



Badger Rock Middle School
2011-2016 Term Report
Executive Summary - December 2015

Overview of Current Term

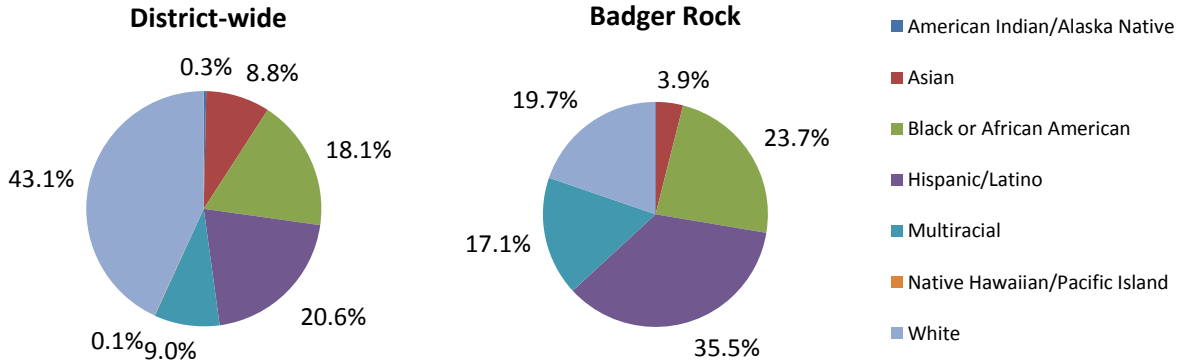
Badger Rock Middle School (BRMS) was founded to empower its students to thrive as citizens, entrepreneurs, leaders, collaborators, and innovators, working to restore the natural world and to better the cultural environment while creating just, nourishing, and sustainable communities. BRMS embraces a philosophy of participatory, place-based learning through real-life, inquiry-driven projects designed by students and teachers emphasizing social change within the local community. Students learn subject matter content using the contexts of place (e.g. school, neighborhood, or larger community), cultural relevance, sustainability and resilience, and design and inquiry.

In 2011, the Governance Council obtained a charter to open BRMS, an instrumentality of MMSD. Today, BRMS is requesting a one-year renewal of its charter school contract with the intention to engage in a long-term strategic planning process to set the stage for the next five years. The planning process will focus on continuing to meet their mission, maximizing communication, enriching partnership relationships, increasing enrollment, strengthening their instructional framework and sustainability planning. BRMS will then request consideration of a five year renewal for the term 2017-2022. Continued operation as a charter school enables parents, extended family, and community members to access a flexible learning environment and participate in the governance and development of BRMS which strengthens the commitment to and involvement of the learner population to BRMS.

The BRMS Governance Council is responsible for making educational decisions aimed at raising student achievement and meeting the mission, vision, and goals of the BRMS charter contract. The Governance Council is currently comprised of ten members including two parents, five community members, a Center for Resilient Cities (CRC) staff member, the BRMS principal, and a school staff member who also sits on BRMS' school-based leadership team (SBLT). The Governance Council recently seated four new members, elected officers, and is engaging in activities that support the school's mission and vision. Enrollment and community partnerships committees are working to resolve challenges in those domains. The revitalized BRMS Governance Council is capable of engaging other stakeholders /partners and optimizing the vision for the school.

Seventy-six students are enrolled at BRMS this school year; maximum capacity of the school facility is 100 students. Current average attendance is 96% (MMSD 94.7%).

