

# **SUSSEX MONTESSORI SCHOOL**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**2020-2021**



**SUSSEX  
MONTESSORI**  
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

**24970 Dairy Lane  
Seaford, DE 19973  
Phone: (302) 404-5367**

## I. OVERVIEW

### 1.1 School Overview:

Review the following chart with the school's basic information. (Note: This table will be completed by the Charter School Office. Please review for accuracy. **Any changes identified by the team must be highlighted in red prior to submitting the report. Only changes highlighted in red will be reviewed by the Charter School Office. Should there be no highlighted changes, the data will appear as presented in this draft.**)

BASIC INFORMATION	
Name of School	Sussex Montessori School
Year School Opened	2020
Enrollment 2020-2021 <sup>1</sup>	260
Approved Enrollment	260
School Address	24970 Dairy Lane, P.O. Box 1686, Seaford, DE 19973
District(s) of Residence	Seaford School District
Website Address	<a href="https://sussexmontessoricharter.com">https://sussexmontessoricharter.com</a>
Name of School Leader	Lisa Coldiron
School Leader Email and Phone Number	<a href="mailto:lisa.coldiron@sussexms.k12.de.us">lisa.coldiron@sussexms.k12.de.us</a> (302) 404-5367
Name of Board President	Linda Zankowsky
<b>Mission Statement:</b> The mission of the Sussex Montessori School (SMS) is to nurture the development of empathetic, collaborative, persistent and innovative global and community citizens in accordance with the time-tested philosophy of Maria Montessori.	

## 1.2 School Demographic Data:

Please review the following table for accuracy and complete the second row (“# of Students on Waiting List”) for 2020-2021. (Note: The remaining sections of the table will be completed by the Charter School Office. **Any changes identified by the team must be highlighted in red prior to submitting the report. Only changes highlighted in red will be reviewed by the Charter School Office. Should there be no highlighted changes, the data will appear as presented in this draft.**)

ENROLLMENT & DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION	
	2020-2021 <sup>1</sup>
Total Enrollment	260
# of Students on Waiting List	8
<b>Gender</b>	
% Male	47.31%
% Female	52.69%
<b>Ethnicity/Race</b>	
% African American	26.15%
% American Indian	0.77%
% Asian	2.31%
% Hispanic/Latino	10.38%
% White	51.15%
% Multiracial	9.23%
<b>Special Populations</b>	
%Special Education <sup>2</sup>	7.69%
% English Language Learners	6.54%
% Low-Income	27.69%

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Schools are invited but not required to comment on any aspect of the demographic data above in table 1.2

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Sussex Montessori School opened its doors for the first time in September 2020. As of November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Sussex Montessori enrolled 260 students in grades K-3. As of that date, 8 student applicants remained on the school’s waiting list. Several already accepted/enrolled families as well as wait-listed families opted for homeschooling due to the pandemic and mask mandate. Most of the students enrolled reside in Western Sussex County (Seaford, Laurel, Bridgeville) followed by a considerable number of students from the central parts of Sussex County. (Georgetown)

While the percentage of low-income students reflected in the table is calculated by the state’s Direct Certification methodology, the school’s calculation reflects 51% low-income enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year. These data are calculated from the Free and Reduced forms that our families submitted.



### 1.3 Approved Minor and Major Modifications:

The table lists any approved minor and/or major modifications over the course of the school’s current charter term.

(Note: This table will be completed by the Charter School Office. Please review the following table for accuracy. ***Any changes identified by the team must be highlighted in red prior to submitting the report. Only changes highlighted in red will be reviewed by the Charter School Office. Should there be no highlighted changes, the data will appear as presented in this draft.***)

Date	Modification Requested	Outcome
April 24, 2020	Facility modification – install modular units for classroom space due to the impact of Covid 19 on the construction timeline.	TCO of June 15, 202 was met as per the requirement of Delaware Code Title 14, Chapter 5, § 511 (l) that the school have a temporary certificate of occupancy (CTO) by June 15th .

