



Response to Notice to Revoke the Charter

April 19, 2024

Dear Washington State Charter School Commission,

On January 26th, our school was forever changed when the instructor of our older elementary class was terminated by the Head of School for failing to meet his contractual requirement of being a licensed teacher in Washington state. Upon being terminated, he immediately sent an email from his private account to all the parents in his class outlining months of issues he had been saving up for this moment. The concerns he raised were real, even though many were caused directly by him. Learning that he was able to operate in such an unsafe manner for months on end without any formal discipline was alarming and caused an extreme reaction from many people in our school community. Then, for this former teacher to actively reach out to multiple families, including our own, to recruit them to leave the school in protest of his termination, was devastating. Since our school is so small, departure of some of these families caused a dramatic impact to our enrollment, de-stabilizing our financial model.

As the dust has settled and we, as a community, began working together, creating safe spaces for open dialogue to share our stories and opinions, we found one common theme: **Pullman Community Montessori (PCM) is a special and important place for our students, and we are invested in its success.** We are a group of concerned parents, caregivers, educators, and community members who have gathered together in this time of crisis to respond to the needs of our children and students and their right to a safe and high-quality education. Together, we are collaborating and cooperating to formally submit this response to the Notice to Revoke the Charter of Pullman Community Montessori (PCM).

First and foremost, we understand that there have been very real problems brought forward and major changes will need to happen should PCM be allowed to continue serving students in the future while honoring the commitments outlined in its charter. We are moving quickly, coordinating efforts, pivoting, reacting, planning, and working together in ways this school has never seen before.



Our parent community has organized, re-establishing the Support and Coordination Council (SCC), a group designed to ensure that there is a two-way flow of communication between school and families as well as coordinating resources and streamlining advocacy for PCM. At the Commission revocation meeting, with less than 24 hours notice, nearly a third of our parent community came to voice their support for the school, many of them parents of students with disabilities, and shared their stories of how the school has been critical to their students' success. **Please take these important voices and experiences into account.**

Our staff, despite these tumultuous circumstances, have continued to show up each day to serve and support their students because of their unwavering belief in the vision and values upon which PCM was founded and the need for this school to continue to be an option in our community for the future.

Since receiving the school's first ever Notice of Perceived Problem (NPP) on February 20th, 2024, **we have worked quickly and tirelessly over the past eight weeks to respond to the concerns raised by our partners at the Charter School Commission (CSC)** by making significant changes. Many of us are doing this while also trying to understand where we are and how we got here. Being a newly organized group, composed mainly of parent volunteers, we are also focused on educating ourselves on policies and laws related to the charter school sector to ensure we are compliant in our efforts and responses.

During this time, **we have overhauled our school leadership and have almost completely refreshed our board of trustees**, bringing in a more robust and energetic representation of our community. Our board, once stagnant and barely able to function due to low participation, is now 7 members strong, comprised of parents and grandparents, who are ready and able to contribute their personal and professional talents and time to benefit our school. We have placed our Head of School on administrative leave and secured the talents of a former charter school principal and special education director, Jeneille Branen, to support our staff, students and families as we stabilize our school and navigate this challenging situation.

We are ready to continue putting in the work and ask that you give us the chance to shape our school into what it was meant to be, a program that offers whole-child education personalized to students needs that will allow all students to reach their full potential. **Please allow us to remain open with conditions to secure funding for next school year and time to fulfill and monitor our current corrective action plan for the issues that you have identified at our school and take it to the next level.**



In the information that follows, we have provided an update on how we have addressed immediate concerns and outlined a plan to update our school model to bring it into financial viability and compliance and deliver on the assurances made in the charter contract. Through coordinated efforts, we will update our school in a sustainable, data-driven way and identify the right leadership. We'll retain the core model of our kids leading their learning in our community using proven methods-- Expeditionary Learning and Place-Based Learning with Montessori influence. We have partners standing by ready to help us with funding resources and educational expertise.

Please, keep in mind that at PCM, 24% of our students have IEPs, as compared to 14.8% in our local school district. Despite the strength of our local district's educational program, we know that one-size-does-not-fit-all, and that families, particularly those with students that have been systematically underserved, need a school like ours. This was the intent of our original charter application, aligned to the intent of the Washington state charter law. Closing PCM will be devastating to our small, rural community. Our kids don't have alternatives like in larger cities. Revoking our charter means abandoning our students and telling them *they don't deserve options*. **You have the opportunity to tell them something different, and we're here to do the work.**

In service,

Robin McDonald, Chair of the Board of Trustees
Bev Wolff, Secretary of the Board of Trustees
Alan MacPhee, Treasurer of the Board of Trustees
Chris Albano, Board of Trustees
Efren Ramos, Board of Trustees
Stephanie Bixby, Board of Trustees
Michelle Bosley, Board of Trustees
Kimberly Casper, Student Support Council President
Jeneille Branen, PCM Interim Head of School
Dave Schneider, PCM Teacher Leader



I. Leadership Changes and Capacity Overview

Given the seriousness of the concerns raised, we have identified the need and made significant changes to our leadership at both the board and staff level.

