

2019–2020 Programmatic Profile and Educational Performance

September 2020



Downtown Montessori Academy

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This report includes text from Downtown Montessori’s parent/student 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 2019–20

This is the 22nd annual report on the operation of Downtown Montessori Academy, one of seven schools chartered by the City of Milwaukee during the 2019–20 school year. 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).

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic that resulted in Wisconsin school closures from March 13, 2020, through the end of the school year, data available for this report are more limited than usual. Therefore, the overall academic achievements described in the report should not be compared with the outcomes of previous years. Detailed descriptions about differences from previous years will be reported in each of the affected sections of the report.

CRC has determined the following, based on the information gathered and discussed in the report.

I. CONTRACT COMPLIANCE SUMMARY

Downtown Montessori met all 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 of Educational Progress

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 help teachers develop strategies to improve students’ academic performance. This year, Downtown Montessori’s progress on local measures could be calculated only for individualized education program (IEP) goals because end-of-year local measures for reading, writing, and math could not be uniformly administered due to school closure. Fall data on other local measures can be found in the report. The outcome for the IEP goal follows.

Special Education

The school's local measure goal for special education was that students would meet at least 75% of their IEP goals at the time of their annual review. This year, 56.3% of the students met this goal, declining from 62.5% the previous year.

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

Because of the early school closures, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) withdrew the requirement for schools to administer any standardized tests. Therefore, Downtown Montessori could not administer standardized tests required in its contract with the City of Milwaukee.

C. CSRC School Scorecard

Due to limited data available to examine student progress, the CSRC scorecard contains partial outcome data this year. The CSRC has determined that it will not use the scorecard to guide its decision about Downtown Montessori's school status for the next school year, and the school's score should not be compared with the score for any previous year. Downtown Montessori scored 88.0% of the 31.25 possible scorecard points.

III. SURVEY/INTERVIEW RESULTS

Every other year, CRC collects feedback from parents, students, board members, and teachers to assess their perceptions of the school. Teacher interviews and student surveys were not conducted due to the school closure. Parent surveys and board interviews were conducted, and the results are summarized in this report, including the following highlights.

Parent surveys representing 134 (67.3%) of 199 families were completed.

- Almost all (98.5%) parents rated the school's overall performance in contributing to their child's learning as "excellent" or "good."
- Nearly all (98.5%) would recommend this school to other parents.

- Parents' favorite characteristics included the sense of community and positive atmosphere, classroom size, and school staff.
- The least favorite characteristics were lack of extracurricular activities, limited space, lack of communication from school leadership, and lack of diversity.

Board interviews were conducted with six of the seven members.

- All (100.0%) reported that the board received a presentation of the school's annual academic performance report.
- The main suggestions for school improvement were to acquire more space to add facilities, execute the school's strategic plan, and continue to improve benefits to attract high-quality teachers.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Downtown Montessori addressed the recommendations from its 2018–19 programmatic profile and educational performance report. On the basis of the results of 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 2020–21 school year.

- Develop and implement a virtual Montessori program.
- Develop staff knowledge and strengths in virtual learning.
- Continue to focus staff training on trauma-sensitive schools.
- Continue to focus on improving accuracy of monitoring data.

V. RECOMMENDATION FOR ONGOING MONITORING AND REPORTING

This report covers the 22nd year of Downtown Montessori's operation as a City of Milwaukee charter school. Downtown Montessori has consistently complied with past contract requirements, and this year it has met all of the applicable contract requirements. Based on contract compliance as well as the school's trend data, the recommendation from CRC is 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 and the NCCD Children's Research Center (CRC). It is one component of the program that the Charter School Review Committee (CSRC) uses to monitor performance of all city-chartered schools.

To produce this report, CRC:

- Conducted an initial school visit to collect information related to contract requirements and to draft a learning memo for the new school year as well as conduct a year-end interview to review progress on recommendations and changes that occurred during the year;
- Visited the school throughout the year to observe classrooms and overall school operations;
- Surveyed parents and interviewed board members to gather feedback about the school (teacher interviews and student surveys could not be conducted due to school closure);
- Attended a school board of directors meeting, along with CSRC representatives, to provide an update regarding compliance with the City of Milwaukee's academic expectations and contract requirements; and
- Collected and analyzed data submitted by the school to complete an annual report.

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.

A. Description and Philosophy of Educational Methodology¹

1. Mission

Downtown Montessori's mission is to create a Montessori environment where each child's early experiences with learning will help him or her to become a self-confident, competent, cooperative adult. The philosophy is based on the belief that children learn best when they are at ease and comfortable. The key is to see the hidden nature of the child at given stages of development and to design an environment that will fulfill the child's innate potential.

2. Instructional Design

Downtown Montessori delivers a valid Montessori program as interpreted by the Association Montessori Internationale or the American Montessori Society. 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.

¹ The parent/student handbook for 2017–18 was used again for 2019–20. An updated handbook will be ready for the 2020–21 school year.

B. School Structure

1. Leadership and Board of Directors²

The school's leadership includes a head of school, assistant head of school, and executive director who all manage the school's day-to-day activities.

The Downtown Montessori Academy Board of Directors provides strategic leadership in support of the school's mission, philosophy, and goals. Again this year, the board 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 head of school to ensure the school's program and operation are faithful to the terms of the charter and that the school is a viable organization.

The board met with the CSRC program analyst and the CRC program specialist regarding a general update, including recent information from the City of Milwaukee and general roles and responsibilities of board members.

This year, CRC conducted phone interviews with six (85.7%) of the seven board members. All six rated the school as good or excellent overall. They all reported that they participated in strategic planning, received a presentation on the school's annual academic performance, and reviewed the annual budget and financial audit. Three things most liked by the board members were the dedication of all faculty and staff, strong leadership, and warm and welcoming environment. Suggestions for improvement included acquiring more space to add facilities,

² Information comes from the fall and spring interviews with school leadership and the school's website, <http://downtownmontessori.com>.

executing the school's strategic plan, and continuing to improve benefits to attract high-quality teachers. See Appendix E for more interview results.

2. Areas of Instruction³

Downtown Montessori is divided into four levels of programming. The Children's House contains the Montessori primary program, which is open to children ages 3 to 6 and covers grades K3, K4, and K5.⁴ Children's House students begin to acquire knowledge through the Montessori Curriculum, which includes five areas of study: practical life, sensorial learning, language, mathematics, and culture (science, history, geography, arts, and music). Students also participate in physical education, and the 5-year-old students also participate in the Urban Ecology Center's Neighborhood Environmental Education Program (NEEP).

The lower elementary program is designed for first through third graders. The school day allows for blocks of concentrated work (individually, in pairs, or in small groups) in the Montessori Curriculum. Downtown Montessori uses Scholastic's Guided Reading Program and Writing Workshop. Lower elementary students also participate in physical education, art, music, and NEEP.

The upper elementary program is open to fourth through sixth graders. Materials and group activities develop individual and collaborative skills in biology, math, language, history,

³ Information from the school's website can be found at <https://downtownmontessori.com/academics>.

⁴ Students who turn 5 on or before September 1 may attend full-day Montessori sessions. Students who turn 4 on or before September 1 may attend a half- or full-day program for 4-year-olds; this program consists of half-day Montessori and half-day childcare. The charter school program does not include 4-year-olds.

geography, music, and visual arts. Upper elementary students also participate in physical education and NEEP.

