



Request for Minor Modification

Submitted to Delaware Department of Education Charter School Office

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Introduction

In light of current successful enrollment figures and the per-grade demand, First State Montessori Academy (“FSMA”) hereby requests a minor modification to our approved enrollment numbers. FSMA’s enrollment initiatives have been very successful. Although FSMA has yet to publicly announce its location, it has received 76% of its full capacity. We believe that it will be more than attainable to reach 80% of our enrollment figures by April 1, 2014, as is required. The enrollment numbers to date reflect a need to restructure the current grade level numbers. We have carefully mapped out new enrollment targets for the first four years and have made sure that we are growing in a way that makes sense for our students and the operations of our school. We believe that the restructured enrollment numbers are achievable, reflect the actual number of application packets received per great, and effective our children, families, and staff in only positive ways.

Responses to Section A: Core Questions

- 1. What modification does the school’s Board of Directors wish to make to the term(s) of the charter? Identify the page number(s) on which the term(s) is/are stated in the currently approved charter. If the term(s) of the charter the school wishes to modify is/are conditions placed on the charter by the Secretary of Education and members of the State Board of Education, state the condition(s) and the date(s) on which the condition(s) was/were placed on the school’s charter.**

First State Montessori Academy is requesting a modification to our enrollment numbers starting in the 2014-2015 school year. We are requesting that our year-one enrollment expand from 241 to 269 students (and subsequent years are altered as shown in Appendix A). As reflected below, FSMA has received a greater number of applications for second and third grade than we anticipated, but fewer applications for sixth grade than we have capacity as currently chartered. Accordingly, we seek leave to exceed our original enrollment numbers on the whole, permitting more grades greater capacity, while decreasing the size of the sixth grade class years. Specifically, as reflected in further detail in the below chart, we are asking to increase the size of 2nd – 5th grade classrooms by 43 students, and decrease the size of the sixth grade class by 9 students.

An overview of the changes requested (specific numbers in Appendix A)

Grade level*	Application Number of classrooms	Requested Number of classrooms
K-1	4	4
2-3	3	4
4,5,6	2	3

* FSMA has multi-age classrooms with 2 grade together at the K-1 and 2-3 level and

3 grades together at the 4,5,6 level.

Year 1: Requested Enrollment Changes (enrollment changes for future years are in Attachment A)

Totals From Original Application		Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Requested New Totals	Current Totals – as of 12/20 (based on applications received so far)*
52	K	13	12	13	12	50	66
52	1	12	13	12	13	50	41
39	2	13	12	13	12	50	41
39	3	12	13	12	13	50	25
26	4	13	13	13		39	26
16	5	8	8	8		24	16
17	6	2	2	2		6	5

* While FSMA has not reached its targeted new totals, the current totals are 8 months prior to the school opening. We are currently at 76% of our full capacity, and we understand that we must be at 80% by April 1, 2014. We are certain that we will be at 80% if not the full 100% by the April 1 deadline.

- 2. What is the effective date of the proposed modification? (Please note: if this is a request for an enrollment expansion of greater than 15%, the applicant must provide an impact analysis pursuant to 14 Del. Code Chapter 5 §511(b)3 as an Attachment See Section B Question 3 in this application.)**

The requests modification would become effective immediately and have practical consequences on the January 2014 enrollment process. FSMA intends to hold a lottery for grades that are overenrolled by the end of January and will need to know our maximum numbers in order to communicate accurately with families.

- 3. The authorizer will review your most recent Performance Review Reports as part of your application. Discuss the school's academic performance, its compliance with the terms of its charter, and its financial viability as measured by the Performance Framework.**

Not applicable.

- 4. Describe the rationale for the request(s). Discuss any relevant research-base or evidence that supports this type of request. (*Attachments may be provided.*)**

There are many benefits to starting FSMA with more grade levels at their full capacity.

First, doing so will improve FSMA's financial viability. With additional students come additional funds that will allow FSMA to be more financially stable and also allow us to qualify for more units such as a principal at an earlier phase. Also, as we are leasing a building that is the size we will need at full capacity, we are able to use a smaller percentage of our budget on lease costs and a higher percentage on things that will have a more direct impact on children such as teachers.

Second, increasing FSMA's enrollment capacity allows FSMA to add two additional classrooms from the outset. As a start-up school, it is important that the staff take ownership and are deeply invested in the school. We believe that having teachers there from the beginning increases the likelihood of this happening. We also believe that the power of being a part of something from the beginning is appealing to potential staff members and will allow us to find highly qualified people more easily.

