

LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY (LEA) NAME: DC Wildflower Public Charter School
BOARD CHAIR NAME: Neil Campbell
SUBMISSION DATE: February 1, 2024
SUBJECT: Facility Amendment Request

SCHOOL BACKGROUND AND PROPOSAL SUMMARY

Campus name(s): DC Wildflower PCS - blue montessori
Year(s) opened: SY 2022-23 (when the Riverseed School location opened)
Grades served: PK3 - 5 (currently through K)
Year the school will undergo its next charter review or renewal: 2026-27

Proposal summary:

DC Wildflower is proposing to open an additional microschool, blue montessori, in historic Anacostia.

Year the school plans to implement the proposed changes: SY 2024-25

When did the school’s board approve the proposed changes? *Please attach minutes from the meeting and vote results.*

The board validated blue montessori’s affiliation with DC Wildflower at our November 2023 board meeting (see minutes attached).

FACILITY

1. Please check the box that best describes the school’s proposed change.

- The LEA or a campus within the LEA is relocating from its current facility to a new facility.
- The LEA or a campus within the LEA is staying in its current facility *and* expanding into an additional facility (i.e., some students will attend the current facility while some will attend the proposed facility).
- The LEA seeks to open a new campus to be housed in a new facility. (Also complete the Expansion and/or Replication Amendment Application.)

2. In the table below, list the facility/facilities the school operates (i.e., the facility/facilities identified in the school’s charter agreement). For each entry, report the facility name, the campus(es) and grades served within, and the address.

Current Facility/Facilities		
Facility Name	Campus Name(s); Grade(s) Served	Address
The Riverseed School	PK3 - K (up to 5th)	913 55th St NE, 20019

- 3. In the table below, list the facility/facilities the school seeks to operate (i.e., the facility/facilities the school will continue operating along with the facility the school proposes operating). For each entry, report the facility name, the campus(es) and grades served within, and the address.**

Proposed Facility/Facilities		
Facility Name	Campus Name(s); Grades Served	Address
blue montessori	PK3 - K	1516 Marion Barry Ave SE, 20020

- 4. Will the school lease or purchase the proposed facility? If the school has already purchased or leased the facility, when did the school acquire it?**

DC Wildflower will lease the proposed facility. A Letter of Intent (LOI) was executed on October 27, 2023. An 11-year lease, with the option of two five-year renewals, was executed on January 26, 2024.

- 5. How will the new location impact current students? How will the school encourage student re-enrollment? How will the school support students in need of transportation to the new location?**

Current students enrolled at The Riverseed School will remain there and we do not anticipate an impact on their re-enrollment.

There are many Metro bus lines that have stops within a short walk of our proposed location, such as the 90, 92, B2, P6, V2, W6 and W8. It is also possible to walk from the Anacostia Metro Station (about a mile).

- 6. Will there be newly created seats for additional students? If so, discuss student recruitment efforts in the new school community.**

blue montessori will create new seats for up to 30 PK3 - K students over the next two years. Student recruitment has included:

- creating a website (www.bluemontessori.org) and social media presence (@bluemontessoridc)
- participation in DC EdFest on December
- holding virtual and in-person Open Houses in January and February
- planned flyering in the immediate residential and commercial neighborhoods, mostly in February
- a direct mail campaign to our closest neighbors, planned for early February

When appropriate, we encourage families who live closer to the new facility to consider enrolling there, knowing that Riverseed's new enrollment is focused on the PK3 cohort each year.

7. What is the maximum occupancy at the new location? If the maximum occupancy load for staff and students is less than the total number of staff and students who will occupy the facility at any point in the future, please explain how you will address this issue.

blue montessori will create new seats for up to 30 PK3 - K students over the next two years. Our architect indicates that per the code we are allowed to have 65 people in the space.

8. Does the proposed space require renovation? If so, describe the renovations the new location will need, either to serve as a school or to be accessible for students with disabilities.

The proposed space will require some work to be ready for students. This includes:

- Modifications required to change use of space from Business to Educational (such as an HVAC upgrade)
- Conversion of existing bathroom for child use
- Addition of a washer, dryer, and handwashing sink
- ADA compliance of space as required
- Removal of a closet to create larger classroom area
- Miscellaneous minor demolition and improvements

We will continue to work with some of the project team we used for our first facility (Tom Porter as project manager and Studio 27 as architect), but have published an RFP for a general contractor to do the work.

Renovation work will begin immediately following the PCSB's approval of the application.

9. Describe the proposed facility's neighborhood (i.e., is it residential or commercial, is it metro accessible). What value will the school add to the proposed neighborhood?

Our proposed location is a store-front on the ground floor of a mixed use building; there are three floors of residential apartments above our commercial unit. In the blocks near us, Marion Barry Avenue SE has a mix of residential buildings, nonprofit and church buildings, and small commercial establishments.

Behind the building is residential, a mix of single family and small apartment buildings.

The new Anacostia Recreation Center at Ketcham is one block away and expected to open in fall 2024.

10. List the traditional and public charter schools near the new location, identifying schools that educate the same grade span your school serves/will serve. Describe how the school's mission and academic performance compare to these schools. What impact will the school's relocation have on enrollment at neighboring schools?

There schools closest to our proposed location are:

- Ketcham Elementary
- DC Prep
- Lee Montessori East End

Of these, the program most like ours is Lee Montessori East End, which has multiple Montessori "Primary" classrooms with PK3 - K students. Our two schools have in common a commitment to fully implementing the Montessori approach, early intervention, and a strong equity orientation. Unlike Lee, we will have two Montessori credentialed teachers in our classroom which we believe will amplify student connection and learning.

