



Highland Community School

A parent-directed, Montessori charter school

Ms. Bridget Schock
MPS, Office of Communication and School Performance
Department of Contracted School Services
5225 W. Vliet St.
Milwaukee, WI 53208

August 12, 2019

Dear Ms. Schock,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, families, staff, and friends of Highland Community School, we respectfully request to engage in the process to renew our charter contract with Milwaukee Public Schools. It has been an honor to work with the School Board and Administration of MPS since 1996. Each time our charter contract is up for renewal, we evaluate our options and unequivocally choose to work with MPS. We hope to continue this meaningful and successful relationship by renewing our contract as a proud not-for-profit, MPS charter school for five years, beginning with the 2020-21 school year.

It is important to our families and extended community that we continue to be a part of and support the Milwaukee public school system. Because of our shared values to place students' interests first, we would like to continue this relationship for the following reasons:

- MPS values rigorous academic achievement standards, and so do we. At Highland, we provide our students with the best whole-child education, starting with the youngest of learners. We are flexible and inclusive with our approach of using Montessori pedagogy to exceed academic standards while developing the soft skills our students need to be effective communicators, critical thinkers, and responsible and just citizens.
- MPS understands the importance of parent engagement and leadership. Highland's initial charter agreement was initiated because Highland is a parent-governed school. Highland parents are involved in their children's education in a variety of ways, including Board leadership. Our parents commit to giving 36-hours of participation each year, and many give more when available.
- The expertise of MPS' central office and administration allows us to provide the best services for students when needed, offer valuable and relevant professional development, and give our families crucial support through working with a school social worker.
- The School Board of Directors' recent adoption of the Montessori Strategic Plan (MPSMSP) proves to be very exciting for all the Montessori public schools, Highland included.
- MPS is respected in the community and has connected us with many collaborative partners for strategic alliances. From school leadership collaboration to being part of the largest cohort of public Montessori schools in the nation, these partnerships are priceless when learning from each other's expertise and advancing our shared missions.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Tracy Williams, Executive Director of Highland, is our renewal contact. Please contact her by phone at (414)342-1412 or by email at twilliams@hcsmkc.org.

We look forward to continuing our partnership in providing an excellent education to Milwaukee students.

Respectfully,

Leana Nakielski
Board President

Tracy Williams
Executive Director



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2019 Application for Contract Renewal with the Milwaukee Public Schools District

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I. 1. How Highland Community School has been faithful in implementing its educational 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 children is the thread that weaves 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 has not wavered from our policy of requiring Montessori certification from the Association Montessori Internationale or American Montessori Society for all lead teachers. Highland has been able to maintain this policy even during a shortage of Montessori teachers, and we believe this is a credit to our committed faculty with long tenures and leadership's dedication to growing our staff from within our community.

Highland has formalized systems and processes for academic support since our last charter renewal in the following ways:

- After researching best practices in closing the “achievement gap,” we restructured our school building into four "families," each consisting of a (1) Children's House, a (2) Lower Elementary and an (3) Upper Elementary classroom. Children advance from Children's House to Upper Elementary within this family structure until they reach the Adolescent Program. We believe that this restructuring has supported us in accomplishing the following goals:
 - creating smaller school communities within our growing school to increase a sense of belonging, community engagement and accountability
 - increasing and improving teacher collaboration between levels
 - decreasing instructional time lost in student transitions between levels
 - increasing opportunities for student leadership
- We have incorporated a systemic approach to multi-tiered supports by embedding academic interventionists for struggling students through the creation of the Comprehensive Academic Teacher (CAT). Our CATs deliver Tier Three individualized academic interventions to students identified as needing intense academic supports. They also support Montessori lead teachers in the proctoring of assessments, analysis of assessment data, and participate in our formalized Child Study process to collaboratively address academic, behavioral, and social-emotional student concerns. In addition to the family model, we also attribute the narrowing of the achievement gap at Highland to the success of our most marginalized students as a result of the CAT system.
- Montessori lead teachers have been trained in and are expected to use additional formative assessments in reading and math to add breadth to the data informing our Tier One and Tier Two instructional approaches.
- To effectively support a Tier One/Universal approach to Montessori instruction, we created an academic coaching staff position. We designed this position to be flexible so that the role could be responsive to the evolution of the needs of Highland over time. For instance, initially, the coach worked to create and formalize effective systems in the areas of Response to Intervention, assessment, and special education. Once those systems were formalized, the coach's role shifted to evaluation and accountability. Now our coach can focus on improving Tier One Montessori instruction in the classroom using the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector Montessori Coaching model. Our teachers

participated in the MPS training and anticipate using the coaching model to improve their practice to the benefits of our students.

