



City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
53202

Meeting Minutes

CHARTER SCHOOL REVIEW COMMITTEE

KEVIN INGRAM, CHAIR

Joyce Mallory, Vice-Chair

*Ruben Burgos, Naryan David Leazer, Monique Liston, Desiree
Pointer-Mace, and Glenn Steinbrecher*

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Gayle Peay, 288-1540

Tuesday, October 30, 2018

5:30 PM

City Hall, Room 301-B

1. Roll call.

Meeting convened: 5:30 P.M.

*Members present: Kevin Ingram, Desiree Pointer-Mace, Glenn Steinbrecher, Naryan
David Leazer and Joyce Mallory*

Members excused: Ruben Burgos and Monique Liston

2. Review and approval of the minutes of the September 27th meeting.

*Ms. Pointer-Mace moved, seconded by Mr. Leazer, for approval of the minutes. There
were no objections.*

3. [170704](#)

Communication relating to the 2017/19 activities of the Rocketship
Southside Community Prep.

Sponsors: THE CHAIR

*Ms. Susan Gramling, Children's Research Center, said that Rocketship has decided to
not be chartered by the City of Milwaukee for this year. There were no
recommendations for school improvement or monitoring. Mr. Steinbrecher said that
city revenue will drop by about \$90,000 this year so he's concerned about having
enough funds in the charter school trust fund. He would like to modify both contracts
since fewer reports will be done. Modifying the contracts will be discussed at the next
meeting.*

4. [170705](#)

Communication relating to the 2017/19 activities of Central City
Cyberschool.

Sponsors: THE CHAIR

*Ms. Susan Gramling, Children's Research Center, said this school is located near the
Parklawn housing complex. Almost all of the student population is African American
and 11.8% are special education and all the kids are eligible for free lunch. All of the
interview data are included in the appendices and 62.2% of parents completed the
survey and 96% of them would recommend the school to other parents. Board
members and staff were also interviewed. Ninety three seventh and eighth grade*

students also completed a survey and over 80% of them indicated they feel safe in school. All of the education-related provisions in the contract were met and the pilot score card was 69.5%, which is a drop from last year (which was 73.1%). This was primarily due to a drop in math and special education goals. There was also a decrease in the Forward exam in maintaining reading proficiency, as well as a decrease in reading and math from the prior year. The recommendations are to continue to work with Milwaukee Succeeds, work on continuous improvement on reading and math, and look at the special education issue and improve the progress of those students. CRC recommends that the school continue with annual monitoring and if the standardized test and local measuring results do not improve, then probation should be considered for this school.

Jessica Schmansky - Executive Director

Mandy Barr

Leon Williams - School Culture

Ms. Pointer-Mace said the students, parents and faculty are happy, but the results are declining. She does see some student churning at this school and the Forward results are distressing. Ms. Schmansky said at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year they started working with literacy teachers and more input from the students versus teachers lecturing. They are working on having the students answer more challenging questions. They are working with helping the kids work their way through a 40-question exam. Ms. Pointer-Mace encouraged the school to work on critical thinking skills for both math and reading, which she feels would improve their test scores. The school did get a grant and now has a math coach for teachers. Ms. Schmansky said they need to work on persistence by their students. Mr. Williams said the older students are bothered if they see that they are falling behind. Students were able to earn badges based upon their accuracy. The school does know the students well who have been there since K4 through grade 8, per Ms. Schmansky. Mr. Williams said their suspension rates are low as they have implemented other means of supporting their students.

Mr. Ingram thinks the school can turn this around, but he also has concerns because they have an expansion grant to become a high school. He would like the school to encourage more parents to complete the survey. The school did not track who did the survey and who did not; CRC does, but does not provide the names to the school, but CRC does follow up with at least 2 phone calls to those parents who didn't submit surveys. Mr. Ingram asked if administration solicits input from its teachers as it creates its improvement plans. Administration does meet with teachers four times per year and they can also meet with Ms. Barr and Mr. Williams. Mr. Ingram strongly encouraged the school to involve teachers in its plan to improve the test scores. Ms. Pointer-Mace moved, seconded by Mr. Steinbrecher, to accept the CRC recommendation. There were no objections.

5. [170709](#)

Communication relating to the 2017/19 activities of the Downtown Montessori Academy.