The adolescent program, for seventh and eighth graders, is an integrative and projects-based learning environment designed to meet students' social, emotional, and intellectual needs. Each week, students participate in math, language arts, humanities, occupations, academic writing, human growth and development, book group, coffee shop, in-school and out-of-school community service, class council, restorative justice, student-led clubs, art, music, and physical education.

This year, the school began a fee-based toddler program for children 2½ to 3 years old. This program is designed to support children building independence and self-confidence, serving as a bridge between the child's home and future K3 Montessori classroom.

Downtown Montessori uses general personal computers. Fourth- through eighth-grade students are provided with their own Chromebook. The school's internet use policy requires parent and student signatures on an elementary/adolescent student computer-use contract. The school uses Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and Skyward to collect student data and data related to academic progress.

The school provided enrichment activities through programs at the Urban Ecology Center, the Milwaukee Art Museum's Junior Docent School Program, and STARBASE Wisconsin, an interactive academic program that helps youth increase their STEM knowledge. Afterschool activities this year included soccer, basketball, Spanish club, garden club, and Girl Scouts.

During the interview and survey process, board members were asked about the school's program of instruction. All six agreed or strongly agreed that the program of instruction is consistent with the school's mission.

3. Classrooms

During the 2019–20 academic year, the school consisted of 12 classrooms: four Children's House classrooms for 3- to 6-year-olds (K3 through K5), 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 on the second floor of the former convent on the premises—has been renovated for classroom and meeting space. Each classroom can hold about 26 students.

All board members agreed that the teacher-student ratio at Downtown Montessori was appropriate. Parents indicated that they appreciate how the small classroom size allows for more individualized education and pace of learning.

4. Teacher Information

The school employed 22 instructional staff and nine teaching assistants during the school year. Instructional staff was made up of 14 classroom teachers, one of whom also acted as assistant head of school; a special education director; two part-time social workers; a reading interventionist; a part-time school psychologist; a part-time literacy teacher; a visual arts teacher;

and a Response to Intervention (RTI) math teacher.⁵ Four classroom teachers taught at the Children's House, four taught lower elementary, three taught upper elementary, two taught the adolescent program, and a full-time classroom substitute teacher covered for others. Teaching assistants were used as needed throughout the school. All 22 instructional staff started and completed the school year, resulting in a retention rate of 100.0%.

At the end of the 2018–19 school year, 20 instructional staff (12 classroom teachers and eight other instructional staff) were employed by the school and eligible to return in the fall of 2019. All but one eligible instructional staff returned in the fall of 2019, resulting in a return rate of 95.0%.

All instructional staff held Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) licenses. All classroom teachers held Montessori certifications.

The *Downtown Montessori Academy Employee Handbook*, revised in March 2020, explains that informal performance evaluation is ongoing. A formal performance evaluation occurs once per year and includes classroom observation and a performance review with the head of school, the executive director, and the teacher.

Regarding professional development, Downtown Montessori continued to focus on team building to support the school community. This work was done with the help of a facilitator—same as the prior year—to work on productivity, teamwork, and communication. Additional professional development included study group work meetings throughout the year; an in-service on trauma-sensitive classrooms; work on the development of printed materials that

⁵ The school contracted with MJ Cares for the services of a speech pathologist and, if needed, an occupational therapist. If physical therapy or vision-related services are needed, the school uses First Aid through the Cooperative Educational Service Agency. If nursing care is needed, the school uses First Aid.

integrate Montessori skills with the Common Core State Standards; a book club discussion, facilitated by an occupational therapist, of *The Out-of-Sync Child*; and regular update training for CPR.

Parents were asked about the school's staff. Almost all (97.1%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I am comfortable talking with the staff," and 95.7% agreed or strongly agreed that they are satisfied with overall staff performance. Nearly all (96.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that people in this school treat each other with respect.

5. School Hours and Calendar

The school posted its 2019–20 calendar on its website. A printed calendar also was available in the school's office. The hours of school operation for this year were 8:45 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. each day for K3 and K4, and 8:40 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. for K5 through eighth grades.

6. Parent Involvement

As described in the parent/student handbook, Downtown Montessori seeks and relies on the energy and spirit of 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 the school's prior experience, shows 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.⁶ All parents of enrolled students are members.

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

Most (92.7%) parents agreed or strongly agreed that staff keep them informed about their child's academic performance, and 91.2% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the staff responds to their worries and concerns.

7. Discipline Policy

The school's code of conduct and discipline policy from the parent/student handbook indicates that when dealing with discipline, it is important for all involved adults to deal with the problem the same way. The method of corrective discipline endorsed by Downtown Montessori

⁶ The Parent Engagement Network is fully described in the parent/student handbook.

is to redirect a student to other activities upon the student's engaging in activity contrary to established rules. The Montessori Method encourages students to make choices and be responsible for their 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.

The school does not tolerate student behavior that is disruptive, disrespectful, cruel, or unsafe to the student (themselves) or others in the teacher and program director's judgment. Interventions are formulated based on the principles of respect for the student; knowledge and understanding of the student's developmental needs and characteristics; knowledge of 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 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 procedures for reporting, investigation, prevention, management, nonviolent communication, and student support.

The parent survey included questions on the school's disciplinary process. Most (89.1%) of the parents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they feel comfortable with how the staff handle discipline.

8. Graduation and High School Information

All 17 eighth graders graduated. In the fall, school staff informed students and parents of high school options, testing requirements, early admission, and other sign-up dates throughout the year. At the fall parent-teacher conferences, school staff discussed high school options and what the students were interested in pursuing. Staff held individual discussions by request. School staff assisted students with required admission essays. At this time, individual Downtown Montessori graduates plan to attend Pius, Rufus King, Reagan, Wauwatosa East, Oak Creek, University School, Tenor, Salam School, Thomas More, and St. Francis. Seven students were undecided at the time of this report.

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

C. Student Population

Because of school closure, enrollment information is based on information known about students enrolled any time from September 20, 2019, through Friday, March 13, 2020.

Downtown Montessori started the school year with 313 students in K3 through eighth grade.⁷ By the end of the year, two more students had enrolled, and four had withdrawn. To protect student identity, CRC does not include results for groups of fewer than 10 students; there were too few withdrawals this year to provide reasons.⁸ Of the students who began the year, 309 (98.7%) remained enrolled on March 13, 2020 (the date of school closure). Note that 2019–20 retention rates cannot be compared with previous school years.

At the time of school closure, 311 students were enrolled.

