

# **SUSSEX MONTESSORI SCHOOL**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**2021-2022**



**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 2021-2022 <sup>1</sup>	341
Approved Enrollment	325
School Address	24970 Dairy Lane Seaford, DE 19976
District(s) of Residence	Charter School
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>
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 2021-2022. (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	
	2021-2022 <sup>1</sup>
Total Enrollment	341
# of Students on Waiting List	180
Gender	
% Male	50.73%
% Female	49.27%
Ethnicity/Race	
% African American	24.63%
% American Indian	0.59%
% Asian	2.35%
% Hispanic/Latino	10.26%
% White	54.84%
% Multiracial	7.33%
Special Populations	
%Special Education <sup>2</sup>	8.21%
% English Language Learners	5.87%
% Low-Income	28.15%

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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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### 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
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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>		
	2021-2022	
	Approved Enrollment	30-Sep Enrollment Count
K		72
Grade 1		84
Grade 2		65
Grade 3		65
Grade 4		55
Grade 5		
Grade 6		
Grade 7		
Grade 8		
Grade 9		
Grade 10		
Grade 11		
Grade 12		
<b>Total</b>		341

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

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**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		
<i>Cells highlighted in grey were grade levels not serviced by this school</i>		
Sussex Montessori School		
	Number of Students Reenrolled Count	Percentage of Students Reenrolled %
K		
Grade 1	75	87.21%
Grade 2	53	86.89%
Grade 3	55	83.33%
Grade 4	44	93.62%
Grade 5		
Grade 6		
Grade 7		
Grade 8		
Grade 9		
Grade 10		
Grade 11		
Grade 12		
<b>Total/Avg</b>	227	87.31%

\*\* 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.

As a school, we constantly monitor enrollment and attrition rates. Regular monthly meetings are held to review enrollment status. We track families who choose to leave and find that it usually falls in two categories: Moved to another state or choose to return to their regular district as they are looking for a more familiar, traditional learning opportunity for their child. Parent Education classes will help

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support families learn the Montessori philosophy and better understand why it “looks” different to what they are accustomed to.

Understanding the Montessori philosophy and understanding how it impacts student learning takes a significant amount of teacher and family education. We have begun offering parent education classes and parent camp learning opportunities for families three times a year to allow for such learning and growth. As parents better understand the Montessori philosophy and curriculum, they have more confidence in their child’s academic program and as a result, become more confident in the Montessori methodology and therefore more likely to stay the course.

We also note that the Montessori early childhood curriculum is designed to start at age 3, not at age 5 as is the case at Sussex Montessori School. The opportunity to start socializing children (and their families) at a younger age to the Montessori approach would benefit the children educationally; we anticipate this would result in less attrition. We therefore support legislative and/or regulatory changes that would allow us to accept 3- and 4-year-old students.

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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](#)**

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- a) 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.

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School Comments: In its second year of operations during an active pandemic, Sussex Montessori School suffered a tremendous amount of teacher and student absences. As a result, academic growth was not what normally would be expected and evident. We look forward to our students beginning to thrive academically as attendance improves for both students and staff. Additionally, many of our teachers were both nascent as educators and in their Montessori certification. As our teachers complete their Montessori training and become Montessori certified educators, we are confident our students will demonstrate significant academic growth in all areas.

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 the first two years. 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.

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## Performance Agreement

### Academic Performance Expectations

The academic performance standards will be in accordance with 14 Del. C. § 512(4) and will consider status, growth, and comparative performance based on federal, state, and school-specific measures.

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

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#### School Comments:

- There is continued and consistent growth in *all areas* that are assessed through DIBELS.
  - On average, each grade level has shown improvement, in most cases significant improvement, in every area throughout each assessment period throughout the year.
  - Low numbers on computation and concepts and applications may be attributed to a transition for our students to the Montessori model, which is materials based and therefore very different from a traditional model. For our students this past year, the focus has been on building concrete foundational skills, especially for the older children who not only missed out on so much due to the pandemic, but also faced the learning curve of using these materials. However, when we look at our younger students, where the emphasis is more on number fluency, they seemed to have done better than expected despite the mostly stop-and-go nature of their learning experience over the past two years.
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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.
- Our Director of Teaching and Learning is Montessori credentialed and has several years 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 education groups and Parent Camp.
- Classrooms are multi-age classrooms.

a) Rate the school's performance according to the criteria established by the school for its 2021-2022 mission specific goal(s).

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School Comments:

According to the school's charter, this goal is 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 assists 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. Results are included in this Annual Report.

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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).

Attached

### 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	
2021-2022	M	M	AS	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.)

School Comments:

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

School Comments:

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

Sussex Montessori continues to work to develop and refine our processes and procedures in support of students with disabilities. We are working closely with another charter school and the Department in support of developing a refined and supportive MTSS process. Additionally, we have purchased a data dashboard program to ensure we can track academic and social emotional goals and data efficiently and therefore more accurately inform intentional instruction.

Sussex Montessori School hired a new Special Education Coordinator with significant special education experience as well as an additional Special Education teacher to push into classrooms for increased student support. The support of the additional staff made a significant impact as it ensured that all IEP goals were being met both in the classroom with the Gen. Ed. teacher as well as with the additional support of the special education teacher pushing in.

## Performance Agreement

### Organizational Performance Expectations

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

The organizational performance standards will be based primarily on compliance with legal obligations, including the fulfillment of the Board's fiduciary obligations related to sound governance.

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
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	Hernance	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 Task Force 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 list only the most recent training date.

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

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School Comments:

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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
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
Mason	Falligant	Teacher	03/21/21

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School Comments:

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

2021-2022		
% of Teachers RETAINED	# of Teachers RETAINED	# of Teachers ELIGIBLE
71.4/%	10	14

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.

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School Comments:

We check in with our teachers often and respond to their needs. The school has Montessori coaches that regularly support our teachers on their journey as well as a strong Director of Teaching and Learning. We are working to support our teachers with increased release time for professional development and for team level work.

Of the four teachers that left our school, three moved to different states and one left the field of education.

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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 through the University of Delaware Montessori Teacher Residency program, Responsive Classroom (a student-centered social and emotional learning approach to teaching and discipline) and literacy training 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	Current Ratio (Working Capital Ratio)	Debt to Asset Ratio	Days Cash	Debt Service Payments / Loan Covenants	Aggregated Three-Year Total Margin	Cash Flow	Debt Service Coverage Ratio	Enrollment Variance	Student Retention	Financial Management and Oversight	Overall Rating
Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
2021-2022	M	M	M	M	Not Rated	Not Rated	M	M	Not Rated	M	

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:

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b) Identify changes to Financial practices that the school has implemented to improve the school’s financial 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

### Financial Performance Expectations

The financial performance standards will be based on standard accounting and industry standards for sound financial operation.

- 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 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 skill 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 social and educational benefits of peer-based instruction for both CWD and their peers are considered an evidence-based practice (Garcia-Carrion et al., 2018; Carter et al., 2017; Chang & Locke, 2016; Watkins et al., 2015; Gunning et al., 2019; McLeskey et al., 2017; Steinbrenner et al., 2020).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.  
(<https://journals.ku.edu/jmr/issue/view/2189/544>)

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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, DE	

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.

\_Linda Z. Zankowsky, Ed.D.



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

Date 1/17/2023

<b>Print/Type Name:</b> Lisa Coldiron	
<b>Title (if designated):</b> Head of School	
<b>Date of approval by board of directors:</b> 1/17/23	
<b>Title (if designated):</b>	
<b>Date of approval by board of directors:</b>	

## 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.

