

2015–2016 Programmatic Profile and Educational Performance

Report Date: October 2016



Downtown Montessori Academy

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This report includes text from Downtown Montessori Academy's student/parent handbook and/or staff handbook. CRC obtained permission from the school to use this text for the purposes of this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
for
Downtown Montessori Academy
2015–16

This is the 18th annual report on the operation of Downtown Montessori Academy, a City of Milwaukee charter school.¹ It is a result of intensive work undertaken by the City of Milwaukee Charter School Review Committee (CSRC), school staff, and the NCCD Children’s Research Center (CRC). Based on the information gathered and discussed in the attached report, CRC has determined the following findings.

I. CONTRACT COMPLIANCE SUMMARY

Downtown Montessori met all of the educational provisions in its contract with the City of Milwaukee and subsequent CSRC requirements.

See Appendix A for a list of contract provisions and report page references.

II. PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

A. Local Measures

1. Primary Measures of Academic Progress

The CSRC requires the school to track elementary student progress in literacy, writing, math, and special education goals throughout the year to identify students in need of additional help and to assist teachers in developing strategies to improve students’ academic performance. Downtown Montessori also reported skill measure goals for K3, K4, and K5. This year, Downtown Montessori’s local measures of academic progress for elementary students resulted in the following outcomes.

Literacy

- All 121 (100.0%) first- through eighth-grade students who scored at or above grade level on the fall Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI) maintained at or above grade-level status in the spring. The school’s goal was 85.0%.
- Of 43 first- through eighth-grade students who scored below their grade level on the QRI in the fall, 42 (97.8%) improved their scores by at least one grade level in the spring. The school’s goal was 85.0%.

Overall, 163 (99.4%) of 164 first- through eighth-grade students met the local measure goal for reading.

¹ The City of Milwaukee Common Council chartered 10 schools in the 2015–16 academic year.

Math

First through eighth graders were assessed on grade-level Montessori sequential math skills. This was supplemented with math skills not in the Montessori sequence: Common Core State Standards for first through sixth graders and MobyMax for seventh and eighth graders.

- By the end of the year, 124 (91.9%) of 135 first through sixth graders reached/maintained proficiency or showed improvement in 80.0% of grade-level math skills. The school's goal was 100.0%.
- None of the 24 seventh and eighth graders reached/maintained proficiency or showed improvement on 80.0% of grade-level math skills. The school's goal was 100.0%.

Overall, 124 (80.0%) of 159 first- through eighth-grade students met their goal for math.

Writing

Writing skills were assessed using the Six Traits of Writing. Most (115, or 83.9%) first- through eighth-grade students increased their fall average writing level score by a half (0.5) point on the spring writing sample. The school's goal was 100.0%.

2. Secondary Measures of Academic Progress

To meet City of Milwaukee requirements, Downtown Montessori identified measurable education-related outcomes in attendance, parental involvement, and special education student records.

The school met its goals in all of these outcomes.

B. Year-to-Year Academic Achievement on Standardized Tests

Downtown Montessori administered all required standardized tests noted in their contract with the City of Milwaukee. However, data regarding year-to-year academic achievement on some of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction standardized tests are not available this year due to the discontinuance of the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination and Badger Exam, as well as the first year of application of the Wisconsin Forward Exam to third through eighth graders.

CRC examined year-to-year results of the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) exam for second graders. Of the 28 students at or above the summed score benchmark as first graders, 24 (85.7%) remained at or above the summed score benchmark as second graders. The goal was at least 75.0%.

C. CSRC School Scorecard

This year, the school scored 91.9% (A-) on the CSRC school scorecard, which places Downtown Montessori in the high performing/exemplary category. This compares to 93.4% on the 2014–15 scorecard.

III. SURVEY/INTERVIEW RESULTS

Every other year, CRC collects feedback from parents, students, board members, and teachers to assess their perceptions of the school. This year, parents and students were offered the chance to complete their surveys online. Teachers and board members were interviewed personally.

- Parent surveys representing 111 (60.0%) of 185 families were completed.
 - » Almost all (96.5%) parents rated the school's overall performance in contributing to their child's learning as "excellent" or "good."
 - » Nearly all (96.5%) parents would recommend this school to other parents.
 - » Parents' favorite characteristics included:
 - Passionate and responsive staff and their approach to learning;
 - Classroom size and environment; and
 - School's community.
 - » The least favorite characteristics were:
 - Lack of extracurricular activities; and
 - Lack of community space or gym.
- All seven board members participated in personal interviews.
 - » All (100.0%) rated the school as "excellent" overall.
 - » All (100%) reported that the board receives a presentation of the school's annual academic performance report.
 - » The main suggestions for school improvement were: build a multi-purpose room/gym, develop a method for teachers to feel comfortable expressing feelings to board members, and continuation of the new strategic planning process.
- CRC interviewed 14 instructional staff, with the following key results.
 - » School climate opinions showed that:

- All (100%) the teachers agreed (eight) or strongly agreed (six) that adults in the school respect students and their different points of view;
 - Thirteen agreed or strongly agreed that staff typically work well with one another; and
 - Twelve agreed or strongly agreed that all families are encouraged to become involved in the school.
- » The very important (or somewhat important) reasons for teaching at the school, expressed by all teachers, were:
- General atmosphere;
 - Educational methodology;
 - Class size;
 - Administrative leadership; and
 - Colleagues.
- » “Somewhat unimportant” reasons included:
- Financial considerations (one); and
 - Student age/grade level (four).
- » Areas most often rated as excellent or good included the program of instruction, parent/teacher relationships, and teacher performance.
- » Six teachers agreed that the school has clear teacher performance assessment processes and seven indicated that they were satisfied with the school’s teacher performance assessment criteria.
- A total of 25 seventh and eighth graders completed online surveys. The students either strongly agreed or agreed that :
 - » They liked their school (40.0%);
 - » Their teachers talk with them about high school plans (76.0%);
 - » They feel safe in school (64.0 %); and
 - » They have improved in reading/writing (80.0%) and math (92.0%).

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Downtown Montessori addressed the recommendations from its 2014–15 programmatic profile and educational performance report. Based on results in this report and in consultation with school staff, CRC recommends that the school continue a focused improvement plan by implementing the following activities during the 2016–17 school year.

- Improve the seventh- and eighth-grade math outcomes by focusing on using fall achievement data to inform specific teaching strategies for specific students.

- Consider hiring a math specialist to work with all grade levels (especially with teachers in the upper grades).
- Continue to study and decide upon an appropriate approach to writing instruction and ensure that all teachers implement it.
- Implement a consistent process for teachers to provide input to the board of directors.

V. RECOMMENDATION FOR ONGOING MONITORING AND CHARTER RENEWAL

Based on past and current contract compliance and the school's continuing scorecard status of high performing/exemplary, CRC recommends that Downtown Montessori continue regular, annual academic monitoring and reporting.

I. INTRODUCTION

This report was prepared as a result of a contract between the City of Milwaukee Charter School Review Committee (CSRC) and the NCCD Children's Research Center (CRC).² It is one component of the program that the CSRC uses to monitor performance of all city-chartered schools. Report information was gathered as follows.

- CRC staff visited the school in the fall to conduct a structured interview with the head of the school, review critical documents, and obtain copies for CRC files.
- CRC staff assisted the school in developing its outcome measures for the annual learning memo.
- Additional site visits included classroom instruction observation and note taking on such issues as classroom setup, number of students and teachers, and student engagement in learning activities.
- CRC staff read case files for selected special education students to ensure that individualized education programs (IEP) were updated.
- CRC staff verified the presence of current licenses or permits for all instructional staff using the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) teacher license website.
- CRC staff conducted a structured, end-of-the-year interview with the head of the school.
- CRC staff conducted interviews with board members and with 14 teachers.
- CRC staff conducted an online survey of seventh and eighth graders.
- CRC conducted a survey of parents of all students enrolled in the school. This involved preparing paper and electronic surveys, making follow-up phone calls, and compiling and analyzing the resulting data.
- CRC staff and the CSRC chair attended a board of directors meeting to discuss the roles of CSRC and CRC as educational monitors and expectations for board member involvement.
- The school provided electronic data to CRC.
- CRC staff compiled and analyzed results and produced this annual report.

² CRC is a center of the nonprofit National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD). NCCD promotes just and equitable social systems for individuals, families, and communities through research, public policy, and practice.

II. PROGRAMMATIC PROFILE

Downtown Montessori Academy
2507 S. Graham St.
Milwaukee, WI 53207

Telephone: (414) 744-6005

Website: <http://downtownmontessori.com>

Head of School: Virginia Flynn

Executive Director: Ian Spanic

Downtown Montessori is in the Bay View neighborhood near the Port of Milwaukee on the southeast side of the city.³

A. Board of Directors⁴

Downtown Montessori is governed by a volunteer board of directors, which provides strategic leadership in support of the school's mission, philosophy, and goals. This year, the board of directors had seven members: a president, a vice president, a secretary, a treasurer, and three other directors. The board makes long-term decisions, provides financial management, and communicates regularly with the executive director and the head of school to ensure that the school's program and operation are faithful to the terms of its charter and that the school is a viable organization.

As the head of school and executive director manage the day-to-day activities, the board's mission is to preserve and protect the financial health and well-being of the school and to work with the school's administration to determine annual goals and objectives. The board develops the long-term strategic plan that sets the annual goals and objectives for themselves, the executive director, and the head of school.

³ The school was previously located in downtown Milwaukee and was chartered by the City of Milwaukee in 1998.

⁴ Information comes from the *2013–14 Annual Report* and the school's website, <http://downtownmontessori.com>.

B. Philosophy and Description of Educational Methodology

1. Montessori Approach

Downtown Montessori delivers a valid Montessori program as interpreted by the Association Montessori Internationale or the American Montessori Society.⁵ Montessori education is both a philosophy of child growth and a rationale for guiding such growth. It is based on a child's developmental needs for freedom within limits and a carefully prepared environment that guarantees exposure to materials and experiences through which to develop intelligence as well as physical and psychological abilities. Begun in Italy by Dr. Maria Montessori, Montessori education was introduced in the United States in 1912, with one of the early schools established by Alexander Graham Bell in his own home. Montessori education has enjoyed a resurgence of interest in recent years, reflecting growing recognition of the validity of its approach.

Downtown Montessori is currently divided into four levels of programming. The Children's House contains the Montessori primary program, which is open to students ages 3 to 6 and includes grades K3, K4, and K5.⁶ The lower elementary program is designed for first through third graders; the upper elementary program is open to fourth through sixth graders; and the adolescent program is for seventh and eighth graders.

The Children's House provides an environment that meets student needs and allows them to work individually and collaboratively with sensory materials that engage their curiosity. The variety of sensory experiences enables them to refine and classify their impressions of the world around them. Students are free to explore and observe at their own pace. The classroom engages students with

⁵ The *Parent/Student Handbook, 2014–2015* remains in place for the 2015–16 school year. See http://downtownmontessori.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Parent_Student_Handbook_14-15.pdf.

⁶ Children who turn 5 on or before September 1 may attend full-day Montessori sessions. Children who turn 4 on or before September 1 may attend a half- or full-day 4-year-old program. The full day for 4-year-olds consists of half-day Montessori and half-day child care. The charter school program does not include 3-year-olds.

numbers, language, writing, reading, reasoning and communication tools, and the basis of self-directed learning.

The sense of responsibility to and respect for self and the community introduced in the Children's House is further developed at the elementary level, along with an interdisciplinary approach to learning. At the lower elementary level, the school continues to group multiple ages in an environment that encourages cooperative learning and self-discipline. This program, based on the Montessori "Great Stories,"⁷ allows children to discover how all things are interrelated and builds on the Children's House program.

The upper elementary program follows a three-year curriculum cycle in all areas of study except math. For this program, learning how to ask, investigate, and resolve questions plays a dominant role. Materials and group activities are designed to develop individual and collaborative skills in biology, math, language, history, geography, music, and visual arts. The school seeks to reinforce upper elementary students' natural curiosity and community.

The adolescent program (seventh and eighth grades) reflects a more rigorous level of academic challenge and preparation for high school, including study skills, time management, and high work and social standards.

