



November 15, 2011

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Last June we advised you of potential changes in our school's enrollment policy. A copy of that communication is attached. In considering the need to revise this policy, the board and administration took into account legal restrictions regarding enrollment policy, several other important factors that relate directly to enrollment and our overall mission and vision at DaVinci Academy. At its November 5 meeting, the board voted unanimously to amend our enrollment policy for the 2012 – 2013 school year. Those changes are outlined at the end of this letter. **All children enrolled at DaVinci Academy at the end of our current school year will remain enrolled, unless they elect to leave the school.**

As described in more detail below, the enrollment policy revisions are consistent with the learning program and capacity of DaVinci Academy. One purpose of the policy is to explain the size of individual sections, or homerooms within a grade level, at our school. Capping section sizes is an important part of our educational program. As a school with limited resources and capacity, we are constantly challenged to closely examine our educational program to ensure it is meeting the goals and objectives expected of our school by our authorizer, the State, and, most importantly, our families. The board and administration are focused on achieving our full mission and vision. The enrollment policy revisions facilitate that process and allow for continued academic improvement, with an increased arts and science focus.

Section size should be shaped by, as well as sustain, DaVinci Academy's learning program. As you know, the Core Knowledge sequence, which is based on the principle that knowledge builds upon knowledge, has always been an integral component of our educational program. Our student achievement results, measured via state test scores and other assessments, show students who have been exposed to Core Knowledge and the other teaching tools we employ perform measurably better than those students who have not been previously exposed to the same learning program.

We have found that the majority of students coming to DaVinci Academy after first grade, without the benefit of the educational regimen utilized at our school, generally need extra assistance to catch up to their peers who have been at our school. This necessitates tutoring and dedicated teacher resources be used for those students to make up for the key elements of our educational program those children missed while attending another school. With our increasing number of grade levels and sections, we do not have the resources or capacity to continue adding new students in all grades without hindering the further improvement and quality of our overall program.

In addition, this year we have increased the academic rigor in grades six through eight, adding high school preparatory classes in reading and math. We are also making extensive use of data-driven assessment and instruction in all grades to ensure that teaching and learning are at or above the rigor of state standards throughout our school. The assessments help us focus attention and additional resources in those areas and for those students for whom that is needed. These enhancements are part of the ongoing development of DaVinci Academy and are consistent with the commitments made to our authorizer, the State, and our students and parents.

As we finalize our high school plan, you will see a continued emphasis on curriculum rigor and academic excellence. We will offer college preparatory courses to everyone and plan to offer college level courses to those students in grades ten through twelve who elect to take them. DaVinci Academy will also attempt to incorporate more arts and science opportunities into the overall learning program.

With all of this in mind, we looked at our enrollment policy and the impact it will have on our overall academic program, given our limited resources and capacity. Other charter schools are facing these same challenges, and a few are considering similar enrollment plans. For the 2012 – 2013 school year, your board and administration have decided to adopt an enrollment policy for DaVinci Academy that is consistent with our academic program, and compatible with our resources and capacities. The board set a maximum section size based on yearly budgetary needs, but also kept in mind DaVinci Academy's mission and vision. Our Authorizer, Friends of Education, believes strongly in this enrollment plan and has included a requirement in our recent Charter Renewal to adopt it, with a 2013 – 2014 school year implementation deadline.

Under our new enrollment policy, we have established two grades, one and six, where class size is higher than other grades. This change will likely lead to more new students in those two grades than we have in other grades. Maximum enrollment in those grades will be set at twenty-six students for next year, and will be reviewed annually by the board and administration. Enrollment in grades two through five and seven and eight next year will be set at fifteen students. Ninth grade enrollment next year will be set at twelve students. However, consistent with Minnesota law, grade sections may have more than fifteen/twelve students because DaVinci Academy is required to enroll all students that were enrolled with us at the end of the prior school year who decide to return for the next school year for a grade level being offered at our school. This fifteen/twelve student limit will also be reviewed annually.

For example, next year we will enroll two sections of twenty-six students in grades one and six, and will include returning students and students from our waiting lists for the grade, if fewer than twenty-six students for each section choose to return to our school. Grades two through five and seven through nine will include at least all students enrolled at DaVinci Academy at the end of this school year who decide to return to our school next year. If any section of those grade levels has fewer than fifteen students, or twelve students in grade nine, new students will be added to those sections from our

waiting list for the grade level, to bring the section size to fifteen/twelve students. For all grades, sibling and staff enrollment preferences will continue.

The hypothetical table below shows how the policy would impact enrollment per grade level and section.

Grade Level	Number of Sections	Enrollment Limit Per Section	Number of Students Returning for 2012-2013	Number of Students Per Section	New Students
1st	2	26	50	26	2
2nd	2	15	50	25	0
3rd	2	15	48	24	0
4th	2	15	47	23/24	0
5th	2	15	44	22	0
6th	2	26	42	26	10
7th	2	15	48	24	0
8th	1	15	23	23	0
9th	1	12	11	12	1

For new students, particularly those in the sixth grade, this will ultimately allow DaVinci Academy to focus the additional resources needed for students new to the school. This will result in our new students getting up to speed more quickly, and will allow the school to devote additional resources to continuing to improve our overall program quality in many ways, including the addition of more arts and science in our curriculum.

This was a decision your school board and administration spent a lot of time considering. For the reasons outlined above, we believe this enrollment program is consistent with our learning program and capacity, and is a policy change we had to make for DaVinci Academy to be able to achieve continuous improvement in our learning program.

As we have stated on numerous occasions, we are excited about the growth and development of our school and look forward to a challenging and rewarding future for our students. We appreciate the great support we have received from our stakeholders because that is a critical component of our success and the achievements of your children. If you have any questions, please contact us.

Sincerely,

Terri Sheehan, School Board Chair
Cory Klabunde, School Director