

# FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

CHARTER SCHOOLS OFFICE

Review Type: Reauthorization

Academy Name: Muskegon Montessori Academy for Environmental Change

Dates: December 1 & 2, 2022

The Review occurred at Muskegon Montessori Academy for Environmental Change with 3 members on the Ferris State University Charter Schools Office (CSO) Review team. The team met with, and interviewed, multiple stakeholder groups, including the School Leadership Team, Governing Board members, teachers, and parents. The team was able to visit multiple classrooms to observe teaching and learning. We appreciate the open communication and transparency from the academy team.

## Onsite Review Findings

| Pillar #1: Academic Progress   |   |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Are classroom interactions cooperative and conducive to learning? Is there a structure approach to managing student behavior throughout the school?</li><li>○ Do teachers provide clear learning goals leading to purposeful instruction?</li><li>○ Are a variety of instructional strategies materials used to meet diverse needs?</li><li>○ Is the learning environment structured and time maximized for learning? Do leaders and teachers share the responsibility for creating a learning environment that supports all students?</li><li>○ Are students given the opportunity to develop higher order thinking skills?</li><li>○ Has the school identified growth initiatives that appropriately address the needs of their student population?</li><li>○ Does the school prioritize continuous improvement and monitor progress toward goals?</li><li>○ Is there evidence of a positive school climate focused on student learning?</li></ul> |   |
| Areas of Strength  | Opportunities for Growth  |
| <p><u>Culture</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PBIS/MTSS implementation is embedded in the culture. There are high behavioral and academic expectations.</li><li>• Teachers report success with recent PBIS initiatives such as SOAR and positive behavior recognition “leaves.” There is a focus on intrinsic motivation and self-directed learning.</li></ul>   | <p><u>Culture</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue efforts to reconnect and engage families (post-COVID) with community building events and opportunities.</li><li>• Continue to identify community partnerships and opportunities to support students and their families.</li><li>• Continue looking into opportunities to provide specials (PE &amp; Music) and other extra-curricular options (clubs, sports, etc.).</li></ul> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a strong SEL/character ed focus for students and staff. Students are encouraged to be active members of a collective learning community.</li> <li>• Systemwide practices are integrated to create cohesion.</li> <li>• Having a small teaching staff allows opportunity for frequent communication and problem-solving.</li> <li>• Parents report an inclusive, supportive community based on relationship building. There is an appreciation for the school's ability to address student needs individually.</li> <li>• Stakeholders are optimistic moving forward with leadership changes. They welcome PBIS/Restorative Practice training and guidance with the interim leader.</li> </ul> <p><u>Instruction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data analysis and interpretation is a foundation of MMAEC decision making. Data is used to drive MICIP planning, PLCs, and collaborative planning time.</li> <li>• All teachers are on the MICIP team, and MICIP goals are the primary focus for all staff.</li> </ul> | <p><u>Instruction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue efforts to integrate the environmental/global theme schoolwide.</li> </ul> |
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**Pillar #2: Fiscal Solvency**  
 ○ Does the academy demonstrate fiscal responsibility, responsiveness, and sustainability?

| Areas of Strength  | Opportunities for Growth  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial stability has been, and remains, a top priority. There is open communication with staff regarding intentional use of funding, and an emphasis on making sustainable financial decisions.</li> <li>• Stakeholders compliment the school's ability to use funds responsibly.</li> <li>• Leaders encourage staff input for financial planning. Staff successfully identify and apply for additional sources of funding such as stabilization grants, etc.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue your goal to pay off your facility loan by 2027.</li> </ul> |

### Pillar #3: Operations

- Do school leaders and members of the Board of Directors effectively manage the academy's operations?
- Are there systems that make the school sustainable, even with teacher or principal turnover?

