

**Wright Middle School Charter**  
*For Board and District review*  
*Final Draft, May 2001*

**A. Vision and Philosophy**

Wright Middle School will provide an academically strong but individualized and flexible program. It will attempt to meet the interests, needs, learning styles, ability levels, social skill development and discipline issues of each student. While the Charter School curriculum will use technology and social action as contexts for learning (see below), Wright Middle School students will fully participate in State-mandated standardized testing, and the school will prepare its students to meet and exceed State and MMSD curriculum standards.

Wright Middle School will prepare 240 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> grade students for high school, both academically and socially. Recognizing the historically large "achievement gap" between minority and non-minority students in the MMSD, the school will strive to achieve equality in the academic achievement of its diverse student population. It will be the explicit goal of the school for its students to meet or exceed the academic achievement of a similar demographic of students within the State and District. While Wright's curriculum will be aligned with State and local standards, the on-site team will develop an educational program and school climate that motivates learning among students possessing a variety of cultural, economic, and family backgrounds. To this end, the on-site team will strive to make the educational program relevant to the population it serves. A hallmark of Wright Middle School students will be an enhanced sense of connection to—and leadership in—the community from which will stem the self-confidence necessary to achieve in future academic pursuits, high school and beyond. Furthermore, Wright Middle School will provide its students with the technological savvy required to compete in an increasingly technology-driven society.

The mission of Wright Middle School is to provide opportunities for all students to acquire the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary for productive participation in an evolving technological society. The philosophy of Wright Middle School focuses on three major strands: (1) a contextualized instruction model that emphasizes citizenship and a connection to the community; (2) individualized attention made possible through small class sizes; and (3) instruction in technology and the arts. The school is committed to addressing new ways in which teaching and learning occur. It is dedicated to helping all students experience educational success.

Wright Middle School is a school of choice, open to 80 students in grades six, seven, and eight. The school will establish ongoing partnerships with colleges/universities, parents, community-based agencies, and businesses. The school will take advantage of the flexibility afforded by Wisconsin charter school law to limit the student-to-teacher ratio to 20:1 (in core academic subjects), to limit overall school size (80 per grade), to allow flexibility in staff hiring (as per charter licensure regulations), and to permit access to State DPI charter school funds and other resources in the fulfillment of the school's mission.

The objectives of Wright Middle School are:

- A. To create an environment in which all individuals feel valued, respected, and celebrated;
- B. To create an environment in which all cultures and ethnic backgrounds feel valued, respected, and celebrated;
- C. To substantively involve students, teachers, parents, administrators, and community members in decision-making;
- D. To connect curriculum areas of study into broad themes, in order that knowledge and skills acquired in one area are applied in others and so that learning is made relevant;
- E. To provide all students with access to advanced technology as tools for learning;
- F. To provide a wide variety of offerings in the unified arts, including: foreign language, art, instrumental music (strings and band) as well as vocal music;
- G. To involve students in extracurricular activities, such as student council, clubs, intramurals, yearbooks, newspapers and dance; and
- H. To implement specific policies of discipline relating to mutual respect and student safety, aligned with the District code of student conduct.

The middle-school years are a critical time in the formation of young adults who are motivated to learn, committed to their own academic achievement, and cognizant of their place in society. Wright Middle School will operate under the philosophy that children are most motivated to learn, and learn best, when their individuality is recognized and encouraged, when they feel safe and protected, when they feel connected to a larger collective identity. In short, children are at their best when they feel they are part of a nurturing family.

Therefore, Wright Middle School will model its school atmosphere and its collective behaviors and practices upon those common to nurturing families:

**Ritual:** Ritual will play an important role in the lives of Wright students.

Behavioral research demonstrates that adolescents feel most secure when they know that they can count on events happening in a reliable and consistent way. Furthermore, ritual is central to instilling in children a feeling that they belong to something enduring and important. In recognition and celebration of the school's diverse student body, ritual at Wright will include: regular "family dinner" events, Black History Month celebration, annual Family Festival, and others.

**Recognition:** Wright Middle School students will be recognized for their achievements, and will learn to recognize worth and achievement in one another. The idea of recognition will be captured under the rubric of "Panther Pride", which will form the basis for regular assemblies where students will be recognized for their achievements in: academics, artistic expression, self-improvement, citizenship, commitment to school community, and others.

