

History of Martin Luther King, Jr. Education Center

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The Martin Luther, Jr. Education Center is the dream of Rev. Haviious Green, founder and pastor of Antioch Church of God in Christ. Rev. Green, envisioned greater service to the community by providing quality education and care for young children. Already having offered free academic tutoring since Antioch's inception in 1965, Rev. Green and his sister, Mrs. Naomi Keener, who was MLK's first director, began attending workshops to gather information pertinent to group child care. Space was limited at the church's location at West Six Mile and Indiana. A year later, in 1971, a larger facility on Appoline and Grove was purchased.

On October 30, 1972, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Care Center opened with seven students, one teacher, and a license for twenty students. As the Center grew, a south wing was added in 1975. By the Fall of 1976, MLK was one of five centers in the city of Detroit approved for care of infants, toddlers, and kindergarteners. Mrs. Julia Green, wife of Rev. Green, program director of MLK, developed the kindergarten curriculum. The first kindergarten class had eight students.

After thirty years of teaching experience with the Detroit Board of Education, Rev. Green proposed a primary unit setting where children would master basic reading and math concepts. In 1982, first grade was added, and second and third grades were opened the following two years, completing the Martin Luther King, Jr. Primary Unit (K-3). It was housed in the newly acquired annex.

Under the directorship of Dr. Constance Price, MLK witnessed many program innovations and growth from thirty-five to one hundred and fifty students. The Center distinguished itself not only in that it provided superior care but also offered instruction in the seven "basic" subject areas (reading, math, science, social studies, art, fine and gross motor), practical life skills (typewriting, computer literacy, foreign language), and education in the arts (dance, Orff and Kodaly Music, and Suzuki Violin).

Martin Luther King, Jr. Education Center continued to develop its reputation city-wide and nation-wide.

It began servicing children from suburban communities, as well as the city proper. The Martin Luther King Suzuki Violinists performed locally for the national Association for the Education of Young Children at the state level for the Michigan State Fair, and received national acclaim with the National Association of Negro Musicians. The Suzuki Musicians performed regularly in the community and made several television appearances.

The Infant/Toddler program at Martin Luther King has been rated superior by the child care licensing consultants. The Kindergarten offers a structured reading program, making its graduates "*accelerated readers*". Children leaving Martin Luther King Primary Unit tested well above grade level.

In June 1986, plans for further expansion included renovation of a second annex purchased in July 1985. This effort was promoted by the benefit "Keeping The Dream Alive," spearheaded by Mrs. Sylvia Turner Hollifield, MLK Parent Association President, and Administrative Staff. Mrs. Coretta Scott King was the keynote speaker.

In 1993, MLKEC competed for the Michigan Early Childhood Grant Program and was awarded a contract to serve 36 four-year olds "at risk" of academic failure. Since that time MLKEC has been funded to provide one year of pre-kindergarten instruction for between 72 and 108 low-income students.

In October of 1995, MLKEC was one of only two schools chartered by the Detroit Public Schools. In May 1995 MLKECA students were featured with Governor John Engler, at the First Annual Charter Schools Exposition in Lansing. The production of our first compact disc recording entitled "Hold on To Your Dream" was the culminating project of our first year as a chartered school.

Beginning the summer of 1997, Dr. Janet Hopson MLKECA Technology Coordinator piloted a six-week technology based enrichment program. A multimedia computer curriculum designed by Computer Curriculum Corporation (CCC), was implemented to provide

instructional, tutorial and basic skills reinforcement in core subjects. This curriculum allows students to begin at their skill level, tracks student progress and identifies problem areas.

The MLKEC gymnasium/auditorium opened in the Fall of 1997, a building project begun by Rev. Havius Green in the spring of 1996. This facility houses physical education activities, dance classes, and a piano lab. It also provides additional space for our annual Winter and Spring concerts and parent education workshops. An enhancement to the community, the gymnasium is in constant demand for use by organizations sponsoring youth programs.

