

APPENDIX A
TO THE CHARTER SCHOOL CONTRACT BETWEEN THE
MILWAUKEE BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS AND
HIGHLAND COMMUNITY SCHOOL

SUBMITTED BY: TRACY WILLIAMS
AND
HIGHLAND COMMUNITY SCHOOL
PARENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS
1706 West Highland Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53233

SUBMITTED TO:
The Office of Board Governance
MPS Central Services Building
5225 West Vliet Street, Room 273
Milwaukee, WI 53208

DATE SUBMITTED:

~~03-27-2020~~

1/16/2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Highland Community School (Highland) is a Montessori school which seeks to increase the number of charter school seats and grades currently contracted through Milwaukee Public Schools. The school was previously located at 3030 West Highland Blvd., but moved its location to 1706 West Highland Ave., in August of 2012. Highland has a long history of academic excellence in a diverse educational environment, both racially and socio-economically. Highland seeks to continue this tradition as a non-instrumentality charter school through MPS.

Many parents in the community at large are interested in being more involved in the education of their children. Traditional public schools are organized as top-down hierarchies which can provide disincentives for the parents and families of students to be involved. The structure of a traditional public school may encourage parents to believe responsibility for education of children resides with the school rather than with the family. Studies show that greater parental involvement in the education of children leads to better outcomes.

Highland seeks to eliminate disincentives to participation by providing a model in which parent involvement in the education of children is expected. Highland attracts families with parents who are interested in being involved in the process. These parents are encouraged through a completed volunteer hours agreement, and by participating in an elected parent board of directors, to have a high level of participation in the social and operational aspects of the school. This leads to a sense of community at Highland which is unmatched at other schools, and provides additional incentive for parents to be involved in the academic success of their children.

Another critical feature of Highland is the Montessori method of education. The Montessori method emphasizes independence, freedom within limits, and respect for the natural development of a child's personality. Critical elements of this educational model are the constructivist or discovery model, which allows students to learn concepts through independent work with

materials, rather than by direct education from an instructor. The educational model also includes looping and multi-age classrooms, which allow the student and teacher to develop stronger relationships, and allow the student to learn by teaching others in the classroom.

Being exempt from the requirements of Chapters 115 to 121, Highland is able to construct a unique educational program based on the Montessori educational philosophy. Highland does not focus on traditional measures of academic success based on testing as the primary measure of student achievement. Rather, Highland seeks to create children who are confident and independent life-long learners who achieve academic success as a byproduct of their passion to independently seek answers to the problems of their generation.

Highland is proud to be a parent-directed, public Montessori charter school in the King Park neighborhood. Founded in 1968 on the principles of social justice and community, our school offers a rigorously academic yet holistic Montessori curriculum to over 400 students, K3 to eighth grade. Highland Community School strives to create a better world by being a leader in the education of children and families who will become creative and self-confident life-long learners, and thereby become the leaders of in their communities.

Mission Statement:

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 children to reach their potential and encourages parents to become responsible for and involved with their children's education.

Vision Statement

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.

Rationale for Charter

Highland Community School has a ~~50~~55+year history of providing a high-quality, innovative, and independent educational program serving Milwaukee's central city. We plan to continue to expand and innovate in ways that will continue to create academic excellence for our students, families, and community. Highland is proud to have been Milwaukee Public Schools' first established charter in 1996, with an academic program and operating model that has spurred demand for Montessori education with an increased focus on parent involvement. The flexibility afforded to Highland as a non-instrumentality charter school guided by a Parent Board of Directors has enabled our school to continue reaching its educational goals with the ability to develop and adjust policies as needed. Highland's success at engaging the family as a whole has impacted MPS, inspiring the district-wide implementation of a Family Engagement Coordinator position to better meet the needs of students and their families. As a model, Highland remains dedicated to innovative educational strategies that can be utilized to support other schools, improving education for all Milwaukee Public Schools students.~~Highland has achieved a high level of educational attainment by creating a system of accountability to a parent board of directors, while having the flexibility to develop and adjust policies quickly by operating outside the MPS institutional framework. Highland has achieved educational success through the Montessori method of education.~~

