



## ABOUT PENFIELD MONTESSORI ACADEMY

Penfield Montessori Academy (PMA) is a tuition-free, public Montessori charter school located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. PMA has been serving children age three through 6th grade in the City's Midtown neighborhood since 2016. Following the teachings of Dr. Maria Montessori, PMA has helped students learn and develop in a free form, constructive manner to suit each child's unique talents and personalities.

In partnership with Penfield Children's Center, PMA is rooted in the Milwaukee community and has served as a leader in child development, a resource for parents and caregivers and an advocate for early intervention services for children with varying abilities.

# PENFIELD MONTESSORI ACADEMY TO CLOSE AFTER 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR

## THOUGH STUDENTS HAVE THRIVED, FUNDING CHALLENGES PERSIST

PMA's most recent charter renewal with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee noted satisfactory ratings in both student and teacher performance. The same renewal, however, noted one key area of concern: funding.

## A SNAPSHOT OF FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Significant disparities in the level of state funding PMA receives as an independent public charter school, roughly \$5,000 - \$7,000 per student less than traditional public schools, has contributed to the school's funding challenges.

Additionally, though it is at the heart of PMA's mission, funding challenges are compounded by the number of special needs students the school serves. Wisconsin provides one of the lowest levels of reimbursement for special education services in the nation. While PMA invested significantly in its building, when it was acquired, unexpected additional building maintenance costs this year contributed to an even more precarious financial situation.

## CHARITABLE GIVING TO FILL THE GAP IN STATE FUNDING ISN'T SUSTAINABLE

**Since its founding, PMA has received nearly \$13 million in philanthropic support. We have continued to call upon our very generous donors and pursued every available opportunity, but relying solely on charitable giving is not sustainable and cannot fill the gap in necessary funding from the state.**

## RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF

PMA's students and staff are always the highest priority, that is no different in this challenging situation. PMA and its partners will be working to equip families with the information needed to make decisions about their child's academic future, and to support staff as they search for their next opportunity.

For more information, contact  
**PMA Principal Michelle Ravin at**  
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**Funding challenges have reached a critical point and the board of directors and leadership of Penfield Montessori Academy have had to make the difficult decision to close at the end of the 2022-2023 school year.**

# FAQs

## **Why is Penfield Montessori Academy closing?**

Though we have a history of educational success, we do not have the funding required to make that success sustainable. These funding challenges have reached a critical point and we have had to make the difficult decision to close Penfield Montessori Academy at the end of the 2022-2023 school year.

## **Are you closing because of poor educational standards?**

No. In fact, our most recent charter renewal with the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee noted satisfactory ratings on everything except funding.

## **Why now? Why wasn't this news shared earlier?**

We wanted to ensure we exhausted all possible solutions before making the difficult decision to close. We shared the news with parents as soon as possible, as we know they must now find a new school for their student(s).

## **What factors impacted PMA's financial situation?**

The current funding model for public charter schools - especially schools that serve special needs students who require additional staff and resources - is insufficient. We have received strong philanthropic support for our programs, but even with that support, the school was not financially sustainable. Coupled with unforeseen building maintenance challenges, we reached a critical point this Spring.

## **How much would be needed for PMA to continue for another school year?**

PMA would need an additional \$1.5 million to operate for another school year.

## **What does this mean for Penfield Children's Center? Is the organization in trouble?**

PMA is incorporated and reports to its own separate board of directors, with its sole member being Penfield Children's Center. Penfield Children's Center remains financially healthy and is continuing to support PMA through the wind down of the school.