

HIGHLAND COMMUNITY SCHOOL

ANNUAL REPORT

2015-2016





**2015-2016
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Kathleen Ronco

Dear Highlanders,

So much has happened at Highland over the past year! Thanks to your support, we were able to provide our students with experiences that otherwise would not have been possible. I'm proud of what we have been able to accomplish together.

This report highlights some of those accomplishments including the development of the Community Cafe, Natural Grounds Redevelopment Project, partnerships with the community, and the ways our students are developing into leaders.

You are helping to create an example of what our broader community could be -- a diverse group of families learning and leading together in a supportive environment. Thank you for being part of the Highland Family.

Yet, growth does not come without change. After 13 years of outstanding service, Kathy Ronco has stepped down as Highland's leader. Kathy has helped create the peaceful stable Montessori community that we will continue to foster. Her legacy of thoughtfulness and open leadership will continue to guide us for years to come. During this transition, Dr. Mark Joerres will serve as interim director, helping to lead the school into the next phase of its journey. We are happy to welcome him as part of our community.

Although we tried to share many of the success from this year, it is difficult to fit them all into a 12-page document. It is challenging to convey the warmth of the staff, students, and parents. Capturing the buzz of excitement as the students prepare to share the results of their six-week research cycles is near impossible. And there is almost no way to thoroughly express the hope inspired by our diverse community. You just have to see it for yourself. I hope you'll come for a visit.

Highland is a nurturing environment that empowers and inspires our students, parents, faculty, and community. Thank you for helping us all reach our fullest potential!

Sincerely,

Nakia Gordon, PhD
2015-16 Board President

MISSION AND VISION

AT HIGHLAND COMMUNITY SCHOOL

We are a community of diverse families and educators working together to offer quality Montessori education in a nurturing environment that enriches, empowers, and inspires children to reach their potential and encourages parents to become responsible for and involved with their children's education.

We are changing the world by nurturing children and their families to be informed, compassionate, life-long learners who are a force for change in education, the community and society.

THE FOUR PILLARS OF A HIGHLAND EDUCATION

A MONTESSORI APPROACH

Cultivating Youth Leadership

COMMUNITY

Creating a Nurturing Place

ARTS

Honoring the Creative Spirit

CARE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Growing an Environmental Ethic

A Montessori Approach



At Highland, our students are leaders.

Each member of the Highland community has committed to help our students learn how to evaluate information while nurturing the students' compassion, curiosity, and sense of personal power. Through our classes and programs, we are raising the next generation of courageous leaders.

COMMUNITY CAFÉ

The Community Café is our approach to the traditional Montessori micro-economy. Managed by our adolescents, the café is open before and after school, Monday through Friday. Students learn entrepreneurial skills while selling coffee and treats to Highland visitors and parents. The students' critical thinking skills blossom when they learn from their mistakes. The adolescents build off of each other's knowledge and learn cooperative management.

"One afternoon, a group of alumni visited the school after the café had closed for the afternoon. They went down to the café to check out the changes and they returned upstairs to the adolescent classroom LIVID. The café was not cleaned and prepared up to their standards for the next morning. They had quite a few questions and words for their peers. It was wonderful to watch! That is what you want. You want to build the community knowledge to the point where everyone knows what the standards are and they are all invested in making sure we meet those standards."

- Chris Kjaer
2015-16 Adolescent Director



Cultivating Youth Leadership

A Montessori Approach

Our students are **empathetic lifelong learners and leaders**. Highland Community school is a place where children are free to choose and are held accountable for their choices. It is a community that embraces our differences and respects each individual's journey. Our staff and faculty model respect and kindness for our students and the students follow suit.

