

FAMILY HANDBOOK



SY 2020 - 2021



SUSSEX
MONTESSORI
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL



Inaugural year

A Message from our Head of School

Dear Sussex Montessori School Family,

Congratulations and welcome! Your child has been accepted and enrolled at Sussex Montessori School for our inaugural 2020-2021 school year. We are so very happy to have you as a part of our new Sussex Montessori family.

We are excited about all the opportunities before us. We expect a great year, and with your help the expectation will become a reality. Working together, we will help our students grow academically and socially so they can continue to develop into responsible, caring, life-long learners who strive to reach their full potentials. We want them to realize how capable they are and what they can achieve. We want them to make new discoveries and to think creatively. We want them to experience the joy of helping others and being part of something greater than themselves.



This handbook contains important and useful information about our policies and procedures. We encourage you to become familiar with it. If you still have questions, don't hesitate to ask. ***Please complete and return the form in the back of this handbook acknowledging that you have read and understand this information.*** Also, please make sure to like us on Facebook and visit our website (www.sussexmontessoricharter.com) to learn of exciting Sussex Montessori School happenings occurring throughout the school year.

As a school, we are committed to ensuring that your child feels welcomed as the unique individual that he/she is and supported and encouraged to become the very best version of him/herself, as a student and as a member of our community. Please know that we consider it an honor and privilege to welcome your children to Sussex Montessori. We are committed to ensuring that our school will be a very special place for everyone.

Fondly,

Lisa Coldiron

Lisa Coldiron
Head of School

***“The child is both a hope and a promise for mankind.”
Maria Montessori***

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Sussex Montessori School: School Calendar

SY 2020 to 2021

Aug 2020						
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Important Dates
August 31st Maria Montessori's Birthday
September 21st International Peace Day
November 2nd Moving Day
November 21st Hello World Day

- Training/Professional Development Days (No School)
- No School
- First Day of School/Last Day of School
- Student-led Conferences
- Important Dates

General Information

Mission & Vision

Our Mission

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.

Our Vision

The Vision of the Sussex Montessori School (SMS) is to use the Montessori method to educate children through authentic personalized learning experiences, respectful relationships, opportunities to innovate, and a focus on global citizenship. We believe that the creation of a Montessori public school in Sussex County, DE will improve student learning, allow for greater choice for parents/guardians, and serve as a model for alternative approaches to education by providing a proven and innovative teaching and learning environment.

As a charter school, we are given the flexibility to create our own educational model while also being held to a high level of accountability by the Delaware Department of Education. We work closely with other Montessori charter schools and are committed to partnering with our local community partners and the larger education community. As a school community, we are dedicated to cultivating and maintaining an academically rich environment that is joyful and welcoming and allows every child within our community to grow to his or her fullest potential. Sussex Montessori is a school developing the whole child!



Background

Sussex Montessori School (SMS) was born from two local organizations coming together to address a grave need in Sussex County. In 2014, the Longwood Foundation, a philanthropic organization dedicated to systemic investments through the state of Delaware, put forth a call for action to address the need for a choice school for underserved families in rural southern Delaware. Aware of the successes of Montessori throughout the state, the Longwood Foundation supported [Montessori Works](#) in the early phases of school development. Both organizations began to engage community members with various backgrounds, in order to develop a comprehensive school plan and design. Many of these individuals had previous experience as Montessori educators and

parents. The creation of Sussex Montessori's founding board was established by these dedicated community members.

Educational Philosophy

The Montessori method fosters self-motivated growth for children and adolescents in all areas of their development – cognitive, emotional, social, and physical. To implement this philosophy, Sussex Montessori School (SMS) will:

- Value the social curriculum equally with the academic curriculum.
- Create an engaging interdisciplinary curriculum combining the Delaware Common Core Standards with Montessori lessons.
- Provide an abundance of learning materials specifically developed for the Montessori classroom.
- Empower the child to direct his/her own learning within and with facilitation by the teacher;
- Provide for inquiry, exploration, critical thinking, collaboration, and creative problem solving.
- Understand and capitalize on individual learning styles.
- Educate the whole child by infusing the development of self-reliance and independence within academic work.

