

January 29, 2016

Kevin Ingram  
Chair,  
Charter School Review Committee

Dear Kevin Ingram,

Milwaukee Math and Science (MMSA) community thanks you and the Charter Review Committee for giving us the opportunity to update you with the progress our school has made toward the recommendations listed in the 2014–15 Programmatic Profile and Educational Performance. As you will observe throughout this document, MMSA has made significant progress in the current school year. With the support of our management organization, Concept Schools, our staff, as a team, put strong measures in place to increase student achievement, leadership and staff consistency, attendance, and retention for both student and staff.

Below you will find the recommendations listed on the 2014-2015 MMSA Programmatic Profile and Educational Performance along with the progress that MMSA has made toward them:

**Recommendation: Continue the summer reading program for students in K5 through fourth grades who are behind in reading.**

#### **Summer Reading Program 2013-2014**

Based on the 2013-2014 recommendation, MMSA created a summer reading program for its students in K5 through 3rd grade for the summer 2014. The purpose of the summer reading program was to inspire students to become active readers. Students were provided with the opportunity to become engaged in reading activities and to start reading independently. Students were exposed to a variety of reading genres, were taken on literacy-based field trips, and helped to remodel/organize MMSA's school library.

The summer 2014 reading program was three weeks long that ran from July 7th to July 24th. It was four days per week, Monday through Thursday. The summer reading program consisted of three instructional hours every day followed by recreational activities including field trips. Around 15 students participated in the summer reading program.

#### **Summer Reading Program 2014-2015**

Based on the 2014-2015 recommendation, MMSA expanded the summer reading program. The focus of the summer reading program for 2015 was to offer remedial reading classes to help our students who are behind in reading. This helped our summer reading program grow from 15 students in 2014 to over 40 students in 2015. Literacy lessons focused on building foundational reading skills, comprehension, summarizing, and writing. The reading program also continued with providing activities that were centered on inspiring students to become lifelong readers. The summer's theme was "Author Spotlight". Each grade level chose an age-appropriate author to focus their literacy activities on each day. At the end of the four weeks, students presented their work inspired by that author. Some authors that were covered were: Dr. Seuss, Eric Carle, Patricia Polacco, Shel Silverstein, and Roald Dahl.

Teachers pre-assessed each student during the first few days of the summer program in both reading and writing. Teachers also utilized Compass Learning to individualize each student's learning. Post-assessments were given during the last couple of days to measure student growth.

The summer reading program was 4 weeks long and ran from June 17<sup>th</sup> to July 15<sup>th</sup>. The program consisted of three instructional hours each day. Students were served breakfast each morning and lunch before going home.

<b>2015 Summer Reading Program Attendance</b>				
<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Student ID</b>	<b>Attendance Rate</b>	<b>NWEA Fall 2014 Reading Score</b>	<b>NWEA Fall 2015 Reading Score</b>
KG	1100004497	90%	121	148
KG	1100153724	80%	137	155
KG	1100144240	80%	145	*NA
KG	1100004930	25%	139	141
KG	1100005005	55%	141	*NA
KG	1100144725	80%	144	*NA
KG	1100150441	20%	117	146
KG	1100004636	40%	140	163
KG	1100004006	15%	135	134
1 <sup>st</sup>	1100146105	30%	145	*NA
1 <sup>st</sup>	1100003837	100%	147	170
1 <sup>st</sup>	1100004721	95%	135	163
1st	1100120183	70%	162	168
1 <sup>st</sup>	1100004496	80%	151	161
1 <sup>st</sup>	1100005009	70%	147	*NA
1 <sup>st</sup>	1100164951	15%	163	*NA
1 <sup>st</sup>	1100004187	100%	142	155
1 <sup>st</sup>	1100004184	10%	144	*NA
1 <sup>st</sup>	1100144534	15%	145	*NA
1 <sup>st</sup>	1100153720	75%	137	158
1 <sup>st</sup>	1100003775	20%	153	159
2 <sup>nd</sup>	1100005007	70%	163	*NA
2 <sup>nd</sup>	1100004422	25%	164	182
2 <sup>nd</sup>	1100146771	100%	156	177
2 <sup>nd</sup>	1100164910	20%	159	*NA
2 <sup>nd</sup>	1100146183	65%	159	177
2 <sup>nd</sup>	1100003437	100%	155	174
2 <sup>nd</sup>	1100004057	90%	150	174
2 <sup>nd</sup>	1100150692	25%	155	159
3 <sup>rd</sup>	1100167990	95%	177	193
3 <sup>rd</sup>	1100162519	90%	178	*NA
3 <sup>rd</sup>	1100003377	50%	196	196

3 <sup>rd</sup>	1100003603	60%	157	165
3 <sup>rd</sup>	1100130687	100%	180	199
3 <sup>rd</sup>	1100004195	10%	154	*NA
3 <sup>rd</sup>	1100003980	40%	164	178
3 <sup>rd</sup>	1100141318	80%	163	188
3 <sup>rd</sup>	1100100027	85%	162	188
3 <sup>rd</sup>	1100158077	75%	173	184
3 <sup>rd</sup>	1100124533	95%	166	182
4 <sup>th</sup>	1100003288	85%	181	187
4 <sup>th</sup>	1100143581	45%	172	*NA
4 <sup>th</sup>	1100004717	100%	154	165
4 <sup>th</sup>	1100120179	75%	147	169
4 <sup>th</sup>	1100003836	95%	154	164
4 <sup>th</sup>	1100003853	70%	143	177
<b>Average Attendance</b>		<b>64.2%</b>		

\*NA represents students that didn't return to MMSA for the 2015-16 school year.

As a result of all interventions in place throughout the regular school year and the summer reading program, many of our students showed growth and some showed significant growth on their NWEA MAP reading test from the Fall 2014 to Fall 2015 (as shown in the chart above). With the help of the summer reading program, many of our students were engaged in learning activities to continue to build their literacy skills instead of taking those summer months off from learning.

### **Summer Reading Program 2015-2016**

The logistics of the summer reading program of 2016 will be discussed and finalized in March/April 2016. Once the summer reading program staff is finalized, we will brainstorm strategies to increase student attendance throughout the duration of the program. Perfect attendance awards/gifts were given during the 2015 summer reading program which encouraged some students to come each day. We will also discuss adding in literacy-related field trips for students, like the 2014 summer program. Those types of activities, along with including the use of technology, are very engaging for students. Because our focus will be on helping the students who have fallen behind in reading, we will continue to keep the numbers low at each grade level or will open multiple sections at each grade level.

The students in K5 through fourth grade will be evaluated at the end of the school year. Criteria that will be used to identify the students that are behind in reading are students that are more than one year below grade level on the NWEA MAP in K5-4th grade or students identified as needing interventions according to PALS data for students in grades K5-2nd grade. According to those criteria areas, approximately 30-35% of our students at each grade level would be considered 'behind in reading' and thus may be asked to attend our summer reading program.

Like last summer, attendance at our summer reading program is not mandatory, but it is strongly encouraged. A letter will be sent home to each student that is identified by our evaluation criteria. That letter to parents will include student-specific data to show where that student is functioning related to

their peers and the national norm. Classroom teachers and the instructional coordinator will also speak to the parents of these students during our May Parent/Teacher Conferences. Throughout the summer, teachers will be encouraged to make phone calls, daily, to students that are signed up but do not attend. Home visits can be used to encourage attendance at our summer reading program too. We hope that the added data and communication with families on the importance of this summer program, engaging lessons, and daily incentives will draw students in and keep attendance at a high level.

