



Schools and Communities United

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Milwaukee Math and Science Academy

Grades K4-8 — In its 4th year as a City charter school

Enrollment — Beginning of 2013-14 year: 316; end of school year: 268

Overview: In December 2014, the City's Charter School Review Committee recommended putting Milwaukee Math and Science Academy on Probation because of poor academic performance, institutional instability and excessive staff turnover. For the past two years (the only years for which data are available), academic performance has been near the bottom among City charters. The school's corporate parent, Concept Schools, and some of its top executives are under investigation by the FBI and other authorities regarding possible misuse of federal e-rate technology grants.

Report from Review Committee's Consultant (Children's Research Center/National Council on Crime and Delinquency):

“While the school has been developing, significant concerns have arisen regarding the school's stability (drop in student return rate, change in principal each year, poor teacher return rate), the lack of teacher licenses or permits, and the slow academic progress of the students.”

National management

- Concept Schools operates 32 schools in 6 Midwestern states; a 501(c)3 nonprofit charter management organization based in Des Plaines, Illinois. This is its only school in Wisconsin.
- Concept Schools was started in Columbus, Ohio in 1999 by a group of Turkish-American educators and engineers who say they were influenced by the teachings of Fethullah Gülen, "a charismatic Turkish preacher of a moderate brand," (*New York Times*) whose followers have opened over 100 charter schools in the US, where Gülen lives.
- A number of people working with Concept Schools were leaders at Wisconsin Career Academy, a charter school closed by the MPS Board in 2012, and its successor, Wisconsin College Prep Academy, a voucher school closed in 2013.

FBI and other current investigations

- Concept Schools is under investigation by federal and state authorities, as reported by newspapers in Chicago, Cincinnati, Akron, Dayton, Columbus and others. Investigations include:
 - In June 2014, FBI agents raided 19 of its schools in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. In July the corporate headquarters in Illinois was raided. An FBI statement said they were part of "an ongoing white-collar crime investigation." A company spokesperson said they were part of a "federal audit of e-rate technology grants." Milwaukee Math and Science received \$8,262 in federal e-grants in 2013.
 - In July 2014, the Ohio Department of Education began an investigation into alleged "attendance rate falsification and test tampering" at a Concept Schools facility.
 - Other investigations concern its use of H1-B visas to bring teachers from Turkey when there is a supply of local teachers.

Local management

- The school's website is silent about staff, governing board and any scheduled meetings. Data were obtained from the school's filings with the IRS.
- In 2012-13, the school received \$1,741,600 in state charter school aid, based on \$7,775 for each of 224 students. Enrollment since then has increased, to 307 in 2013-2014. The 2014-15 per-pupil grant is \$8,075.
- In 2012-13, the school received an additional \$597,691 in other state and federal education grants.
- In 2012-13, the school paid 10% of its state charter school aid to its parent, Concept Schools: \$174,160.
- In 2012-13, the school's local governing board consisted of: Omer Yazganoglu, Kadir Celik, Ibrahim Tuna, Moufid Darwich, Lutanya Coleman and Ergun Sevilmis (principal). School leaders told the Review Committee on Dec. 16 that the current board has four members and is seeking additional members.

Facility

110 W. Burleigh Ave. Building was purchased from Harambee Community School in August 2014 by Good Samaritan Schools LLC for \$715,000. Good Samaritan Schools was created June 2014 by persons unknown.

Overall School Accountability Score from Department of Public Instruction

- 2012-13: Score 49.0; "Fails to Meet Expectations." Ranked 17th of 18 non-MPS charters; 6th of 7 City charters
- 2013-14: Score 48.1; "Fails to Meet Expectations." Ranked 17th of 19 non-MPS charters; 6th of 8 City charters

Student Achievement Score from Department of Public Instruction

- 2012-13: Score 20.3—18th of 18 non-MPS charters; 7th of 7 City charters
- 2013-14: Score 20.1—19th of 19 non-MPS charters; 8th of 8 City charters

Students

- 2013-14: 95% Black non-Hispanic; 99% Economically Disadvantaged; 11% Special Education
- 2013-14: 28% of students who finished the previous year and were eligible to return did not return in the fall
- 2013-14: 22% of students who started in September 2013 withdrew before the end of the school year

Proportion of students considered Proficient or Advanced [DPI]

- 2013-14 Mathematics 5.1%—18th of 19 non-MPS charters; 7th of 8 City charters
- 2013-14 Reading 5.1%—18th of 19 non-MPS charters; 7th of 8 City charters

Staff

- Of 12 classroom teachers from 2012-13 eligible to return in Fall 2013, 1 returned.
- Of 14 classroom teachers to start in September 2013, 13 were new to the school and 4 left during the year.
- In interviews with Charter School Review Committee consultant, teachers noted a "lack of sufficient staff (need teacher assistants and more staff to meet needs of special education students," "low pay," "lack of basic supplies and resources," and "too much work--too many classes to prepare for and duties plus lack of a set curriculum."

Prepared for Schools and Communities United by Jack Norman (jacknorman100@gmail.com). Sources: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction; City of Milwaukee; school web sites, IRS form 990, *Akron Beacon Journal*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *WHIO-TV* (Dayton), *Columbus Dispatch*, *New York Times*.