

First Things Classical Charter School

Facilities Master Plan

March 30, 2023

I. **First Things Classical Charter School (FTCCS) Overview:**

The FTCCS will be located in the Rio Rancho area and offer a classical liberal arts education to students K-6 in its initial year. Expanding one grade each year until it serves K-12, FTCCS will be a state-authorized public charter school with student selection determined by lottery. Student education will include instruction in Latin, fine arts, and the classics. Initially, space will be leased for FTCCS until a permanent facility can be constructed. The following information is intended to show that we meet or exceed all PED requirements for FTCCS. (Note: The “*State-Chartered Charter School Facilities Master Plan/Educational Specifications Scope of Work Checklist*” was used in preparing this submittal.)

- a. **Identify year of initial charter, first year of operation (planning year)** - FTCCS submitted its Notice of Intent in January 2023 and will be submitting its application in June 2023 for school to start in the Fall of 2024.
- b. **Identify charter school enrollment cap per school’s charter** - FTCCS is planning on starting the school with grades K – 6 with two classes per grade and 20 students per class: and adding one grade each year for the first five years, as shown in the table below:

<u>Grade</u>	<u># Classes</u>	<u># Students/Class</u>
K	2	20
First	2	20
Second	2	20
Third	2	20
Fourth	2	20
Fifth	2	20
Sixth	2	20

Total enrollment in Year 1 is expected to be 280 students.

- c. Adding one grade each year for the first five years, FTCCS will ultimately serve 520 students when all grade levels are implemented in Year 7. The five-year grade expansion goals are:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Grades</u>
1	K-6
2	K-7
3	K-8
4	K-9
5	K-10

Each additional grade will have two classes per grade and twenty students per class. The total enrollment in Years 2 through 5 are:

- i. Year 2 – 320 (8 grades x 2 classes/grade x 20 students/class)
 - ii. Year 3 – 360 (9 grades x 20 students/class x 20 students/class)
 - iii. Year 4 – 400 (10 grades x 20 students/class x 20 students/class)
 - iv. Year 5 – 440 (11 grades x 20 students/class x 20 students/class)
 - v. Ultimate build out in Year 7 will be K-12 with 520 students.
 - vi. Each class will have one teacher and one teaching assistant resulting in a teacher to student ratio of 1:20.
 - vii. We are also looking at a possible 50% reduced student attendance should we not be able to initially attract all the students that we wish to have attend FTCCS. This would result in an initial student population of 140 students (1 class per grade with 20 students per class). If this occurs, it is still our desire to increase our student population in Years 2 through 5 so that our desired full student population shown above is realized.
- d. **Provide basic facility information** - FTCCS has just started a search for a school site. It is our intention to initially lease a facility for the first five (5) years of operation during which time we will be looking for a permanent location. We will be starting our search for a leased facility in April/May 2023 once the PSFA approves this initial submittal.
- i. FTCCS has entered into an exclusive Buyer Broker Agreement with Constance Dove (Dove Property Advisors, LLC) to assist in our search.
 - ii. All leased facilities will meet or exceed regulatory requirements so that we can demonstrate full compliance with public funding requirements.
 - iii. FTCCS has sought budgeting assistance from The Vigil Group, and they have developed an initial five-year budget for the student population shown above. The Vigil Group has also looked at a student population at 50% of the target so that we can demonstrate that we will be financially capable of operating at a reduced student population.
- e. **Planning Process** - Our Facilities Master Planning process was collaborative including discussions at monthly meetings of the Founding Board, public outreach events, discussions with the Vigil Group and Dove Property Advisors, meetings with elected public officials (e.g., Rio Rancho Mayor Hull) and other community leaders and attendance at the PED Training.