Teachers will use a reading workshop model that will include guided reading, shared reading, and read a-louds. Teachers will utilize Compass Learning to assign work based on a student's individual needs. Accelerated Reader is a program that will also be a component of our Summer Reading Program. Lastly, teachers will use a resource called, Support Coach by Triumph Learning, like last summer. This program helps to build foundational skills to understand fiction and nonfiction text. Triumph Learning offers a variety of resources at all levels but we would focus on the intervention/RTI resources for our struggling students.

**Recommendation: Continue to focus on strategies and staff resources that will result in continued growth in reading.**

In the 2015-2016 school year, MMSA continues to have an extra reading class for all students in grades Kindergarten through second grade. Each group meets twice per week for a total of 90 extra minutes of reading instruction beyond the regular classroom instruction. The focus of the reading class is to continue to build foundation skills: phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, and fluency

Our management company, Concept Schools, recently re-configured their curriculum directors. The K-3 director that was added last year is now just a K-2 curriculum director. The 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers have support from a new 3-5 curriculum director and 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers are now supported from content-specific curriculum directors. Concept Schools recognized the need for more curricular support at each grade band level.

The K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers continue to implement interdisciplinary units. Those interdisciplinary units provide a large block of time for English/Language Arts each day while also providing a block of time for 'unit time'. This 'unit time' is used to explore themes and concepts across many content areas, especially science and social studies, through many forms of literature and informational text. The K-2 curriculum director provided a book list for each grade level that included at least 15-20 books per unit, supporting the science and social studies concept in that unit. Each MMSA teacher received at least 90 new trade books at the beginning of the 2015-16 school year to support their unit needs.

Our teachers attended professional development sessions provided by Concept's K-2 director of elementary on August 19, 2015 and October 2, 2015. The focus of the professional development was on literacy and interdisciplinary units.

All reading teachers continue to work with the scope and sequence that has been created by the Concept curriculum directors. The scope and sequence consists of skills, themes, and concepts across the grade levels so teachers understand what the students have already been taught and what skills and knowledge they need to teach to build for the future. Therefore, our teachers, K-8, continue to work with an aligned curriculum to meet the Common Core State Standards, Wisconsin Science Standards, Wisconsin Social Studies Standards, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Technology skills.

In addition to better-aligned and revised curriculum in all grades, MMSA provided its teachers with additional resources to increase the quality of teaching and learning. MMSA reading and math teachers

use Compass Learning (Odyssey) with their students twice per week during regularly scheduled time in the media center. This program allows students to work at their own pace on the material and concepts that were assigned to them after taking the NWEA test. This program also allows teachers to assign work to students based on concepts that are being taught in class.

MMSA reading teachers effectively use Reading A-Z as a resource. This website allows teachers to find appropriate text for each student's individual reading level. Teachers can find leveled text on the same topic to teach science and social studies themes and concepts during 'unit time'. This website also offers progress monitoring. Teachers can check reading behaviors and fluency with running records, check comprehension with retelling rubrics and check overall comprehension with text quizzes. The teachers often use this program to print leveled readers and books including high frequency words to send home with students as homework.

Teachers continue to explore other online resources to find literacy activities to engage their students. Some favorites that teachers are using are: ABCya, Lyrics2Learn, ReadWorks, Measuring Up!, Book It, SpellingCity, Fact Monster, Fun Brain, and countless other programs. Teachers also utilize online resources to find inspiration for teaching ideas, bulletin boards, student projects, etc.

All of the reading/ELA teachers, including our two special education teachers are now members of a professional reading organization, the WSRA (Wisconsin State Reading Association). Through this membership, teachers are part of the literacy community. They gain insightful research from the journal that is published three times a year, along with research-based interventions to improve students' literacy.

Along with those memberships in WSRA, 6 teachers will be attending the WSRA Convention at the beginning of February. These teachers will listen to opening remarks from our State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tony Evers, followed by a keynote presentation by Pasi Sahlberg about education reform and what the United States can learn from Finland's educational system. These presentations will be followed by sectionals offered by authors and literacy experts from across the country. Each teacher chose sectionals based on their individual professional development goals and the goals of MMSA. Teachers will be expected to share the knowledge and resources they gained while at the convention with the other ELA teachers at school. We hope to continue this professional development opportunity each year.

While our younger students are invited to attend our summer reading program, our older students are supported with their reading needs during Saturday School. All students in grades 4-8 are invited for our Saturday School sessions. Saturday School runs for eight Saturdays during the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester from 9AM-noon each Saturday. The focus is on reading and math interventions. Just like during the summer reading program, teachers utilize Compass Learning for individualized learning based on student's NWEA MAP scores. Teachers also engage students with apps on the iPad, online programs, and engaging literacy activities. To end each Saturday School session, students participate in a team-building activity, new game, or fun activity. They are also served lunch before dismissal. To encourage attendance at Saturday School, students are given a raffle ticket each Saturday they attend. At the end of the eight sessions, gift cards and prizes will be awarded to the lucky winners.

Based on the recommendation to continue to focus on staff resources that will result in continued growth in reading, MMSA has again provided support to reading teachers extra staff.

In the 2015-16 school year, MMSA has the following staff positions to support the reading initiatives in place:

1. A full-time teacher to provide Title I services to students who are academically behind by working with small groups and individual students one on one
2. 4 teaching assistants (one works with K4 students, one works with K5 and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, one works with 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, one recently hired to work with 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade)
3. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade ELA teacher provides reading interventions for struggling 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students during two periods of the day.
4. MMSA also employs a full-time building substitute teacher. When she is not providing coverage for an absent teacher, she is also providing reading support for our younger students.

The MMSA students have just completed the winter NWEA testing.

<b>2015/2016 NWEA Measures of Academic Progress- Individual Targeted Growth</b>			
<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Number of students that met ½ of spring 2016 targeted growth spring goal in winter 2016 based on individual RIT score from Fall 2015</b>	<b>Number of students that met full spring 2016 targeted growth goal in winter 2016 based on individual RIT score from Fall 2015</b>	<b>Total Number of Students who took both spring and winter tests</b>
Kindergarten	8 (25.6%)	4 (12.9%)	31
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	15 (36.6%)	4 (10.0%)	41
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	11 (35.5%)	3 (10.0%)	31
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	6 (18.8%)	9 (28.1%)	32
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	8 (20.5%)	11 (28.2%)	39
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	3 (12.5%)	4 (17.0%)	24
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	4 (11.8%)	23 (67.6%)	34
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	3 (8.3%)	21 (58.3%)	36
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	3 (16.7%)	18 (27.8%)	18

Number of students (N values) for each grade level in tables 1 and 2.

2015/2016 NWEA Measures of Academic Progress Fall to Winter RIT Comparison- Reading		
Grade Level	Number of Students in Fall 2015	Number of Students in Winter 2016
Kindergarten	32	36
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	47	42
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	32	36
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	36	33
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	45	41
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	26	25
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	37	39
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	39	36
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	24	19

Table includes all students attending at the time of each testing period and that report was run through NWEA (MAP) site.