All students experience extensions of classroom study through community involvement. In addition to being a state-certified "Green and Healthy School," Downtown Montessori is a member of the Urban Ecology Center, located on the Milwaukee River, which provides a coordinated science and environmental program for students. The Montessori teacher/directress works with students individually and in groups, introducing materials and giving guidance as needed. The teacher's role is

⁷ The five Great Stories span the Montessori curriculum at a glance. Key lessons emphasize fundamental parts of each story in all subject areas.

to help students teach themselves through the use of the Montessori materials and attention to the learning environment.⁸

2. Teacher/Instructional Staff Information

During the 2015–16 academic year, the school consisted of 12 classrooms: four Children’s House classrooms for 3- to 6-year-old (i.e., K3 through K5) students, four lower elementary classrooms (first through third grades), and three upper elementary classrooms (fourth through sixth grades). The adolescent program classroom—an open-concept space—was on the second floor of the newly renovated building on the same property.

Throughout the year, the school employed 17 instructional staff and four teaching assistants. Instructional staff included 13 classroom teachers, a special education teacher, a school psychologist, a social worker, and a Title I reading teacher.⁹ Four classroom teachers taught at the Children’s House, four taught lower elementary, three taught upper elementary, and two taught the adolescent program. The four full-time teaching assistants were each assigned to a Children’s House classroom in the morning and floated in all classrooms as needed in the afternoon. In addition, the school hired one part-time floating teacher’s assistant to help where needed in the mornings.

All 17 instructional staff started and completed the school year, resulting in an instructional staff retention rate of 100.0%. At the end of the 2014–15 school year, 15 instructional staff (11 classroom teachers and four other instructional staff) were employed by the school and eligible to

⁸ *Parent/Student Handbook, 2014–2015*, p. 32 (remains in effect for 2015–16).

⁹ The school contracted with MJ Care for the services of a speech pathologist and, if needed, an occupational therapist.

return in the fall of 2015; all staff returned.¹⁰ All staff held DPI licenses (each license was verified on DPI's website). All classroom teachers had Montessori certifications as well.

The school also provided enrichment activities. A music consultant provided group singing and afterschool guitar lessons.¹¹ This year, Downtown Montessori offered an online program for gifted students through Madison's gifted and talented program. The school continues to work with the Urban Ecology Center and Discovery World and implemented an intergenerational art and history project with seniors at the High School of the Arts.

The school reported the following professional development and in-service activities and the months in which they took place. In addition to a staff meeting once every two weeks for program support and in-service, the following specific trainings were provided.

- August 31: Dr. Sue Terry—Literacy
- September 1: Skyward—Introduction to Program
- September 2: Effective Educator (EE) Intro and Goal Planning—Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA)
- September 3: First Aid
- October 23: Continuation of EE—CESA
- November 20: The Diverse Classroom
- January 15: Active Shooter Response—Milwaukee Police Department
- February 12: Creating Behavior Plans—Staff
- April 22: Classroom Management—CESA

¹⁰ Two positions were eliminated for the 2014–15 school year: the art teacher and the Title I math teacher. The special education aide employed during 2013–14 was rehired in 2014–15 as a regular classroom assistant. She stayed the entire year as an assistant and is not reflected in the instructional staff return or retention rates.

¹¹ The music consultant worked with the classroom teachers to plan music that complemented academic topics. This person was not counted as instructional staff.

Dr. Terry continued in-service days throughout the school year to support the new guided reading program. She worked two afternoons a week with lower elementary students and teachers to support literacy development. CESA staff also worked throughout the year to support EE requirements and mentor teachers at different levels of the cycle.

During the interview process, CRC asked teachers about professional support. Six rated it as excellent or good; seven rated it as fair and one as poor. Regarding the performance review procedure, 12 of 14 teachers strongly agreed or agreed that the school has a clear teacher performance assessment process. Seven were satisfied with the school's teacher performance assessment criteria, and nine agreed that student academic performance is an important part of teacher assessment.

Parents were also asked about the school's staff. A total of 96.5% of parents strongly agreed/agreed with the statement "I am comfortable talking with the staff" and 95.6% indicated satisfaction with overall staff performance. Over 94.7% of the parents strongly agreed (63.7%) or agreed (31.0%) that people in this school treat each other with respect.

Of 25 seventh and eighth graders surveyed, about three quarters (76%) agreed or strongly agreed that the teachers help them succeed in school. Also, 11 (44.0%) indicated that teachers respect students (an additional 10 neither agreed nor disagreed). A total of 19 agreed that their teachers talk with them about high school plans.

3. Parental Involvement

As described in the *Parent/Student Handbook, 2014–2015*, Downtown Montessori seeks and depends upon the energy and spirit of its parents. Parents are urged to contact their child's teacher for volunteer opportunities in and out of the classroom. Downtown Montessori's handbook states that

current research, as well as their prior experience, show a direct relationship between parental involvement and how much the child benefits from the school.

Examples of active parental involvement include accompanying students on field trips, reading stories to students, assisting in building improvements such as constructing shelves and assembling playground equipment, organizing publicity events, preparing snacks, and donating equipment. The school expects all parents to spend at least four hours per year on such service activities. The school posts activity sign-up sheets throughout the year and sends emails and notes home with students to encourage parents to participate. Parents also are encouraged to visit their child's class at least once a year. To aid parent involvement, the school's all-volunteer parent group, Parent Engagement Network, is dedicated to supplementing and enriching student education by providing parent involvement opportunities.¹² All parents of enrolled children are members. Monthly meetings are held in the evenings.

Each student has a folder in which notices, school forms, and schoolwork are sent home. The school endeavors to communicate as much as possible through email to prevent unnecessary paper use in accordance with the principles of being a Green and Healthy School. Teacher email addresses are listed in the *Parent/Student Handbook* on the school website, where current information and notices also are available. Parent-teacher conferences occur twice each year and upon parent request.

When asked about parental involvement, 12 of the 14 teachers agreed/strongly agreed that the staff at this school encourage all families to become involved in school activities; 11 teachers rated parental involvement as excellent or good and three rated it as fair. All 14 teachers rated parent/teacher relationships as excellent or good. Over 96% of parents agreed/strongly agreed that they feel comfortable talking with staff. In addition, 94.6% of parents indicated that staff recognize student strengths and weaknesses.

¹² The Parent Engagement Network is fully described in the *Parent/Student Handbook, 2014–2015* and on the school's website at <http://downtownmontessori.com/parent-info/parent-engagement-network/>.

4. Discipline Policy

The school's code of conduct and discipline policy from the *Parent/Student Handbook, 2014–2015*, which remained unchanged for the 2015–16 academic year, indicates that when dealing with discipline, it is important for all involved adults to deal with the problem in the same way. The method of corrective discipline endorsed by Downtown Montessori is to redirect a student to other activities upon engaging in activity that is contrary to established rules. The Montessori Method encourages students to make choices and be responsible for their own actions. Discipline is used to help students rather than punish them. All staff and parents serve as role models for students through their conduct with students, other staff, and other parents. Each student should be dealt with positively; according to the handbook, parents and staff should avoid showing anger. Quiet time is used only if redirection does not work; students choose when they are ready to rejoin the group.

When a student's behavior is disruptive, disrespectful, cruel, or unsafe to the student or others in the teacher and program director's judgment, it is not tolerated. Interventions are formulated based on the principles of respect for the student, knowledge and understanding of the student's developmental needs and characteristics and the group's needs, and an understanding that appropriate behavior must be taught and modeled.

The discipline policy describes specific consequences for older students when other interventions have not worked. These steps, depending on the nature of the offense, range from a review of the school rules and a warning for a first offense to possible consequences for fourth offenses, such as in-school suspension, isolation from the group, or temporary suspension from activities. For chronic behavior problems that are suspected to be beyond the student's control, a referral is made to support services for evaluation and help. Suspension and expulsion are considered last resorts and are subject to board review.

The school's anti-bullying/peace policy defines bullying specifically with examples and includes:

- A procedure for reporting bullying and retaliation for reporting bullying;
- A procedure for investigating reports of bullying;
- Sanctions and supports;
- Bullying prevention and management (including a team meeting when behavior interventions have been put in place); and
- The school's commitment to nonviolent communication and student support.

Teachers, students, and parents were asked about the discipline policy at DM. Opinions were mixed. Of the 14 teachers interviewed, 12 considered school discipline as a "very important" or "somewhat important" reason for continuing to teach there. Six rated the school's adherence to the policy as excellent (one) or good (five), four as fair, and four as poor. Of students who completed the survey, 44.0% agreed or strongly agreed that the rules are fair; 44.0% neither agreed nor disagreed; and 12.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Over 83% of the parents indicated that they feel comfortable with how the staff handles discipline.

5. Waiting List

In April 2016, 34 students at the K3 level, 35 for K4, 12 for K5, two for first grade, and one each for fourth and sixth grades were on the waiting list for admittance to the school in the fall.

C. Student Population

Downtown Montessori started the school year with 264 students in K3 through eighth grade.¹³ By the end of the year, six more students had enrolled and four had withdrawn. In order to protect student identity, CRC does not include results for fewer than 10 students; there were too few

¹³ As of September 18, 2015.

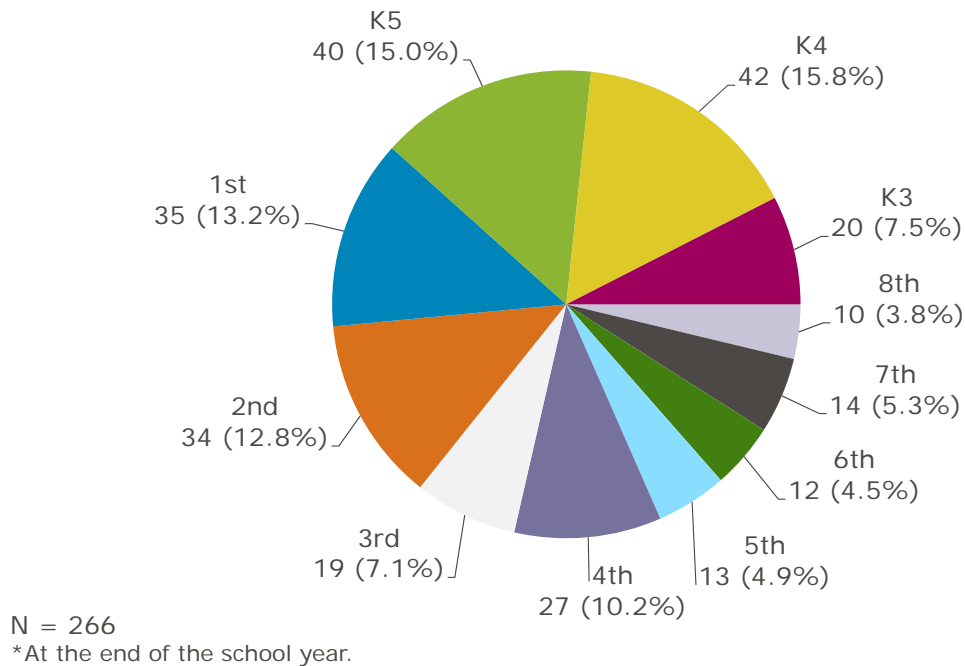
withdrawals this year to provide reasons. Of the students who began the year, 260 (98.5%) finished the school year at Downtown Montessori.

At the end of the year, 266 students were enrolled.

- Of these, 172 (64.7%) students were White, 43 (16.2%) were Latino/a, 34 (12.8%) were Black or African American, 12 (4.5%) were Asian, three (1.1%) were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and two (0.8%) were American Indian/Alaska Native.
- The boy-to-girl ratio of students was nearly even: 134 (50.4%) girls and 132 (49.6%) boys.
- A total of 13 (4.9%) students had special education needs: 11 had speech and language needs, three had specific learning disabilities, and one student's need was for other health impairment.¹⁴
- There were 58 (21.8%) students eligible for free or reduced lunch prices.
- There were 102 students in the Montessori primary program (Children's House), 88 in lower elementary, 52 in upper elementary, and 24 in the adolescent program (Figure 1).

¹⁴ Students may have more than one type of identified need.

Figure 1
**Downtown Montessori Academy
 Enrollment by Student Grade Level*
 2015–16**



On the last day of the 2014–15 academic year, 234 students attending Downtown Montessori were eligible for continued enrollment at the school for 2015–16 (i.e., they did not graduate). Of these, 212 were enrolled in the school on the third Friday in September 2015. This represents a return rate of 90.6% and compares to a return rate of 90.3% in the fall of 2014.

A total of 25 seventh and eighth graders participated in an online survey at the end of the school year.

- When asked whether they feel safe in school, 64.0% of students strongly agreed or agreed.
- There were 10 who indicated that they like Downtown Montessori, 12 neither agreed nor disagreed, one disagreed, and two strongly disagreed.