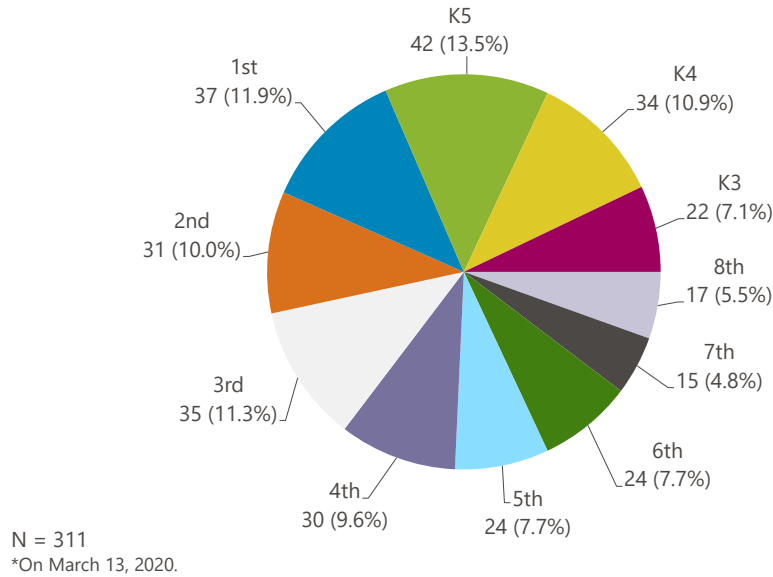
- Of these, 211 (67.8%) students were white, 53 (17.0%) were Latinx, 27 (8.7%) were Black or African American, 14 (4.5%) were Asian, three (1.0%) were American Indian/Alaska Native, and three (1.0%) were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.
- There were 163 (52.4%) girls and 148 (47.6%) boys.
- A total of 17 (5.5%) students had special education needs. Twelve had speech and language needs, four had other health impairment, one had specific learning disabilities, and one had an emotional and behavioral disorder.⁹
- There were 46 (14.8%) students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.
- There were 98 students in the Children’s House, 103 in lower elementary, 78 in upper elementary, and 32 in the adolescent program (Figure 1).

⁷ As of September 20, 2019. The third Friday of September is considered the beginning of the school year for student tracking purposes.

⁸ Withdrawals that occurred after March 13, 2020, are not reflected in these counts.

⁹ One student had needs in both specific learning disabilities and other health impairment.

Figure 1
Downtown Montessori Academy
Enrollment by Student Grade Level*
2019–20



On the last day of the 2018–19 academic year, 287 students attending Downtown Montessori were eligible for continued enrollment for 2019–20 (i.e., they did not graduate). Of these, 271 were enrolled in the school on the third Friday in September 2019. This represents a return rate of 94.4%, slightly higher than the return rate of 91.4% in the fall of 2018.

D. Activities for Continuous School Improvement

The following is Downtown Montessori’s response to the activities recommended in the programmatic profile and educational performance report for the 2018–19 academic year. At that time, the recommendation was that the school continue a focused improvement plan by implementing the following activities during the 2019–20 school year. Each recommendation and response by the school follows.

- Recommendation: Increase the support for teachers to meet the needs of their diverse learners, especially with new staff.

Response: The school instituted formal teacher study groups. The teachers at each level met monthly. The meetings were facilitated by school leaders, with additional suggestions from other teachers toward the end of the meetings.

In addition, school leadership (head of school, assistant head of school, and the special education director) met with groups of teachers every Wednesday to discuss students' individual needs. These leaders also met with classroom assistants to help them share ideas with each other.

- Recommendation: Provide more professional development to improve the integration of the Montessori approach with Common Core.

Response: School staff developed printed materials that integrate Montessori skills with Common Core. An outline of how to integrate the two was prepared and discussed among all staff.

- Recommendation: Improve the understanding and implementation of RTI.

Response: As described earlier, the study groups included a discussion of the need to provide specific interventions for struggling students. These included students who were not yet identified as needing a special education evaluation but required data collection on the efficacy of interventions being tried. With the presence of the special education director, RTI was fully integrated into their data-driven approach.

- Recommendation: Develop and deliver targeted English language arts (ELA) services for students who scored below proficiency on the Wisconsin Forward Exam.

Response: These few students received extra help from the teaching assistants under the guidance of the Montessori teacher. Again, specific tasks were developed and tracked to show student improvement or the need for more specialized services. Unfortunately, progress of these students from year to year was not assessed due to the lack of spring 2020 testing.

- Recommendation: Improve targeted services for students with special education needs to improve the local measure results.

Response: This year, the school hired a full-time, experienced special education director who, in addition to providing direct services to special education students, worked with classroom teachers to improve general instruction in the classroom. The special education director also improved the entire individualized education program (IEP) process.

- Recommendation: Improve the use of the data addendum and the accuracy of student identification numbers by all staff, including teachers, when completing the spreadsheets that will be sent to CRC at the end of the year.

Response: The school worked on this, and although there was some improvement, many of the identification numbers that were wrong last year continued to be wrong this year. Some of the assessment scores needed correcting, the school was missing records for the students who withdrew, and attendance data were missing/mislabeled (days attended was substituted with days of excused absences). The analyst could deduce the attendance days, but it required assuming the other data were correct. The school was very quick and responsive to follow up with the other corrections.

After reviewing the information in this report, and in consultation with the school's leader at the end-of-year interview in May 2020, CRC recommends the following activities for the 2020–21 school year.

- Develop and implement a virtual Montessori program.
- Develop staff knowledge and strengths in virtual learning.
- Continue to focus staff training on trauma-sensitive schools.
- Continue to focus on improving accuracy of monitoring data.

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-teacher 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 goals for attendance, parent-teacher conferences, and special education record-keeping. 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) assessment and 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%. This rate includes all students enrolled at any time during the school year and up until the last day of in-person attendance (March 13, 2020). "Present" was defined as being present for at least half the day. The school achieved this goal, with students present on average 94.2% of the time this year.¹⁰ When excused absences were included, the attendance rate rose to 100.0%.

By policy, Downtown Montessori does not suspend students.

B. Parent-Teacher Conferences

At the beginning of the academic year, the school established a goal for parents of all students to participate in scheduled parent-teacher conferences, which may occur in person or by phone. This year, the school scheduled two conference sessions: one in the fall and one in the spring. Spring conferences were not held this year due to school closure. Data reflect

¹⁰ Attendance rate is based on all 301 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.

participation in the fall conference. Except for the parents of one student who enrolled in mid-October, parents of all students (100.0%) enrolled at the time of the conferences attended. Therefore, the school has met its goal related to parent-teacher conferences.

C. Special Education Student Records

This year, the school established a goal to develop and maintain records for all special education students, including those who were evaluated but not eligible for services. During the year, 22 students received special education services. One received an initial evaluation and was found ineligible for services. Four of the students were reevaluated during the current year and, as a result of those evaluations, were dismissed from special education services.¹¹ An IEP was developed for 15 of the 17 new or returning special education students who required one.¹²

In addition, CRC typically reviews a representative number of files in the spring. Because of school closure, CRC could not conduct the reviews this year.

D. Local Measures of Educational Performance

Charter schools, by their definition and nature, are autonomous schools with curricula reflecting 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

¹¹ One student's reevaluation date was postponed due to the pandemic.

¹² One student's annual IEP was postponed due to the pandemic, and another student's IEP is scheduled to be completed in August. Another student had two IEPs conducted: The annual IEP was reviewed in October, and a follow-up IEP was conducted in January; however, the current IEP year started in October 2019.

¹² One student's annual IEP was postponed due to the pandemic, and another student's IEP is scheduled to be completed in August. Another student had two IEPs conducted: The annual IEP was reviewed in October, and a follow-up IEP was conducted in January; however, the current IEP year started in October 2019.

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's expectation is that, at a minimum, schools establish local measures in literacy (i.e., reading), writing, math, and special education. Because of school closure as a result of the pandemic, academic progress from fall to spring could not be measured for reading, math, and writing. However, special education progress was measured, as annual IEPs could be held virtually if the scheduled dates were after the school closure. All of the local measure assessments administered in the fall are indicated in this report.