I. 2. How Highland Community School has met goals and measurable objectives during the term of this contract.

Highland aimed high with its goals and measurable objective in the last contract application. Below you will find our School scores and a narrative for the last four years.

Forward ELA

School Year	MPS FRL Average Proficiency	HCS FRL Average Proficiency	Difference
2014-2015	16.2%	19.0%	2.8%
2015-2016	13.4%	18.8%	5.4%
2016-2017	13.9%	17.1%	3.2%
2017-2018	13.5%	22.2%	8.7%

Forward Math

School Year	MPS FRL Average Proficiency	HCS FRL Average Proficiency	Difference
2014-2015	9.8%	4.9%	-4.9%
2015-2016	10.1%	10.9%	0.8%
2016-2017	10.9%	15.7%	4.8%
2017-2018	11.3%	16.7%	5.4%

- Highland Community School’s Free and Reduced lunch (FRL) students did not exceed the district in math in the Spring of 2015. However, in the Spring of 2016, 2017 and 2018, Highland FRL students exceeded the district in both Math and ELA. This improvement is largely due to the structure of our Family Model that was put in place to help identify students who were struggling in certain academic areas. We also implemented the Comprehensive Academic Teacher whose sole responsibility is to work with students that need Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions.
- Our goal was to have Highland’s FRL student’s average proficiency rates be at least ten percentage points above the MPS FRL district average on the Spring 2017 state test. Although we did not meet the ten percentage points higher, our FRL students did exceed the district 4.8% higher in Math and 3.2% higher in ELA. We are continuing to make strides in providing our students with interventions to address areas of concern, thereby, continuing to show growth at a higher rate than the district.
- Highland Community School’s goal for Closing Gaps score on the state Report Card was to increase annually (from a baseline of 34) for three years (until the school exceeded the MPS district by the end of the 2017-2018 school year). Highland achieved the goal of the “Closing Gap” score by increasing annually from the baseline of 34 to having a Closing Gap score of 76.9 for the 2017-18 school year. Highland has met this goal, but we acknowledge there is more work to be done to close the gap even further for our students.

- We set a goal of 95% of third graders would increase reading proficiency by 2017 as measured by Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment Running Records System. However, only 78.3% of Highland third graders were proficient in reading by the Spring of 2017. This was a very ambitious goal, and although we did not meet it, we want to continue to work towards achieving this higher percentage.

Another indicator of growth within HCS is seen when looking at our newly developed Adolescent Program. In the last five years, Highland has graduated 105 students and 82% (87 students) proudly chose a Milwaukee Public School high school. For the students choosing MPS, 68% (59 students) attend or attended the three most academically challenging schools with forty-seven students attending Rufus King, seven attending Ronald Reagan, and five students attending Gold Meir.

I. 3. How Highland Community School has met its financial performance goals and is financially sound.

The Board of Directors of Highland Community School annually approves and submits a school budget to MPS by June 1st. Highland's Board Finance Committee 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 January 31st. Annual audits, with the accompanying management letters, are submitted to MPS by October 1st unless an extension has been approved. In recent years, the audit has been completed with no major findings, and we continue to improve on our internal controls each year. Highland continues to review and improve its financial policies and procedures on an annual basis.

Highland began the term of this contract with net assets of \$1,397,106. This number has increased by 50%. Highland's key financial indicators are strong, and all are better than the industry average. Our liquid funds are high, and our debt ratio is declining, putting us in a stable financial position.

I. 4. A description of Highland Community School's well-functioning organizational structure, including pertinent information about parental involvement, staffing, health and safety, school enrollment, discipline guidelines, and school facilities.

Highland became the first school to charter with Milwaukee Public Schools in 1996, and its academic program and operating model help spurred parent demand for Montessori education with an increased focus on parent involvement. As the first MPS charter school in Milwaukee, Highland is dedicated to providing opportunities to implement innovative educational strategies that can support all other schools, improving education for all Milwaukee children. Highland is proud to be part of Milwaukee Public Schools, with the largest cohort of public Montessori schools in the nation, and its commitment to parent engagement.