- A total of 15 (60.0%) agreed/strongly agreed that their fellow students respect each other and their different points of view.

When asked what they liked\ best about the school, student comments reflected a wide variety of issues, including their freedom and independence, the school and class size, and the learning environment. The firewalls on the computers blocking many websites were among the issues least liked. See Appendix G for the results of the student interviews.

D. Hours of Instruction

The school posted its 2015–16 calendar on its website. The calendar also was available in hard copy in the school’s office. The hours of school operation for this year were the same as last: 8:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. each day for K3 and K4 and 8:45 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. for K5 through eighth grades.

E. Computer/Technology Capability

Downtown Montessori has generic personal computers. All students have access to computer stations at various times throughout the day. The school’s Internet usage policy (which appears in the *Parent/Student Handbook, 2014–2015*) requires parent and student signatures on an elementary/adolescent student computer use contract. The school uses MS Excel spreadsheets and Skyward to collect student data and data related to academic progress.

F. Activities for Continuous School Improvement

Following is Downtown Montessori’s response to the activities recommended in the programmatic profile and educational performance report for the 2014–15 academic year. At that time, the recommendation was that the school continue a focused improvement plan by revamping the literacy program during the 2015–16 school year through the following.

- Recommendation: Provide teachers with more literacy training and implement the Scholastic reading program, which includes the provision of leveled reading material.

Result: These two recommendations are included in the guided reading approach adopted by the school this year. The school hired a literacy consultant from Cardinal Stritch University who provided in-services in August 2015 regarding the new guided reading program, provided by Scholastic Corporation. Guided reading is a small-group model that helps teachers provide differentiated reading instruction. The program also includes leveled books. The consultant provided continuous coaching with individual teachers twice a week throughout the year. At the end of the year, the consultant evaluated each teacher at the lower elementary level and provided suggestions for improvement for the 2016–17 school year.

- Recommendation: Implement the Lucy Calkins writing program.

Result: Implementation of the Lucy Calkins writing program has been deferred. The school's leadership decided to focus on the guided reading approach for this year, and therefore the school continued to use the Six Traits of Writing approach.

After reviewing the information in this report and in consultation with the school's leader at the end-of-school interview in June 2016, CRC recommends the following activities for the 2016–17 school year.

- Improve the seventh- and eighth-grade math outcomes by using the fall achievement data to inform specific teaching strategies for specific students.
- Consider hiring a math specialist to work with all grade levels, with a focus on working with the higher grades.
- Study and decide upon an appropriate approach to writing instruction.
- Implement a consistent process for teachers to provide input to the board of directors.

G. Graduation and High School Guidance Information

All 14 eighth graders graduated. School staff informed parents of high school options, testing requirements, early admission, and other sign-up dates throughout the year and held individual discussions by request. Milwaukee Public Schools personnel came to a parent meeting to discuss their IB (international baccalaureate) and AP (advanced placement) programs. Downtown Montessori also

worked with the High School of the Arts to assist interested students with their auditions. Downtown Montessori students are planning to attend Brookfield East High School, Tenor High School, MacDowell Montessori High School, St. Francis High School, Greenfield High School, High School of the Arts, Escuela Verde, and Dominican High School.

At this time, Downtown Montessori does not have a formal method to track the high school achievement of its graduates. The school's leader gains information informally through contact with families and graduates who come back to visit.

III. EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE

To monitor Downtown Montessori's school performance, a variety of qualitative and quantitative information was collected at specific intervals during the past several academic years. This year, the school established goals for attendance, parent conferences, and special education student records. The school used internal and external measures of academic progress. This section of the report describes school success in meeting attendance, conference, parent contract, and special education record-keeping goals. It also describes student progress as measured internally on student report cards and externally by standardized tests, such as the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) and the Wisconsin Forward Exam.

A. Attendance

At the beginning of the academic year, the school established a goal of maintaining an average attendance rate of 95.0%. "Present" was defined as being present for at least half of the day.

The school achieved this goal, as students were present on average 95.4% of the time this year.¹⁵

When excused absences were included, the attendance rate rose to 100.0%.¹⁶

B. Parent Conferences and Contracts

At the beginning of the academic year, the school established a goal for parents of all students to participate in scheduled parent-teacher conferences. This year, the school scheduled two conference sessions: one in the fall and one in the spring. Parents of all (100.0%) students enrolled at the time of the conferences attended. The school has therefore met its goal related to parent conferences.

C. Special Education Student Records

This year, the school established a goal to develop and maintain records for all special education students. During the year, 17 students with special education needs attended the school. Four of the students were reevaluated during the current year and, as a result of those evaluations, were dismissed from special education services. An IEP was developed for all 13 of the new or returning special education students that required one.

In addition, CRC reviewed a representative number of files during the year. This review indicated that IEPs had been completed and reviewed in a timely manner and that parents were invited to and did participate in the IEP team. The school has met its goal related to keeping updated student special education records.

¹⁵ Attendance rate is based on all 270 students enrolled at any time during the year. The rate was calculated for each student by dividing the number of days attended by the number of expected days of attendance and averaging across all students.

¹⁶ The CSRC requires the school to report suspensions. According to the data submitted by the school, there were no student suspensions this year.

D. Local Measures of Educational Performance

Charter schools, by their definition and nature, are autonomous schools with curricula that reflect each school's individual philosophy, mission, and goals. In addition to administering standardized tests, each charter school is responsible for describing goals and expectations for its students in the context of that school's unique approach to education. These goals and expectations are established by each city-chartered school at the beginning of the academic year to measure the educational performance of its students. Local measures are useful for monitoring and reporting progress, guiding and improving instruction, clearly expressing the expected quality of student work, and providing evidence that students are meeting local benchmarks. The CSRC expectation is that at a minimum, schools establish local measures in literacy (i.e., reading), writing, math, and special education. Due to their young age, results for K3 through K5 are combined below. Results in each academic content area for students in first through eighth grades are illustrated subsequently.

1. Progress Reports for K3 Through K5

Downtown Montessori uses the Scholastic progress reports in K3 through K5 to track students' progress on the following skills.

- Language (spoken, written, reading, parts of speech, and word study)
- Mathematical development (numbers, counting, addition, subtraction, and multiplication)
- Sensorial discrimination (visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory)
- Cultural areas (globes, maps, and animals of the world)
- Practical life (care of person, grace, courtesy, and control and coordination)

Students are rated as "presented," "practiced," "improving," or "proficient" on each skill. This year, the school established a goal that by the end of the year, K3 through K5 students who attended

all year would be proficient or show progress (presented to practiced, practiced to improving, or presented to improving) in grade-level skills in each of these five areas. Students who were initially proficient would maintain proficiency.

This year, while the school addressed all areas mentioned above, progress data were provided in the areas of literacy (language) and math (mathematical development). Data were submitted for 98 K3 through K5 students who were enrolled for the year. Of the 97 students who completed all five math and five literacy skills, 95 (98.0%) maintained proficiency or showed progress for each of the five math skills and each of the five literacy skills assessed (Table 1).

Table 1 Downtown Montessori Academy Students Proficient or Showed Progress on Math and Literacy Skills 1–5 K3 Through K5 2015–16 (N = 98)		
Skill	n	%
Math		
Skill 1	98	100.0%
Skill 2	98	100.0%
Skill 3	98	100.0%
Skill 4	98	100.0%
Skill 5	97 ¹⁷	100.0%
Literacy		
Skill 1	98	100.0%
Skill 2	98	100.0%
Skill 3	98	100.0%
Skill 4	98	100.0%
Skill 5	96	98.0%

¹⁷ One student was missing a score for math skill 5.

2. Literacy, Writing, and Math Progress for First Through Eighth Grades

a. *Literacy Skills*

Literacy skills for students in first through eighth grades were measured in fall and spring using the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI). QRI helps teachers assess student skills in a variety of areas. First graders are assessed in alphabet recognition (lowercase and uppercase), letter/sound recognition, QRI word recognition, and a QRI reading passage (if applicable); second and third graders are administered the QRI word recognition and QRI reading passage (if applicable) sections; and fourth through eighth graders are assessed with the QRI reading passage and comprehension sections. Student scores for all subtests are averaged and result in a grade level of functioning. Test results indicate whether a student met, was below, or was well below grade-level benchmarks; results also indicate the student's current level of learning for that grade level. CRC examined progress for students who scored at grade level or above in the fall as well as students who scored below their respective grade level in the fall (Table 2).

Table 2 Downtown Montessori Academy Literacy Goals: Student QRI Scores 1st Through 8th Grades 2015–16					
Grade Level	N	Students at or Above Grade Level Fall of 2015		Students Below Grade Level Fall of 2015	
		n	%	n	%
1st	35	14	40.0%	21	60.0%
2nd	34	31	91.2%	3	8.8%
3rd	19	11	57.9%	8	42.1%
4th	27	18	66.7%	9	33.3%
5th	13	13	100.0%	0	0.0%
6th	12	12	100.0%	0	0.0%
7th	14	13	92.9%	1	7.1%
8th	10	9	90.0%	1	10.0%
Total	164	121	73.8%	43	26.2%

i. Students at or Above Grade Level

For the 2015–16 school year, Downtown Montessori set the goal that at least 85.0% of students who scored at or above their current grade level in reading in the fall would again test at or above grade level on the spring test. Additionally, of students who scored below their grade level on the fall QRI, 85.0% would improve their reading level by one grade level on the spring test. All (100.0%) 121 students who tested at or above grade level in the fall tested at or above grade level on the spring test, exceeding the school's goal for these students.

ii. Students Below Grade Level

In the fall, 43 first- through eighth-grade students scored below grade-level benchmarks. Of these, 42 (97.8%) increased their score at least one grade level on the spring test (Table 3), exceeding the school's goal of 85.0%.

Table 3		
Downtown Montessori Academy Literacy Goal: Students Below Grade Level 1st Through 8th Grades 2015–16		
Grade Level	Students Below Grade Level Fall of 2015	% of Students Who Met Goal
1st	21	95.2%
2nd	3	Cannot report due to <i>n</i> size
3rd	8	Cannot report due to <i>n</i> size
4th	9	Cannot report due to <i>n</i> size
5th	0	N/A
6th	0	N/A
7th	1	Cannot report due to <i>n</i> size
8th	1	Cannot report due to <i>n</i> size
Total	43	97.8%

Results indicate that 163 (99.4%) of the 164 of the students with comparable scores met the school's local measure goal in literacy.

b. Writing Skills

This year, the school set a goal that at all students who completed the writing sample in the fall (October) would increase their overall average level by a half point (0.5) on the spring (May) writing sample.¹⁸ Students were assessed on two or more of the Six Traits of Writing, dependent upon grade level. For example, first through third graders focused on organization and conventions; fourth through sixth graders focused on organization, conventions, content, and word choice; and seventh and eighth graders focused on organization, conventions, content, word choice, sentence fluency, and voice. Student skills on each trait were assessed on a 5-point rubric for each trait applicable by grade,¹⁹ and the total for all traits was averaged and converted into an overall writing level.

This year, 137 first- through eighth-grade students were tested in fall and spring. Most (115, or 83.9%) of those students increased their average writing level score by 0.5 or maintained an overall level score of 4.6 or higher for both the fall and spring writing samples (Table 4).

¹⁸ Students with an average of 4.6 or higher in the fall were not able to improve their overall scores by 0.5 at the time of the spring test. Those students were expected to maintain or improve that average in the spring.

¹⁹ The language in the school's learning memo refers to a four point rubric (1 = needs support, 2 = progressing, 3 = meets expectations, 4 = mastery), but the school tracked the scores using a five-point scale (1 = experimenting, 2 = emerging, 3 = developing, 4 = capable, and 5 = experienced). In addition, the traits that students focused on differed slightly from the learning memo. CRC determined that the revisions used were valid measures of writing progress.

Table 4 Downtown Montessori Academy Writing Skills Progress Based on Six Traits of Writing 1st Through 8th Grades 2015–16			
Grade	N	Number Met Writing Goal	% Met Writing Goal
1st	26	26	100.0%
2nd	25	20	80.0%
3rd	12	4	33.3%
4th	26	24	92.3%
5th	13	12	92.3%
6th	11	7	63.6%
7th	14	12	85.7%
8th	10	10	100.0%
Total	137	115	83.9%

c. *Math Skills*

First- through sixth-grade students were rated on a number of Montessori sequential math skills. Each math skill was rated as presented, practiced, improving, or mastered/proficient. The school's goal was that all students enrolled for the year would maintain proficiency or show improvement in four (80.0%) out of five grade-level math skills. Scores were provided for 135 first through sixth graders who attended all year. By the end of the year, 124 (91.9%) students reached/maintained proficiency or showed progress in 80.0% of skills (Table 5).

