

2010
ANNUAL REPORT

CHARTER SCHOOL REVIEW COMMITTEE
COMMON COUNCIL
CITY OF MILWAUKEE

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Introduction

The following report documents the activities of the Charter School Review Committee (CSRC) of the Common Council of the City of Milwaukee for 2010.

The CSRC's contribution to the effort to raise student achievement in our city is outlined in its strategic plan. Its role is to:

1. Make recommendations to the Common Council about which charter school applicants to approve.
2. Monitor the performance of operating charter schools.
3. Make recommendations to the Common Council about which charter schools should be renewed, put on probation, or closed.

Strategic Plan of the Charter School Review Committee

Mission: To ensure that the Common council and the Mayor of the City of Milwaukee are quality authorizers of charter schools.

Methods:

1. Establish policies and procedures that meet quality authorizing practices as defined by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers' "Principles and Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing."
2. Review applications submitted by persons and/or organizations seeking to establish charter schools authorized by the Common Council.
3. Recommend to the Common Council applicants that meet the requirements of the Committee.
4. Work with the City Attorney's office to establish contracts with schools that are approved by the Common Council.
5. Monitor for academic, governance and financial results of approved schools.
6. Hold schools accountable for agreed upon outcomes described in their contracts.
7. Recommend to the Common Council that schools be granted extensions to their contracts and their charter.
8. Recommend to the Common Council that schools have their contract terminated and their charter revoked if they fail to meet the terms of their contract.

Intended Impact:

TO IMPROVE AUTHORIZING PRACTICES SO THE CHARTER SCHOOL REVIEW COMMITTEE (CSRC) CAN ADD VALUE TO THE EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EXISTING SCHOOLS AND INCREASE THE NUMBER OF NEW, HIGH-QUALITY SCHOOLS CHARTERED IN THE CITY.

Strategies:

Continuously improve the authorizing practices of the CSRC

1. Implement the National Association of Charter School Authorizer evaluation recommendations.
2. Continue to develop and implement the fiscal and academic methodologies for evaluating schools in the City's portfolio.
3. Staff the Committee appropriately.

Improve the outreach and messaging of the CSRC

1. Develop a message that increases the understanding among key advocates and the general citizenry about the role of the CSRC.
2. Engage in the ongoing conversation about the role of charter schools in increasing the number of quality schools in the city of Milwaukee.

TACTICS and ACTIVITIES

1. Continuously improve the authorizing practices of the Charter School Review Committee

Implement the recommendations in the NACSA evaluation of CSRC authorizing practices

Just prior to launching its strategic planning initiative, the CSRC participated in an evaluation of its authorizing practices, conducted by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers. These recommendations inform our efforts to improve our authorizing and are, therefore, connected to our strategic planning.

Develop and implement methodology to evaluate and compare school quality

The Charter School Review Committee has done an excellent job of monitoring schools which it authorizes and has taken action when needed as demonstrated by having placed some schools on probation and closing down underperforming schools. The Committee has been exploring different ways to assess school quality in partnership with the academic and fiscal monitoring firms. These efforts are tied into ongoing national efforts to define a “quality school” but will deliver a product in a more rapid timeframe that can continue to evolve and be informed by national standards.

Staffing

The Charter School Review Committee currently contracts with agencies to provide the staffing services it needs to authorize effectively.. For the Committee to pursue the strategies listed above and to achieve its intended impact, it must have the necessary staff. This strategy calls for developing polices for determining if and when contracts with outside firms need to be changed to meet our authorizing needs. A current description of roles and responsibilities is attached in Appendix A, along with proposed description of roles and responsibilities to implement this plan.

2. Improve the outreach and messaging of the Charter School Review Committee

Strategic Communication

To strengthen the Committee’s position with community leaders to better address the challenges that charter schools face as well as to attract those interested in charter schools outside Milwaukee, the Committee will undertake a strategic communication initiative to identify a clear, consistent message about the role of the CSRC in improving educational quality in the City of Milwaukee. We will also identify target audiences for this message and determine the best method for delivering these messages. In doing so, not only will key individuals better understand and be able to support chartering and the resulting high-impact charter schools, but the Committee will speak as a whole and have a cohesive vision and message to attract increased interest in its efforts.

Network for Resources

We are clear about the CSRC role in the charter school movement. Because we will focus our work on reviewing applicants, monitoring schools, and holding schools accountable, the CSRC will leave to other organizations the work of advocating and supporting charter schools. However, the CSRC will remain aware of and connect schools to different resources that support school improvement.

Engage in Policy Conversation

The charter school community in Milwaukee is dynamic with many individuals and organizations attempting to address the challenges that schools face in areas such as facilities, financing and board governance. While the Charter School Review Committee does not have the resources or direction to lead these efforts, it is important for them to be a part of the conversation so they can help shape the policies affecting chartering and charter schools.

Approvals

New schools in 2010

In 2010, King's Academy completed its pre-opening and opened as a charter school. A report on their progress will be included in next year's report.

New schools in 2011

On May 25, 2010, the Charter School Review Committee voted to recommend the following applicants to operate a charter school sponsored by the Common Council:

CEO Leadership Academy
Garden Homes Montessori School
Milwaukee Math and Science Academy

Subsequent to this approval, the CSRC made a recommendation to withhold approval of Garden Homes Montessori School in light of audit findings gathered after the initial approval.

Therefore, the anticipated new schools for the 2011-12 school year will be

CEO Leadership Academy
Milwaukee Math and Science Academy

Monitoring

The Children's Research Center, M.L. Tharps and the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University continue to provide monitoring services for the CSRC. The reports from CRC and M.L. Tharps are included as attachments to this report.

Renewal Decisions

The CSRC held a public hearing on July 13, 2010 and voted at that time to recommend that the Common Council close the Academy of Learning and Leadership, which had been on probation since December 30, 2008. The Common Council voiced support for that recommendation and approved it at its September 1, 2010 meeting.

Between the recommendation and the final vote, the CSRC's primary concern once the closure was approved was to re-enroll as many of the students as possible. Out of 331 children at ALL:

- 231 "stayed" at the Milwaukee College Prep-Lindsay Heights Campus, an expansion campus of Milwaukee College Prep in the ALL building;
- 45 moved
- 24 did not make a commitment at the time of the first week of school
- 3 committed to MCP-LHC but had not shown up by the first week of school
- 28 were unreachable