Board of Trustees

Since the CSC's initial concerns were brought to the Board of Trustees, all but one member has been replaced. Bev Wolff, who was a founding member of the board, remains an active member, but stepped down as Board Chair on March 14th, 2024, transitioning Chair duties to Robin McDonald, a local business owner and parent of two PCM students. Chair McDonald brings a fresh, new perspective to the board as well as extensive management and operational expertise. Given her extensive background in school leadership and operations as well as her experience with charter school compliance, Trustee Wolff was elected to serve as Board Secretary.

On March 14th, 2024, the board also added two new trustees, Chris Albano and Alan MacPhee. Trustee Albano, a Communications and Electronics System Expert, brings deep expertise in problem analysis and solutions as well as a personal commitment to the school's success as a parent of a PCM student. Trustee MacPhee had been recruited to the board through a thoughtful and intentional vetting process by former Board Treasurer, Aubree Guyton. Director MacPhee is the grandfather of a PCM student as well as a retired Certified Public Account with previous non-profit board experience. When Trustee Guyton submitted her resignation, Alan was ready and accepted the role of treasurer on March 22nd, 2024.

Trustee Ana Burton, who had served on the board since November 14, 2023, and brought experience in fundraising, marketing and education, submitted her resignation effective April 5, 2024, citing concerns around her personal and professional reputation as well as a lack of bandwidth to commit to the current tumultuous situation. At a working session of the board on April 4 2024, board members interviewed three additional candidates. All were invited to join the board, and all accepted. Trustees Michelle Bosley, Efren Ramos, and Stephanie Bixby are all parents of PCM students, and have been actively involved in the Support and Coordination Council (SCC). Trustee Bosley has an extensive HR background and works in Child and Family Support Services for Boost Collaborative. Her volunteer experience includes teaching ESL to Salvadoran refugees, serving on the board of Families Together of Whitman County, and now working with Boost to implement the Parent to Parent program. Trustee Ramos is a local business owner.



He also serves as secretary for the City of Pullman’s Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Committee and is a coach for youth sports in his spare time. Trustee Bixby has marketing experience through working with her family and promoting their game streams with social media. Together, the directors bring institutional knowledge, clear eyes about the issues at hand and the work needed to address them, and importantly, a deep personal commitment to the school’s success.

School Leadership

As of March 25, 2024, the Board hired Jeneille Branen to serve as the Interim Head of School, while the current Head of School is on administrative leave. Ms. Branen has been an educator for 25 years and was most recently the Executive Director of Palouse Prairie Charter School for six years. She has an Ed.S. in school administration and was a founding member of Palouse Prairie and held a number of administrative positions over her nine year tenure there. During her time at Palouse Prairie, she was in a position where the Board fired their school leader after one year in his position. Ms. Branen stepped into a co-leadership model to turn the school around, which occurred successfully. The school became a credentialed Expeditionary Learning (EL) Education School and per its [2022 Authorizer Performance Report](#), which reflects the outcomes Ms. Branen achieved during her tenure as the school leader, the school had “Honor” Standing academically, operationally, and financially. Her strengths include building a strong staff culture, providing high-quality professional development and supporting teachers to reach their highest potential and, thus, increase student achievement.

In addition, during her time at Palouse Prairie, Ms. Branen, hired and trained current PCM Upper Adolescent teacher leader, Dave Schneider. He served on Ms. Branen’s leadership team, and she encouraged him to pursue school leadership. He is a big reason Ms. Branen has agreed to support PCM. Seeing the need and knowing he has support and the right set of skills, Dave has expressed interest in leading our school into the future and applying for the Head of School position once the hiring process is initiated, should the school remain open. The board will initiate a hiring process when the Commission’s decision is made.

To address the effectiveness of our current model as well as its financial viability, Mr. Schneider, has been working closely with Interim Head of School, Jeneille Branen, to identify high-level changes that will uphold our Montessori/Place-Based/Project-Based Learning roots while incorporating data-driven and research-informed curriculum. To achieve this result, they will utilize our current partnerships with The National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector, The Teton Science School, and Instruction Partners. If



approved, the 3-year dual-teacher Montessori model will give way to a multi-grade, project/place-based learning-focused, single instructor looping model, to continue to capture the benefits of a multiage community while achieving more manageable class sizes and affordable staffing ratios.