Characteristics of a Montessori Education at Sussex Montessori

- **Multi-Age Classrooms** are three-year age spans: 5-7 and 7-9-year olds in the elementary program. This maximizes curriculum options, encourages cooperation, and fosters self-confidence by allowing children to sometimes lead and sometimes follow. (4th, 5th, and 6th grade will be added in subsequent years.)
- **Montessori Materials** focus on many levels of understanding, beginning with the concrete and moving to the abstract. Materials are self-correcting and reinforce autonomy, confidence, and self-motivation.
- **Uninterrupted Work Periods** enable students to explore a topic or material thoroughly. Whole-class instruction is minimal; individual or small group lessons are preferred. Uninterrupted work periods encourage concentration and increases stamina.
- **Mastery Learning** goes beyond memorization and repetition to true understanding and application of knowledge, skills, and concepts. Rather than simply covering concepts in a predetermined order, our curriculum maps identify learning goals for each level, and our teachers have the flexibility to present concepts that suit the learning needs and styles of each student. Rather than structuring the day to assign a limited amount of time to each subject area, our Montessori approach provides both students and teachers flexibility in the time they choose to devote to any given pursuit. When a student, or group of students,

“Joy, feeling one's own value, being appreciated and loved by others, feeling useful and capable of production are all factors of enormous value for the human soul.”

Maria Montessori

demonstrate a particular interest in exploring a concept, question, or issue more deeply, the Montessori philosophy calls for teachers to facilitate such interests. Individual students progress at his/her own rate, either moving ahead without having to wait for the rest of the group or taking the time needed to internalize the material or concept.

- **Collaboration** is encouraged and students frequently work together on assignments. Though direct instruction is provided to every student every day, students spend a large portion of the learning time working with each other. This approach not only fosters collaboration, but also provides students the opportunity to articulate their thinking to others, which helps to deepen their comprehension.
- **Peace Education** is integral to the Montessori method and is woven all throughout the Sussex Montessori curriculum beginning with our morning meetings and including our lessons on “grace and courtesy” which guides and supports children to be respectful and at peace with themselves and with others.

Family Engagement and Investment

Our intention is to honor and include all those who devote their time, attention, and love to raise the children in our care at Sussex Montessori School (SMS). Whether you are a parent, grandparent, or caregiver—you are welcome.

It is our hope at SMS that you will be involved with our school in a way that is meaningful to you and positively impacts our students. Each family is asked to do what it can—we have no required number of hours but instead ask that you participate as often as you can and contribute when and where you are able. Not only does your involvement help our community, but you serve as a powerful role model for our students.



In-Person Volunteering Policies

In-person volunteers play an important role in the success of our students and school. To ensure the safety of our students and staff, all volunteers must be screened before volunteering. If you plan on volunteering at any time during the school year, please complete the required forms (included in this handbook and on our website). These forms authorize the school to complete a thorough background screening of prospective volunteers. Upon receipt of your results you will be notified of your eligibility to volunteer. Per current public health guidelines, in-person volunteering will be kept to a minimum. SMS will gladly welcome additional in-person volunteers as soon as it is safe to do so.”

This policy applies to all school activities during the school day, except for parents/guardians and/or adults who are visiting the school as an audience member for a class or school presentation.

Required Forms for Volunteers:

To access all required forms, please visit <https://sussexmontessoricharter.com/volunteer/>

- [Volunteer Enrollment and Disclosure Form](#)
- [Department of Education Tuberculosis Health Questionnaire](#)
- [Delaware Child Protection Registry Request Form](#)

Forms must be turned into the office and processed prior to volunteering. All forms will be treated and stored confidentially by the Sussex Montessori Staff and Board of Directors. Please allow at least 30 days for us to submit and process your forms as they are submitted to outside agencies. Volunteering will not be allowed until forms are processed.

Who to contact to get involved:

Note: All volunteers must submit the Volunteer Enrollment and Disclosure Form found in the handbook’s Appendix.

Department	Name, Title	Email
Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)	Danielle Moore, Parent	Dtmoore712@gmail.com
Special Education	Sara Poole, Special Education Coordinator	sara.poole@sussexms.k12.de.us
English Language Learners	Anna Ornelas-Moore, Associate Teacher	anna.ornelas-moore@sussexms.k12.de.us
Homelessness Liaison	Cierra Cox, Associate Teacher	cierra.cox@sussexms.k12.de.us
Medical Related Services	Jennifer Passwaters, School Nurse	jennifer.passwaters@sussexms.k12.de.us
After School Clubs	Elaine Mulford, Administrative Assistant	elaine.mulford@sussexms.k12.de.us
Enrollment	Kaneisha Trott, Community Engagement Specialist	kaneisha.trott@sussexms.k12.de.us
Transportation	Kaneisha Trott, Community Engagement Specialist	kaneisha.trott@sussexms.k12.ke.us
Food Services & Student Health	Jennifer Passwaters, School Nurse	jennifer.passwaters@sussexms.k12.de.us
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)	Precious Benson, Parent	Preciouscarter20@gmail.com
Title I	Kaneisha Trott, Community Engagement Specialist	kaneisha.trott@sussexms.k12.de.us

