



TO: Members of the Board of Education

FROM: Jennifer Cheatham, Superintendent of Schools

DATE: December 14, 2015

SUBJECT: Badger Rock Middle School and James C. Wright Middle School Charter Renewal

Issue: The charter contracts for Badger Rock Middle School (BRMS) and James C. Wright Middle School (Wright) expire on June 30, 2016. Per respective contracts, the Board is required to make a decision whether or not to renew Wright's contract at least six months before the contract's expiration and BRMS' contract at least three months before the contract's expiration. As a result, the Board discussed both charter schools' performance and future plans on December 7, 2015 to support final action to renew the contracts at the Regular Meeting on December 14, 2015.

Background: In November 2013, MMSD adopted a new charter school renewal process that requires charter schools and their governing bodies to prepare an evidence-based report detailing the implementation, efficacy and plan for the future term across six domains 1) Purpose and Vision, 2) Governance, 3) Teacher and Learning, 4) Operations, 5) Fiscal Management, 6) Legal Compliance. Given that the process was successful in supporting the Board's renewal of Nuestro Mundo's charter, we implemented the same process to support the renewal of BRMS and Wright. On February 12, information about the timeline for review and action by the Board was shared via the Weekly Update. In June and September, MMSD administration met with school leadership and governing council members to share the timeline and process for completing the term reports. Schools submitted first drafts of their term reports which were then reviewed by MMSD administration in October. Thereafter, MMSD administration provided feedback to support schools' refinement of their reports. The final reports were then used to create executive summaries for the Board of Education to support final recommendations on renewal of the charter contracts. On December 4, per request of a Board member, the full term reports were shared with the Board.

If the Board approves the motion to renew contracts for BRMS and Wright, the contracts for each school will be revised to reflect clear expectations we have for improvement over the upcoming year (see detail in Analysis section below). There will also be certain modification we will need to make to reflect changes in state laws since the contracts were last negotiated, including changes to governance structures. The contracts will come back to the Board prior to the required April 1 finalization date. We anticipate providing ample time to the Board for review and consideration.

Analysis: 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. 76 students currently attend BRMS (36% Hispanic, 24% African American, 17% bi- or multi-racial, 32% ELL, 25% SPED, 67% low-income).

Strengths during the current term (2011-2016):

- Positive trends in the percent of students meeting MAP reading growth targets from 2012-2015, increasing annually in nearly all subgroups and above the national average for growth
- Sustained focus on project-based learning model, core values of place, cultural relevance, sustainability and resilience, design and inquiry
- Recent reinvigoration of governance council membership, participation and commitment
- Action to establish governance council as 501c3

Expected improvement in 2016-2017 (to be articulated in 2016-2017 contract):

- Demonstrate progress toward meeting 2015-2016 SIP goals with an emphasis on improved reading growth and proficiency, especially for African American students
- Increase and sustain enrollment to 100 students, including development of recruitment strategy and increased communication and visibility of school presence at Badger Rock Center
- Strengthen instructional framework, ground in research base and include a clearly articulated curriculum and assessment plan
- Increase and sustain annual average attendance rate to 94% or above (BRMS 2014-2015 annual average attendance was 93%)
- Engage in a strategic planning process to produce a comprehensive 5-year charter school plan that meets the needs of the district and, specifically, includes a long-term facility and financial plan focused on sustainability and reducing per student cost

James C. Wright Middle School (Wright) was founded to successfully educate all students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence required to participate fully in an evolving global society. The school was created to be a pioneer in the use of thematic integrated and multi-cultural curricula as a way of connecting with the lives of its students, to be MMSD's technology showcase school, and to be a forerunner in engaging the community in the education of its children. 253 currently attend Wright (49% Hispanic, 23% African American, 9% bi- or multi-racial, 54% ELL, 17% SPED, 86% low-income).

Strengths during the current term (2011-2016):

- Positive trajectory for African American students in MAP reading proficiency, which is a focus group for the school
- Commitment to providing a multicultural, academically focused learning environment integrated with the South Madison community; curriculum infused with social action, social responsibility and self advocacy
- Cultivation of CLEAR values: Citizenship, Leadership, Equity, Achievement, Relationships
- Consistent enrollment trend at capacity with waitlists

Expected improvement in 2016-2017 (to be articulated in 2016-2017 contract):

- Demonstrate progress toward meeting 2015-2016 SIP goals
- Strengthen and sustain governance council membership, role and authority

- Strengthen instructional framework, ground in research base and include a clearly articulated curriculum and assessment plan
- Engage in a strategic planning process to produce a comprehensive 5-year charter school plan that meets the needs of the district and, specifically, articulates a clear, innovative vision that leverages the opportunities and autonomies of being charter school

Recommendations:

- It is recommended that the Board of Education renew the charter for James C. Wright Middle and authorize the administration to negotiate a charter contract to continue James C. Wright Middle School as an instrumentality charter school for a period of one year from July 1, 2016 until June 30, 2017.
- It is recommended that the Board of Education renew the charter for Badger Rock Middle and authorize the administration to negotiate a charter contract to continue Badger Rock Middle School as an instrumentality charter school for a period of one year from July 1, 2016 until June 30, 2017.