School Safety and Use of Restraint

As parents and grandparents to students at PCM, as well as the governing body to the school, safety is doubly paramount to us as a board. We understand that the Commission is also very concerned about our students’ safety and its obligations to ensure it as an oversight body. To that end, we think that it’s very important to define and contextualize what is occurring at our schools as it relates to restraint. As a school, we have seen an uptick in the need to use restraint with a small group of students at our school, based on their specific needs and challenges. This uptick occurred this school year, as is made evident by our prior year data in the table below. Last year, PCM had a 7% restraint occurrence, as compared to rates as high as 35% at a neighboring elementary school, from which students have matriculated to PCM. We share this data because **PCM is not unique in having students that have challenging behaviors, and we are committed to reducing the use of restraint to address those behaviors.**

Data for School Year 2022-2023

DistrictName	SchoolName	Enrollment	Suppression	Distinct number of students restrained	Total number of incidents of Restraint	Number of distinct students injured during restraint	Number of incidents of restraint where a student was injured	Number of staff injuries reported	incidents: 1 person res (basket, etc)
Pullman School District	District Total	2919	No Suppression	25	249	47	47	135	40
Pullman Community Montessori	District Total	109	No Suppression	4	8	0	0	0	8
Pullman School District	Pullman High School	939	No Suppression	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pullman School District	Franklin Elementary	285	No Suppression	7	65	1	1	45	8
Pullman School District	Jefferson Elementary	356	No Suppression	8	125	41	41	65	23
Pullman School District	Lincoln Middle	616	No Suppression	4	48	5	5	20	8
Pullman School District	Sunnyside Elementary	367	No Suppression	4	8	0	0	1	1
Pullman School District	Kamiak Elementary	400	No Suppression	2	3	0	0	4	0
Pullman Community Montessori	Pullman Community	109	No Suppression	4	8	0	0	0	8

Source: <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/student-success/health-safety/school-safety-center/restraint-and-isolation>



Our educational systems of inclusion are often met with punishment, exclusion rather than understanding and support, which is not the case at PCM. Over the last month, the team of educators consisting of the Nautilus team, teachers and administration alongside families have been delving into the root causes of the students' challenging behaviors and creating space and resources to support these children and also create a more safe learning environment for all students. The staff have been using an approach grounded in research (CPI, Mandt and Dr. Ross Greene) related to offering empathy, collaboration, problem-solving and skill building. Students that exhibit challenging behaviors are a result of a lack of essential skills and a mismatch between their expectations and their abilities. Our team, in collaboration with the families, have worked together to create a sensory room where students that are experiencing demands that exceed their abilities have a space to take a sensory break before escalating in frustration and violence. This space is also providing a classroom environment experience, where our school counselor is teaching specific lessons to the students to build the skills they are lacking to be more successful in the general education classroom. They are also learning to advocate for themselves for when they need a sensory break when feeling overloaded.

The data we have documented shows that this approach is very supportive of students. During the week of March 25th, we had 7 restraints, 6 elopements and 1 in-school suspensions. By the week of April 15th, after implementation of this space, we have had zero restraints, in-school suspensions or out of school suspensions. We have had one elopement. Families have expressed appreciation for the work we have been doing because they are already seeing a difference in their child, which is carrying over into the home life.

II. Immediate Concerns and How They Have Been Addressed

The table below outlines the immediate steps taken by the school to address the concerns posed in the Notices of Perceived Problems and the Immediate Correction of Safety Deficiencies notice issued by the Commission. Many of these things were put into place immediately upon receiving the notice. Updates to other action items are also presented below, as well as details about how these issues will be subject to on-going monitoring by the school and the board.



Areas of Concern	School's Response	On-Going Monitoring
<p>Student Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Elopements ● Restraints ● Other Safety Incidents ● Fostering a Fear-Free Safety Culture 	<p>Daily Data Tracking and Reporting: The school is engaged in a CAP process with the Commission to address safety concerns. It has already been monitoring and reporting all incidents of student safety to the Commission via the Safety and Attendance tracker linked here. Per this data, the number of elopements and restraints has dramatically reduced over the past five weeks of monitoring and with the addition of a Sensory Room in 102. Communication with parents of the students that were part of the elopement and restraint count has also evidenced improvements in behavior at home.</p> <p>Safety: Below is a summary of key components of the current CAP that are in place to address student safety concerns.</p> <p>Ensuring and having student safety at school and on the bus: All staff have been assigned PCM Safety Plan & Refresh Training in SafeSchools. This comprehensive training will achieve the following goals and will be fully completed by staff by 4/19/24:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure there is a school-wide understanding of the concerns expressed by Commission Staff and the planned school response to address these concerns. It is imperative all staff are aware and ready to actively 	<p>The ESD 101 Safety Assessment scope has a follow-up component to ensure the school has implemented the recommendations.</p> <p>The board will continue to monitor the Safety and Attendance Tracker linked to the monthly Board Dashboard as well as respond to any anonymous tips and complaints made via WA FAB. We would expect to see numbers decrease over time and if they don't, we would be intervening earlier and more frequently based on weekly data.</p> <p>Newly revised Safety and Attendance tracking to begin 4/22/2024 which will break down the incidents by classroom, enabling more honed teacher coaching.</p>