Table 5 Downtown Montessori Academy Math Progress/Proficiency 1st Through 6th Grades 2015–16			
Grade	N	Students Who Progressed/Maintained Proficiency in 80.0% of Skills	
		n	%
1st	33	28	84.8%
2nd	32	31	96.9%
3rd	19	18	94.7%
4th	26	23	88.5%
5th	13	13	100.0%
6th	12	11	91.7%
Total	135	124	91.9%

Math progress for seventh and eighth graders was based on the Montessori math skills, which are taught using the Montessori math curriculum and supplemented by the Common Core State Standards math skills. Students were assessed on 31 to 35 math skills. The school's goal was that all students enrolled for the year would reach mastery or show improvement in 80.0% of those grade-level math skills.²⁰ Students who were proficient in a skill would maintain proficiency.

All 24 seventh and eighth graders who were enrolled the entire school year completed the math assessment. None of the 14 seventh graders or 10 eighth graders assessed maintained mastery or improved in 80.0% or more math skills assessed between the initial and final testing periods. The school did not meet its math local measure goals for any of the 24 seventh- and eighth-grade students).

Overall, 124 (80.0%) of 159 first- through eighth-grade students met the school's local measures in math.

²⁰ The learning memo uses the term "proficiency," which aligns with the first- through sixth-grade math scale, and the term "mastery," which aligns with the seventh- and eighth-grade math scale.

3. Special Education Student Progress

The school set a goal for special education students to demonstrate progress toward meeting their IEP goals. To measure this goal, the school decided that students who had active IEPs should meet 80.0% of their IEP goals by the time of their annual review or reevaluation. (Note that ongoing student progress on IEP goals is monitored and reported throughout the academic year through the special education progress reports that are attached to the regular report cards.) Of the 13 applicable students, seven had active IEPs for an entire IEP year at the school. In order to protect student identity, CRC does not include results for cohorts of fewer than 10.

E. Standardized Measures of Educational Performance

In 2015–16, DPI required all schools to administer PALS assessments to K4 through second graders and the Wisconsin Forward Exam to third through eighth graders.²¹ These tests and results are described in the following sections.

1. PALS for K4 Through Second Graders

Beginning in 2013–14, DPI required that all students in K4 through second grade take the PALS assessment in the fall and spring of the school year. PALS aligns with both the Common Core English standards and the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards.

Three versions of the PALS assessment are available: PALS-PreK for K4 students, PALS-K for K5 students, and PALS 1–3 for first through third graders.²² The PALS-PreK includes five required tasks (name writing, uppercase alphabet recognition, beginning sound awareness, print and word

²¹ Per the contract with the CSRC, the school will administer all tests within the DPI-requested timeframe; this includes the PALS. The timeframe for the fall K4 and K5 PALS assessment was October 12 to November 6, 2015; for first and second graders, the timeframe was September 14 to October 9, 2015. The spring testing window for all students was April 25 to May 20, 2016. The timeframe for the Wisconsin Forward Exam was March 28 to May 20, 2016.

²² Although the PALS 1–3 can be used for third graders, DPI only requires the test for K4 through second graders; third-grade students are tested using the Wisconsin Forward Exam.

awareness, and rhyme awareness). Two additional tasks (lowercase alphabet recognition and letter sounds) are completed only by students who reach a high enough score on the uppercase alphabet task. Schools can choose whether to administer the optional nursery rhyme awareness task. Because this latter task is optional, CRC does not report data on it.

The PALS-K includes six required tasks (rhyme awareness, beginning sound awareness, alphabet knowledge, letter sounds, spelling, and concept of word) and one optional task (word recognition in isolation). The PALS 1–3 comprises three required tasks (spelling, word recognition in isolation, and oral reading in context). The PALS 1–3 also includes one additional required task for first graders during the fall administration (letter sounds) and additional tasks for students who score below the summed score benchmark. These additional tasks are used to gather further diagnostic information about those students.

For the PALS-K and PALS 1–3, specific task scores are summed for an overall summed score. For the PALS 1–3, the fall and spring summed scores are calculated using different task combinations. The summed score is then compared to benchmarks set for each grade level and test administration. Reaching or surpassing the benchmark is not an indicator that the student is reading at grade level; the benchmark simply helps teachers identify which students may have difficulty learning to read. For example, if the student’s summed score is below the designated benchmark for their grade level and test administration, the student is identified as requiring additional instruction to master basic literacy skills.²³ Students who are at or above the benchmark have the basic skills required to, with targeted instruction, continue learning to read without intervention. Teachers may use PALS assessment results to help plan classroom reading and spelling instruction according to student needs.

The PALS-PreK has no similar summed score or set benchmarks. Because students enter K4 with different levels of exposure to books, letters, and sounds, the purpose of the PALS-PreK is to learn

²³ Information retrieved from <http://www.palswisconsin.info>

students' abilities as they enter K4 in the fall. In the spring, developmental ranges for each PALS task indicate whether the student is at the expected developmental stage for a 4-year-old child.

a. PALS-PreK

A total of 40 K4 students completed the PALS-PreK in the fall and spring. Although the spring developmental ranges relate to expected age-level development by the time of the spring semester, CRC applied the ranges to both test administrations to see if more students were at or above the range for each test by the spring administration. The number of students at or above the developmental range increased for each task from fall to spring (Table 6).

Table 6 Downtown Montessori Academy PALS-PreK for K4 Students Students at or Above the Spring Developmental Range 2015–16 (N = 40)				
Task	Fall		Spring	
	n	%	n	%
Name writing	27	67.5%	38	95.0%
Uppercase alphabet recognition	23	57.5%	34	85.0%
Lowercase alphabet recognition ²⁴	20*	90.9%	28 [†]	100.0%
Letter sounds ²⁵	21 [‡]	91.3%	33 [§]	100.0%
Beginning sound awareness	36	90.0%	39	97.5%
Print and word awareness	37	92.5%	40	100.0%
Rhyme awareness	28	70.0%	37	92.5%

*Out of 22 students who qualified and completed the lowercase task in the fall.

†Out of 28 students who qualified and completed the lowercase task in the spring.

‡Out of 23 students who qualified and completed the letter sound task in the fall.

§Out of 33 students who qualified and completed the letter sounds task in the spring.

²⁴ Students who score 16 or greater on the uppercase alphabet recognition task complete the lowercase alphabet recognition task. Four additional students completed the lowercase task in the fall and six additional students completed the lowercase task in the spring despite not achieving a 16 or greater score on the uppercase alphabet recognition task. These students are not included in results.

²⁵ Students who score nine or greater on the lowercase alphabet recognition task complete the letter sounds task. One additional student completed the letter sounds task in the fall and two additional students completed the letter sounds task in the spring despite not achieving a nine or greater on the lowercase alphabet recognition task. These students are not included in results.

b. *PALS-K and PALS 1–3*

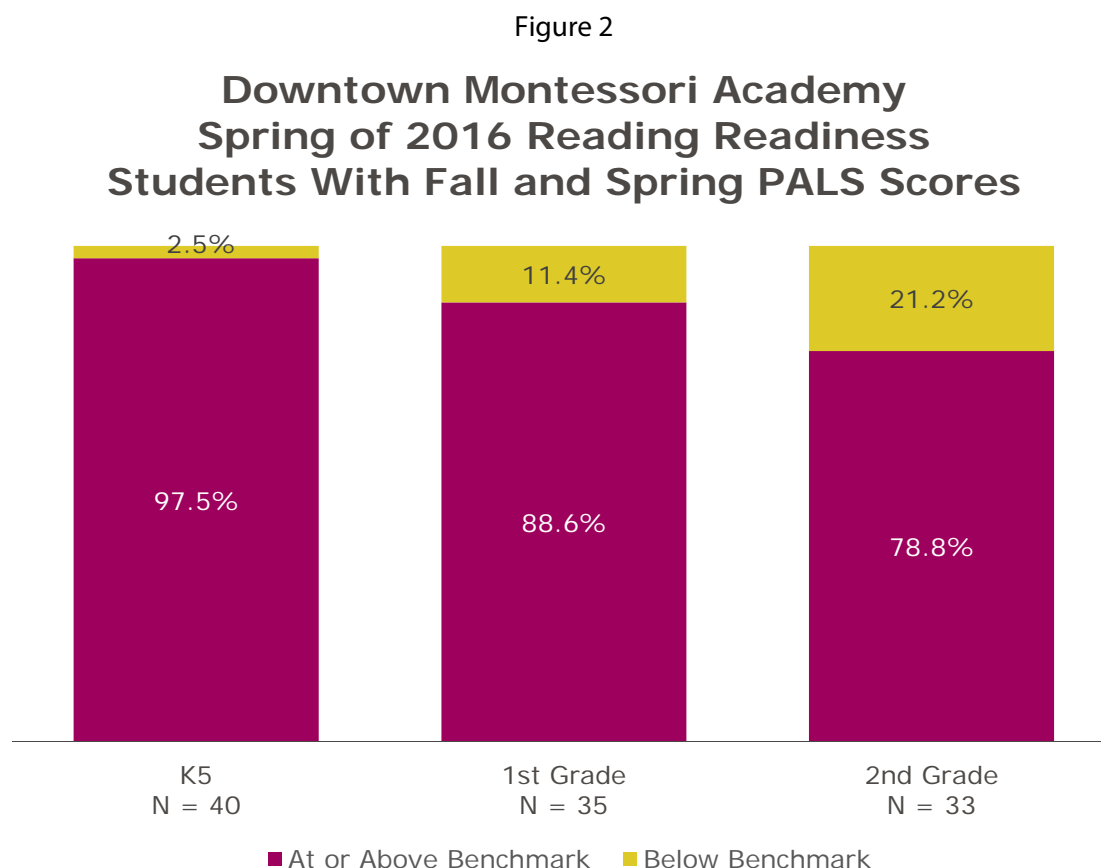
As mentioned previously, each of these tests has a summed score benchmark for the fall and spring (Table 7), which are calculated using different task combinations. Therefore, the spring benchmark may be lower than the fall benchmark. Additionally, benchmarks only measure whether the student is developmentally on track to become a successful reader; results from fall to spring should not be used to measure individual student progress.

Table 7		
PALS-K and PALS 1–3 Published Summed Score Benchmarks		
Assessment	Fall Benchmark	Spring Benchmark
PALS-K	28	81
PALS—First Grade	39	35
PALS—Second Grade	35	54

CRC examined reading readiness for students who completed the fall PALS test and/or the spring PALS test (Table 8).

Table 8			
Downtown Montessori Academy PALS Reading Readiness for K5 and 1st Graders Fall of 2015 and Spring of 2016			
Grade Level and Test Period	N	Students at or Above Benchmark	
		n	%
K5			
Fall	41	39	95.1%
Spring	41	39	95.1%
1st Grade			
Fall	37	32	86.5%
Spring	37	31	83.8%
2nd Grade			
Fall	34	31	91.2%
Spring	34	27	79.4%

Next, CRC looked at spring benchmark status for students who completed both the fall and spring assessments (40 K5 students, 35 first graders, and 33 second graders). At the time of the spring assessment, 97.5% of K5 students, 88.6% of first graders, and 78.8% of second graders were at or above the spring summed score benchmark for their grade level (Figure 2).