Highland's well-functioning organizational structure is evidenced by its 50 years of existence. We attribute this support to our impressive parent involvement, growing enrollment and waitlists, the long-time dedication of our faculty and staff and continued and growing partnership with the community. The commitment of Highland's parents, teaching faculty, and professional staff to the near west side community and to educating children and engaging their families has made Highland

one of the most diverse, and successful schools in Milwaukee. Across the city, people recognize the three tenets of diversity, parent involvement, and Montessori education as values they share.

In 2019, Highland celebrates three historical milestones: a 50th-Anniversary, approval of a 3-year strategic plan, and the appointment of the first woman executive of color to lead the organization. All this while remaining true to our focus of providing the best education for all students by engaging their parents at all levels of participation from governing the school to helping make classroom materials.

Organizational Structure

As a school that has grown from just a few students to over 400 students currently, Highland's goal is 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 interventionist 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 two Montessori certified teachers, two assistants, and a comprehensive academic interventionist. All hallway families and the Adolescent Program receive support from artists-in-residency specializing in the visual arts and performing arts, an environmental science teacher, a physical education specialist, special education teachers, an occupational therapist, a social worker, a Montessori coach, and an administrative team.

Highland's long-standing parent-led Board of Directors is invested in educational opportunities for all students from every socio-economic background. It 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 the Milwaukee community and is a key champion in maintaining a healthy well-run organization.

Parent Involvement

As a parent-run school, Highland's goal is to foster a nurturing environment for both our 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 parents delivering over tens of thousands of hours of engagement each year and the parent board overseeing our programs and guaranteeing a quality Montessori education for every child. The Parent Board of Directors leadership is critical in ensuring equitable education to all students, regardless of the risk factors in the child's life. Parents support the needs of the school by participating in parent workdays, donating healthy food items for a daily snack, guiding decisions while on committees, and attending all school events. It's not only parents who are involved, but grandparents, aunts, uncles, other extended family members, and alumni contribute by sharing their talents, volunteering, and donating all to support Highland's students.

Staffing

Highland Community School has 72 staff members, of which 46% are persons of color. The organizational structure is a non-traditional model that relies on a large amount of ownership by the faculty and staff. While all positions report to appointed personnel, all faculty and staff are responsible to and for each other and more importantly, they are responsible to the parent body represented by the Parent Board of Directors. The teaching staff meets weekly with other teachers from their level or their hallway family, and administrative staff meets weekly with the Executive Director to ensure sound management of the school. All faculty and staff meet monthly to collaborate and evaluate progress towards the school goals. Regular in-services and professional development opportunities provide additional capacity building in specific areas.

Highland's commitment to growing and empowering its staff is evident. A few examples of this commitment are encouraging and investing in classroom assistants' Montessori certification to implementing the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector's Coaching and Child Study Model to promoting an internal candidate to Executive Director after a competitive consultant-led national search. The purpose of this intentional investment is to guarantee the best education for our students.

Health & Safety

Health and safety are very important to Highland. The Health & Wellness policy was created with parental input and serves as a guideline to ensure that school activities promote a healthy lifestyle. Some examples of this are Highland's investment in a natural playscape, parents providing a daily healthy morning snack, all staff members are CPR and first aid trained, and a defibrillator is present and tested regularly.

The safety of our students and staff is a priority for Highland. Highland's Facility Manager works with the Crisis Management Team to review and ensure a sound Crisis Plan is shared with all staff and enforced daily. Should a crisis happen, or a safety concern presents itself, the Crisis Management Team and staff members involved meet to review all steps taken and confirm the Crisis Plan was followed. When appropriate, communication to the Highland Community is provided with a clear, straight forward message. Further, Highland has a strong working relationship with the local police and fire department.

Highland has a Code of Conduct Policy that all students and adults follow for conflict resolution and behavior guidance. Also, all people 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

With our current enrollment of 414, the school has grown since the first year of the current contract (2015), when 350 students were enrolled. Moving forward, Highland will intentionally slow the rate of enrollment to retain the close-knit, nurturing environment for its families.