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Schools are invited but not required to comment on any aspect of the modification data above in table 1.3

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**1.4 School Enrollment:**

Please review the following chart with the school’s enrollment trends during the current term of the charter. (This table will be completed by the Charter School Office. Please review for accuracy. **Any changes identified by the team must be highlighted in red prior to submitting the report. Only changes highlighted in red will be reviewed by the Charter School Office. Should there be no highlighted changes, the data will appear as presented in this draft.**)

School Enrollment Trends		
<i>Cells highlighted in grey were grade levels not serviced by this school</i>		
	2020-2021	
	Approved Enrollment	30-Sep Enrollment Count
K	65	86
Grade 1	65	61
Grade 2	65	66
Grade 3	65	47
Grade 4		
Grade 5		
Grade 6		
Grade 7		
Grade 8		
Grade 9		
Grade 10		
Grade 11		
Grade 12		
<b>Total</b>	260	260

Schools are invited but not required to comment on any aspect of the enrollment data above in table 1.4.

Sussex Montessori School secured enrollment of 260 students as of November 13.

The majority of our students enrolled were in lower grades, specifically Kindergarten and first grade. Sussex Montessori opened with six full classrooms (26 students per class) of K-1 students and 4 full classrooms of 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade students.

### 1.5 Reenrollment:

Reenrollment Rate<sup>2</sup> is the % of students continuously enrolled in the school from one year to the next.

Review the following chart with the school's reenrollment trends during the current charter term. (This table will be completed by the Charter School Office. Please review for accuracy. **Any changes identified by the team must be highlighted in red prior to submitting the report. Only changes highlighted in red will be reviewed by the Charter School Office. Should there be no highlighted changes, the data will appear as presented in this draft.**)

School Reenrollment Trends		
Cells highlighted in grey were grade levels not serviced by this school		
Sussex Montessori School		
	Number of Students Reenrolled Count 239	Percentage of Students Reenrolled 92%

\*\* School entry grade level. Reenrollment data not collected for this grade level.

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Describe the school's plans to monitor and minimize attrition rates. Provide information about why students are choosing to enroll in different schools.

N/A 2020-2021 was the school's first operational year, the data from SY21 serves as the school's baseline for future performance

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## II. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

### 2.1 Delaware School Success Framework

Overall Academic Ratings

**Due to the impact of COVID-19 on learning and learning environments, accountability for SY 20/21 has been waived. The school's assessment data for SY20/21 is available at: [Charter School Report Card Link](#)**

a) Based on the data available on the Delaware Schools Report Card website and data compiled by the school discuss:

- overall academic achievement,
- major challenges,
- and accomplishments over the course of the school year.
- You may also use this space to share the results of school-based data.

School Comments:

The school year of 2020/21 was the first year for Sussex Montessori School. With the advent of COVID, which added the challenges of remote learning, frequent quarantines, sporadic attendance, and a stop and go approach to learning, achieving academic excellence, while an ongoing expectation, was challenging in the school's first year. The school year began in a hybrid format with some children attending in person 2 days a week and others who were fully remote. With the completion of the new classrooms all children were invited to return to in person learning in November. Families that remained remote were invited again to return to in person learning in March. Western Sussex County experienced a higher rate of infection resulting in quarantining of children for periods of time. This and other factors significantly influenced regular attendance. The results of ongoing trauma continue to be felt in the school and community.

In addition to Covid related issues, the research on public Montessori schools suggests that academic achievement grows over the first three years as a school becomes established with Montessori practices. This reflects the experience of Sussex Montessori School as teachers and students grow into the child-centered Montessori method of learning. For this reason, the school's charter projected modest academic growth for this first year. Research demonstrates that the school's academic achievement goals will be evident in years three to five; the longer children are in a Montessori school, the greater the gains over time.