MONTESSORI MODEL UNITED NATIONS

Our Montessori Model United Nations program is a year-long project that leads our 6th graders through the academically rigorous process of becoming United Nations ambassadors. They spent all year researching difficult subjects like domestic violence and immigration issues. In March 2016, they participated in a global conference in New York City at the United Nations Assembly Hall. We were one of the few public schools in attendance. The experience of collaborating and negotiating with their peers from all over the world gave these students a perspective on leadership that is impossible to match in the classroom.

LOVING TO LEARN STARTS EARLY

Highland is a place where children love to learn and that love starts early. In our toddler community children ages 14 months to 3 years are empowered use their blossoming autonomy. In 2015-16, our teachers guided 12 students as they grew their self-confidence and learned to take care of their basic needs. Our toddler community is the only early childhood education program in Milwaukee where all the teachers are certified by the American Montessori Society.



Community

Highland is a community school.

In 1968, it was founded on the principles of parents working together to create a place that honors the intelligence, creativity, and sensitivity of children. Forty-eight years later, we still focus on creating a nurturing school for students and their families.

Highland parents are the backbone of our school. Each parent commits to volunteer for 36 hours each school year. That commitment governs our school, keeps the building and grounds beautiful, and helps our students succeed.

A Highland parent sums it up best:

"At Highland, we enroll the whole family."

GLOBAL YOUTH SERVICE DAY

In the 2015-16 school year, we concentrated on building on the community feel inside the school and extending it out into the wider Milwaukee community and the world. In partnership with the Nonprofit Center of Milwaukee and Youth Changing the World, Highland hosted Milwaukee's Global Youth Service Day Celebration. Our students and parents started the day by volunteering to clean up the neighborhood. After the hard work, the celebration began. With food, music, dancing, and a lot of laughter, attendees celebrated the positive impact of youth service in Milwaukee.



Creating a Nurturing Place



Arts

Our arts program builds community and deepens our awareness of the world. In the 2015-16 school year, the arts program at Highland helped students share their own unique messages with the world.

MILWAUKEE ART MUSEUM DOCENT PROGRAM

This past year's graduates of the Junior Docent program was one of our school's best, and according to director of the program at the Milwaukee Art Museum, one of the *strongest showings of any school* in the Milwaukee area. Last year's sixth year students spent long hours in the art room making reproductions from the museum's collection. Their presentations and creative responses were thoughtful, articulate, and very mature.

HIGHLAND COMMUNITY PLAYERS

The Highland Community Players is Highland's theatrical arts program. The Players have been producing raw and original works that respect the intelligence of their actors and audience. The 2015-16 school year was no exception. The Lower Elementary kids (grades 1-3) took center stage at the *4th Annual Highland Circus*, a school talent show that introduces young performers to performing in front of a crowd. The culmination of the season was the adolescent (grades 7 and 8) performance of Stephen Gregg's comedy, *This is a Test*. This final show was notably heartwarming because this 8th grade class began our drama program in 2009 when they were just 1st graders.

The Upper Elementary Play addressed the serious issues of labeling, stereotypes, and self-fulfilling prophecies in *The Bully, The Liar, & The Thief*. Fifty-four students took on a variety of roles, from acting to stage crew. It paid tribute to the Western film genre and included great music legends, including musicians who recorded in Grafton, WI. The show earned praise from local media outlets and a Citation of Commendation from State Representative Evan Goyke.



Care of the Environment

Children learn to love and respect the earth by getting their hands dirty. However, many children do not have the opportunity to connect with natural spaces on a regular basis. Therefore, connecting students to nature, embedding environmental education into the curriculum, and greening our school grounds is a top priority for Highland.

NATURAL GROUND REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The Natural Grounds Redevelopment Project is about planting and cultivating the seeds of a strong environmental ethic in our children. We are re-imagining our outdoor space to be a natural learning environment for us all. A few years ago, we began this journey by installing raised bed gardens during a parent volunteer day. We've been steadily modifying the grounds ever since. In 2015, we purchased the building from Milwaukee Public Schools which allowed us more freedom to alter the school grounds. Through a partnership with MMSD, three bioswales were installed on the property. We also partnered with Reflo to create the Phase 2 plan for the Natural Grounds that will guide us in future developments. We are a school committed to developing the child as a whole and taking in to consideration the significance of our interactions with the environment that sustains us. By sowing these seeds, our students influence their families and the community at large.