Discipline Guidelines

Highland Community School has a progressive discipline policy that works with the student, parent(s), staff, and community in solving discipline problems at the school. This policy includes appropriate handling of conflict/behavior issue as well as the promotion of positive behaviors. Mechanisms include mediation, redirection, emotional coaching and modeling, and use of praise for respectful interactions. This policy has been institutionalized with on-going staff training and professional development sessions. Each year the plan is reviewed and modified to better meet the needs of Highland students. All students, staff, parents, and community members are expected to follow the above stated Code of Conduct Policy and adhere to the Bill of Rights. These policies can be found in The Parent Handbook and Staff Handbook.

School Facilities

In Spring 2015, Highland purchased the building on 17th Street and Highland Avenue from Milwaukee Public Schools. Since then, Highland has made a considerable investment in improving the building and grounds. Inside the building, improvements include modifying classroom sizes for more mobility, creating two distinct classroom spaces for the Adolescent Program, creating spaces for special education interventions, partnering with Valentine Coffee to host a Community Café run by the Adolescent Program, and updating technology. Outside the building, Highland has worked with the Green Schools Consortium of Milwaukee, the City of Milwaukee, REFLO, MMSD, and other community partners to create a Natural Grounds that extends the classrooms outside and to inspire daily interaction with nature. The Natural Grounds consists of three play structures, including a separate space for the Toddler program, two hoop houses, an outdoor classroom, a solar cart, two bioswales, an orchard, and many rain gardens. All these improvements provide educational opportunities for Highland students around urban agriculture, problem solving, water conservation, and environmental sustainability.

Community Engagement

Highland Community School values our community partners and works cooperatively with local organizations to provide the best educational programming possible. Our community partners enhance every aspect of the education program, and we are grateful for their partnership, support, and investment. Through these partnerships, Highland promotes social awareness and responsibility to community and society.

Each student learns and develops his sense of social responsibility through active participation in thoughtfully organized projects, like the 3rd-grade social justice research project. Through applying

skills and knowledge to authentic and practical objectives, the students develop a deeper understanding of the needs of the community and reflect on the positive impact they can have on the world around them. It creates a sense of responsibility.

Operating in the King Park neighborhood, Highland’s purchase of the old MacDowell building exemplifies our commitment to be a stable entity and participate in the fight for equity in some of the neediest communities in Milwaukee. Highland’s staff recognizes the value of helping those in need within our community and shows this by voluntarily donating a portion of every paycheck to a family emergency fund, which enables us to respond when a need appears within our family population.

I. 5. Evidence that parents and students are satisfied with the school.

In addition to providing an education that encourages our students to reach their full potential, one of the goals at Highland is to be a warm, welcoming school known for its nurturing environment. The key component of this environment is a spirit of engagement and the close interaction of parents with students, teachers, and other team members.

Highland’s success as a school is due to parents being involved with 95% of parents completing their engagement commitment of 36-hours a year. 100% of our Board of Directors are parents. As a parent-directed school, Highland is constantly soliciting advice on how to be a better school and is responsive to the concerns of both the parent, student and staff population.

Of our current staff who are parents, 65% currently have or had children enrolled at our school. If that isn’t enough, in the five years, parents have helped us raise a total of \$256,116 through our catalog sales, fundraising events, volunteering at the Fiserv Forum, and corporate rewards such as Box Tops for Education. Highland parents also donate thousands of dollars of fresh fruit and vegetables for a healthy, daily snack.

Exceptional student retention is another example of parent and student satisfaction within Highland. When compared to MPS mobility rate, Highland’s rate is annually at least eight percentage points lower.

School Year	Average MPS Mobility Rate	Highland Mobility Rate	Difference
2015-2016	11.6%	0.0%	-11.6%
2016-2017	11.3%	3.0%	-8.3%
2017-2018	10.2%	2.2%	-8.0%

Recently Highland asked its families why they choose Highland and what makes them stay. Below are a few excerpts from those responses, highlighting parent satisfaction with Highland Community School during the past years:

“An investment of time and intention is how we approached finding the right fit for my kids. Highland has a family environment that encourages meaningful parental involvement and non-threatening parent/teacher involvement to facilitate conflict. Highland has a commitment to the environment and incorporates in their curriculum socialization that teaches children their

responsibility to and for the earth. Highland is academically challenging and provides a learning experience beyond their neighborhoods and introduces them to other places in the world. Each of those priorities delineated above brought us to Highland.” – Shelia and Larry Ashley