2. *Wisconsin Forward Exam for Third Through Eighth Graders*²⁶

In the spring of 2016, the Wisconsin Forward Exam replaced the Badger Exam and the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) as the state's standardized test for English/language arts and math for third through eighth graders; science for fourth through eighth

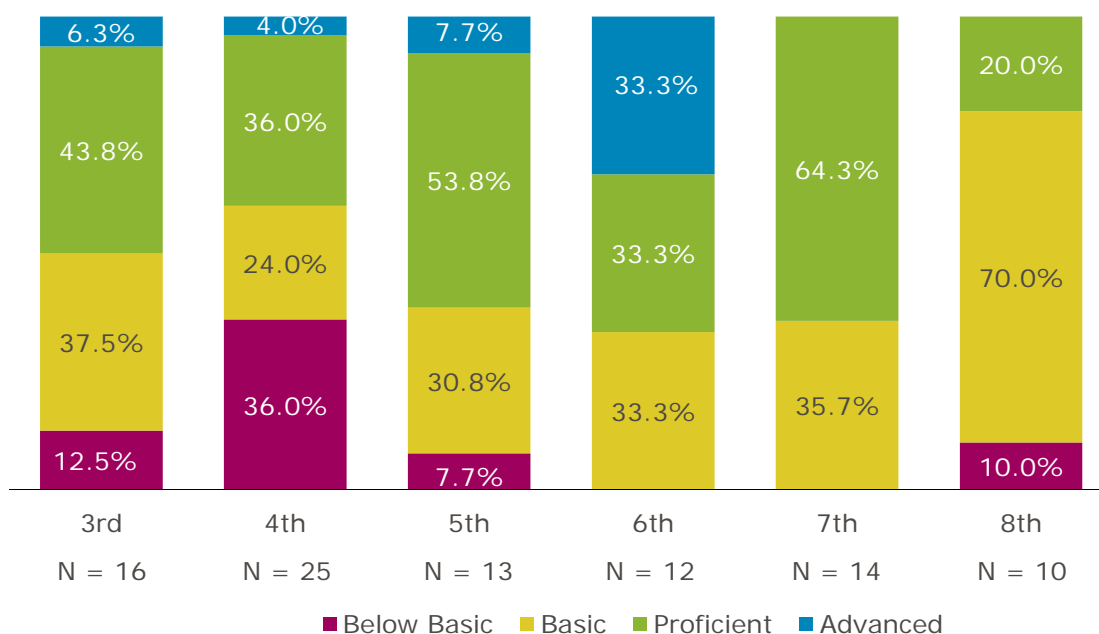
²⁶ Information taken from the DPI website (<http://dpi.wi.gov/assessment/forward>) and Wisconsin Forward Exam family brochure (<http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/assessment/pdf/Forward%20brochure%20for%20families.pdf>).

graders; and social studies for fourth, eighth, and tenth graders. The Forward Exam was administered in the spring of the school year.²⁷ The test is computerized but not adaptive based on student responses. The Forward Exam was developed and administered by the Data Recognition Center (DRC), a local company with offices in Wisconsin. DRC will also be responsible for reporting results.

The Forward Exam, a summative assessment, scores each student based on performance in each content area. Scores are translated into one of four levels: advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic. A total of 90 third through eighth graders completed the English/language arts and math components of the Forward Exam.²⁸ Of these, 50.0% were proficient or advanced in English/language arts (not shown). English/language arts results by grade level appear in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Downtown Montessori Academy Forward Exam English/Language Arts Assessment 2015–16



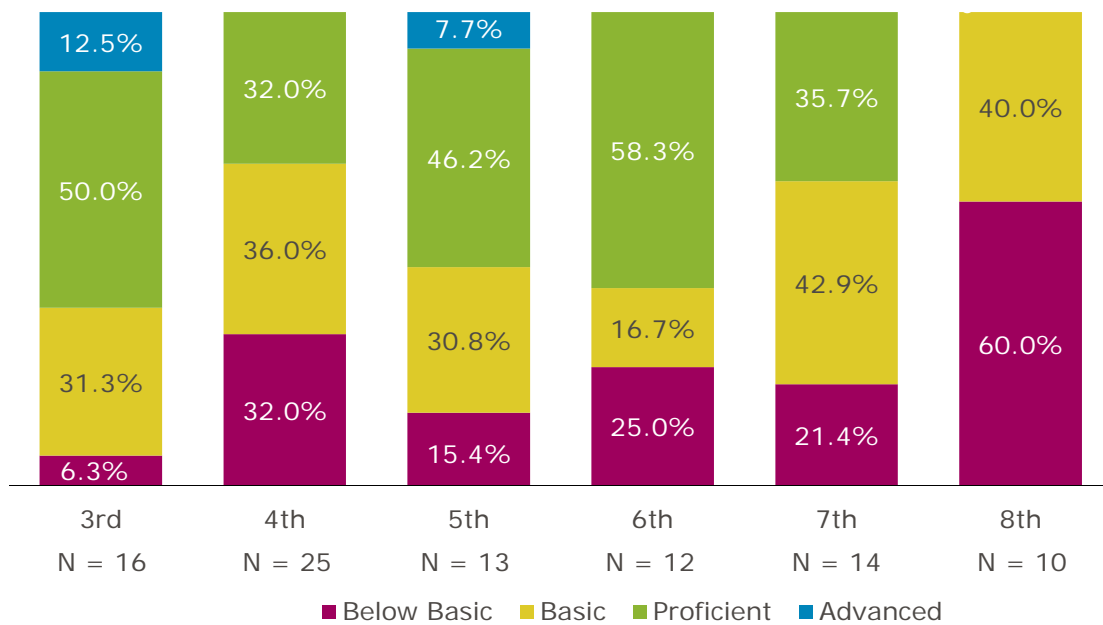
²⁷ The Wisconsin Forward Exam testing window was March 28 – May 20, 2016.

²⁸ One student who took the Forward Exam was not included in this analysis due to enrollment after the third Friday in September. One other student had Forward Exam results but was not on the roster list and therefore also is not included in this analysis.

About two fifths (41.1%) of the 90 students were proficient or advanced on the math component of the exam (not shown). Math results appear in Figure 4.

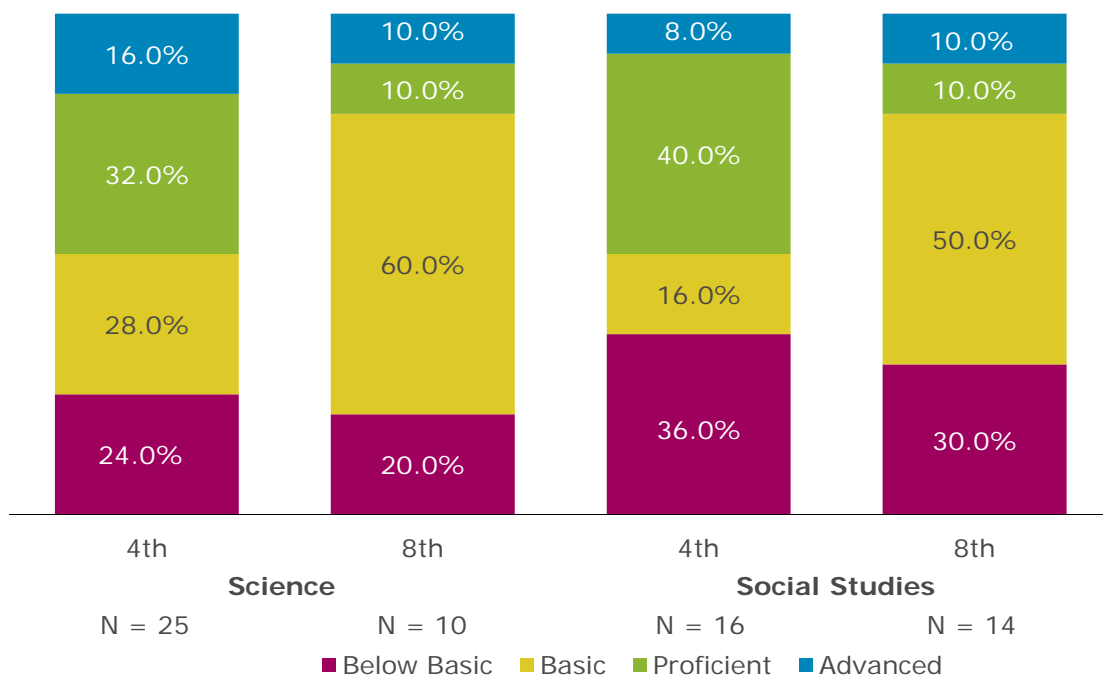
Figure 4

Downtown Montessori Academy Forward Exam Math Assessment 2015–16



A total of 25 fourth-grade and 10 eighth-grade students completed the social studies and science tests (Figure 5). Of the fourth- and eighth-grade students, 40.0% were proficient or advanced in social studies and 40.0% were proficient or advanced in science (Not shown).

Figure 5
**Downtown Montessori Academy
 Forward Exam Social Studies and Science Assessments
 2015–16**



F. Multiple-Year Student Progress

Year-to-year progress is measured by comparing scores on standardized tests from one year to the next. Year-to-year progress/performance expectations apply to all students with scores in consecutive years.

In the fall of 2013, students in K4 through second grade began taking the PALS reading assessment. The PALS summed score benchmark is intended to show teachers which students require

additional reading assistance—not to indicate that the student is reading at grade level. Additionally, there are three versions of the test (PALS PreK, PALS, and PALS 1–3), which include different formats, sections, and scoring. For these reasons, an examination of PALS results from one test to another provides neither a valid nor a reliable measure of student progress. Therefore, CRC examined results for students who were in first grade in 2015 and second grade in 2016 who had taken the PALS 1–3 during two consecutive years. The CSRC’s expectation is that at least 75.0% of students who were at or above the summed score benchmark in the spring of first grade will remain at or above the summed score benchmark in the spring of second grade.

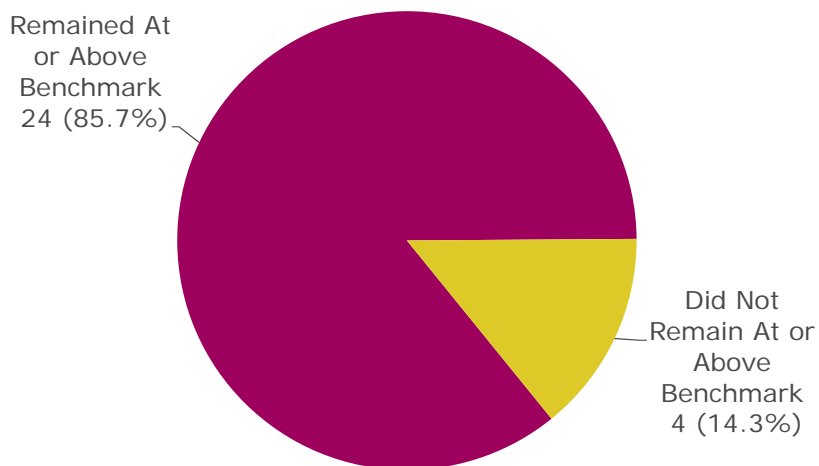
The 2014–15 school year was the first and only year the Badger Exam was administered. Prior to the 2014–15 school year, the WKCE was used to measure year-to-year progress for students in fourth through eighth grades. Because this is the first year the Wisconsin Forward Exam was administered, 2015–16 results will be used as baseline data to measure student progress from 2015–16 to 2016–17; results will be available at that time.

1. Second-Grade Progress Based on PALS

A total of 33 students completed the PALS spring assessment in 2014–15 as first graders and 2015–16 as second graders. Based on PALS results from the spring of 2015, 28 students were at or above the spring summed score benchmark as first graders; 24 (85.7%) of those students remained at or above the summed score benchmark in the spring of 2016 as second graders (Figure 6).

Figure 6

**Downtown Montessori Academy
Year-to-Year Reading Readiness for
2nd Graders*
2015–16**



N = 28

*Second-grade students who completed PALS 1–3 in two consecutive years and were at or above benchmark as first graders.

2. Fourth- Through Eighth-Grade Wisconsin Forward Exam

This is the first year that the Wisconsin Forward Exam was administered. Year-to-year results will not be available until the next school year.

G. CSRC School Scorecard

In the 2009–10 school year, the CSRC piloted a scorecard for each school that it charters. The pilot ran for three years and in the fall of 2012, the CSRC formally adopted the scorecard to help monitor school performance. The scorecard includes multiple measures of student academic progress, such as performance on standardized tests and local measures.²⁹ It also includes point-in-time

²⁹ In 2013–14, the PALS assessment replaced the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test measures for first- and second-grade students.

academic achievement and engagement elements, such as attendance and student and teacher retention and return. The score provides a summary indicator of school performance. The summary score is then translated into a school status rating.

In 2014, CSRC approved a new scoring system in order to make the scorecard percentages more meaningful and provide schools with greater opportunities to exhibit improvement. The new scoring system is based on the following scale.

A	93.4% – 100%	C	73.3% – 76.5%
A–	90.0% – 93.3%	C–	70.0% – 73.2%
B+	86.6% – 89.9%	D+	66.6% – 69.9%
B	83.3% – 86.5%	D	63.3% – 66.5%
B–	80.0% – 83.2%	D–	60.0% – 63.2%
C+	76.6% – 79.9%	F	0.0% – 59.9%

The percentage score is still translated into a school status level as in previous years, with small changes to the status-level cut scores. The previous and newly adopted cut scores are shown in Table 9.