GREEN SCHOOL CONSORTIUM

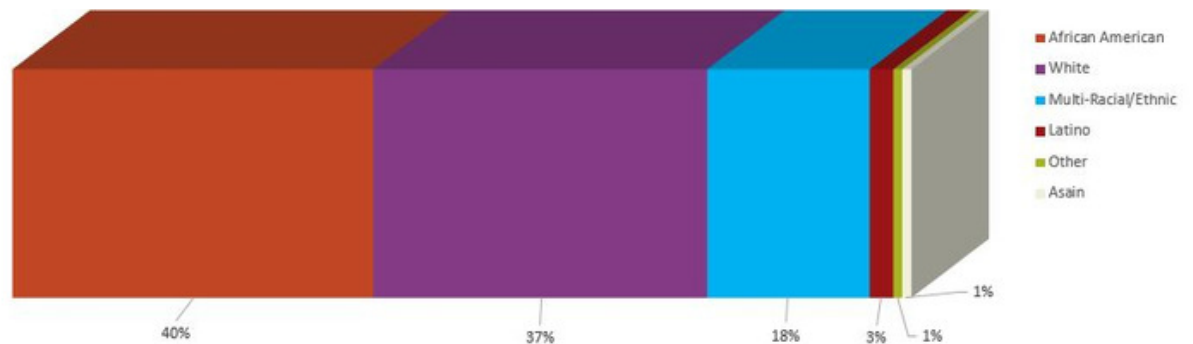
As members of the Green Schools Consortium of Milwaukee, Highland has quickly become a leader in the greening school grounds in Milwaukee and hosted the first ever Green Schools Design and Development Conference this past June. This conference brought together stakeholders to share green infrastructure plans and network together while inspiring more schools to break ground. We were proud to share our lessons learned and help other schools in their efforts!



Highland by the Numbers

We are a community of diverse families

% of students by race/ethnicity



We are proud of our graduates

- **20** students graduated in 2016
- **100%** of graduates were accepted to their first choice of high school

Parent involvement helps our students succeed

- **90%** of parents volunteered within the classrooms, helped with field trips, brought food, organized fundraisers, beautified our school, and much more!
- **4** parent education sessions were offered covering a variety of topics from Montessori education to discussing personal boundaries.



Our staff believe in a Highland education

- **32** faculty and staff send or sent their children to Highland
- **41%** of our faculty and staff have committed **5** years or more of their careers working at Highland & **9** have worked at Highland for **10** years or more

Numbers are great at giving you a snapshot but they don't tell the whole story. Come and see a Montessori education at Highland for yourself! We'd love to show you around the school. To schedule your tour, please contact Michaela Humpal, Co-Director of Community Resources at (414) 342-142.

THANK YOU

Thank you to the parents, grandparents, and friends of Highland Community School, who generously donate to our school. Your investments, sweat equity, time, in-kind donations, guidance, love, and support make Highland the wonderful place that it is.

Thank you for being a part of the Highland community!

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Arts@Large
Avenues West Association
Bader Philanthropies
City of Milwaukee
Disney
Divine Savior Holy Angels High School
Edge Grain, LLC
Fire Up Your Feet
First Stage
Fund for Lake Michigan
Global Leadership Fund
Greater Milwaukee Foundation
 Roper Family Education Fund
 Annette J. Roberts & Joan R. Robertson Fund for
 World Peace, World Law & Peace Education
Greater Milwaukee United Nations Association
Green Schools Consortium of Milwaukee
Greener Roofs & Gardens LLC
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Harley Davidson Foundation
Hartman Literacy and Learning Center
Herbert H. Kohl Charities
Jimmy John's
Kohl's Cares LLC
Little Giant Photography
Lowe's
Marquette University Students
Metro Market
Milwaukee Art Museum
Milwaukee Bucks
Milwaukee High School of the Arts
Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District
Morgan Stanley
Nature Conservancy
Nonprofit Center of Milwaukee
Northwestern Mutual Foundation
Partners Advancing Values in Education

