



SUSSEX ACADEMY

ANNUAL REPORT

Report Date: January 15, 2025

Delaware Department of Education

Charter School Office

401 Federal Street, Suite 2

Dover, DE 19901

Phone: (302) 735-4020

Email: infocso@doe.k12.de.us

Homepage: <https://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/2267>

I. OVERVIEW

1.1 SCHOOL PROFILE

Sussex Academy 21150 Airport Road, Georgetown, DE 19947 http://www.sussexacademy.org/			
Year Opened	2000	District(s) of Residence	Indian River School District
2023-24 Enrollment	1,158	Approved Enrollment	1,115
Current Grade Span	K-12	Approved Grade Span	K-12
School Leader(s)	Kyle Bentley	School Leader Phone & Email	302.856.3636 kyle.bentley@saas.k12.de.us
Board President	Jennifer Donahue	Board President Email	jennifer.donahue@saas.k12.de.us
Mission Statement: The mission of the Sussex Academy is to prepare students for future academic success by providing an accelerated, supportive academic environment within a small school setting.			

1.2 STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Enter the number of students on your waiting list (if applicable).

	2023-2024
Total Enrollment	1,158
Students on Waiting List	1,166
% Male	46.55%
% Female	53.45%
% African American	5.09%
% American Indian	1.04%
% Asian	3.45%
% Hispanic/Latino	15.03%
% White	71.07%
% Multiracial	4.23%
% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.09%
% Special Education	7.51%
% English Language Learners	4.23%
% Low-Income	7.51%

1.3 APPROVED MINOR AND MAJOR MODIFICATIONS

Date	Modification Requested	Outcome
5/4/2020	Major Modification to increase enrollment from 840 to 1,080 students; change the school's grade configuration from 6-12 to K-12; establish a second campus; and remove its special interest preference.	Approved
12/31/18	Increase enrollment from 776 to 840 students SY 20/21.	Approved

1.4 SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

	Approved Enrollment	30-Sep Enrollment Count	% of Actual Enrollment
K		43	
1		44	
2		44	
3		45	
4		45	
5		45	
6		127	
7		130	
8		140	
9		137	
10		126	
11		114	
12		118	
Total	1,115	1,158	104%

1. Explain successes or challenges of implementing the school's recruitment plan.

School Comments:

The continued recruitment success of Sussex Academy is rooted in its strong mission, which resonates with families and drives their decision to enroll their children with us. Our school's commitment to high academic standards and exceptional performance has built a reputation of

excellence within the community and this is clearly reflected in our enrollment data. In particular, our focused efforts to enhance recruitment during the 2022-23 school year yielded impressive results. The number of families on our waitlist increased from 816 in the previous year to 1,166 in the 2023-24 Annual Review, underscoring the growing demand for a Sussex Academy education. This positive trend highlights the effectiveness of our recruitment strategy and the continued confidence families place in our school.

1.5 SCHOOL REENROLLMENT

Reenrollment Rate is the percentage of students continuously enrolled in the school from one year to the next.

Grades	NUMBER OF STUDENTS REENROLLED	PERCENT OF STUDENTS REENROLLED
K	2	
1	40	95.24%
2	39	92.86%
3	41	97.62%
4	44	100%
5	41	93.18%
6	44	100%
7	115	92.74%
8	126	94.03%
9	101	78.29%
10	112	92.56%
11	105	90.52%
12	115	100%
Total/Avg	925	92.78%

2. Explain successes or challenges of implementing the school's retention plan.

School Comments:

Sussex Academy has demonstrated continued success in maintaining strong retention rates, with an increase from 89.59% in the 2022-23 school year to 92.78% in the 2023-24 school year. This upward trend highlights the effectiveness of our retention strategies and the satisfaction of our school

community. The most notable success is seen in the 6th grade, where 100% of our elementary families chose to continue their children's education in our middle school. We believe this is a clear testament to the strength of our academic programs and community engagement.