~~HCS has led the way in Montessori education in Milwaukee, with staff from Highland helping to launch MacDowell, the first MPS Montessori school. Highland and MacDowell have had a long~~

history of staff moving from one institution to the other, staff parents sending their children to the other institution, and close ties between the student bodies. Beyond MacDowell, Highland has a long history of working with and sharing information among several other MPS Montessori schools such as Fernwood and Maryland. Many of our students graduate from Highland and attend some of MPS's top-rated high schools such as King, Reagan and Golda Meir. We are proud of our role in helping Milwaukee, and MPS in particular, to be one of the leaders in urban Montessori education, and we are committed to continue nurturing that expertise. In 1996, Highland joined the Milwaukee Public Schools as the first charter school in Milwaukee, and we have continued to support the growth of public Montessori schools in MPS.

~~Our~~As a Montessori school, Highland's teachers and instructional staff have strong backgrounds in Montessori educational methods and philosophy. We are committed to ~~making sure ensuring~~ that our staff have the opportunity for ongoing professional training and development in this area. Indeed, in addition to ensuring our lead teachers are licensed educators, ~~all of our lead teachers~~ are also certified by the American Montessori Institute and American Montessori Society, ~~and with~~ many of our other staff members ~~are also actively~~ engaged in Montessori training. Historically, ~~we have grown~~ many of our own teachers; began as Highland parents ~~and other or~~ community members ~~have who~~ worked first as classroom assistants ~~at Highland~~ before going on to complete Montessori training and ~~to~~ lead their own classrooms.

Highland is accountable to a Board of Directors made up of current ~~parent~~s ~~members~~. Parents serve for a three-year term, with recruitment of new members occurring annually each spring. Members of the Board are selected via vote by the parent body as a whole. Parents are recruited by current board members and elected by all parents at the annual meeting. This creates both accountability and flexibility for the school. HCS is both accountable to the parent directors and reliant on those directors to understand and help create change when needed to maintain our organizational pursuit of academic excellence. For example, in a large district, personnel policies are necessarily based on purely objective criteria and provide an unimpeachable process by which hiring decisions are made. For a small school like Highland, however, where there is only one layer between administration and classrooms, our policies can be more flexible. This allows for more flexibility when urgency requires intervention or promotion. The parent board guides Highland in financial, legal, strategic planning, and policy issues, along with the hiring and support of the Executive Director.

~~Having both flexibility and accountability are critical to Highland's success as a MPS charter school. In order to continue our innovative tradition as a parent-run Montessori school, accountable first and foremost to our parent body through our elected parent Board of Directors, we need the flexibility afforded to us as a charter school.~~ Highland has flourished as a charter school of MPS. The flexibility afforded to us as a non-instrumentality charter, coupled with our strong parent-directed leadership model, has enabled our school to contribute in a meaningful way to the urban

education landscape of Milwaukee, and we look forward to a continued partnership with MPS.

The name of the person who is seeking to establish the charter.

On June 27, 1996, the Milwaukee Board of School Directors entered into a contract on its own initiative to establish an MPS Charter School, having considered the proposal submitted by Tamara O'Dell, Mary Andres, Danae Davis Gordon, Mary Ann Erdtmann and Tim Souers, the Proposal

Development Team of Highland Community School. The current president of the Highland Board of Directors is ~~Leana Nakielski~~ Brian Litzsey, and the current director is Tracy Williams.

The name of the person who will be in charge of the charter school, and the manner in which administrative services will be provided.

Tracy Williams or her successor, as designated by the Highland parent board of directors, shall be in charge of Highland Community School.

A description of how the community wishes to assume more responsibility/support for, or leadership in, the educational process.

~~Many parents in the community at large are interested in being more involved in the education of their children. Traditional public schools are organized as top-down hierarchies which can provide disincentives for the parents and families of students to be involved. The structure of a traditional public school may encourage parents to believe responsibility for education of children resides with the school rather than with the family. Parents continue to express an interest in being more involved with the education of their children.~~ Studies show that greater parental involvement in the education of children leads to better outcomes. As a parent-directed school, Highland is actively involved with the families of its students, viewing the family unit as instrumental to our students' success.