#### Areas of Strength

- MMAEC is focused on retention and/or assisting staff with alternative certification pathways and Grow Your Own opportunities.
- There is a comprehensive onboarding handbook to support inexperienced staff and a mentoring handbook for current teachers and teacher assistants.
- Choice Schools provides ample support staff to support MMAEC and their specific model, i.e., Montessori and Environmental focus.

#### Opportunities for Growth

- Continue to develop the Instructional Coaching and Leadership handbook.
- Monitor staff turnover trends and ensure appropriate succession planning.
- Providing planning time for teachers has been beneficial, continue supporting teachers financially and emotionally.
- Expand focus on Environmental aspect – greenhouse, solar panels.
- Address safety concerns over traffic and zoning for schools (adding a crosswalk).
- Sustain efforts to remove bus garage and add additional greenspace.

### Pillar #4: Compliance & Governance

- Does the academy comply with all applicable laws and regulations?
- Does the academy comply with all contractual obligations as outlined in the charter contract?
- Does the Board of Directors provide competent stewardship and oversight of the academy?

#### Areas of Strength

- The board has prioritized sound financial planning and high academic outcomes.
- Board members bring several areas of expertise (financial, service, education) that contribute to planning and oversight.
- The board participates in frequent development and training. They have a written strategic plan that is aligned to school activities and reviewed monthly.
- The board complimented Choice Schools for their support/guidance, transparency, and efficiency.

#### Opportunities for Growth

- None at this time

## Contract Performance Report(s) Review

| Pillar                              | Areas of Strength  | Opportunities for Growth   |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Pillar #1: Academic Progress</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muskegon Montessori Academy for Environmental Change (MMAEC) has had very strong academic performance for the last several years. MMAEC <i>MET</i> its educational contractual goals for the 2021-22 academic year. The academy accomplished this by meeting an impressive number of indicators: overall school index (74.15), growth index (85.03), 50<sup>th</sup> percentile NWEA School Conditional Growth Percentile (exceeded indicator expectations), M-STEP percent proficient compared to composite district (exceeded indicator expectations), and 62% of students met the grade level norm on the reading NWEA.</li> <li>• Currently, using 2021-22 data, and consistently for the last several years, MMAEC has performed as one of the top three academies in the Ferris State University portfolio of schools. This was true even with a dip in proficiency on M-STEP, as most (if not all) schools statewide saw a decline. This is a great accomplishment that the academy should be proud of.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MMAEC should focus on growth on the M-STEP in both ELA and math over time. Most likely due to the results of the pandemic, these are the only indicators the academy did not meet. Pre-pandemic, MMAEC had 61% (ELA M-STEP) and 54% (Math M-STEP) of students proficient. The academy should create a plan to get back those levels over the length of the new contract. Current baseline proficiency: 44% (ELA M-STEP) &amp; 24% (Math M-STEP).</li> </ul> |
| <b>Pillar #2: Fiscal Solvency</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the last two years, MMAEC has met all 6 key performance indicators of fiscal health: current ratio, change in fund balance, days cash on hand, enrollment over time current enrollment, and debt-to-asset ratio.</li> <li>• The academy is performing exceptionally well in regards to finances.</li> <li>• Audited financial statements for the 2021-22 year reported a very strong fund balance of 32% of revenue.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None at this time.</li> </ul>   |

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| <b>Pillar #3: Operations</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None reported in the CPR. See this pillar under “Onsite Review Findings” for more information.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None were reported in the Contract Performance Reports. However, it is important to note that in order to maintain the current level of academic growth and achievement, the academy will need to focus on staff stability. Turnover of administration and teachers may be an obstacle to academics that the academy will need to address.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Pillar #4: Compliance &amp; Governance</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% compliant in 2020-21 &amp; 94% compliant in 2021-22. The goal is 100% every year.</li> </ul>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fill all board vacancies.</li> <li>• The goal of the board should be at least 85% average attendance. (2020-21 was 80%. 2021-22 was 82%.</li> </ul>   |

**Dr. Christopher White**



**Associate Director**

**Ferris State University Charter Schools Office**