

CASE FOR SUPPORT



Sussex Montessori Public Charter School

A Unique Learning Opportunity for Delaware Students





What if?



What if any child could be placed in an educational environment that would make them confident, excited, and eager to learn, for the rest of their life?

That is our goal at
Sussex Montessori School.



A Unique Model School

We are committed to serving a diverse K/1-6 grades enrollment of 455+ students from a predominantly rural area

The school will provide a quality Montessori education, fully teacher certified

As a public school, Sussex Montessori School will be **free to all students**

Any family from Sussex County, DE can apply

The distinguishing feature of Montessori students is that they move forward in life with a deep love for learning and an innate self-confidence in their ability to succeed.

The Montessori approach was created 100+ years ago to serve very poor children in Rome. However, the vast majority of 3,000 U.S. Montessori schools are private, with enrollment costing \$12,000 or more per year.

Sussex Montessori School will be unique – a public school, employing Montessori in a rural setting to serve K/1-6 grades children who reflect the cultural and economic diversity of their communities.

As such, Sussex Montessori School represents a special learning opportunity – both for the students it will serve, and for replication in and beyond Sussex County.

For philanthropists, educators, public officials, businesses, community leaders, and concerned parents seeking a new educational approach that works for all, we invite you to join us on this exciting journey.



The Formation of Sussex Montessori School

For decades, billions of dollars have been spent studying ways to improve student performance in public schools. Almost all of that money has focused on schools in U.S. cities, while students from rural areas have been largely ignored.

That has finally begun to change, with new investments now being made by private foundations, Federal, and state agencies alike.

Impressed with how young learners from diverse backgrounds benefit from the Montessori approach, Longwood Foundation in 2016 provided seed funding to *Montessori Works* to help establish a public Montessori school in rural Delaware.

In 2018, the Delaware Department of Education (DOE) joined with this project, approving support for the “Sussex Montessori School.” A portion of a Federal grant awarded to Delaware DOE in 2018, will help support some school start-up costs.

Western Sussex municipal, business, and community leaders have expressed strong support for Sussex Montessori School. A site for the school has now been secured in Seaford, Delaware.

Once Sussex Montessori School opens, the state will pay for school operating costs, but not for the



capital and planning expenses required to create and expand the school itself. A capital campaign is being launched to raise to raise \$5.9 million in private gifts, in addition to \$4,100,000 in loans to cover the school’s capital costs.

Why Western Sussex County?

The loss of Seaford, Delaware’s industrial base over the past 20 years pulled significant economic, social and professional resources from western Sussex, while increasing its levels of poverty.

As a result, for too many years, students of all ages from western Sussex have performed at significantly lower levels than others in the county and state.

We believe Sussex Montessori School has the potential to support new initiatives that are starting to reverse this trend and improve the performance and prospects for students across western Sussex County.

Supporting Local Education

Too many young children, particularly those from needy families, fall behind in their early years of school. Educators call this “the Gap” and unless it is closed by grade 3, children may never get on-track again.

Typical education models perpetuate this problem by assuming, and insisting, that all children learn the same tasks, in the same way, during the same allotted time.

A Montessori education, however, treats each child as a unique learner, allowing them to master various skills at their own pace.

Montessori studies show, when elementary-age students grow excited about learning, they will

succeed in their critical early years.

As Sussex Montessori students move on to other local public schools, we believe they will contribute to a measurable improvement in student proficiency data.

High student achievement will occur across our entire enrollment, regardless of family income. We are working to ensure the diversity of at least 51% of our students.

Finally, with regional elementary school enrollment forecast to grow by 40% over the next 15 years, SMS will help share the burden with other public schools by serving 455 students each year.





Progress and Planning

Sussex Montessori School will open in September, 2020 with 260 students in grades K/1-3. Expansion to grade 6, to serve a total student population of 465 students, will occur over the next three school years. The following expenses include estimates for a contingency and borrowing costs. Significant savings will result from the adaptive re-use of existing buildings.

2019

Pre-Construction

(Current - September 2019)

Property purchased and annexed into Seaford. Infrastructure, buildings designed and engineered for new construction and adaptive re-use.

Cost: \$ 800,000

2020-2021

Phase II

(August 2020 - September 2021)

Renovations to historic barn for classroom and gathering spaces. New spaces will increase classroom total to 13. Athletic fields designed. Grade 4 added.

Cost: \$ 2,200,000

2019-2020

Phase I

(July 2020)

Property purchases, infrastructure installation – including new water, and building construction. New water, sewer and electric service, and parking lots. Ten classrooms and support services, including school administration building, and one multi-purpose classroom. Grades K/1-3 open.