Pick N' Save
Public Allies
Reflo
Rishi Tea
Daniel M. Soref Charitable Trust
Stone Creek Coffee
Sweet Water Foundation
Target
Third Man Records
To Solution Inc.
U.S. Bank Foundation
Urban Ecology Center
UW-Extension
Wisconsin Energies Foundation
Wisconsin Environmental Education

BIKE WALK EAT SPONSORS

BelAir Cantina
Boelter
CHCoakley
DreamBikes
GS Design
Gruber Law Offices, LLC
The Juice Kitchen
Mechanical Inc.
Palermo's
Public Allies
Quorum Architects, Inc.
Michael Soens
Stone Creek Coffee
Story Hill Renovations LLC
Target
ToSolutions
Urban Ecology Center
Wisconsin Bike Fed

FAMILY & FRIENDS

Anonymous (5)
 Darlene Arnold
 Dick Best
 Joseph Brien
 The Brindel Klug Family
 Mary & George Carian
 Jillian Esser
 The Curley DeLeo Family
 Ethan Davis
 Brian DeWindt
 Kevin Driscoll
 Rachel Eide
 Cecilia Salinas
 Nakia Gordon
 Sherita Greer
 Amy Gutowski
 Michael Haley
 The Hubing Duax Family
 The Humpal Family
 Eric Johnson

The Kimble Family
 Joel Kriofske
 Alexandra Kriofske Mainella
 Ronald Leggio
 Veronica Mancheno
 Mr. and Mrs. Richard Marx
 Mike and Paula McKean
 Donna Miller
 The Moss-Brown Family
 Trent Muller
 Lucia Murtaugh
 Leana Nakielski
 Rachel Neal
 The Nephew Family
 Nicholas Petty
 Kathleen Ronco
 Barbara Scotty
 Demetria Smith
 Stan Spence
 Amanda Taddey

Ivorena Taylor
 Caitlin Taylor
 The Wallock Family
 John Ward
 Michael Ward
 Barry Weber
 Stevie Weishan
 Christielle White
 Tracy Williams
 Mike and Mary Alice Williams
 Justin Williamsen
 Raven Wilson
 Marilyn Wiseman
 The Yeager Leggio Family
 Corey Zetts

Every effort was made to ensure that this list is accurate. If your name is not listed, or is listed incorrectly, please contact Michaela Humpal, Co-Director of Community Resources at (414) 342-1412.

Financial Statement

The Highland Community School Board of Directors and school administration report that all of our financial requirements have been met and policies and procedures are in place, including an annual independent financial audit, to ensure the highest standards of financial oversight. A copy of our audited financial statements for the year ending June 30, 2016, is available upon request.

Income

Childcare Revenue	\$807,503
Educational Revenue	\$3,171,924
Other Income (includes fundraising)	\$180,144
Total Income	\$4,159,571

Expenses

Educational & Programs	\$3,547,441
General & Administrative	\$386,152
Fundraising	\$36,808
Total Expenses	\$3,970,401

Excess of Income over Expenses \$189,170

Statement of Financial Position

Total Assets	\$3,207,994
Total Liabilities	\$1,618,980

Net Assets

Unrestricted Net Assets	\$1,242,620
Board Restricted Net Assets	\$166,563
Change in Net Assets	\$179,831
Total Net Assets	\$1,589,014

Total Net Assets

HIGHLAND COMMUNITY SCHOOL

"Free the child's potential, and you
will transform him into the world."

- Maria Montessori