However, challenges remain, particularly during the transition from middle to high school. Exit interviews indicate that some students leave Sussex Academy to pursue opportunities in athletics, technical programs, or within larger comprehensive high schools with more resources. Despite this, we are pleased to report a positive shift in our 9th-grade retention rate, which improved from 75.4% in the 2022-23 Annual Report to 78.29% in the 2023-24 school year, reflecting our ongoing efforts to address this transition and better meet the needs of our students.

Overall, the growth in retention rates underscores the effectiveness of our efforts to engage and support families, while also highlighting areas where we continue to adapt and refine our approach to meet the evolving needs of our students.

II. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Delaware operates under the belief that all schools benefit from continuous improvement – including those that receive exceeds expectations ratings – to best support all students. The [Delaware School Success Framework \(DSSF\)](#) outlines the accountability standards by which all Delaware public schools are measured. This state- and school-level data helps identify each school's needs and determine how best to support students across the state.

DSSF measures the following areas to determine school success. This annual data is publicly available on the [Delaware Report Card](#).

- Academic achievement – Proficiency for ELA and math (grades 3-8 and 11)
- Academic progress – Growth in ELA and math (grades 4-8); includes growth of the lowest and highest performing students in a school
- School quality/student success – On-track attendance (K-12), science proficiency (grades 5, 8 and biology), social studies proficiency (grades 4, 7 and 11), college/career preparedness (grades 9-12), and on-track in 9th grade
- Graduation rates – 4-year, 5-year and 6-year adjusted cohort graduation rates
- English language proficiency (ELP) – Progress toward English language proficiency (grades 1-12)

2.1 DELAWARE SCHOOL SUCCESS FRAMEWORK – SY 2023-2024

Indicators/Measures	Weight	Metric Value	Points Possible	Points Earned
Academic Achievement	20%		100	63 Approaching Expectations
Proficiency ELA (grades 3-8 and 11)	10%	75.37%	50	38
Proficiency Math (grades 3-8 and 11)	10%	50.94%	50	25
Academic Progress	25%		112.50	71 Well Below Expectations
Growth in ELA (grades 4-8)	10%	63.88%	50	32
Growth in Math (grades 4-8)	10%	54.20%	50	27
Growth of lowest quartile ELA (grades 4-8)	1.25%	72.23%	6.25	*
Growth of highest quartile ELA (grades 4-8)	1.25%	56.96%	6.25	4
Growth of lowest quartile Math (grades 4-8)	1.25%	73.00%	6.25	5
Growth of highest quartile Math (grades 4-8)	1.25%	53.35%	6.25	3
School Quality/Student Success	25%		125	100 Meets Expectations
On Track Attendance (grade K-12)	3%	98.17%	12.5	12
Proficiency Science (grade 8 and Biology)	5%	51.15%	25	13
Proficiency Social Studies (Grades 7 and 11)	5%	55.26%	25	14
College and/or Career Preparedness (9-12)	8%	96.61%	37.5	36
On Track in 9th Grade	5%	100.36%	25	25
Graduation Rate	20%		100	98 Exceeds Expectations
4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate	15%	97.52%	75	73
5-Year Cohort Graduation Rate	3%	98.35%	13	13
6-Year Cohort Graduation Rate	2%	100%	12	12
Progress toward English Language Proficiency	10%	23.00%	50	12 Well Below Expectations
Total	100%		493.75	345
Overall Percentage / Rating				69.06% Approaching Expectations

2.2 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

Sussex Academy's 2018-19 DSSF ratings are:

Indicator	Points	Point Earned	Percent Point
Academic Achievement	100.00	86.00	86% Exceeds Expectations
Academic Progress	125.00	87.00	70% Exceeds Expectations
School Quality/Student Success	75.00	69.00	92% Exceeds Expectations
Graduation Rate	88.00	84.00	95% Exceeds Expectations
Progress Toward English Language Proficiency	n/a	n/a	Not Applicable
Overall	388.00	326.00	84% Exceeds Expectations

By September 2027, our expectation is to achieve overall ratings of "Meets" or "Exceeds" standard as measured by the Delaware School Success Framework. Each year, we will show growth within our overall rating putting us on track to achieve our academic performance expectations. This progress will be monitored through our annual performance review.

