization will continue to grow and supports its families and involve them in decision making.

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> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> School presentations clearly and effectively communicated information from its Application for Renewal.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> School sufficiently addressed any issues/concerns raised by the MPS Charter School Contract Review Team members.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> School (if appropriate) provided sufficient supplementary information to further clarify performance results and ratings.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Samples of student work and classroom visits reflect strongly and positively the school's teaching and learning practices.</p>	<p>Charter school site visit did not provide compelling evidence that the school is meeting performance standards.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> School presentations insufficiently communicated information from its Application for Renewal.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> School did not adequately address issues/ concerns raised by the MPS Charter School Contract Review Team members.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> School did not provide ample supplementary information to clarify performance results and ratings.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Samples of student work and classroom visits did not necessarily positively reflect the school's teaching and learning practices.</p>
X	

Summary Comments:

MESA provided a thorough and thoughtful presentation. The leadership team provided further evidence that an intentional focus around data and instructional practices would help to support student growth. MESA intentionally shared new strategies that have been implemented as a result of the recommendations from its previous contract renewal.

The school visit consisted of testimonies from school leaders, board members, staff, parents and students. Classroom observations and the school presentation provided compelling evidence of the school's organizational and financial stability. MESA has a strong, committed and diverse board. The school took steps to realign its leadership team to redistribute the support to its students, families, and staff.

The presentation was centered around the intentional school improvement that has been developed and implemented over the term of the contract. MESA recognized the importance of being supportive of one another and began to build the culture and structure of crew with its staff. MESA's leadership team created a more welcoming environment with cosmetic upgrades to the facility, clearing out the courtyard for a school garden and opening an outdoor classroom (dome) to support its environmental science focus. MESA has developed systems to ensure that all students are supported academically, socially, and emotionally. MESA has placed a more intentional focus on professional development and coaching for its teachers within the classroom.

The classroom observations provided ample evidence of the incorporation of its identified curriculum, commitment to the Habits of Scholarship, and mindfulness. Students were engaged and on task

throughout the classroom observations. Common expectations were displayed and referred to consistently throughout each classroom that was observed. MESA continues to provide a virtual option for students due to the high request from parents.

It was clear that there was a heavy focus on the Habits of Scholarship as anchor charts were visible throughout all classrooms and students referenced them on several occasions. Each classroom had learning intentions and success criteria posted for each of the core subjects.

There were samples of student work throughout the school that demonstrated the school’s approach to learning and student achievement. There was also representation of work samples that showed growth over time since the beginning of the year.

The student focus groups provided further evidence that the school is supporting the students in a number of ways. All of the students shared how they loved coming to school and that they appreciated the support that they receive from the teachers. They all could speak about their joy for math and science. One student stated, “I love math. It’s comforting to me.” Another student shared what they have learned in science. “We do a lot of science. We have learned about grass, bugs, and have done a lot of experiments with bees, honey, moss and with frogs.”

The family representatives voiced the same enthusiasm for the school. They spoke highly of the continuous communication that they receive on a regular basis. They shared how the school leadership team is present and available to meet the needs of the students and families. They appreciated the smaller, family oriented, school environment.

The Team recognizes that there is a strong commitment to the implementation of continuous improvement. The current leadership and staff are to be commended for their tenacity, diligence, and persistence to support student learning and engagement, and for its commitment to revitalizing the educational program.

Charter School Review Team Renewal Recommendation		
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 Academic 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.
X 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 Academic 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 academic, 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:

MESA has made some positive improvements that support the growth of students both in academics and social-emotional well-being. The school has made adjustments to ensure that there is a direct focus of support for students and families in the areas of academics, climate and culture. Some examples of the focused support include: an instructional coach, a mindfulness teacher and a special education coordinator.

MESA acknowledges its academic performance measures. MESA continues to meet or exceed expectations on the state report card. MESA has an established plan in place to support the academic growth of its students. This plan includes professional learning, data analysis, and social emotional learning for students. Finally, MESA's strong commitment to the EL model brings additional accountability for the school.

It is evident that MESA promotes commitment from all school community members, which attests to the school's approach to student achievement. The culture of the school is safe and nurturing to students' needs and supportive of learning. MESA identified a number of community partners; however, the Team did note that there was even a greater opportunity for exploration of partnerships in light of the school's programming and location.

MESA has met 100% of the financial performance measures during the term of the contract. They have received an unmodified audit and there have been no budget deficits. Furthermore, MESA's strong financial support over time from its governing board demonstrates the commitment to the future success of MESA.

MESA is working diligently to ensure that all teachers are appropriately licensed or in a program to support proper licensure. The school has a strong and committed board of directors with diverse backgrounds. The school has restructured its administrative team in hopes of continuing improved performance. Through parent testimonies and its presentation, the Team noted a commitment to increasing parental engagement.

Based on the evidence provided in the Charter School Application for Renewal, Performance Summary, Site Visit (which included classroom visits, testimonies from students, staff and parents); along with additional data and artifacts, the Charter School Review Team recommends a three-year renewal of the non-instrumentality charter school contract with MESA. This recommendation is based on MESA's commitment to implementing the feedback from its previous contract renewal, the purposeful social emotional support for students and staff, a focus on data analysis, and the implementation of continuous improvement.

MPS Charter School Review Team Members

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Dr. Patricia Ellis	Interim Director Equity, Access and Inclusion
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Signature: *Bridget Schock* Date: December 14, 2021

Bridget Schock, Director, Contracted School Services