

Minnesota Transitions Charter School

Annual Report

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September 7, 2012

Introduction

Minnesota Transitions Charter School (MTCS) has successfully completed its fourteenth year of operation with 3,280 students and its fifteenth graduation. We are submitting for following information as our Annual Report.

Mission

Forging partnerships among students, businesses, community and families to help each learner make the transition from school to career/postsecondary and meet the responsibilities of a changing future.

MTCS opened in the summer of 1996 as a K-12 school. The school opened with approximately 90 students. Since then MTCS has expanded its programming to include an Alternative Learning Program, a sober school for high school students and two on-line programs.

Student Demographics/Attrition

MTCS serves an inner city population of students from the city of Minneapolis. During the 2011-2012 school year MTS provide education to 3280 students (October 1st count). Students of color comprise 40.1% of the student population. Over 60% of MTS students qualified for free/reduced priced lunches. MTS provides Special Education services to 12% of all students in grades K-12.

Ethnic Breakdown:

African American: 28.1%

Hispanic: 6.2%

Caucasian: 59.9%

Native American: 3.9%

Asian: 1.9%

The student gender breakout is 52% males in grades K-12 and 48% females in grades K-12.

The total number of students who received services from MTCS was 7,532. The total number of ADMs for the 2011-2012 was 2,781. MTCS has a high transient population due to 40% of the families being homeless. The on-line programs attract a high number of students but 50% do not finish their courses.

Teaching Faculty Information

Enclosed is a list of staff members for the 2011-2012 school year (Appendix A). MTCS staff turnover rate at the end of the 2011-2012 school year was 7%. This percent is higher than the previous year of 5% turnover. This was due in part to the increase of staff to serve the growing population. Some staff had contracts that were not renewed due to the changes made in programming or for poor performance. Two staff members who were deployed to Afghanistan in May 2011 returned to MTCS in June 2012. One of these staff members resigned to take an Assistant Principal job with the US Department of Defense. Due to the expansion of the Banaadir Leadership Academy MTCS has hired additional staff for the 2012-2013 school year. At the end of the 2011-2012 school year a member of the MTS High School passed away unexpectedly.

Governance

Board members are elected in an annual meeting held every February. The annual meeting took place on February 29, 2012. The MTCS Board of Directors consists of nine members, five are teachers, one parent, one staff member and two are community partners. A list of Board members is included (Appendix B). At the annual meeting the Chair of the Board and the Superintendent report on the progress of MTS to the parents, staff and community. During this meeting the LEA representative for ESEA is elected by the school community. A parent survey is also available at this meeting. Over 300 families attended the annual meeting in February.

During the 2011-2012 school year the Board met the third Thursday of every month. A quorum was present at each meeting. The average attendance of Board members included eight out of the nine Board members present at every meeting. In February the Board welcomed two new members and one incumbent. One of the members was a licensed teacher and two were parents of MTCS students. Attached is the list of the Board members who are the current members. Currently seven members are serving as board members. A licensed teacher left the board as the board member was no longer a teacher at MTCS. The other board member resigned. The Board of Directors will appoint new members this fall. Another election will take place in February 2013.

All board members have received training in the required areas by School Business Solutions prior to the 2011-2012 school year. The two new board members were trained by Booth and Lavorato in April 2012. One of those board members has since resigned.

Authorizer

MTCS is sponsored by Pillsbury United Communities. MTCS began its partnership with PUC in 2004 and was renewed by PUC in June 2011. The contract renewal date is June 2014. Katie Kohn is the liaison for PUC. She can be reached by email: kohnk@puc-mn.org. PUC has offered a number of opportunities for charter schools including conferences that may be of interest to charter school staff, field trip opportunities for students and on-going meetings for the charter schools they sponsor. PUC meets monthly with the directors of the charter schools sponsored by PUC. Ms. Kohn attended the MTCS August 2011 Board meeting and has made a site visit to the school. Ms. Kohn made site visits to all programs during the 2011-2012 school year.

Each month MTCS sends the board minutes and agendas to PUC. The monthly financial report is also sent. PUC asks for monthly updates on program issues and/or challenges. These reports are given at the monthly directors' meeting.