3. Reflect on your school's academic performance in relation to the goals set forth in the performance agreement. Please reference the specific Delaware School Success Framework (DSSF) listed below. Highlight successes, challenges, root causes, and describe how the school will address the challenges.
 - a. Academic Achievement
 - b. Academic Progress
 - c. School Quality/Student Success
 - d. Graduation Rate (if applicable)
 - e. Progress toward English Language Proficiency

School Comments:

Sussex Academy remains committed to achieving overall ratings of "Meets" or "Exceeds" standards, as measured by the Delaware School Success Framework, by September 2027. However, like many school systems in Delaware, Sussex Academy has faced challenges in recent years in meeting high academic expectations. The root causes of these challenges include, but are not limited to, the

ongoing impact of COVID-19-related learning loss, recent growth to a K-12 charter school, and changes in leadership.

According to the 2023-24 Delaware Report Card, Sussex Academy outperformed the state average by 35% in English Language Arts (ELA) and 20% in Math. We are proud to be a leader in academic performance, ranking among the highest-performing school systems in Delaware, both among district and charter schools. Additionally, we are pleased that our on-track 9th-grade and graduation rates continue to meet expectations, ranging from 97% to 100%. Sussex Academy has also seen significant improvement in attendance, with on-track attendance rising from 84% to 98%.

In terms of academic achievement, Sussex Academy mirrors the state, district, and charter school trends, showing declines in proficiency in recent years on standardized assessments. ELA and Math proficiency levels decreased by 2% and 6%, respectively, compared to the previous year. Academic progress for growth also decreased or remained flat for our lowest and highest quartiles in grades 4-8 during the 2022-23 school year. Additionally, Science and Social Studies proficiency levels declined from the previous year, and College and Career Preparedness dropped slightly from 100% to 97%. One of our greatest challenges is the increased number of Multilingual Learners (MLL) students.

We are actively working to improve outcomes by focusing on school culture, curriculum, and instruction. We believe that fostering school pride, a sense of belonging, and a safe learning environment are essential for improving academic outcomes. Our team is dedicated to enhancing these areas, which we believe will positively impact student self-efficacy on standardized exams and lead to academic gains within a stronger school culture.

To support our curriculum, Sussex Academy has created the role of Chief Academic Officer as part of the Organizational Plan for the current school year. This decision allows for focused leadership on academics, demonstrating our commitment to placing student success at the forefront of our efforts. We are also evaluating curricular materials and resources to ensure we are using high-quality curriculum across all subject areas to better position our students for success.

Furthermore, Sussex Academy is leveraging the DTGSS teacher evaluation system to improve instruction. We are building capacity by engaging DTGSS-certified teachers to provide feedback to their colleagues through a coaching model. This year, all teachers have set student improvement goals based on historical data and will monitor progress toward these goals throughout the year. In addition, we have implemented grading practices that hold higher expectations for student preparation and achievement. To support the success of these grading changes, professional development opportunities will focus on DTGSS Standard 3.1: Checks for Understanding and Feedback to enhance our instructional practices in this area.

Finally, we are expanding our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) for students requiring Tier II and Tier III interventions. In the 2024-25 school year, Sussex Academy Elementary has added two dedicated MTSS blocks to the school day, providing additional support in both Math and ELA. We have also implemented small-group instruction and push-in support for Multilingual Learner (MLL) students in grades K-8. To further support MLL students in grades 9-12, we have created opportunities for these students to receive targeted interventions within their course schedules,

facilitated by our English teachers. Additionally, we have increased the number of interventionists at the elementary school to provide more support for students with IEPs.

2.3 SUPPLEMENTAL ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE DATA

4. Provide any academic performance-related evidence, supplemental data, or contextual information. In this section, you may provide graphs and/or charts to supplement your narrative as Appendix 1.