“Highland has provided a great educational experience for children while allowing them to just be themselves. I love the communication I receive from teachers, the relationships that we have built, and the comfort in knowing my kids are in great hands.” – Brandi Anthony

“I chose Highland because I love the sense of community, commitment to children's dignity and learning, and the opportunities that parents have to collaborate with their children and the staff in leading the school. I also love that our community is diverse and committed to social justice. We stay for the reasons I mentioned above. Further, I know that the Highland Community faces challenges, and I appreciate the way the staff collaborates with children and families to address them in a loving, restorative manner.” – Heather Sattler

“We chose Highland because we wanted a top-notch Montessori education for our kids, but we were equally impressed with the parent involvement, social justice focus, arts and theater opportunities, Highland's diversity in student population and location within the city of Milwaukee. As social workers in Milwaukee, my spouse and I desired to engage our children in learning how to be stewards of social equity. We are part of a community, one who is dearly loved by many and benefits so many children and families. This community is necessary and vital within the city of Milwaukee and deserves the full support of continuation toward its mission.” – Diana & Mike Johnstone

“We truly feel grateful for the privilege of getting to participate in what is labeled as a school but has demonstrated to be much more. It is a community. It is the future. It is the hub of extraordinary student-led ideas that if implemented on a larger scale, could not only benefit Milwaukee for the better but the entire global community, as well. Programs offered through Highland Community School aim to do just that...When asked where we send our daughter to school, we proudly smile and boast, “Highland Community School.” Highland has eased the anxiety of being a parent and shown us that education is so much more than learning numbers and letters. It is about cooperative and thoughtful existence for the benefit of the community as a whole. By promoting this positive supportive outlook, HCS is creating a team of individuals that when released into the world will make undeniable changes for the better. They already are. And it has been incredible to be a part of it.” – Samantha & Alexis Burgos

As demonstrated, Highland parents share their experience with their friends and families. They talk about the education their children receive, the community built at Highland and the many ways they feel like they contribute to making the school what it is today. In the last two years alone, 72% of school age applicants have been referred to Highland by a current parent, former parent, or alumni. Former families and alumni come back to Highland to volunteer, visit, celebrate, and invest in the school annually. One former shared the following:

“We continue to be very proud and quite fortunate that Highland was the first place that our daughter experienced school. We know our daughter is amazing, and she continues to show us her

brilliance to this day, as she thrives academically, athletically, musically, and civically at a highly selective university. But innate ability and creativity must be cultivated and finding the right environment for a child's potential to be encouraged and nurtured is critically important—particularly in the earliest of years. For us, back in the early 2000s, Highland Community School set the foundation for our daughter to be a lifelong learner. Highland instilled in her a love of learning, freedom to explore deeply that which she found engaging, and a responsibility to contribute her gifts within a community of other caring students and adults. All students deserve what Highland has to offer.” - David McKinney & Elizabeth Miller

Highland staff continues to invest in the students who attended Highland by contributing to a scholarship fund to help alumni who are starting at a post-secondary school. As part of the application process, the candidates are asked to reflect on how their experiences at Highland Community School helped shape who they are today. Below is an excerpt from two of the more recent scholarship winners.

“Growing up in the Highland Community has built me to be the strong and driven person I am today. Highland has taught me to be independent at a very young age which has helped me succeed with my education and also be able to look for opportunities to improve myself and my education...if it wasn't for Highland I wouldn't have pushed to be my best self and control what I want from my future.” – India

“I left with characteristics that exemplify the Highland mission statement. These ideals also created a foundation for a lifelong love of learning...Highland helped me accomplish things in high school as well because they made me passionate about taking charge of my own education and not allowing others to direct my learning experience. I completed all my high school goals through the learned work ethic and involvement in my own education. Through Highland's help, I would be able to spread compassion, love of education, diversity of morals, and would work to reach my full potential every day.” – Sophia

I. 6. Highland Community School's active and effective school 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.

The 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 is the way that we ensure that we are led in a way that facilitates equity and social justice. Nine to fourteen members comprise the Board of Directors, each a parent or guardian of current students and are elected by the parent body each year at our Annual Meeting in May. The Board of Directors' ultimate responsibilities includes financial, legal, strategic planning, policy issues, and hiring the Executive Director. The Board ensures the school's mission and vision are followed, and the integrity of the Montessori philosophy is upheld within the school.