Results for K3 through K5 are not part of the overall local measure score for the CSRC scorecard because of the students' young age; these results are combined below. Where available, 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 Montessori Progress reports in K3 through K5 to track students' progress on the following skills in these five areas.

- 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”¹³ on each skill in each of the five areas. This year, the school established a goal that K3 through K5 students who attended all year would be proficient or show improvement (i.e., presented to practiced, practiced to improving, or presented to improving) in grade-level skills in literacy and math. Students who were initially proficient would maintain proficiency.

While the school set local measures for all areas mentioned above, progress data were not available in literacy (language) and math (mathematical development) due to the school closure. Fall results were submitted for 98 K3 through K5 students who attended at the time of fall testing.¹⁴ Table 1 indicates that the school conducted the fall assessment of K3 through K5 students using the Scholastic progress reports. The results in Table 1 are reported for students who were at the presented or practiced range and at the improving or proficient range for each math and literacy skill assessed in the fall of 2019.

¹³ The school’s learning memo equates “proficient” with “mastered.”

¹⁴ Data for one student who withdrew in December are not included.

Table 1 Downtown Montessori Academy K3 – K5 Students Fall Math and Literacy Assessment Fall 2019 N = 98				
	Presented or Practiced		Improving or Proficient	
Skill	Students	%	Students	%
Math				
Skill 1	38	38.8%	60	61.2%
Skill 2	31	31.6%	67	68.4%
Skill 3	54	55.1%	44	44.9%
Skill 4	59	60.2%	39	39.8%
Skill 5	51	52.0%	47	48.0%
Literacy				
Skill 1	56	57.1%	42	42.9%
Skill 2	69	70.4%	29	29.6%
Skill 3	37	37.8%	61	62.2%
Skill 4	67	68.4%	31	31.6%
Skill 5	61	62.2%	37	37.8%

2. Literacy for First Through Third Grades

This year, first- through third-grade students were administered a grade-level Fountas and Pinnell passage by the end of September 2019, with the intent of being assessed again in May 2020. The score consisted of a grade-level score with the whole number as the grade and the decimal as the month (e.g., fourth grade, third month of instruction = 4.3).

The school established the following goals.

- At least 75.0% of students below grade level in the fall would gain at least half a grade level (0.5) on the spring Fountas and Pinnell.

- At least 80.0% of the students who are at their current grade level in the fall (e.g., a fourth-grade student in the fall at or above 4.1) would gain at least half a grade level (0.5) at the time of the spring test.
- Any student scoring at least one grade level above the student's current grade level in the fall would maintain above-grade-level status in the spring (e.g., a fourth-grade student must have a score of 5.1 or higher to be above grade level).

Because of school closure, spring scores were not available this year, so progress from fall to spring could not be determined. A total of 102 first- through third-grade students took the literacy assessment in the fall, of which 87 (85.3%) were at or above grade level (Table 2).¹⁵

Table 2 Downtown Montessori Academy 1st – 3rd Grade Students Grade-Level Literacy Score With Respect to Current Grade Fall 2019 N = 102		
Fall Status	Students	%
Below Grade Level	15	14.7%
At Grade Level	73	71.6%
Above Grade Level	14	13.7%

3. Literacy for Fourth Through Eighth Grades

Literacy skills for students in fourth through eighth grades were measured in fall using the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI). QRI helps teachers assess student skills in a variety of areas. All students in fourth through eighth grades were administered components of the QRI in the fall of 2019 (no later than November) and were intended to be assessed again in the spring of 2020. Student scores for all subtests are averaged and result in a QRI-tested grade

¹⁵ One student who was eligible to take the assessment did not take it.

level and a functional level of learning for that tested grade level (frustration, instructional, or independent) for the fall and spring assessments. The intention was that progress would be measured by comparing the fall functional level with the spring functional level. Expectations for functional level advancement were based on whether the student was below, at, or above grade level at the time of the fall test. Expectations for each grade level status/functional level are shown in Table 3. The school's goal was that at least 90.0% of students would make progress as described in the table.

Table 3			
Spring Goals Based on the Fall Grade Level and Functional Level Status			
Fall Functional Level	Fall Grade Level Status		
	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level	Above Grade Level
Frustration	Frustration at the next grade level	Independent at the same grade level	Maintain above-grade-level status, regardless of functional level
Instructional	Instructional at the next grade level	Independent at the same grade level	
Independent	Independent at the next grade level	Instructional at the next grade level	

Because of school closure, spring scores were not available this year, so progress from fall to spring could not be determined. Of 110 students assessed in the fall, 44 (40.0%) were at the Independent level, and 109 (99.1%) were at grade level.

4. Writing Skills for First Through Eighth Graders

Students were assessed on two or more of the Six Traits of Writing. First through third graders focused on organization and conventions; fourth through sixth graders focused on sentence fluency, organization, ideas, and conventions; and seventh and eighth graders focused

on word choice, organization, ideas, sentence fluency, voice, and conventions. Student skills on each trait were assessed on a five-point rubric (1 = experimenting, 2 = emerging, 3 = developing, 4 = capable, and 5 = experienced), and the total for all traits was averaged and converted into an overall writing level. The school set a goal that all students who received an average score below 4 in the fall would increase their overall average score by 0.5 on a second writing sample taken in May 2020, and students with an average of 4.0 or higher in the fall would score 4.0 or higher in the spring.

This year, 213 first- through eighth-grade students were tested in the fall. Sixty students (28.2%) received a 4.0 or higher, and the remaining 153 (71.8%) averaged below 4.0 in the fall. Because of school closure, spring scores were not available this year, so progress from fall to spring could not be determined.

5. Math Skills for First Through Sixth Graders

First- through sixth-grade students were rated on a number of Montessori sequential math skills, supplemented by at least three grade-level Common Core math skills not reflected in the Montessori sequence. Each math skill was rated as Minimal: Needs Support; Basic: Progressing; Proficient: Meets Expectation; and Advanced: Mastery. The school's goal was that all students enrolled for the year would maintain proficiency (if proficient or above in the fall) or show improvement in at least three (60.0%) out of five grade-level math skills. Because of school closure, spring scores were not available this year, so progress from fall to spring could not be determined.

Scores were provided for 182 first through sixth graders who took the assessment in the fall. Of those students, 68 (37.4%) were proficient or advanced in three out of five skills (Table 4).

Table 4 Downtown Montessori Academy Math 1st – 6th Grades Fall 2019			
Students	Grade	Proficient or Advanced in Three Out of Five Goals	% Met Goal
1st	37	13	35.1%
2nd	32	16	50.0%
3rd	35	24	68.6%
4th	30	10	33.3%
5th	24	Cannot report due to n size*	
6th	24	Cannot report due to n size*	
Total	182	68	37.4%

*Fewer than 10 students proficient or advanced in three out of five skills.

6. Math Skills for Seventh and Eighth Graders

Math progress for seventh and eighth graders was examined using MobyMax, which results in a grade-level equivalency based on Common Core standards. Grade level is established when a student demonstrates proficiency in required grade-level standards using a 75.0% threshold. By the end of spring, 80.0% of the seventh- and eighth-grade students who tested at or below grade level in the fall were expected to improve at least half of a grade level. Students above grade level in the fall were expected to maintain above-grade-level status in the spring.