Table 9 City of Milwaukee Educational Performance Rating Scale for Charter Schools		
School Status	Total Scorecard Percentage	
	Prior to 2014	New Scale
High Performing/Exemplary	100.0% – 85.0%	83.3% – 100.0% (B to A)
Promising/Good	84.9% – 70.0%	70.0% – 83.2% (C– to B–)
Problematic/Struggling	69.9% – 55.0%	60.0% – 69.9% (D– to D+)
Poor/Failing	54.9% or less	0.0% – 59.9% (F)

The CSRC uses the score and rating to guide decisions regarding whether to accept a school's annual education performance and continue monitoring as usual and whether to recommend a

school for a five-year contract renewal at the end of its fourth year of operation under its current contract. The CSRC's expectation is that schools will achieve a rating of 70.0% (Promising/Good) or more; if a school falls under 70.0%, the CSRC will carefully review the school's performance and determine whether a probationary plan should be developed.

Downtown Montessori scored 91.9% (A-) this year, which places them at the high performing/exemplary level. This compares to 93.4% on the 2014–15 scorecard and 89.3% on the 2013–14 scorecard.³⁰ See Appendix D for school scorecard information.

H. DPI Report Card

At the time of the report, DPI did not produce report cards for any schools for the 2015–16 school year.

I. Parent/Teacher/Student/Board Satisfaction Regarding Student Academic Progress

CRC surveyed 113 parents.

- Over 88% agreed or strongly agreed that their child is learning what is needed to succeed in later grades.
- Nearly 94% indicated that staff keep them informed of their child's academic performance.
- A total of 89.4% agreed or strongly agreed that they and their child clearly understand the school's academic expectations.
- Nearly all (96.5%) parents rated the school's overall contribution to their child's learning as excellent or good.

³⁰ Note that the 2014–15 scorecard includes PALS results; this differs from previous years. Additionally, due to the shift in standardized tests, WKCE results were not available this year. The scorecard percentage is based on measures available at the time of this report.

CRC surveyed 14 teachers.

- Eleven rated their students' academic progress as excellent (four) or good (seven).
- All 14 considered the educational methodology/curriculum approach at the school as important reasons for continuing to teach at MMSA.
- A total of 13 rated the program of instruction as excellent (four) or good (nine).

Of the seven board members interviewed, all agreed that:

- Students are making significant academic progress;
- The school is making progress toward becoming a high-performing school; and
- On a scale of good to excellent, the school rates as excellent overall.

When students were asked about their own academic progress, 23 (92.0%) of 25 indicated that their math skills have improved and 20 (80.0%) indicated that their reading/writing skills have improved.

IV. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report covers the 18th year of Downtown Montessori's operation as a City of Milwaukee charter school. Downtown Montessori met all of the educational provisions in its contract with the City of Milwaukee and subsequent CSRC requirements. The scorecard analysis yielded a score of 91.9% (A-), which places the school in the high performing/exemplary category.

Based on past and current contract compliance and the school's continuing status of high performing/exemplary, CRC recommends that Downtown Montessori continue regular, annual academic monitoring and reporting.

Appendix A

Contract Compliance Chart

<p align="center">Table A</p> <p align="center">Downtown Montessori Academy</p> <p align="center">Overview of Compliance for Education-Related Contract Provisions</p> <p align="center">2015–16</p>			
Section of Contract	Contract Provision	Report Reference Page	Contract Provision Met or Not Met
Section I, B	Description of educational program of the school and curriculum focus.	pp. 3–5	Met
Section I, V	The school will provide a copy of the calendar prior to the end of the previous school year.	p. 13	Met
Section I, C	Educational methods.	pp. 3–5	Met
Section I, D	Administration of required standardized tests.	pp. 24–31	Met
Section I, D	<u>Academic criterion #1</u> : Maintain local measures, showing pupil growth in demonstrating curricular goals in reading, math, writing, and special education.	pp. 17–24	Met
Section I, D	<u>Academic criterion #2</u> : Year-to-year achievement measures.		
	a. PALS year-to-year expectations for 2nd-grade students.	a. pp. 32–33	a. Met
	b. Year-to-year results for 3rd- through 8th-grade were not available this year.	b. N/A	b. N/A
Section I, D	<u>Academic criterion #3</u> : Year-to-year achievement measures.		
	Progress for students below grade level or proficiency level was not available this year.	N/A	N/A
Section I, E	Parental involvement.	pp. 7–8	Met
Section I, F	Instructional staff hold a DPI license or permit to teach.	p. 6	Met
Section I, I	Pupil database information, including special education needs students.	pp. 10–13, 16	Met
Section I, K	Discipline procedures.	pp. 9–10	Met

Appendix B

Student Learning Memorandum

Student Learning Memorandum for Downtown Montessori Academy

To: Children's Research Center and Charter School Review Committee
From: Downtown Montessori Academy
Re: Learning Memo for the 2015–16 Academic Year
Date: November 24, 2015

Note: This memorandum of understanding includes the *minimum* measurable outcomes required by the City of Milwaukee Charter School Review Committee (CSRC) to monitor and report students' academic progress. These outcomes have been defined by the leadership and/or staff at the school in consultation with staff from the Children's Research Center (CRC) and the CSRC. The school will record student data in Skyward or Excel spreadsheets and provide the data to CRC, the educational monitoring agent contracted by the CSRC. Additionally, paper test printouts or data directly from the test publisher will be provided to CRC for all standardized tests unless CRC is able to access the results directly from the test publisher. All required elements related to the outcomes below are described in the "Learning Memo Data Requirements" section of this memo. CRC requests electronic submission of year-end data on the fifth day following the last day of student attendance for the academic year, or June 10, 2016.

Enrollment

The school will record enrollment dates for every student. Individual student information and actual enrollment dates will be added to the school's database upon admission. Required data elements related to this outcome are described in the "Learning Memo Data Requirements" section.

Termination/Withdrawal

The exit date and reason for every student leaving the school will be determined and recorded in the school's database. A specific reason is required for each student expulsion. Required data elements related to this outcome are described in the "Learning Memo Data Requirements" section.

Attendance

The school will maintain an average daily attendance rate of 95%. Any student who attends school for at least half of the day will be counted as present. Required data elements related to this outcome are described in the "Learning Memo Data Requirements" section.

Parent/Guardian Participation

A parent or guardian of every student enrolled at the time of each scheduled parent-teacher conference will participate in a conference, which may occur in person or by phone. Required data elements related to this outcome are described in the "Learning Memo Data Requirements" section.

Special Education Needs Students

The school will maintain updated records for all students who received special education services at the school, including students who were evaluated but not eligible for services. Required data elements related to this outcome are described in the "Learning Memo Data Requirements" section.

Academic Achievement: Local Measures³¹

Children's House

Students attending the Children's House (K3, K4, and K5) will demonstrate progress in acquiring skills in the areas of math and literacy. Each student's development will be reported to his/her parents on report cards, and this information will be collected in Skyward. The following scale will be used to track skill levels and changes in skill acquisition.

- 1 – Presented
- 2 – Practiced
- 3 – Improving
- 4 – Mastered/Proficient

Children will be assessed on all five math skills and five literacy representative skills in the fall. Students who attend all year will be proficient or show improvement (presented to practiced, practiced to improving, or presented to improving) in grade-level skills in each of the areas by the end of the year. Students with initial proficiency in a skill will maintain proficiency.

Required data elements related to this outcome are described in the "Learning Memo Data Requirements" section.

Elementary and Adolescent Program

Literacy

All students in first through eighth grades will be administered components of the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI) no later than the end of the first quarter (November 2015) and again in the spring.

First-grade students will be administered the following components.

- Alphabet recognition, both lowercase and uppercase
- Letter/sound recognition
- QRI word recognition
- QRI passage (if applicable)

Second- and third-grade students will be administered the following components.

- QRI word recognition
- QRI passage (if applicable)

Fourth- through eighth-grade students will be administered the passage and comprehension component of the QRI in the fall and spring.

³¹ Local measures of academic achievement are classroom- or school-level measures that monitor student progress throughout the year (formative assessment) and can be summarized at the end of the year (summative assessment) to demonstrate academic growth. They are reflective of each school's unique philosophy and curriculum. The CSRC requires local measures of academic achievement in the areas of literacy, mathematics, writing, and IEP goals.

Students' scores for all subtests will be averaged and result in a grade level of functioning as well as their level of learning for that grade level (frustration, instructional, or independent). These will be aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for each level.

CRC will examine progress for students who completed both the fall and spring QRI tests. Progress for students above and below their current grade levels will be reported.

- At least 85% of first- through eighth-grade students who scored at or above their grade level on the fall QRI will maintain at or above grade-level functioning in the spring.
- At least 85% of first- through eighth-grade students who scored below their grade level on the fall QRI will improve their reading skills by one grade level on the spring test. These assessments will be aligned to CCSS for each grade level.

Required data elements related to this outcome are described in the "Learning Memo Data Requirements" section.

Writing

Writing skills will be assessed in the fall and spring of the school year using the Six Traits of Writing.³² Both writing samples will have grade level prompts based on grade-level topics with the narrative genre.³³

Each of the six traits will be scored on a four-point rubric (1 = needs support, 2 = progressing, 3 = meets expectations, 4 = mastery). Grade levels and the traits chosen for them follow.

- First through third graders will focus on organization and conventions.
- Fourth through sixth graders will focus on sentence fluency, organization, ideas, and conventions.
- Seventh and eighth graders will focus on fluency, organization, ideas, sentence fluency, and conventions.

The average score of these traits for each sample will be used to measure student progress toward the goal.

All students who complete the writing sample in October will increase their overall average score by .5 on a second writing sample taken during May 2016. Students with an average of 4 in the fall will be expected to maintain that average in the spring.

Required data elements related to this outcome are described in the "Learning Memo Data Requirements" section.

³² The six traits of writing are organization, fluency, conventions, ideas, voice, and word choice.

³³ Writing genres include expository, descriptive, persuasive, and narrative.

Mathematics: First Through Sixth Grades

Students in first through sixth grades will demonstrate progress in acquiring the grade-level Montessori sequential math skills, supplemented by at least three grade-level CCSS math skills not reflected in the Montessori sequence. The following scale will be used to track the skill level and change in skill acquisition.

- 1 – Presented
- 2 – Practiced
- 3 – Improving
- 4 – Mastered/Proficient

Students will be assessed on all five representative skills no later than November 17, 2015. Students who attend all year will be proficient or show improvement (e.g., from presented to practiced, practiced to improving, or presented to improving) in at least four out of five grade-level math indicators of math growth by the end of the year. Students with initial proficiency in a skill will maintain proficiency.

Required data elements related to this outcome are described in the “Learning Memo Data Requirements” section.

Mathematics: Seventh and Eighth Grades

All seventh- and eighth-grade students will demonstrate progress in acquiring the Montessori math skills, which are taught using the Montessori math curriculum in pre-algebra, algebra 1, or algebra 2 and supplemented by grade-level CCSS math skills through MobyMax. The CCSS skills are not reflected in the Montessori sequence. The following scale will be used to track skill level and changes in skill acquisition.

- 1 – Needs Support
- 2 – Progressing
- 3 – Meets Expectations
- 4 – Mastery

Students will be assessed on all representative skills no later than November 17, 2015. Students who attend all year will be proficient or show improvement (e.g., from presented to practiced, practiced to improving, or presented to improving) in 80% of grade-level math skills by the end of the year. Students who were initially proficient in a skill will maintain proficiency in that skill.

Required data elements related to this outcome are described in the “Learning Memo Data Requirements” section.

Special Education Students

Students with active IEPs will demonstrate progress toward meeting their IEP goals *at the time of their annual review or re-evaluation*. Progress will be demonstrated by reporting the number of goals on the IEP and the number of goals met. Please note that ongoing student progress on IEP goals is monitored and reported throughout the academic year through the special education progress reports attached to the regular report cards. Students will achieve at least 80% of the total number of goals on their IEPs. Required data elements related to this outcome are described in the “Learning Memo Data Requirements” section.

Academic Achievement: Standardized Measures

The Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for K4 Through Second-Grade Students³⁴

The Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) will be administered to all K4 through second-grade students in the fall and spring of each school year within the timeframe required by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Required data elements related to this outcome are described in the “Learning Memo Data Requirements” section.