Areas of Concern	School's Response	On-Going Monitoring
	<p>participate in the response as this is a school-wide effort to improve process and transparency. Much of the response system is a review of what has been established already this year through the beginning of the year PD and mid-year PD.</p> <p>2. Review critical processes, policies, and procedures that enable PCM to be successful in our response to concerns and ensure we maintain a welcoming and safe environment for our staff, students, and families.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nautilus Protocol 2. De-escalation practices (EMILY & TMC) 3. Community Agreements (School Wide) 4. Restraint and Isolation Protocol 5. Elopement Response Protocol 6. Discipline Policy, Procedure, & Matrix 7. Major Incident Process Overview & Threat Assessment Process 8. Transportation Expectations & Incident Protocol 9. Student & Family Handbook 2023-24 10. Child Study Process 11. Harassment, Intimidation, & Bullying (HIB) Policy, Procedure, and Curriculum (JARED) 12. PCM Grievance and Conflict Resolution Policy & 	



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	<p style="text-align: center;">Procedures - classroom, staff, school</p> <p>The interim Head of School reviewed the Threat Assessment Process . The school reviewed and will enforce its HIB policy and procedure and school bus behavior policy outlined in the Transportation Handbook. These are found in the Family Handbook and shared with each enrolled family.</p> <p>ESD 101 Safety Assessment: The Board is working with the Comprehensive School Safety Specialist at ESD 101 to obtain and implement school safety coaching and support, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A desk review of the school's Emergency Plan, Safety Plan, and safety related policies and procedures ● Review of the trainings staff have received with respect to safety ● Review of the school's safety related data (PCM will provide data to ESD 101) ● A walkthrough of the school and classrooms ● Interviewing the school Safety Officer/Incident Commander and other staff ● An analysis of elopement data and recommendations on strategies to reduce elopements. ● Issuing a report from ESD 101 with findings and 	



Areas of Concern	School's Response	On-Going Monitoring
	<p>recommendations, including training or resources that can be offered to improve the school's implementation to be shared with the Commission within 3 days of receipt from ESD 101, and no later than June 1st, 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If recommendations are made, a follow-up walkthrough will be conducted to observe implementation fidelity and effectiveness. <p>Schoolwide MTSS Review: The board is working with interim school leadership Jeneille Branen, who is a former charter public school principal, Title 1 Director, and Special Education Director. Ms. Branen has been reviewing the MTSS procedures, including Tiers 1-3 behavioral and academic interventions, as part of her interim leadership by April 26th. In addition, the Board is establishing a contract with Dr. Mike Dunn, Professor of Special Education and Literacy at WSU Vancouver, to conduct a desk review of the MTSS plan and remote classroom observations to evaluate the school's academic intervention. After reviewing the current processes, a plan of action will be developed to support all students to be highly engaged in a safe learning environment. The school will share the results of this review with the Commission and the Board within 3 business days once it is shared with the school, no later than June 30th, 2024.</p> <p>Supporting Staff with Challenging Student</p>	



Areas of Concern	School's Response	On-Going Monitoring
	<p>Behaviors: The school contracts with the True Measure Collaborative (TMC), which builds educator capacity to serve students with disabilities well through coaching, PD, and TA. See here for scope of work with the TMC. The TMC is working closely with the Director of Special Education and Interim Head of the School to identify high leverage moves to support staff in de-escalation teaching strategies and also developing plans to support students in Tier 2 and 3 related to behaviors that are in alignment with school policies and special education law.</p> <p>The TMC engaged in site visits on March 25 and April 17, 2024. Feedback from the visits was used to develop and implement professional development about de-escalation strategies in the moment for Instructional Guides and Instructional Aides by the Interim Head of School.</p> <p>PCM's Interim Head of School, Director of Special Education and School Counselor are working with staff to address concerns relating to effective de-escalation and addressing behaviors to reduce restraints and elopements. These methods include specific targeted professional development, classroom observations, coaching cycles, communicating with and partnering with families and following our discipline policy to apply ISS and OSS, if and when appropriate.</p> <p>The Interim Head of the School has crafted a</p>	



