



Highland Community School

A parent-directed, Montessori charter school

Ms. Lisa Haar
MPS, Program Supervisor – Contracted Schools
5225 W. Vliet Street – Room 230K
Milwaukee, WI 53208

June 14, 2024

Dear Ms. Haar,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, families, staff, and friends of Highland Community School, I write today to express our intent to renew our charter contract with Milwaukee Public Schools.

As Highland's Executive Director, I am immensely proud of the progress and achievements of our school over the past charter term, particularly during an unprecedented challenge for education – a global pandemic. Throughout the past term, our commitment to offering a quality Montessori education in a nurturing environment where parents are encouraged to be responsible for and involved with their children's education has remained unwavering.

Since the beginning of our partnership in 1996 as Milwaukee Public Schools' first charter school, Highland Community School has continuously strived to meet and exceed the standards set forth by MPS. Our dedicated team of educators, administrators and staff have worked tirelessly to uphold our values and foster an environment and curriculum that enriches, empowers, and inspires the whole child to reach their potential.

Throughout our current charter term, we have consistently shown progress in meeting our educational objectives and fulfilling the requirements outlined in the charter agreement. Highland Community School continues to be an integral part of the local community, actively engaging our parents and broader community partners to enhance our students' educational experience.

As we look ahead to the next charter term, we remain fully committed to upholding the values and mission that define Highland Community School. We remain dedicated to honoring our beginning as a parent-led school, understanding that our success in educating the whole child is a community responsibility between parent and school.

We look forward to partnering with Milwaukee Public Schools as we move forward in the charter renewal process. Tracy Williams, Executive Director of Highland, is our renewal contact. Please contact her by phone at 414-342-1412 or by email at twilliams@hcsmk.org.

Respectfully,

Tracy Williams
Executive Director

Amy Nelson-Christensen
Board Vice President

cc: Milwaukee School Board Directors



2024 Application for Contract Renewal with the Milwaukee Public Schools District

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I. A. Academic Performance

1. How Highland Community School has been faithful in implementing its education program outlined in the charter proposal (Appendix A).

Highland Community School has been constant in implementing an educational program as outlined in Appendix A of the charter proposal. Authentic Montessori pedagogy and the commitment to doing what is best for the whole child is the thread woven throughout all our educational decisions. Our educational program is based on a child's inborn desire to learn and is specifically designed to complement the natural interests and strengths unique to each stage of development. Highland Community School remains committed to its policy of requiring Montessori certification from the Association Montessori Internationale or American Montessori Society along with state licensure for all lead teachers. Highland has been able to maintain this policy even during a shortage of Montessori teachers. We credit this to our committed, long-tenured faculty and leadership's dedication to growing our staff from within our community.

Highland has formalized the following school-wide systems and processes since our last charter renewal:

- **Child Study:** A Montessori-based approach to RTI/MTSS. This approach focuses on meeting the needs of all children, resolving difficulties early, and using a wide range of data to support student development.
- **Nautilus Approach:** Replaces the traditional discipline/behavior policy. Like the Montessori method, it is a constructivist approach, focuses on the whole-human (rather than other discipline policies or systems which use a behaviorist approach), and aims to connect the child to their classroom environment and their learning.
- **Social Emotional Learning:** A vital part of human development, equipping students with the skills, abilities, tools, and knowledge to build positive relationships, solve problems, make intelligent decisions, and achieve the necessary level of self-awareness. Social-emotional learning can also provide the foundation for educational success.
 - We have added a full-time school counselor who provides weekly Tier 1 SEL lessons along with individual and small group support.
- **Montessori Coaching:** A holistic framework for supporting Montessori teachers in classrooms and partnering with school leadership teams that moves our school towards an environment supportive of human development and growth. Our Montessori Coach observes, meets with teachers and support staff, supports professional development and holds the vision of One School, Strong Systems, and Honest Talk.
- **Systems for Equity:** Creating a learning environment where all students have equal access to opportunities and resources, regardless of their background or identity. This includes addressing issues of race, class, gender, and other forms of marginalization that can affect a student's ability to succeed in school.
 - **Increased Access:** Ensuring all students have access to a full set of Montessori materials and prepared Montessori adults.
 - Shared budgets and inventories for level teams that reflect a complete Montessori classroom.
 - High-quality instruction in all classrooms through increased collaboration, curriculum maps and shared planning to ensure all students have access to similar content and experiences.
 - Analysis of reading instruction strengths and weaknesses, which has led to increased achievement.
 - Added both fiction and non-fiction Jr. Great Books routines at the 1st-6th grade levels.
 - Ensured all students have access to systematic phonics materials and instruction at the Tier 1, 2 and 3 levels.
 - **Culturally Responsive Teaching:**
 - Added books with characters that reflect our community.
 - Adopted the *Learning for Justice* Social Justice Standards.