In addition to the Board, there are several parent-run committees for any parent to be involved in the decision making at the school and have an opportunity to demonstrate leadership, including:

- Admissions: meet with prospective parents, assist with orientations and community building
- Creativity: plans and staffs Holiday Bazaar, Craft Night, and school-wide art projects
- Facilities: assist in the creation and implementation of large-scale facility related projects
- Finance: Budgeting, benefits planning, and other finance needs for financial health
- Fund Development & Fundraising: fundraiser, grant, and donor pipeline development
- Library: maintain the library, purchase books, plan and execute Book Fair
- Parent Education: organizes Parent Education Nights and teacher appreciation
- Natural Grounds & Gardening: continue to develop Natural Grounds
- Social Justice: fosters dialogue and reflection on the impacts of race & class

The Board has adopted a three-year Strategic Plan in Fall 2019, to ensure further that we are living the mission and vision by strategically aligning our resources, practices, and supports to demonstrate Highland's commitment to educational excellence, social justice, and community building.

The strength effectiveness of our parental governance structure has allowed Highland to maintain sound leadership per our mission and vision despite leadership changes over the last five years.

II. 1. Changes to Highland Community School's educational program for the term of the next charter school contract.

As Highland has grown into a larger school, we have found that many of the existing processes and systems help to improve our assessment data, school culture and supports for our students and families who need the most assistance. As with all growing organizations, our systems have room to improve to best serve our students and their families. There are several steps Highland will take to further strengthen our Montessori program.

Highland has a strong history of supporting students and families meeting them where they are and supporting their social, emotional, and behavioral needs. With growth, we realized we need formalized systems that make identifying needs of students and supporting those more efficiently and transparently. For the 2019-2020 school year, a full-time school social worker has been added to provide these services and guide our work as we implement a strong RTI system using a Child Study process that supports the social, emotional, and behavioral growth of our students. This process provides early and ongoing intervention for students that encourages family and school-wide staff participation. The Child Study is a tool to develop action plans for students who are showing difficulties thriving in the Montessori prepared environment. Through increased

collaboration and communication between teachers, parents, and students, struggling students will receive interventions earlier and in a more targeted way. Full implementation will be complete by the end of the 2021-2022 school year.

A Montessori Coach position was created to support the school-wide implementation of strong Tier 1 Montessori curriculum and guide teacher development in the 2019-20 school year. This position also aims to bring cohesion throughout the school community and increase collaboration between staff through weekly classroom observation and coaching meetings.

As outlined in HCS’s organizational structure, the family model has been maintained and is an integral part of the academic growth experienced over the past few years. The family model will continue to be strengthened by devoting professional development time to increase effective communication and collaboration between staff. This includes acquiring appropriate materials and strategies to help students successfully bridge transitions between levels.

Capacity for horizontal collaboration between teachers at the same level will be built through two protocols—Lesson Study and Child Study. Lesson Study is a protocol that fosters robust team discussions of specific lessons or lesson sequences. Lesson Study allows teachers to refine presentations by providing a structured approach for sharing, observation, feedback, and reflection.

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"> • Align and integrate Montessori curriculum with state standards and common core. • Implement Coaching Model within the Montessori curriculum to support staff. • Provide professional development in math and reading. • Analyze of Star data as a tool for goal setting. • Implement Lesson Study to share and standardize instructional practices. • Identify key Montessori lessons that all classrooms will implement.
Coordinated and sustained focus on reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further professional development on assessment tools and systematic reading interventions to support early literacy. • Increase capacity for Tier 1 reading instruction for early literacy. • Use Star and Running Records data to inform instruction. • Increase efficiency in planning and record keeping ensuring appropriate instruction.
Coordinated and sustained focus on basic math skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement formative math assessment. • Utilize Comprehensive Academic Teachers to increase math fact fluency. • Increase capacity for differentiated classroom instruction, flexible grouping, and immediate

	intervention for students who are not showing proficiency in math standards.
Targeted interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify lagging skills, plan interventions, and track effectiveness of interventions through Child Study process. • Standardize assessments and interventions throughout the school. • Increase the capacity of teachers and staff to successfully implement classroom interventions for struggling students. • Provide an interventionist to each hallway family to provide Tier 3 instruction, social/emotional/behavioral support, participate in Child Study as the collectors and monitors of data, and provide resources for classroom teachers when classroom interventions are needed.
Substantial time for collaborative planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase vertical collaboration through hallway family meetings. • Increase horizontal collaboration through the Coaching Model, Child Study, and Lesson Study. • Build capacity for peer observation and coaching. • Evaluate family model to identify strengths and weaknesses to determine next steps.

