



City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
53202

Meeting Minutes CHARTER SCHOOL REVIEW COMMITTEE

KEVIN INGRAM, CHAIR

**Glenn Steinbrecher, Melinda Scott Krei, Joyce Mallory, Gayle
Peay, and Desiree Pointer-Mace**

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Wednesday, October 14, 2015

5:30 PM

City Hall, Room 301-B

1. Roll call.

Meeting convened: 5:39 P.M.

Desiree Pointer-Mace excused.

2. Review and approval of the minutes of the September 24th meeting.

Ms. Scott Krei moved, seconded by Ms. Peay, for approval of the minutes. There were no objections.

3. [150543](#)

Communication relating to the 2015/16 activities of North Point Lighthouse.

Sponsors: THE CHAIR

Susan Gramling, Children's Research Center, said the school is just north of Silver Spring in the intersection of 34rd and Douglas. The school has been operating for three years and the report covers K4 through 6th grade and the school added 7th grade last year. Last year, there were 296 students enrolled. Almost all of the students are African American and 12% have identified special education needs. There was one contract requirement that wasn't met - that all of the instructional staff have a Dept. of Public Instruction (DPI) license or permit - two teachers did not have these certifications. Some of the special education students also had data missing that should have been provided. The school report card gave the school a "D" and put it into the category of "problematic or struggling" and it has been in that category all three years, although the percentage is improving over time. The school is currently at 63% and the expectation was that after 3 years the school would be at 70%. The percentage of kids in both the first and second grade who met the state benchmark at reading was 30%. Student retention numbers are high at 98.6% and attendance numbers are also high; they lost about 2/3 of their teachers throughout the year and the teacher retention rate was 88%. Two recommendations from the prior year were also not fully met. The recommendation to the committee is due partly due to the high leader turnover (6 new ones in 3 years) and is that the CSRC place this school on probation with specific, measurable outcomes that would need to be addressed this year.

Adam Peck - Board Chair

Susan Jambeck- Chief of Schools

Corey Whitacker - Board member

Dr. Beverly Echols - Principal

Jeremy Williams - Regional Vice President

Victor Jukadove - Dean of School Culture

Ms. Peay asked about the high turnover of leadership. Mr. Peck said the leaders left for various, personal reasons mid-school year and he cannot explain why that is. He felt that the leader at the end of last year wasn't retained as the goals hadn't been met. The position of principal hasn't been consistent enough to permit them to hit their goals. Ms. Scott Krei shares the same concerns of Ms. Peay relating to leader retention. The committee needs to hear details about how this will be addressed. Mr. Peck said the board oversight didn't cause leaders to leave. Lighthouse provided training and support to the leader who didn't meet the goals, so a new leader was selected. After that leader left, the Board has become involved in the interview process. He feels the Dr. Echols is a great leader. Ms. Jambeck feels that Dr. Echols has turnaround experience, which she believes was the single missing factor among the former leaders. Of the 6 board members, 5 are local. Three of the local board members were present in the audience.

Ms. Peay is concerned that something is happening at the first and second grade levels where the student reading scores are just plummeting. Ms. Jambeck said one of the problems at the end of last year was with test administration and they've adopted a new curriculum this year written by educational experts and the teachers absorb the content from these units and dissect how these units should be implemented. They have also increased the amount of support materials provided to teachers. It is "all hands on deck" with the school leadership as well as with Lighthouse providing support. There is a newly created turnaround team. Mr. Williams is also a turnaround leader from Gary who has been assigned to this school, as is Ms. Jambeck. The board has reached out to community partners, such as Jewish Family Services, Next Door Foundation and other local groups to improve the school. Mr. Whitacker also said that the board is very engaged.

Ms. Scott Krei wanted to know what Dr. Echols' priorities are. Dr. Echols said she would ensure that the social and emotional needs of the students are being met which will be done by talking with teachers, parents and the students. From that piece, it's professional development to see what the students and teachers need. Mr. Jukadove is working on the school culture and discipline. They also utilized the police department and building up the volunteer program and training those volunteers. One of the goals is to have all the students talk and speak in complete sentences. She is also reaching out to local businesses to have 6th and 7th graders explore hands-on learning.

Mr. Steinbrecher was concerned that 62 students were suspended of the 288 enrolled students, with 216 of those students being in K4 through 3rd grade, which is a pretty young age to be suspended. Ms. Jambeck said that as a network and a school they have committed to reducing suspensions, so this year they are implementing restorative principals, which is not suspending students, but working with the students and families. They are going to focus on teaching them to resolve conflicts, although, in the short term, they are still suspending students. Currently 3 teachers are not DPI certified, two K4 and one first grade teacher. The teachers have completed the test and they are awaiting the results.

Ms. Jambeck said although they didn't hit the goals, they are getting closer every year and missed only by a few students for many of those goals. They met all but one contract provision. The restructuring has begun and extra support is being provided with both human capital and increased financial board support to the school. There's also a plan for small group instruction and the student support team model, in which teams discuss individual students and how to best meet their needs. They also discussed teacher retention and financial incentives to retain teachers as it's hard to retain teachers when a school is on probation. In the past the school was hesitant to turn over teachers as it lost points for that, but now the school is not

hesitant to release teachers.

Mr. Fields read the letter from Ms. Pointer-Mace contained in the file.

Dr. Echols thinks the chances of turning around the school are 80% if she has the right staff, right curriculum and that curriculum is well delivered. She is committed to doing the best she can. The strengths that she sees right now is the support she has from Lighthouse and the parents that are sad right now with the high leadership turnover. It's going to take a team to make the needed changes. Lighthouse is contracting to provide special education staff, which are not reflected in the licensure statistics. Last year the financial report was late, so Mr. Peck will insure it's done in a timely manner this year. The units have now been designed for the teachers rather than having them create their own. Lanita Johnson - Director of Teacher Leadership detailed how the teachers will be evaluated, which is a Lighthouse model and also include teacher observation and on-going evaluation and mid-year and end-of-year evaluations while coaching will also be provided throughout the year. Ms. Gramling wants to make sure that the teachers and parents are aware of how the teachers are evaluated and that information should be included as part of the handout.