- Addressing Bias and Discrimination:
 - Established a GSA club for students in 4th-8th grade.
 - Offered PEARLS programming for 6th-8th grade.
 - Revamped 3rd grade capstone project to connect Montessori’s Fundamental Needs of Humans to the social justice issues in our community.
 - Worked with MPS’s Department of Gender and Identity to provide professional development on creating an inclusive environment.
 - Re-established our family Social Justice Committee.
- Differentiating Instruction:
 - Used Child Study system to identify and support students who need it, monitoring progress to ensure interventions are appropriate.
 - Strengthened data review systems for Tier 2 and 3 interventions.

2. How Highland Community School has met goals and measurable objectives during the term of this contract, including growth in student achievement and evidence of how Highland is making progress towards meeting its academic outcomes.

In addition to the stated contract performance measures, Highland has made an internal commitment to the following goals:

Student Growth Goals: 2019

- The number of students at or above target on the reading portion of the STAR (or other district-wide assessment) will increase by 5% each year from spring to spring.
- The number of students proficient or above on the math portion of the STAR (or other district-wide assessment) will increase by 5% each year from spring to spring.

Our contract terms dictate that Highland must meet or exceed MPS district proficiency scores. In our last charter renewal, Highland set additional goals above and beyond that metric. In 2020, we experienced a global pandemic and collectively our students experienced a loss in learning. This loss impacted our ability to meet these additional goals as we shifted our focus to meeting emergent needs. As evidenced by the tables below, we are seeing growth again and remain committed to taking the steps necessary to see dedicated improvement in these areas.

STAR Reading

| School Year | HCS Spring Proficiency | Growth |
|-------------|------------------------|--------|
| 2020-2021 | 41.7% | -- |
| 2021-2022 | 43.2% | +1.5 |
| 2022-2023 | 39.6% | -3.6 |
| 2023-2024 | 47.2% | +7.6 |

STAR Math

| School Year | HCS Spring Proficiency | Growth |
|-------------|------------------------|--------|
| 2020-2021 | 24.7% | -- |
| 2021-2022 | 24.6% | -0.1 |
| 2022-2023 | 22% | -2.6 |
| 2023-2024 | 33.8% | +11.8 |

STAR Early Lit

| School Year | HCS Spring Proficiency | Growth |
|-------------|------------------------|--------|
| 2020-2021 | 55.5% | -- |
| 2021-2022 | 36.8% | -18.7 |
| 2022-2023 | 57.5% | +20.7 |
| 2023-2024 | 61.9% | +4.4 |

Student Achievement Goals: 2019

Highland Community School's Black students' average proficiency rates on the Forward Exam will meet or exceed the MPS Black student district average in all tested subject areas.

While our overall proficiency levels continue to meet or exceed the MPS district average, we are focused on raising the achievement rates of our Black students. As shown in the tables below, we have seen an increase in the proficiency rates in ELA, but our math rates have been stagnant. This reflects the intentional work we have done in reading and writing during our current charter contract. We have begun to do similar work in math and anticipate seeing growth throughout our upcoming contract term.

Results:**Forward ELA (English Language Arts)**

| School Year | MPS Black Student Proficiency | HCS Black Student Proficiency |
|-------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2020-2021 | 8.8% | 12% |
| 2021-2022 | 7.8% | 15.6% |
| 2022-2023 | 8.8% | 17.8% |

Forward Math

| School Year | MPS Black Student Proficiency | HCS Black Student Proficiency |
|-------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2020-2021 | 3.9% | 2% |
| 2021-2022 | 4.2% | 1.3% |
| 2022-2023 | 4.7% | 2.7% |

Forward Social Studies

| School Year | MPS Black Student Proficiency | HCS Black Student Proficiency |
|-------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2020-2021 | 3% | 8.7% |
| 2021-2022 | 14.6% | 44.4% |
| 2022-2023 | 18.3% | 37.5% |