Areas of Concern	School's Response	On-Going Monitoring
	<p>professional development regimen covering Classroom Management and Conflict Resolution specifically related to opportunities identified during observations and began implementing this training during designated professional development time which is scheduled every Friday at 1pm beginning April 5th, 2024.</p> <p>Cultivating a Fear-Free Safety Culture: The nonprofit the WA Family Advocacy Board has agreed to host a web form for the school community to share anonymous safety concerns that then get shared with the board for addressing to reduce concerns about retaliation or fears about reporting. This has been implemented and will be in place for the duration of this Safety Corrective Action Plan. The school advertises the anonymous safety web form via ParentSquare.</p>	
<p>Financial Viability and Oversight</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SY 2023-2024 • SY 2024-2025 and beyond 	<p>Financial Oversight: The newly-installed Chair and Treasurer of the board both have advanced financial literacy, with the former being a business owner and the latter a financial expert as defined by the SEC.</p> <p>Financial forecasts through the end of the fiscal year are analyzed and reviewed on a monthly basis by the finance committee and the full board.</p> <p>Financial Viability: The Board Finance Committee and</p>	<p>The Finance Committee and Board are monitoring the budget and all expenditures at monthly meetings. These groups have been meeting more frequently over the past 8 weeks to scenario plan. The scope of support provided by back-office provider Joule Growth Partners can be found here.</p>



Areas of Concern	School's Response	On-Going Monitoring
	<p>our back-office provider have worked extensively on our 5-year budget to understand what it will take to be viable in the near-term and sustainable in the long-term. For SY 23-24, the school will end the year with 14 days of cash on hand. A small increase of funding via a legislative budget proviso from the 2024 legislative session improved the school's current cash position. However, even small enrollment losses dramatically affect our cash position.</p> <p>Here is the current 5-year budget and graphical summary, dated April 11, 2024.</p> <p>Key drivers for sustainability that are reflected in the budget, beyond this school year are meeting enrollment targets as the school scales, fundraising for SY 24-25 to fill a 500k cash gap, and the ability to operate a modified educational model with reduced staffing (see section II. Updates to Program Terms and Requests for Contract Amendments to Program Terms below). Approval and implementation of these staffing and model changes are critical for the financial model to work. The WA Charters Board Finance Committee is also recommending the full forgiveness of the operational and facilities loans that PCM holds with WA Charters. This will be a savings to the budget in future years, as well.</p> <p>Fundraising: We have worked diligently to update our financial model to move PCM closer to a place of</p>	



Areas of Concern	School's Response	On-Going Monitoring
	<p>viability, while working to ensure that the educational model has been updated in a way that is responsive to our students needs and the outcomes that we've seen to date. A significant funding gap still remains for SY 24-25. We have been in close contact with funding partners at WA Charters and the Gates Foundation, and both have expressed the potential for financial support for the 24-25 school year that will support our cash position and the redesign to our school model, respectively. Funding commitments would be contingent on satisfactory progress on the non-financial issues that the school is addressing via the revocation process and demonstration of a sustainable long-term financial model. <i>Thereby, we are requesting the ability for the school to stay open, with conditions to secure funding for next year.</i></p> <p>Enrollment: A parent survey has shown that of the 12 current families that submitted their responses, 66% would matriculate their students into 9th grade at PCM and 33% were on the fence. Based on enrollment results from the annual lottery performed on March 28, 2024 as well as 85 students from returning families who have completed an intent to return, a total of 108 students are planning to attend for SY 24-25, should the school remain open. Our budget is based on 108 students.</p>	



Areas of Concern	School's Response	On-Going Monitoring
	<p>The current facility allows for this planned grade level growth and the current staffing model anticipates it. The financial model for the school moves toward sustainability once a 9th grade is added. This has always been the financial model upon which the school has been premised. Fulfilling it requires hitting enrollment targets. Please see here for a high-level school enrollment model plan.</p>	
<p>Charter Contract Compliance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epicenter Submissions • OSPI Reporting 	<p>PCM's current Epicenter on-time rating is 67%. We are working with the Commission to understand why this rating is as such because we have submitted the most recent deliverables on-time.</p> <p>The board continues to monitor compliance deliverables and timely submission via the monthly Compliance Tracker</p>	<p>The board continues to monitor compliance deliverables and timely submission via the monthly Compliance Tracker</p> <p>The Interim HOS and Board Chair weekly meetings will review this compliance submission data along with the data on this check-in form.</p>
<p>Board Capacity and Oversight</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bylaw Compliance • Resolving Grievances 	<p>Bylaw Compliance and Oversight: The bylaws require 5-11 trustees and the position of chair and secretary to be filled. We are in compliance with our board bylaws. We have seven board members and a board chair, secretary, and treasurer. The finance committee includes two officers of the Support & Coordination Council (parent group).</p> <p>Our trustees have fulfilled reporting and training requirements for board members in a timely way, and</p>	<p>The board will utilize BoardonTrack coaching and evaluation tool to monitor board and HOS effectiveness. The board has access to support from BoardonTrack via this scope of work and to WA Charters board supports included in this scope. The board chair will be attending the April Board Chair Roundtable hosted by WA Charters and BoardonTrack and the annual WA</p>