DPI-Required Assessments for Third- Through Eighth-Grade Students

DPI-required assessments will be administered on an annual basis in the timeframe identified by DPI (i.e., spring of 2016). Required data elements related to this outcome will be described in the “Learning Memo Data Requirements” section as soon as the reporting elements are known.

Year-to-Year Achievement:³⁵

1. CRC will report results from the DPI-required standardized assessment. Data from 2015–16 will serve as baseline data for subsequent years. If possible, beginning in the 2016–17 school year, CRC also will report year-to-year progress for students who completed the assessment in consecutive school years at the same school. When year-to-year data are available, CSRC will set its expectations for student progress, and these expectations will be effective for all subsequent years.
2. Data from the 2015 spring PALS assessment will be used as baseline data. CSRC’s expectation for students maintaining reading readiness is that at least 75% of students who were in first grade in the 2014–15 school year and met the summed score benchmark in the spring of 2015 will remain at or above the second-grade summed score benchmark in the spring of 2016.

³⁴ Students who meet the summed score benchmark have achieved a level of minimum competency and can be expected to show growth given regular classroom literacy instruction. It does not guarantee that the student is at grade level. (Information taken from DPI website.)

³⁵ CSRC will not have year-to-year achievement measurements for students in K4 and K5.

Appendix C

Trend Information

Table C1					
Downtown Montessori Academy Enrollment					
Year	Number Enrolled at Start of School Year	Number Enrolled During Year	Number Withdrew	Number at End of School Year	Student Retention (Number and Percentage Enrolled for the Entire Year)
2011–12	166	5	5	166	161 (97.0%)
2012–13	199	4	9	194	190 (95.5%)
2013–14	233	2	5	230	228 (97.9%)
2014–15	249	2	3	248	246 (98.8%)
2015–16	264	6	4	266	260 (98.5%)

Figure C1

Downtown Montessori Academy Student Return Rates

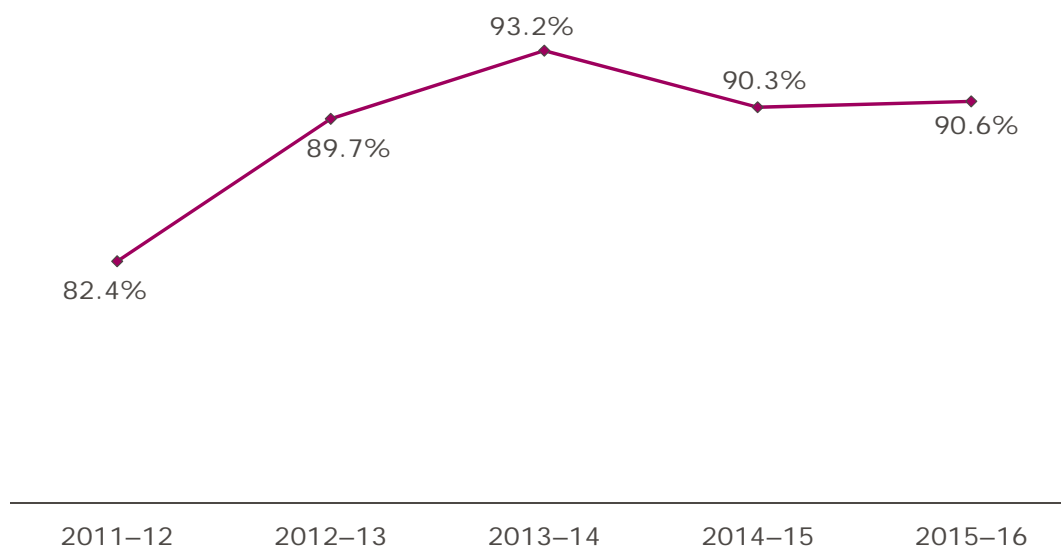


Figure C2

Downtown Montessori Academy Student Attendance Rates

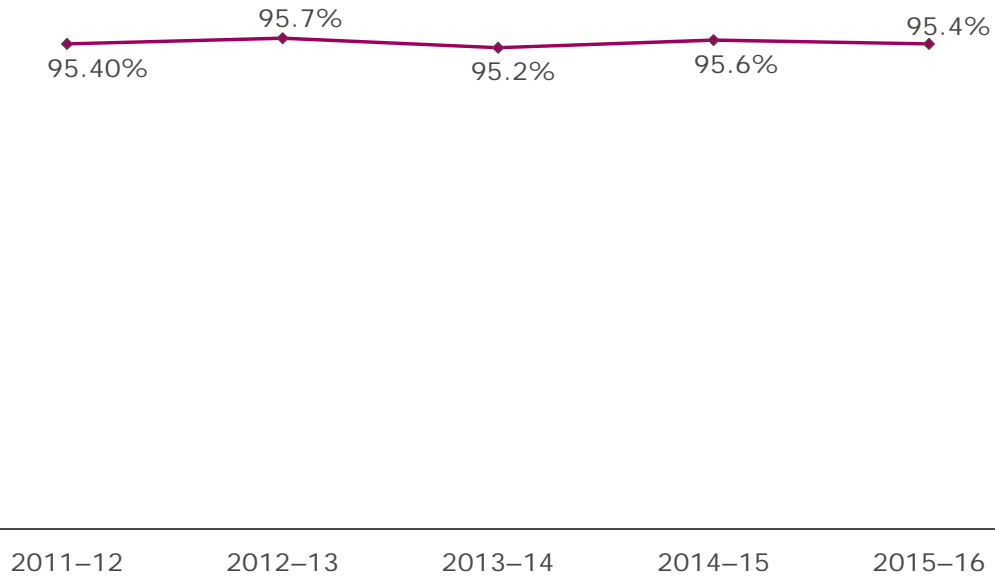


Table C2	
Downtown Montessori Academy Parent Participation	
School Year	% Participated
2011-12	100.0%
2012-13	100.0%
2013-14	100.0%
2014-15	100.0%
2015-16	100.0%

Table C3					
Downtown Montessori Academy Teacher/Instructional Staff Retention Rates					
Teacher Type	Number at Beginning of School Year	Number Started After School Year Began	Number Terminated Employment During the Year	Number at End of School Year	Retention Rate: Rate Employed at School for Entire School Year
2011–12					
Classroom Teachers	8	0	0	8	100.0%
All Instructional Staff	9	0	0	9	100.0%
2012–13					
Classroom Teachers	10	0	0	10	100.0%
All Instructional Staff	15	0	0	15	100.0%
2013–14					
Classroom Teachers	10	0	0	10	100.0%
All Instructional Staff	15	1	0	16	100.0%
2014–15					
Classroom Teachers	11	0	0	11	100%
All Instructional Staff	15	0	0	15	100%
2015–16					
Classroom Teachers	13	0	0	13	100%
All Instructional Staff	17	0	0	17	100%

Table C4 Downtown Montessori Academy Teacher/Instructional Staff Return Rates			
Teacher Type	Number at End of Prior School Year	Number Returned at Beginning of Current School Year*	Return Rate
2011–12			
Classroom Teachers	7	7	100.0%
All Instructional Staff	9	7	77.8%
2012–13			
Classroom Teachers	8	7	87.5%
All Instructional Staff	9	8	88.9%
2013–14			
Classroom Teachers	10	9	90.0%
All Instructional Staff	15	14	93.3%
2014–15			
Classroom Teachers	10	10	100.0%
All Instructional Staff	13	13	100.0%
2015–16			
Classroom Teachers	11	11	100%
All Instructional Staff	15	15	100%

*Only those staff who were eligible to return are considered in these calculations. If a teacher or instructional staff member was not asked back, he/she was no longer eligible.

Table C5 Downtown Montessori Academy CSRC Scorecard Results	
School Year	Scorecard Result
2010–11	88.6%
2011–12	87.4%
2012–13	85.2%
2013–14*	89.3%
2014–15	93.4%
2015–16	91.9%

*In 2013–14, the PALS replaced the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test as the reading performance measure for first and second graders.

Appendix D

CSRC 2015–16 School Scorecard

**City of Milwaukee Charter School Review Committee
2015–16 School Scorecard**

r: 4/11

K5–8TH GRADE

STUDENT READING READINESS: GRADES 1–2

- PALS—% 1st graders at or above spring summed score benchmark this year (5.0)
- PALS—% 2nd graders who maintained spring summed score benchmark two consecutive years (5.0) **10%**

STUDENT ACADEMIC PROGRESS: GRADES 3–8

- WKCE reading—% maintained proficient and advanced (7.5)
- WKCE math—% maintained proficient and advanced (7.5)
- WKCE reading—% below proficient who progressed (10.0)
- WKCE math—% below proficient who progressed (10.0) **35%**

LOCAL MEASURES

- % met reading (3.75)
- % met math (3.75)
- % met writing (3.75)
- % met special education (3.75) **15%**

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: GRADES 3–8

- WKCE reading—% proficient or Advanced (7.5)
- WKCE math—% proficient or advanced (7.5) **15%**

ENGAGEMENT

- Student attendance (5.0)
- Student reenrollment (5.0)
- Student retention (5.0)
- Teacher retention (5.0)
- Teacher return* (5.0) **25%**

HIGH SCHOOL

STUDENT ACADEMIC PROGRESS: GRADES 9, 10, and 12

- EXPLORE to Aspire—composite score at or above benchmark on EXPLORE and at or above benchmark on Aspire (5.0)
- EXPLORE to Aspire—composite score below benchmark on EXPLORE but increased 1 or more on Aspire (10.0) **30%**
- Adequate credits to move from 9th to 10th grade (5.0)
- Adequate credits to move from 10th to 11th grade (5.0)
- DPI graduation rate (5.0)

POST-SECONDARY READINESS: GRADES 11 and 12

- Post-secondary acceptance for graduates (college, university, technical school, military) (10.0)
- % of 11th/12th graders tested (2.5) **15%**
- % of graduates with ACT composite score of 21.25 or more (2.5)

LOCAL MEASURES

- % met reading (3.75)
- % met math (3.75)
- % met writing (3.75)
- % met special education (3.75) **15%**

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: GRADE 10

- WKCE reading—% proficient and advanced (7.5)
- WKCE math—% proficient and advanced (7.5) **15%**

ENGAGEMENT

- Student attendance (5.0)
- Student reenrollment (5.0)
- Student retention (5.0)
- Teacher retention (5.0)
- Teacher return* (5.0) **25%**

Table D Downtown Montessori Academy (K4 Through 8th Grade) Charter School Review Committee Scorecard 2015–16 School Year					
Area	Measure	Maximum Points	% Total Score	Performance	Points Earned
Student Reading Readiness: 1st and 2nd Grades³⁶	% 1st graders at or above spring summed score benchmark this year	5.0	10.0%	83.8%	4.2
	% 2nd graders at or above spring summed score benchmark this year	5.0		85.7%	4.3
Student Academic Progress 3rd Through 8th Grades	WKCE reading: % maintained proficient or advanced	7.5	35.0%	N/A	N/A
	WKCE math: % maintained proficient or advanced	7.5		N/A	N/A
	WKCE reading: % below proficient who progressed	10.0		N/A	N/A
	WKCE math: % below proficient who progressed	10.0		N/A	N/A
Local Measures	% met reading	3.75	15.0%	99.4%	3.7
	% met math	3.75		80.0%	3.0
	% met writing	3.75		83.9%	3.1
	% met special education	3.75		Cannot report due to <i>n</i> size	--
Student Achievement 3rd – 8th Grades	WKCE reading: % proficient or advanced	7.5	15.0%	N/A	N/A
	WKCE math: % proficient or advanced	7.5		N/A	N/A
Engagement*	Student attendance	5.0	25.0%	95.4%	4.8
	Student reenrollment	5.0		90.6%	4.5
	Student retention	5.0		98.5%	4.9
	Teacher retention rate	5.0		100.0%	5.0
	Teacher return rate	5.0		100.0%	5.0
TOTAL		46.25³⁷			42.5
K5–8TH GRADE SCORECARD PERCENTAGE					91.9%

*Teacher retention and return rates reflect all eligible instructional staff (classroom teachers plus other staff).

³⁶ Includes students who completed both the fall and spring PALS.

³⁷ The WKCE reading and math tests were discontinued after the 2013–14 school year. Therefore, the maximum points possible for the WKCE scorecard measures were subtracted from the total possible points. The scorecard percentage was calculated by dividing the number of points earned by the modified denominator.

Appendix E

Teacher Interview Results

In the spring of 2016, CRC interviewed 14 teachers regarding their reasons for teaching and overall satisfaction with the school. Interviews included 13 Montessori teachers from the lower elementary through adolescent program and an art teacher.