- i. We are currently working on an aggressive public outreach program so that the community is aware of FTCCS and to recruit students that desire a classical education to attend. We have developed brochures and social media platforms to promote FTCCS, and we will continue to work to expand both public and digital presence to our target community.
- ii. FTCCS intends to be located within the boundaries of the Rio Rancho School District which is shown on the map below:



Rio Rancho Public Schools ❖ 500 Laser Rd. NE ❖ Rio Rancho NM 87124 ❖ (505) 896-0667

II. Existing and Projected Conditions - Educational Program, Curriculum and Delivery Methods:

- a.** First Things Classical Charter School (FTCCS) seeks to provide a classical liberal educational opportunity for students in Rio Rancho and the northwest Albuquerque metropolitan area. FTCCS seeks to train the minds and improve the hearts of young people through a rigorous American classical education in the liberal arts and sciences, with instruction in the principles of moral character and civic virtue. We are emphatically not an institution of religious or political indoctrination. A classical liberal arts education invokes the key principles that undergird the school's mission, culture, and academic program.
- i.** Many things are beneficial, but not everything can be taught in K-12 education. Because time is limited, First Things will give priority to teaching the most essential knowledge and skills. The school's curriculum is content-rich, balanced, and strong across the four core disciplines of math, science, literature, and history. The fine arts and Latin are also key components of the curriculum.
 - ii.** Cultivating morality is among the primary aims of education. A decent and orderly learning environment precedes real learning. FTCCS will cultivate virtue throughout the curriculum and will maintain a high standard of behavior on campus.
 - iii.** Knowledge builds upon knowledge. FTCCS will teach the basic parts (grammar) of each subject first so that students can understand the way those basic parts relate to one another (logic). This will equip students to effectively express their own ideas about each subject (rhetoric). For example, students must first learn the elements in the periodic table, i.e. the grammar of chemistry, before they can understand mixtures, compounds, and reactions.
 - iv.** Public education inherently serves a civic purpose. FTCCS will have a strong civics curriculum that will equip students to understand America's first principles of government and contribute to their own community.
- b.** The term, "Classical" certainly invokes a particular tone. However, the purpose of FTCCS is to provide an educational opportunity that leans on the teaching of classical literature, art, and sciences, as well as on the history of the United States, and on an appreciation of the individual's responsibility as a citizen and place in improving the community and the country.
- c.** First Things Classical Charter School will provide a tuition-free public education that is of higher quality than most private schools will offer. "Tuition-free" and "public" undermine any pretext of elitism, and our aim is to make education truly rich, valuable, and lovely for anyone who wants it.

d. Educational Philosophy

i. Based on the premise that human beings are not merely cogs in a machine, but that they have the capacity to know, to think, to feel, and to act, we believe that this capacity is what makes civilized society, community, and government possible. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the society to shape each generation into informed, discerning, and responsible adult members. Schools play a substantial role in this education work, and the guidance native to good schools—in books, art, music, physical exercise, and social interaction—makes them uniquely suited to nurture children from a state of ignorance into being civilized and contributing men and women. Therefore, we invoke a form of education that includes traditional teaching methods that have been part of Western Civilization for over 2500 years.

ii. When we turn to the primary sources of the Western Canon, we find men and women aptly described as rational and moral beings. From man’s rationality and morality, we extrapolate a third faculty: man is social or political. Excellence in these three faculties—knowledge of the world, moral self-government, and civic virtue—provides the three legs of the stool upon which civilization and civilized people rest. The purpose of classical education is to lead students to excellence in these faculties, and a classical school serves as a bulwark to our civilized and free society. We look to founding this classical charter school with excellence in teaching and operations to the end that students in the public school domain may be educated in the liberal arts and sciences and receive instruction in the principles of moral character and civic virtue.

iii. The primary function, therefore, of FTCCS is the dissemination of knowledge. Self-government and civic virtue are essential complements to this function, but only occasionally as explicit parts of the curriculum. The dissemination of knowledge should be purposeful, and it should begin at an early age. Students do not merely need to learn “critical thinking skills” but also need to furnish their minds and imaginations with something to think about. The emphasis of our curriculum is upon the core disciplines of math, science, history, and language arts, followed by attention to music, art, and foreign languages. Each of these disciplines is taught with an emphasis on our own history and traditions as American citizens and inheritors of Western Civilization, with an acknowledgment of the many cultural traditions included in our diverse country.

e. We value education that:

i. Values knowledge for its own sake.

ii. Upholds the standards of correctness, logic, beauty, weightiness, and truth intrinsic to the liberal arts.

iii. Demands moral virtue of its adherents.