Cost: \$ 5,600,000

2021-2022

Phase III

(October 2021 - September 2022)

Additional site and building construction for 5 classrooms, raising total to 18. Grades 5 and 6 added.

Cost: \$ 1,400,000

Total Campaign: \$ 10,000,000

Our objective is to raise all funds required for the school through this multi-year campaign.



Our Campaign

Funding for Sussex Montessori School will come from a combination of foundation, business, and individual donations and long-term borrowing, as necessary.

Sources of Funding

School borrowing	\$ 4,100,000
Foundations	\$ 3,000,000
Corporate gifts	\$ 1,300,000
Individual gifts	
Major	\$ 1,200,000
Mid-level	\$ 250,000
General	\$ 75,000
Event fundraising	\$ 75,000

Total Objective: \$ 10,000,000

The school campaign, launching in 2019, will be conducted by members of a new Sussex Montessori School Campaign Council.



Our School Location

Sussex Montessori School will be located on the site of a former family farm and granary in Seaford, DE.

The farm's oversized barn, farmhouse, and various outbuildings are in excellent repair and can be readily converted for educational purposes.

The site is ideal for a "Montessori-style" curriculum, which uses indoor and outdoor experiences and responsibilities as key components of learning. The school is located on Stein Highway, a major east-west thoroughfare.





Site Plan





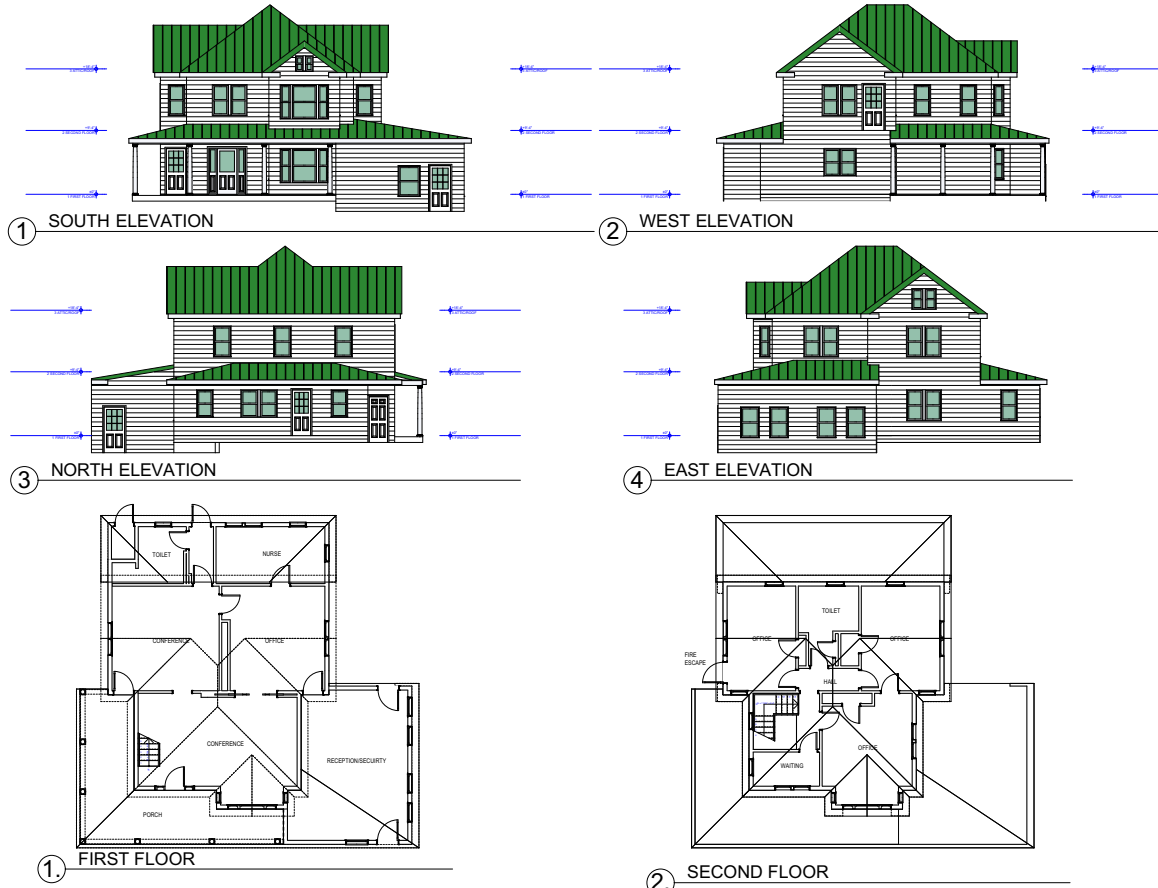
Conceptual Design



An overview of the proposed plan, including buildings to accommodate grades K/1 to 6.



