



February 20, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter comes from the Madison County Heart & Soul leadership team **in support of I-35 Schools application for Future Ready Day Care grant funds**. Our endorsement of the onsite local community day care is supported by findings of the Madison Community Heart & Soul, an initiative which includes the communities of St. Charles and Truro, both within the I-35 School District's boundaries.

Community Heart & Soul is a program of the Orton Family Foundation and is nationally recognized for small city and town development. Patrons of the I-35 School District participated in the initiative in several ways: Over 100 high school students responded to the Heart & Soul survey; Heart & Soul representatives were present at the district's student registration August 2019; and Superintendent Dentlinger, along with other staff and faculty, participated in Heart & Soul forums. Across the county, over a thousand surveys were collected, and multiple community meetings were held.

Survey data were thoroughly aggregated and analyzed in the Madison County Heart & Soul Findings report. Through this process, *what matters most* to the people of the communities was identified. Heart & Soul statements that describe what the people of the community value were created. These statements are used by community leaders and elected officials to make informed programming and policy decisions. You are invited to visit our website: <http://www.madisoncountyheartandsoul.org/>

In support of the Future Ready Day Care grant, we cite the county Heart & Soul statement which specifically addresses education: *We value our quality local schools that challenge students in a safe learning environment and provide a variety of extra-curricular activities to prepare them for a better future*. Within the collected data, schools were identified as a "most important place" in the county; furthermore, respondents highly valued the "small town feel" and "friendly, helpful people." A Heart & Soul statement specific to the St. Charles community states *We appreciate and support local government, businesses, agriculture, churches, civic services and community organizations, which cooperate, collaborate, and coordinate their efforts toward our community's well-being*.

Taken together, these statements and data indicate that *what matters* to the people of the I-35 School District is day care within their school community. The Little Roadrunner Center was opened in 2019, and with the recent closing of home day cares within the community, the need continues to grow. The people of the I-35 school community believe that by working together, they can provide for the well-being of their children in a safe, friendly environment. The support of the Future Ready Day Care grant funds will help make this possible for many more children of the I-35 community.

Sincerely,

Ann C. Bartelt,
Madison County Heart & Soul representative

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