School Management and Administration

MTCS is unique in that there are a number of programs within the charter school. Anthony Scallon was the Superintendent of MTCS. He is a founder of the school and is a licensed administrator. Mr. Scallon was assisted by Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Mary Funk and Deputy Superintendent of Administration and Human Resources Patricia Brostrom. Ms. Funk is a licensed administrator and Ms. Brostrom has completed the requirements for administrative licensure and is currently completing a doctorate in educational leadership. In April 2012 Mr. Scallon resigned as Superintendent. Ms. Brostrom has been named as Interim Superintendent.

Each MTCS program has its own director. Each director is required to participate in staff development to strengthen their leadership schools. A list of administrators is attached along with professional development plans for those who are not licensed. (Appendix C)

Academic Program/ Performance

Minnesota Transitions Charter School is located in Minneapolis. Out of the K-12 enrollment of 3280 students, 60% of them qualify for free and reduced lunch. Most of the students who did not qualify for free/reduced lunch were enrolled in the on-line programs. Many of the students in the seat-based programs come from disadvantaged homes and benefit little from parent support with their education. MTCS student population is transient and has difficulty persevering with academic adversity. A considerable percentage of our high school students come to school are behind in credits. Frequent visits are paid to the school by parole officers and social workers. Our students are survivors and have a great capacity for learning if positive relationships are built by all staff members. They achieve better in small classrooms and do well in our career academies offered at the high school level. They are all spirited and are a privilege to work with.

MTCS is aware of the issue of low parent involvement and has a family liaison makes home visits to improve school parent relationships and also encourages parents to visit their child's school. The elementary hosts parent nights (Title One) two times each year. Families are invited for dinner and family activities related to reading and math are provided for all. It is always a huge success and over 60 % of the parents attend. Parent teacher conferences are not attended as well as the parent nights. Middle school parents attend parent teacher conferences at about 50 % and the high schools range from 10-15% attendance. Parents have access to students' grades and attendance on line through our student management system but few families have the opportunity to access the program because they don't have the internet. With success the high school holds one of their parent teacher conference up North at the Boys and Girls club as to accommodate parents with issues of transportation.

Many of our middle school and high school students have attended several schools before they enroll at MTCS. This lily padding from school to school causes our students to arrive at MTCS with fractured skills. It is important and a commitment to assess what our students already know and accelerate their learning in order to get them up to grade level or above.

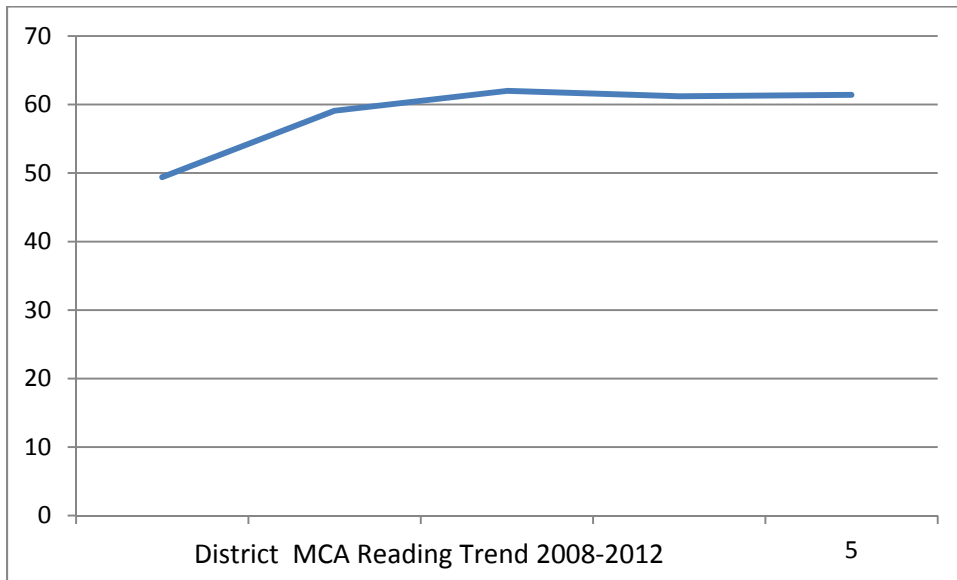
Over 90% of the students of MTCS in seat based programs who are enrolled in grades 6-12 qualify for free and reduced lunch. Their homes are often void of encouragement to succeed in school. Parole officers are frequent visitors at the school. A student survey completed this fall indicated that over 80 % of the students plan to attend college after graduation. This indicator demonstrates a gap between the students' perception and the rate of their achievement.