Ketcham and DC Prep have more conventional approaches that include blended learning on platforms like ST Math and Lexia to support small group and individualized learning. Montessori also prioritizes individualized learning for all students but we are unlikely to use technology-based instruction in our Primary classroom.

A recent OSSE [Fiscal Year 2021 Pre-K Report](#) indicates that about 9% of students in preschool were identified for special education. At The Riverseed School, our first microschool, we have nearly four times that number (36%). We anticipate that this trend will continue at this second microschool and plan to use our successful early intervention and inclusion model at blue montessori.

Earlier drops in preschool enrollment (like a 6.3% drop in 2021-22) were heavily skewed to PK3 students. Lee was the most successful of our three neighbors in matching all of their available seats. Digging into their historical lottery results we can see that Lee was able to both match nearly all of their open seats and make wait list offers to fill their classrooms in SY23-24. At our Ward 7 microschool we also both matched all of our seats and had ample waitlist to meet our enrollment target.

On a positive note, OSSE reported a [modest 2.2% increase](#) in enrollment city-wide in 2023-24. We believe that our small size and teacher leadership will attract parents of very young children.

11. When did the school hold an open board of trustees meeting to discuss the proposed change(s)?

On November 8, 2023 the board [validated the affiliation](#) of blue montessori with DC Wildflower PCS and the individual commitments of Cliff Bussie and Jordan Kerstetter, who will be blue's Teacher Leaders.

The proposed expansion has been a topic in our open meetings since last spring, as we discussed and approved our FY24 budget. The board of trustees were formally introduced to our prospective school founders at our annual retreat on June 23, 2023 and the emerging Teacher Leaders presented at our open meeting on August 9, 2023. They have attended and/or reported on their progress at each board meeting since then. We discussed and validated their five year budget plan in full board and committee meetings in October 2023, in advance of submitting the Five-Year Operating Budget tool on November 30, 2023.

12. Describe how the school has engaged its internal community in its decision to relocate or expand into the proposed location. Submit documentation of the school's communications with its staff and families regarding the proposed space. Identify the internal community's concerns and how the school is responding to their needs.

As outlined above, the board of trustees has been actively engaged with blue montessori's Teacher Leaders since early summer.

We have shared the expansion with families at The Riverseed School and our newsletter subscribers, inviting them to share the news in their own networks. For the school year 2024-25 we won't have transfers between schools in our network, so there is no expected enrollment impact on The Riverseed School.

13. Describe how the school has engaged the community surrounding the proposed location. *Please attach documentation of communications with nearby principals, neighbors, ANC representatives, Councilmembers, and other community groups, notifying them of the school's plans.*

a. When did the school inform the ANC representatives of its facility plans? Has the school already presented its facility plans during an ANC meeting? If not, when will it do so?

Our Executive Director reached out to the single member district (8A02) [commissioner, Barbara Clark](#), on January 2nd to request a meeting to discuss the expansion. We reached out again on January 30th. We have not received a response.

The Teacher Leaders reached out to the ANC 8A Chair, Jamila White, on January 28 to request a place on the agenda for February's ANC 8A general meeting. While we may not be able to do so (some ANCs request that presenters come before their executive committee before the general meeting) we will pursue a March presentation.

Since neither commissioner has a phone number listed at anc.dc.gov, we have relied on them to respond to email in order to communicate.

Both the Executive Director and/or Teacher Leaders have attended the ANC 8A general meetings since October. Current DC Wildflower parents who are residents of Ward 8 have committed to support by amplifying our outreach to the commissioners and attending ANC meetings to share their experience at The Riverseed School.

We plan to reach out to our State Board of Education representative for Ward 8, Carlene Reid, and at-large member, Jacques Patteron and Councilmember Trayon White to invite them to see our model in action at The Riverseed School and connect with our new Teacher Leaders.

b. Summarize the external community's concerns, if any, and describe the school's response with specificity.

While we haven't yet been able to come before ANC 8A, we can anticipate some of the concerns we expect to be expressed.

- **Parking** – We will not impact the availability of on-street parking because we have dedicated parking behind the building. There is also ample parking on Marion Barry Ave SE and on 15th St SE for caregivers to park for pick-up and drop-off.
- **Competition** with neighborhood schools – We have reached out in person and by email to try to establish and extend our relationships with the two schools closest to us: [Ketcham Elementary](#) (DCPS) and [DC Prep](#) (PCS).
 - We will continue to be respectful and not directly market to families who attend the United Planning Organization's Child Development Center at Ketcham. Principal Beckwith was very clear that this is a key feeder program for her preschool classrooms.
 - We believe that offering a Montessori preschool is an added benefit to neighborhood families, creating more choice rather than competition.
 - Similarly, we know that the intimacy of a micro school environment is a different choice that won't appeal to all families.
- **Green Space** – Our proposed location lacks green space in the frontage and at the rear of the building. We do have permission from the owner to take a parking space offline to create some garden space. We will work with the Department of Parks & Recreation to develop an

agreement that allows us to use the playgrounds at the new Anacostia Recreation Center at Ketcham. We have also reached out to DC Prep Anacostia Campus (at 1409 V St SE) about utilizing their playground for recess.

- **Security** – We know that a windowed storefront on a busy street potentially exposes children to more attention than is desirable. While we want visitors to be able to see Montessori in action, we will find ways to ensure their privacy. We also know that building access will need to be closely monitored so plan to have electronic access control for staff.

14. Complete and submit DC PCSB's [Five-Year Operating Budget](#) template in accordance with its instructions.

The [budget template](#) was submitted to PCSB on November 30, 2023. On January 12, 2024, we [responded](#) to questions posed by the PCSB finance team.