Through our Commitment to Community Contract, Highland seeks ~~to eliminate disincentives to~~ promote participation by providing a model in which parent involvement in the education of their children is expected. ~~Highland attracts families with parents who are interested in being involved in the process. These p~~Parents are encouraged through a volunteer hours agreement, and to take an active role in the school community through a variety of opportunities including sitting on our Parent Board of Directors, participating in our family-led committees, volunteering in the classroom, and leading an afterschool club or sport. Highland works hard to communicate and recognize that every parent may participate in different ways by participating on an elected parent board of directors, to have resulting in a high level of participation in the social and operational aspects of the school. This leads to a sense of community at Highland which is unmatched ~~at other schools,~~ and provides additional incentive for parents to be involved in the academic success of their children.

A description of the educational program of the school.

Highland Community School is a Montessori program, with significant additional resources focused on multicultural education, creative arts, social justice, and non-violence.

The heart and soul of Highland is a shared educational philosophy that guides decision-making at every level. The teaching staff, the administration, and the parents ~~are in agreement agree~~ with the fundamental tenets of Montessori philosophy. This means that all ~~of our~~ lead teachers are Montessori certified, and that the philosophical belief in Montessori pedagogy is fundamental to daily classroom practices and childrearing at home. One of the most critical and key challenges is to maintain Highland as a true Montessori offering. This is a constant concern for the leadership, both parental and staff, at Highland. This understanding is critical in all conversations concerning our school.

The Montessori approach to education was initially developed by Dr. Maria Montessori in the early part of the 20th century. Above all, Dr. Montessori stressed the importance of respecting each child as an individual, having a thorough knowledge of child development and being a sensitive observer of the child. She believed that these teacher attributes allowed one to “follow the child” in facilitating and creating opportunities for experiences and learning which are carefully matched to the child’s needs, interests, and developmental levels. She also stressed the importance of preparing an environment for every child which allowed the child to be a highly engaged and active participant. Montessori--educated children are more self-directed as a result of their experiences, and arguably better prepared ~~than traditionally educated peers~~ to meet the challenges of a complex and rapidly changing world.

The Montessori model uses looping and multi-age classrooms to achieve additional benefits for ~~the children students~~. Montessori classrooms span multiple educational levels and use *looping* to develop longer term relationships between the teacher and students, ~~and between the as well as amongst~~ students ~~with each other~~. As a child enters a Montessori classroom, ~~there are~~ older children in the classroom ~~who already understand can guide younger students in~~ the classroom rules and procedures. Students benefit by having relationships with teachers for three years rather than one. Students also benefit by learning to work with both older and younger peers to both learn and teach.

| (K3 – K5)

Children's House is a nurturing, homelike environment for young children. It contains materials that have been prepared by the Montessori teacher ~~in order~~ to help ~~the~~ children develop in various areas. ~~On any given day, the children~~ Students regularly choose their own work from among materials displayed on open shelves (Montessori Materials Tools) and may use any material for which they have received an introductory lesson. Over ~~a period of~~ time, ~~the~~ children learn to work with a high degree of independence and concentration, developing intense focus and a greater depth of knowledge as a result.

There are five areas in the Montessori preschool curriculum:

Practical Life: This area enhances the development of hand-eye coordination, gross motor skills, and ~~cognitive order~~ executive functioning; through care for the child ~~him/herself~~ themselves, the environment, development of social relationships, and coordination of physical movement.

Sensorial: This area enables children to order, classify, and describe sensory impressions related to length, width, temperature, color, pitch, mass, etc.

Mathematics: This area makes use of manipulative materials so ~~that the children~~ students can internalize concepts of numbers, symbols, sequences, operations, and the memorization of basic facts.

Language Arts: This area includes oral language development, written expression, reading, the study of grammar, creative dramatics, and children's literature. Basic skills in writing and reading are developed ~~through the use of~~ by using sandpaper letters, alphabet cut-outs, and a variety of other presentations that support children in linking letter symbols and sounds effortlessly; and encourage students to express their thoughts through writing.