School Comments:

In the summer of 2024, the new leadership team at Sussex Academy conducted an analysis of 3-5 years of performance data, including attendance, discipline, entry plan gatherings, ACCESS, Advanced Placement, ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies. The data was reviewed by the executive leadership team, the Board of Directors, and staff to identify trends and raise awareness of the school's performance. The findings from this analysis highlighted areas of excellence, opportunities for growth, and proposed next steps:

Areas of Excellence

- Attendance increase to above 95% for secondary campus
- Teamwork, academic rigor, excellent students, positive relationships and supportive families emerged as the most common areas of excellence from staff members
- Multilingual learners performing at higher proficiency levels than state average
- 9/15 AP exam mean scores and passing rates above state / global averages
- ELA proficiency is above or well above state averages in SAT and SBAC data
- SAT proficiency increased to 88% during the 2023-24 school year
- Math proficiency is above or well above state averages in SAT and SBAC data

Opportunities for Growth

- Increase attendance to 95% or more for elementary campus
- Decrease Eschool referrals (suspensions) with interventions for the 26 students that accounted for 37 referrals (suspensions) in Eschool data
- Decrease Eschool referrals (suspensions) for male students
- Improve the K-12 sense of community, communications, grading practices, and consistency as shared by staff members during the entry plan meetings
- Increase math and science AP scores to at or above state / global averages
- Reverse negative trend observed in overall ELA proficiency data
- Reverse negative trend observed in overall Math proficiency data
- Increase 4th and 5th Grade Math / ELA proficiency data
- Reverse negative trend observed in overall Science proficiency data
- Reverse negative trend observed in overall Social Studies proficiency data

Next Steps

- Share data analysis with Board of Directors, leadership team and staff to increase awareness of achievement / performance data
 - Implement changes to grading practices to prepare students for academic success
-

- Use problem solving team to analyze data and develop MTSS interventions for SEL / Math / ELA needs
- Implement yearlong professional development plan using DTGSS framework to build capacity
- Increase time for ELA and Math in 4th / 5th grade levels
- Lead teachers in analyzing subgroup achievement and performance data

5. Reflect on other aspects of the school's academic performance that may not be captured by the DSSF. Highlight successes, challenges, root causes, and describe below how the school will address the challenges.

School Comments:

In recent years, Sussex Academy phased out the International Baccalaureate (IB) program and shifted towards offering AP coursework for students to fulfill our mission to create an accelerated, supportive academic environment within a small school setting. As we continue to gain experience with the AP course offerings and grow into the new model, we are experiencing both challenges and successes in the program. The math, computer science and chemistry data demonstrate room for growth. At the same time, our students are achieving great success in the majority of areas, as compared to both state and national averages. See below for 2023-24 AP achievement data:

Subject	# of Exams	MEAN SCORE			PASSING RATE			Years in Program
		SA	DE	Global	SA	DE	Global	
Biology	61	3.39	3.00	3.15	80.30	63.30	68.30	5
Calculus AB	35	2.37	3.09	3.22	34.30	58.30	64.40	2
Calculus BC	11	1.45	3.69	3.92	0.00	74.80	80.90	1
Chemistry	19	2.63	3.32	3.31	47.40	76.60	75.60	2
Comp Sci A	10	2.40	2.36	3.18	40.00	41.80	67.20	3
Comp Sci Princ	18	3.44	2.74	2.90	94.40	58.70	64.00	5
English Lang	49	2.92	2.67	2.79	63.30	49.40	54.60	3
English Lit	50	3.28	3.25	3.16	80.00	75.30	72.40	2
Environmental Science	33	3.79	2.68	2.80	87.90	49.30	54.10	4
Human Geography	53	3.23	2.43	2.83	69.80	44.90	56.10	3
Macroeconomics	39	3.31	2.91	3.13	87.20	61.00	65.10	4
Spanish Lang and Culture	20	3.75	3.14	3.54	90.00	69.10	83.00	2
Statistics	39	2.21	2.75	2.96	41.00	55.90	61.80	2
US History	27	3.22	3.12	3.23	77.80	69.90	72.20	3

Based upon the overall success of the AP course offerings, Sussex Academy is exploring the AP Capstone Diploma pathway for our students. We intend to offer the necessary coursework for

students that are excelling in AP courses. This plan will provide the opportunity for students to earn the AP Capstone Diploma during the 2026-27 school year.