What became important as the year progressed was for both the teachers and the children to grow comfortable with the Montessori Curriculum and to improve teaching fidelity to the Montessori



method. Teachers and administrators frequently utilized observation tools from the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector to collect data in every classroom on indicators of Montessori classrooms providing ongoing evidence of this growth. While supervisory observation was an essential tool of teaching assessment, more importantly feedback after observations and through coaching provided teachers with the means to talk about their craft in order to improve their classroom management and delivery of instruction.

In addition, through the use of Transparent Classroom, a Montessori based on-line record keeping system, teachers were able to record lessons and track students' progress throughout the curriculum. Regular assessments (DIBELS/Acadian) were on-going through-out the school year allowing for continual and vigilant observation and tracking of data to ensure on-going student growth. Statewide summative assessments in Math and ELA provide a baseline for academic achievement relative to grade-level standards. The Student Success Committee reports data on the charter academic and social emotional goals three times a year to the board. The adherence to the Montessori pedagogy will lead to the overall achievement of all students at our school as reflected in the formative assessments outlined in the charter and state summative assessments.

**Performance Agreement**

**Academic Performance Expectations**

a) Discuss the school’s academic performance based on its approved Performance Agreement (see above).

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**School Comments**

A formal academic expectation was not set for our inaugural year due to the Covid pandemic and the inconsistencies of hybrid/remote and in-person learning.

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### III. ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

The Organizational Performance Framework reflects expectations the charter school is required to meet through state and federal law and the charter performance agreement, and seeks to provide information regarding these key questions:

- Is the school organizationally sound and well operated?
- Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations and sound public stewardship?
- Is the school meeting its obligations and expectations for appropriate access, education, support services, and outcomes for students with disabilities?

#### 3.1 Mission Specific Goal(s)

Is the school faithful to its mission as defined in its current charter, including approved mission-specific academic goals if applicable?

The mission of the Sussex Montessori School (SMS) is to nurture the development of empathetic, collaborative, persistent and innovative global and community citizens in accordance with the time-tested philosophy of Maria Montessori. Accordingly, a mission-specific goal is to ensure that Sussex Montessori School provides an authentic Montessori education.

Per our charter, we have focused on the following actions to support the mission:

- All teachers are either Montessori credentialed or are participating in the UD Montessori Teacher Residency (UDMTR) to obtain their full certification.
- Each classroom has a teacher and associate teacher. The staff reflects the diversity of the community.
- A Director of Teaching and Learning was hired with full Montessori credentials and prior public Montessori experience.
- Teachers participate in Montessori coaching, lesson practice of Montessori materials, and on-going child study processes supporting the implementation of the philosophy.
- Teachers are training in Responsive Classroom to support the social emotional development of children.
- Classrooms have been outfitted with Montessori materials.
- Carefully designed classrooms and outdoor environments support children's learning.
- Parents learn about the Montessori approach from their initial contacts for admissions through their child's enrollment through classroom visits and observations, routine communications from teachers, and participation in parent groups.
- Classrooms are multi-age classrooms.
- The board includes a Montessori Moment in Board meetings.

According to the school's charter (Section 4), this goal will be monitored by the leadership team and the Board using the National Center of Montessori in the Public Sector's [Rubric of Essential Elements of Montessori Practice in the Public Schools](#). The rubric provides a set of descriptors that

can assist SMS in determining how well it is implementing a Montessori program. The school distributed a survey based on this rubric to all teachers and board members in June 2020.

a) Rate the school's performance according to the criteria established by the school for its 2020-2021 mission specific goal(s).