Because of school closure, spring scores were not available this year, so progress from fall to spring could not be determined. Of the 32 students tested, 14 (43.8%) were above grade level in the fall.

7. 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 with active IEPs who had been at the school for one entire IEP year would demonstrate progress toward meeting at least 75.0% of their total IEP goals at 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.) There were 16 students with active IEPs for an entire calendar year at the school,¹⁶ and nine (56.3%) met or exceeded 75.0% of their IEP goals at the time of the annual review or reevaluation, falling short of the goal.

E. External Standardized Measures of Educational Performance

DPI requires all schools to administer a DPI-approved reading achievement test to K4 through second-grade students. In 2016, the CSRC selected the PALS assessment for students in first and second grade at all city-chartered schools; Downtown Montessori also chose PALS to meet the DPI requirement for students in K4 and K5.

¹⁶ CRC asked the school to indicate whether or not the student was there for a full IEP year. Of the 16 with annual IEP reviews, the school indicated that one student was not there for a full IEP year, but goals were reviewed. All of the 16 students were included in last year's data. One student with IEP goals reviewed was missing the response to this field.

For students in third through eighth grades, DPI requires the Wisconsin Forward Exam. These tests and results are described in the following sections.

1. PALS¹⁷

The PALS assessment aligns with both the Common Core English standards and the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards. It is available in three versions: PALS-PreK for K4 students, PALS-K for K5 students, and PALS Plus for first and second graders.

a. *PALS-PreK*

PALS-PreK includes five required tasks (name writing, uppercase alphabet recognition, beginning sound awareness, print and word awareness, and nursery rhyme awareness). Two additional tasks (lowercase alphabet recognition and letter sounds) are completed only by students who reach an adequate score on the uppercase alphabet task. Schools can choose whether to administer the nursery rhyme awareness task. Because that task is optional, CRC did not report data on nursery rhyme awareness.

PALS-PreK does not have a summed score benchmark because the purpose is to learn 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. Although the spring developmental ranges relate to expected development by the time of the spring semester, CRC typically applies the spring ranges to both test administrations to see

¹⁷ Information about the PALS assessments comes from <https://palsresource.info/wisconsin> and <https://pals.virginia.edu>. For more information, visit those sites.

whether more students were at or above the range for each test by the spring administration.

This year, the spring developmental range was applied to the fall scores simply as a benchmark, but it is important to note that these are meant to be used only on the spring assessment, and it is not the expectation that k4 students are to be at this range in the fall.

A total of 35 K4 students completed the PALS-PreK in the fall; these results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Downtown Montessori Academy PALS-PreK for K4 Students Students' Fall Scores at or Above the Spring Developmental Range Fall 2019 N = 35		
Task	Students	%
Name writing	23	65.7%
Uppercase alphabet recognition	17	48.6%
Lowercase alphabet recognition ¹⁸	14*	87.5%
Letter sounds ¹⁹	12†	92.3%
Beginning sound awareness	33	94.3%
Print and word awareness	28	80.0%
Rhyme awareness	28	80.0%

*Of 16 qualified students who completed this task in the fall.

†Of 13 qualified students who completed this task in the fall.

¹⁸ Students who score 16 or higher on the uppercase alphabet recognition task complete the lowercase alphabet recognition task. One student completed the lowercase task in the fall despite not scoring 16 or higher on the uppercase alphabet recognition task; this student is not included in the results.

¹⁹ Students who score 9 or higher on the lowercase alphabet recognition task complete the letter sounds task. Two students completed the letter sounds task in the fall despite not scoring 9 or higher on the lowercase alphabet recognition task or a 16 or higher on the preceding uppercase alphabet task. Another student did not take the assessment even though the student qualified. These students are not included in the results.

b. *PALS-K and PALS Plus*

The PALS-K and PALS Plus are administered in the fall and spring semesters. Because of school closure, the spring assessments were not completed this year. Of 111 students in K5 through second grade, 100 (90.1%) were at their fall benchmark on the PALS assessment.

Table 6		
Downtown Montessori Academy		
K5 – 2nd Grade Students Who Met PALS Fall Benchmark		
Grade	Students	%
K5	39	92.9%
1st grade	32	86.5%
2nd grade	29	90.6%

2. Wisconsin Forward Exam for Third Through Eighth Graders

The Wisconsin Forward Exam was implemented as the state’s standardized test for ELA and math for third through eighth graders; science for fourth and eighth graders; and social studies for fourth, eighth, and tenth graders. Scores for each test are translated into one of four levels: advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic. The exam is administered in the spring of each school year. Schools were not required to administer the exam in the 2019–20 school year due to school closures as a result of the pandemic.

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 expectations apply to all students with scores in consecutive years. Students in K4 through second grade take the PALS reading assessment. The

PALS summed score benchmark indicates when a student requires additional reading assistance, not that the student is reading at grade level. Additionally, there are three versions of the test, with different formats, sections, and scoring. Because only students who are in first and second grade during two consecutive years complete the same version of the test, CRC typically examines only year-to-year results for a cohort of students who were in first grade in the spring of one year and second grade in the spring of the following year. The CSRC's performance expectation is that at least 75.0% of students at or above the summed score benchmark in first grade would remain at or above the summed score benchmark as second graders in the subsequent school year.

Students in third through eighth grade take the Wisconsin Forward Exam in the spring. The exam results from two consecutive school years are typically used to assess student progress. Expectations for year-to-year progress on the exam were adopted by the CSRC for the 2019–20 school year. The CSRC's performance expectation is that at least 60% of fourth through eighth graders who were proficient or advanced in ELA the prior year would maintain proficiency, and at least 50% of fourth through eighth graders who were proficient or advanced in math the prior year would maintain proficiency.

Because of school closure, spring 2020 results were not available, and year-to-year progress could not be assessed.

G. CSRC School Scorecard

In the fall of 2012, after a three-year pilot, the CSRC adopted its first school scorecard. The scorecard included multiple measures of student academic progress, including performance

on standardized tests and local measures and point-in-time academic achievement and engagement elements, such as attendance and student and teacher retention and return rates. Due to significant testing changes, the scorecard was revised, and a second pilot was initiated in 2014–15.

In February 2020, when three years of comparable data on all elements in the second pilot scorecard were available, the CSRC reviewed data trends and made minor modifications to the scoring rubric. The changes place more emphasis on year-to-year student progress and less on point-in-time measures in order to capture a more realistic picture of the school's impact on student growth over time.²⁰ Like the previous versions, the updated scorecard was designed to monitor school improvement from year to year and will be used to guide decisions about a school's status as a city-chartered school for subsequent school years. See Appendix D for detailed information on the revised scorecard.

Because of the early school closures this year, several of the progress measures on the revised scorecard were unavailable for 2019–20. Knowing this in advance of compiling reports for this year, the CSRC decided that the abbreviated scorecard will not be the primary source for making decisions about a school's status for the 2020–21 school year. On the significantly abbreviated scorecard, Downtown Montessori scored 88.0% of the 31.25 possible scorecard points. These results should not be compared with scores in previous or subsequent school years.

²⁰ The CSRC continues to focus on the schools' impact on student achievement over time; therefore, the changes assigned more points to the progress indicators rather than point-in-time assessments. For the elementary scorecard, the year-to-year progress for students below proficiency in ELA and math were increased by 2.5 points, and the point-in-time ELA and math proficiencies were decreased by 2.5 points. For the high school scorecard, the first two items related to Aspire were merged, two items related to grade promotion were given 2.5 extra points, and point-in-time measures on Aspire in English and math were decreased by 2.5 points each.