Forward Science

| School Year | MPS Black Student Proficiency | HCS Black Student Proficiency |
|-------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2020-2021 | 4.1% | 4.3% |
| 2021-2022 | 9.3% | 22.2% |
| 2022-2023 | 10.2% | 12.5% |

I. B. Financial Performance

1. How Highland Community School has met its financial performance standards and is financially sound.

The Board of Directors of Highland Community School approves and submits a school budget to MPS by April 30th annually. Highland's Finance Committee of the Board reviews the financial statements and performance indicators and reports on the financial health of the organization to the full board every month. A mid-year unaudited balance sheet and revenue/expense statement along with a budget-to-actual report are submitted to MPS by February 15th each year. Annual audits, with the accompanying management letters if applicable, are submitted to MPS by September 30th unless an extension has been approved.

During our last 5-year term, our annual audits have been completed with no major findings. We take care to follow our financial policies and procedures to produce monthly statements that lead to an accurate year-to-date financial picture and ease of audit. Highland continues to review and improve its financial procedures annually.

In 2021, we made a major addition to our school facility to add a secure main entrance and two more classrooms for our 7th and 8th grade and after school programs. We refinanced our current building loan and ran a capital campaign in which we raised over \$150,000 to offset the amount we needed to finance.

During this contract term, we were grateful to have received an allocation of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds. These critical funds allowed us to make major improvements to our school technology, classroom curriculum and set up, and maintain a level of integrity in our daily operations throughout the Covid pandemic. These funds have allowed us to carry over some of our regular contract funds in a reserve dedicated to future building improvements, including air quality and air conditioning.

Highland began the term of this contract with \$2.1 million in net assets and has grown that to over \$3 million. These funds are critical to the longevity of Highland and have put us in a strong financial position.

I. C. Organizational Performance

1. A description of Highland Community School's well-functioning organizational structure, including pertinent information about parental involvement, staff, health and safety, school enrollment, discipline guidelines, and school facilities. In addition, a description of how community partnerships have impacted students.

Highland is proud to have been Milwaukee Public Schools' first established charter in 1996, with an academic program and operating model that helped spur parent demand for Montessori education with an increased focus on parent involvement. As a model, Highland remains dedicated to innovative educational strategies that can be utilized to support other schools, improving education for all Milwaukee Public School students. Highland is grateful for its continued partnership with MPS and values the opportunity to be part of the largest cohort of public Montessori schools in the nation.

Highland's well-functioning organizational structure is evidenced by its 55 years of existence. Our high level of parent involvement, strong enrollment and waitlists, long-time dedication of our faculty and staff, and commitment to growing and maintaining community partnerships remain fundamental elements of Highland's success. Highland's commitment and that of its school community to the neighborhoods of the near west side, the education of its students, and engagement of their families has established Highland as consistently one of

the most diverse and successful schools in Milwaukee. Highland's core tenets of diversity, parent involvement, and Montessori education continue to resonate as common values shared by our community.

Organizational Structure

As a school that has grown from just a few students to over 420, Highland's goal remains to maintain that small, intimate feeling for its students and families. Students are divided into four families with each family occupying a hallway of classrooms. Each hallway family consists of a Children's House (K3-K5) room, a Lower Elementary (1st-3rd grade) room, and an Upper Elementary (4th – 6th grade) room. Each classroom has a Montessori certified lead teacher and a classroom assistant or co-teacher. Each hallway family is assisted by a Comprehensive Academic Teacher (CAT) who supports individual students and their unique needs. The four upper elementary rooms flow into our Adolescent Program (7th and 8th graders), which has a distinct area within the school. The Adolescent Program is supported by a trained and certified Montessori Director, three certified teachers who are currently in the Adolescent Montessori training, and a part-time Spanish teacher who also supports as an assistant to the classroom. All hallway families and the Adolescent Program receive support from an art teacher, a performing arts teacher, an environmental science teacher, a physical education teacher, special education teachers, an occupational therapist, a social worker, a school counselor, Montessori coach, and our administrative team.

Highland's long-standing parent-led Board of Directors is invested in educational opportunities for all students from every socio-economic background. Our Board is one of the ways we as a community take responsibility for each other and mitigate obstacles that prevent learning. Our Board of Directors represents the diversity of both Highland and Milwaukee and is a key champion in maintaining a healthy well-run organization.