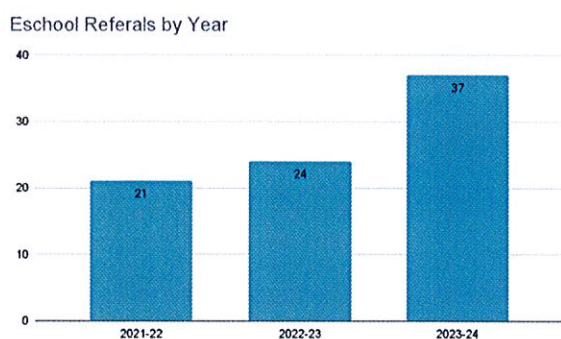
6. Provide and reflect on additional information regarding academic-related indicators your school would like the Accountability Committee to consider. (This could include social and emotional development, attendance and retention, student engagement, student discipline, and others as appropriate.) Highlight successes, challenges, root causes, and describe how the school will address the challenges.

School Comments:

In recent years, data have shown that the social-emotional well-being of students is an urgent concern at the national, state, and local levels. Social media, smartphones, and the COVID-19 pandemic have intensified the need for schools to be responsive to the mental health needs of adolescents and youth across the country. Sussex Academy is no exception to this national trend.

Although discipline referrals at Sussex Academy are relatively low compared to local, state and national data, we have noticed an increase in behavioral concerns over the past three years., as show in the data below. It is reasonable to suggest that the discipline directly correlates with mental health concerns. Qualitative counseling data also points to the need for additional resources and personnel to support our students.

Discipline Data- Eschool Referrals / DSC



Currently, we have three full-time counselors serving nearly 1,200 students in our school system. To address these concerns, Sussex Academy is utilizing Panorama survey data and intervention

resources to provide additional support to our students in the 2024-25 school year. We also revised our schoolwide expectations and include SEL lessons in our advisory / MTSS process.

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 ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

SUMMARY AND OVERALL RATINGS

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 & School Management	Reporting & Requirements	Student Rights	Teacher Certification and Hiring		
	1a	1b	1c	1d	2a	2b	2c	3a	3b	4a	
2023-24	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	Meets Standard

M: Meets Standard

AS: Approaching Standard

F: Far Below Standard

3.2 ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

PERFORMANCE AGREEMENT

By September 2027, our expectation is to achieve an overall rating of "Meets," as measured by the Organizational Performance Framework. Each year, we will be on track to demonstrate performance aligned with those organizational performance expectations. This progress will be monitored through our annual performance review.

7. Describe the school's organizational performance during school year 2023-24. (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:

Sussex Academy met all the Organizational Performance Framework Metrics.

8. Discuss management and operations successes and challenges during the 2023-24 school year. Areas you may want to consider as appropriate:
- School leadership
 - Day-to-day operations including: transportation; facilities; food service; staffing (hiring, retention, professional development, evaluation); health and safety; community engagement

School Comments:

It is important to note that during the 2023-24 school year, Sussex Academy experienced a leadership change, with the Head of School leaving the organization in November. The Interim Head of School stepped up successfully, guiding the school through the day-to-day challenges associated with this transition. With a strong focus on mission fidelity and effective school management, the Interim Head of School helped ensure a successful finish to the 2023-24 school year.

In addition, Sussex Academy is still in the early stages of offering K-12 programming. The separate K-5 campus posed challenges with transportation, facilities, food service and professional development plans. There remained opportunities for growth in establishing a cohesive strong K-12 community at the end of the 2023-24 school year.

9. Address any measure(s) where the school did not meet standard or is approaching standard (if applicable).

School Comments:

Sussex Academy met all the Organizational Performance Framework Metrics.

3.3 AT-RISK STUDENTS, STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

10. If applicable, describe any changes or enhancements the school has made based on findings from audits, investigations, or other administrative proceedings related to at-risk students, students with disabilities, gifted and talented students, or Multilingual Learners.