IV. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report covers the 22nd year of Downtown Montessori's operation as a City of Milwaukee charter school. Downtown Montessori has consistently complied with past contract requirements, and this year it has met all the applicable contract requirements. CRC recommends that Downtown Montessori continue regular, annual academic monitoring and reporting, based on contract compliance as well as the school's trend data.

Appendix A

Contract Compliance Chart

<p style="text-align: center;">Table A</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Downtown Montessori Academy</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Overview of Compliance for Education-Related Contract Provisions</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2019–20</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.	p. 2	Met
Section I, V	The school will provide a copy of the calendar prior to the end of the previous school year.	p. 8	Met
Section I, C	Educational methods.	p. 2	Met
Section I, D	Administration of required standardized tests.	pp. 25–30	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. 17–25	Met
	<u>Academic criterion #2:</u> Year-to-year achievement measures for students who are proficient. 4th – 8th grade students at or above proficient on the Forward Exam in ELA the prior year: 60% will maintain proficiency. a. 4th – 8th grade students at or above proficient on the Forward Exam in math the prior year: 50% will maintain proficiency. b. Second-grade students at or above summed score benchmark in reading (PALS): At least 75.0% will remain at or above.		a. N/A b. N/A
Section I, D	<u>Academic criterion #3:</u> Year-to-year achievement measures: progress for students below proficient. a. 4th – 8th grade students below proficiency on the Forward Exam in ELA the prior year: 35% will demonstrate progress. b. 4th – 8th grade students below proficiency on the Forward Exam in math the prior year: 35% will demonstrate progress.	N/A	a. N/A b. N/A
Section I, E	Parental involvement.	pp. 8–9	Met
Section I, F	Instructional staff hold a DPI license or permit to teach.	p. 7	Met
Section I, I	Pupil database information, including special education needs students.	pp. 11–13, 17	Met
Section I, K	Discipline procedures	pp. 9–11	Met

N/A: Not applicable this year due to the early school closure as a result of the pandemic.

Appendix B

Student Learning Memorandum

STUDENT LEARNING MEMORANDUM FOR DOWNTOWN MONTESSORI ACADEMY

To: NCCD Children's Research Center and Charter School Review Committee
From: Downtown Montessori Academy
Re: Learning Memo for the 2019–20 Academic Year
Date: October 3, 2019

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 NCCD Children's Research Center (CRC) and the CSRC. The school will record student data in Skyward or MS 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 12, 2020.

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 that 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 Measures²¹

Children's House Literacy and Math

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

Students 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.

²¹ 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, math, writing, and IEP goals.

Elementary and Adolescent Program Literacy

Second- through third-grade students will be administered a grade-level Fountas and Pinnell passage by the end of September 2019, and again in May 2020. The first graders will be tested by the end of October 2019 and again in May 2020. The score will be reported as a grade-level score with the whole number as the grade and the decimal as the month (e.g., fourth grade, third month of instruction = 4.3). Any student scoring below the first-grade level will have a score of K for kindergarten without a month indicator.

- At least 75% of the students below grade level in the fall will gain at least half a grade level (0.5) on the spring Fountas and Pinnell.
- At least 80% of the students who are at their current grade level in the fall (e.g., a fourth-grade student in the fall at or above 4.1) will gain at least half a grade level (0.5) at the time of the spring test.
- Any student who scores at least one grade level above their current grade level in the fall will maintain above-grade-level status in the spring (e.g., a fourth-grade student must have a score of 5.1 or above to be above grade level).

All students in fourth through eighth grades will be administered components of the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI) no later than the end of the first quarter (November 2019) and again in the spring. Progress will be measured by comparing the fall functional level with the spring functional level. Expectations for functional level advancement will be set based on whether the student was below, at, or above grade level at the time of the fall test. Expectations for each grade-level status/functional level are shown in the table below. At least 90% of students will make progress as described below.

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

Fall Functional Level	Fall Grade Level Status		
	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level	Above Grade Level
Frustration	Frustration at the next grade level	Independent at the same grade level	Maintain above-grade-level status, regardless of functional level
Instructional	Instructional at the next grade level	Independent at the same grade level	
Independent	Independent at the next grade level	Instructional at the next grade level	

Elementary and Adolescent Program Writing

Writing skills will be assessed in the fall and spring of the school year using the Six Traits of Writing.²² Both writing samples will have grade-level prompts based on grade-level topics with the narrative genre.²³

There are a total of six traits scored on a five-point rubric (1 = experimenting, 2 = emerging, 3 = developing, 4 = capable, and 5 = experienced). Different grades have a different number of traits. Grade levels and the number of traits chosen for them follow.

- First through third graders will focus on organization and conventions. (Scores of two traits to be averaged)
- Fourth through sixth graders will focus on sentence fluency, organization, ideas, and conventions. (Scores of four traits will be averaged.)
- Seventh and eighth graders will focus on word choice, organization, ideas, sentence fluency, voice, and conventions. (Scores of six traits will be averaged.)

The average score of these traits for each sample will be used to measure student progress toward the goal.²⁴

All students who receive an average score below four in the fall will increase their overall average score by 0.5 on a second writing sample taken in May 2020. Students with an average of four or above in the fall will score four or above in the spring.

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

Elementary and Adolescent Program Math

First Through Sixth Graders

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 Common Core State Standards math skills not reflected in the Montessori sequence. The following scale will be used to track the skill level and change in skill acquisition.

²² The six traits of writing are organization, fluency, conventions, ideas, voice, and word choice.

²³ Writing genres include expository, descriptive, persuasive, and narrative.

²⁴ The highest possible average score is 5.0.

- 1—Minimal: Needs support
- 2—Basic: Progressing
- 3—Proficient: Meets expectation
- 4—Advanced: Mastery

Students will be assessed on all five representative skills no later than November 1, 2019. Students who attend all year will show improvement (from minimal to basic or basic to proficient in at least three 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 or improve to advanced.

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

Seventh and Eighth Graders

All seventh- and eighth-grade students will be given a benchmark assessment in the fall, by the end of September 2019; and in the spring, by the end of May 2020. This benchmark assessment will be completed using MobyMax, an evaluation program, resulting in a grade-level equivalency based on performance according to Common Core State Standards. Grade-level equivalency is established when the student demonstrates proficiency in the required standards for a particular grade level. The assessment uses a 75% threshold to determine proficiency.

By the end of spring, 80% of the seventh- and eighth-grade students who tested at or below grade level in the fall will improve at least half of a grade level. For example, a seventh-grade student who receives a grade-level equivalency score of 6.3 will improve to a score of at least 6.8.

Students who test above grade level in the fall will remain above grade level in the spring.

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

Students With Special Education Needs

Students with active individualized education programs (IEPs) who have been at the school for one entire IEP year will demonstrate progress by meeting 75% of their IEP goals at the time of their annual review. 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.

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 Students

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.

Wisconsin Forward Exam for Third- Through Eighth-Grade Students

The Wisconsin Forward Exam will be administered on an annual basis within the timeframe specified by DPI. This standardized assessment will produce an English/language arts score and a math score for all third through eighth graders. Additionally, fourth- and eighth-grade students will complete the science and social studies tests. Data elements related to this outcome are described in the “Learning Memo Data Requirements” section.

