



April 24, 2020

Secretary Susan Bunting, Ed.D.  
Delaware Department of Education  
John G. Townsend Building  
401 Federal Street  
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Secretary Bunting:

On behalf of the Board of Directors for Sussex Montessori School, Inc., I am requesting a minor modification to our planned school facilities. This modification will allow the school to install modular units for our classrooms in place of our planned classroom pods which were scheduled to be completed by June 15, 2020. We make this request so that we may still meet the requirement of Delaware Code Title 14, Chapter 5, § 511 (I) that the school have a temporary certificate of occupancy (CTO) by June 15<sup>th</sup>.

This request is made due to the impact of COVID-19 which has complicated our construction timeline. We are grateful that we have been able to continue construction during the Governor's State of Emergency Declaration. Our contractor, Bancroft Construction, has been carefully following all social distancing guidance provided by the CDC as we work to keep our crews safe and to ensure that we can continue to build. However, Bancroft has shared with us that we will not make the June 15<sup>th</sup> deadline for a CTO as they now have to restructure the work to accommodate the CDC guidance. Please see the attached for more details regarding the impact on our timelines. As an alternative Bancroft is working with us on a plan to install modular units for classrooms so that we can meet the June 15<sup>th</sup> requirement.

It is important to note that we must install modular units beginning May 8, 2020 to meet the requirement for a TCO by June 15, 2020. There is an added expense to the school of \$450,000 to install modular units for 6 months. The board is concerned that this is a very fluid time. First, we are installing units far in advance of teachers or students needing to be in them in order to accommodate the legal requirement of the TCO. Second, we do not yet know the status of schools for the fall. Decisions that are made regarding school in



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September could actually make the installment of the units irrelevant. Installing units to be ready for a later TCO date is a more fiduciary sound use of our funds. It takes approximately 5-6 weeks for the installation of the modular units. With this in mind, we respectfully request consideration of any waiver that can be made in these unprecedented times to alter the TCO deadline so that we can maximize our use of funds to best support the children and teachers.

We understand the many considerations that must be made by you and your staff at this time. We appreciate the support we have received and appreciate your consideration of our request for this minor modification as well as our request for any flexibility in the statutory requirement. Please feel free to have the appropriate person contact me with any questions related to this request. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Linda S. Zankowsky". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Linda S. Zankowsky, Ed.D.  
Board Chair Sussex Montessori School  
[lindaz@montessoriworksde.org](mailto:lindaz@montessoriworksde.org)



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**Minor Modification Request  
Submitted to Delaware Department of Education  
4/24/2020**

Linda S. Zankowsky, Ed.D.  
Board Chair Sussex Montessori School  
[lindaz@montessoriworksde.org](mailto:lindaz@montessoriworksde.org)



**CHARTER SCHOOL MODIFICATION APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

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There are core questions that must be answered by the applicant, regardless of whether the modification is considered a minor or major modification. Additional questions are determined by the specific nature of the request, for example expansion or reduction by more than 15%, change of name, change of location, etc. Please provide clear, complete, and accurate information in response to each question.

Please indicate the type(s) of modification(s) you are requesting by checking all applicable boxes below:

<b>Minor Modification (Section A Only)</b>		<b>Major Modification (Section A <u>AND</u> additional questions identified below)</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enrollment change (increase or decrease) between 5 and 15%	<input type="checkbox"/>	Performance Agreement <b>Section A only</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Change agreement with EMO/CMO	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enrollment change (increase or decrease) of greater than 15% <b>Section B</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Start date (one-time) delay	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grade configuration (adding grade levels or reducing grade levels) <b>Section C</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Name of charter school	<input type="checkbox"/>	Educational Program (i.e. curriculum) <b>Section D</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Existing or planned school facilities or structures (including any plan to use temporary or modular structures)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mission (includes At-Risk designation) <b>Section E</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Change in terms to current site facility arrangement (i.e. lease to purchase)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Replace, remove, or add EMO/CMO, or transfer of authorizer <b>Section F</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Educator Evaluation Process	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enrollment preferences <b>Section G</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	A change to the current authorized number of hours, either daily or annually, devoted to actual school sessions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Location change <b>Section H</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Goals for student performance <b>Section I</b>



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### Section A Core Questions:

1. What modification does the school's Board of Directors want 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 wants 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.

*We seek to install modular units in lieu of our planned construction of classroom pods until such a time as the classroom pods can be completed. We expect this to be mid-fall 2020. Our original charter does not specifically identify a site and construction plans. We secured the site after charter approval. However, we have been in close communication with the Delaware Department of Education Charter Office regarding the purchase of property at 24960 Dairy Ln, Seaford, DE 19973, our plans for development of this property, and our funding, and our timelines.*

2. What is the effective date of the proposed modification?

*The effective date would be upon approval of the State Secretary of Education. We appreciate immediate consideration of this request as we need to move quickly to install the modular units by May 8, 2020 to meet the June 15<sup>th</sup> deadline for a temporary certificate of occupancy.*

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

**Academic Performance** – *Not Applicable since school has not yet opened.*

**Compliance with the Terms of the Charter** – *Sussex Montessori School has successfully met all terms of the charter for the planning period prior to opening a school. We have been in close communication with the charter office during each phase of our work.*

*We broke ground on February 27, 2020 with the goal of renovating existing buildings for offices and food service distribution, and building 5 classroom pods housing two*



*classrooms each for a total of 10 classrooms for our first cohort of 260 children. At the time, of groundbreaking we were on target to meet the requirement of having a temporary certificate of occupancy by June 15, 2020.*

**Financial Viability** – *There is no performance report required at this time. Please see item 6.*

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)*

*The Covid19 situation has complicated our construction timeline. We are grateful that we have been able to continue construction. Our contractor, Bancroft Construction, has been carefully following all social distancing guidance provided by the CDC as we work to keep our crews safe and to ensure that we can continue to build. Bancroft has shared with us that following CDC guidelines will increase the time needed to complete our classrooms for several reasons:*

- 1) *we will have to limit the number of trades that we can have working in each classroom pod at any time to preserve social distancing,*
- 2) *we need to manage the potential risk that if a crew member did become ill, quarantining other crew members, would impact our timeline got completion*
- 3) *to date, our pipeline for materials has been strong. However, we do not know the impact that our current situation may have on the pipeline going forward and therefore how that could impact our timeline.*

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

*The modification will positively impact the operations of the school by providing time to:*

- *The school expects to be able to meet the June 15, 2020 required TCO with modular units while construction continues on the classroom pods.*
- *Ensure that the site is ready for opening day.*

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.



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*This change will have no impact on the current operating budget of the school.*

*The capital campaign is based on a \$10,400,000 project. We have secured financing of \$7,650,000 through PNC Bank (short term loan) and the USDA (long-term loan) to complete a three-year phased construction of classrooms and administrative offices on the site. In addition, have successfully raised \$1,753,629.00 toward our match of \$2,590,000 for the USDA loan.*

*The costs for the infrastructure required for the modular units is already part of our plan to develop classrooms for Phase B of our building project. A six-month leasing of modular units will add \$450,000 to our capital budget. The board has several options to consider to recoup these funds including:*

- 1) reconsidering the planned construction for the second floor of the barn.*
- 2) raising additional funds to off set the costs of the modular units.*
- 3) allocating a portion of the CSP grant to support some of the costs.*
- 4) reconsidering the amount of long-term debt the school carries. The current budget has debt service of \$4.1 million over 40 years. We have been approved by the USDA for up to \$7.65 million in debt. As a last resort, board could consider adding to our debt load.*

*The board will evaluate these and other options over the next three months.*