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School Comments Overall, the data gathered from the Essential Elements Rubric in June 2021 indicates the following:

Strengths:

- Despite limitations due to the pandemic the school is maintaining its focus on the Montessori philosophy and environment.
- Strong family engagement
- The facility supports the Montessori approach
- Members of the community (parents and teachers) embrace the philosophy and approach
- There is an experienced Montessori leader as the Director of Teaching and Learning
- We have received positive feedback from the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector

Areas for Growth:

- Continuing to challenge ourselves to be true to the Montessori pedagogy
  - Recruiting/hiring/training/retaining quality Montessori teachers
  - Continuing to develop the facility
  - Evaluation of the mixed aged classrooms – 2 year age spans vs. 3 year age spans
  - Access to visual and performing arts
  - Flow of communication through the school (admin-board-staff-parents)
  - Impact of COVID restrictions
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b) Provide as **Appendix 1** the results (data source) of the school's mission specific goal(s). Remember not to include any personally identifiable information (PII).

Please see Appendix 1 for the data from the Essential Elements Rubric.



### 3.2 Organizational Performance

Note: Please utilize the hyperlink in this sentence for more information about the [Organizational Performance Framework](#).

The following tables will be completed by the Charter School Office. Please review for accuracy.

## SUMMARY AND OVERALL RATING

### Sussex Montessori School

Year	Education Program				Governance & Reporting			Students & Staff		Facilities, Transportation, Health & Safety	OVERALL RATING
	Mission Fidelity	Applicable State & Federal Requirements	Students with Disabilities	English learners	Governance & Public Stewardship	Oversight of School Management	Reporting Requirements	Students Rights	Req. on Teacher Certification & Hiring Staff		
	1a	1b	1c	1d	2a	2b	2c	3a	3b	4a	
2020-2021	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	Meets Standard

a) Describe the school’s organizational performance over the current school year (This section is for the school to address any overall rating where the school has not met standards. The school will be able to address individual metrics in the sections below.)

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School Comments:

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b) Identify changes to organizational practices that the school has implemented to improve the school’s organizational outcomes.

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School Comments:

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c) Address any measure where school did not meet standard or is approaching standard.

## **Performance Agreement**

### **Organizational Performance Expectations**

Discuss the school's organizational performance based on its approved Performance Agreement.

a) Discuss the school's organizational performance based on its approved Performance Agreement (see above).

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School Comments:

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### 3.3 Board Financial and Governance Members and Training

a) Please complete the chart below with the necessary information. In accordance with Del. 14 §512 (15), the school shall have a satisfactory plan to ensure the effectiveness of its board of trustees, including governance trainings conducted for any new board members and at a minimum of once every 3 years.

#### Board Financial and Governance Training

First Name	Last Name	Role/Title	Financial Training Date
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\*Please list only the most recent training date.

Linda	Zankowsky	Board President	1/3/21
Rebecca	Thomas	Board Member/Faculty	3/17/21
Sean	Steward	Board Members/Finance Chair	10/15/21
Patricia	Hermance	Co-Vice Chair - Board Member	4/22/21
Elizabeth	Harrison	Board Member	7/15/20
Christine	Gorowara	Co-Vice Chair - Board Member	7/14/20
Lauren	Connelly	Board Member	6/13/21
Penny	Short	Board Member – Covid TaskForce Chair	7/20/20
Chantel	Janiszewski	Board Member – Student Success Committee Chair	5/6/2020
Jessica	Bradley	Board Member – Facility Chair	7/24/21
Lisa	Coldiron	HOS	8/29/20
Michelle	Hastie	Finance Director	

**Please attach all certificates or evidence of Board Governance Training for active board members.**

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#### School Comments:

All board members have completed the required Financial Governance Training. Certificates are attached.

All Board members completed the DANA governance training in July 2019. In addition, all new and most continuing board members have completed the online governance training provided by the DDOE Charter Office.

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b) Please complete the chart below with the necessary information. Pursuant to [14 Del. Admin. Code 736](#) 6.1 Each member of a Citizen Budget Oversight Committee shall attend and receive a Certificate of Completion for the Citizen Budget Oversight Committee training within the allotted timeframe of his/her appointment to a Citizen Budget Oversight Committee. Provided further, additional training may be required from time to time as determined by the Department.