**Togetherness:** Wright Middle School will continually seek opportunities for teachers, parents, and students to come together for the purposes of educating its children. The staff will conduct regular evening "seminars" and "workshops" to train parents how to best participate in the education of their children, including strategies for helping with homework. The goal will be create a "community of learners" that involves all members of the Wright Middle School community/family.

The development and improvement of personal/social skills will be a main goal of the program. In order to accomplish this, an atmosphere of mutual respect and a community of care and concern will be developed, and a school counselor will ensure that conflict resolution and anger management components will be an integral part of the program. The curriculum will emphasize education and understanding of community standards. Family/community support will also be sought and incorporated. Therapeutic services will be provided by the school counselor to enhance social and personal skills.

### **B. Purpose**

This charter document is intended as a replacement for Wright Middle School's existing charter contract, which expires on June 30, 2001. Since its inception as a charter school, the school has shown great growth and evolution, has developed a distinct character and culture all its own, and has demonstrated an ability to prepare its students for academic success. The new charter would extend Wright's charter status for a period of five years, expiring June 30, 2006.

### **C. Leadership and Governance**

Art Rainwater, Superintendent, Madison Metropolitan School District, seeks to continue the charter school status of James Coleman Wright Middle School with the approval of the Board of Education of the Madison Metropolitan School District. The relationship of the charter school to the overall organization of the Madison School District, the Board and Administration is the same as other Madison middle school's except that it will maintain its charter school status.

Ed Holmes, licensed Secondary Principal, will be the Charter School Principal. He will provide administrative oversight to the site-based work team, which will be made up of all Charter School and or district employees. A close working relationship will be maintained between MMSD administrators, the site-based team, and the school Governance Board. The MMSD Assistant Superintendent shall remain responsible for the evaluation of the Principal. Formal teacher evaluations will remain within the purview of the Principal, as prescribed by the MMSD/MTI collective bargaining agreement. The principal and site based team will work closely with the Governance Board to establish a means for all school constituents, through the Governance Board, to provide meaningful, constructive feedback to charter school employees.

A Learning Coordinator or Assistant Principal will assist the Principal with the day-to-day coordination of the educational program.

The governance structure will be composed of a school based policy-making Governance Board and a site-based team composed of all school employees. All stake holders (including parents, students, and community members) will be involved to the maximum degree appropriate.

The following individuals will comprise the Governance Board of Wright Middle School:

1. The Principal of Wright Middle School (ex-officio)
2. Three (3) representatives of the staff
3. Three (3) parent representatives
4. A community representative
5. Sergeant-at-arms (non-voting)

Tenure to the Governance Board will be for a maximum of three consecutive terms (each term is one year). Procedures for the selection of Board members, and the

responsibilities of the Board and its members, will be clearly defined in a separate Governance document.

The principal will serve as the instructional leader of the school and will identify the appropriate role for the Learning Coordinator and/or the Assistant Principal. The school counselor will lead the transition of incoming and exiting students to ensure continuity in the educational program from elementary to high school. In addition, the counselor will establish programming for career exploration, and will provide individual counseling services in the areas of coping strategies, peer mediation, etc.

The Governance Board will meet monthly to recommend and monitor policies for the school. The principal will approve policy and be responsible for implementation and monitoring of such policy. The Principal will ensure a strong partnership between parents, staff, community members and school and District administrators. Standing committees of Wright Middle School will include but not be limited to:

- Communications Committee  
This committee will work to establish effective lines of communication among all school constituents, including staff, parents, and community members. The committee will help to publicize school events, will communicate the policy decisions of the Governance Board to all members of the Wright community, and develop effective lines of communication with parents.
- Boosters Committee  
The primary function of this committee will be to vigorously seek funding opportunities to support enhanced opportunities for students and staff. This includes but is not limited to traditional fund-raisers. The Governance Board will have discretionary control of funds raised through Boosters activities as prescribed by MMSD policy.

Any parent, staff member, or appropriate community member may request membership on a committee. Appointments to committees and task assignments will be made by the Governance Board.

In keeping with the school's vision of establishing a nurturing "family" environment, parental involvement at Wright Middle School will be encouraged beyond participation in school governance. Parental involvement will be essential to the success of the overall school mission, including organizing and executing events, upon the approval of the principal, participating in staff-led "workshops" when appropriate, and so on. To this end, all incoming families will be asked to sign a "contract", affirming the parents' recognition of the importance of their involvement, and committing parents to actively participate in the school in some way. These contracts will serve to underscore the centrality of participation by all to the school's mission.