Family Involvement

As a parent-led school, Highland's goal is to foster a nurturing environment for both children and their families while empowering parents to become responsible for and involved in their children's education. Parent involvement drives the school, with Highland families delivering approximately 20,000 hours of engagement each year.

This year, 3,047 students and family members attended 25 family and school-wide events throughout the year. Our family engagement is not limited to parents and guardians, but includes grandparents, aunts, uncles, other extended family members, and alumni, all of whom contribute by sharing their talents, volunteering, and donating to support our Highland community.

Our Parent Board of Directors, comprised entirely of current parents and guardians, also plays a critical role in ensuring an equitable education for all students. Families can choose to support our school by serving on one of six family-supported committees, leading clubs and sports offerings, chaperoning field trips and other adventures, and planning and hosting events and workshops. Our families also contribute by fully engaging in their children's education through high participation in family-teacher conferences (85% in 23-24) and other educational programming throughout the year.

Based on feedback from our families, we have made a considerable investment in expanding our afterschool clubs and sports offerings and joined Milwaukee Recreation's school youth sports leagues in the 2022-2023 school year. In the 2023-2024 academic year, 94 students participated in at least one sport, with 14 parents and family members coaching 8 sports teams. Since 2022, we have added 4H, Forensics, Robotics, and Chess, while also expanding our Girl Scouts programming. All these efforts are supported or led by family members.

Because of this shared commitment to expanding our club and sports programming, 230 of our 285 1st-8th graders participated in one or more afterschool offerings at the school in the 2023-2024 school year.

Staffing

Highland Community School has 70 staff members, 47% of which are persons of color. Highland staff are deeply invested in the mission and vision of our school, with 53% of staff children/grandchildren attending Highland. Staff members are also Highland alumni, alumni parents/grandparents, and family members of current students. The strong sense of community runs deep at Highland. We also have 3 contracted special education staff placed at our site.

As is the case for schools and other organizations, staffing has been a challenge in recent years. We are seeing a decline in candidates applying for roles. We have had to hire staff through contracting agencies, which has impacted our budget. Despite these challenges, we have retained key staff. In the 2023-2024 school year, we had an overall retention rate of 91% and a 100% retention rate for classroom teachers. At Highland, our Montessori Coach meets regularly with and supports our teachers and education staff. In the last contract term, we added a School Social Worker and School Counselor to our staff, both of which have been instrumental in supporting students' social and emotional needs. We encourage a high level of autonomy and collaboration amongst staff. All faculty and staff are responsible to and for each other. Based on survey data, staff feel supported and heard in their roles at Highland.

Highland's commitment to growing and empowering its staff is evident. In our last contract term, Highland staff attended further education programs, gained Montessori certifications, secured teaching licenses, and earned advanced degrees. Regular in-service and professional development opportunities provide additional capacity building in specific areas.

Health & Safety

Health and safety are very important to Highland, with both parents and staff involved in creating and advocating for health and wellness policies in school. Some examples of this are Highland's investment in a natural playscape, healthy classroom snacks, encouraging healthy school lunches, CPR and first aid training for staff, and safety protocols that are reviewed and practiced regularly.

The safety of our students and staff is a priority for Highland. Highland's Crisis Management Plan informs our schoolwide decisions in response to key events. Each school year, we practice our response by using drills for fire, tornado, lockdown, and playground evacuation scenarios. Highland has a strong working relationship with local authorities and surrounding community buildings for emergency support.

In 2021, we built an addition to the front entrance of our existing building. This added two classroom spaces and provided us with a new secure entry which positions our main office staff at the front of the building. We have increased protocols surrounding visitors in the building.

Highland has a Code of Conduct Policy that all students and adults follow for conflict resolution and behavior guidance. All individuals at Highland Community School have the following Bill of Rights. These rights may not ever be suspended for any reason:

The right to physical safety. No one may ever use their hands, feet, or other objects to physically hurt another person.

The right to emotional safety. No one is allowed to intentionally hurt another's feelings or make another feel uncomfortable.

The right to work in peace. No one is allowed to do things that distract another from getting their work done. Interruptions will only happen when something more important is taking place, and that person's attention is required.

School Enrollment

Our current school enrollment is 419 students. When we entered this latest term in 2020, we had 414 enrolled students. During our contract term we fluctuated between 414 and 425 students. While we originally projected an enrollment around 435 by the end of our contract term, due to student attrition and class sizes, that number proved to be a bit higher than we could accommodate.