Year-to-Year Achievement²⁵

1. CRC will report results from the 2019–20 Wisconsin Forward Exam. In addition, progress will be reported for students who completed the Forward Exam in two consecutive years at the same school. When sufficient year-to-year data are available, the CSRC will set its expectations for student progress, and these expectations may be effective in subsequent years.
2. The CSRC’s expectation for students maintaining reading readiness on the PALS is that at least 75% of students who were in first grade in the 2018–19 school year and met the summed score benchmark in the spring of 2019 will remain at or above the second-grade summed score benchmark in the spring of 2020.

²⁵ The 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	Enrolled at Start of School Year	Enrolled During Year	Withdrew	Number Enrolled at End of Year	Retention (Enrolled for Entire Year)
2015–16	264	6	4	266	260 (98.5%)
2016–17	274	4	4	274	270 (98.5%)
2017–18	286	2	2	286	284 (99.3%)
2018–19	299	2	7	294	292 (97.7%)
2019–20	313	2	4	311	309 (98.7%)

Table C2	
Downtown Montessori Academy Student Return Rates	
School Year	Rate
2015–16	90.6%
2016–17	87.1%
2017–18	90.5%
2018–19	91.4%
2019–20	94.4%

Table C3	
Downtown Montessori Academy Student Attendance Rates	
School Year	Rate
2015–16	95.4%
2016–17	95.2%
2017–18	95.5%
2018–19	95.6%
2019–20	94.2%

Table C4	
Downtown Montessori Academy Parent Participation	
School Year	% Participated
2015–16	100.0%
2016–17	
2017–18	
2018–19	
2019–20	

Table C5	
Downtown Montessori Academy Teacher/Instructional Staff Retention	
School Year	Retention Rate: Employed Entire School Year
2015–16	100.0%
2016–17	
2017–18	
2018–19	
2019–20	

Table C6			
Downtown Montessori Academy Teacher/Instructional Staff Return Rates			
Teacher Type	Number at End of Prior School Year	Returned First Day of Current School Year	Return Rate
2015-16			
Classroom teachers	11	11	100.0%
All instructional staff	15	15	100.0%
2016-17			
Classroom teachers	13	10	76.9%
All instructional staff	17	13	76.5%
2017-18			
Classroom teachers	13	13	100.0%
All instructional staff	16	16	100.0%
2018-19			
Classroom teachers	14	14	100.0%
All instructional staff	19	19	100.0%
2019-20			
Classroom teachers	12	12	100.0%
All instructional staff	20	19	95.0%

Note: Includes only teachers who were eligible to return (i.e., who were offered a position for fall).

Appendix D

CSRC 2019–20 School Scorecard


City of Milwaukee Charter School Review Committee School Scorecard

r: 06/20


K-8TH GRADE

HIGH SCHOOL


STUDENT READING READINESS: GRADES 1-2

• PALS—% 1st graders at or above spring summed score benchmark this year	4.0	
• PALS—% 2nd graders who maintained spring summed score benchmark two consecutive years	6.0	
		10.0%


STUDENT ACADEMIC PROGRESS: GRADES 3-8

• Forward Exam reading—% maintained proficient	5.0	
• Forward Exam math—% maintained proficient	5.0	
• Forward Exam reading—% below proficient who progressed	12.5	
• Forward Exam math—% below proficient who progressed	12.5	
		35.0%


LOCAL MEASURES

• % met reading	6.25	
• % met math	6.25	
• % met writing	6.25	
• % met special education	6.25	
		25.0%


STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: GRADES 3-8

• Forward Exam reading—% proficient or advanced	2.5	
• Forward Exam math—% proficient or advanced	2.5	
		5.0%


ENGAGEMENT

• Student attendance	5.0	
• Student reenrollment	5.0	
• Student retention	5.0	
• Teacher retention	5.0	
• Teacher return*	5.0	
		25.0%


STUDENT ACADEMIC PROGRESS: GRADES 9, 10, AND 12

• ACT Aspire—% 10th graders who maintained benchmark on composite score or progressed at least one point	15.0	
• Adequate credits to move from 9th to 10th grade	7.5	
• Adequate credits to move from 10th to 11th grade	7.5	
• DPI graduation rate	5.0	
		35.0%


POSTSECONDARY READINESS: GRADES 11 AND 12

• Postsecondary acceptance for graduates (college, university, technical school, military)	10.0	
• % of 11th/12th graders tested	2.5	
• % of graduates with ACT composite score of 19.6 or higher	2.5	
		15.0%


LOCAL MEASURES

• % met reading	5.0	
• % met math	5.0	
• % met writing	5.0	
• % met special education	5.0	
		20.0%

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: GRADES 9 AND 10

• ACT Aspire English—% students at or above spring benchmark	2.5	
• ACT Aspire math—% students at or above spring benchmark	2.5	
		5.0%

ENGAGEMENT

• Student attendance	5.0	
• Student reenrollment	5.0	
• Student retention	5.0	
• Teacher retention	5.0	
• Teacher return*	5.0	
		25.0%

*Teachers not offered continuing contracts or who moved farther than 25 miles from any Milwaukee County border due to a transfer of a family member are excluded when calculating this rate.

Note: To protect student identity, CRC does not report data on scorecard items with fewer than 10 students. These cells will be reported as not available (N/A) on the scorecard, and the total score will be calculated to reflect each school's denominator.

Table D1					
Downtown Montessori Academy CSRC Elementary School (K Through 8th Grade) Scorecard Revised for 2019–20					
Area	Measure	Maximum Points	% Total Score	Performance	
Student Reading Readiness: PALS, 1st – 2nd Grades	% 1st graders at or above spring summed score benchmark this year	4.0	10.0%	Not available	
	% 2nd graders who maintained spring summed score benchmark two consecutive years	6.0			
Student Academic Progress: 3rd – 8th Grades	Forward Exam English/language arts: % maintained proficient/advanced	5.0	35.0%	Not available	
	Forward Exam math: % maintained proficient/advanced	5.0			
	Forward Exam English/language arts: % below proficient who progressed	12.5			
	Forward Exam math: % below proficient who progressed	12.5			
Local Measures*	% met reading	6.25	25.0%	Not available	
	% met math	6.25			
	% met writing	6.25			
	% met special education	6.25		56.3%	3.5
Student Academic Achievement: 3rd – 8th Grades	Forward Exam English/language arts: % at/above proficient	2.5	5.0%	Not available	
	Forward Exam math: % at/above proficient	2.5			
Engagement	Student attendance rate	5.0	25.0%	94.2%	4.7
	Student return rate	5.0		94.4%	4.7
	Student retention	5.0		98.7%	4.9
	Teacher retention rate	5.0		100.0%	5.0
	Teacher return rate	5.0		95.0%	4.7
TOTAL Possible Points		31.25		27.5	
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SCORECARD PERCENTAGE					88.0%

Appendix E

Board Interview Results

Board member opinions are qualitative and provide valuable, although subjective, insight regarding school performance and organizational competency. Downtown Montessori's board of directors consists of seven members. CRC conducted phone interviews using a prepared interview guide with six (85.7%) board members who agreed to participate.

The board members have served on the board for an average of just over six years. Their backgrounds included financial, law, education, school parent, community stakeholder, and marketing.