Cultural Activities: In this area, children are exposed to the basics of geography, history, world cultures, life sciences, and earth sciences. Music, art, and movement education are part of the integrated cultural curriculum.

In Children's House, children experience a unified social, physical, and intellectual development. They develop a solid foundation that includes a positive attitude towards school, inner security and

a sense of order, pride in their physical environment, curiosity, skill in concentration, the habit of initiative, the ability to make decisions, self-discipline, and a sense of responsibility to other members of the class, school, and community. This foundation enables them to acquire more specialized knowledge and skills throughout their school career.

~~The~~ Older children within this group also begin to practice the expanded educational opportunities that will be the focus of the next phase of their education – moving beyond the classroom. ~~Each late spring, the 5-year-old students go on an overnight camping trip (a tradition that continues through the entire elementary program).~~ Four ~~Four-year-year~~-old students also begin to explore the world beyond their classroom, ~~but~~ with smaller scale activities like trips to the museum, the library, and the Urban Ecology Center at Washington Park. Each spring, 5-year-old students go on an overnight camping trip (a tradition that continues through the entire elementary program).

The Montessori Elementary Program: Lower Elementary (1st – 3rd Grades) and Upper Elementary (4th – 6th Grades)

The Montessori elementary program builds upon the preschool experience. ~~As such~~ In the lower elementary environment, ~~the~~ classroom materials continue to serve as a means to an end, developing imagination, aiding in abstraction, and generating a world view about the human task and purpose. Interdisciplinary studies combine geological, biological, and anthropological science. In each of these areas, children practice the skills of classification and critical thinking. Children engage with questions about the origins of the universe, the nature of life, people and their differences, and other substantial intellectual pursuits. These lessons support what Montessori called “the cosmic mind” and what former Highland teacher and principal Tim Souers described as “making the transition into the social world.”

The classroom environment for six to twelve-year-old students focuses much more on working in small groups, teaching children how to work together, and to solve problems in a proactive, social way as much as possible.

However, as this “cosmic mind” develops, the classroom alone is unable to meet the children’s needs for learning. Field trips and partnerships with community organizations become a critical part of Highland students’ elementary education.

Each spring, Highland elementary students put on a school play. This ~~helps them encourages~~ students to exercise their creativity, learn to speak and perform in public, learn to ~~plan for things~~ prepare materials like costumes and props, and work together to create and perform an artistic project. ~~Because our building does not have an appropriate theater space, it also fosters relationships between Highland and our community, and affords teachers, staff, and parents to model cooperative and sharing behavior with other community leaders.~~

Highland students have also studied art through the Milwaukee Art Museum’s junior docent program, developed and implemented a recycling program within the school, and take on additional new projects as their studies and interests naturally lead to them. Highland faithfully implements the Montessori educational system in most areas, such as practical life, sensorial materials, language, and math. However, we augment several areas, such as study of physical geography with cultural information. We also augment our overall curriculum with additional enrichment in physical education, music, art, and along with our multicultural studies, food.

As a capstone to the elementary program, Highland 6th graders travel to New York City to participate in the Montessori Model United Nations (MMUN). This program is a year-long project, culminating in a ~~three-day~~ simulation session in which student delegates represent selected member nations of the United Nations and participate in writing, presenting and debating original resolutions that deal with current world problems, issues and political situations.

The MMUN offers students an opportunity to become active participants in the issues at hand through ~~MMUN-MMUN~~-sponsored activities. Delegates interact and work with students from all around the world. A strong sense of community and social justice is forged as they ~~must~~ work together, observing rules of conduct, ~~negotiate~~ negotiating and ~~reach a~~ reaching consensus. Student delegates also participate in global education, social action programs and serve as mentors of the program. The ~~MMUN participants actually hold their~~ conference is held at the

UN, where ~~they-student participants~~ sit in the seats of Delegates, ~~and~~ in the meeting rooms where history is made.