Third, the new growth structure we are requesting allows us to grow in a way that makes more sense. It allows for more children to start in the beginning and reap the benefits of longer amounts of time in our Montessori classrooms. It will help us create fewer transitions for children and allow them to be in our school for a longer stretch of time, if they start at earlier grade levels. The numbers have been adjusted in a way that will enable us to fill four K-1st classrooms and four 2nd-3rd grade classrooms from the onset facilitating a natural flow into our 4th – 6th grade classrooms the following year. The new numbers allow for growth that makes more sense in the long-term for FSMA students, their families, and our staff.

- 5. Describe how the proposed modification will impact the operation of the school. Include how student achievement, staffing, facilities, and the financial viability of the school may be impacted in the current school year and for the remainder of the school's charter term.**

The desired increase of 25 children will not negatively impact the operations of the school. The restructured enrollment targets will create a need for 2 additional teachers and 2 additional classrooms in year-one. Because it was FSMA's ultimate goal to expand to include these additional classrooms, the change will not impact FSMA's model (only the timing of implementing that model). The expansion will not impact the facility because we have available space. This operational change also will not impact the education received by students or student achievement. If anything, we believe that having additional classrooms will allow for more teacher collaboration and thus will positively impact student achievement. However, this change will impact FSMA's financial viability in a positive way. A detailed account of how this will impact our financial viability is reflected in the attached budget. (See Attachment - Budget.)

- 6. Indicate the projected impact, if any, of the proposed modification on the school's present financial position, and its financial position going forward. If the modification promises to create financial challenges, indicate how those will be remedied.**

The attached budget shows how the additional students will impact the financial operations of the school. (See Attachment - Budget.)

Opening with more children allows First State Montessori Academy more financial security. As mentioned in our response to Question 4, one of the benefits to increasing our numbers is the increase in funding we will receive. The decision to rearrange the structure of the enrollment at each grade level has been done carefully and purposefully in response to our applications and property search. Because we are leasing a space that has ample room for the grade level arrangements we are requesting, we believe that starting at these numbers from the beginning is a wise decision financially and for the success and viability of the entire school and its students. Our cost for the lease is the same regardless of the amount of children we enroll - so we have carefully mapped out the number of children that we can serve effectively within our space.

Appendix A: Enrollment Numbers – Year One through Year Four

Year 1 (2014 – 2015)

	Classroom 1	Classroom 2	Classroom 3	Classroom 4	Total Staff
K	13	12	13	12	4 Teachers 4 Paras
1	12	13	12	13	
2	13	12	13	12	4 Teachers 4 Paras
3	12	13	12	13	
4	13	13	13		3 Teachers 1 Para
5	8	8	8		
6	2	2	2		

Total Students: 269

Total Staff: 11 Teachers and 9 Paras

Year 2 (2015 – 2016)

	Classroom 1	Classroom 2	Classroom 3	Classroom 4	Total Staff
K	12	13	12	13	4 Teachers 4 Paras
1	13	12	13	12	
2	12	13	12	13	4 Teachers 4 Paras
3	13	12	13	12	
4	12	13	12	13	4 Teachers 4 Para
5	10	10	10	9	
6	6	6	6	6	

Total Students: 313

Total Staff: 12 Teachers and 12 Paras

Year 3 (2016 – 2017)

	Classroom 1	Classroom 2	Classroom 3	Classroom 4	Classroom 5	Total Staff
K	13	12	13	12		4 Teachers 4 Paras
1	12	13	12	13		
2	13	12	13	12		4 Teachers 4 Paras
3	12	13	12	13		
4	10	10	10	10	10	5 Teachers 5 Para
5	10	10	10	10	10	
6	8	7	8	8	8	

Total Students: 339

Total Staff: 13 Teachers and 13 Paras

Year 4 (2017 – 2018)

	Classroom 1	Classroom 2	Classroom 3	Classroom 4	Classroom 5	Total Staff
K	12	13	12	13		4 Teachers
1	13	12	13	12		4 Paras
2	12	13	12	13		4 Teachers
3	13	12	13	12		4 Paras
4	10	10	10	10	10	5 Teachers
5	10	10	10	10	10	5 Para
6	10	10	10	10	10	

Total Students: 350

Total Staff: 13 Teachers and 13 Paras