All six of the board members said they participated in strategic planning for the school, received a presentation on the school's annual academic performance report, reviewed the school's annual financial audit, and received and approved the school's annual budget.

On a scale of excellent to poor, all six board members rated the school as excellent. All six members agreed or strongly agreed that the school was making progress toward becoming a high-performing school and that board members took their responsibilities seriously.

Table 1 Downtown Montessori Academy Board Member Interview Results 2019–20 (N = 6)					
Performance Measure	Response				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teacher-student ratio/class size at this school is appropriate.	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Program of instruction (includes curriculum, equipment, and building) is consistent with the school's mission.	83.3%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Students make significant academic progress at this school.	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
The administrator's financial management is transparent and efficient.	83.3%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
This school is making progress toward becoming a high-performing school.	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
This school has strong linkages to the community, including businesses.	83.3%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
The administrative staff's performance meets the board's expectations.	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
The majority of the board of directors take their varied responsibilities seriously.	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
This school has the financial resources to fulfill its mission.	66.7%	16.7%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%
The environment of this school ensures the safety of its students and staff.	83.3%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

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

- Dedication of all faculty and staff;
- Strong leadership; and
- Warm and welcoming environment.

Regarding things they like least, the board members mentioned:

- Lack of facilities, including a gym and library with no room for expansion;
- Need to focus on data/financial information for planning; and
- Limited organized sports.

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

- Acquire more space to add facilities;
- Execute the school's strategic plan; and
- Continue to improve benefits.

Appendix F

Parent Survey/Interview Results

Parent/guardian opinions are qualitative and provide a valuable measure of school performance. To determine satisfaction with the school, parental involvement with the school, and an overall evaluation of the school, each school distributed paper surveys during spring parent-teacher conferences and made the survey available online. CRC made at least two follow-up phone calls to parents/guardians who had not completed a survey. If these parents/guardians were available and willing, CRC completed the survey over the telephone. There were 137 surveys completed and submitted to CRC, representing 134 (67.3%) of 199 Downtown Montessori families.²⁶

Most parents agreed or strongly agreed that their child is safe in school (97.8%), they are comfortable talking with staff (97.1%), believe the staff recognize their child's strengths and weaknesses (96.4%), that people in the school treat each other with respect (96.3%), and are satisfied with the overall performance of the staff (95.7%; Table F1). However, only 51.8% believe the school offers a variety of courses and afterschool activities to keep their child interested.

Table F1 Downtown Montessori Academy Parent Satisfaction With School 2019–20 (N = 137)						
Statement	Response					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
I am comfortable talking with the staff.	81.0%	16.1%	0.7%	1.5%	0.7%	0.0%
The staff keep me informed about my child's academic performance.	56.9%	35.8%	6.6%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%
I am comfortable with how the staff handle discipline.	62.8%	26.3%	8.8%	1.5%	0.7%	0.0%
I am satisfied with the overall performance of the staff.	67.2%	28.5%	2.9%	0.7%	0.7%	0.0%
The staff recognize my child's strengths and weaknesses.	67.2%	29.2%	2.2%	0.7%	0.7%	0.0%
I feel welcome at my child's school.	74.5%	17.5%	5.1%	1.5%	0.7%	0.7%
The staff respond to my worries and concerns.	63.5%	27.7%	5.8%	2.2%	0.7%	0.0%
My child and I clearly understand the school's academic expectations.	54.0%	36.5%	6.6%	2.2%	0.7%	0.0%
My child is learning what is needed to succeed in life.	59.9%	32.8%	5.1%	0.0%	0.7%	1.5%

²⁶ Two parents/guardians in three households completed a survey. Results of both surveys are included.

Table F1 Downtown Montessori Academy Parent Satisfaction With School 2019–20 (N = 137)						
Statement	Response					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
My child is safe in school.	75.2%	22.6%	1.5%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%
People in this school treat each other with respect.	70.8%	25.5%	2.2%	0.0%	0.7%	0.7%
The school offers a variety of courses and afterschool activities to keep my child interested.	18.2%	33.6%	28.5%	16.8%	2.9%	0.0%

The second measure examined the extent to which parents engaged in educational activities while at home. During a typical week, most of the parents of younger children (K4 through fifth grades) read to or with their children (98%), work on arithmetic or math (93%), participate together in activities outside of school (93%), and work on homework with their children (89%); Table F2).

Table F2 Downtown Montessori Academy Parent Participant in Activities K4 – 5th Grade 2019–20 (N = 123)					
Activity	Response				
	Never	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	No Response
Read with or to your child(ren)	1.6%	0.0%	10.6%	87.0%	0.8%
Work on arithmetic or math	4.9%	1.6%	32.5%	60.2%	0.8%
Work on homework	5.7%	3.3%	23.6%	65.0%	2.4%
Participate together in activities outside of school	2.4%	2.4%	43.1%	49.6%	2.4%

Parents of older children (sixth through eighth grades) engaged in similar activities during the week. For example, 95% of parents monitored homework completion and 78% participated in activities outside of school with them at least once a week. Discussion of graduation plans was less common, but these responses may be an indication of the age of the students; 54% of parents indicated that they discuss their children's progress toward graduation at least weekly, and 49% discuss plans for education after graduation at least weekly.

Table F3 Downtown Montessori Academy Parent Participant in Activities 6th – 8th Grade 2019–20 (N = 37)					
Activity	Response				
	Never	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	No Response
Monitor homework completion	5.4%	0.0%	48.6%	45.9%	0.0%
Participate together in activities outside of school	10.8%	10.8%	35.1%	43.2%	0.0%
Discuss with your child his/her progress toward graduation	8.1%	37.8%	40.5%	13.5%	0.0%
Discuss plans for education after graduation	8.1%	43.2%	35.1%	13.5%	0.0%

Parental satisfaction was also evident in the following results.

- Most (98.5%) parents would recommend this school to other parents.
- Most parents (92.0%) will send their child to the school next year. Seven (5.1%) parents said they will not send their child to the school next year, and three (2.2%) were not sure. The remaining parent/guardian did not respond to the question. Of the students not returning, most reasons provided were the student graduated or the family is moving out of the district.
- When asked to rate the school's overall contribution to their child's learning, a majority (98.5%) of parents rated the school's overall contribution to their child's learning as excellent or good.

When parents were asked about what they like most about the school, responses included:

- Strong sense of community and respect for one another, positive and caring relationships, welcoming environment, family oriented;

- Classroom structure: Small size allows for more individualized education and pace of learning; appreciate the varied grade level;
- Montessori philosophy, curriculum, and quality of education; focus on the environment (eco-conscience); teaches students important life skills, such as time management, independence, and respect for each other; and
- Excellent teachers and staff; investment in and dedication to students' success.

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

- Lack of afterschool and/or extracurricular activities available at the school, such as foreign language classes;
- Facilities: Physical size of the school limits what facilities and activities are available (e.g., gymnasium, science lab, library); parking lot is too small; don't like the playground;
- Communication: More responsive communication from school leadership; would like to hear more from the board; communication could be more prompt (e.g., better email communication, better communication about event/schedule changes), more regular communication from teachers on upcoming curricular activities, especially challenging for some children and their child's progress;
- Lack of diversity among students and staff; and
- Discipline policy: The school is not adequately addressing bullying and not applying the policy fairly.