#### **D. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**

The following program components will include but not be limited to the following:

1. A contextualized, service-learning model ("Learning Through Social Action"—see below) and, when suitable, an integrated curriculum
2. A curriculum that challenges students along the entire spectrum of ability
3. Integrated and applied technology
4. Cooperative learning
5. Community-based learning, with an emphasis on active parental involvement

6. Intensive support services
7. Multiple forms of assessment in addition to traditional forms
8. An emphasis on hands-on learning
9. An aggressive discipline model that emphasizes respect for self and others
10. Extensive extracurricular opportunities
11. Opportunities for self-expression through the arts

The method by which pupil progress in attaining educational goals will be measured is by testing on curricular units in the context of the classroom as well as state and local standardized test such as the WSAS and Terra Nova exams.

Individual student progress in the areas of education and psycho/social development will be evaluated by multiple forms of assessment developed by the Wright Middle School staff including standardized State-mandated assessments. In keeping with the school's approach to learning and emphasis on citizenship, students will be assessed for their progress in terms of community as well as in traditional academic areas.

Wright Middle School will commit itself to preparing its students for success in high school. Academic preparedness for high school will be determined on the basis of State and District assessments and standards/benchmarks.

An ongoing internal assessment process and an annual internal audit of the program operation of the school will be developed and performed by the principal and governance board. Among the assessment criteria will be: academic achievement, attendance, school climate, and discipline referrals. This information will be used to determine James C. Wright's School Improvement Planning Goals.

The following educational goals under Wisconsin State Statutes Sec. 118.01 will be addressed:

- Academic skills and knowledge, including:
  - Basic skills (reading, writing, spelling, arithmetical calculations, communicating with others)
  - Analytical skills (problem solving)
  - Literary, fine arts
  - Computer science
- Vocational skills
  - Knowledge of available occupations and required skills and abilities
- Citizenship
  - Workings of society and government
  - Local, state, national, and world history
  - Human relations (including Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American cultures)
- Personal development
  - Physical education
  - Health and diet
  - Sex education

The curriculum will cover language arts/humanities, math/science, social studies/history, and physical education. This curriculum will be taught in an integrated fashion wherever possible. The curriculum will be developed by Wright staff in accordance with State and local standards.

Perhaps more important than the nature and content of the *curriculum* for enabling students to attain the state educational goals, is the *support structure* that is made available to students to ensure academic success. Wright Middle School will provide an array of support services to its pupils, with an emphasis on learning preparedness in the basic areas of reading, writing, and arithmetic. This will be accomplished through specialized on-site staff members, including a Reading Specialist and additional educational aides as needed. The District will determine the support staff needed on the basis of State and other student assessments administered by Wright staff, as well as by recommendation of the Governance Board and Principal.

Wisconsin Learner Goals will be assessed annually for each student based on mandated Wisconsin Student Assessment tests, the Stanford Diagnostic Reading test, Individualized Education Plan (IEP) as required, and other assessments as deemed appropriate by the school staff.

Wright Middle School will primarily follow the calendar of the Madison Metropolitan School District, although occasionally additional staff development opportunities will be sought.

### **Core Curriculum**

The core academic curriculum (i.e. mathematics, language arts, science, social studies) of Wright Middle School will continually strive to meet and exceed the grade-level academic standards established by the State and the MMSD. Core academic staff will provide a report to the Governance Board at the beginning of each school year to ensure that (1) the planned curriculum is aligned with State and local standards, and (2) that all elements of the State and local grade-level standards are being addressed by the planned curriculum.

As literacy forms the basis for all learning, the development of reading skills will be a central focus of the school's curriculum. Reading will be stressed across the curriculum, and a school Reading Specialist will work with core academic staff to integrate established reading development strategies into the classroom. The Reading Specialist will also work individually with students needing intensive and individualized attention, as identified by the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test and other assessments.

### **Learning Through Social Action**

Learning will be made relevant through a thematic curriculum model based on values of citizenship and civic duty: *Learning through social action*. Each year, the school community will select a "social theme" (e.g. homelessness, racism) that will serve as a broad, unifying context for the curriculum, including specials subjects wherever possible. This model provides a flexible way for the teaching staff to connect their classroom curricula to a common, socially relevant theme, without the heavy burdens on staff that often accompany fully integrated curriculum. The Principal, Learning Coordinator and the Governance Board will work with staff to identify small ways in which curriculum can be augmented to connect with the chosen social theme. The Principal, together with the Governance Board and staff, will work to infuse the chosen theme into the day-to-day climate of the school; students will be surrounded by reminders of their connection to the community, and how that connection translates into responsibility for self. In addition, students will be given avenues for social action through artistic expression and other extracurricular activities.