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

	SY20-21	SY 21-22	SY 22-23	SY 23-24	SY 24-25
Children’s House	140	134	133	132	132
Lower Elementary	126	123	112	117	111
Upper Elementary	107	111	123	113	110
Adolescent Program	53	62	64	65	74
Total	426	430	432	427	427

II. 3. Highland Community School’s goals and measurable objectives for the term of the next charter.

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

Student Achievement Growth

- 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.

Student Achievement Attainment

- Highland Community School Black students’ average proficiency rates on the Forward Exam will continue to meet or exceed the MPS Black district average in all tested subject areas at each grade level and will increase at least 15 points from a baseline of 40.8.

“Summary Scores

The purpose of the table below is to inform understanding of performance of the all-students group and student groups relative to possible identifications. The table provides summary scores for your school and for student groups in your school. It also lists applicable identification thresholds.”

Student Group	Summary Scores		Applicable Thresholds			Threshold Warning
	Current	Prior	CSI	ATSI	TSI	
All-Students	45.4	42.4	6.4	NA	NA	NA
Asian	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Black	40.8	41.5	NA	6.4	14.9	NA
Hispanic/Latino	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Amer. Indian	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Pacific Isle	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Two or More Races	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
White	81.7	73.2	NA	6.4	14.9	NA
Econ. Disadv.	55.9	57.5	NA	6.4	16.4	NA
EL	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
SWD	36.8	29.0	NA	6.4	16.4	NA

- 95% of Highland Community school third graders will be proficient in reading by 2017, as measured Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment Running Records System.
- By the end of K5, 95% of HCS students will be on or above target (transitional readers) as evidenced by the STAR or other district wide spring benchmark assessment along with 95% meeting benchmark on PALS.

II.4. Highland Community School’s financial plans and forecast.

Highland maintains a five-year financial pro forma that guides our financial planning. We have purposefully slowed our enrollment targets to provide a smaller class size and quality program. Our goal is to maintain this enrollment level, increasing slightly in our Adolescent program over the next two years. We purchased a building in 2015 and are currently engaged in a feasibility study for expanding space for the increase in Adolescent enrollment. Highland uses its five-year financial pro forma to develop long-term organizational budget planning that is sustainable for the school.

II. 5. Highland Community School’s plans for strengthening parental and community involvement in the school’s educational mission.

Parent Involvement

Highland Community School was founded by parents who were seeking a better educational model for their children. Since 1968 we have been a parent-run school and as such put great significance

and energy into building the capacity of our parents to lead our school, either by teaching, serving on the Board of Directors, or serving in other supportive roles to the school. Highland makes it a priority to encourage parents to become responsible for and involved with their children's education. We believe that parent involvement from early on is the key to a child's success.

It is Highland's tradition to encourage and support parents who are interested in becoming teachers and acquiring Montessori certification. 50% of our staff have children enrolled in our school or who graduated from Highland. Four Highland alumni are currently on staff. Additionally, whenever the school has an opening for employment, the school leadership always promotes within our community of families and staff first. Twenty-two percent of current Highland staff started with Highland as parents before becoming employed by the school. Also, Highland Community School has committed a significant portion of the annual budget to support professional development opportunities for staff. Additionally, parent volunteers have organized a parent education event that is specifically designed to educate parents about key Montessori concepts while allowing parents to receive lessons directly from a Montessori teacher.

Aside from involving parents in school governance, staffing, and professional development opportunities, Highland continues to require each parent sign a "Commitment to Community contract" that outlines the school's high standards of parent involvement, including the commitment of 36 hours of parent involvement with the school. As tracked by our Parent Involvement Coordinator, 95% of parents meet or exceed their commitment. For over 35 years, Highland has maintained a full time Parent Involvement Coordinator that manages parent volunteer opportunities and is responsible for tracking parent involvement hours, outreach, and helping organize parent directed volunteer opportunities that align with the school's mission and enhance educational programming for our children. As is evident, parent involvement and enhancing the skills of our parents/community members is a huge priority for our organization. The school leadership dedicates resources, time, and funding to ensure we advance the talents of our parents/community members.