Milwaukee Math and Science Academy has implemented many strategies this school year to improve our students reading ability. Looking ahead to the remainder of the school year, teachers will continue to engage students in literacy activities through the use of differentiated instruction, centers, read alouds, small group pull-outs, Compass Learning, online programs, and tutoring to meet the needs of all learners. MMSA staff are dedicated to helping our students achieve at a higher level and closing the achievement gap that currently exists.

**Recommendation: Provide more professional development in the areas of reading and writing (literacy), with a new emphasis on how to measure writing skills at all levels.**

MMSA recognized a serious need to improve the writing skills of our students in all grades. This summer during leadership meetings, we wrote our professional development plan for the 2015-16 school year. We designated time and resources to writing professional development for our teachers.

During the 2014-15 school year, each grade level used a rubric based on Common Core language. Although the rubrics included kid-friendly language, the students and teachers didn't find the rubrics user-friendly. Teachers expressed difficulty breaking down the language to have meaningful conversations with their students during individual writing conferences. The students also didn't feel they understood the rubric enough to know how to improve their writing. After the ELA committee met to discuss these issues and concerns, we decided to go back to using the 6 Traits of Writing to instruct and assess our students. Not only does 6 Traits of Writing have more online support, there are also training sessions that can be used to help teachers. The K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade rubric is an 8-point scale and the 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade rubric is a 6-point scale.

Writing across the curriculum was a focus during our Teacher Institute in August before our students returned. A representative from MTEC (Milwaukee Teacher Education Center) came to MMSA on Friday, August 21<sup>st</sup> to meet with all teachers. During this workshop, Joan LoPresti presented a review of the

writing method, followed by an introduction to the 6 traits. Teachers participated in the writing process and then used their own writing to assess their work based on the rubric that is being used for our 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Although teachers assessed all areas of the 6 traits, the main focus was on the traits of ideas, voice, and word choice. Joan brought many authentic student samples, narrative and informational, for the MMSA teachers to assess. Discussions led by Joan often led to critical conversations at each grade level and within content areas so that teachers were all on the same page as what is to be expected from our students.

This professional development workshop continued on October 28<sup>th</sup> when Joan returned to MMSA. During this workshop, the focus was on doing research in the classroom and how teachers can facilitate informative writing. Joan provided teachers with many resources they could use in their writing lessons. She was sure to provide strategies that content area teachers could use in their classroom because writing instruction doesn't just happen in the reading/ELA class. Joan finished this workshop with showing authentic examples of our student's writing from the pre-assessment given in September 2015. Teachers were able to meet in small groups to assess those writing samples.

Joan will be returning to MMSA to observe writing lessons taught by classroom teachers during the regular school day. She will provide feedback to those teachers and give them specific strategies they can implement with their next writing lesson. We believe this coaching will be invaluable to our writing teachers and they will learn strategies that will help our students become better and more effective writers.

As mentioned earlier, 6 reading/ELA teachers will be attending the WSRA convention in February. Some of the sectionals that teachers chose are related to improving our students' writing. Again, those strategies will be shared with other teachers upon their return from the convention.

The curriculum directors from Concept have written units to include authentic writing tasks in each unit. This includes all content areas. By including those writing tasks directly in the unit plans, they have made it very easy for teachers to teach the writing process. It is important for students to understand that writing doesn't just happen in a reading/ELA classroom. There are different types of writing done in different classes that represent the types of writing students will do in future jobs/careers.

**Recommendation: Focus on writing improvement throughout the academic year by using fall writing samples to inform teaching interventions and strategies.**

All K-8<sup>th</sup> grade students completed a pre-assessment for writing in September. Those writing assessments were scored by classroom teachers. The teachers used those scores to group students for writing mini-lessons within their class during center work or writing workshops. Teachers use their document cameras to share student work. They use those exemplars to point out positives of the writing but also allows students to give feedback on how the writing can be improved. Once this discussion is had with students, they go back to their own work to edit and revise the pieces that need more work.

As mentioned earlier, each unit of instruction for ELA and content-area include authentic writing tasks. These tasks are included as one of the formal assessments to check student understanding of the Common Core Standards or content-standards throughout that unit. The benefit of using a 6 Traits of Writing rubric is that students are familiar with that rubric and it can be used across all content areas. Math units also include writing tasks for students to complete, which teaches them to explain their



thinking when showing their work. We certainly saw our students struggling with this concept last year on the Badger Exam. Our students were able to find the correct computation for the math work but were unable to explain how they did the work or why their answer was correct. By practicing these skills more explicitly in class, students will be more successful on assessments.

The instructional coordinator (IC) does lesson plan checks for each teacher, several times per month. During this check, the IC is looking to see that the teacher is including explicit writing instruction in their lessons. The director and instructional coordinator also look for writing instruction during classroom walkthroughs and observations. Verbal feedback or an email are sent to follow-up with feedback.

Teachers have received 5 hours of professional development focused on 6 Traits of Writing. Teachers participated in a writing workshop with a representative from MTEC, Joan LoPresti. Teachers used that instruction to implement writing lessons in their own classroom to improve student writing. Joan will complete classroom observations with the reading/ELA teachers throughout the rest of the school year. Her focus will be on what the teachers are doing and how they can improve their writing lessons. Immediate feedback will be provided along with helpful suggestions for future writing lessons.

Along with the outside resource that was used to provide support, teachers also participate in staff meetings in which they share best practices with other teachers. Teachers each have learning strategies and activities they use with their own students and that expertise is shared with peers. Recent mini workshop lessons included topics, like: writing a \$2.00 summary, using sticky notes to engage with a text, sharing graphic organizers for organizing narrative and informational writing ideas, writing territories, activities to encourage showing instead of just telling, strategies for good beginnings and endings, student assessments, etc.

**Recommendation: Clarify and implement appropriate Individualized Education Program (IEP) development and review. Consider requiring both goals and subgoals for each IEP.**

As we compiled data from last year regarding our students' Individualized Education Program (IEP), we noticed there was a significant drop in the percentage of students that met the criteria that was written in MMSA's Learning Memo for the 2014-2015 school year compared to the previous year, 2013-14. After analyzing that data, what we found was that our students with IEPs were making growth toward their goals and subgoals but they didn't meet the criteria in both areas (75% of goals AND 80% of subgoals). The wording in the 2014-15 learning memo stated,

*"Students with individualized education programs (IEP) who have been enrolled at MMSA for the full year of IEP implementation will meet or make progress on 75% of their goals AND meet 80% of their subgoals at their annual review or reevaluation. Progress on IEPs will be monitored through special education progress reports attached to the regular education progress reports."*

Moving forward, the first thing that was changed was the criteria to meet the Special Education requirement in the MMSA 2015-16 Learning Memo. This change was made to acknowledge the growth that students were making toward their IEP goals but also acknowledging the growth on their subgoals. The new IEP criteria states,

*"Students with individualized education programs (IEP) who have been enrolled at MMSA for the full year of IEP implementation will meet or make progress on 75% of their goals. Progress is defined by meeting at least 80% of the subgoals under each goal at their annual review or reevaluation. Progress on*

*IEPs will be monitored through special education progress reports attached to the regular education progress reports.”*

With the new wording, students will meet the criteria if they meet or make progress on 75% of their goals (which can be done by showing growth on 80% of their subgoals). We hope this revised criteria will allow for a more clear understanding of the growth our students are truly making.