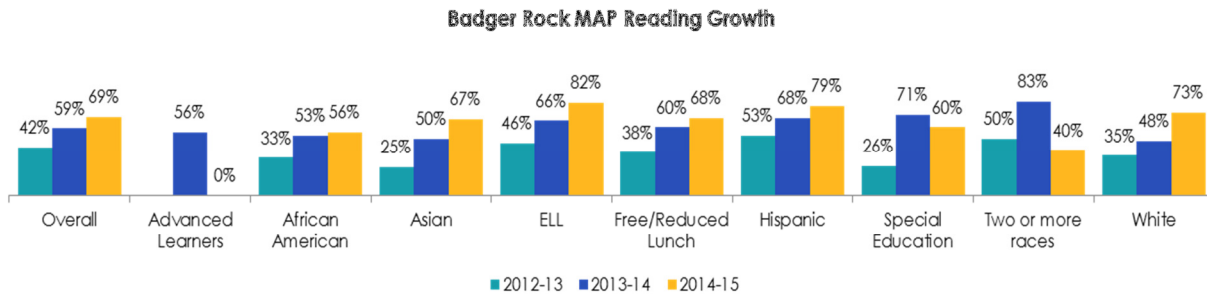
Students Demographics 2015-2016



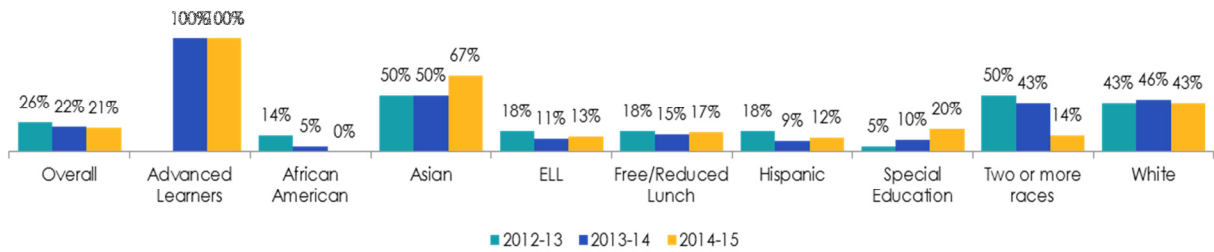
	SPED	ELL	Low-Income
District	13.9%	27.3%	46.8%
Badger Rock	25%	31.6%	67.1%

Student Achievement

The first goal in the district’s Strategic Framework is for every student to be on-track to graduate as measured by key milestones which include proficiency and growth in literacy and mathematics as measured by MAP. Badger Rock showed positive trends in the percent of students meeting growth targets from 2012-2015, increasing annually in nearly all subgroups and is above the national average for growth. Overall proficiency, however, has seen a decrease over the last several years with the exception of a significant increase for students with disabilities. Note that some significant changes in proficiency and growth trends in certain subgroups may result from small numbers of students in those groups, an example being the change in reading proficiency for multiracial students.

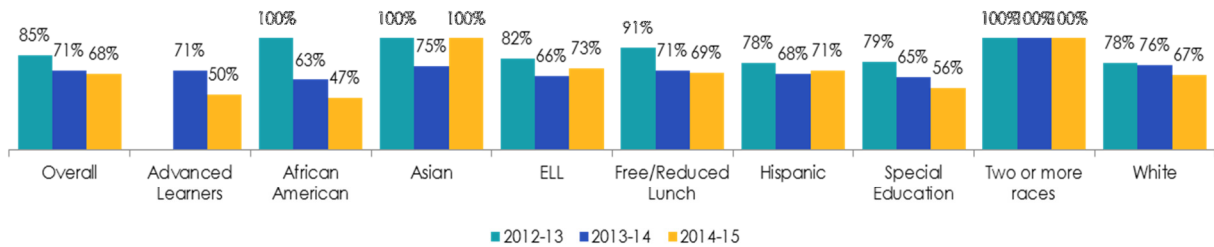


Badger Rock MAP Reading Proficiency

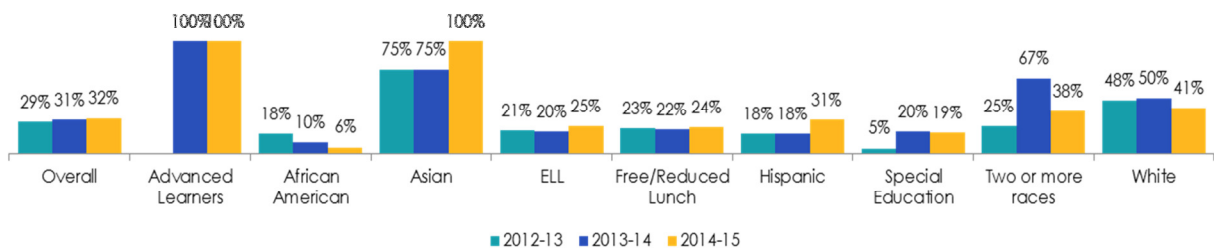


While the results in MAP math growth vary, the percentage of students meeting growth targets is still far above the national average. While we have seen some incremental improvement overall in math proficiency, we've seen a decline in proficiency levels for African America students.

