



**METROPOLITAN LEARNING CENTER (MLC)  
PARENT TEACHER STUDENT ASSOCIATION (PTSA)**

2033 NW GLISAN ST, PORTLAND, OR 97209

[www.MLCPTSA.ORG](http://www.MLCPTSA.ORG)

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February 28, 2026

SUBJECT: Appreciation and Partnership in Strengthening MLC

Dear Superintendent Dr. Armstrong and Members of the School Board,

On behalf of the Metropolitan Learning Center PTSA, we want to express our sincere appreciation for the decision to keep the MLC high school open for the 2026–27 school year and to recommit to strengthening enrollment.

We recognize that these decisions are unfolding during a period of significant financial constraint across Portland Public Schools. We do not take lightly the reality that difficult choices are affecting schools and communities throughout the district, nor do we underestimate the complexity of the broader right-sizing work ahead. We are grateful for the thoughtful dialogue at last week's meeting and for Board members who engaged seriously with questions of process, policy alignment, impact, equity, and the possibility of long-term sustainability.

The conversation over the past several weeks made clear that how decisions are made matters as much as what decisions are made. We appreciate the willingness to pause, reflect, and reconsider. That responsiveness helps rebuild trust and reinforces our shared commitment to transparent governance.

MLC represents a distinct educational model within PPS. Our school is not simply three separate programs that exist in one building. Our elementary, middle, and high schools each have unique strengths and developmental needs, but they are interconnected parts of a cohesive K–12 community built on shared values and practices. From kindergarten through twelfth grade, MLC is rooted in relationship-based teaching, experiential learning, and student voice. We are parts of a whole: roots in our elementary years, branches in middle school, and flowers in high school, grounded in an educational philosophy that spans the full K–12 journey.

As an alternative K–12 public school option, MLC attracts families for many reasons. Some students enroll because they struggled in larger, more traditional systems. Others enroll because their families are intentionally seeking experiential learning that uses the city as a classroom, cross-age learning and sustained multi-year relationships with teachers, collaborative project-based work, and a smaller community from the very beginning of their educational journey. Particularly at the K–5 level, families often choose MLC not as an alternative of last resort, but as a first choice aligned with their educational values. Strengthening that elementary pipeline is essential to long-term sustainability.

Alternative education is not outside of equity work; it is part of it. Ensuring that families have access to varied, publicly available educational models is essential to serving the full spectrum of learners. A strong public system includes schools of different sizes and approaches, reflecting the diverse ways students learn and grow. We understand concerns raised about whose voices are most visible in advocacy spaces. Our hope is that the answer is not to narrow access to distinctive models, but to expand outreach so that more families across the district are aware that schools like MLC exist within PPS and have equitable access to them.

Like schools across the district, MLC has experienced enrollment challenges in the post-pandemic years. We were heartened to welcome Principal Dr. Ashlee Hudson this year. She brought clarity, enthusiasm, and intentional focus to enrollment strategy from the outset. In partnership with her and under her leadership, the PTSA established an

Enrollment and Recruitment Committee to strengthen messaging, increase visibility, and support sustainable growth. Prior to the phase-out announcement, we were encouraged by positive momentum in our rising ninth-grade class. Stability and continuity in school leadership will be critical to maintaining and expanding that progress.

As we move forward, we respectfully offer several priorities for partnership:

- Proactively contacting all students who were already accepted into MLC’s incoming ninth-grade class to affirm that their placement remains secure and to remove unnecessary barriers created by the earlier uncertainty and the requirement that they now must reapply. This should be done by both Ashlee and Reconnection Services.
- Strengthening recruitment and retention efforts across all grade levels, recognizing that a healthy K–12 pipeline is essential to long-term stability.
- Broadening outreach so more diverse communities are aware of MLC’s K–12 model, and ensuring that district communications and marketing efforts clearly represent MLC as a cohesive school with a distinct identity.
- Integrating alternative schools meaningfully into district-wide equity and portfolio planning conversations.
- Collaborating on a sustainable and transparent plan for long-term growth that aligns with the district’s broader right-sizing efforts.

We also recognize that the financial pressures facing PPS are rooted in statewide funding challenges. As a PTSA community, we remain committed to advocating at the state level for stable, adequate, and equitable school funding so that districts are not forced into decisions that disrupt students and staff. Strengthening public education requires partnership not only within the district, but with legislators and policymakers across Oregon.

We share your belief that this cannot be a “wait and see” year. Our community is prepared to engage fully in the work ahead. Meaningful and sustainable enrollment growth will require aligned messaging, structural support, and a clear understanding of what MLC is and its role within the district.

The past several weeks have been destabilizing for students and staff. This decision brings relief and renewed purpose. We are committed to channeling that energy into constructive collaboration and forward momentum, with a shared goal: a strong, equitable, and diverse public school system that includes vibrant alternative pathways.

Thank you for reconsidering this decision and for reaffirming the importance of alternative education within PPS. We look forward to working together to ensure that MLC not only remains open, but continues to flourish.

Sincerely,

**2025-26 MLC PTSA Executive Board**

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