Although our data showed that many students in special education struggled to meet their individual goals and subgoals on their annual IEP, 66.7% of those students had significant growth (more than 10%) from their fall 2014 NWEA MAP reading test to the spring 2015 NWEA MAP reading test. Twenty seven out of the thirty-three students (81.8%) that tested in the fall 2014 and spring 2015 met their personal RIT goals. The data below shows that the majority of our students with IEPs are making growth on these assessments, so we had to take a closer look at our IEP goals and subgoals for our students.

2014-2015 NWEA MAP READING DATA STUDENTS WITH IEPS							
Grade	School Id	NWEA Fall 2014 Reading	NWEA Spring 2015 Reading	Met Spring RIT Goal	Fall 2014 Reading National Percentile	Spring 2015 Reading National Percentile	Difference
KG	1100098649	148	158	no	69	51	-18
KG	1100151750	132	149	yes	16	23	7
KG	1100004214	144	186	yes	55	99	44
KG	1100101687	126	143	yes	6	11	5
1	1100003775	153	179	yes	28	54	26
1	1100143844	141	167	yes	7	23	16
1	1100004887	146	178	yes	13	51	38
1	1100150441	117	142	yes	1	1	0
1	1100144725	144	170	yes	10	30	20
2	1100164910	NA	161	NA	NA	14	NA
2	1100004990	158	201	yes	12	79	67
3	1100003376	150	165	no	1	1	0
3	1100140549	197	194	no	68	36	-32
4	1100004123	154	184	yes	1	7	6
4	1100120179	147	180	yes	1	4	3
4	1100003836	154	179	yes	1	4	3
4	1100143298	178	209	yes	6	58	52
5	1100157592	172	202	yes	1	25	24
5	1100003372	166	196	yes	1	14	13
5	1100004614	165	199	yes	1	19	18
5	1100003330	170	200	yes	1	21	20
5	1100143385	147	194	yes	1	11	10

6	1100003725	167	187	yes	1	2	1
6	1100004135	NA	193	NA	NA	6	NA
6	1100152158	187	205	yes	4	23	19
6	1100147074	182	187	yes	2	2	0
7	1100003341	206	212	yes	23	34	11
7	1100003400	196	218	yes	8	50	42
7	1100143505	185	206	yes	1	21	20
7	1100140865	189	193	no	3	5	2
7	1100004712	195	214	yes	7	39	32
7	1100143390	199	201	no	11	13	2
8	1100004137	204	201	no	15	11	-4
8	1100004662	191	208	yes	3	22	19
8	1100003362	190	204	yes	2	15	13

Along with the revision of the criteria, the special education teachers and instructional coordinator met to discuss goals for the school year. The special education team, including the special education teacher, regular education teachers, and LEA representative were asked to write IEPs with goals and subgoals for all students. As the IEPs for new students are adopted, goals have been re-written to be more specific according to the individual child's ability level. We have found that other schools/districts use Common Core State Standards as their goals, which doesn't lead to very individualized criteria for students to work on throughout the school year. The IEP team works diligently to break down the Common Core Standards into goals that are more specific and easier to measure.

Progress monitoring for all of our students is important but especially for our students with IEPs. Progress for IEP students with academic goals is monitored through ongoing classroom performance, including: exit tickets, writing samples, tests, quizzes and individual work. Additionally, informal observations, curriculum based measures, informal inventories and assessments and formal assessments are used depending on individual needs. For students with behavior goals, progress is monitored by check-in/check-outs, logs and incident reports, number of behavior reflection sheets completed, number of breaks out of the class, number of assignments completed and other behaviors specific to each individual student. For speech and language, skills are monitored through the use of tallies to count instances of positive production of sounds or correct uses of language, observations, informal assessments, and formal assessments. MAP scores are also used.

Parent contact/involvement is an important component of helping our students be successful too. Phone calls, parent/teacher conferences, IEP meetings, other parent meetings, home visits, email, text messages, letters,, newsletters, and in person meetings, such as at arrival or dismissal and at school events, are all ways that our special education staff stay in contact with parents. Some parents are contacted weekly, others are contacted at least a few times per quarter. It depends on the student and their specific needs and the availability of the parent. Parents are contacted for updates on progress (good and bad), to set up IEP meetings, to check on students when they are absent, to inform parents of upcoming events, when a student is not feeling well, when a student asks to stay after school, to build home/school relationships and collaboration.

Contact is also made with outside services such as Wrap/REACH staff, MUTT, counselors, therapists, medical doctors, and psychologists in order to support students.

The table shows MMSA’s current special education data:

<b>MMSA’s Current Special Education Data</b>			
<b>Primary Disability Area</b>	<b>Total Number of Students</b>	<b>Transferred to MMSA for 2015-16 School Year</b>	<b>New IEP During the 2015-16 School year</b>
<b>OHI (Other Health Impairment)</b>	16	4	1
<b>Speech and Language</b>	8	2	1
<b>SLD (Specific Learning Disability)</b>	6	3	0
<b>ID (Intellectual Disability)</b>	1	0	0
<b>EBD (Emotional Behavioral Disability)</b>	2	2	0
<b>SDD (Significant Developmental Delay)</b>	2	1	0

\*\*There are currently eight evaluations that are in process but are not complete, at this time. Five new evaluations have already been completed during the 2015-16 school year, with 2 new IEPs.

**Recommendation: Continue to provide enrichment opportunities for students who are functioning above grade level.**

MMSA continues to provide enrichment opportunities for students who are functioning above grade level. Not only did we initiate a new mentoring program for students this year, we also increased our efforts in having more of our students participate in network-wide events that Concept Schools organizes throughout the year. Below is this new initiative and network-wide events that our high performing students continue to participate:

Concept Schools has created a mentoring program called, Concept Young Scholars Program (CYSP). Concept Young Scholars Program is a new program for all Concept Schools that will focus on academic challenges, healthy lifestyle, building confidence, volunteerism, exploration, and many fun activities related to the four goal areas: personal development, voluntary public service, physical fitness, and expedition/exploration.

CYSP is a multifaceted program that is designed to prepare students to become future leaders in our communities. Students enrolled in CYSP learn more and have more confidence in their learning. In addition, they are engaged in a systematic process that guides, recognizes, and rewards their progress. The program offers a more challenging curriculum and engaging activities such as Math Olympics, Science Olympiad, college trips, overnight events, and the Congressional Award program.

After a student registered for CYSP they set goals in four areas: personal development, voluntary public service, physical fitness, and expedition/exploration. Students selected an advisor who helps them set achievable goals, assist them in planning activities, and monitors student progress.

Each scholar has a chance to earn a Gold, Silver, or Bronze medal. Scholars who earn a medal will be rewarded at the end of the school year in an award ceremony. The medals and certificates are important for scholars to keep in their academic portfolio because they can ultimately help strengthen their resume and college applications.

Currently there are 41 MMSA students that are part of CYSP. There are 6 teacher mentors that check in with those students each week. Some of the events that our students have already participated in this year are: Salvation Army bell ringers, Santa Hustle event volunteers, Jewish Museum tour, and the MMSA Middle School Lock-In. Other activities that are planned for the future are: Fight for Air volunteers, Hunger Task Force food sort, MacKenzie Center overnight trip, and Hunger Task Force food box making.