School Comments:

Sussex Academy has consistently improved its services and expanded our collective capacity to better meet the needs of at-risk students. In recent years, we have hired additional staff to deliver interventions and increase support for our students. We have expanded our counseling department, assigned staff at each campus to oversee our growing Multilingual Learner (MLL) population, hired a full-time speech pathologist, and continued to increase staffing to support students with IEPs. Our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) programs continue to grow, with a focus on data-driven decision-making. These improvements have been made based on both qualitative and quantitative data. Furthermore, we have not had any audits, investigations, or administrative proceedings that would require additional steps.

11. Describe any changes or enhancements to the process by which at-risk students, students with disabilities and gifted and talented students are identified and the evidence that the school was able to provide the right resources and services for these students.

School Comments:

The MTSS benchmarking tools (e.g., Edmentum, i-Ready, DIBELS, etc.) continue to guide our process for implementing interventions for students receiving tiered support. Additionally, data management systems like i-Tracker and RAP help document our academic, social-emotional, and behavioral interventions. We also have three teachers serving as interventionists in grades K-5, providing a higher level of early intervention and support for classroom teachers.

12. Describe any changes or enhancements to the process by which Multilingual Learners are identified and the evidence that the school was able to provide the right resources and services for these students.

School Comments:

We have identified staff to oversee the MLL programs at both the elementary and secondary campuses. These staff members provide small-group instruction to students and support classroom teachers in meeting the needs of our MLL students. As previously described, the MLL student population at Sussex Academy is growing, and we are using the ACCESS data and WIDA standards to guide the provision of appropriate services for these students.

3.4 GOVERNANCE AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

13. Describe how the board has provided oversight in the areas of academics, finance, and operations, including legal compliance.

School Comments:

The Sussex Academy Board of Directors holds monthly public meetings throughout the 2023-24 school year, except for July and December. At each meeting, the Board reviews and votes on the monthly operating budget to ensure financial oversight. The Board's Finance Committee and Treasurer also meet regularly during the year to further analyze and assess the school's financials. Additionally, the Board receives monthly updates from the Head of School on academic and operational matters. The Board's School Performance Committee focuses on academic issues and strategic planning efforts. Legal compliance matters are brought to the attention of the Board President and Vice President by the Head of School; however, no such issues arose during the 2023-24 school year. Finally, the Board reviewed and updated governance-related policies throughout the year.

14. Discuss board-related success and challenges during school year 2023-24. Areas you may want to consider as appropriate include:

- Membership and recruitment
- New member induction and ongoing governance training
- Meeting attendance
- Board self-evaluation
- Progress on particular board-level projects

School Comments:

The Sussex Academy Board of Directors continues to excel in membership and recruitment efforts. The Board is composed of dedicated members who attend meetings regularly and actively participate. All Board members complete the required ongoing governance training. Additionally, Board committees provide regular updates on progress toward their respective goals.

The Board also led an extensive, months-long search for a new Head of School to lead Sussex Academy. To assist in this process, the Board retained the services of the Delaware Academy of School Leadership (DASL) within the Education and Human Development School Success Center at the University of Delaware. The search included input from teachers, staff, parents, and students.

In addition, the Board holds a summer retreat each July, providing an opportunity to self-assess, set new goals, and share priorities for the upcoming school year.

15. Describe the process used by the board to evaluate school leadership.

School Comments:

The Sussex Academy Board of Directors Performance Committee conducts an annual performance evaluation of the Head of School. The process includes the identification of goals related to the following areas:

- Academic Framework
- Financial Oversight
- Organizational Framework
- School Board Policy
- Leadership Priorities

16. Describe the school's process for success planning including identification, development, and retention of school leaders.

School Comments:

Sussex Academy continued to participate in the Department of Education's Equity-Centered Pipeline (ECP) work during the 2022-23 school year. This multi-year program aligns with the goal of developing systems for identifying, training, hiring, and supporting both potential and existing school leaders. As part of this initiative, the ECP team at Sussex Academy conducted an in-depth evaluation of current succession planning and worked on creating a Teacher Tracking System to identify potential leaders.

During the 2022-23 school year, teachers received training on the DTGSS evaluation system, observed their colleagues, and provided coaching to improve instruction throughout Sussex Academy. This work also resulted in the creation of an organizational framework that includes job descriptions, roles, and responsibilities. The Equity-Centered Pipeline work continues into the 2023-24 school year.