The Montessori Adolescent Program (7th & 8th grades Grade)

The 7th and 8th grade Montessori Adolescent Program, for the 12-~~to~~ 14-year--old, is built on the foundations of the elementary program. Students are expected to bring a high level of independence and self-direction, ~~a~~ comfort with collaborative work, and a love of learning for learning's sake. The manipulative materials of the elementary level are rarely present, as adolescents have moved beyond their applications and are now solidly comfortable with the more adult learning techniques of reading, discussion, and application to a task.

With their expand~~ing~~ capacity for abstraction and critical thought, adolescents are highly creative thinkers and learners. Our interdisciplinary project-based approach supports flexible thinking and a personal connection to what students are learning. While traditional education ~~often teaches- may focus on~~ facts that are isolated from life outside the classroom, the Montessori adolescent program offers lessons with practical applications that allow students to make improvements in that community. "What will I use this for?" is an often-asked question of the adolescent, as ~~he-is-they are~~ determined to use knowledge to DO something in the world. Projects such as monitoring the neighborhood watershed, building and maintaining a large garden, or working at a homeless shelter, are real world opportunities for many lessons in science, language arts, and practical life skills.

~~In order to-To~~ accommodate a wide range of interests and learning styles, teachers vary their techniques in the classroom; ~~with~~ lectures, seminars, group learning, and hands-on activities ~~are~~ all employed to target different types of learners. In this way, teachers can expect students to be fully engaged in their learning. In the adolescent program, students demonstrate their mastery of material ~~thorough-through~~ various methods: ~~like~~ quizzes and tests, book reports, oral presentations, group work, visual projects, demonstrations, and labs. Science, mathematics, social studies, language and writing are a natural outcome of the adolescent curriculum.

Montessori adolescents continue to learn without letter grades or gold stars. Conversations with

~~the~~ teachers and written remarks on papers compliment the most important barometer of success: the student's own knowledge that ~~he has~~ they have put forth ~~his~~ their best effort. The mixed-age class supports each student in applying ~~himself~~ themselves in a unique way to a group experience. Longer blocks of time each day for subject areas such as Humanities, Creative Expression and Math allow enough time for each student to follow personal threads of interest without interruption.

~~Eight Grade Capstone Project:~~ Each year, Highland 8th graders embark on an adventure of a lifetime as their capstone project. These soon-to-be Highland graduates travel to Costa Rica on a journey that brings to life not only their study of Spanish, environment, history, and culture, but also their developing independence and global citizenship.

Montessori is a unique educational approach that nurtures a child's intrinsic desire to learn. Montessori focuses on the whole child—~~the~~ cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of each student. Traveling abroad adds an element of global citizenship. Throughout their education at Highland, students are taught to explore, respect, and care for the world around them. Experiencing a different culture is an exciting way to continue to explore and question their beliefs about themselves and their own community. While students may anticipate ~~that they will~~ learning a lot from hiking among the wildlife in the rainforest, speaking Spanish with their host families, and visiting a coffee plantation, the unexpected learning comes from the journey itself. More importantly, these experiences plant seeds ~~maybe~~ for a desire to travel to continue to study languages, or even to go to college to pursue their own dreams. ~~Perhaps the~~ The realization that we are all part of the same global community is the most important lesson of all.

~~Furthermore, the~~ As a part of their curriculum and fundraising efforts for their Costa Rica capstone, adolescents manage an in-school café, ~~“Kathy’s Community Café,”~~ where they develop job-related skills aligned with Montessori's quest for fostering self-sufficiency and understanding of economic principles ~~by providing real-world practices for the students~~. As part of their work in the ~~community~~ café, students learn the processes in which to “apply” for certain jobs as well as the various aspects of maintaining a business from tracking and ordering inventory, managing cash, opening and closing the café, customer service, and community engagement.

The Adolescent Program is holistic in its approach to educating the whole child, not only the child's cognitive potential, but also his or her physical, social/emotional, and moral growth. ~~The courses-Courses~~ are interrelated ~~so that the student realizes to emphasize~~ the interconnections of life. It is also holistic in that the school, family and child maintain the partnership built in the child's younger years which promotes an optimal learning environment.