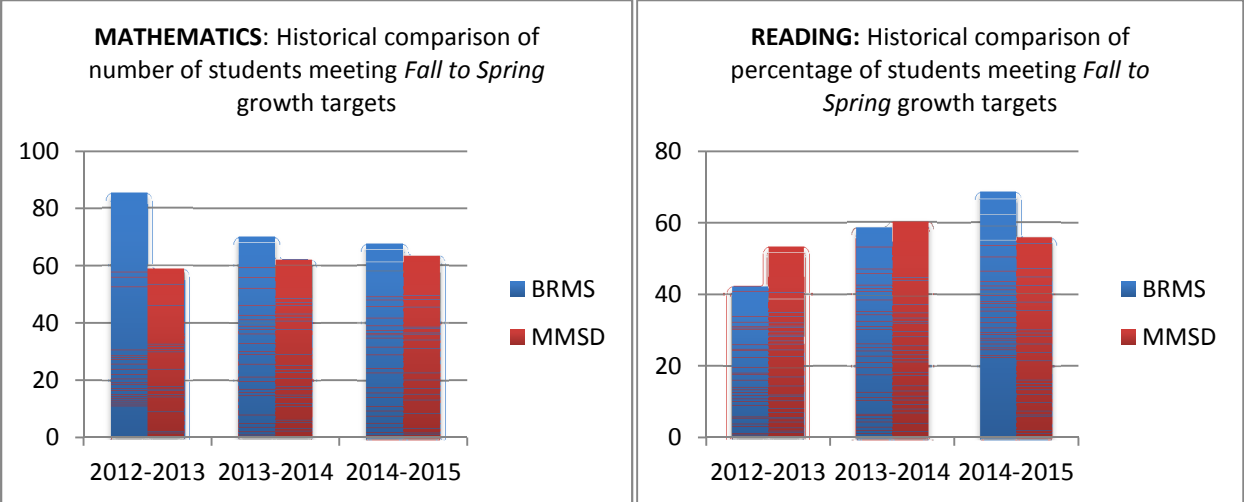
Badger Rock MAP Math Growth



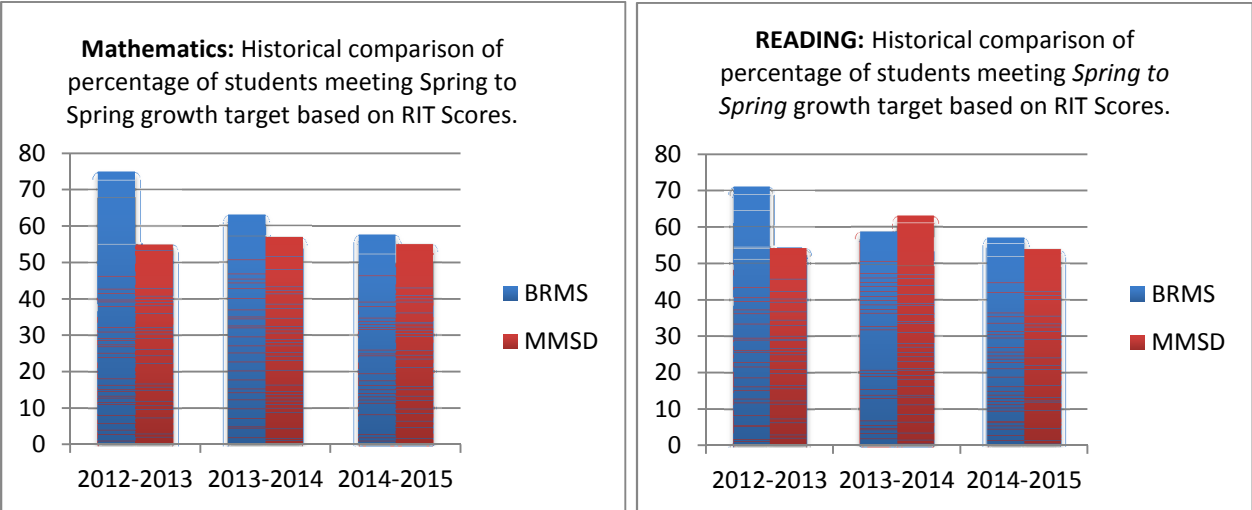
Badger Rock MAP Math Proficiency



Looking at the data in a different way, the BRMS Governance Council compared fall to spring growth targets for BRMS students to MMSD middle schools overall. This comparison showed BRMS students outpacing MMSD middle school students each year in meeting math growth targets 2012-2015 as well as in meeting reading growth targets in 2014-2015.