Architectural Drawing 1



SUSSEX MONTESSORI SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING 11/13/2018

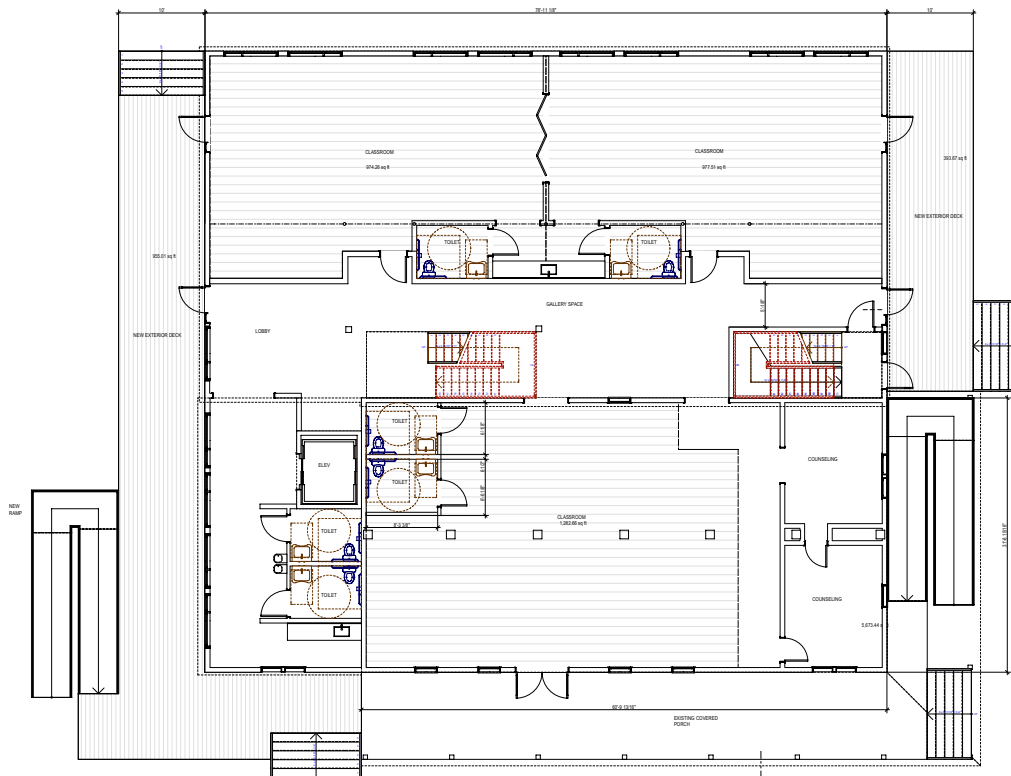
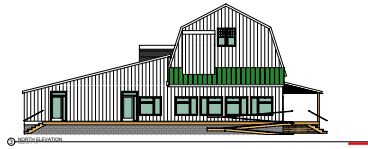
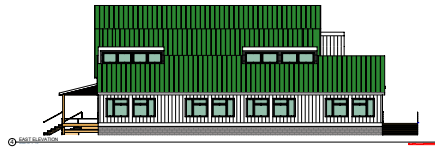
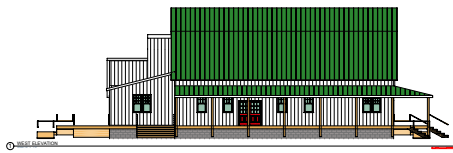
FARMHOUSE



The Victorian farmhouse will serve as the school's administrative offices, with rooms for meetings, private conferences, and a nurse's area.



Architectural Drawing 2



① FIRST FLOOR

The Barn will serve as classrooms for grades 4-6 and a large multi-use area.



The Unique Characteristics of Sussex Montessori

Because all children develop at different rates, our school will provide a warm, supportive environment in which each student can learn at his or her own pace. Teachers will be “facilitators” rather than “instructors.”

Such individualized, progressive education is critical in elementary school where the first six years of education establish students’ attitudes toward learning for the rest of their lives.

Children who attend Sussex Montessori School will work in unique, multi-age classroom clusters. Personalized learning, building peer relationships and solving real-life challenges will encourage innovative learning skills.

Lectures and memorization will be replaced by challenging child-centered indoor and outdoor learning experiences, encouraging students to form their own ideas and concepts.