**Citizen Budget Oversight Committee Membership & Trainings**

First Name	Last Name	Role/Title	Financial Training Date
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School Comments:

Linda	Zankowsky	Board Chair	01/3/21
Richard	Riggs	Charter Office-Monitoring	
Edwin	Santos	Parent	03/22/21
Dean	Swingle	CBOC Committee	12/15/10
Tom	Thunstrom	CBOC Committee	03/2/21
Lauren	Connelly	CBOC Committee Chair	06/13/21
Sean	Steward	CBOC Committee	10/19/21
Michelle	Hastie	Finance Director	
Lisa	Coldiron	HOS	08/29/20

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**3.4 Teacher Retention: Is the school monitoring and minimizing teacher attrition rates and maintaining a stable teaching staff?**

2020-2021		
<b>% of Teachers RETAINED</b>	<b># of Teachers RETAINED</b>	<b># of Teachers ELIGIBLE</b>
100%	10	10

Review the table above with the school’s teacher retention trends and answer the following questions.

a) Describe the school’s plans to monitor and minimize teacher attrition rates. Provide information about why teachers leave the school.



2020-2021 was the school’s first operational year, the data from SY21 serves as the school’s baseline for future performance



b) Describe how the school’s professional development plans support teachers and leadership.

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**School Comments:**

All Sussex Montessori teachers and leadership are engaged in continual professional development for Montessori certification, Responsive Classroom and literacy support as well. Professional goal setting, a commitment to observation and on-going coaching support helps strengthen the community of educators and by extension our students.

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## IV. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

### 4.1 Financial Performance

Note: Please utilize the hyperlink in this sentence for more information about the [Financial Performance Framework](#).

The following tables will be completed by the Charter School Office. Please review for accuracy.

Financial Performance Framework Ratings	Near Term Indicators				Sustainability Indicators				Financial Management and Oversight	Overall Rating
	Current Ratio	Days Cash	Enrollment Variance	Default, Loan Covenants, & Debt Service Payments	Total Margin	Debt Asset Ratio	Cash Flow	Debt Service Coverage Ratio		
Year	1a	1b	1c	1d	2a	2b	2c	2d	3	
2020-2021	M	M	M	M	N/R	M	N/R	M	M	Meets Standard

a) Describe the school's Financial performance over the current school year (This section is for the school to address any overall rating where the school has not met standards. The school will be able to address individual metrics in the sections below.)

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School Comments:

b) Identify changes to Financial practices that the school has implemented to improve the school's financial outcomes.

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School Comments:

SY 2020 - 2021 was the school's first year of operation. The school's Board of Directors has continued with weekly facilities meetings to discuss the school's ongoing construction and its capital budget and expenses. The school's Board also implemented monthly finance committee meetings in order to discuss the monthly financial results, to stay abreast of unanticipated changes to revenues and expenses, and to provide financial input regarding any strategic and operational needs that may occur during the school year. The CBOC meets quarterly.



c) Address any measure where school did not meet standard or is approaching standard

### 3. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT

2020-2021
M

This measure assesses the timeliness of reporting, the implementation of the Citizen Budget Oversight Committee, and the adherence to the policies and procedures of the First State Financial Management System.

**DOE Rating Information:**

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The FY21 independent audit disclosed related party transactions in the notes to the financial statements (Note 10).

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**School Response To Rating:**

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## Performance Agreement

### Financial Performance Expectations

a) Discuss the school's financial performance based on its approved Performance Agreement.

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School Comments:

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b) Describe how the school developed and implemented a corrective action plan in response to audit findings (if applicable).

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School Comments:

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## V. INNOVATION

Describe the school's innovative practice(s) that could be replicated at other schools in Delaware. Please include the data that supports the success of these practice(s).

