

Dear City of Decatur Planning Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed expansion of Smarties Academy. As a parent of a child who currently attends Smarties and with a second infant who we plan to enroll next year, I have experienced firsthand the benefits of the program, and I believe that the expansion will bring even more value to the community.

I understand that there might be concerns about the proposed expansion, and I would like to address each of these concerns as to why I believe the City should support the plan.

Traffic and Parking: The proposed expansion will bring more parents and staff to the area, but I believe that the Smarties team has developed a comprehensive plan to address this concern. They have planned to install a larger parking lot and a new entrance to ensure that traffic flow is efficient, and parking is adequate. Additionally, several parents including myself walk or bike our children to the school, participating in the City's long-standing tradition of walking between Homes, Schools, and Places of Worship.

Zoning: The Smarties Academy team has done due diligence and followed the zoning laws set by the City of Decatur. The former church space is ideal for the expansion, as it is a large building with ample room for classrooms, therapy rooms, and other spaces needed for the program. Importantly, the plan preserves the handsome stone structure visible from Clairemont and Erie, which lends beauty to the area.

Safety: Smarties Academy takes safety very seriously, and they have a comprehensive plan in place to ensure that the building is safe for children, parents, and staff. They have put in place an extensive fire safety plan and will install emergency exits, alarms, and sprinkler systems to ensure that the building is as safe as possible.

Noise: Smarties Academy is committed to being a continually good neighbor to the surrounding community. The primary source of noise from the campus is the sound of happy children playing on the playground, with considerable setback from Clairemont Avenue and with the property adjoining only one private home.

Waste and Recycling: Smarties Academy has a strong commitment to sustainability, and they have put in place a recycling program and waste reduction strategy which includes the extensive use of a composting program provided by CompostNow.

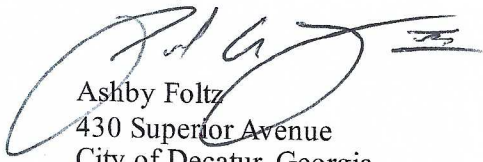
Impact on Neighborhood: I believe that the expansion of Smarties Academy will have a positive impact on the surrounding neighborhood. The program will create more jobs and opportunities for people in the community, providing more City of Decatur parents with a fantastic full-year, five-day, full-day childcare

option for their children. Additionally, it will provide a safe and supportive environment for children to learn and grow.

In conclusion, I strongly support the expansion of Smarties Academy, and I believe that it will be an asset to the community. The program will benefit families, staff, and the surrounding neighborhood, and I urge the City of Decatur planning committee to approve the proposed plan.

Thank you for considering my views.

Sincerely,



Ashby Foltz
430 Superior Avenue
City of Decatur, Georgia

February 20, 2023

City of Decatur

Planning/Zoning Commission

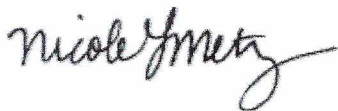
Dear City of Decatur Leaders:

My husband, David Metzger, and I are writing to show our support for the proposed expansion project of Smarties Academy currently located at 465 Clairemont Avenue in Decatur. We are current residents of the city and have enjoyed living here since 2015. Before we moved within the city limits, we lived nearby and our oldest daughter (10) started at Smarties Academy when she was 18 months old. We had a hard time finding an opening at any daycare in the area for our infant. Smarties was our first choice, and we had to wait for almost two years for a spot to open up. The wait was long, but it was well worth it. We felt privileged to send our daughter to such a high quality childcare center that cared for her physical, social, and emotional well-being while they fed her nutritious food and taught her how to speak Spanish. She stayed there through pre-K and was well prepared when she entered City Schools of Decatur.

Fast forward, 9 years when a surprise little one entered our life. We knew that Smarties Academy would be our first choice for childcare. Our infant (14 months) started there in August 2022, and Smarties has continued to provide exceptional childcare. Many of the teachers that worked there when our older daughter attended are still employed there.

As working parents, one of the hardest decisions is where and to whom you entrust the care of your children. Our area has few childcare facilities and all have long waiting lists. Like many in our community, we believe that our society needs to place a greater emphasis on high quality childcare. Smarties Academy is an asset to the working community of Decatur, as it provides outstanding care close to downtown and to the Clifton Corridor. The owner, Bogna Kabat, and the Smarties administrators have improved the current building over the years and are committed stewards of the environment. Please allow them to expand.

Sincerely,



Nicole L. Metzger

nicolelmetzger@gmail.com



432 Lockwood Ter, Decatur, GA 30030



February 10, 2023

To whom it may concern:

We would like to submit our support for the proposed expansion of Smarties Academy. Our family was welcomed into the Smarties Academy community nearly two years ago when our son, Archer, began attending Smarties at 8 months old. The staff at Smarties cares deeply about the needs, development, and safety of each child. Archer is provided the opportunity each day to grow and learn with classmates of a similar age. Archer loves attending Smarties and playing with his friends and teachers. Smarties leadership communicates openly with families and does their best to accommodate needs; during the depths of the pandemic, Smarties navigated a very difficult situation by soliciting feedback from families and community experts to help make difficult decisions.

Childcare, particularly for young children prior to entering Kindergarten, is very challenging for working families in the United States. Parents grapple with how to support their families while also making sure young children are being cared for. The process of trying to find childcare is often very frustrating; there is commonly a lack of childcare availability (supply) and a surplus in young children (demand)¹. This imbalance results in long waitlists, uncertainty, and desperation from parents. Many parents drop out of the workforce due to these conditions.

United States Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen recently said this about childcare in the United States²:

"Child care is a textbook example of a broken market, and one reason is that when you pay for it, the price does not account for all the positive things it confers on our society."

Smarties Academy fills an essential gap for families during the most crucial developmental years of human life, gaps not covered by the state. Expanding the capacity and capabilities of Smarties Academy will unequivocally be a net benefit to our community.

We wholeheartedly submit our family's support for the proposed expansion.

Sincerely,

Rebecca and Brett Harn
Smarties Academy family since 2021

RMHarn



¹ The Economics of Child Care in the United States

<https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/The-Economics-of-Childcare-Supply-09-14-final.pdf>

² Remarks by Secretary of the Treasury Janet L. Yellen on Shortages in the Child Care System

<https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0355#:~:text=Child%20care%20is%20a%20textbook,it%20confers%20on%20our%20society.>

February 22, 2023
Smarties Experience

To whom it may concern:

We have been so happy and feel so lucky to be able for our son to go to Smarties. I've had a few friends say that their child had been on the waiting list since they were pregnant. We were at a Montessori school before, but found Smarties when our son was one. It was a big financial leap and commitment for us, but we've been extremely happy with our experience. Smarties is (I think) the only school in the area/metro Atlanta that provides full Spanish immersion. I looked into other programs but they were either half days, mom days out type programs, or fifty/seventy-five percent language immersion. I myself teach and know that when given a little room for English, the percentages are easily lowered as to how much Spanish is spoken. Our son is doing an amazing job expressing his feelings and ideas in Spanish and I will be forever grateful! While Spanish is the medium of instruction, I've been wowed with how talented and professional the teachers are and the lessons they deliver. Their lessons are so well organized and content rich that our son comes home full of knowledge and excited to share what he has learned.

While I could continue with example after example of the greatness of curriculum and instruction at Smarties, I feel like it is so very important to talk about the core and heart of the school; the staff and teachers. I remember in one of our first parent meetings via Zoom, arranged by Smarties during COVID, we all talked about how we feel so at peace dropping our children off and how we can feel how much love the staff and teachers pour into our children. Just walking down the main hallway in the morning is a joy. I love how everyone knows who Santi is (I think he feels like a superstar) and how welcome we feel immediately; Smarties is amazing at creating community. This is actually one of our ACTFL Language Standards for the classroom and I feel like sometimes it seems difficult to achieve, but Smarties does it so seamlessly.

The communication at Smarties has always been wonderful. During COVID, I relied on Smarties for more school related information than my own school. The information was always immediate and thorough. There is such clear transparency as far as school operations, classroom incidents, or just news in general. This all feeds into the safe community feel. I love the ability to see the teachers' lessons so that when I ask my son about his day and he doesn't have much to comment, I can see what they have been talking about and ask him more specific questions and then his response blossoms into complete stories with details and excitement.