Concept Schools hosts the CONSEF Science Fair each year. This year's science fair is again being held in Cleveland, Ohio on April 9, 2016. To promote this enrichment opportunity with our students and to build positive teacher/student relationships, teachers are mentoring one-four students that will be entering a project in the science fair. Currently we have approximately 15 students that are working on their science projects.

Students and teacher mentors have met to define a problem, form a hypothesis, plan the experiment, do research, create a display board, practice the presentation, etc. Students and teachers meet during lunch time, after school, and on weekends to collaborate together on this project.

The 2015 CONSEF Science Fair was a success for our MMSA students. Eight of our students qualified to make the trip to Cleveland. One student won a bronze medal, four of our students won a silver medal, and three of our students came home with a gold medal and a gift card for their efforts!

The Milwaukee Math and Science Academy STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math education) team meets throughout the semester to conduct experiments, explore math problems, and prepare for STEM demonstrations for the MMSA Science Fair and the Concept School CONSEF Science Fair in Cleveland, Ohio. They meet many weekends during the school year to prepare their demonstrations.

MMSA continues to build its robotics program for its students. Robotics is an opportunity for students to learn from professionals and accomplish a formidable task. Our Robotics program helps to build communication and social skills amongst a team of students. Also the team participates in several competitions (Concept Sumobot, FLL-FIRST Lego League, and FTC-FIRST Tech Challenge) throughout the year. This year the robotics team already competed at a competition at Marquette High School. Our Robotics team gave a very valiant effort and they were nominated as one of the top 5 teams for robot design. The students show such enthusiasm for their robots and gladly give up time on their weekends to work toward their competition goals.

Concept Schools hosted their annual spelling bee on Saturday, December 12th on the campus of the University of Illinois-Chicago. Two of our MMSA students participated in this event after winning the school spelling bee. One of our 5<sup>th</sup> grade students represented our school in the 3rd-5th grade division

and an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student was the representative for the 6th-8th grade division. Our 5<sup>th</sup> grade student finished in the top 20 and our 8<sup>th</sup> grade speller was in the top 5.

Concept Schools hosts MathCON for those students that excel in math. All of our students have been registered in 5th-8th grade. Students will take the online test during the month of February, regional finals will be held in Indianapolis on March 12<sup>th</sup> and the National Mathcon Finals will be held at the University of Illinois-Chicago on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. To prepare for MathCon, 12-15 students consistently stay after school to meet with the math teachers each week.

Concept Schools is sponsoring a writing competition for 3rd-8th grade students "From Idea to Concept, Sharpening Our Classroom Writing." Each grade level has a different writing prompt based on concepts and ideas that are being covered within the curriculum units. During the 2014-2015 school year, one of MMSA's 5<sup>th</sup> graders won 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade division with her essay about animal rights.

Milwaukee Math and Science Academy also offers 3 days of enrichment clubs this year instead of just 2 days. Some of the clubs that students can participate in include: STEM, Spanish Club, World Cultures, Kids' Club, Book Club, Sports Club, Art Club, Student Government, Drama Club, Robotics, Students for Justice and Community Leadership (SJCL). So far this school year, about 50% of our students have participated in one of these clubs after school. This spring we will also be adding an Urban Agriculture Club for students. This club will last throughout the summer so students can grow and harvest their own produce.

In the classroom, teachers take advantage of the curriculum resources they have to differentiate their instruction. Most curriculum resources offer extra activities or enrichment strategies to meet the needs of the high-achieving students. Another way that teachers differentiate instruction is through the use of centers. Students can be divided up into small groups based on their ability. The centers for our advanced students often encourage higher-level thinking, problem solving, and more difficult text. Just like it is important to meet the needs of our struggling students, supporting our gifted students is crucial to their continued growth also.

Lastly, our new character education teacher has been enrolling our student leaders in academic enrichment programs through local community resources. Currently, 46 middle school students have been enrolled in programs at UW-Milwaukee, Marquette University, and College for Kids Saturday Academy. This enrollment continues throughout the school year.

**Recommendation: Continue to address and implement strategies to increase student attendance, retention, and return rates.**

MMSA has continued to implement strategies to increase student attendance, retention, and return rates this year. As explained in details below, these strategies revolve around five strategies listed below:

- Effective policies
- Communication with parents
- Parental involvement
- Recognition and awards
- A motivating school culture

The MMSA administrative team, administrative assistant, and school social worker monitor the daily attendance and intervene when a pattern of absences occur. Our administrative assistant and social worker call the parents of students who are absent and follow up with them. Our home visit program prioritizes students with excessive absenteeism. We visit such families first and discuss what MMSA can do to help them. We set up meetings with parents with children with excessive absenteeism and discuss the issues and offer help to remedy the problem.

We have revised our attendance policy this year. The policy is now outlined clearly with consequences. These changes were highlighted during the student/parent orientation meetings at the beginning of the school year. The policy is part of the Student/Parent Handbook that all parents had to sign at the beginning of the school year. MMSA now sends a letter home after five absences. A meeting with parents is set-up to develop an attendance plan after ten absences. Parent/guardian will meet with Dean of Students and the social worker after fifteen absences to notify the family that the child is now at risk of not being promoted to the next grade and the director reserves the right to retain any student that misses thirty days of school. A certified letter is sent home to give the parents the second written warning about attendance/truancy issues. Truancy is also reported to an attendance intervention program called TABS (Truancy Abatement and Burglary Suppression). An automatic withdrawal policy has been put into place that when a student is absent 10 consecutive days without any communication with the school, the student will be withdrawn. This policy is only followed after several actions have taken place: calling parents each day, follow-up with the social worker, and a home visit to speak to the family.

On a weekly and monthly basis, we recognize students with high attendance rates. These students are recognized in school wide assemblies, their pictures are posted around the school, and letters are sent home congratulating their parents. Homeroom classes with the highest attendance rates get recognized on a weekly basis. Our teachers are also part of the school-wide efforts in increasing attendance. They make personal phone call home when a student is absent for two days. They show sincere concern and care by inquiring about absenteeism. They have also provided students with make-up work procedures and opportunities to increase attendance.

We believe that increasing parental involvement will help with retention, too. Therefore, we have increased the parent engagement opportunities this year. When families are involved, they become more invested in the school and want to come back year after year. In addition to four parents teacher conferences that we hold throughout the school year, we organize the following events for our parents/families:

- Parent orientation
- Spooky Night
- Honor Roll Banquets at the end of each quarter
- 8th Grade High School Night
- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade High School Application Night
- PTO meetings
- Literacy Night
- Parent Breakfasts

- MMSA Science Fair
- Black History Month Celebration
- End of the year celebration
- Online or phone parent surveys throughout the year
- Men's Meetings
- Chant Battle
- Student/Staff Basketball Game
- Welcome dinner for our Somalian families

About 70% of the parents of MMSA students have attended at least one of the following events that we have hosted already this school year (Somalian Welcome Dinner, Parent orientation, parent/teacher conferences, Spooky Night, Honor Roll dinner, 8th Grade High School/Application Night, Men's Meeting, and the Chant Battle). That number will increase as we continue to host parent activities throughout the rest of the school year.