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	<p>they hold a diverse range of relevant expertise to oversee a charter public school and nonprofit entity. See resumes here and capacity summary above.</p> <p>Grievance Policy: We are working with our parent group the SCC to review policies for compliance, clarity, relevance, and redundancy in partnership with board members. They are currently going through a second review right now before they are submitted for approval. This stakeholder feedback is critical to ensuring the policy is clear, legal, and accessible to all.</p>	<p>Charters conference. The Board Chair and Secretary have also received coaching from BoardonTrack's Governance Coach, including an observation and feedback on a monthly board meeting.</p> <p>In partnership with the BoardonTrack Governance Coach, a new board member onboarding document has been created to ensure new trustees receive a consistent message, have access to resources, and understand their responsibilities within their first 90 days.</p>
<p>Educational Program Term #1</p>	<p>The OE classroom and adolescent classroom are operating separately for all instructional time.</p> <p>To address the need for a second teacher in both rooms through the end of year to facilitated these separate classes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The older elementary classroom is staffed by teacher of record Jordan Bovee, and we are completing the hiring process for an IA who will start on 4/26/24. ● The adolescent classroom is staffed by teacher 	<p>The interim Head of School conducts classroom observations once a week and will monitor and coach the instructors and IAs in these classrooms. The interim HOS will then report qualitative and quantitative data on these classrooms to the Board Chair in their regular check-ins.</p>



Areas of Concern	School's Response	On-Going Monitoring
	<p>of record Dave Scheider and the IA is Shane Davis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> as of 4/1/2024. Shane most recently served as a SpEd IA at PCM. 	
<p>Head of School Accountability</p>	<p>The PCM Board initiated a third-party investigation into the allegations against the Head of School. The board engaged the Schwabe legal firm, but due to a miscommunication, they were no longer able to continue conducting the investigation. At this time, the board is currently working to identify a different firm to conduct this investigation to ensure we have data regarding the allegations. Also, at this time, the Head of School remains on administrative leave until further notice. The board has kept the Commission apprised of these changes.</p> <p>Current interim Head of School is Jenielle Branen (resume). The Board Chair is meeting with her daily to check in and the full board gets updates at regular board meetings. At the moment, the board is meeting twice per month.</p>	<p>The plan for hiring the HOS will commence if the school is allowed to stay open. An updated job description/requirements will be developed and posted. The school will evaluate all internal and external applicants to find the most qualified candidate.</p> <p>Our current adolescent and acclaimed community leader, Mr. Dave Schneider (bio), has shown interest in the Head of School position. He has leadership training and coaching and is a strong instructional leader. Here is a link to an article about Dave's instructional and community leadership.</p>



III. Updates to Curriculum and Instructional Design and Request for Contract Amendments to Program Terms

Over the past three months, a group of stakeholders have been meeting to review concerns about PCM and make plans for a sustainable high-quality school model moving forward. These plans include added educational, operational, and financial expertise and capacity. They include reviewing elements of our school model that are working pedagogically and financially and those that are not. They included assessing community demand for enrollment in PCM, if certain model changes were to occur, with the understanding that these must first be contractually approved, but also knowing that demonstration of community demand and support are critical for approval and viability. What follows is an overview of what we have determined is the best model to move PCM forward both academically and financially and a request for the Commission to consider contract amendments to two program terms to enable it to take shape. More detailed work would need to be completed by the instructional team to bring these changes to life, but we put these initial details before the Commission to understand the allowability to make these changes by this fall, which will support our students' learning and our school's financial position.

Revisiting the Effectiveness of the PCM Instructional Model

The implementation of our current charter did not result in the academic achievement we expected for our students. Challenges we experienced were due to a combination of insufficient planning time for teachers to develop curriculum based on state standards and student needs, the inability to recruit and retain qualified Montessori staff to facilitate a high-fidelity Montessori model, inconsistent implementation of personalized student work plans aligned to state standards, and a lack of clarity for students in how to engage in extensive uninterrupted work blocks (especially those new to the model). This is reflected in low math and ELA student achievement outcomes from our first three years of operation. Thereby, we are requesting changes to two program terms to enable us to address these outcomes in a way that is research-backed and responsive to our students' needs. We have carefully reviewed the Curriculum and Instructional Design section of the originally approved charter application and provide relevant updates to the section in the table below. In addition, we have provided sample student schedules to help the Commission visualize what these changes would look like, at a high-level.



