



First State Montessori Academy

Deep Roots, New Branches

May 11, 2017

Dear Denise Stouffer and the Charter School Office,

Thank you for the 2017-2018 Renewal Report provided to First State Montessori Academy on April 27th, 2017. We appreciate the time the group from DOE took in explaining the process to us and visiting our school. The support from your office has always extremely helpful and we look forward to working through this renewal process together.

We have reviewed the preliminary information you provided and have some updated numbers and data that we would like to submit. We also have provided a very brief overview of our initial reactions to the information provided and look forward to continuing to analyze our performance on a high level as a part of the renewal process. FSMA is committed to giving children an incredibly rich educational experience and we are constantly reviewing and refining our practices. This renewal process will allow us to capture our ideas and rationale in one place and we know it will be extremely worthwhile.

Thank you for simplifying the way the information was provided to us. We are anxious to get started. FSMA is an amazing place where learning is joyful and abundant and we look forward to the DOE granting our renewal and allowing us to continue to give hundreds of children a unique and powerful education experience.

Thank you,

Courtney Fox

Head of School

In the Overview Section, the following percentages are our most recent data:

- Ethnicity Percentages for 2016-2017:
 - African American – 18.46%
 - American Indian – 1.8%
 - Hawaiian – 0.70%
 - Asian – 4.67%
 - White – 73.83%
 - Hispanic – 4.43%
- English Language Learners Percentages:
 - 2016-17: 3.27%
- Low-Income Percentages:
 - 2014-15: 20.86%
 - 2015-16: 16.0%
 - 2016-17: 16.5%

- School Re-Enrollment Summary Revisions

	2015 – 2016		2016 - 2017	
	Number of Students Re-enrolled	Percentage of Students Re-enrolled	Number of Students Re-enrolled	Percentage of Students Re-enrolled
Total	241	89.92%	280	91.80%

Academic Performance:

The report we received highlighted a strength in On Track to Graduation, and approaching the standard in Academic Achievement. We have concrete plans to continue having a strong attendance rate to continue our 5 star rating in this area. While our Academic Achievement scores are almost adequate, we are not satisfied with these results. As FSMA grows and develops, we are strengthening our curriculum and implementation. In our first years, teachers had to work extremely hard to align Montessori and CCSS. We have worked on this process and refined it each year to make the alignment stronger. As we continue to blend these two important components of our school program, we believe we will see continued growth at all grade levels in all areas.

In addition, FSMA recognizes that we received 2 stars in the Growth and College and Career Preparation categories and we are not satisfied with this result. As we deeply analyze this information in our Renewal Application, we will review the scores to look for areas of strength and weakness. We have already begun to analyze our math curriculum implementation, specifically at the upper grade levels to ensure that it is not only aligned with Common Core State Standards but also supporting children in using examples of

deeper depth of knowledge. Over the course of the past year, we have taken many steps to strengthen our teaching and positively impact the learning at FSMA. Some of these steps included:

- Expanding our Response to Intervention program to include Math
- Providing more resources for teachers in both their professional library and classroom materials
- Revising Scope and Sequence at certain grade levels where gaps were identified
- Provided Professional Development Opportunities for a variety of topics
- Hired a Literacy Coach for all k/1 teachers for a yearlong study and coaching
- Hired new staff with expertise in certain curriculum areas

Organizational Framework:

FSMA is currently meeting all requirements of the Organizational Framework. In our first year, our Highly Qualified Teacher numbers were less than the federal requirement of 100% as we had multiple teacher in the process of finishing their state certification. FSMA teachers are required to have both Montessori certification and State certification, which is not something abundantly available. FSMA made the decision to hire some staff who were in the process. In subsequent years, we have met the federal requirement and met the standard in all areas.

Organization is a strength of our school. We have created clear roles and responsibilities to ensure we are meeting all compliance requirements and providing families and staff with a positive school experience. The school is fulfilling all of its legal and fiduciary responsibilities as well as being a sound public steward that impacts over 400 children each day. The school is providing all children with a free and appropriate education and makes sure that all services that children need or require are provided. We understand the importance of making sure everyone at FSMA gets what they need and work hard every day to make this our reality.

Financial Framework:

First State Montessori has managed its finances and achieved a Meets Standard in all rated categories in its first two years of operations. This has been accomplished through strong administrative leadership, an involved Board Finance Committee, an experienced and knowledgeable Citizens' Budget Oversight Committee and the use of an outside financial consultant. Collaboration amongst all parties has been a key component in contributing to the financial stability of the school.

Some of the practices utilized by FSMA that have contributed to this strong financial picture include:

- Researching anticipated costs and created a budget that ended up being very close to our actual revenue and expenses which allows us to prioritize and budget accurately.
- Our administration knows the budget inside and out and is engaged and involved in budget development and monitoring.
- Using historical data to make budgeting decisions
- Constantly seeking grants and forming relationships with funders
- Developing a community that donates and volunteers services that are not directly related to student learning so that all of our funding can go directly into classrooms, which has allowed us to budget creatively
- Our Citizens Budget Oversight Committee/Finance Committee has made a tremendous impact on the financial status of the school