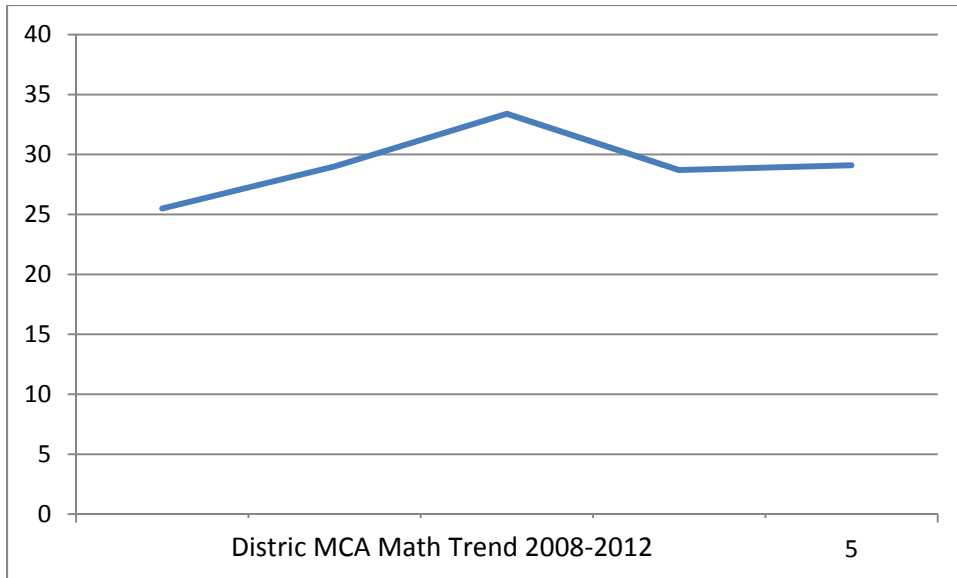
Academic interventions would allow for students who are missing assignments or who have homework to get their work done and not have to worry about it when they get home. As cited above most of parents are unable to help students with their homework and therefore the teachers are limited to what they can assign.

MTCS has a good relationship with many community members and will continue to expand partnerships. The array of options for students includes both academic and enrichments. MTCS has put a significant time and money in the core areas of reading and math. With the emphasis on the cores it has limited the schools to provide any after school programming and elective classes which would develop students for the 21st century and increase school spirit and community connectedness.

All seat based students are tested in the fall using the NWES (MAPS test) for grades 3-10 in reading and math. The Qualitative Reading Inventory is given to all students in grades 1-10 and a pre-test for math is given to all students. This in addition to other factors provides information to teachers to place students in the appropriate classes and also to supply supplemental services to students in need which includes but is not limited to Title services, ELL services and Special Education services.

As documented on the MAPS test the percentage of students who took the test in the fall and also in the spring was 56% in reading and 43% in math. . MTCS is able to accelerate students learning who are enrolled and attending our school as documented by the growth scores on the MAPS test but the scores do not necessarily reflect proficiency on the MCA scores.





Innovative practices

Career Academies and City as a School programs offer students credits towards graduation and priceless experience with preparing for the careers and post-secondary options. Currently we have a CNA program, Trades Academy, Digital Media Academy and Sports Academy. City as a School provides internships for students to explore career interests while earning credit towards graduation.

MTCS will provide job and career training for 100+ students during the summer session and 100 students during the core school year through continued partnerships with the Minneapolis Employment and Training Program (METP, the Employment Action Center (EAC), Tree Trust and Youth Build which is a federal on the job training program for students aged 17-21.

This year each program has developed and implemented an intervention program which addresses a systematic approach to deal with chronic misbehavior and academic failure. The plans are systematic and designed to address each programs unique needs.

As mentioned before MTCS continues to use the North West Evaluation Assessment for grades 2-12 in both areas of reading and math. The QRI (Qualitative Reading Inventory) is administered for students 1-10th grades.

Professional Learning communities will analyze data from student monitoring sheets each month and make programming changes when necessary. All staff participates in PLC meetings each week for 60 minutes. All discussion and topics are related to student learning. Each month building directors will meet with teacher (core content area) and review student progress as documented on the student monitoring sheets. Teacher walkthroughs are completed each week. Administrators provide feedback to teachers immediately.

All administrators are encouraged to act as instructional leaders not just building managers. Two professors from the University of Minnesota meet with all administrators every other month to educate all of us how to effectively evaluate staff and hold crucial conversations.