17. Share how the board supports the school. Speak to the board's involvement in events, operations, and fundraising activities.

School Comments:

Sussex Academy's Executive Board sets the policies, goals, and objectives for the school. The Board also ensures that the Head of School has the resources and support needed to implement these policies and achieve the established goals. These governance efforts are critical to the success of Sussex Academy.

Board members actively support Athletics, Performing Arts, Fundraising, Graduation, Open Houses, and other school events. Additionally, the Board supports student academic achievement by awarding a Board Scholarship each year to an outstanding graduating student. Board members are also actively engaged in leading or participating in the following committees:

- Executive
 - Finance
 - Governance / Policy
 - Public Relations / Outreach
 - Buildings and Grounds
 - School Performance
-

3.5 STUDENTS AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

18. Describe how the school solicits feedback from parents and students regarding satisfaction with the school. Provide summary data and reflect on the feedback. How does the school use this information to inform ongoing school improvement?

School Comments:

Sussex Academy solicits feedback from stakeholders throughout the school year for various purposes. As a charter school in Delaware, we believe that summative feedback can be gathered from reenrollment data. The 2023-24 reenrollment data shows that nearly 93% of students choose to return, which suggests that satisfaction levels remain relatively high.

When families decide to leave for another option, they are asked to complete an exit survey to help us better analyze retention data. This data is used by school administration to inform school improvement plans and is also considered during the planning process. For example, some survey data indicates that families are choosing to leave Sussex Academy for athletic opportunities. This information was used to develop plans, such as the introduction of a Middle School wrestling team for the 2024-25 school year. It is important to note that much of the exit survey data points to external factors or personal beliefs as the major reasons families choose to leave, rather than dissatisfaction with the educational opportunities offered by Sussex Academy.

3.6 TEACHER RETENTION

Is the school monitoring and minimizing teacher attrition rates and maintaining a stable teacher staff?

Note: Complete the table below.

SCHOOL YEAR	PERCENT OF TEACHERS RETAINED	NUMBER OF TEACHERS RETAINED	NUMBER OF TEACHERS ELIGIBLE
2023-24	97%	60	62

19. Explain successes or challenges of implementing the school's teacher retention plan.

School Comments:

Sussex Academy's retention rate increased from 87% in the 2022-23 school year to 97% in the 2023-24 Annual Report. While we are pleased with this growth, we also recognize the importance of analyzing the data to inform our hiring and retention strategies. One teacher left for another district to earn a higher salary, while another left due to the non-renewal of their annual contract by the Head of School. We will use this information to continue developing plans to remain competitive with surrounding district salaries and benefits.

20. Describe how the school's professional development plans have evolved to support teachers and leadership.

School Comments:

During the 2023-24 school year, teacher leaders identified needs and spent time over the summer planning professional development based on their observations. This resulted in a deeper understanding of the teacher evaluation model and best practices. It marked a shift from previous years, which relied on contracting outside consultants to deliver professional development. The professional development opportunities were designed by teachers for teachers. School administration collaborated with teachers to plan, deliver, and assess the effectiveness of the development. The overarching goal of this approach is to build leadership capacity across Sussex Academy.

21. Describe how the school's completion of educator evaluations has evolved.

School Comments:

Educator evaluations at Sussex Academy continue to evolve with a shift toward a “flat accountability system” across our campuses. With teachers receiving training and credentialing in the Delaware Evaluation System, we have effectively established less hierarchy in the system, increased autonomy for teachers, shared responsibility for meeting high instructional expectations, and fostered greater organic innovation.

Under the new model, the administrator will continue to supervise all faculty members evaluated under the DTGSS system. The administrator will oversee all evaluative components, including goal setting and summative evaluations. Using the DTGSS Observational Framework to guide them, the coaching components will be led by our teacher leaders. We believe this approach will foster mutual accountability, increase dialogue between teachers about highly effective practices, and improve the overall quality of instruction, ultimately leading to better student outcomes in the long term.