Additionally, BRMS students have shown growth from year to year, outpacing MMSD middle school students in math growth target spring to spring 2012-2015 and in reading growth target spring to spring for 2014-2015.



Educational Program

BRMS holds a vision to empower its students to thrive as citizens, entrepreneurs, leaders, collaborators, and innovators, working to restore the natural world and better the cultural environment while creating just, nourishing, and sustainable communities. Educational programming is driven by the BRMS mission and based on four core values of place, cultural relevance, sustainability and resilience, and design and inquiry. Staff and community partners lead students to discover and embrace the core values.

To develop a sense of place, students investigate and care for the community. They scrutinize cultural and natural systems via hands-on activities at the school site. Classes also go off-site routinely to survey the local watershed and nearby neighborhoods. The focus on cultural relevance means that students learn with content and activities that reflect their backgrounds. At BRMS, students regularly encounter images, language, people, and values that help them feel at home in an environment where they can readily learn. Teachers ground their instructional practices in community awareness and participation. As students learn content, staff help them contextualize their learning into an awareness that how we live impacts our ecosystem and society. The school building, energy systems, gardens, and greenhouses model sustainability and resilience. Subject matter content units are designed to nurture curiosity and promote inquiry and design skills. Staff develop units around essential questions, challenges, and problems. Design projects require students to identify opportunities and problems, collect and interpret data, design prototypes, give and receive feedback, and share final products.

Using the Environment as Integrating Context for Learning model (Lieberman and Hoody, 1998), BRMS uses the natural and cultural environments as a comprehensive focus and framework for learning in all areas, general and disciplinary knowledge, problem solving, thinking skills, and basic life skills to achieve its mission and vision.

BRMS students gain knowledge and skills through project based learning, where small groups of students begin with a project they select. Teachers support project advancement by providing students with information, skills, and scaffolding conceptual and content instruction needed for students to move their projects through key milestones to completion. Teachers provide guidance to ensure projects advance logically and create lectures, assignments, homework, workshops, and quizzes that impart the specific knowledge students need in the appropriate subject matter (e.g., math, science, English Language Arts). BRMS faculty align content and instruction to the Common Core State Standards while meeting students' needs.

What do the BRMS vision and core values look like in action? Their students engage in a participatory, place-based learning environment through real-life, inquiry-driven projects of their own design, with a strong emphasis on fostering social change within the local community. BRMS' place-based curriculum provides relevant and meaningful service learning and community collaboration experiences for students, outside in our gardens in partnership with Growing Power, and beyond the classroom walls. The school's curriculum is theme-based and interdisciplinary, with a blurred line between typical subjects and a strong emphasis upon nurturing an ethic of caring between students, staff, families, and people of diverse cultures. For instance, in one project, students sought and analyzed feedback via a community listening session. Based on that feedback, and with guidance from their partner Growing Power, students decided to create an outdoor living lab. Students planted more than 50 different species of native plants on 1,000 square feet of land along Rimrock Road to increase biodiversity in the area as well as increase water infiltration into the groundwater. This exercise engaged students in presentations, social science data collection and analysis (e.g., community listening sessions), biology (biodiversity), agriculture and agribusiness, mathematics, and physical education throughout the course of the project.

Given the success in closing achievement gaps and engaging students attributed to project based learning (e.g., Halvorson, et al., 2012 and others), BRMS aims to improve students' academic success to ensure they graduate on time with career and college readiness skills. Project based learning offers ways other than standardized assessments to measure student learning and success, particularly through access and participation in real-world field experiences and public presentations. These experiences give students the chance to develop their self concepts as learners and community members through relationships with the world outside of school walls and with feedback loops from peers, community members, and future employers. Furthermore, BRMS believes that students should show growth from entry to exit in taking responsibility for their own learning, both in initiating projects, designing a work plan and a rubric to assess what they might do better for the next project. Every BRMS student should demonstrate understanding of our core values and leave with greater resilience in order to sustain themselves in an ever-changing world. Their growth should show an increased ability to design projects, a greater curiosity, and an appreciation for the importance of cultural relevance and place.