Ms. Scott Krei moved to accept the recommendation of the Children's Research Center and that a mid-year report be completed. A letter from CSRC needs to be drafted listing why the school is being placed on probation and the conditions which have to be met in order to lift the probation. The CSRC can rescind a charter at any time and a mid-year report would be done in January and open enrollment is held in February. Ms. Scott Krei moved that North Point Lighthouse be placed on probation and a mid-year report be completed in January and a decision will be made at that time if the charter will be discontinued. Seconded by Ms. Peay. There were no objections.

4. [150705](#)

Communication relating to the 2015/16 activities of the Downtown Montessori Academy.

Sponsors: THE CHAIR

Susan Gramling, Children's Research Center, said this school is located in Bayview and the report covers its 17th year of its operation; it is one of the two original schools chartered by the city. The school is K4 through 8th grade and there were 284 students at the end of last year with a varied student population in ethnicity. Twenty five percent of the kids are eligible for free or reduced lunch and only 9 kids received special education services last year. The school met all of its contract provisions and got an "A" as a "high performing/excellent" school. The recommendations for improvement were to provide teachers with more literacy training, implementing the scholastic reading program and also the Lucy Caulkins program. The recommendation is for regular, annual academic monitoring and reporting.

Virginia Clinton - Head of School

Ms. Clinton said that the school does not believe in the status quo and that the guiding reading program, which is leveled, meets the needs of the Montessori classroom as the kids work at their own pace. They have worked with Cardinal Stritch for years in reviewing what they do and how they can improve it. They also work with UW-M to improve math scores, particularly as it relates to common core standards.

Ms. Scott Krei said that the writing scores are really exemplary. Ms. Clinton believes that's due to their quest for constant improvement and the fact that the kids begin at the school when they are very young and they are able to go to any school and succeed. They did meet the DPI licensure. Ms. Gramling will send a corrected page A1 noting that. Ms. Clinton said that the school does need to get more laptops.

Ms. Scott Krei moved to accept the recommendations, seconded by Ms. Peay. There were no objections.

5. Public Testimony.

Santana Wells - she has a 4-year-old at North Point Lighthouse and she thinks the teachers are excellent in being able to get hold of her and reports. She cannot get hold of administration or the board. They say that the bus company actions are not their responsibility. Her son loves his teacher. Even here, at this meeting, none of the administration wants to talk to her. She knows of a 4-year-old was expelled although she was told there was only in-school suspension.

Jackie Wells -- her son was left on the bus until 10 a.m. and she wasn't aware of it until the end of the day and was told by the bus company, not the school. She couldn't even talk to the administration about another child hitting her son until she waited an hour and ended up having to pound on the door. She hears more from the bus company than the school. The school also didn't contact her nor the police department. Her son was on the bus for four hours. Strangers ended up helping her four-year-old son to call police and he was by himself on Silver Spring. The teacher was very sorry, but not the former or current principal. The change in principals wasn't even communicated to parents.

Dr. Echols said she takes responsibility for the school for not calling and the bus company made a mistake. She is reaching out to parents and has been here three weeks.

Pat Page - a teacher at North Point Lighthouse who talked to the Ms. Wells who was upset and the receptionist did help the child. She says the leaders are excellent and do stay late.

Earline Tolliver-Lee -- grandparent of a K4 student at North Point and also a granddaughter who has been there for two years. She is an advocate for both students and teachers and her grandkids have awesome teachers. Teachers and leaders get overwhelmed, especially when someone else has created a mess. She has had bad situations with prior leaders and she has told them of her concerns. A lot of it was sugarcoated up here as she was in the school daily. They are understaffed with 35 K4 students with one teacher. She agrees that Dr. Echols isn't available - she has shaken her hand 3 times and each time she could only talk for two minutes. Her grandson was withdrawn by the school from the school.

Rebecca Johnson - has 3 children that attend North Point Lighthouse, she's the Parent Teacher Organization president, a volunteer and just started a girl scout troop. A lot of the kids at Lighthouse are troubled. It's not the responsibility of the school to fix her son's problem - they help, but she is ultimately responsible. They need parents to be involved when things are going good, not when things are going bad. They are understaffed and the teachers are putting in a lot of work. She sees the improvement within 3 weeks under Dr. Echols.

Camille Collins - she has been with Lighthouse since it opened and the school did fix the problems and she is in the school every day. Her daughter is at the school, as well as six or seven of her nieces and nephews. The problem is that now the rules are being enforced.

Princess High - a new 3rd grade teacher at North Point Lighthouse and she thinks the bus drivers need more support and the students were suspended for having razors or poking other students with thumbtacks. She would like fewer suspensions with more social and emotional support. She thinks the school needs much more time to turnaround, although she's seen incredible improvement in a short time. There needs to be more parental involvement. She has seen improvement with the students.

Ken Craig - just moved here with his two daughters and he only puts his girls in charter schools and this is the first school he's had to re-think about putting his girls into. He thinks Dr. Echols is like Joe Clark and he has seen the changes and he's also assisting more at the school rather than just complaining.

Angela Lynch - 2nd grade teacher at the school who has been at North Point Lighthouse for two years and a teacher for 19 years. She sees the school getting there and Dr. Echols is awesome.

*Meeting adjourned: 7:52 P.M.
Linda M. Elmer
Staff Assistant*