I joke with my friends that we came for the Spanish but stayed for the food. I didn't realize how important this would be. As most parents are, we are busy! Knowing that all food will be provided for our son is such a relief and makes mornings so much easier. Also knowing that not only is there food, but nutritious food, is amazing. It makes me feel a peace of mind on the days when our dinners are fast meals.

We are excited about the Smarties expansion. Other families as well as ourselves have said that we will stay as long as we can at Smarties. We have loved it each and every day and look forward to the time we have left. We're excited to see the new expansions and opportunities at Smarties!

Rebecca Valdez
Mom to Santiago Valdez

Friday, February 17, 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are writing on behalf of Smarties Academy in Decatur, in strong support of their plans for expansion.

Our son Theodore is 2 years old and has been attending Smarties since August 2022. We have had experience with three early learning centers / daycares, here in Decatur and in Boston, MA. And we can say without reservation that Smarties is second to none. But before we extol the virtues of Smarties, let us first tell you how much this community has helped our son and family.

Our son was born at the beginning of the pandemic (the very day that the city of Boston officially shut down), and he did not begin daycare / schooling until he was 1 year old. Less than a year later, we moved from Boston to Decatur for work. This was a big change for our family and for Theo in particular, and while Theo did very well in adjusting to our new home life, he struggled to adjust to his new daycare (a Montessori school). At Montessori, we went through frequent tantrums and meltdowns (very out of character for Theo) and noticed that his patience and attention span had started to suffer, not to mention his learning.

Then we learned about Smarties Academy. We were fortunate enough to have our name called from the waiting list, and within 2 weeks (just 2 weeks!) of the start of school, the tantrums were down to zero and Theo was his old self again. Within 4 weeks, Theo was potty trained and using Spanish at home. He now speaks routinely in both English and Spanish, can count to 20 and beyond, and has started to teach us new things. We cannot tell you what a joy it is as a parent to be in a position to learn from your child – and we never dreamed it would happen so early!

Every day when Theo wakes up, he says “I go to school today! I see Ms. Diana and Ms. Mari and Ms. Cynthia!” (these are his teachers, whom he loves). On Sundays he says, “I want to go to school tomorrow!” When we pick Theo up from school, he is happy and beaming, and he shows us his artwork and his skills on the bicycle and the song-and-dance he just learned that day. As parents, our hearts are full. To see your child be so happy every day, and to see the progress that we see in Theo, is a very special gift. And because of our experiences with other daycares, we can tell you that this is the magic of Smarties.

There are so many wonderful points about Smarties that make it such a special place. But the most distinguishing ones that we have seen are:

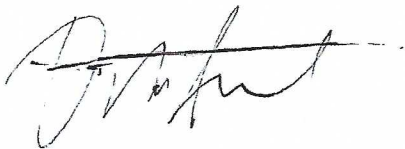
1. **Philosophy of holistic education** – they teach the children and the parents (the whole family), and they serve wholesome food in addition to wholesome education;
2. **Artistic and cultural teaching** – more than just languages (Spanish + English), we learn about many cultures and art and how we can appreciate and enjoy each other;

3. **Dedication to teachers and staff** – Smarties has the highest teacher retention rate we have ever seen, which speaks to the strength of their community and the support of their teachers. This is absolutely critical for successful early childhood education.
4. **Strong sense of community (and family)** – This is not just a school to us; Smarties has become our family, helping to raise our son and always there to support us.

We feel so fortunate to be a part of this family, that we could write pages more about why we love Smarties. But we also know that there are other families sitting patiently on the waiting list, as we were. So the one thing we wish for Smarties right now is for them to be in a position to serve more families longer. The proposed plans for expansion, as we understand them, are critical in meeting this goal. **We strongly urge you to approve the Smarties proposal** so that other families can experience the joy and peace of mind that we have had with our son.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Dr. Dorothy Koveal, Ph.D.
Instructor, Biomedical Engineering
Georgia Institute of Technology & Emory



Dr. Jeffrey Markowitz, Ph.D.
Asst. Professor, Biomedical Engineering
Georgia Institute of Technology & Emory

To Whom it May Concern
Regarding: Smarties Expansion Support
Feb. 19, 2023

My husband Chris and I write in wholehearted support of Smarties expansion.

We consider the teachers and administrators at Smarties our family because they have taught and loved our three-year-old daughter Ava as much as we have. All of Ava's teachers have demonstrated tremendous patience and empathy toward her and taught her with the utmost skill.

During our most recent parent/teacher conference, Ava's teachers told us they were witnessing her exhibit some sensory seeking behaviors. It was the first time we understood why Ava did certain things at home and it gave us the tools we needed to help Ava overcome this minor developmental hurdle. Smarties is collaborating with us and an occupational therapist to assist Ava, so she's prepared for kindergarten.

Smarties' Spanish immersion curriculum has undoubtedly advanced Ava's early reading and language skills. My husband and I regret that we were not exposed early to a second language, and we're thrilled to have found a school that provides that for Ava.

We had the chance to transfer Ava to a public-school last year which would have saved us tuition payments, but we said no immediately because Smarties is worth every cent. Our child is thriving. She is curious about the world, feels safe to express herself and has developed wonderful friendships. She skips into Smarties and often asks on the weekends if she can go to school.

We are so impressed with Ava's classroom set-up that we've modeled Ava's home playroom to look like it. Smarties utilizes their space cleverly, but the children and staff need more space. Ava and other children need rooms where they can receive specialized therapy. We've nurtured friendships with the parents of kids in Ava's class and we'd love to grab coffee and get to know other parents, too. One of the best features of Smarties is its high-quality food. We struggle to get Ava to eat well at home because she's used to better cooks! We would definitely buy meals-to-go from Smarties.

We sincerely hope Smarties moves forward with its expansion plans.

Thank you –
Ashley Fantz and Chris Hight
Ava Hight's parents

February 16, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

I write this letter in full support of Smarties Academy's mission and growth. Our daughter has attended Smarties from the age of 8 months to present (27 months), and has truly blossomed cognitively, socially, physically, and emotionally in their daycare program. She has gone through numerous major developmental stages and changes, and Smarties has supported and cared for her at each step along the way, while gracefully including my husband and I as parents and partners in the process. She adores her teachers, the staff, and her friends, and we do, too!

There are so many stories I could share to demonstrate how Smarties truly lives their mission, but here is one that stands out. Our daughter was diagnosed with Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (JIA) in her right knee last summer. We don't have a backyard or basement in our house – there isn't much space to run around – so honestly, we didn't notice her physical activity changing much in our presence. If anything, we thought she was maybe being a bit more cuddly and less independent due to her new baby brother on the way.

However, her teachers at Smarties took note and took action. They reached out to us to let us know that she was sitting more during playtime and asking for help from the teachers more often, repeatedly. Had they not flagged this for us, it could have been months before we realized that our daughter needed to be medically evaluated. We took her to numerous specialists and eventually received the JIA diagnosis, and Smarties stayed in close communication with us every step of the way. Her condition has ebbed and flowed – she's had a couple flare ups here and there – and Smarties is truly our partner in staying on top of her condition and supporting her.

We are so grateful that Smarties truly continues to be "smart for kids" AND "smart for parents" and could not support their expansion more. We feel incredibly lucky to be part of their program, and know that the expansion has the opportunity to impact so many more families in a meaningful way during these crucial years of child development. Our daughter is thriving, and we are looking forward to sending our new baby boy to Smarties to join his sister soon!

Please feel free to reach out with any additional questions you may have.

Warmly,



Elyssa Lakin

elyssamlakin@gmail.com

770.241.6644

Greetings,

The Smarties slogan should be **Alleviate Mom Guilt**.

My husband and I have 3 children. All of them have attended Smarties, and the older two started at Smarties when they were 3 and 1 years old. Previously, both of them attended another daycare and had a nanny. However, it wasn't until we started at Smarties that the guilt and worry I felt each day as I left them to go to work subsided.

Smarties not only allowed my children to thrive, but benefitted my mental health. It was the first daycare where my kids didn't cry everyday I left them. They eat amazing food. They do amazing activities like gardening and yoga. And best of all they have the most amazing teachers!

Smarties is a model of childcare that other providers should emulate. The fact that Smarties has the chance to expand their amazing services, benefitting more families and offering even more family-centered services should be a no-brainer for the City of Decatur and a priority of the community.

Smarties is supporting families to raise well-rounded, healthy kids. I hope that their future plans will be approved so these opportunities are available to even more families.

Sincerely,

Jessica Allen Tchoukalov and Tzvetan Tchoukalov
Smarties Parents from 2018 to present.

February 22, 2023

To whom this may concern:

My name is Priya Schaffner; my husband, John, and I feel incredibly fortunate to have our two girls at Smarties Academy.

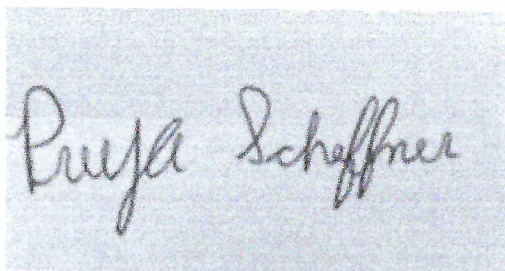
After facing a lot of fear and unknown during the COVID pandemic, we enrolled our first daughter, Kavya, at Smarties when she was 8 months old in October of 2020. We were immediately put at ease as it was evidenced right from the start how diligent, communicative and careful the teachers and staff were during that challenging time. Not only did we feel so safe having our little girl at Smarties, but we could tell fairly quickly how enriched her life was from her experience there. She blossomed developmentally and seemed to feel so at home while at Smarties. We felt so overjoyed that our second child, Kinara, was recently able to join her big sister at Smarties starting in June 2022 as well. She too has grown so much while at Smarties and I can tell how much love she gets while she's there. Over the last 2.5 years, each and every teacher and staff member have become like family. The building radiates warmth and kindness from the moment you walk through the doors, and we couldn't feel happier with our experience at Smarties.

Smarties Academy is one of the best decisions we have made as parents, and we only wish that other parents and families in the community are able to join this special and enriching community. Smarties Academy is a gem in our community, truly enriching the lives of the families that it serves. We are beyond grateful for our experience and look forward to many more years to come at Smarties Academy.

We would be more than happy to share more information about our experience as well. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me at Priya.ramamurthy16@gmail.com with any questions.

Best

Dr. Priya Schaffner, DNP, FNP-C

A rectangular area containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Priya Schaffner". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored, slightly textured background.

Sagar and Ameer Patel
1514 Woodbridge Way NE
Atlanta, GA 30329

To Whom It May Concern:

We have only been with Smarties Academy since August of 2022, but even in that short amount of time, we have benefitted from it immensely. Ms. Kabat has truly created a unique and special experience for both children and parents. We were drawn to the school for its immersive Spanish experience, its commitment to nutritious and organic foods for its children, and its safe and loving community feel. Smarties has certainly lived up to all of our expectations for what we wanted in a school for our son.

The teachers at Smarties not only willingly take our questions and concerns about our son's developmental milestones, but they unilaterally provide suggestions and tips for us for things to do with him. As a first time mother, I never imagined I would be this comfortable leaving my child with someone else, but the teachers at Smarties treat him with such genuine love and affection that I have no hesitation. He has made such developmental leaps since being in school at Smarties and we know that his teachers and the classroom experience at Smarties are responsible for a lot of them.

When Ms. Kabat indicated that she was looking to expand Smarties, we were both excited. First, we were excited about the possibility of keeping our son in school at Smarties longer with a potential Pre-K program and after school activities. We were also happy about the possibility of additional classrooms, so that there is space for not only any future children we may have, but also space for others to experience all of the amazing qualities about Smarties that we have. Selfishly, we were also very thrilled about the potential bakery. We so appreciate the menu and food quality at Smarties for our son and have often joked that he would be disappointed with his offerings at home in comparison. As working parents, the idea that we could pick him up from school as well as pick up a healthy, fresh, nourishing meal for dinner for all of us, sounds almost too good to be true.

We hope that you will strongly consider approving the Smarties Academy expansion proposal. We are happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have regarding our experience with Smarties Academy. Our email address is ameeandsagar@gmail.com

Sincerely,



To whom it may concern,

I am writing to encourage and even insist that Smarties Academy receive the expansion approval it seeks to receive for a multitude of reasons. I have 2 children who attend Smarties and have been sending my children there for going on 3 years now. We have been so amazed and happy with the attention to our kids' lives when they are not with us. It is truly a service and a luxury that not all parents have.

Smarties cares deeply about each and every child at their school. Every teacher knows my kid's names even if they have never had them in their class. At the end of the day when you go and pick up your kids the teachers look as fresh and happy as they did at the beginning of the day. And truly, the kids are in a better mood and disposition at the end of the day than at the beginning, which really shows you the level of care they are receiving throughout the day.

Smarties invests in food and food staffing, which is incredibly important for development and my kids literally eat better than I do every day they are there. The language immersion was very important to our family and the teachers put so much into teaching not only the children the language but the culture around where they are from. My older child knows every country his teachers are from and what the differences in their traditions and cultures are...that is rare in a school, let alone a pre-school. They emphasize safety and send out routine updates whether that be during inclement weather or things happening around the neighborhood. They also listen to their parents with a lot of surveys and tracking on our happiness with the level of care. They also help out when you don't even expect them to – talking with my kids about what to do at home to help mom and dad out which is really appreciated and not necessarily something I expect from a school.

I have about 4-5 families that I know personally, that we have recommended the school to, that are on the wait list to get into Smarties and I know would be extremely happy with the opportunity to get in and receive the incredible care they have to offer.

We cannot say enough wonderful things about Smarties Academy. We wish we could send our kids there throughout their entire school experience. We will be extremely sad to graduate this year with the older but look forward to many more years with the younger!

Thank you,
Rhanatah & Andrew Harrison

February 16, 2023

Dear Smarties' Community,

When I initially applied at Smarties for my son, it was because I was looking for a full-time daycare where he would learn Spanish. Because of the limited space at Smarties, we almost didn't get in and with so few options for Spanish-immersion daycares in Atlanta, I almost had to say goodbye to my dream that my son would grow up bilingual.

What I didn't realize is that Smarties is so much more than a bilingual daycare. I have been blown away by how Smarties truly lives up to their motto: Smart for Kids, Smart for Parents. My son has learned so much more than Spanish in the less than a year he's had at Smarties. He has learned to wash his hands, sleep on a schedule and without a comfort animal, to sign communication, to go down slides safely, and trust people other than his parents to take care of him. For me, the teachers and staff at Smarties have taught me how to be a better parent and encourage my son's growth. They take care of food and diapers, making my job easier, and they strive to be open except for major holidays, making it possible for me to be a mom and a professional.

My partner and I both work full time and I feel so peaceful and happy dropping him off while we work because I know he is being loved and care for. All the teachers seem to know his name, making it feel like a true community. I trust the teachers and staff at Smarties and wholly support their dreams to expand Smarties to make it more accessible for more parents. For me, I am especially looking forward to their plan to make meals-to-go so that I can finally experience some of the incredible food my son eats every day.

With gratitude,



Rebekah Stewart, mother of Lewis Lennon

Feb 8th, 2023

To Whom this may concern,

We started our Smarties journey when we put our name down on a waiting list at the beginning of my second trimester with our first child. We opted to start after she turned one and keep her home with concerns that she was "too young" for daycare. From our research and tour, we felt that Smarties was a good fit for our growing family. We appreciated the Spanish immersion and cultural appreciation as well as their organic and nutritious meals that introduce new flavors with a different one each meal, each day and each week. Little did we know that the school would be so much more than we could ever expect. They tailored their attention to our daughter's personality and needs and helped her grow, be comfortable and thrive in a setting without mom or dad.

During the pandemic, the school was very transparent with which classrooms had positive cases, how they were handling the situation, while also being respectful of the individual and family's privacy. They implemented very strict standards to keep all children, staff and families safe by frequently consulting CDC subject matter experts and balancing it with staff and family preferences by sending out many surveys to assess everyone's comfort level with restrictions.

With our second child, it was without a doubt that we would enroll him at Smarties and this time started him in the infant classroom compared to our daughter that started in the toddler classroom. We had seen the great care they provide for the children. Our son is often greeted by many other teachers and staff members that are not part of his classroom because they have such a wonderful family environment. We appreciate the biannual parent-teacher conferences they hold to share our kids' milestones and what goals they have for the next 6 months.

We know our time with Smarties will end but would want our children to continue building off of their strong Spanish language foundation. Incorporating a kindergarten and space for elementary age summer camps would be so helpful to continue fostering those skills and connection with the Smarties community.

We are beyond grateful for Smarties and the impact their community has had on our family. We have met and befriended many other Smarties families who have similar experiences. An expansion would not only greatly improve the current environment, but also impact so many more families.

It really does take a village to raise children and we are honored to have Smarties be part of our village.

Sincerely,



Philip and Eva Wong

Kate Casolaro and Rudy Colberg

1269 University Drive NE
Atlanta, GA 30306
781.962.1703
kacasolaro@gmail.com

February 17, 2023

Smarties Academy

465 Clairemont Ave,
Decatur, GA 30030

Dear Ms. Bogna,

We are writing to share our extremely positive experiences we have had with Smarties as both of our daughters are enrolled in your program. As first time daycare parents, it was really important to us that our daughters (age 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ and age 10 months) were in an environment that was loving, enriching, social and aligned to our values. It was also a priority, given we are a bilingual and bicultural family, that the program have Spanish immersion. We have found all of that and more in our experience at Smarties. Our older daughter has truly fallen in love with school, and the growth and development she has experienced since she began in her class in September has been amazing to watch. Her social abilities, confidence and capability to do things for herself have progressed so much. Our baby started in January and it is clear she is in such a stimulating and loving environment.

A big priority for us in choosing a school for our children was becoming part of a community of diverse families that share similar values and interests. We are so happy to be part of Smarties and love the ideas shared by the administration as to how they can continue to build out the program and the space to foster community, connection and collaboration among the children and families. We would love to be part of that expanded community and look forward to many more years of positive experiences with our children and their classmates at Smarties.

Sincerely,


Kate + Rudy
Kate Casolaro and Rudy Colberg

2/6/20223

Dear Whom This May Concern,

Both of our children attend Smarties and we're very grateful to the teachers and staff for the exceptional care they provide. We love Smarties and so do our kids. We could see the difference immediately after moving our daughter over from another daycare. She would smile as soon as we pulled up and came out happy too. There were no more stories about yelling teachers and kids hitting each other, but lots about fun activities and kind friends.

As working parents, it can be difficult to balance everything and not having excellent childcare options makes that so much more stressful. We are confident that they are well cared for and nurtured and that gives us so much peace. This includes the activities they do - every time we've walked into the school the kids in every class are on task and playing calmly, they food they eat - they often eat better at school than at home and the love that they feel from their teachers. The staff has a strong schedule and processes they follow that keep families on the same page.

We wholeheartedly support the expansion of programs at Smarties and would love to see the amazing care they offer benefit more families. We have friends on the waiting list who are eager to get their children accepted. Decatur is a great place to raise a family and growing the footprint of Smarties would benefit this community.

Sincerely,

Landon and Tonni Bennett

The image shows two handwritten signatures in purple ink. The top signature is 'Tonni Bennett' and the bottom signature is 'Landon Bennett'. Both are written in a cursive, flowing style.

17 February 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

It is my pleasure to write this letter supporting Smarties Academy's expansion plan.

My daughter started attending Smarties Academy in the fall of 2020. Some might wonder why I would place my child in day care in the middle of the Covid pandemic. I am a health care worker and during the pandemic I along with other health care professionals were stretched thin supporting our hospitals and communities. Smarties Academy was one of the few childcare facilities that put the safety of their staff and students first. They clearly communicated their Covid precautions and procedures, and I felt at ease knowing my daughter would be in the best of hands in a loving, mindful environment. My family and I felt incredibly supported by Smarties Academy during our need for childcare in a chaotic, scary time.

Since then, my daughter has continued to thrive in their program. She has learned what it means to be environmentally friendly, reduce waste, recycle, and repurpose materials. Smarties Academy is not only teaching their students about these important topics, but they live by it. They lead by example, positively influencing their students, the future of our communities. My daughter has learned more than I could have imagined in the last two years. She's writing her name, recognizing letters, and her understanding of Spanish is remarkable (she's even teaching me at home). Beyond this she has learned to appreciate the beauty and celebrations of other cultures. Smarties Academy's holistic approach to learning from providing nutritious meals to their class curriculum is unique and very much needed.

Smarties Academy continues to provide excellent childcare support to the City of Decatur and surrounding communities. Further growth and expansion opportunities will only allow Smarties Academy to accommodate more families in need like mine. Raising a child takes a village and I'm so thankful that Smarties Academy is part of my village in this beautiful yet challenging journey of parenthood. I hope more parents and their children get to experience the incredible support that Smarties Academy provides for their families and communities. If you need more information or would like to speak, then please feel free to reach me at 404-717-7171 or dr.nikul86@gmail.com.

Sincerely,



Nikul Chaudhari

To whom it may concern,

Smarties Academy has made a profoundly positive impact on our family. Our daughter was born shortly after the United States entered lockdown and due to restrictions and our desire to protect her through the pandemic, our family remained relatively isolated and could only rely on a few family members for support. Once our daughter reached one year old, we felt that it was important for her to expand her environment and for our family to grow the support network we lacked during the early stages of the pandemic.

We were so fortunate to find that environment at Smarties and have been so grateful for our daughter to be part of such a safe, loving, and mindful community. The Smarties mission closely aligns with our goals. The environmentally conscious approach, Spanish immersion, and nutritional focus have built many healthy habits for our daughter and have supported her growth socially and academically. When we started her at Smarties, she was a bit behind with her gross motor skills. Through the careful attention of her teachers and encouragement of her classmates, she has flourished.

We now have an infant son who is also enrolled at Smarties and are so grateful that the school has been able to support our growing family. Our children love being in the same environment and are afforded the opportunity to interact throughout the day, furthering their bond. We have been able to network with so many families and our children have so many friends now, all thanks to Smarties.

The teachers and staff are truly incredible and it is so obvious how much they all care for the kids. We are always in awe of how everyone recognizes our family and engages with us during drop-off and pick-up. The curriculum has been great and we have seen significant development with both of our children. One of our favorite parts of the school is the diverse and nutritious meals that are provided. Our children have been exposed to so many healthy foods and are developing positive eating habits thanks to the school.

The proposed Smarties expansion would extend the support for our family and the community even further by providing additional resources to parents and affording more families the opportunity to become part of the Smarties network. We whole-heartedly support the direction and have benefited so much from the mission and goals. We sincerely hope we are still part of Smarties as it grows and expands, but more importantly, will be happy to be part of a community that offers such an incredible resource to families of young children.

Sincerely,

Kendra and Tom Little


Kendra Little
Thomas Little

February 17, 2023

RE: Smarties Academy Expansion

Hello,

My name is Sejal Zaveri and my children are currently enrolled at Smarties Academy. My eldest has been a student since he was 4 months old, and my youngest started earlier this year when he turned 4 months.

In our current times, childcare in general is so difficult to find and good childcare is almost impossible it seems. Smarties goes above and beyond providing good care, they are exceptional in every way. The administration and staff are the kindest, most caring individuals I have come across in an educational setting. Their curriculum is both engaging and challenging for my children. They teach in a variety of ways, ensuring all children are supported in a manner that best suits them. From in class activities to playground and outside time, there are so many skills the children are learning which sets a great foundation for them to be successful.

I love that the school is Spanish immersion and that the classes are also so diverse. Different ethnic backgrounds are prominent in each class, and I find this gives my children a more realistic picture of the world we live in.

Smarties provides the most nutritious meals and exposes the children to various tastes and flavors from a very young age. My toddler is more open to trying new foods because of the variety he gets to eat while at school.

Without a doubt, Smarties gives me peace of mind knowing my children are taken care of in a safe and loving manner. The community they have created is the support group I didn't know I needed. The teachers and administrators are always available to answer any questions or just help with normal developmental challenges. For a 2-year-old, these come often, and they are always there to provide me with tools and suggestions to help navigate these waters.

I'm so thrilled they have the opportunity to expand, and I truly hope they are able to fulfill this next phase. A larger Smarties will allow even more families to have such a wonderful place to send their children. I believe the strongest indicator of a great school is the feedback the children provide. Every weekend my son asks when it will be Monday because he wants to return to Smarties 😊.

Thank you,
Sejal Zaveri

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for sharing the exciting news about Smarties' expansion plans. It's wonderful to hear that the school is growing and adding more services to benefit the families and community it serves.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit a written statement in support of your mission and growth. Our family has been extremely happy with the care and education our children have received at Smarties. The teachers and staff have created a warm, nurturing, and safe environment for the children to learn and play. The Spanish immersion and curriculum is well-rounded and engaging, and my child has shown tremendous growth and development under their guidance.

We believe that Smarties' expansion would have a positive impact on the community, as it would provide even more families with access to high-quality childcare, nutritious meals, and education services. The addition of a kindergarten program and K-5 camps are particularly beneficial, as they would allow children to receive the care and support they need in a familiar and comfortable environment. The new bakery and kitchen for meals-to-go is also a great idea and would make life easier for busy parents.

We fully support Smarties' vision of being a one-stop place that fulfills all families' needs and allows for more quality time together. The school's growth and expansion would benefit the community in countless ways, and we are excited to see what the future holds for Smarties.

Thank you for your continued dedication to providing exceptional care and education for our children.

Sincerely,

Bhavnes and Sweta Vivek

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature on the left is 'BVV' followed by a stylized flourish. The second signature on the right is 'Sweta Vivek' written in a cursive style.

To whom it may concern,

Smarties Academy is the kind of school every person deserves. It's an educational haven of love, creativity and joy — crucial ingredients in raising kind, brave adults.

It's an echo you'll hear across every household with Smarties students: the professional teachers are passionate about their work and shower the children with care, while focusing on growth and development.

The Spanish language spoken exclusively at Smarties fosters a global world view and bolsters brain function, literally physically changing the brain for the better. An April 2022 Cambridge University article says language learning leads to the "improvement of ... communication, creativity, recall and concentration."

The food cooked and served at Smarties is both healthy and delicious. Frankly, it's enviable, with the menu reading like one from a gourmet restaurant. For example, on January 30, the Smarties chefs served salmon, pasta salad, corn and black olives for lunch.

Amid a detrimental daycare shortage, with \$100 fees to simply get added to at least months-long daycare waitlists, more high quality childcare for Decatur's youngest residents is exactly what our community needs.

I'm ecstatic Smarties administrators are taking steps to expand their childcare, language and food services...to improve the lives of thousands more Decatur families over the coming years. It's a boon to residents, an investment in both the present and the future, and the kind of growth any municipal leader would be proud to endorse.

In support and admiration,

Rikki Klaus



Rikki Klaus and David Nadler

Smarties has become an integral part of our family, and we are immensely grateful for the love and care they have provided us during the challenging times of the pandemic. Despite being on a lengthy waitlist, we were fortunate to secure a spot, and it has been nothing short of wonderful. One of the standout features of this school is their emphasis on nutritious meals and complete Spanish immersion program, which sets them apart from other schools we visited in the Atlanta area.

As parents, we have always prioritized nutrition for our children, and we were thrilled to find a school that shares our values. The staff at Smarties went above and beyond in accommodating our needs, including allowing breastfeeding during the day for our second child's entire first year and facilitating weekly visits from our occupational therapist and speech pathologist.

The teachers and administrative staff at Smarties are truly exceptional. Their teaching skills are top-notch, and they have instilled a love of reading in our 4-year-old. We are incredibly grateful for the progress our children have made under their care.

Although we are disappointed that there is no kindergarten program this year, we are excited about the upcoming summer camps and the school's expansion to serve more families. We believe that if everyone went to Smarties, the world would be a better place. Thank you to the entire Smarties team for caring for our children as if they were your own. We look forward to staying involved and watching the school continue to thrive.

Timothy + Heather Stoll
2/21/2023

To whom it may concern:

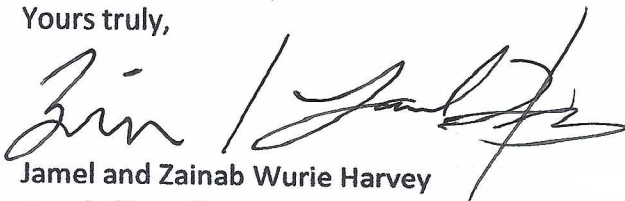
While I am not a DeKalb County native, I have lived here since 2010 when I started law school at Emory and subsequently began working at Emory after graduation. Our family believes that Smarties Academy is the gem of DeKalb, and we would like to express our strong support for the expansion of our children's second home. Smarties has been an amazing place to watch our two young ones grow, thrive, and flourish over the last three years. The staff and management are kind and care so much, about the whole health of our children and family generally.

We have appreciated the peace that we have knowing that when we drop off our children daily, they are in caring, loving hands. Additionally, our kids learn so much for their teachers, friends, and staff - from filling up others' buckets with kind words and actions to the names of dinosaurs that we don't even know! It is especially beautiful seeing that our children who have no Spanish background are now Spanish speakers! We have learned so much Spanish ourselves, which has helped us interact in more meaningful ways with Spanish speakers in our community.

We appreciate the thought put into every aspect of the program - from classroom designs to in-house chefs and gardening classes. One experience that made our hearts smile so much was that one day, we dropped off our older child in his class, and then went down to drop off the toddler. While doing so, we heard festive signing in the hall, and our older child's class came around singing Feliz Navidad to the younger classrooms. It was truly an amazing sight to see. It was beautiful to see the teachers get into the music just as much (or even more so!) than the children, and it brightened up our morning.

Without this expansion, our eldest child will age out of Smarties in July, so we hope Smarties is afforded the opportunity to grow and continue serving our community by expanding its reach to older children. We are pleading with you to help us achieve this goal!

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zainab / Jamel", written in a cursive style.

Jamel and Zainab Wurie Harvey
zwurie@gmail.com
682-66-9219

Kim Del Guercio & Brian Sperry
1894 Westminster Way NE
Atlanta, GA 30307

February 21, 2023

To Whom it May Concern:

I'm writing in strong support of Smarties Academy's expansion. We have been sending our son to Smarties since he was 6 months old and are constantly grateful for the safe, loving environment that Smarties provides. As soon as our son was born, we were looking for daycare options and Smarties was our first choice. We feel so lucky that we were able to get off of the waitlist in time for him to start in the infants' classroom. I personally felt so comfortable leaving him in the care of Ms. Mildres and Ms. Beatriz and could not imagine more nurturing providers for him. Since then, Jacob has been in two other classrooms and has been growing and socializing so well. We have loved all of his teachers and feel that they have been perfect fits for each developmental stage. We are also so grateful for the nutritious, delicious food that is provided each day and for the tailored, creative curriculum and activities that Jacob is exposed to.

We are so supportive of Smarties' expansion goals and feel like they have truly lived out their mission of being 'Smart for Kids, Smart for Parents.' We are excited for the possibility of expansion and the new space that will provide more opportunities to build community and support the children's growth and development. We are also excited to enjoy some of the nutritious meals to-go which will not only be convenient, but support dedicated family time. We look forward to many more years at Smarties and continuing to be part of the very special Smarties community.

We are happy to provide more information if needed and welcome you reaching out to us at kim.delguercio@gmail.com or by calling 404.353.2101.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kim Del Guercio + Brian Sperry". The signature is written in a cursive style with a plus sign between the two names.

Kim Del Guercio & Brian Sperry

February 21, 2023

To whom it may concern,

My husband Adam and I were pregnant with our second child when we started to look for a daycare for our son. The search process for the perfect daycare was more challenging than we expected. We had a long list of requirements. Our son was beginning to speak Spanish already and it was important to us that the school have a strong language component. We also strive to eat healthy, organic, and local foods whenever possible and wanted a school that aligned with these values. We also didn't want to have to pack meals everyday due to the amount of preparation time and difficulty in ensuring variety for just one child. We wanted to make sure our son was getting outside time in a safe and pleasant environment. We wanted the physical space to be safe, appropriately stimulating, and focused on the whole child/family. We wanted a place where our daughter would also be able to attend, even as an infant. We wanted the school to feel like a community where we all felt welcome and connected to other families. We researched and toured many schools and Smarties was the only school we found that did all of this and more. We were put on a waitlist and that was the hardest part - what if there wasn't space for us? Fortunately, we were able to get a spot and our son started in August of 2022, with plenty of time to adjust before his sister was born. Once she was born, the facility and staff went out of their way to support our family in the transition. They had done the same when my son was prescribed glasses a couple months before. No matter what is happening at home, we have supportive partners at Smarties to help us through it all. We are looking forward to starting our daughter at Smarties this coming August.

The growth of Smarties will make all of this available to even more families as well as help ensure that Smarties is able to accommodate siblings of the current families. The vision is so much more than a "day care." More space creates opportunities for more gathering and connecting. A bigger kitchen allows for - healthy, local, organic - grab and go dinners for families needing a few more minutes in the day. It'll create even more really good jobs; it is clear from the limited turnover that Employees at Smarties are valued, well compensated & happy in their roles. The expansion will allow for the building and grounds - previously a church - to become even more family and child-centered. I trust we can all agree that - especially in this era - schools should be a place that gives families peace of mind. We are so fortunate that Smarties is such a thriving part of our community. My family is so grateful.

Warm regards,



Spring Walker & Family

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to encourage and even insist that Smarties Academy receive the expansion approval it seeks to receive for a multitude of reasons. I have 2 children who attend Smarties and have been sending my children there for going on 3 years now. We have been so amazed and happy with the attention to our kids' lives when they are not with us. It is truly a service and a luxury that not all parents have.

Smarties cares deeply about each and every child at their school. Every teacher knows my kid's names even if they have never had them in their class. At the end of the day when you go and pick up your kids the teachers look as fresh and happy as they did at the beginning of the day. And truly, the kids are in a better mood and disposition at the end of the day than at the beginning, which really shows you the level of care they are receiving throughout the day.

Smarties invests in food and food staffing, which is incredibly important for development and my kids literally eat better than I do every day they are there. The language immersion was very important to our family and the teachers put so much into teaching not only the children the language but the culture around where they are from. My older child knows every country his teachers are from and what the differences in their traditions and cultures are...that is rare in a school, let alone a pre-school. They emphasize safety and send out routine updates whether that be during inclement weather or things happening around the neighborhood. They also listen to their parents with a lot of surveys and tracking on our happiness with the level of care. They also help out when you don't even expect them to – talking with my kids about what to do at home to help mom and dad out which is really appreciated and not necessarily something I expect from a school.

I have about 4-5 families that I know personally, that we have recommended the school to, that are on the wait list to get into Smarties and I know would be extremely happy with the opportunity to get in and receive the incredible care they have to offer.

We cannot say enough wonderful things about Smarties Academy. We wish we could send our kids there throughout their entire school experience. We will be extremely sad to graduate this year with the older but look forward to many more years with the younger!

Thank you,
Rhanatah & Andrew Harrison

Smarties Academy
465 Clairemont Ave
Decatur GA 30030

Emma and Blake Harrington
732 N Parkwood Rd
Decatur, GA 30030

February 17, 2023

To Whom it May Concern,

Blake and I would like to express our support for the expansion of Smarties Academy. Our son, Leo, has been attending Smarties for several years now and we have been so pleased with his education there. Smarties is not a typical daycare, and instead is a proper school- focused on teaching and loving our kids holistically. Leo has absolutely thrived at Smarties, and we feel very fortunate that he got the opportunity to attend.

At Smarties Academy, Leo has been eating all organic meals worthy of a Michelin star. He is fluent in Spanish, and is already pre-reading in Pre-K. He is absolutely ahead of the curve going into Elementary school. Perhaps most importantly though, is how Smarties have shaped him into a community member who values kindness.

Smarties Academy is a unique institution, and we are fortunate to have this resource in our neighborhood. Blake and I fully support an expansion, and plan to send Leo there for summer school for years to come.

Please reach out to us with any questions you may have.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Blake and Emma Harrington".

Emma and Blake Harrington

As a currently enrolled family at Smarties, we are proud to support the mission and growth of this amazing program. Smarties has become an integral part of our family, providing not only excellent childcare services, but also a supportive community that has enriched our lives in countless ways.

From the very first day we arrived at Smarties, we were impressed by the welcoming and loving environment. The staff, led by the owner and founder Ms. Bogna, are passionate about their work and truly care for the children in their care. Our child is always happy and excited to attend Smarties, and we have noticed a significant improvement in his social skills and overall development since he started attending.

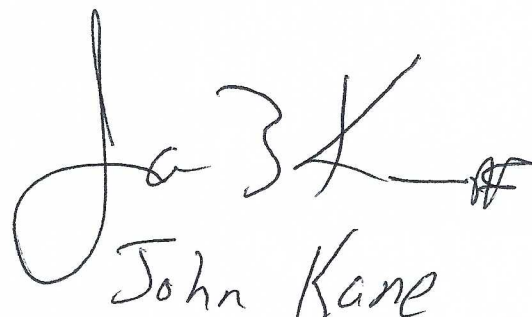
One of the things that sets Smarties apart is their commitment to providing a holistic, green environment that promotes health and well-being. The organic, nutritious meals that are provided have been a game-changer for our family. Knowing that our child is getting the energy he needs to learn and grow, while also developing healthy eating habits, is a huge relief.

But perhaps the most important benefit of Smarties has been the sense of community and support that we have found there. As busy parents, it can be hard to find the time and resources to give our child the best possible start in life. Smarties has made this easier by providing a range of family support and resources, as well as a convenient and reliable childcare service.

We believe that the growth of Smarties could have a tremendously positive impact on our community. By providing more families with access to the high-quality care and support that Smarties offers, we can help ensure that all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential. We are proud to be a part of the Smarties family and look forward to watching it grow and thrive in the years to come.



Jessie Kane



John Kane

Hello Smarties admins,

I feel incredibly lucky that my son was able to start with you all this academic year. I am so proud of him and grateful to you all, as you helped through the potty-training phase and all the challenges and joys of toddler life. As a global public health person with limited Spanish skills learned later in life, I know the value of learning a second language early in life and I am delighted to be able to offer that to my son with your help. I have several friends and colleagues who are on the waitlist and I know that they and other families will benefit from the expansion of this wonderful program in the future.

We are grateful to be a part of the Smarties community, and wish you all the best with the expansion.

Joanna

To whom it may concern,

We are writing to let you know about our support for the expansion of Smarties Academy. Our 14 month old daughter has been going to Smarties for the past 7 months. The care she has received here has been the biggest blessing to us as parents. It brings tears to our eyes to think about how grateful we are to have Smarties taking care of our daughter, teaching her, and loving her while we work. The care she receives is so personalized to her needs, as well as our desires as parents. Our daughter has severe food allergies, and not a day goes by that we are not reminded of how grateful we are to have people that can meet her needs and keep her safe when we are not around. We're reminded daily from friends how rare it is to have a school that can not only handle her allergies, but is happy to do so, and cooks for her according to her dietary needs.

The search for childcare was grueling for us, as it was for many families. Nannies were unaffordable, and other schools made us incredibly nervous to leave our daughter. Smarties was hands-down the greatest option, and we were so grateful to get in after a year on the waitlist. Their expansion plans will allow other families to experience the loving, nurturing, educational environment our daughter has experienced. It will also give us the opportunity to continue her Spanish education with Smarties through Kindergarten and into elementary school. After the investment we have all made into her education, we know this is so important to keep up her Spanish after she leaves Smarties.

The need for great childcare in Atlanta will only continue to grow. As a community, we have the opportunity, and the responsibility, to ensure that our children receive the best care possible. These are our future leaders. The investment we make in them now will be seen for generations to come. We hope you will support Smarties in their expansion plans, so they can continue to nurture and educate tomorrow's leaders.

Sincerely,

Mallory and Luke Keller

Smarties Expansion Support

Tori Campbell <toricampbell86@gmail.com>

Tue 2/21/2023 12:51 PM

To: Office Smarties Academy <office@smartiesacademy.com>

To Whom it may concern,

I am writing today in support of Smarties Academy's plan for expansion.

We feel so fortunate to be part of the Smarties family! When Smarties reopened after the Covid Shutdown my husband Phillip and I were able to enroll both of our young boys and we are so grateful they had space for us. Our older son is now in kindergarten and thriving and excelling at Spanish! Our younger son is currently attending Smarties preschool and loves his class and teachers so much. He comes home every day smiling and excited to tell us about what he is learning. I am so thankful we found such a nurturing environment for him to learn each day. We cannot express enough how much it means to us that our children have been nourished at Smarties by healthy food, amazing teacher influence, and playful activities. We have also found the extra curricular content provided by Smarties to parents to be invaluable.

I am confident Smarties expansion would positively benefit our school and broader community and am happy to speak with anyone in more detail about our experience if needed.