Community Partners

Changing the world is a big undertaking for a school. Highland cannot do on its own. It needs partners to create the kind of educational opportunities students need to reach their full potential. Highland Community School is grateful and proud to have a wide variety of community partners to supplement the curriculum and open new worlds for our students. From robotics to playing soccer, learning about the United Nations to playing the piano, there is something for every student. It is through these quality, mutually beneficial partnerships that Highland is able to fulfill its mission and aim towards our vision:

Girl Scouts of America –Daisies, Brownies, Juniors, and Cadets – Staff and parent volunteers run scouting programs for girls from K5 through 6 th grade.
Green Schools Consortium of Milwaukee – Highland is proud to be a founding member of the Green Schools Consortium. Working with other schools and environmental organizations, Highland has been able to achieve its Natural Grounds and inspires others to make similar changes to their playscapes.
Hands in Harmony – Weekly piano lessons are offered afterschool at Highland. Through the lessons, students explore standard repertoire, composition, theory, and improvisation. The rigorous but achievable lessons build students confidence and develop academic and social

<p>stamina. Thanks to an MPS Partnership grant, Highland and Hands in Harmony offer lessons to any student who is interested, not only to those whose families can afford the lessons.</p>
<p>Junior Achievement – Highland students participate in Finance Park programming.</p>
<p>Service Learners – Every semester, Highland welcomes services learners from Marquette University, UW-Milwaukee, and several high schools to volunteer in our afterschool program or help within classrooms and with administrative tasks depending on the students’ interest.</p>
<p>Milwaukee Art Museum – All upper elementary students (4th-6th grades) participate in the Milwaukee Art Museum’s Junior Docent School Program (JDSP). The program introduces elementary school students to the vocabulary, elements, and history of art while developing critical thinking skills. Over three consecutive years and after a culminating project presented to their peers and family, they become official Junior Docents.</p>
<p>Montessori Model United Nations – Every 6th-grade student at Highland participates in the Upper Elementary Capstone project, the Montessori Model United Nations (MMUN). They embark on a year-long project that culminates in a 5-day international conference at the United Nations Assembly Hall in New York City. Through this process of researching, writing, and presenting, our students begin to understand a perspective different than their own.</p>
<p>National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector – This year, 2019-20, Highland is working with the NCMPS to implement their Montessori Coaching program and Child Study. This program will support the faculty while they hone their craft and identify students who need extra support earlier.</p>
<p>Parenting Network – Parenting classes are offered to Highland parents free of charge. Parents learn about a variety of topics from peaceful discipline to how to connect with their tween. These classes offer parents a chance to connect while learning skills to help with everyday life.</p>
<p>Simba Soccer Club/Milwaukee Kickers – Simba Soccer Club and the Milwaukee Kickers collaborate with Highland to offer students the chance to be on a soccer team. Students learn basic soccer skills, develop their coordination while also learning perseverance and teamwork.</p>
<p>Urban Ecology Center – All Children’s House classes participate in annual fieldtrips to the UEC’s Washington Park center as a part of the UEC’s Neighborhood Environmental Education Program. The program reinforces science concepts in the outdoors. Also, the Urban Ecology Center - Menomonee Valley supports our annual walk bike fundraising event.</p>
<p>UW-Extension/4-H – Experts from UW-Extension offer a tech club each Thursday for Highland’s adolescent students. Through this club, students explore robotics, film producing and editing, photography, rockets, and many more STEM concepts. Highland offers a Lego Robotic program through 4-H. In 2019-20, two teams will compete.</p>

Deepening and expanding our list of Community Partners is one of the priorities in Highland’s strategic plan. Over the next three years, Highland plans on expanding its offerings with a focus on physical recreation and community service.

II. 6. Changes to Highland Community School’s governance structure.

Highland believes that parent governance is the ultimate parent involvement strategy. It is a powerful tool to develop parent leaders, who in turn will reach out to other parents and encourage them to take positions of leadership in the school, as well as the City. The governance board is fully engaged and continue to improve upon the model of learning at the school. Highland’s parents are responsible for the success of, not just their children, but all the students as a whole. This model has been encouraging life-long learning and education advocacy in our parent body for the last fifty years, as well as creating agents of change in education for all Milwaukee children.