- iv.** Prepares human beings to assume their places as responsible citizens in the political order.
- f.** The classical view of education holds that human beings are thinking creatures. Unlike other living beings, humans live by their intelligence. We want to know things. Specifically, we want to know what the things around us are and how they operate. We want to know who we are, where we come from, and what is expected of us. In short, we want to know the truth. Any plan of education, therefore, should take advantage of a young person's natural curiosity. Schemes that stall children in their learning because "they are not ready for it" or "it is not age-appropriate," or that use various gimmicks that sugar-coat learning as though children regard their books as they do their medicine, are not only unnecessary but counterproductive and insulting to the human mind.
- g.** In addition to requiring students to know certain things, a classical education also teaches young people to include certain standards in their judgment. To be "classical" means to uphold a standard of excellence. The classical works of Greece and Rome are not great simply because they are old. They are great because they employ harmonious language to depict remarkable human events and to explain the transcendent ideas of human existence. Each of the liberal arts has its own standard of correctness, logic, beauty, weightiness, and truth.
- h.** The study of a language offers perhaps the best example, especially since human beings live by communicating. Everyone can talk, and most people can read and write on a "functional" level. A classical education requires more than functional literacy, however. It teaches students from an early age the high standards of grammar, precision in word choice, and an eloquence that can emanate only from a love of the language. Throughout this education, the student will be exposed to the highest examples of eloquence attained by the greatest writers and speakers of the language. We teach grammar, certainly, but by using the great works, we also teach cultural literacy and beauty and introduce young people to the masters of the language so they themselves learn to employ the force and beauty of the spoken and written word, and in fact, to prefer it.
- i.** Education is a moral enterprise. Young people are put into moral situations constantly. "Should I tell Mom that I broke her favorite vase or pretend like nothing happened?" "Should I copy the answers of the person sitting next to me?" "Should I smoke the cigarette and drink the beer my friend just gave me?" "Should my boyfriend and I have sex since we love each other?" These are the timeless moral questions youth face today and have always faced. Anyone who thinks they are new should read the *Confessions* of St. Augustine. This patriarch of the church stole apples as a child and, as a teenager, impregnated a woman to whom he was not married. His knowledge of sin came from his own inner struggle. Schools can approach the moral lives of children as youth in three ways: they can try to ignore moral issues altogether, they can open up moral questions for students to explore in a "non-judgmental" and non-committal environment, or

they can teach classical views of self-command using traditional teaching methods.

- j.** FTCCS will present the honing of the conscience that all students have toward the highest and purest things in life. We will insist that students always be attentive and polite. We will inculcate core virtues at all levels of learning. When students become capable of discussing virtue, we will not present them with moral conundrums that seemingly have no right or wrong answers. Instead, we will confront them with the great stories of self-restraint and self-sacrifice found in literature and history. These narratives show that actions have consequences and that there is a clear difference between right and wrong. Just as we encourage students to emulate the intellectual virtues of writers and scientists, so we lead them to emulate the moral virtues of heroes and heroines. The history of classical education is quite simply a history of the conjunction of learning and morality.
- k.** Classical education has always been concerned with the political order. FTCCS seeks to support the idea that free citizens have a responsibility and privilege to vote to uphold and support the political society. The American Founders hoped that schools would teach young people how to preserve the constitutional republic they would inherit. The Founders knew that free government depends not on the decisions of a few politicians but on the wisdom and virtue of a free people. Political wisdom and virtue do not come easily. More than two centuries of American history has confirmed that this nation can be sustained only by citizens who understand, serve, and defend America’s founding principles. Similarly, it is imperative that students understand that an American is not a specific, definable race or ethnicity, but rather the amalgamation of ideals of freedom, responsibility, commitment to truth, knowledge and virtue, rights, and community. We will teach that true freedom promotes the pursuit of happiness through limited, balanced, federal, and accountable government protecting the rights and liberties of a vibrant and enterprising people. Such political knowledge can only be gained by a thorough study of American history and government: that study to consist principally in the reading of primary sources.
- l.** Contrary to popular opinion, classical education is far from arcane, irrelevant, dull, and unimaginative. Rather, the classical view understands that a human being without knowledge of the past, without reverence for his inheritance, and without a judgment formed by the standards of true greatness, is much like a man with amnesia. He does not know who he is or where he comes from. He does not know his rights or his duties. He knows neither his debts nor his debtors. Worse, he may easily become the pawn of the first person he runs into, so unfamiliar and mysterious will his surroundings seem to him. A true classical, liberal, civic education recognizes with Lincoln that if we know where we are, by knowing where we have been, we shall then know “whither we are tending.”
- m.** An increasing number of people today, even young people, demonstrate a longing for the good and the beautiful and the true. And such a longing is the first step on the road to true happiness.