Discipline Guidelines

Since our last charter renewal, Highland has transitioned to the Nautilus Approach, a Montessori-specific progressive discipline policy developed by Public Montessori in Action that works with the parent(s), staff, and the community in solving discipline problems at the school. Like the Montessori method, it is a constructivist approach, focuses on the whole-human (rather than other discipline policies or systems which use a behaviorist approach), and aims to reconnect the child to their environment and their learning. Students are introduced to active listening and conflict resolution skills, age-appropriate skills are demonstrated, and examples practiced that give students appropriate choices in social situations. For cases that may be more extreme, Highland will refer to MPS Student Services for guidance. This discipline policy is set forward by the Parent Board of Directors and implemented by support staff, including classroom teacher(s), Child Study Team Members, the Executive Director and MPS.

School Facilities

Since the purchase of our building from Milwaukee Public Schools in Spring 2015, Highland has continued to make significant investments to improve the building and grounds. In 2021, a three-story expansion was completed that added 3,820 square feet to the building including a new two-story foyer with a secure entrance, a relocated main office, two new classrooms, and an outdoor teaching garden on the roof. 95 donors made 380 donations in support of our *Growing the Good* campaign to raise over \$150,000 needed to help finance the expansion. In the 2023-2024 school year alone, Highland was the recipient of grants from the Whole Kids Foundation, the Greater Milwaukee Association of Realtors Youth Foundation, and the Forest County Potawatomi Foundation to make further improvements to our outdoor learning spaces, providing students with an edible garden and furnishing our toddler play area with new equipment. Highland is currently preparing for a five-year comprehensive overhaul of our HVAC system, which will include the installation of new boilers, a new roof, and multi-pane glass windows for the entire building. With this work, Highland is moving into the future with environmentally sound investments to ensure a comfortable learning environment for all.

Community Engagement

Community Engagement plays an integral role in our identity as a school. Within our own community, Highland honors its origins as a parent-directed school by offering our families numerous opportunities to complete their annual volunteer hours through leadership on the Parent Board of Directors, committee work, sports and clubs, and classroom-based activities.

Highland also honors its commitment to our five pillars of education by giving students the opportunity to connect with each other as well as our community at large. Our newly formed Student Council helps foster

youth leadership and ensure our school is a nurturing place. Projects like our 3rd grade capstone tie Montessori’s Fundamental Needs of Humans to the social justice issues facing our city, partnering students with local organizations seeking to address those issues. Care of the environment is demonstrated through our annual neighborhood clean-up and our partnership with the Milwaukee Parks Foundation at King Community Center, located adjacent to our school grounds.

Highland’s ownership of our building at 17th Street and Highland Avenue is further proof of our commitment to engaging with our community. Classes and events led or sponsored by parents are often held on school grounds outside of regular school hours. Our upcoming 24-25 academic year calendar includes over 20 events designed to engage varying segments of our school community. In the 23-24 academic year, over 35 staff members participated in a bi-weekly payroll deduction to support the Highland Family Fund, which offers emergency support to current families and an annual scholarship for alumni students.

2. Evidence that parents and students are satisfied with the school.

Every spring and fall, Highland deploys a family survey to gauge the satisfaction of our families and solicit feedback, ideas, and areas for improvement. Each year, the results of this survey dictate the direction of our family programming the following year and help our administrative staff in prioritizing projects for the school.

Because the bulk of our survey content from 2020-2022 was centered around Highland’s response to the pandemic, the questions below were not used as a regular metric for our surveys until 2023-2024.

| Percent strongly agrees/Agrees | Fall 2023 | Spring 2024 |
|---|------------------|--------------------|
| Allows input and welcomes parents’ contributions | 94% | 92% |
| Is a safe place for my child | 98% | 97% |
| Supports me in my child’s learning | 93% | 89% |
| Keeps me well-informed about my child’s progress in school | 83% | 88.5% |
| Encourages me to be an active partner with the school in educating my child | 98% | 98% |
| Is a place where my child feels they belong. | — | 97% |
| As a parent I feel connected to Highland | 92% | 90% |
| Feel comfortable requesting to visit with your child’s teacher? | 97.5% | 98% |
| Talking with school staff about school programs? | 94% | 95% |