Operations

BRMS enrolls students from the Sennett Middle School attendance area as resident students and students living in all other attendance areas as transfer students with 80% of enrollments held for resident students. BRMS follows MMSD procedures for transfer and open enrollment students if applicable. During the first term of operations, the BRMS governance council developed and implemented an admission policy and procedure. Demographically, enrollment reflects BRMS' neighborhood and the community at large. After initial enrollment of 50 students, it quickly increased to more than 100 students and then tapered to the current enrollment of 75 students.

BRMS ENROLLMENT TRENDS

	2011-2012		2012-2013		2013-2014		2014-2015		2015-2016	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
All	48	100	100	100	92	100	84	100	75	100
Asian	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
African American	11	22.9	25	25	17	18.5	21	25	17	22.7
Hispanic	19	39.6	40	40	39	42.4	27	32.1	26	34.7
White	14	29.2	25	25	26	28.3	26	31	15	20
Bi - or Multi-Racial	*	*	*	*	*	*	7	8.3	14	18.7
English Language Learner	20	41.7	42	42	39	42.4	25	29.8	23	31.5
Special	12	25	23	23	22	23.9	20	23.8	18	24.7

Education														
Low-income	32	66.7		71	71		64	69.6		56	66.7		48	64.86

* Student numbers fewer than 7 suppressed

BRMS rents space in the Badger Rock Center, a 100% green-powered building with vegetable gardens, fruit trees, grape arbors, and a cranberry bog. Badger Rock Center’s design and structure is green, sustainable, and built to LEED Platinum standards. The facility is built next to a park and connects to other neighborhood space through walking and biking paths. The facility is viewed by the governance council as playing an important role in attaining BRMS’ mission and upholding their philosophy. The facility creates a positive sense of place, student learning occurs indoors and outdoors, in formal and informal settings, and includes the broader community. The charter agreement allowed BRMS to operate in a temporary facility early on with the understanding that a building would be constructed specifically to and leased by MMSD to house BRMS and compliment the educational program. After one year in the temporary facility, BRMS transitioned to its current location where it shares space with one of its primary partners, the Center for Resilient Cities.

In accordance with the charter agreement, and state law regarding instrumentality charter schools, BRMS follows all MMSD health and safety policies and procedures, including any new or revised policies developed during the term of the charter. Notable changes occurred to the district Behavior Education Plan during this term; the new BEP is fully integrated into the BRMS’ operation. BRMS has developed a school- and site-specific safety plan with response procedures for fire, extreme weather, lock-down, and evacuations in accordance with MMSD guidelines and requirements.

BRMS faculty and staff are hired through the MMSD Human Resources infrastructure. Significant decisional authority rests with the school principal, who is responsible for ensuring that hiring practices and decisions align with the expectations of the Governance Council. The BRMS Governing Council, in partnership with the principal, is responsible for ensuring faculty and staff receive orientation and training on school specific regulations, policies, and procedures as well as appropriate professional development. The Governing Council provides input into the evaluation of the principal's performance.

Future Plans (2016-17)

BRMS intends to continue making progress toward fulfilling its purpose: empower its students to thrive as citizens, entrepreneurs, leaders, collaborators, and innovators, working to restore the natural world and to better the cultural environment while creating just, nourishing, and sustainable communities.

Student Achievement

BRMS will demonstrate progress towards meeting goals for student growth and proficiency in reading and math as specified in the 2015-2016 SIP (see chart below). BRMS will continue to focus on intentional tracking with regard to educational program fidelity and SIP monitoring supported through Central Office. These processes will continue to guide BRMS toward continued improvement over the next year.