This curriculum model builds upon and extends Wright Middle School's existing strengths. In the past several years, Wright staff have established partnerships that meaningfully involve students in social action. For example, Wright students have become involved in an ongoing relationship with convalescent elderly at the nearby St. Mary's hospital, where Wright students read and sing to elderly patients. In this way, the school's SIP goals of reading are integrally connected to the theme of civic participation. Other examples include soup kitchen food drives, letters to the editor on local current events, and the school's own "empty bowls" project, in which Wright art students sell ceramic bowls of their own making as a fundraiser for local food pantries.

### **Community Partners**

Community partners will be sought who can further Wright's ability to impact upon the chosen social theme. The Capital Times newspaper will, in particular, be sought as an ongoing community partner due to (1) its proximity to the school, (2) its long-standing history of participation with Wright Middle School, and (3) its unique ability to provide guidance and resources for connecting school-wide reading/writing goals to the chosen theme.

### **Talented and Gifted Programs**

An active Talented and Gifted (TAG) program will be developed to provide learning opportunities that challenge Wright's students to achieve to the full of their potential. A part-time TAG coordinator will have responsibility for developing and implementing the TAG program. In addition, opportunities will be sought for placing advanced students in classes that challenge their ability. More generally, the school will align its programmatic choices with the philosophy of providing a challenging, yet supportive, learning environment for all students.

### **E. Personnel**

The staffing level will consist of approximately forty staff members inclusive of professionals and para-professionals. The student to staff ratio will be 20 students to 1 teacher in all academic classes. Class sizes may vary in non academic courses. Subject to sub-chapter (7) (8) (ss. 118.19) (1) and 121.02(1)(a)(2) positions required by the Department of Public Instruction to hold a license according to P13.03(10) will hold such a license. Liability immunity provisions of SS. 118.257, 118.295, 118.126(2) and 115.31(5)(6), shall apply to all school instructional staff. All teachers shall be eligible for membership in Madison Teachers Inc. For legal purposes, school instructional staff shall be hired by the Madison Metropolitan School District Board of Education and shall be accorded the rights, privileges, and protections of such appointments. Charter School licensure as provided by the Statutes will be pursued as needed.

We recommend that James C. Wright be an instrumentality of the District and that the board shall employ all personnel for the charter school. The Wright Middle School Governance Board will participate on all school based staffing allocation and hiring committees. Supervision and evaluation of the staff will be conducted by the school principal. This procedure is consistent with hiring practice conducted by the Madison Metropolitan School District.

### **F. Students**

The minimum number of students that will be enrolled at Wright will be 180, the maximum number will be 240. The grade levels that will be served are 6 – 7 – 8.

The means by which the school will achieve a racial and ethnic balance among its pupils will be by review of applications submitted for admission, however given the application process to enroll in the charter school it may be difficult to have a student population reflective of the school district. The requirement for admission into the charter school is that the students live in the West attendance area. We will make every effort to be sure the student socio - economic demographic is representative of the socio - economic status of those students who attend Middle School in the West (Please see attached Admission Policy). The process for selection if interest exceeds projected/authorized enrollment is set forth in board policy. The procedure for disciplining pupils and ensuring their health and safety is set forth in the school District's Student Code of Conduct Policy. We will carefully follow the rules and regulations in the aforementioned document to provide a safe and secure school environment for both students and staff.

Information, if necessary that identifies an alternative Madison School District school for pupils who reside in the charter school's attendance area and do not wish to attend or are not admitted to the charter school is contained in MMSD board policy and is based on where they live. Information related to the extent to which the charter school will be prepared to meet the special needs of the students is set forth in the vision and philosophy statement in paragraph (A) of the proposal.

Wright Middle School will be available to any student in the West High Attendance Area of the Madison Metropolitan School District. Wright Middle School will not discriminate against pupils on the basis of sex, race, national origin, ancestry, creed, sexual orientation, physical, mental, or emotional needs in its education programs or activities. Special Education staff will be provided in proportion to the special education needs of the students enrolled. Furthermore, to ensure that transportation needs do not hinder attendance or full participation in extra-curricular activities, the District will provide transportation to and from Wright Middle School within the West High Attendance Area, following District policy. Transportation will be provided to school in the morning and back home at the end of the school day. Late buses will also be provided for students participating in after-school activities.