n. School schedule: FTCCS will meet the state requirements of 1140 instructional hours per year. FTCCS will be open at least 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. 5 days/week and offer a minimum of 6 class periods/day

III. Enrollment and Charter School Cap & Capacity and Utilization Analyses:

- a. **Proposed Enrollment & Classroom Size:** FTCCS is planning on starting the school with grades K – 6 with two classes per grade and 20 students per class:

<u>Grade</u>	<u># Classes</u>	<u># Students/Class</u>	<u># Classrooms/Size (minimum)</u>
K	2	20	2 rooms @ 1000 sq ft/room
First	2	20	2 rooms @ 640 sq ft/room
Second	2	20	2 rooms @ 640 sq ft/room
Third	2	20	2 rooms @ 640 sq ft/room
Fourth	2	20	2 rooms @ 640 sq ft/room
Fifth	2	20	2 rooms @ 640 sq ft/room
Sixth	2	20	2 rooms @ 560 sq ft/room

Total enrollment in Year 1 is 280 students. Total classroom space will be 14 classrooms of 9520 total square feet. Additional space will be required for administration/staffing, special uses (e.g., counseling, health), hallways, bathrooms and so forth, which is anticipated to increase the size of the needed space to 15,000-20,000 square feet. It is our intention to work all these issues out with Dove Property Advisors once an initial approval is received from PSFA.

Adding one grade each year for the first five years, as shown in the table below, FTCCS will ultimately serve 520 students when all grade levels are completed in Year 7:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Grades</u>	<u>Additional Classrooms/Space Needed</u>
1	K-6	14 classrooms/9,529 SF
2	K-7	16 classrooms/10,640
3	K-8	18 classrooms/11,760 SF
4	K-9	20 classrooms/12,760
5	K-10	22 classrooms/13,760

Each additional grade will have two classes per grade and twenty students per class. The total enrollment in years 2 through 5 are:

1. Year 2 – 320 (8 grades x 2 classes/grade x 20 students/class)
2. Year 3 – 360 (9 grades x 20 students/class x 20 students/class)
3. Year 4 – 400 (10 grades x 20 students/class x 20 students/class)
4. Year 5 – 440 (11 grades x 20 students/class x 20 students/class)
5. Ultimate build out in Year 7 will be K-12 with 520 students.
6. Each additional year after Year 1 will require 2 additional classrooms. By Year 5, the total classroom space will be 13,760 square feet (minimum) and a total space requirement of 17,000-20,000 square feet assuming additional

space twice that of the classroom space to accommodate administration, restrooms and special uses identified above. In working with Dove Property Advisors, additional space for specialty classrooms such as fine arts, laboratory work, technology, physical education and so forth will be identified and included in the final application due in June of this year. Initially, we are not planning on providing food service. Students will bring their food and eat it in the classroom. Safety and security features will be key criteria of the selection process in choosing school locations both for leasing and for the permanent campus.