During the 1997-98 school year, MLKECA was cited twice by the Detroit Free Press as the most improved school district in MEAP test scores for the State of Michigan. In the Spring of 1997, Dr. Janet Hopson opened our technology center with the financial backing of the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund Grant, awarded to our charter consortium, the Detroit Metropolitan Charter Schools Network. The purpose of the center is to utilize modern technology to encourage academic achievement. In addition, the center is helping to develop skills our students will need in the 21st century.

MLKEC was selected among Metro Detroit Area Schools to receive a visit from the Detroit Red Wings Officials. The sport's most recognized trophy, the Stanley Cup was shared with MLKEC students, parents and community. This gala affair which took place on February 23, 1998, was complete with a TV interview, photo session, reception and souvenirs.

In the Fall of 1998, annex three housed two second grade classrooms and the addition of Dr. Lafayette Price to the administrative team full-time. He brings a wealth of knowledge and twenty-seven years of teaching experience. MLKECA was also selected as a model charter school to host an information session, tour, and student demonstration for the officials of the Grand Rapids School District.

MLKEC enjoyed another "banner" year in 1999. Guest speakers for our Education Day included Dr. Robert L. Green, Former Vice Provost of Michigan State University, and Dr. Charles Moody, Retired Vice Provost of the University of Michigan. For our 27th Anniversary Benefit, MLKEC Parent/Teacher Association President, Ms. Lynette Cobb and Administrative Staff were honored to have Dr. Benjamin S. Carson and his

wife Candy share, on this auspicious occasion, his "Prescription for Life."

In 2000, Judge Jeffrey G. Collins, formerly with the Michigan Court of Appeals, and currently Wayne County Executive, spoke about "Education in The New Millennium" at our Education Day. During this school year renovations were completed on annex four which housed two second grade classrooms.

During the 2000-2001 school year, Governor John Engler awarded the Martin Luther King Education Center the Golden Apple Award for outstanding achievement on the Michigan Education Assessment Program.

In the fall of 2002-2003, we witnessed the opening of our newly constructed academy building which houses ten classrooms, computer lab, lavatory, and office facilities. The State Department of Education expanded our Michigan School Readiness Program to funding for 144 pre-school students. To climax the year, Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick joined us for our 30th Anniversary Celebration.

Michigan Association of Public School Academies highlighted MLKECA in its 2003-2004 Publication "We Choose Charter Public Schools." In the 2004-2005 school year, the new addition was completed to connect the gymnasium to Building I. It houses three classrooms, a science lab, resource and music rooms.

MLKECA received a congratulatory letter stating "We applaud Martin Luther King, Jr. Educational Center for its leadership in creating an environment that nurtures and challenges students to do their best" from MAPSA President, Dan Quisenberry for the 2005-2006 school year.

MLKECA was recognized as one of the Twenty Top-Performing Michigan Charter Schools based on 2006-07 MEAP results.

The Skillman Foundation has selected MLKECA to receive its “Good Schools in Detroit: Making the Grade Award” for the school years 2007-2011.

Highlights for the 2008-2009 school year include: #1 Michigan Charter School “Beating the Odds” for 2008 MEAP Math & ELA. This recognition was based on a comparison of high poverty rate and high academic achievement by the Michigan Department of Education. MLKECA was also the #3 Top Performing Michigan Charter School on the 2008 MEAP Test.

In May of 2009, Dr. Raphael Price envisioned the construction of a separate facility for Grades 6-8. Annex 1 was demolished in July 2009, and the new middle school building was completed January 2010. It houses a library, science lab, keyboard lab, teacher’s resource room and offices. The six classrooms (including art and foreign language immersion centers), are equipped with digital interactive whiteboard systems. These state of the art additions provide more hands-on opportunities needed for our students to be competitive with their suburban counterparts.

Again, in 2009, MLKECA was among the Top-Performing Michigan Public Charter Schools recognized by the Michigan Association of Public School Academies (MAPSA) for exceeding the state average proficiency on all MEAP Tests at 82.2%.

For the 2009-10 school year, MLKECA was identified as “Beating the Odds” on two separate studies conducted by the Michigan Department of Education. One study identified 63 schools that are performing above their predicted levels, based on risk factors, and the second study identified 72 schools that perform better than a comparison group of schools with similar demographics.