We also believe that we will be able to retain our students and parents by creating a safe, high achieving, and nurturing school environment by having clear behavioral expectations. Therefore, we continue to employ two deans of students this year. Additionally, we are implementing the following strategies:

- Milwaukee Math and Science Academy Commitment to Excellence is required to be signed by parent, student and staff
- Each family receives a MMSA handbook at the beginning of the school year which clearly states behavioral expectations and consequences
- Routines and Procedures document that each staff member answers questions and meets with Dean of Students in the beginning of the school year to ensure understanding of the school's clear and consistent routines and procedures concerning discipline.
- Student orientation day in the summer
- Weekly afternoon assemblies for K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade and 4th-8<sup>th</sup> grade. The purpose of these assemblies is to enforce the school culture and core values.
- Promoting a culture of high achievement by implementing the strategies below:
- Every classroom represents a University to promote college choices; College pennant hanging around the school "Where are you going to college?"; Each grade is referred to as the class they will enter college, such as the class of... 2020
- All classrooms have positive affirmations posted around the room.
- The PBIS matrix of expected behaviors hang in each classroom
- Expectation reminders are hung in the hallway, bathroom, and other common areas.



- All students will learn and be able to recite the school's mission and pledge.
- Quarterly awards dinner to celebrate student's academic achievement and improvement.
- Constant reference to making college-bound choices.
- Common Language being used to redirect students about expectations.
- After school enrichment and tutoring for small group interventions both above and below grade level performance.
- Concept Young Scholars Program (CYSP)
- Incentives given for achieving personal goals on MAP test, other assessments

**Recommendation: Continue the strategies to retain teachers throughout the school year and encourage teachers to return year after year.**

Each year we look to retain our great teachers. We continue to implement strategies and support our teachers so they are likely to return year after year.

- We are offering a more competitive salary scale to attract quality teachers and keep the ones who are working towards our school's vision
- We begin contract negotiations and discussions with the current staff starting in February so that we know what their expectations are from us for next year before they make other decisions. This is much earlier than we did in the previous years.
- We continue to support our teachers with an administration team that consists of the director, instructional coordinator, and 2 deans of students.

By having 2 deans to deal with discipline, problems are resolved much more efficiently. It also allows the deans to form stronger bonds with the students and parents they work with because they can focus on a smaller group. Since the students are equally divided amongst the 2 deans, they have more time for classroom visits and observations. The deans speak with the teachers after those visits to offer classroom management suggestions to the classroom teachers.

The Instructional Coordinator is in charge of the academics at Milwaukee Math and Science Academy. She oversees and supports teachers with lesson plans, the grading policy, classroom grades, testing data, Title I, scheduling, hiring, and evaluations. The IC meets with teachers on a regular basis to address curriculum needs, resources, testing data, and other concerns. Walkthroughs and observations are completed and used as formative assessments to help teachers improve in their delivery and instruction. The IC also completes formal evaluations in compliance with the Evaluator Effectiveness program through Wisconsin DPI.

- Instructional Coordinator and Dean of Students meet with grade level teams to discuss needs, resources, concerns, upcoming events, etc.
- A Leadership Team was created last year, consisting of the director, deans of students, instructional coordinator, K-2 grade chairperson, 3-4 grade chairperson, 5-8 grade chairperson, math department head, ELA department head and special education director. Meetings are held

once per month so the representatives can share thoughts, ideas, concerns from staff members and actions can be taken to problem solve.

- Along with the leadership team, several committees have also been created this year. These committees allow teachers to get involved in the school community, grow professionally, and take on leadership roles. These committees show the MMSA Administration team's commitment to including teachers in making school decisions and developing teacher leaders.
  - **RTI Committee:** The committee meets on an ongoing basis to review data, develop plans, interventions, and progress monitor to help the students improve academically and/or behaviorally and also provide support to the teacher. The committee updates school tier-level changes, as needed.
  - **Special Events Committee:** The committee coordinates special events for the school, including but not limited to: honor roll dinner, winter/spring concerts, Black History Month program, and K5/8th grade promotion. Responsibilities would include: ordering food, setting date in calendar, decorations, create event programs, certificates, set-up for event, communication with teachers and administrators. The proposal for each event would need to be presented to the director.
  - **Positive Culture Committee:** This committee focuses on improving the culture of our school. Members conduct student and staff surveys to gain feedback about the implementation of new initiatives, activities, etc. to present to the leadership team. Members celebrate the success of students and staff through special recognition (certificates, presentations at assemblies, etc.). The committee plans and organizes staff outings, potluck lunches, or other activities to boost staff morale/team-building.
  - **The PBIS Committee:** This committee focuses on the effective implementation of PBIS for MMSA. Committee members include administrators, regular education teachers, a special education teacher and a parent or two, when possible. The committee has crafted a PBIS action plan, monitors behavior data and evaluates the progress of the plan. The committee uses all obtained data and works diligently to ensure a safe and positive learning environment for all students. Members of the committee also gather feedback from teachers and students about the implementation of PBIS and make improvements, as needed.
- Teachers are recognized during staff meetings for accomplishments, like: student test scores, number of home visits, number of logs in Student Information System (phone calls, conferences, meetings, etc.), success with individual students, obtaining donations of money/supplies/books/etc., bringing volunteer readers from the community into their classroom, attendance.
- Build camaraderie by organizing after-school events for staff members: Staff Welcome luncheon, holiday party and a bowling night at local businesses in Milwaukee; celebrating staff birthdays, and organizing international trips during spring break.
- Staff appreciation treats: the admin team provides treats for the staff throughout the day. Some treats include: hot chocolate, tea, breakfast muffins and breads, fruit, Starbucks drinks

Supporting our teachers with curriculum help, classroom management, organization, and instructional strategies are an important component to building a positive work environment. Each member of the

administration team has an 'open door policy'. We make time to listen to our teachers about their concerns, answer their questions, or just lend a listening ear. The administration team also feels very strongly about creating and encouraging the continued growth of teacher leaders at our school. When teachers feel supported and that their thoughts and opinions matter, they have more buy-in in the school and want to stay longer. This is a benefit for all members of the school community.

**Recommendation: Submit an explanation of the specific measures taken during the first half of the 2015-16 academic year to reduce the number of out-of-school and in-school suspensions. This explanation should include any professional development activities regarding appropriate behavioral consequences.**

We understand the concern about the number of suspensions during the 2014-2015 school year. We know that our students being at school, involved in the learning environment, is crucial to their academic growth and we have taken many actions to improve our discipline policies, school culture, and vision for our students.

In anticipation of the many needs of our students, we now have a full time school social worker, Ms. Duchow, who works as a liaison between our school and our families. In addition to working with our MMSA families, Ms. Duchow does one on one meetings with students that have issues with negative behaviors and social conflicts. Ms. Duchow also does check-in and check-out meetings with students who have frequent behavior issues. These check-ins are part of a student's behavior contract. We found that many of our students lack positive social skills and anger management strategies; Ms. Duchow is able to meet with individual students and small groups to help our students learn how to show more self-control.

We have added Character Education to all of our students' schedules. The character education teacher is a licensed guidance counselor. She meets with each class twice per week and covers lessons like: skills for learning, emotion management, problem solving, empathy and communication, bullying prevention, substance abuse prevention, conflict resolution, and goal setting. MMSA has adopted the character education curriculum offered by Committee for Children, called *Second Step*. This curriculum resource offers short videos for students to respond to, posters, academic integration activities, homework, family letters, assessments, and student handouts. The students have responded well to the lessons presented during class time.