EDUCATION PROGRAM TERM #1:

Approved Element	Proposed Element Change
<p><i>Developmentally appropriate age-grouped classrooms</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three-year blocking of ages by developmental appropriateness in accordance with international Montessori standards. • Classrooms feature a dual certificated teacher paired with a trained classroom assistant with paraprofessional certification. • Specialized services for special education students (SpEd), ELL, highly capable students (HiCap), and others will be provided in the general education classroom, with staffing support to meet the needs of all students. • Teachers employ an integrated, place-based, Montessori curriculum aligned with all state standards. 	<p><i>Developmentally appropriate age-grouped classrooms</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-grade blocking of ages by developmental appropriateness • Classrooms feature a certificated teacher with expertise to instruct the assigned developmental grade paired with a trained classroom assistant when feasible. • Specialized services for special education students (SpEd), ELL, highly capable students (HiCap), and others will be provided in the general education classroom to the greatest extent possible based on student needs, with staffing support to meet the needs of all students. • Teachers employ an integrated, place-based, Montessori-inspired curriculum aligned with all state standards.
Rationale and Research Basis	Observable Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research shows that without the ability to properly implement the Montessori Model with fidelity, particularly in grades participating in state testing (3-8) due to the 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developmentally appropriate mixed-age classrooms: Classroom age groupings will adhere to the developmentally appropriate groupings defined by student academic and social emotional assessment



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increased accountability demands of both the Montessori Model and implementation of state assessments, the quality and rigor of the academic program greatly decreases (Flemming et.al., 2023). The Montessori Model holds a rigorous demand for teacher Montessori certification and Washington State requires that teachers also hold an Elementary Education Certification. This dual certification requirement can create barriers to recruitment and fidelity to the implementation of the Montessori Model, especially in a small community with a smaller talent pool.

- By transitioning the school to be Montessori-inspired, the school would be able to focus on hiring high-quality, Washington State elementary certified teachers and allows for a longer runway to staff on Montessori-inspired practices.
- Kindergarten and first grade will remain Montessori-focused. The proximate Montessori preschool will continue to be a feeder for PCM with continuing the Montessori-inspired model. This also supports the school with recruiting teachers that are dual-certified in Elementary Education and Montessori.

scores which will be reviewed quarterly to determine transition needs and grouping shifts. On-going professional development on data-driven decision making to inform developmentally appropriate groupings will be implemented.

2. **Transitions and progression:** Mixed-aged classrooms feature smooth transitions both throughout the day and as students progress through age groupings. Students will focus on their personalized learning goals both in ability matched groupings and independently. Evidence of effectiveness will be measured through curriculum-based assessments and interim assessments (including NWEA MAP).
3. **Standards-aligned curriculum:** Grade level CCSS-aligned curriculum will be fully integrated in all age groupings. The school will implement place-based, project-based activities and units aligned to state standards based curriculum in science and social studies. The school already has established partnerships with the Teton Science School, which specializes in



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PCM has seen some early success implementing the Montessori model in the lower primary grades.

- Starting in grade 5, Washington state class size funding is reduced which also can create a financial barrier to having Instructional Assistants in every classroom. While the school would continue to prioritize having an IA in every classroom to the greatest extent possible, we would like to propose that this is removed as a program term requirement.

place-based learning and the new instructional leadership has expertise in Expeditionary Learning. These are two potential curriculum for standards-aligned place- and project-based learning in science and social studies. Teachers will guide students to set individual goals and track their progress based on curriculum based assessment and interim assessments. On-going professional development on data-driven decision making to improve curriculum delivery will be implemented.

EDUCATION PROGRAM TERM #2

Approved Element

Self-directed learning environment

- Morning and afternoon blocks of uninterrupted work time build focus and respects students' work.
- Students build agency over their education by taking increasing ownership in the creation of personalized work plans (PWP) that incorporate their interests, setting SMART goals, reflecting on progress, and recalibrating.

Proposed Element Change

Self-directed learning environment

- Morning and afternoon blocks will consist of structured time spent on core content subjects (math and ELA).
- Students build agency over their learning through place-based, Montessori-inspired projects.
- Learner-centered classrooms, where freedom is



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- Learner-centered classrooms, where freedom is expanded with show of responsibility, builds intrinsic motivation. Flexible work groups, where students may work alone or in teacher-devised groups, provide another avenue for building agency, displaying responsibility, practicing collaboration skills, and participating in group problem solving.

expanded with show of responsibility, builds intrinsic motivation. Flexible work groups, where students may work alone or in teacher-devised groups, provide another avenue for building agency, displaying responsibility, practicing collaboration skills, and participating in group problem solving.