Environmental Sustainability and Education

Care of the Environment: Children learn to love and respect the earth by getting their hands dirty. However, many children do not have the opportunity to connect with natural spaces on a regular basis. Therefore, connecting students to nature, embedding environmental education into the curriculum, and greening our school grounds is a top priority for Highland.

Natural Grounds ~~Redevelopment~~ Project: The Natural Grounds ~~Redevelopment~~ Project is about planting and cultivating the seeds of a strong environmental ethic in our children. We have reimagined ~~are re-imagining~~ our outdoor space to be a natural learning environment for us all. ~~A few years ago, we~~ We began this journey by installing raised bed gardens during a parent volunteer day. ~~We've been steadily modifying and have steadily modified~~ the grounds ever since. ~~In 2015, we purchased the building from Milwaukee Public Schools which allowed us more freedom to alter the school grounds.~~ Through a partnership with MMSD, three bioswales were installed on the property. ~~We also partnered with Reflo to create the Phase 2 plan for the Natural Grounds that will guide us in future developments. We are-~~ 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. As a school, we are committed to developing the child as a whole and taking into consideration the significance of our interactions with the environment that sustains us. By sowing these seeds, our students influence their families and the community at large.

~~Green School Consortium of Milwaukee As a founding member of the Green Schools~~

~~Consortium of Milwaukee, Highland has quickly become a leader in the greening school grounds in Milwaukee and hosted the first ever Green Schools Design and Development Conference in June, 2016. This conference brought together stakeholders to share green infrastructure plans and network together while inspiring more schools to break ground. We were proud to share our lessons learned and help other schools in their efforts!~~

The methods the charter school will use to enable pupils to attain the educational goals under Wis. Stat. § 118.01

Highland will continue to meet or exceed legally required educational goals through our effective, well-documented implementation of the Montessori curriculum.

Assessment is a daily occurrence in each classroom. Because the Montessori curriculum is child-centered and is led by the individual child's needs and interest areas as well as her level of concentration and focus, teachers must be aware of where a child is at all times. Daily logs are kept on every student. Once they are given a lesson, they must master that skill before they move on to the next skill level. All assessments are ability based. Teachers meet with their peers on a regular basis to discuss ongoing needs, plan, organize and evaluate the progress taking place in each classroom. Highland also administers the standardized tests required in other MPS schools, and publicly reports and analyzes those scores for additional accountability. We believe that the most appropriate measures of success for Montessori students extend far beyond academic testing; however, we also take seriously our responsibility to ensure that all of our students demonstrate academic proficiency in addition to building essential character traits such as perseverance, intellectual curiosity, conscientiousness, self-control, and concern for others.

Highland believes that students with special needs can and should be, wherever possible, served within the same mainstream classroom as all students. A Montessori education is a wonderful match for children with special needs. The individualized curriculum allows all ~~of our~~ children, including children with special needs, to fully participate in the Montessori classroom. The mixed age groupings necessitate a wide and complete range of materials within each room and each child ~~is able to~~ can move through these materials at his or her own pace. Since all children are working on different skills, no one is set apart or viewed as different from their peers. Additionally, children who are in mixed age classrooms stay with the same teacher for several years in a row. This means

that their teacher has every opportunity to intimately understand developmental levels, learning styles, and family support systems. Highland takes great pride in being a welcoming and supportive school for all students, and we work hard to ensure through our Response to Intervention efforts that all students are fully supported.

The governance structure of the school, including the method to be followed by the school to ensure parental involvement

Highland's governance structure and level of parent involvement may be our single greatest strength as an educational community. Highland is ~~run-guided~~ by a Board of Directors consisting of ~~between 9 and 14~~ nine to fourteen current Highland parents, elected by the full Highland parent body. The parent Board has full legal responsibility for all decisions relating to the operation of the school. It sets and monitors the budget, makes and amends all school policies, hires and ~~supports~~ fires the director, and, in conjunction with the teachers, supports the curriculum.