Another new addition to our staff is Mr. Ali, a parent liaison. Mr. Ali is not only a parent of one of our students; he acts as a liaison between our teachers and the Somalian students that are now enrolled at MMSA. He meets with the Somalian families to communicate our school's expectations, discipline policy, academic responsibilities, and events happening at our school. Mr. Ali offers ESL assistance to teachers along with homework help for our students. He has been a huge asset to truly understanding the needs of our new students.

In a proactive effort to decrease the number of in and out of school suspensions, as a school we have implemented PBIS, restructured our discipline policy and forged collaborations with outside community organizations. In addition to those efforts, this year new parents and students were required to attend a pre-enrollment meeting. The goal of the pre-enrollment meeting was to offer prospective parents and students an opportunity to gain insight on the goals and expectations of MMSA. Returning parents and students were required to attend an orientation meeting during MMSA's Open House, before the start of school year. During this orientation meeting, parents and students also were given the opportunity to gain insight on the upcoming school years goals and expectations. At both the pre-enrollment and

orientation meeting, parents and students were required to sign a contract stating that they understood and would abide by the school-wide expectations.

In response to the Charter Review Committee's concern about the number of suspensions and in planning for the 2015-16 school year, work began in late May of 2015. The administration team met to look at the discipline data and a decision was made to research ways to decrease the suspension rates and promote positive school culture and climate. With this research, and the recommendation of Concept School Leadership, it was decided that the PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Support) approach would be the best avenue to take. Research suggests that PBIS has been very effective in schools such as ours. Even though the outcome of implementing PBIS is positive for many schools, it does take years for PBIS to take full effect. With that in mind, we set out to craft a plan on how to use PBIS most effectively for the upcoming school year. During June and July the school dean took part in PBIS trainings. During the Concept School Leadership Summit in July, the dean participated in a full day PBIS training. In late July, administrators and teachers sat down to collaborate with Jerry Luckett. Mr. Luckett is currently a Dean of Students in the Kenosha Unified School District, but he also serves as a nationally trained PBIS trainer. During this collaboration we looked at where our school discipline, culture and climate were and outlined what was needed to catapult our school to where we wanted it to be. Analyzing our data from the 2014-15 school year was crucial in this planning stage. We looked at the number of incidents reports, types of incidents, what time they occurred and where they took place. Using the data from that collaboration we decided that it would be best for our focus for the upcoming school year to be on our school wide discipline and expectation policy. In early August we began reconstructing our discipline and expectation policy using PBIS as an underpinning. The school's redefined discipline policy and expectations allow students, parents and teachers to have a transparent understanding of the school's behavior expectations for this school year.

In order for these changes to be effective we began the school year with several meetings and professional development sessions with Mr. Jerry Luckett. We have also created a PBIS committee at MMSA that meets weekly to discuss new strategies to put in place and address any concerns. This committee also fine tunes the discipline and expectation policies to ensure that they meet the needs of our students. The committee also targets teachers who are struggling with classroom management to provide support. The teacher and members of the committee meet to discuss current problems and brainstorm strategies that the teacher could implement in their classroom to better manage the learning environment.

In an on-going effort to combat the high suspension rate, the committee implemented "Reset". This renewed commitment to PBIS expectations included re-introducing the students to our schoolwide procedures and schoolwide expectations. Reset also gives students an opportunity to reflect on their past behaviors and make a conscious effort to reset their own behaviors to better meet the schoolwide expectations. Since returning from winter break, the PBIS committee has created and hung reminder posters about expected behaviors in the hallway, bathroom, etc. Teachers are constantly referring to those posters as they enforce the MMSA expectations.

As a part of our "Reset" we have teamed up with the Boys Scouts of America to bring the *Learning for Life* Program to our school under the guidance of Ms. Robbie Haynes. The *Learning for Life* Corporation offers seven programs designed to support schools and community based organizations in their efforts to prepare youth to successfully handle the complexities of contemporary society and to enhance their self-confidence, motivation, and self-esteem. The seven programs focus on character education and career education. Learning for Life programs help youth develop social and life skills, assist in character development, and help youth formulate positive personal values. It prepares youth to make ethical decisions that will help them achieve their full potential.

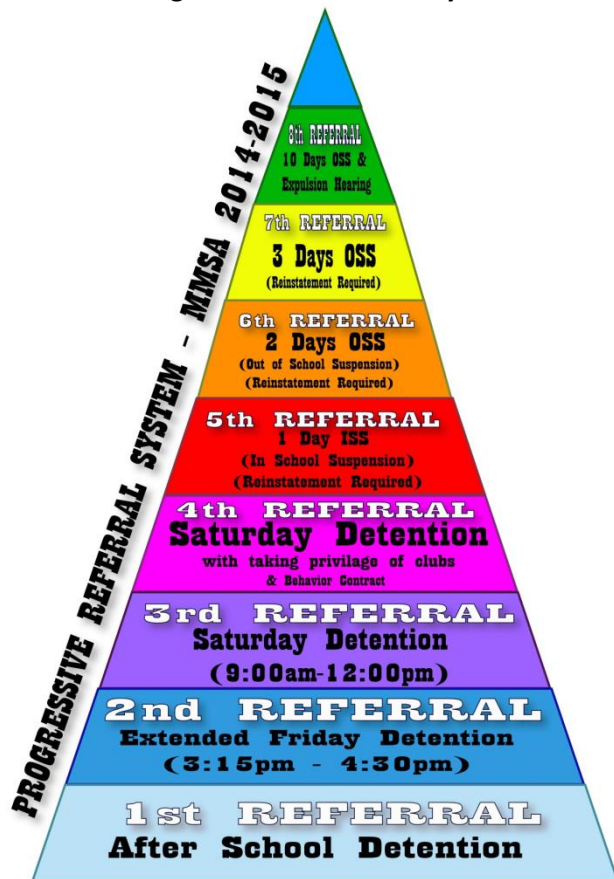
With the new school year approaching, the deans met to discuss past behavior concerns and consequences. In order to restore the school culture, PBIS would be re-implemented but there was a concern that students were not receiving consequences for chronic behavior. With the understanding that PBIS is geared more towards positive interventions, we were concerned about behaviors that are extremely problematic and wanted to ensure that consequences were appropriate.

The Deans also decided that after-school and Saturday detentions were not effective in deterring negative behavior. Students would not be able to stay after school due to transportation concerns. Also, due to these same concerns, students would not show up for Saturday detentions. The next best thing would be lunch detentions, because they are immediate and easily enforced.

As the school year continues we have seen a huge increase in referrals and discipline concerns, specifically in the areas of Bullying, Insubordination, and Disorderly Conduct. Although we try our best to utilize PBIS incentives and alternatives to suspensions, the behavior concerns are so chronic that suspensions would be the appropriate consequence.