Families are satisfied with a Highland education, as further evidenced by our mobility rate. We have a very low turnover in student enrollment from year to year.

| School Year | Average MPS Mobility Rate | Highland Mobility Rate | Difference |
|-------------|---------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| 2020-21 | 5.1% | 1.2% | -3.9% |
| 2021-22 | 12.8% | 0.7% | -12.1% |
| 2022-23 | 14.0% | 1.2% | -12.8% |

3. A demonstration of Highland Community School’s active and effective governance structure.

Highland has a well-established Mission and Vision that guides how we are governed:

Mission: We are a community of diverse families and educators working together to offer quality Montessori education in a nurturing environment that enriches, empowers, and inspires the whole child to reach their full potential. We encourage and support parents to be responsible for, and involved with, their children’s education.

Vision: 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.

Mission and Vision allow us to provide high quality and socially-just Montessori education for one of the most racially, economically, and socially diverse populations in Milwaukee.

Being governed by a parent board ensures that we are led in a way that facilitates equity and social justice. Nine to fourteen members make up the Board of Directors, who must be parent or guardian of current students and are elected by the parent body each year in May to serve for a three-year term. The Board of Directors’ ultimate responsibilities include financial, legal, strategic planning, policy issues, and hiring/supporting the Executive Director. The Board ensures the school’s mission and vision are followed, and the integrity of the Montessori philosophy is upheld.

In addition to the Board, there are six family-supported committees which enable any parent to be involved in our decision-making process and have an opportunity to show leadership:

- Visual Arts: Supports the visual arts program and related events
- Hustle: Plans and executes Highland’s largest all-school fundraiser
- Facilities: Aids in the creation and implementation of large-scale facility related projects
- Finance: Supports budgeting, benefits planning, and other finance needs for financial health
- Library: Staffs and maintains the library, aids students in their independent research and reading interests, plans and supports the Book Fair
- Social Justice: Fosters dialogue and reflection on the impacts of race and class

II. A. Academic Performance

1. A description of Highland Community School’s education program for the next charter school contract term, including any proposed changes.

Highland will continue to follow the Montessori Pedagogy to provide our students with an educational

experience that supports the whole child. Below are several steps Highland will take to further strengthen our Montessori program:

- We have designed and implemented several systems to address the needs of our students, families and staff. We will refine those systems in the following ways:
 - Work to increase access to mental health services.
 - Provide more support to our Classroom Assistants by adding an Assistant Coaching position.
 - Strengthen Child Study, Nautilus and Coaching to increase efficiency.
- We have received feedback from our families surrounding increased transparency about how their children are doing in school and how they can support them at home. We plan to address this need by:
 - Providing opportunities for families to support their children at home in math and reading through school events, videos, and handouts.
 - Creating progress reports that are clear and concise.
 - Implementing more equitable classroom/family communication systems.
- To increase our students’ academic achievement, we will:
 - Explore, name and implement added ways to differentiate instruction for our key students.
 - Collaborate horizontally to:
 - Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of our math instruction.
 - Name next steps to address math instruction weaknesses and implement them.
 - Calibrate how we assess student work across levels.
 - Collaborate vertically to help students successfully bridge transitions between levels.

2. Highland Community School’s proposed enrollment and grade levels for the term of the next charter school contract.

| | SY 25-26 | SY 26-27 | SY 27-28 | SY 28-29 | SY 29-30 |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Children’s House | 131 | 134 | 135 | 134 | 133 |
| Lower Elementary | 124 | 124 | 120 | 118 | 118 |
| Upper Elementary | 104 | 110 | 114 | 115 | 114 |
| Adolescent Program | 66 | 59 | 56 | 61 | 63 |
| Total | 425 | 427 | 425 | 428 | 428 |

3. An outline of Highland Community School’s goals and measurable objectives for the term of the next charter school contract, including how the school intends to meet these goals.