Wright Middle School will be a school of choice, open to any students in the West High Attendance Area of the Madison Metropolitan School District. Admissions will be conducted by a District-run lottery process, which will be designed to admit a cohort of students that reflects to the extent possible the demographics of the West High Attendance Area with respect to special education needs and free/reduced lunch eligibility.

No student will be required to attend Wright Middle School. All placements will be by mutual consent of the student's parent/guardian, the student, Wright Middle School, and the District. Upon admission, the parent/guardian will sign a one-year agreement of commitment. Alternative middle schools in the West Attendance area are Velma Hamilton Middle School or Cherokee Middle School.

The disciplining of students is carried out in accordance with Board of Education policy on student discipline. A positive discipline model will be developed, and implemented under the leadership of the principal. The discipline model will be based on such models as:

- Reality Therapy Model by William Glasser
- The Errors in Thinking Program by Koerner and Fawcett
- Internal Focus of Control Model by Jerry Conrath



- Restitution Model by Diane Chelsom Gossen

The on site discipline plan will be reviewed and monitored by the Principal and Governance Board. It will be published by the Communications Committee in the Wright Middle School Student Handbook. Suspensions from Wright Middle School will be made by the principal. The Principal shall recommend a student to the appropriate Assistant Superintendent for expulsion in accordance with MMSD Board Policy.

#### **G. Business, Facilities, and Operations**

The proposed financial relationship of the charter school will be the same as other Madison Metropolitan school district schools. A budget proposed budget for the 2001- 2002 school year is attached. The business and support services to be provided by the district will be the same as those provided to other schools. The manner in which annual audits of the financial operations of the charter school will be performed will be the same as other Madison School District schools.

Wright Middle School will be housed at the Madison Metropolitan School District owned facility at 1717 Fish Hatchery Road, Madison, Wisconsin. The building is a two story facility with 15 classrooms, a Library, gym/cafeteria, main office and support services area. Liability coverage for the Wright Middle School facility will be the same as coverage for other schools in the district and will be provided by the Madison Metropolitan School District. Liability insurance for James C. Wright will be carried by the MMSD and will be the same as for other middle schools in Madison. Establishing Wright as a charter school will have no effect on the liability of the Madison school District. The district will also be responsible for worker's compensation and liability coverage for acts of its employees.

Technology will be a cornerstone of Wright Middle School, which will serve as a showcase school in the integration of technology into the curriculum. Instructional technology services will be provided by the District, and a full-time Technology Coordinator will provide technology course offerings and on-site consultations with core academic staff seeking assistance integrating technology into their classrooms.

The charter school facility will be provided and maintained by the District and will be inspected by the building inspector and fire inspector to ensure a safe and healthy environment pursuant to city codes.

Wright Middle School is already a fully functioning middle school in the Madison Metropolitan School District. It is not expected that the effect on the liability of the District will be any different than the liability for any other school in the District.

Annual budget allocations for Wright Middle School will follow the same formulation as for any other charter school in the Madison Metropolitan School District. A year-end report will be prepared at the end of each school year and presented to the Wright Middle School Governance Board and the Board of Education of the Madison Metropolitan School District.

#### **H. Exemptions from Statutes, Policies, or Contracts**

Wright Middle School intends to comply with all federal statutes. There are no specific statutes or district policy from which James C. Wright Middle School should be exempt. Wisconsin State Statutes 115 to 122 will apply unless it is determined

otherwise by the Wright Middle School Governance Board (to the extent permissible under Wisconsin Charter School law).

Morning and mid-day food for students eligible for free, reduced, or paid meals will be provided by the Madison Metropolitan School District. Other meals and other snacks will be secured by the Charter School staff.

The Wright Middle School Governance Board will work in conjunction with the principal to establish policies and procedures for Wright Middle School. The school will operate under the policies of the Madison Metropolitan School District.

No variations or waivers in collective bargaining agreements are anticipated.

This Charter School contract shall be in effect for a period of 5 years as provided by Wisconsin Charter School law, from July 1, 2001 until June 30, 2006. The contract may be renewed at the conclusion of this term, as provided by Wisconsin Charter School law and District policy.

### **I. Involvement and Input**

This revised charter document was developed by the Wright Middle School Governance Board, in consultation with the Wright Middle School staff, parents, and members of the community. The Board's intent in this process has been to restructure the charter document to reflect and extend Wright Middle School's existing programmatic strengths, while protecting its key assets (such as small class sizes and access to technology), and enhancing its commitment and accountability to its educational mission.