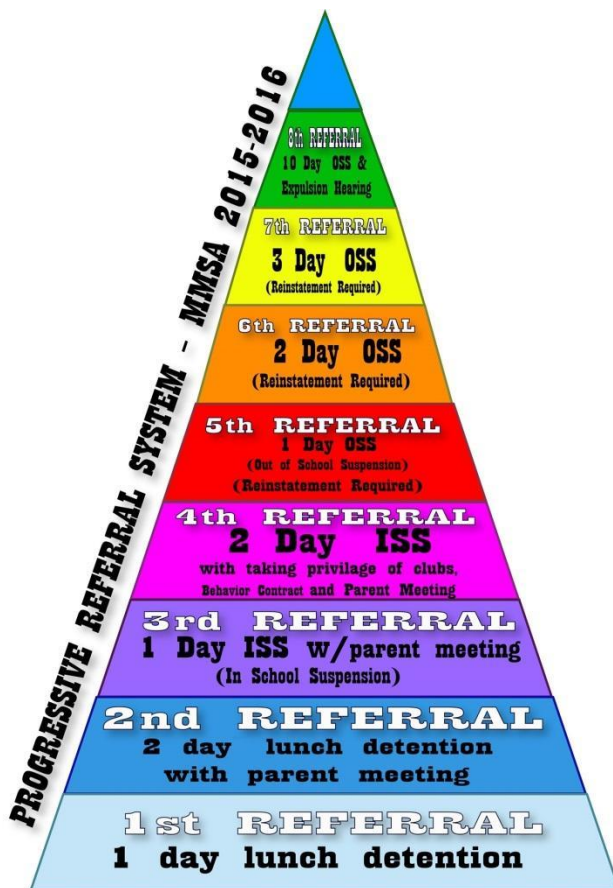
Below you will see the progressive referral system for the 2014-15 school year compared to the 2015-16 school year.

2014-15 Progressive Referral System



The above steps may be skipped or amended at the discretion of Administration

2015-16 Progressive Referral System



The above steps may be skipped or amended at the discretion of Administration

Because many of our students struggle with anger management and showing self-control, the administration team, athletic director, special education teachers and MMSA's security man attended CPI (Crisis Prevention Institute). During this institute, the participants learned non-crisis interventions to safely manage disruptive and assaultive behaviors. Having strategies to de-escalate a situation is important for reducing the risk of injury for those involved in a conflict, minimizing exposure to liability and promoting a sense of safety and security.

In addition, in June the dean targeted students from the 2014-15 school year that had severe behavior problems. The dean set up individual meetings with those students and their parents to create a behavior contract and discuss ways to help their child be successful during the new school year.

We know that, "It takes a village to raise a child". Neither educators, nor parents can do it all alone so forming collaborative partnerships are a key component to a more positive culture at MMSA. We understand that increasing parental involvement and getting their input is crucial, this is why mandatory parent meetings are scheduled when students have behavioral concerns. Parents and students will meet with the dean of students and work together to create a behavior plan. With the creation of the behavior plan, all parties will collaborate to set SMART (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Results-specific, and Time-bound) goals with the student. MMSA is a school of excellence, so goals are specific to academic success as well as behavior. Along with the academic goals, consequences for not meeting school-wide expectations pertaining to behavior are discussed as well. The dean will review this behavior plan several times per quarter and meet with parents and students on an on-going basis.

Lastly, to compliment the re-implementation of PBIS, we are also working to incorporate Restorative Practices/Justice into our school culture. As a part of professional development, all teachers and staff have begun training on Restorative Practices. A representative with the Milwaukee Public Schools Violence Prevention Program, Chauna Perry Finch has been working with the staff at MMSA to implement circle groups throughout their homerooms. Restorative Practices can be roughly defined as a way to build better relationships between the students and staff, reducing misbehavior, violence and bullying within the school environment. By implementing the circle process in the classroom, this can help not only the teachers form better relationships with the students, but the students form better relationships with their peers.

With the aid of PBIS and other interventions, the number of incidents that result in suspension has dropped. However, as with any other school, we have to suspend students but sometimes it takes harsher consequences to build a positive school culture. We want to send a clear message to our students that fighting and other chronic behaviors will not be tolerated. This school year we have had a total of 986 reported incidents. Out of those reported incidents only 161 resulted in out of school suspension and 42 resulted in in-school suspension. This means that, on average, a student is out of the learning environment 1.6 days. This number has dropped significantly compared to last year when students spent an average of 4 days out of the learning environment. When looking at the data, it shows that this year we have decreased the number of days on suspension by more than 2 days. When possible, students were issued an in school suspension instead of an out of school suspension so they didn't have to be fully removed from the learning environment. Students on in school suspension received supplemental assignments supplied by their classroom teachers. Students were expected to complete that work throughout the day. We strongly believe that if we continue to work hard and stay consistent, this number will continue to decrease. Please also note that over 40% of the students who received a 1 day suspension have not received another out of school suspension since.

We should also take into account major cases, such as one of our current eighth grade students who currently has 19 days of suspension. This student has caused major disruptions to the entire learning environment on numerous occasions. Some of this student's incidents include repeated classroom

disruptions, initiating conflicts with students, using profanity, vulgar language, verbal threats to students and teachers. This student has also brought knives to school, made a kill list, held scissors to a staff member's neck and tried to commit suicide. We have spent countless hours in meetings with the special education teachers, the student, her parents, Wraparound representatives, counselors, the student's crisis workers, the psychologist, special education advocates, and other team members trying to make sure this student is successful in our school. Some of the things we have done include, but by no means are limited to, brainstorming ways to best meet the needs of this student, the dean meeting with this student outside of school trying to build a relationship, visiting this student at the hospital, one on one in school instruction, peer mediation, check in and out system, and the dean accompanying this student to class. This student has even been given after hours instruction at the local library. When looking at the population of our students and understanding that our students have so many individual needs, it can be argued that we do work hard to meet those needs on a daily basis.

Our school has added some students from the Somalian community. We welcomed these students to our school with open arms. We absolutely believe in creating a diverse learning environment where our students have an opportunity to learn about other cultures through personal experience. Unfortunately the transition into our school population has not been easy for our Somalian students and there have been a number of conflict issues with the other students in our school, including bullying and disorderly conduct. These conflicts have led to some true learning opportunities for all of our students. Teachers have included lessons on cultural awareness, acceptance, and tolerance in their homerooms, reading classes, and restorative circles. Mr. Ali, our Somalian liaison continues to be a great support for our new students as they adjust to our school and, for some, our country.

Using PBIS as a foundation for behavior management, we have been trying to focus more on the positive behaviors that students are displaying versus the negative ones. To promote positive behavior, students are awarded Hawk Bucks when they follow our three school-wide expectations- Be Respectful, Be Responsible and Be Safe. At the end of every week, students in grades K-3 are able to enter their Bucks into a raffle where they can choose a prize of their choice, if they are one of the lucky winners. Students in grades 4-8 are able to use their Bucks to purchase items from the school store. Inside of individual classrooms, teachers use various incentives to promote positive behavior. Other school-wide positive behavior incentives include dances, award programs, and special treats. Cincere, a local R&B celebrity recently visited to our school to perform for students who had positive behavior. The students also had a chant battle to help promote positive school culture. During this chant battle, each homeroom performed a chant they had written together as a group. Students took great pride in their work and it was truly a culture builder. Just recently, we hosted a school lock-in where students were able to stay in school all night to play games, dance, shoot hoops, paint nails, watch movies, and much, much more. The list of great things that students are rewarded with just goes on and on.

We look forward to hearing your feedback on our progress on addressing the committee's concerns.



Sincerely,

On Behalf of the MMSA Team  
David Chief  
Director