One of the policy requirements that Highland's parent Board has created is a parent volunteer-hours agreement. While the exact number of hours required has varied from year to year, the concept is core to Highland's community, and has been since our inception ~~more than 50~~ 50 years ago. The ~~school-parent~~ Commitment to Community contract also outlines how the school, parents, and students will share responsibility for ensuring student achievement including an expectation of volunteer time for each parent. This contract is signed upon admission to the school and is revisited on an annual basis. While Highland does not sanction families who fail to fulfill the volunteer commitment, signing the agreement sets the tone for a school culture in which families are always welcome in the school and are valued as essential partners in the education of our children. Students at Highland see that their families are part of the school. As a result, ~~the wall that exists in many schools between home and school is not present at Highland, and~~ we have a productive partnership with the families of our students, even families that may not initially have felt comfortable in a school setting.

Many activities qualify towards volunteer time, including serving as a room parent, acting as a member of the Board of Directors, ~~making-providing~~ making-providing healthy snacks for our children, ~~supporting helping set up or cleanup for~~ supporting school events, ~~helping in our office, selling items in our fund-raising projects,~~ assisting in our library, and ~~leading clubs and sports-working on available projects or~~

~~providing childcare during our parent workdays. Highland works hard to recognize the contributions each family makes to our community, understanding that there are many ways to participate and support our school. While circumstances do not allow 100% of our parents to volunteer extensively every year, all of our parents participate to the best of their ability, and we work with each family to find ways to make such participation succeed for both the family and the school. Furthermore, we do have nearly 100% parent participation in the most crucial activities, such as parent teacher conferences.~~

Highland employs a full time ~~Parent Involvement Coordinator;~~ Family Engagement Manager, whose role is to engage and support families, ensuring a strong level of partnership between the school and family. ~~parents through coordination of school-wide activities like Parent Workdays.~~

Through consistent and open dialogue, the Family Engagement Manager coordinates events that promote an inclusive school environment for all families and identifies resources and services that can be brought to the school to ease the burden on families, such as dental cleanings and winter gear swaps.

~~-The Coordinator~~ Manager also ~~helps identify~~ plays a crucial role in identifying potential parent-leaders, ~~helps helping~~ new and returning parents ~~identify find~~ volunteer committees and other opportunities that ~~fit within~~ match their interests, skills, and ~~available time~~ availability.; Additionally, the Family Engagement Manager ~~and~~ tracks ~~parent family~~ volunteer hours.

This position has been an integral part of Highland's culture for much of our history, ~~and as such, we have developed considerable allowing us to gather significant~~ data over time, documenting our successful ~~parent family~~ engagement efforts.

Highland ~~parents families~~ are actively engaged in every aspect of our school. Furthermore, over time, parents take the opportunity to explore new areas and contribute to Highland in new ways. This is particularly true for our parents who first come to the school with minimal experience as leaders and activists. While ~~Those parents are the most may be more~~ likely to initially fulfill their volunteer hours ~~exclusively~~ in "helping" roles. ~~However,~~ as they become more comfortable in the community, ~~and as the Parent Involvement Coordinator gets to know them and helps them see where they might be able to take more leadership,~~ they often become engaged at a deeper level, learning new skills and growing as professionals as well as parents. Several current or former Highland staff members initially became part of our community in this way.

In ~~2018-2019~~ 2023-2024, Highland ~~parents volunteered a total of over 12,000~~ 9,000 ~~parents documented~~ documented over 7,000 volunteer hours ~~(equivalent to approximately five four full-time year round employees)~~ within the school. When also including other engagement activities not logged such as parent-teacher conferences, event attendance and undocumented volunteer

contributions we estimate an additional 5,000 hours, equivalent to five full-time year-round employees.

Subject to. Wis. Stat. §§ 118.40(7)(a), 118.19(1) and 121.02(1)(a)2, the qualifications that must be met by the individuals to be employed in the school

Highland abides by all state and federal employment, record keeping, and contracting laws as applicable. Our lead teachers hold AMI or AMS certification as Montessori teachers; other instructional staff are provided opportunities for training and professional development in the Montessori instruction method and principles.~~will be required to attend Montessori educational development programs and other appropriate professional development training as determined by the parent board and the director.~~

Highland also complies with MPS policies on criminal background screening, and all contractors will abide by the MPS policy on minimum wage.