Sponsors: THE CHAIR

Ms. Susan Gramling, Children's Research Center, said the 2017-18 school year was the 20th year of this school and is located in Bayview. The school serves K4 through 8th grade and 70.3% are white and 15% are Latino/Latina and 12.2% are eligible for free lunch and 5.6% are special education students. Seventy one point eight percent of 195 parents returned the survey and 96% of the parents would recommend the school to other parents. The biggest concern of board members is lack of a gym and space for organized sports. One hundred percent of the teachers thought the teachers and faculty work well together and 100% of the students feels safe in school. The

school has met all of the educational provisions of its contract and scored 84.2% on its scorecard, which was an increase from 75.8%. There was a slight decrease in maintaining math proficiency, but all other scored had increased. They are working with Cardinal Strich University to improve student scores. The recommendation is to continue regular, annual academic monitoring.

Virginia Flynn - Head of School

Ms. Flynn said that this year they will be working on 4th-6th graders not just rushing through the Forward test, but taking the time to be persistent and do it well.

Ms. Mallory asked about board diversity and Ms. Flynn said it isn't diverse enough (the board has 7 members). Two members are parents. Per Ms. Flynn, once students reach 6th grade, they tend to go to a different school, either because of a lack of gym, the need for a bigger school or because parents move their children into open enrollment. They don't do a lot of suspensions because they feel it's not in the best interest of the child. They are seeing more students with emotional and behavioral issues so they have added 2 social workers. For the 2nd year in a row, the teachers seemed to report a theme of not being involved with management decisions. The school is looking for a gym space, even off-site.

Ms. Mallory moved, seconded by Ms. Pointer-Mace to accept the recommendations of the CRC. There were no objections.

6. [170708](#)

Communication relating to the 2017/19 activities of the Darrell Lynn Hines College Preparatory Academy of Excellence.

Sponsors: THE CHAIR

Ms. Susan Gramling, Children's Research Center, said the school is located on the far northwest side and serves K4-8th grade with almost 100% African American students. Eighty percent of parents would recommend the school to other parents and all 6 board members completed the survey and the most common suggestion was to retain more resources. Fifty nine 7th and 8th grade students took the survey and 40.7% said they felt safe at school and 28% had no opinion. They scored 62.4% this year and 65.8% last year on the score card. The Forward exam had decreased results for students who were below proficient in both reading and math, as well as a decrease in the local measures for both reading and math, in addition to a decrease in teacher retention. The recommendation for school improvement is to continue a more focused school improvement plan and develop strategies to retain teachers in place at the beginning of the year and continue the positive intervention and behavior program and get attendance on an upward path, rather than the current downward path (it's currently at 90.8% while it was above 92% a couple of years ago). CRC recommends two options: continuing annual monitoring and if the Forward exam results and local measures do not improve, then place the school on probation OR place the school on probation at this time.

Precious Washington - Executive Director

Lois Fletcher - Principal

Ms. Pointer-Mace is concerned that 5 out of 6 board members rated the school program highly as well as 72% of the teachers. To her, that sounds like the teachers are blaming the students for the low scores, rather than owning the problem. She has a lot of respect for the school, but she worries about these test results. Ms. Mallory is concerned about the class size for a couple of grades, inconsistency in discipline and the amount of parent involvement. Ms. Mallory also questioned if the same kids are staying or if kids are moving in and out. Ms. Gramling noted that the student retention is quite stable, but the return rate has dipped over the past few years.

Ms. Fletcher said that they need to work with teachers to realize that they need to work better or harder based on the test results and that doesn't mean that they're bad

teachers. They have to create an action plan to address these test results. As a school, they value students' voices, but they also need to practice focusing on taking a standardized test and independent work rather than sharing and comparing. The older grades do worse on the tests and that's also the grades they have the higher teacher turnaround. Ms. Washington also mentioned the larger class sizes for some grades, so they are being more deliberate and strategic in placing their educational assistants throughout the day. The educational assistants are also asked if they feel as if they are being utilized and if they are adding educational value.