Rationale and Research Basis

- Math/ELA scores indicate changes are needed. We propose to adopt a high quality CCSS aligned curriculum in these areas and have more structured lessons to build skills and understanding. We intend to continue to partner with Instruction Partners, to select the most appropriate ELA and math curricula for our students and to provide professional development for our staff on implementation of high-quality Tier 1 instructional materials. Our agreement with Instruction Partners also covers the costs for adoption of high-quality instructional materials, and we would use this to purchase math and ELA curriculum. PCM would form curriculum adoption committees which would select an adoption rubric, review potential curriculum, solicit feedback from Instructional Partners, staff, and families, and select

Observable Indicators

1. **Core Content Blocks:** Core content blocks will be observable through the daily scheduling of ELA and Math at dedicated times each day.
2. **Educator implementation:** Educator implementation of curriculum delivery will be evidenced by participation in the following types of professional development:
 - Adopted curriculum professional development
 - Data driven instructional decision making
 - Ongoing formal and informal coaching.
3. **Student-driven, personalized work plans:** Student-driven, personalized work plans will be



EDUCATION PROGRAM TERM #2

curriculum to implement starting the 2024-2025 school year.

- Ensure students are taught all required grade level content standards by adding structures to personalized work plans.
- Decrease the required amount of time students are currently expected to be engaged in uninterrupted work blocks
- Adopting high quality math and ELA curriculum, and in partnership with Instruction Partners, means the school will need dedicated core context blocks in which to implement the curriculum and improve Math/ELA proficiency. Research from [UnboundEd](#) supports this concept.
- By utilizing the adopted curriculums, we will be able to provide clarity for students and families on academic mastery and areas for growth.

evidenced by implementation and integration of interim assessment data (NWEA MAP) to drive student goal setting.



Sample Daily Student Schedules

	Lower Elementary					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday		Friday (½ day)
8:30am	Circles	Circles	Circles	Circles	8:30am	Circles
9:00am	Core Course: Math	Core Course: Math	Core Course: Math	Core Course: Math	8:45am	Core Course: Math
9:45am	Core Course: Science	Core Course: Social Studies	Core Course: Science	Core Course: Social Studies	9:30am	Core Course: ELA
10:30am	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	10:15am	Recess
11:00am	Core Course: ELA	Core Course: ELA	Core Course: ELA	Core Course: ELA	10:45am	Place Based Learning
11:45am	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	11:30am	Lunch
12:05pm	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	11:50am	Closing Circles
12:45pm	Core Course: Writing	Core Course: Writing	Core Course: Writing	Core Course: Writing	12:20pm	Dismissal
1:15pm	Storytime	Storytime	Storytime	Storytime		
1:45pm	Place Based Learning	Place Based Learning	Place Based Learning	Place Based Learning		
2:45pm	Closing Circles	Closing Circles	Closing Circles	Closing Circles		
3:15pm	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal		



	Upper Elementary					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday		Friday (½ day)
8:30am	Circles	Circles	Circles	Circles	8:30am	Circles
9:00am	Core Course: Math	Core Course: Math	Core Course: Math	Core Course: Math	8:45am	Core Course: Math
9:45am	Core Course: Science	Core Course: Social Studies	Core Course: Science	Core Course: Social Studies	9:30am	Core Course: ELA
10:30am	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	10:15am	Recess
11:00am	Core Course: ELA	Core Course: ELA	Core Course: ELA	Core Course: ELA	10:45am	Place Based Learning Block
11:45am	Core Course: Writing	Core Course: Writing	Core Course: Writing	Core Course: Writing	11:30am	Lunch
12:25pm	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	11:50am	Closing Circles
12:45pm	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	12:20pm	Dismissal
1:10pm	Place Based Learning Block	Place Based Learning Block	Place Based Learning Block	Place Based Learning Block		
2:15pm	Student Project Block (Interventions and Enrichment)	Student Project Block (Interventions and Enrichment)	Student Project Block (Interventions and Enrichment)	Student Project Block (Interventions and Enrichment)		
2:50pm	Closing Circles	Closing Circles	Closing Circles	Closing Circles		
3:15pm	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal		



	Adolescent Community					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday		Friday (½ day)
8:30am	Circles	Circles	Circles	Circles	8:30am	Circles
9:10am	Core Course: Math	Core Course: Math	Core Course: Math	Core Course: Math	8:45am	Core Course: Math
10:10am	Core Course: Science	Core Course: Social Studies	Core Course: Science	Core Course: Social Studies	9:30am	Core Course: ELA
11:10am	Brain Break	Brain Break	Brain Break	Brain Break	10:15am	Recess
11:25am	Core Course: ELA/Writing	Core Course: ELA/Writing	Core Course: ELA/Writing	Core Course: ELA/Writing	10:45am	Place Based Learning Block
12:25pm	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	11:30am	Lunch
12:55pm	Place Based Learning Block	Place Based Learning Block	Place Based Learning Block	Place Based Learning Block	11:50am	Closing Circles
2:15pm	Student Project Block (Interventions and Enrichment)	Student Project Block (Interventions and Enrichment)	Student Project Block (Interventions and Enrichment)	Student Project Block (Interventions and Enrichment)	12:20pm	Dismissal
2:50pm	Closing Circles	Closing Circles	Closing Circles	Closing Circles		
3:15pm	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal		