

**The State, (Columbia, SC)**

July 4, 2005

**Section:** METRO/REGION

**Edition:** FINAL

**Page:** B5

**Memo:** Related story, B1

## **PRIVATE SCHOOL'S SUCCESS SPURS CHARTER INITIATIVE**

*LISA MICHALS, Staff Writer*

For decades, Forest Acres' **Harmony School** has offered a private preschool and kindergarten education that departs from traditional teaching methods.

Harmony offers multi-age classes using an inquiry-based teaching model. Teachers give individual or small-group lessons, and students can pursue the lessons independently for as long (or short) a period as they like. For parents like Staci Quan, though, when their children finish kindergarten, it's difficult to find a similar school atmosphere.

"This school, in my opinion, inspires more of a love for learning," said Quan, a mother of four children.

So when **Harmony School** parents and leaders realized a charter school might offer them a fully funded method to expand into the elementary grades, the small school community cheered.

Eventually, though, it became clear that yielding control of the charter school to a parent and employee-run governing board, which is required by law, was a bit risky for the intimate Harmony community, said Deborah Holmes, school director.

"We don't know what conflicts could possibly happen," she said.

The charter school movement split from Harmony.

Meanwhile, Harmony officials decided to expand its private school status and offer first through third grades starting this fall. The school can serve an additional 20 students. Quan plans to stick with Harmony, since the charter school won't open until fall 2006. For more information, call the school at (803) 787-1899.