Goal: On the Forward Exam, Highland students will continue to meet or exceed the performance of other MPS students in the areas of Math, ELA, Science and Social Studies.

| Key Practices of Schools that effectively raise achievement for struggling students | Highland Community School Implementation Strategies |
|--|---|
| Teachers provide strong Tier 1 curriculum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine Montessori curriculum maps. • Implement Coaching Model within the Montessori curriculum to support staff in strong instruction. |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide professional development in differentiation strategies. • Analyze STAR data and use it as a tool for goal setting. • Implement Lesson Study to share and standardize instructional practices. |
| Coordinated and sustained focus on reading | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully implement requirements of Act 20. • Use STAR and Running Records data to inform instruction. • Increase efficiency in planning and progress monitoring systematic phonics instruction. • Utilize Reading Teacher to support Children’s House early literacy. |
| Coordinated and sustained focus on basic math skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize all Comprehensive Academic Teachers to increase math fact fluency. • Increase ability for differentiated classroom instruction, flexible grouping, and immediate intervention for students who are not showing ability in math standards. • Offer PD opportunities to increase teacher understanding of math development and instructional strategies. |

II. B. Financial Performance

1. Highland Community School’s financial plans and forecast.

Highland maintains a five-year financial pro forma that guides our financial planning. We are at/around our enrollment capacity for our building and our enrollment projections above reflect this. Our next long-term goal is to finance infrastructure changes to our building’s heating and cooling system.

Within the next 3-5 years, we plan to improve the heating efficiency of the building by replacing windows and doors, replacing our boiler that is past its useful life, and adding a cooling unit to the building. This is a major project, estimated at over \$2 million dollars. The ESSER funds received over the last few years have enabled us to save some of our regular funding, and our cash in excess of operating is invested in accordance with our organization’s investment policy. We plan to complete this project through available cash reserves, donations, and grant funding. We do not plan to increase our debt by financing any portion of this project.

We place high value on our staff and the educational needs of students, with our budget reflecting that focus on spending. We are committed to maintaining this focus throughout this project, and to continue to invest in the financial future of Highland Community School.

II. C. Organizational Performance

1. Highland Community School’s plans for strengthening parental and community involvement in the school’s educational mission.

Parent Involvement:

Supporting Room Parents

Highland continues to enhance the role of Room Parents to better support our community at the classroom level. These parent leaders organize regular classroom meet-ups, strengthen, and amplify school communications within the classroom and ensure parents feel engaged and informed. They meet with the school’s Family Engagement Coordinator twice yearly to offer feedback about culture, climate and communication efforts. As we move into our next charter contract, we hope to provide more administrative support to room parents, especially in their efforts to engage with new families and organize classroom meet-ups.

Engaging New Families

Beginning in the Fall of 2024, Highland Community School will put an increased focus on our New Families Meeting to make it more effective and welcoming. Each new family will receive personalized check-ins from our Family Engagement Coordinator to help them feel valued and supported from the start. Additionally, our annual Ice Cream Social brings together new and returning families to foster connections between cohorts.

Communicating Academic Progress, Creating Partners in Academic Achievement

We continue to create new tools for family-teacher communication, focusing on improving communication with our families around academic progress. These changes aim to help families better understand their child's academic progress and reduce barriers to seeking help or more information about their child’s school experience. We aim to increase the level of communication between classrooms and families to ensure continuity and consistency across all classrooms.

Community Involvement:

Community partnerships play a vital role in fulfilling our mission and vision at Highland Community School, allowing us to expand our educational and extra-curricular activities far beyond the scope of our teachers and staff. From financial literacy to Lego Club, breakdancing to the negotiating at the United Nations, each partnership is designed to build on our students’ core educational experiences at Highland, broadening their perspectives and world view. We are proud to count the following organizations as current community partners:

| Partner Organization | Core Constituency | Program Focus |
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| Girl Scouts of America | Students: K5 – 6 th Grade; Afterschool | HCS partners with GSA to offer Daisies, Brownies, Juniors and Cadets programming designed to build courage, confidence, and character, with support from staff and parent volunteers. |
| Junior Achievement | Students: 5 th – 8 th Grade | HCS students take part in Finance Park, JA’s capstone program for personal financial planning and career exploration. |
| Milwaukee Art Museum | Students: 4 th – 6 th Grade | HCS partners with MAM annually through the Museum’s Junior Docent School Program, designed to introduce students to the vocabulary, elements, and history of art while developing critical thinking skills. Upon completion, each student becomes an official Junior Docent. |
| Montessori Model United Nations | Students: 6 th Grade | Each year, HCS’s 6 th grade class takes part in the upper elementary capstone project, the MMUN. This year-long project culminates in a 5-day international conference held at the United Nations in New York and is designed to challenge students to understand |