IV. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

The Financial Performance Framework is a reporting tool that provides the Department of Education with the necessary data to assess the financial health and viability of charter schools in its portfolio for the purposes of an annual review. The framework summarizes a charter school's financial health while taking into account the school's financial trends over a period of three years.

4.1 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

SUMMARY AND OVERALL 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 & Oversight	
YEAR	1a	1b	1c	1d	2a	2b	2c	2d	3	4	OVERALL RATING
2023-24	M	AS	M	M	M	AS	M	M	Not Rated	M	Meets Standard

M: Meets Standard

AS: Approaching Standard

F: Far Below Standard

4.2 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

PERFORMANCE AGREEMENT

By September 2027, our expectation is to achieve an overall rating of "Meets" or "Exceeds on the Delaware School Success Framework (DSSF). Each year, we will show growth within each metric area, putting us on track to achieve our academic performance expectations. This progress will be monitored through our annual performance review.

22. Using the results contained in the Financial Performance Framework, describe the school's financial performance during school year 2023-24. (This section is for the school to address any overall rating where the school has not met standard. The school will be able to address individual metrics in the sections below).

School Comments:

It is important to note that Sussex Academy demonstrated significant growth in the Financial Performance Expectations for the 2023-24 Annual Report. There are no areas in the "Far Below Standard" range, compared to three in the 2022-23 school year report. The overall rating also improved from "Approaching Standard" to "Meets Standard."

However, there is still room for improvement in both the Debt-to-Asset Ratio and Cash Flow. Sussex Academy will continue working with our auditors to analyze historical reports and develop plans for future budgets. The Head of School, Board Treasurer, and Financial Analyst will collaborate to monitor revenue, expenditures, and track line items to improve forecasting and meet all standards going forward.

23. Identify changes to financial practices that the school has implemented to improve the school's financial outcomes.

School Comments:

The 75-day cash balance target remains a priority for our school's financial outcomes. To achieve this goal, a financial analyst was hired to develop systems for monitoring revenue, expenditures, and forecasting using a line-item system. The financial analyst now works closely with the Head of School and Business Office leaders to forecast, monitor, and adjust practices to meet this goal. The system also includes financial reports to the Board, detailing the year-end outlook for revenues, expenses, and cash, allowing for closer scrutiny during the budgeting process. We expect this approach to improve the rating for Cash Flow in future reports.

The school continues to use zero-based budgeting, which includes contributions to the cash reserves. Key areas of focus include academics, athletics, transportation, technology, facilities/maintenance, curriculum, and professional development. The Business Office is now collaborating with each area to establish budgets based on line items we can forecast, as well as other needs, to ensure we operate within appropriate budget categories.

24. Address any measure(s) where the school did not meet the standard (if applicable).

School Comments:

Accounting standards changed in FY 22, with the school's lease payments for our buildings now being considered debt. This is a change from previous years. As a result, our Debt-to-Asset Ratio was raised to "Approaching Standard." With the cash days target now met, we expect the cash flow standard to improve in future reports, thanks to the current systems in place that guide financial decision-making.

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

School Comments:

No corrective action plan is needed.

V. INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

26. Describe effective systems, structures, and/or processes that have led to significant school improvement that could be replicated at other schools. Please include the data that supports the success of these practices. Areas you may want to consider, as appropriate:

- Leadership
- Professional Learning
- Instructional Transformation
- Equity
- Culture and Climate Shift
- Collaboration/Partnerships

School Comments:

As described in previous sections of the report, we believe the work associated with our ECPP participation could be successfully replicated at other schools. The qualitative data gathered from our teachers indicates that teacher leaders feel empowered by their roles, and the flat accountability system creates less anxiety than traditional models. The system also creates opportunities for professional development, designed by teachers for teachers, within our school.

VI. ANNUAL REPORT CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

Name of School:	Sussex Academy
Location:	Georgetown, NE

I hereby certify that the information submitted in this annual report 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.

 1/15/25

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

Print/Type Name:	Jennifer Donahue
Title (if designated):	Board President
Date of approval by board of directors:	1/15/2025