Thank you for your consideration,

Tori Campbell

404-790-2770

toricampbell86@gmail.com

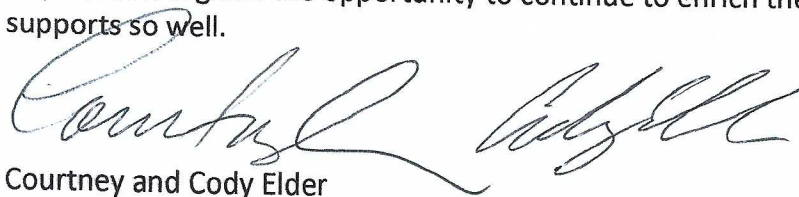
Decatur, GA

Letter in Support of Smarties Expansion Initiative

As a childcare facility, Smarties has been able to offer everything that we've needed as a dual-professional household to support the care and growth of our young children. Smarties Academy, however, has shown itself to be so much more than a daycare program for our family. Our two sons both started at Smarties Academy before they were 12 weeks old. The teachers and administration at this school have nurtured our children physically, emotionally, socially and academically during our time there over the last 5 years. Our boys have blossomed in the culturally rich environment that Smarties has fostered. In addition to a robust, well-rounded age-appropriate curriculum, the Spanish language immersion that my children have experienced has been an incredible asset to their learning environment.

The additional value that the Smarties program has offered our family has kept us enrolled even through the challenges presented by the COVID pandemic. This value lies in the peace of mind knowing that my children receive nutritious, prepared meals that are often above and beyond what we're able to provide at home during a busy week. It lies in the exposures to community-oriented and environmentally conscious activities such as gardening and recycling through art. The holistic approach at Smarties places value in developing mindfulness and consideration of others, as well as the importance of self and physical health through yoga, dance and outdoor play. I have watched my children become increasingly confident, secure, and empathetic during their years at Smarties. The program also partners with parents to be an active part of this growth and development process. I can't imagine not having this program as a part of our lives as parents of young children.

The proposal for Smarties to grow in capacity to host an additional several classrooms and sponsor a kindergarten program will offer this same great experience to a larger number of families in our Decatur-area community, where demand for strong, quality childcare is high. If a kindergarten class at Smarties had been available for my oldest son, who is currently in the pre-kindergarten program, we would have opted to remain at the school for an additional year. We hope that with this expansion, my youngest will be able to extend his time in this wonderful learning community and that my oldest will be able to return for continued instruction in the Spanish language. As a parent, the proposal for building additional space for providing meals and gathering space excites me the most. The support in providing nutritious meals for my family and helping me connect to other families would enhance this program even beyond where it is today. Smarties is already the village that has helped me raise my children, and I hope that it is given the opportunity to continue to enrich the community that it already supports so well.



Courtney and Cody Elder

May 1, 2023

The City of Decatur Planning Commission
Decatur City Hall
509 North McDonough Street
Decatur, GA 30030

To The City of Decatur Planning Commission,

It is our great pleasure to write this letter to express our strongest support of the proposed Smarties Academy expansion in the City of Decatur. Our family has lived in the City of Decatur for the last 6 years and our son Maxwell has spent more than 2 wonderful years as a student at Smarties. As you know, Smarties has proposed an addition to its current building and to increase its enrollment from 148 to 255 students. The proposed expansion represents a tremendous opportunity for City of Decatur to allow more families to access the uniquely special and enriching community at Smarties, including an immersive Spanish bilingual educational experience.

Max, who is currently in the Smarties Pre-K program, is our second child. Between our two kids we have been a part of 3 different early childhood education centers. Smarties stands apart for its instructional excellence, nurturing and enriching environment, and outstanding administrative staff and teachers who foster a sense of community. As a student at Smarties, Max has shown tremendous growth both socially and academically. It provides us peace of mind, as working parents, to know that he is in such a warm and nurturing environment. Max is always excited to go to school and see his teachers and peers. We have been amazed by his academic progress over the past two years. In addition to learning to speak and understand Spanish, he has learned to read in both English and Spanish and has already developed an impressive knowledge base of English phonetics. Each week he comes home excited to share the new letters and letter teams he learned at school. Through age-appropriate lessons, he has gained an appreciation for other cultures and topics such as environmental stewardship. The holistic environment at Smarties is exemplified by the uniquely nutritious foods that are prepared in house, including from the vegetable garden planted by students. To have such meals available to-go for families, as Smarties has proposed, would be a huge added benefit for working parents.

Smarties Academy's proposed plan would provide more families and children with immersive, high-quality, Spanish bilingual education in their uniquely nurturing environment. This would be a true gift to the community, and we are therefore pleased to provide our highest and most enthusiastic recommendation for the Smarties expansion proposal. We sincerely hope the Commission approves this request, which would allow enhanced access to this unique educational resource for future generations of City of Decatur children.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey and Jennifer Collins

Dear City of Decatur,

I am writing to enthusiastically recommend Smarties, a daycare that has provided exceptional care and education for young children in our community for several years. It's clear that Smarties is dedicated to creating a nurturing and stimulating environment for children. Their curriculum is well-designed to provide age-appropriate learning opportunities that encourage children's development and growth. The staff members are highly qualified, compassionate, and experienced. They demonstrate a genuine love for children and consistently provide a safe, loving, and fun atmosphere. They prioritize the well-being of each child and maintain excellent communication with parents to ensure that they are fully informed about their child's progress.

The facilities are well-maintained, clean, and spacious, providing ample room for children to play and learn. Smarties also has a secure entrance and employs various safety measures to ensure the safety of the children in their care.

Overall, I highly recommend Smarties to the City of Decatur for their outstanding daycare services. I am confident that the expansion of Smarties would be an excellent addition to your community, and I am certain that they would provide exceptional care and education to young children in the area.

Ryan Wiles



Sara Patel
21 Spring St.
Decatur, GA 30030

May 1, 2023

To whom it May Concern:

My daughter, Eila Patel, has been attending Smarties since June 2020. The program at Smarties is unparalleled. While visiting many local daycare facilities before her arrival, Smarties was the only one I felt comfortable leaving her with. I immediately saw that they care about each student as if they were their own. They have created safe and appropriately stimulating environments that change as the students grow. They have school wide themes that they then differentiate towards each age level for students to work on developmentally appropriate skills. They utilize a play-based curriculum, which is so crucial for children who are just learning how to be in the world, since children learn primarily through play. They believe in a reuse and recycle approach to their creating and crafting and there isn't a SmartBoard in sight, which I place an incredible value on, when thinking about developing and instructing the tiniest of minds.

However, you can read about their amazing curriculum, their approach to crafting, their limited use of technology, and while that all sets them apart, the humanness with which they approach their families and community is truly laudable. My husband and I became first-time parents during the Covid 19 Pandemic and had to make some very tough decisions about childcare; we opted to keep her home for a while but kept her spot at Smarties. Smarties is the only daycare/preschool facility I know of that decreased the tuition for families who were not attending. They have a well-known and long waitlist. But they provided this benefit for their families because they care about their families and children first. They sent out survey after survey to assess comfort levels, modified hours to make school work safely for families, and closed only when absolutely necessary, and even then offered zoom opportunities and activities to try and do at home as a way to connect with children and maintain a semblance of routine.

They LOVE celebrating birthdays- students and staff alike. Each child gets to select how they want to celebrate - Eila chose cupcakes with pink frosting and dancing. She felt so special and so celebrated. She wore her 3 year old crown proudly and told anyone who would listen what it was. The administration staff makes sure teachers also feel celebrated on their day with signs decorating the hallways, a special gift for each teacher and gentle reminders to parents if they'd like to have their child bring in a hand made card. As a former teacher, there is very little that touches a teacher's heart than personalized artwork. Smarties is more than a school, it is a place where children feel welcomed and safe and parents know their children will be well cared for.

And while the selfish part of me would love for it to stay small, I know expanding the school so more children and more families in the metro Atlanta area can benefit from this amazing program and staff is how something this great can become even greater. As I mentioned before,

finding a place to send your child to for the majority of their waking hours is an incredibly tough and sometimes painful choice. Smarties comes up all of the time as one of the most incredible daycares in this area on the mom groups I am a member of but it is always followed with, "but they have a really long waitlist so good luck getting a spot." They now have the opportunity to change that, to give more families a sense of security and belonging.

I wholeheartedly encourage you to approve their request and plan to expand; expanding a school like Smarties would only benefit this community.

Warmly,
Sara Patel

E: sara.naegele@gmail.com
M: 718-687-3196

The City of Decatur Planning Commission
Decatur City Hall
509 N. McDonough Street
Decatur, GA 30030

May 9, 2023

RE: Smarties Academy Expansion

Dear Members of the Planning Commission,

My wife and I are parents of a child enrolled at Smarties Academy at 465 Clairemont Ave in Decatur, GA. We would like to voice our support for the expansion of this incredible facility. Led by a passionate, talented and qualified team – the intentions of the expansion will benefit the community at large and we believe that the City of Decatur should approve this request.

As parents of a very young child, we are excited that this expansion will include additional classrooms, a kindergarten and summer /seasonal camps for children K-5. We are also very excited that the plans include a possible bakery and kitchen for children, families and caretakers. We believe that the community at large will benefit by the expansion also including new, specialized rooms for individual therapy sessions for children, breastfeeding rooms, a nurse's office and an event space for school performances, graduations, training, classes for parents, classes for teachers, and possibly being utilized for personal conferences, celebrations, birthday parties, anniversaries etc.

We have made Smarties Academy our home, and this expansion would allow more local working families obtain the childcare they deserve.

Thank you for reading, feel free to contact me for any additional feedback or questions.

Sincerely,

Josh and Dara Schaier
516.317.4963
joshuaschaier@gmail.com

April 29, 2023

To the members of The City of Decatur Planning Commission:

Our daughter Olivia started at Smarties in August 2021 when she was just one-and-a-half years old. In the past nearly two years, she has thrived in the nurturing and healthy environment that Smarties has provided our family. We hope that many more families have the privilege of the program Smarties offers through its requested expansion.

Both my husband and I are full time professionals who must rely on daycare services to meet the demands of our jobs. He runs his own business and I manage a non-profit office of 27 employees with the high stakes mission serving children who have been abandoned, abused, and neglected. Given the work that I do, every day I count our family extremely lucky and blessed to be able to provide her the kind of love and care our daughter receives both at home and at school.

We could not ask for a higher quality education, more engaged and caring teachers, and the healthy and carefully planned menu that she receives daily at Smarties. She is part of a diverse classroom with children of different cultural backgrounds and teachers who can teach her about their own international perspectives. When we get ready in the morning she is excited to see her friends and teachers. I have been extremely impressed by the detailed lesson plans she receives each week, even at her young age.

More than this, Smarties is a unique and singular program in DeKalb County. We live 20 minutes away from the school and it is not located on our usual commutes. However, we both know how important this small sacrifice of a daily commute is so that our daughter can receive an immersive bilingual education. Both my husband and I knew from the moment we started our family that language learning was a high priority and a value for us. We wanted our daughter to receive bilingual exposure as soon as possible. Given my parents are immigrants who still prefer to speak Spanish regularly, it was important for me that my daughter be able to speak both Spanish and English fluently and will remain the case throughout her life. Now at four, I hear her combining English and Spanish regularly and knowing to distinguish words between the languages.

I do not know of many other bilingual programs in the Atlanta area who offer the structure and beautiful learning environment that Smarties offers. It would be a tremendous loss to the community not to allow this important program to grow so that it can positively impact families who desire a quality education for their littlest ones.

Thank you,



Christina and Aaron Thomas
1567 Sylvester Cir. SE,
Atlanta, GA 30316.

May 1, 2023

To the Decatur Planning Commission.

I am writing to support the Smarties Academy's requested amendment to a conditional use permit and comprehensive site development plan to allow for the expansion of the school's facilities and services. Our daughter has been a student at Smarties since September 2022. We have experience with other early childhood education centers and have been extraordinarily impressed by the caring and supportive environment Smarties provides to students and families. Thanks in part to Smarties, our recently adopted daughter is thriving emotionally, socially and academically, and we have received incredible support as parents adjusting to a new child.

We are both working parents and have two children and understand how stressful the search for childcare can be. It is not only a challenge to find a program that meets the needs of your family and child, but simply to find availability in a program. Smarties' planned expansion will provide much needed early childcare options for parents and allow more families to experience the incredible opportunities Smarties offers.

As a Smarties parent and a resident of the City of Decatur, I wholeheartedly support Smarties Academy's application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anne Flinn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Anne Flinn

Distinguished members of the Decatur Planning Committee,

We are writing as current parents of two children at Smarties Academy in support of their plans to expand student capacity. We have sent our children to Smarties for five years and are strong advocates of the program, its teachers, and administration.

Smarties provides a holistic daycare and pre-K education in a unique immersion program, differentiating the childcare options in Decatur. We have seen them continuously improve their program and remain flexible during the unprecedented COVID challenges we all experienced. They remain steadfastly focused on developing each child given their own needs and personalities.

We are confident that Smarties Academy would thrive in providing expanded services to additional children at the Clairmont location. We also understand that there is more than enough demand for this expansion in the Decatur area as families continue to settle in the area. In addition to serving the growing number of families in the area, this is an undeniable opportunity to provide more employment options for Spanish speaking teachers and educational administrators.

Given the ideal location, underutilized remaining building space, and ample capacity to expand pickup/drop-off and outdoor recreational space we see no reason why the Decatur Planning Committee should not approve this expansion.

Sincerely,

Charles A. Schreiner

Charles A. Schreiner

Sara A. Schreiner

Sara A. Schreiner

5/1/2023

Letter of Support

rachel shah <rachelshah@gmail.com>

Mon 5/1/2023 11:50 AM

To: Office Smarties Academy <office@smartiesacademy.com>

Dear City of Decatur Planning Commission,

I am writing to express my very strong support for the Smarties Academy expansion, including additions to the building and increasing enrollment of students.

Smarties is an amazing place and program for Decatur and Atlanta-based families with young children. It is unique among other daycare programs in that it provides holistic care and education to young children and their families through its school program, its phenomenal kitchen, language immersion, and an open space that welcomes families, respects their individuality, and encourages community building.

It would be in Decatur's best interest to support the expansion of Smarties given how special an asset this program is to the city and community.

As parents, my spouse and I could not be more happy to send our child to this program. We feel a lot of gratitude when we drop off and pick up and see the joy and energy amongst the kids and teachers. It is a safe, loving, and nurturing environment. And in many ways, there is a lot of care towards the parents of these young children. Smarties encourages parents to connect through regular coffee socials. And that connection, especially for parents at a time in life that can be isolating, is very special.

I hope the City of Decatur realizes the easy choice and the clear benefits of supporting Smarties expansion.

Thank you!

Rachel Shah, MD and Marissa Lapedis, MD

Julianne & Brad Summers
1387 Conway Rd
Decatur, GA 30030

Dear Decatur residents and The City of Decatur Planning Commission,

The purpose of this letter is to express our support for the expansion of Smarties Academy from 148 to 255 students. Based on our experience and the experiences of family and friends that attend other daycares in Decatur and elsewhere, Smarties is clearly the best. With the expansion, more children will be able to benefit from Smarties' incredible teachers and staff, organization, communication, food, and overall curriculum and care.

Our daughter has attended Smarties since she was 12 weeks old. It is hard to describe how difficult it is to send a tiny, brand new baby away to be cared for by someone else, but the administrative staff and teachers at Smarties helped make this challenging transition easy for our family. The teachers quickly picked up on her personality and provided truly amazing care, and we never once worried about her.

Our daughter is now wrapping up her second year at Smarties, and most (if not all) teachers and other staff know her name and are excited to see her every day. It's so special that not only are her classroom's dedicated teachers getting to know her, teaching her new things, helping her thrive, and taking care of her; but everyone in the entire building is dedicated to her safety and happiness. We could not be more satisfied with her teachers and all of the extraordinary staff at Smarties.

In addition to stellar personnel, Smarties is clearly committed to providing the very best in Early Childhood Education. The curriculum is wonderfully detailed, very well organized, and communicated clearly to parents. Our daughter learns so much every day. Not only does she learn shapes, colors, numbers, and words; she also learns life skills, such as how to drink from an open cup, use utensils, and regulate her emotions. Additionally, when she masters new skills, her teachers and staff are just as excited as we are.

Lastly, one cannot talk about Smarties without mentioning their exemplary food program. The quality and diversity of food that the children receive is unreal. Organic, homemade, healthy, and delicious.

It is no secret that there is a shortage of quality daycare centers in our community and across the country, so *any* daycare facility expansion opportunity should be seen as absolutely necessary. Smarties Academy is one of a kind, and this expansion would allow more children to experience the Smarties environment and thrive.

Thanks for your consideration,
Julianne & Brad Summers