2015-2016 SIP goal (% increase from 2014-2015)	All students	Focus group African American	Focus group Low-income
MAP reading growth fall to spring	78% (+10%)	66% (+10%)	63% (+10%)
MAP reading proficiency	26% (+5%)	10% (+10%)	66% (+10%)
MAP math growth fall to spring	76% (+10%)	57% (+10%)	62% (+10%)
MAP math proficiency	27% (+5%)	16% (+6%)	26% (+6%)

Educational Program

BRMS aims to improve individual student achievement by sustaining and strengthening its focus on quality implementation of project-based learning coupled with building staff capacity in essential teaching skills as outlined in the MMSD Common Core State Standards Implementation tool. Evidence of individual student achievement will include MAP performance, project presentations, and comparative levels of attendance and engagement in the broader context of college and career ready skill sets with clearly outlined formative and summative assessments. Such measures may include presenting project results at conferences, public art exhibitions, publication of project results, media coverage, and other unique growth fostering experiences.

In addition, BRMS intends to better align many of their systems and structures with those of the MMSD including professional learning systems, teacher teaming within the Great Teaching Matters Framework, implementing the Common Core State Standards 3-year plan and implementing Academic and Career Planning. BRMS believes that greater alignment with these systems and structures will enhance their instructional design model, mission and core values as well as enable them to more efficiently and effectively leverage MMSD resources in the service of all students.

Governance

The BRMS Governance Council recently seated four new member and elected officers. Enrollment and community partnership committees are working to resolve challenges in those domains. Over the 12-month term the BRMS Governance Council intends to build a base for a more strategic approach to the ongoing and sustainable operation of BRMS by completing the following:

- review and adjust strategic goals
- define action steps and action plans
- engage critical stakeholders/partners in review of goals and action plans
- adopt an improvement model
- implement a review system for all critical systems and processes

Preliminary work is already underway regarding the opportunity, desire, and need to increase enrollment to 100 students for 2016-2017. The Governing Council believes there is a fragmented understanding and communication of the purpose and mission of the school and the true value of a BRMS education within the immediate neighborhood. The Governance Council's Enrollment Committee has designed solutions to drive enrollment up such as improving physical and virtual visibility, improving messaging and marketing around unique BRMS features, and improving communications and clarifying expectations between BRMS, the Governance Council, and the district.

To further strengthen BRMS's ability to achieve its mission and vision, and to implement its educational program with fidelity, the BRMS Governance Council proposes to review the 12-month contract waivers for compliance and sufficiency. The Council will then review options for new waivers and remove any if appropriate to develop a final series of waivers necessary for success.

All roles and responsibilities of the Governance Council and its committees will be updated related to school policies, holding an innovative charter aligned with district vision, charter school budget, grants, and fund development, staffing, marketing and communications, partners, visioning, charter school evaluation, curriculum and assessment, and best practice dissemination. All updates will be reflected in a matrix that will be informational and serve as an evaluation and accountability tool to help ensure the Governance Council continues to operate effectively to ensure the school's success.

Operations

In addition to annual base funding from the district, BRMS is working to revamp its annual giving campaign, under the umbrella of the 501c3 (status pending), to allow for an annual stream of charitable contributions to the school to support operations in future years. During the proposed 12-month term the BRMS Governance Council will focus on building donor relationships and increasing individual and corporate donor bases. BRMS will also work toward increasing student, family, and community participation in current fundraising programs and work to identify new fundraising opportunities that align with the BRMS mission and philosophy. Additionally, the BRMS Governance Council will continue to collaborate with its key partners (Center for Resilient Cities and Growing Power) to apply for grants that support and improve the educational program, instructional methods, and partnerships implementation.

As part of the strategic planning process, BRMS will develop a long-term facility and financial plan with the goals of developing and implementing a sound, deployable sustainability plan and cutting per pupil spending down to be at or below the district average. Some strategies proposed to reach this goal are:

- ensuring enrollment projections are met through effective publicity and targeted marketing;
- bringing families/students back into public schools who have previously been home-schooled (BRMS has been able to attract one such student for the 2015-2016 school year);
- increasing fundraising by at least 10% over the \$400,000 raised in the first term
- diversifying their donor base;
- continuing to leverage financial and in-kind support from partners;
- using flexibility within state charter law; and,
- obtaining 501(c)3 charitable organization status under the Internal Revenue Code to allow Friends of BRMS to conduct independent fundraising and execute fiduciary responsibilities more effectively.