The teachers interviewed had been teaching for an average of 8.9 years. The number of years teaching at Downtown Montessori ranged from one year to 20 years.

Six teachers rated the school's overall progress in contributing to students' academic progress as excellent, seven rated the school's progress as good, and one teacher rated the school's progress as fair.

Six teachers agreed that the school has clear teacher performance assessment processes and half were satisfied with the performance assessment criteria (Table E1).

Table E1 Downtown Montessori Teacher Performance Assessment 2015–16 (N = 14)						
Question	Response					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
This school has a clear teacher performance assessment process	0	6	6	2	0	0
I am satisfied with my school's teacher performance assessment criteria	0	7	5	1	0	1
Student academic performance is an important part of teacher assessment	1	7	2	3	1	0

All staff agreed or strongly agreed that adults at the school respect students and their different points of view; one staff member disagreed that staff encourage all families to become involved in school activities (Table E2).

Table E2 Downtown Montessori School Climate 2015–16 (N = 14)						
Question	Response					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
Adults who work in this school respect students and their different points of view	6	8	0	0	0	0
Staff at this school typically work well with on another	3	10	0	0	0	1
Staff at this school encourage all families to become involved in school activities	4	8	0	1	0	1

When asked to rate the importance of various reasons for continuing to teach at the school, all teachers rated educational methodology, general atmosphere, class size, administrative leadership, and colleagues as somewhat important or very important (Table E3).

Table E3 Reasons for Continuing to Teach at Downtown Montessori 2015–16 (N = 14)					
Reason	Importance				
	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Unimportant	Not at All Important	No Response
Financial considerations	4	9	1	0	0
Educational methodology/curriculum approach	12	2	0	0	0
Age/grade level of students	7	3	4	0	0
Discipline	8	4	2	0	0
General atmosphere	14	0	0	0	0
Class size	9	5	0	0	0
Administrative leadership	10	4	0	0	0
Colleagues	7	7	0	0	0
Students	5	4	2	0	3

CRC asked teachers to rate the school's performance related to class size, materials and equipment, and student assessment plan, as well as shared leadership, professional support and development, and the school's progress toward becoming an excellent school. Areas most often rated as excellent or good included program of instruction, parent/teacher relationships, and your performance as a teacher (Table E4).

Table E4 Downtown Montessori School Performance Rating 2015-16 (N = 14)				
Area	Rating			
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Class size/student-teacher ratio	8	3	2	1
Program of instruction	4	9	1	0
Shared leadership, decision making, and accountability	0	6	7	1
Professional support	2	4	7	1
Progress toward becoming a high-performing school	5	6	3	0
Your students' academic progress	4	7	3	0
Adherence to discipline policy	1	5	4	4
Instructional support	2	4	7	1
Parent/teacher relationships	5	9	0	0
Teacher collaboration to plan learning experiences	5	5	3	1
Parent involvement	3	8	3	0
Your performance as a teacher	3	11	0	0
Administrative staff's performance	2	8	4	0

When asked to name two things they liked most about the school, teachers noted:

- Curriculum;
- Small school;
- The students;
- Teacher autonomy; and
- Parent involvement.

Things teachers liked least about the school included:

- Salary and benefits;
- Lack of a clear and consistent discipline policy;

- Lack of transparency and consideration of teachers' wants and needs in administration's decision making process;
- Lack of assistants in classroom; and
- Poor communication from administration.

Teachers identified poor relationship between teachers and administration and poor salary and benefits as barriers that could affect their decision to remain at the school. Additional comments included that teachers feel unsupported by office staff and administration.

Appendix F

Parent Survey Results

Parent opinions are qualitative in nature and provide a valuable measurement of school performance. To determine parental satisfaction/involvement with and an overall evaluation of the school, each school distributed paper surveys during spring parent-teacher conferences and offered the ability to complete the survey online. CRC made at least two follow-up phone calls to parents who had not completed a survey. If these parents were available and willing, CRC completed the survey over the phone. A total of 113 surveys,³⁸ representing 111 (60.0%) of 185 Downtown Montessori families, were completed and submitted to CRC.

Most parents either agreed or strongly agreed that they are comfortable talking with staff (96.5%), feel welcomed at Downtown Montessori (95.6%), clearly understand the school's academic expectations (89.4%), and the staff recognizes their child(ren)'s strengths and weaknesses (94.6%; Table F1).

Table F1 Downtown Montessori Parent Satisfaction with School 2015–16 (N = 113)												
Factor	Response											
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		No Response	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
I am comfortable talking with the staff	87	77.0%	22	19.5%	2	1.8%	2	1.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
The staff keep me informed about my child's academic performance	65	57.5%	41	36.3%	1	0.9%	5	4.4%	1	0.9%	0	0.0%
I am comfortable with how the staff handles discipline	54	47.8%	40	35.4%	15	13.3%	2	1.8%	0	0.0%	2	1.8%
I am satisfied with the overall performance of the staff	73	64.6%	35	31.0%	1	0.9%	3	2.7%	0	0.0%	1	0.9%
The staff recognize my child's strengths and weaknesses	77	68.1%	30	26.5%	2	1.8%	3	2.7%	1	0.9%	0	0.0%
I feel welcome at my child's school	83	73.5%	25	22.1%	4	3.5%	1	0.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
The staff respond to my worries and concerns	62	54.9%	40	35.4%	6	5.3%	3	2.7%	2	1.8%	0	0.0%
My child and I clearly understand the school's academic expectations	63	55.8%	38	33.6%	4	3.5%	7	6.2%	0	0.0%	1	0.9%

³⁸ For two families, both parents completed the survey and both parents' responses are included in the results.

Table F1 Downtown Montessori Parent Satisfaction with School 2015–16 (N = 113)												
Factor	Response											
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		No Response	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
My child is learning what is needed to succeed in later grades or after high school graduation	69	61.1%	31	27.4%	12	10.6%	1	0.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
My child is safe in school	86	76.1%	22	19.5%	3	2.7%	2	1.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
People in this school treat each other with respect	72	63.7%	35	31.0%	5	4.4%	1	0.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
The school offers a variety of courses and afterschool activities to keep my child interested	20	17.7%	31	27.4%	32	28.3%	25	22.1%	4	3.5%	1	0.9%

The second measure examined the extent to which parents engaged in educational activities while at home. During a typical week, most or many parents of younger children (K4 through fifth grades) read to or with their children (96.1%); worked on homework with their children (82.4%); and/or participated in activities such as sports, library visits, or museum visits with their children (87.3%; Table F2).

Table F2 Downtown Montessori Parent Participation in Activities K4–5th Grade 2015–16 (N = 102)								
Activity	Response							
	Never		Monthly		Weekly		No Response	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Read with or to your child(ren)	0	0.0%	4	3.9%	98	96.1%	0	0.0%
Encourage the use of phones, tablets, or computers for learning	8	7.8%	18	17.6%	76	74.5%	0	0.0%
Work on arithmetic or math	3	2.9%	14	13.7%	84	82.4%	1	1.0%
Work on homework	11	10.8%	6	5.9%	84	82.4%	1	1.0%
Participate together in activities outside of school	2	2.0%	11	10.8%	89	87.3%	0	0.0%

Parents of older children (sixth through eighth grades) engaged in similar activities during the week. For example, at least once a week, 88.9% of 18 parents monitored homework completion; 88.9% encouraged the use of phones, tablets, or computers to do research; and 83.3% participated in activities outside of school with them (Table F3).

Table F3 Downtown Montessori Parent Participation in Activities 6th – 8th Grades 2015–16 (N = 18)								
Activity	Response							
	Never		Monthly		Weekly		No Response	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Monitor homework completion	0	0.0%	2	11.1%	16	88.9%	0	0.0%
Encourage the use of phones, tablets, or computers to do research	0	0.0%	2	11.1%	16	88.9%	0	0.0%
Participate together in activities outside of school	1	5.6%	2	11.1%	15	83.3%	0	0.0%
Discuss with your child his/her progress toward graduation	0	0.0%	3	16.7%	15	83.3%	0	0.0%
Discuss plans for education after graduation	2	11.1%	4	22.2%	12	66.7%	0	0.0%

Parental satisfaction was also evident in the following results.

- Almost all (96.5%) parents would recommend this school to other parents.
- Most parents (91.2%) will send their child to the school next year. Six (5.3%) parents said they will not send their child to the school next year, and three (2.7%) were not sure.
- When asked to rate the school's overall contribution to their child's learning, a majority (96.5%) of parents rated the school's contribution as excellent or good.

When asked what they liked most about the school, responses included:

- Passionate and responsive staff;
- School's and staff's approach to learning;
- Size of the school and classrooms;
- Classroom environment; and
- School's community.

When asked what they like least about the school, several responses included:

- Lack of extracurricular activities; and
- Lack of community space or gym.

Appendix G

Student Survey Results

At the end of the school year, 25 students in seventh and eighth grades completed an online survey about their school. Responses were generally positive.

- Most (88%) of students indicated that they used computers at school.
- About three-quarters (76.0%) of students said that teachers help them succeed in school.
- Twenty (80.0%) students said they had improved their reading ability and 23 (92.0%) students said that their math abilities had improved.
- The majority (76.0%) of students said teachers talk with them about high school plans (Table G).

Table G Downtown Montessori Student Survey 2015–16 (N = 25)					
Question	Answer				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I like my school.	1	9	12	1	2
My reading/writing skills have improved.	10	10	4	1	0
My math skills have improved.	13	10	1	0	1
I regularly use computers/tablets in my school work.	13	9	2	1	0
The school rules are fair.	3	8	11	3	0
The teachers at my school help me to succeed in school.	8	11	4	2	0
I like being in school.	1	9	12	1	2
I feel safe in school.	6	10	8	1	0
The grades I get on classwork, homework, and report cards are fair.	7	9	8	1	0
My school has afterschool activities.	9	9	5	2	0
My teachers talk with me about high school plans.	4	15	4	2	0
Students at my school respect each other and their different points of view.	0	5	8	10	2
Teachers at my school respect students.	3	8	10	3	1
The students at my school respect each other and their different points of view.	3	12	6	3	1

When asked what they liked best about the school, students said:

- Their freedom and independence;
- The school and class size that allows them to know people and have a sense of community; and
- The learning environment and Montessori Method.

When asked what they liked least, students said they disliked the firewalls on the computer because many websites are blocked, which make it difficult to do research.

Appendix H

Board Interview Results

Board member opinions are qualitative in nature and provide valuable, although subjective, insight regarding school performance and organizational competency. Downtown Montessori's board of directors consists of seven members: a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer and three additional directors. All seven participated in a phone interview conducted by CRC staff.

The board members have served on the board from three to 20-plus years, with an average of seven years. The backgrounds of the board members include education, accounting and financial experience, law, and business/marketing.

One board member said he/she participates in strategic planning for the school. All seven received a presentation on the school's annual academic performance report, received and approved the school's annual budget, and reviewed the school's annual financial audit. All seven reported that the board uses data to make decisions regarding the school. On a scale of poor to excellent, all seven board members rated the school as excellent overall.

Table H Downtown Montessori Board Member Interview Results 2015–16 (N = 7)					
Performance Measure	Response				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teacher-student ratio/class size at this school is appropriate.	3	4	0	0	0
Program of instruction (includes curriculum, equipment, and building) is consistent with the school's mission.	5	2	0	0	0
Students make significant academic progress at this school.	7	0	0	0	0
The administrator's financial management is transparent and efficient.	5	2	0	0	0
This school is making progress toward becoming a high-performing school.	7	0	0	0	0
This school has strong linkages to the community, including businesses.	2	5	0	0	0
The administrative staff's performance meets the board's expectations.	5	2	0	0	0
The majority of the board of directors take their varied responsibilities seriously.	5	2	0	0	0
This school has the financial resources to fulfill its mission.	5	2	0	0	0
The environment of this school ensures the safety of its students and staff.	5	2	0	0	0

When asked what they liked most about the school, the board members mentioned:

- Dedicated teachers and administrators;
- Positive learning environment; and
- Class sizes.

Regarding things they like least, the board members mentioned:

- Lack of physical space;
- No gym; and
- Lack of organized sports.

When asked for one suggestion for improving the school, board members said:

- Procure a larger facility;
- Develop a method for teachers to feel comfortable expressing feelings to board members; and
- Continue the new strategic planning process.

Additional comments encompassed that faculty should be included when looking for a new school leader.