For the 2010-11 school year, the state announced MLKEC as one of 123 schools “Beating the Odds” who outperformed schools with similar risk factors and demographic composition. On November 21, 2011, MLKECA was awarded a certificate by the Michigan Department of Education for being a 2009-2010 Title I “Beating the Odds” school and ranking I the top 50% on MDE’s “Top to Bottom listing for the 2010-2011 school year for Schools “Beating the Odds”. The certificate was signed by State Superintendent Michael P. Flannigan and State Board President, John C. Austin.

The E-rate Grant, (a discounted telecommunications service for schools and libraries), was awarded to MLKEC for implementation Fall 2011. This program provides upgrades to the internet, and communication systems. Classroom learning enhancements include web collaboratives, wherein students can share science and math information worldwide. There is also capacity for virtual learning including cultural exchanges and cabling for educational programming.

Dr. Raphael Price, Dean of Students, spearheaded the 40th Anniversary Celebration of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Education Center and Academy to be held in June 2012 at the Fellowship Chapel Dome. Congressman John C. Conyers, Jr. is the keynote speaker: “Restoring Economic Strength through Education and Community Service.”

In 2013-14 MLKECA received several honors. It was ranked among the Top 25 by the Michigan Department of Education and the Top 10 by Mackinac Center for 2012-13. MLK was designated a Reward School for being in the Top 5% for 2013-14.

The 2014-15 school year highlights academics, new programs and construction.

Excellent Schools rated MLK in the Top 10 of Detroit Schools. Bridge Magazine heralded MLK as Academic State Champs based on high MEAP scores among schools with high poverty levels.

MLKECA sister school was awarded a Federally- funded Head Start Partnership with New St. Paul for Infants and Toddlers. The state of Michigan continues to fund four GSRP classrooms. Construction projects included kitchen expansion to house new refrigeration, fine arts classrooms, and staff facilities.

Mackinac Center for Public Policy acknowledged MLKECA presenting an award “For outstanding achievement as noted in the 2015 Elementary and Middle School Context and Performance Report” with the grade of an A.

MLKECA is ranked highest in overall M-Step proficiency for the 2015-16 school year among DPSCD Charter Schools. MLK students exceeded the state of Michigan overall, and in subject areas of Mathematics and English.

For the 2016-2017 academic school year, MLKECA was rated the Top School in the DPS Annual Charter Portfolio based on 2016 M-Step Scores. The College Readiness Analysis for Spring 2017 MAP data indicated targets were met in Reading for Grades 4 & 8, and Math for Grades 6, 7 & 8.

During the school year 2017-18, MLKECA was granted a charter contract by Grand Valley State University effective July 2018. MLKECA had been chartered by the Detroit Public Schools for twenty-five years.

Dr. Constance Price was named among the top five finalists in MAPSA’s “Outstanding Administrator of the Year” for 2018-19 Awards. She was recognized at the State Capitol in April 2019.

During the 2019-20 school year, GVSU awarded MLKECA the Academic Grant Award for K-8 results measured by the 2018 M-Step. The school’s mean ELA student growth percentile was greater than 50%.

The Mackinac Center for Public Policy also recognized MLK for its exemplary academic achievement on The Michigan Context and Performance Report Card for Public Elementary and Middle Schools, 2019.

Campus expansion included acquisition of buildings, houses and lots for recreational use, playgrounds, and parking. Upgrades to existing facilities targeted the gymnasium, kitchen, fine arts studios and intervention space.

Modernizing our instructional delivery methodologies to include virtual education has proven an immediate and critical need for our students. MLKECA will upgrade its technology curriculum to emphasize student preparedness for the digital economy by learning the fundamentals of computer science: coding, programming, robotics, cybersecurity and the like.

Our school’s future vision of continual expansion of our technology inventory highlights additional computer stations, chromebooks, laptops, and iPads for each student, elementary and middle school mobile labs, and interactive whiteboards. Students will be trained in desktop publishing, power point presentations and interactive video production. Community outreach goals will extend creation of technology courses to parents and community as well as staff.

MLK Center and Academy has experienced steady growth and expansion to an enrollment of over five hundred students and staff of fifty.