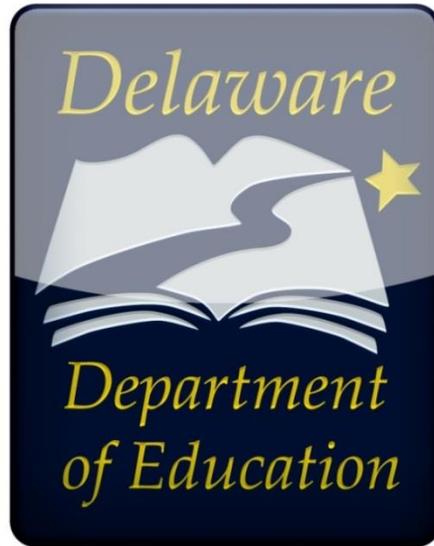


CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



First State Montessori Academy

**MAJOR MODIFICATION APPLICATION
FINAL REPORT**

CSAC Initial Meeting: February 22, 2016
CSAC Initial Report Published: February 25, 2016

On December 30, 2015, First State Montessori Academy submitted an application for a major modification of its charter.

The following were in attendance at the Final Meeting of the CSAC on February 22, 2016:

Voting Committee Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee

- David Blowman, Chairperson of the Charter School Accountability Committee and Associate Secretary, Financial Management and Operations, DDOE
- Karen Field Rogers, Deputy Secretary, DDOE
- April McCrae, Education Associate, Science Assessment and STEM, DDOE
- Barbara Mazza, Education Associate, Exceptional Children Resources, DDOE
- Chuck Taylor, Head of School, Providence Creek Academy
- Deborah Wilson, Community Representative

Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)

- Catherine Hickey, Deputy Attorney General, Counsel to the Committee
- Jennifer Nagourney, Executive Director, Charter School Office, DDOE
- John Carwell, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Financial Reform and Resource Management, DDOE

Representatives of First State Montessori Academy

- Yvonne Nass, Board Co-Chair
- Angela Angeny, Board Member, Parent, Head of PTO, Head of Expansion, and Charter School Network Captain
- Courtney Fox, Head of School
- Liz Madden, Education Director

Discussion

The following was discussed:

- A summary of the request – Through its major modification application, the school seeks to increase its enrollment (beginning in the 2016-17 school year), change its grade configuration to add 7th grade (beginning in the 2017-18 school year) and 8th grade (beginning in the 2018-19 school year), and add space to accommodate the increased enrollment. The school is confident that it is prepared for the changes, as it has a strong staffing model, policies and procedures, a rich Montessori-based curriculum, strong financial footing, a committed board, a supportive community, and supportive families.
- Curriculum development – The school stated that it already has a set Montessori curriculum in place that includes the proposed expansion grades. The 2016-17 planning year will provide an opportunity to align the Montessori curriculum with Common Core State Standards and the school's current practices. The school provided a handout to the CSAC which outlined the curriculum development and rollout process. It focused on the several key areas: a clear plan for professional development, logistics, regulations, pedagogy and parent involvement. The curriculum development process will be similar to the first curriculum rollout when the school opened. However, that process was completed by board members and expert consultants. The new process will be completed by current staff. The CSAC underscored the need for content specialists.
- Potential gaps in the Montessori curriculum – The school stated that the Montessori curriculum is based on big ideas. Integration is the biggest challenge. Sequencing is different in the Montessori curriculum (i.e. the age when certain content is introduced).
- Status of the new facility – The school stated that it has submitted a letter intent and is working with the current landlord to move in by July 1, 2016. Next steps are based on approval of the modification application. In the interim, the FSMA board and the landlord have agreed on basic lease terms.
- Career and technical education – The school stated that it will work with the state to gain a clear understanding of the regulations.

Conclusion

Mr. Blowman asked the CSAC whether there were outstanding areas of concern or whether additional information was needed to inform its decision-making. None were noted.

Mr. Blowman asked whether there were any components of the application that any members felt did not meet the standard for a positive final recommendation. None were noted.

A motion was made and seconded that the Major Modification Application be recommended for approval. All six voting CSAC members voted "yes" in favor of a recommendation for approval.

Next Steps:

- A Final CSAC Report will be issued no later than February 25, 2016.
- A second and final public hearing will take place on March 7, 2016, in the 2nd Floor Auditorium of the Carvel State Office Building, which is located at 820 N. French St., Wilmington, Delaware, beginning at 5:00 p.m.
- The public comment period will close on March 11, 2016.
- The Secretary of Education will announce his decision at the regular meeting of the State Board of Education on March 17, 2016.