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### School Comments:

Montessori education is currently being used in two public charter schools and the Montessori Academy in Christina. Nationally, there are over 500 public Montessori schools in districts and charters. Building on the goals of Montessori Works which founded Sussex Montessori School, Sussex Montessori strives to be a strong partner with local districts and early childhood programs. Montessori Works and the University of Delaware Montessori Teacher Residency continues to build the infrastructure to support an expansion of accessible Montessori education. Sussex Montessori is developing a model for attracting diverse families to Montessori education, is learning how to start a Montessori School with teachers who have little or no background in Montessori, and continues to find solutions to the disconnect between public regulations and an innovative model of education. In addition, the school has created physical spaces that are designed to support children's development in both indoor and outdoor settings. The school stands ready to partner and share our learnings with others who seek to expand accessible Montessori education.

Montessori education is over a century old and yet is as relevant today as it was when Maria Montessori first developed this pedagogy. Montessori uses a holistic, child-centered approach to teaching and learning that research strongly supports. Montessori is dually focused on both academic learning, and social emotional learning so important to meeting the needs of today's children. Unique to Montessori is the morning three-hour, uninterrupted work period which allows children to develop executive functioning skills such as deep focusing on a task and time management. It allows the child to work on a task or skill until mastery. The flexibility that children have to move about the classroom stimulates learning while choice in materials and work plans boosts motivation and supports engagement. In a Montessori classroom children can be seen working independently and/or within a small group which encourages peer to peer learning. The materials in the classroom support foundational understanding in a concrete manner before moving to high-level abstract concepts. The brain remembers what it repeatedly does. Additionally, typical Montessori schools encourage the care of the indoor and outdoor environment through a variety of activities... it is not unusual to see a student sweeping the sidewalks, washing the windows, tending to a garden or preparing tea. Current brain research confirms the efficacy of such teaching... allowing students to work to mastery without being interrupted, the ability to move about within a classroom, supporting deep focus by limiting constant daily interruptions and allowing a child to take care of his/her own environment are all parts of Montessori pedagogy that could be replicated in today's more typical classrooms.

The American Montessori Society cites the following research studies in support of Montessori Education:

- Randomized control design studies have found superior outcomes on academic and pre-academic assessments for children who attended Montessori preschool and elementary
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schools compared to non-Montessori control group children (Lillard, et al, 2017; Lillard & Else-Quest, 2006).

- Research also suggests positive long-term impacts when comparing high school students who attended Montessori preschools and elementary schools to a control group matched on gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and high school attended (Dohrmann, et al, 2007).
  - Furthermore, studies examining classroom practices found stronger academic gains for children in preschool classrooms implementing the Montessori Method with high fidelity (Lillard, 2012; Lillard & Heise, 2016).
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## VII. ANNUAL REPORT CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

<b>Name of School:</b> Sussex Montessori School	
<b>Location:</b> 24960 Dairy Lane	
<b>Location:</b> Seaford, Delaware	

I hereby certify that the information submitted in this annual of a charter school is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; that this application has been approved by the school's Board of Directors.

Signature: Chairperson of Board of Directors (or designated signatory authority)

Date



11/30/2021

Print/Type Name:	Linda S. Zankowsky, Ed.D.
Title (if designated):	Board Chair
Date of approval by board of directors:	11/30/2020

## References:

<sup>1</sup> Based on September 30<sup>th</sup> Unit Count

<sup>2</sup> Pursuant to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (34 CFR §99), the DDOE applies the following statistical methods to avoid disclosure of personally identifiable information in aggregate reporting.

1. For all data, counts for groups or subgroups with 15 or fewer students are suppressed and represented by “-” in data reports. Complementary suppression of one or more non-sensitive cells in a table may be required so that the values of the suppressed cells may not be calculated by subtracting the reported values from the row and column totals.

2. Only report percentages for grade level reporting within a school and district.

3. Percentages are suppressed when the underlying student counts can be derived for groups or subgroups with 15 or fewer students (i.e., if the number tested and proficient are reported, then the percentage may need to be suppressed).

4. Any percentage above 95 or below 5 will be reported as >95% and <5%, respectively.

<sup>3</sup> Graduation rate data is lag data by one school year to include all students that have completed their high school diplomas during that year including summer graduates.