The procedures that the school will follow to ensure the health and safety of the pupils

Highland will adhere to all Wisconsin state laws and MPS policies regarding health and safety standards.

The means by which the school will achieve a diversity among its pupils that is reflective of the school district school-age population

Highland Community School has a ~~50~~ 55-year history of being a parent-~~directed run~~, community-oriented, Montessori school in Milwaukee's near-west side. Before moving to the building at 17th and Highland, Highland was located in a historic Pabst mansion at 31st and Highland Blvd since the mid-1990s; before that, we were located at 20th and Highland in the Victor Schlitz mansion.

Throughout the last ~~55~~ 50-years, our focus has been on serving the children of Milwaukee with a particular focus on our immediate community. Highland's children and families reside in over ~~3545~~ zip code areas with ~~9493~~ 9493% in the City of Milwaukee and over ~~7071~~ 7071% live in the primary zip codes as outlined here: 53208 (~~24.528~~ 24.528%); 53212 (~~12.11~~ 12.11%); 53216 (~~7.5~~ 7.5%); 53210 (6%); 53218 (5%); 53209 (5.9%); 53210 (5.6%); 53222 (4%); 53207 (4.5%); 53233 (3.8%); 53218 (3.6%); and 53205 (3.4%).

In the ~~2018-19~~ 2023-2024 school year, Highland had ~~416~~428 children enrolled and ~~220~~ over 200 families with the following ethnicity breakdown: ~~47% African American;~~ 41.37.9% Caucasian; ~~37% African American,~~ 40.12.3% Hispanic; ~~11.1% Two or More Races;~~ 1% Asian; ~~.5% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander;~~ 1% ~~American Native.~~ 2% American Indian. ~~17.21%~~ 17.21% of Highland students receive special education services.

The requirements for admission to the school

~~As described in the previous section, our admissions outreach is inextricably linked to our commitment to creating a school environment that is racially, ethnically, and economically diverse.~~

~~Any student within the Milwaukee Public School district is eligible to attend Highland. Our admissions is done via lottery. When demand exceeds the number of spaces available, as often happens, students are selected by lottery until the number of available spaces are filled. Because we select students by lottery, the primary work of ensuring a racial and ethnic balance among our pupils that reflects the City of Milwaukee and the MPS school age population is done by our Admissions Committee. They work hard to make sure that the families in our diverse primary and secondary target neighborhoods know about Highland, and have the opportunity to come in and see our school in action. Because of our commitment to the Montessori approach, we admit the overwhelming majority of our students at age 3. Students are admitted in the later grades only as seats are vacated.~~

In 2023, we moved our admissions window from October to February to align with the MPS district. This move was made after receiving feedback from families who missed our earlier enrollment period in the fall. We have found that aligning our admissions window encourages a more equitable experience for all Milwaukee families and continues to encourage a diverse pool of applicants for our lottery system.

Enrollment and grade level distribution for each year of the charter

For most of Highland's first 550 years, we served students from age 3 through the 3rd grade. We

expanded to provide one of the first true Montessori programs serving toddlers from 14 months to 3 years in 2002-2003, and in the 2008-2009 school year ~~we~~ began adding an upper elementary (4th – 6th grade) program. In the 2013-2014 school year our adolescent (7th – 8th grade) program began.

	<u>2025-2026</u>	<u>2026-2027</u>	<u>2027-2028</u>	<u>2028-2029</u>	<u>2029-2030</u>
<u>K3 – K5</u>	<u>134</u>	<u>134</u>	<u>135</u>	<u>135</u>	<u>136</u>
<u>1st – 3rd</u>	<u>125</u>	<u>123</u>	<u>121</u>	<u>122</u>	<u>125</u>
<u>4th – 6th</u>	<u>106</u>	<u>110</u>	<u>114</u>	<u>116</u>	<u>114</u>
<u>7th – 8th</u>	<u>66</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>65</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>431</u>	<u>429</u>	<u>428</u>	<u>435</u>	<u>440</u>