Financial Management

MTCS continues to improve the processes for business management and financial review. The financial audit for FY2011 indicated a positive fund balance. MTCS is currently in the process of the financial audit for FY2012. The audit had no material weaknesses or other findings. A copy of the report was sent to MDE and PUC upon completion. MTCS uses School Business Solutions for accounting and has a successful partnership with School Business Solutions. The MTCS Board approved the budget for the 2011-2012 school year at the May 2011 board meeting. The budget was revised in March 2012. (Appendix D)

MTCS received the Finance Award from MDE in 2012.

Enrollment Policies

MTCS is a public charter school and accepts all students who apply to attend. When a program is full, the student is put on a waiting list until there is an opening. When a program opens a lottery is conducted. With two on line programs MTCS is able to accept students from all across the state of Minnesota.

Operational Performance and Challenges

MTCS Schools are mainly low income minority students. One of challenges is to provide the programming that will raise student learning. MTCS has used RTI as a way to raise scores. In addition, MTCS has emphasized community and parent involvement to reach out to low income minority parents.

MTCS admits many students who are behind in credits. MTCS is designing new programming including on line makeup credit in order to raise MTCS' graduation rate.

MTCS is challenged in trying to find adequate facilities for its students. MDE has approved a new facility for Banaadir Academy for the 2012-2013 school year. The program moved in August in 2012. There were challenges in getting the building ready for the first day of school. However, the new site was able to open for the first day of the 2012-2013 school year.

Like other schools, MTCS is challenged to the run its schools with the state holdback. MTCS has a 18% fund balance. In addition online vendors with large accounts have been willing to accommodate MTCS' cash flow plans and payment of outstanding bills. In addition, MTCS has established a line of credit with Franklin Bank to ensure school operations. With a holdback of 40% of state funding, MTCS has worked with Franklin Bank to establish a financial plan for the 2011-2012 school year. Franklin Bank will continue to assist MTCS with financial planning for the 2012-2013 school year.

Non-Profit Status

MTCS is registered with the Minnesota Secretary of State as a non-profit in good standing. (AppendixE)

Future Plans

In June 2012, MDE approved a new facility for the K-8 Banaadir leadership Academy. MTCS has leased space in the building that formerly housed New Millennium Academy. MTCS moved in to this space in August 2012. This has provided the K-8 program with a larger facility and a playground.

MTCS has hired a district Career Academy Coordinator. This person will assist all programs in providing career exploration and community involvement throughout the MTCS district. The coordinator will also be responsible for monitoring the existing career academies and will represent MTCS with the Perkins consortium.

MTCS will explore the possibility of lease aid for the St. Paul Independent Study site and for the Virtual High School. Currently, leases for these spaces are being paid from the general education fund. MTCS has ended the relationship with Community Learning Project and is committed to reestablishing a comprehensive Independent Study program in the space formerly occupied by Community learning Project in St. Paul.

The holdback of 40% in the 2011-2012 school year presented MTCS with cash flow challenges. MTCS was able to stay current with vendors but was not able to provide additional services to students due to lack of funds. MTCS has planned for the holdback again this year and will not be able to fully provide for the needs of the students due to not receiving funds after February. MTCS is hopeful that the Minnesota Legislature will come up with a plan during the next legislative session that is not detrimental to students.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patty Brostrom
Interim Superintendent

Mary Funk
Deputy Superintendent

Minnesota Transitions Charter School

2012-2013

Board of Directors

Chair: Mary Funk
Licensed Teacher
Deputy Superintendent
Term start: February 2011
Term expires: February 2014
Contact: mfunk@mtcs.org

Secretary/Treasurer: Mary Kay Higgins
MTCS Administrative Assistant
Term start: February 2011
Term expires: February 2014
Contact: mhiggins@mtcs.org

Director: Renisha Gray
Community Business Partner
Term start: February 2010
Term expires: February 2013
Contact: Renisha@hotmail.com

Director: Sheila Casey
Licensed Teacher
Term start: February 2010
Term expires: February 2013
Contact: scasey@mtcs.org

Director: Tim Cunningham
Licensed Teacher
Term Start: February 2011
Term expires: February 2013

Director: Janae Jones
Parent
Term Start: February 2012
Term Expires: February 2015

Director: Evans Onchiri
Licensed Teacher
Term Start: February 2012
Term End: February 2015

Director: Linda Wodele
Community Member
Term Start: September 2012
Term End: February 2015

