



Press Release

February 9, 2018—Kato Public Charter School (formerly known as RiverBend Academy) is being considered for non-renewal of its charter contract with its authorizer, Novation Education Opportunities (NEO). By statute, a charter school must have a contract with an authorizer to operate in Minnesota. The school has a grading rubric in four performance areas: academic, school climate, operations, and financial management. To receive a contract renewal, the school must earn a passing grade in each of these areas. NEO is proposing the nonrenewal of the charter contract because the overall academic and school climate performance targets were not met despite real improvement in several areas. If that decision becomes final, the school will be dissolved at the end of the school year. The KPCS Board believes that there is a need for the school in our community, and a request for a hearing with the NEO board has been made.

KPCS is an open-enrollment school and families choose it for a variety of reasons. Invariably, they state that their needs were not being met through other public education options. The school serves a high at-risk population with students coming from Mankato and surrounding communities. Approximately 40% of students receive special education services and 50-60% qualify for the Free or Reduced Meal Program. While some students are academically average or above average, the school has a large share of students who experience a variety of barriers that impact their academic achievement, such as severe trauma and housing insecurity. The school works with various community organizations to provide supports to students and families.

In the academic performance area, the school fell short of the target by 1.56%. This score is heavily influenced by MCA and ACT scores. NWEA scores, which measure growth rather than proficiency, demonstrate high levels of improvement.

In the school climate performance area, KPCS has made impressive growth in the current and previous years. While the overall score is only 37.5%, it is calculated as an average of the previous three years. The current level of achievement in this area is 75%, well above the passing grade.

The school earned full points in both operations and financial management. Poor financial management is often the cause for charter school closings. KPCS has earned the Minnesota Department of Education School Finance Award for several years in a row, as well as the NEO Stewardship in Finance Award.

The school is requesting testimonials from current and previous students and families to demonstrate the positive impact of Kato Public Charter School. Input from the broader community is also welcomed, as KPCS's impact extends beyond the school walls. Letters of support and questions about the renewal process should be directed to the school director, Claudia Madrigal, at cmadrigal@katopcs.org.

Empowering Enrichment & Innovation

District 4066-07 | 110 N 6th St, Mankato, MN 56001 | Ph: 507-387-5524 | Fax: 507-387-5680 | katopcs.org