Mr. Leazer questioned about the low number of students who feel safe. Ms. Fletcher said the students are physically safe, so maybe the students' results refer more to emotional safety. Mr. Leazer said he felt a lack of sense of urgency for correcting these low scores. Ms. Fletcher said it is always urgent and this is the second year, so they are communicating a sense of urgency and also creating a roadmap to address the situation. They also want to track the results more frequently so they don't reach the end and realize they aren't where they want to be. Ms. Mallory suggested holding parents more accountable and give them a sense of urgency and that they must be a part of the solution. This year the school did apply for a grant to pay for a parent coordinator position. They have had conversations with parents whose children are consistently tardy and those same parents wanting to get their kids before the end of the school day. The school is working on providing more support to teachers who teach at the higher grades and working on accomplishing what the teacher intended and evidence that the goal was accomplished. They also want to ensure that students are understanding rather than merely regurgitating facts.

Mr. Steinbrecher moved to continue annual monitoring and if reading and math scores do not improve, then consider placing the school on probation, with a 6-month review, seconded by Ms. Pointer-Mace. There was one objection (Mr. Leazer).

7. [170702](#)

Communication relating to the 2017/19 activities of Milwaukee Math and Science Academy.

Sponsors: THE CHAIR

Ms. Susan Gramling, Children's Research Center, said the school serves students k4-8th grade and 94% are African American and 100% are eligible for free lunch. Forty three point eight percent of 201 families completed the survey and 86.4% would recommend the school to other parents. Twenty six students in 7th and 8th grade completed the survey and 50% of the students feel safe in school and 30.8% had no opinion. All 5 board members participated in the interviews and the biggest concern was the limited budget. Sixty eight point four percent of staff said staff worked well with each other and 100% agreed administrative leadership is an important reason to teach at this school. The teacher return rate increased from 78% to 84%. The school failed to have 3 teachers licensed, but the other academic contract requirements were met. The school earned 55.2% on the pilot score card (up from 51.8% from the previous year). Some of the problems were a drop in student return rate. The school is currently on probation and the expectation was that the score card result would be 66.8% and 9 goals were also delineated with the expectation that 5 of those goals would be met. Only one goal was fully met and one was partially met. The recommendations are to consider a plan for school closure at the end of this school year or extend the probation for another year with the same 9 goals.

Alper Akyurek - Principal

Crystal Gilmeier - Assistant Principal of Academics

Torvey Henderson - Asst. Principal of School Culture

Chris Murphy - Chief Growth and Concepts Officer

Ms. Gilmeier said for the two goals that had cohorts that were too small to report, she

did provide data that the results were good. She also explained why the three teachers were unlicensed at the time of the report. She also provided a report (attached to file 170702) explaining some of the test scores and looking at returning versus new students. They do have data that shows their students are improving.

Mr. Murphy said Concept Schools offers training, marketing support, a new teacher induction program and other services. This year all teachers are licensed. This school is in the bottom third of their schools. The student population has grown.

Mr. Akyurek said the school was put on probation in October 2017 and will continue with their strategy with a few tweaks. Ms. Gilmeier said the teachers are being told to teach children reading at their level, rather than at a lower level, as a group and at a lower level when it is individual reading. They are also working with the teachers on how to implement the data they have and how to create a lesson plan to address the data. They are also encouraging teachers to have students track how they are doing and how they measure up to other students. They then want to use this as a tool to involve parents - parents might show up for a talent show, but not a reading night. They are suspending fewer students and using restorative practices. There was an increase due to a new cohort of students coming in; some of the habitual offenders no longer are. Parents are buying into the lower suspensions.

Mr. Ingram said the understanding is that this school, as part of a Concept school, would have access to resources that other charter schools did not. He wanted to know what financial resources Concept Schools would provide. For two years, Concept Schools has not received any money, but they're now receiving funds to cover two salaries.

Ms. Gilmeier said parent support is lacking and they need to support the teachers to support the students. They need to start teaching reading at grade level and focusing on writing.

Willie Steel - parent of one of the students - he is concerned that the school has no textbooks, have to get engaged in a child's life, teachers and administration need to dress professionally.

Mr. Leazer moved to extend the probation for one additional year, seconded by Mr. Steinbrecher. Motion failed

Ms. Pointer-Mace moved, seconded by Ms. Mallory, to extend the school's probation for one more year with a review in 6 months. There were no objections.

Meeting adjourned: 9:25 P.M.

Linda M. Elmer

Staff Assistant

This meeting can be viewed in its entirety through the City's Legislative Research Center at <http://milwaukee.legistar.com/calendar>.