As stated above, we do have concerns about being able to initially attract all of the students that we anticipate, so we are also looking at a 50% reduction in our projection of the student population in the initial year. If this occurs, we will be enhancing our public outreach so that we can attract more students each year with the goal of being at the full projected student population by Year 5. The Vigil Group is looking at the budgets needed to support this approach. Use of leased space with the ability to grow the student population that we desire is a critical component of this approach so that we will only start looking at a permanent location once we have attained the student population that we seek.

IV. Location/Building Search Overview

- a. Our preferred school location is in Rio Rancho, New Mexico (i.e., urbanized area of Sandoval County). Please see Page 3 in Section I for a map of this area.
- b. As noted above, efforts have begun to search for a location in Rio Rancho. We are working with Dove Property Advisors to assist us in locating a site to lease for the initial five years of operation. Connie Dove has successfully located and renovated or built facilities for 27 educational organizations, most being charter schools.
- c. Once the school charter is approved, we will enter into a lease for an initial site. We expect to be in a permanent building by the beginning of Year 6, at the first renewal of our charter.

Potential Building	Location	Benefits	Constraints	Next Steps
601 Quantum Rd NE See details in Exhibit 601	Rio Rancho	~Institutional Quality Facility ~Adequate Space for Charter Cap (28,000 SF) ~Central Location	~Cost of Build Out	~Tour with Board Facility Committee ~Owner open to use
561 Quantum Rd NE See details in Exhibit 561	Rio Rancho	~~Institutional Quality Facility ~Central Location ~Likely Adequate for First 5 Years (12,624 SF)	~More Affordable Build Out	~Tour with Board Facility Committee ~Discuss with Listing Broker/Owner
2351 HP Parkway See details in Exhibit 2351	Rio Rancho	~Institutional Quality Facility ~Remote Location ~Shared Use Facility	~May Not Be Willing to Have a Charter on the Property ~Owner Likely to Finance Build Out	~Discuss with Board ~Tour Facility if Owner is Open to Use

- d. Our search will include facilities/buildings that currently meet or can be remodeled/built-out to meet all building codes, Educational Occupancy and State Adequacy requirements.
- e. Facilities will be provided for specialty and support services such as Counseling, OT/PT, Staff Offices and Student Health, or these spaces will be provided by contract. No on-site food services are anticipated at this time. Students will be asked to bring their lunches and eat them in the classroom.

V. Program of Spaces

- a. Program of Spaces – Each classroom will meet minimum space requirements for each student and provide space for administrative support staff and specialty/support services.
- b. Alternative Methods - FTCCS will utilize remote learning capabilities when needed.

VI. Capital Plan

- a. FTCCS will pursue all available financial resources to provide the following:
 - i. Maintenance, Security and Capital needs – SB-9 Fund 31701 & 31703; Operational SEG Fund 1100.
 - ii. Technology/Broadband – Fund 11000 Operational SEG & ERATE (Federal USAC)
 - iii. FTCCS is planning on providing a laptop as required school materials for each student with IT support for both on-site and remote learning. FTCCS will seek both public and private funding to support this effort.

VII. **Master Plan Support Materials** will be developed as part of pursuing leased school facilities. Proposed additional space requirements currently under consideration are listed below. Remodeling will be included in the lease and both public and private funding will be sought to provide these facilities.

Additional Spaces	Year 1 – Estimate of Square Footage Required	Year 3 – Estimate of Square Footage Required	Year 5 – Estimate of Square Footage Required
Administrative Offices	600	600	600
Art Studio	N/A	N/A	N/A
Theater	N/A	N/A	N/A
Multipurpose Space	2000	2000	2000
Custodial Space	20	20	20
Technology Space	100	100	100
Teacher Workroom	200	200	200
Restrooms	400	400	400
Student Health Space	100	100	100
Special Education Classroom(s)	150	150	150
Gymnasium	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cafeteria	N/A	N/A	NA
Kitchen	N/A	N/A	N/A
Library	N/A	N/A	N/A
HS Classrooms	N/A	N/A	2000
Total	3570	3570	5570
Playground Area	400 outside	400 outside	400 outside