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| | | circumstances and perspectives beyond their own through research, writing, and presentation. |
| Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra | Students: Children's House (K3-K5) | HCS' partnership with the MSO's Arts in Community Education program exposes our youngest students to a variety of musical genres through on-site experiences, as well as a field trip to a Symphony performance. Highland is excited to expand the program to Lower El classes in the 24-25 year and Upper El classes in 25-26. |
| Parenting Network | Parents | Through HCS' partnership with the Parenting Network, courses on a variety of topics are offered to Highland parents free of charge. Ranging from <i>Peaceful Discipline</i> to <i>How to Connect with Your Tween</i> , these classes offer parents an opportunity to connect with each other and create community while learning valuable skills. |
| PEARLS for Teen Girls | Students: 5 th -8 th Grades | Highland's partnership with PEARLS provides students with a peer-based support group that combines social emotional learning with a curriculum designed to instill the key values of Personal Responsibility, Empathy, Awareness, Respect, Leadership and Support in each student. |
| Public Montessori in Action | Staff | Public Montessori in Action provides coaching and leadership support to our Executive Director and Montessori Coach in supporting our Montessori curriculum implementation and Nautilus approach to discipline. |
| Service Learners | Staff; Students | Each year, Highland partners with service learners from Marquette University, UWM, and several area high schools. These students volunteer in after-school programming, aid in classrooms, and help with administrative tasks depending on their area of interest. |
| Simba Soccer Club/Milwaukee Kickers | Students | Through Highland's partnerships with the Simba Soccer Club and Milwaukee Kickers, students are offered the opportunity to develop as young athletes while being encouraged to view soccer as a basis for a healthy lifestyle and academic achievement. |
| True Skool | Students; Afterschool | Highland's partnership with True Skool is designed to engage, empower, and educate youth through transformative arts and Hip-Hop Culture. Courses range from breakdancing to graffiti art. |
| Urban Ecology Center | Students: K4-K5, 7 th – 8 th | HCS' collaboration with the UEC provides nature-based learning to students, incorporating outdoor science programming and environmental educational curriculum. |
| Middle Level Forensics Association of Wisconsin | Students: 6 th -8 th ; Afterschool | MLFA supports Highland's middle school Forensics program through training, meets, and programming. |
| Milwaukee Ultimate Club | Students: 4 th -8 th ; Afterschool | MUC members donate their time by providing Ultimate Frisbee Clinics to our Upper Elementary and Adolescent Students in King Park throughout the Fall. |
| Milwaukee Recreation | Students; Afterschool | Our school takes part in the Track, Volleyball, and Basketball leagues of Milwaukee Rec. |
| Wisconsin Scholastic Chess Federation | Students; Afterschool | The WSCF supports our parent-led Chess Club with curricula and consultation. |

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| Kinship Food Center | Students: 3 rd Grade | Partners with Highland on the 3 rd Grade Project, the lower elementary capstone focused on Human Fundamental Needs. |
| Neu-Life Community Development | Students: 3 rd Grade | Partners with Highland on the 3 rd Grade Project, the lower elementary capstone focused on Human Fundamental Needs. |
| Hope House of Milwaukee | Students: 3 rd Grade | Partners with Highland on the 3 rd Grade Project, the lower elementary capstone focused on Human Fundamental Needs. |
| Milwaukee Parks Foundation & King Community Center | Students: 3 rd Grade | Partners with Highland on the 3 rd Grade Project, the lower elementary capstone focused on Human Fundamental Needs. |
| UW-Extension/4H | Students; Afterschool | Supports our school’s growing and robust 4H program that includes a Community Club, a Robotics Project and a Gardening Project. |

As we move into the next cycle of our charter agreement, we will continue to foster and develop community partnerships that speak to the priorities of our strategic plan and the needs of our student community.

2. Changes to Highland Community School’s governance structure.

Parent governance is integral to the fabric of Highland Community School. As a parent-directed body, a parent’s responsibility extends far beyond one’s own children to the well-being of the student body as a whole. Maintaining a governing body of current parents facilitates the development of leaders who understand our mission on a personal level and can advocate for our school and our students at the community and city levels. Having successfully guided Highland Community School through the past fifty-five years, we are confident that our model of parent governance will continue to support our school community in its critical work of nurturing our students and their families to be informed, compassionate, life-long learners who are a force for change in education, the community, and society.