While Sussex Montessori School students will take the same state tests as all others, our teachers will determine progress based on observation techniques and progress monitoring strategies that do not require testing throughout the year.

Time-tested evidence shows young Montessori students’ enthusiasm for learning and high academic performance carries over into middle and high school and benefits all students equally, regardless of their backgrounds.





School Evaluation

Goals for Sussex Montessori students include academic achievement, positive social and emotional growth, and the development of character, innovation skills and global citizenship.

Like other public schools, we are accountable to the Delaware DOE to demonstrate student progress toward established objectives.

In addition, Sussex Montessori School will undertake two long-term program evaluations* to ensure school leadership remains true to Montessori principles.

Research will help determine whether instilling a love and commitment to learning among diverse, rural students can offset other inhibitors to education, and carry forward through middle school years. We believe this will encourage greater investment in rural Montessori education.

Progress reports will be issued regularly and site visits encouraged, as we anticipate interest in potential replication from other educational funders and organizations.



Sussex Montessori School will be unique in terms of:

- The rural background of our students
- The size, cultural, and economic diversity of our school's enrollment
- Our use of the Montessori curriculum, and
- Delivery of a tuition-free public school education

* *Developed by the National Center of Montessori in the Public Sector, Rubric of Essential Elements of Montessori Practice in the Public Schools; and the Developmental Environmental Rating Scale (DERS) will provide the basis for this study.*

Potential partners for such a study include the University of Delaware, the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector, the Brady Foundation, and the University of Kansas Center for Montessori Research.



School Enrollment



By 2023, the primary school will be fully enrolled with 455 students, K/1-6, shared primarily with the Seaford, Woodbridge, and Laurel school districts.

Ethnically and fiscally diverse, these districts will provide an ideal mix of early learners to

participate in a model rural school program, including significant numbers of lower income, ELL, special education, and service-eligible children.

If applications to Sussex Montessori School exceed capacity, a lottery will be implemented for new students.





Student Statistics

Estimated Student Enrollment & Characteristics

The likely public school partners with Sussex Montessori School enrollment are:

	K/1-3	K/1-6
Seaford (50%)	131	230
Woodbridge (25%)	61	106
Laurel (15%)	43	74
Indian River (10%)	25	45
Total:	260	455

Breakdown by municipality of population living below poverty line:

Municipality	Total Pop.	# Below Poverty	% Below Poverty
Seaford	7,125	1,817	25.5%
Laurel	4,320	1,516	35.1%
Bridgeville	2,397	503	21.0%

A breakdown by race, weighted for each district, suggests the following enrollment for the first year (K/1-3). This diversity mirrors that of the participating school districts:

	%	Students
African American	31.15%	81
Latino	23.46%	61
Caucasion	41.54%	108
Other	3.85%	10
Total:	100%	260

Student proficiency data:

	English	Math
Seaford		
Elementary	61.78%	64.13%
Middle	44.38%	29.09%
Woodbridge		
Elementary	49.67%	47.82%
Middle	33.78%	30.01%
Laurel		
Elementary	44.87%	45.09%
Middle	54.60%	39.85%



Our Investment in Outreach

Our objective is for the Sussex Montessori enrollment to mirror the populations of the communities it will serve.

Sussex Montessori School will address this objective from the start by employing a full-time Outreach Specialist.

Well known and highly-regarded, our specialist is forming relationships with churches, clubs,

health providers, and community groups, to assist families with the application process.

Through this process, year after year, Sussex Montessori will help ensure a competitive number of applications from across the region's economic spectrum.

School District Student Demographics - 2017:

	Lower Income	English Language Learners	Special Ed.
Seaford	51.2%	24.5%	11.9%
Woodbridge	44.6%	8.3%	16.6%
Laurel	54.9%	19.6%	13.6%
Indian River	40.0%	16.9%	18.3%

*Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)**

Identified Student Percentages (ISP)	%
Seaford	53.43
Woodbridge	50.37
Laurel	56.85
Indian River	36.78

** Delaware DOE, 2018*



SUSSEX
MONTESSORI
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

Sussex Montessori School Campaign Council

Campaign Office | PO Box 1686, Seaford, DE 19973 | 302-381-6032

CAMPAIGN LEADERS

Lauren Connelly	Rob Harman	Penny Short
Jessica Crampton-Bradley	John Hollis	Sean Steward
Lynn Harman	Jimmy Hoppa	Amy Walls

CAMPAIGN STAFF

Michael Rawl <i>Campaign Manager</i>	Kaneisha Trott <i>Community Engagement Specialist</i>
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Board of Directors

Sussex Montessori School | PO Box 1686, Seaford, DE 19973

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