Family Investment

Parents/guardians are welcome to reach out to teachers and staff at any time. We are here to make sure families have all the information they need with respect to their child. Teachers will respond within 24-48 hours.

Student performance will be shared with parents/guardians in a variety of ways throughout the year:

- Report cards three times a year – twice will include in-person conferences
- Weekly updates will be sent from all classrooms with individual emails sent as needed
- Individualized Education Program (IEP) and 504 meetings will be held as required for children with special needs.



Parent Engagement Opportunities:

- Fundraising, parent engagement, and staff appreciation (Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) volunteers)
- Field Trip Chaperones
- Lunch Captains (to deliver lunches to classrooms)
- Classroom volunteers and mentors
- Special event helpers
- “Walk-in Wednesday” leaders
- “Watch Me Work” Day leaders

Parent Education Opportunities:

- Parenting Series (offered throughout the school year)
- Morning Coffee Meetings
- Open House
- Newsletters

Parent Responsibilities for Supporting Children’s Learning:

- Ensure that your child is on time for school and ready to learn
- Ensure that your child gets a good night’s sleep, plenty of exercise and nutritious meals
- Read together every day
- Attend conferences twice a year and participate in student-led goal setting
- Read and review student report cards
- Assist students in completing homework activities and student work
- Attend Open House

- Attend “Walk-in Wednesday” and “Watch Me Work” days
- Volunteer at Sussex Montessori
- Review the Family Handbook

Visiting Sussex Montessori During the School Day

Scheduled Visits: If you have a scheduled visit to the school (volunteering in the classroom, conference, meeting, etc.) you must first sign in at the main office. Your child’s teacher will inform the main office ahead of time. Please be prepared to present your license, or equivalent form of identification (ID card with picture), in exchange for a visitor tag which you will return to the office when your visit is complete.

“Free the child’s potential, and you will transform him into the world.”

María Montessori

Unscheduled visits: If you are stopping by the school unexpectedly, you must sign in at the main office *first*. Once signed in, a member of our office staff will call the person you are visiting to determine their availability. If available, he/she will meet you in the lobby. If you are dropping an item off, please leave the item with main office staff who make sure the parties involved are informed and the items are collected.

Arrival and Dismissal

Arrival

Sussex Montessori School (SMS) opens for students at 7:45 a.m. Welcoming our students on-time and adhering carefully to school rules and routines will help ensure a safe and welcoming start to every day. For the safety of all our children, please **DO NOT use cell phones** during arrival or dismissal.



Car-line drop off begins at 7:45 a.m. Please pull in the front of the designated “Car Drop-Off Area”. A staff member will be there to greet your child. Please do not leave until your child is met by a Sussex Montessori adult. Please do not get out of your car in the drop off area. **If you need to get out of the car to come into the building, please park and walk in with your child.**

Bus Drop Off: Students will be dropped off in the front of the new modulares on campus. They will be met by their teachers where they will be welcomed into their classroom. Bus drop off protocols may change when students move from modular to the permanent quads. More information will be provided at that time.

Any students not in the building by 8:15 a.m. must be escorted into the building by an adult and signed in. Children arriving AFTER 8:30 a.m. will be considered late.

Dismissal

Dismissal begins at 3:30 p.m.

Having a safe dismissal process is of utmost importance to us at SMS. It is necessary that we have open and consistent communication about your child's transportation. If you know that your child is going home a different way than usual, you must submit a written note to the school office, email dismissals@sussexms.k12.de.us, call the main office by noon that day. Please do not email your child's teacher as they may not have time during the day to check their email messages. Please let us know as soon as possible about any changes to your child's regular dismissal arrangement. We will not allow your child to go home with anyone other than already approved individuals unless we have written confirmation from the parent (photo ID required).

Bus Riders will be walked to their bus to ensure they are on the correct bus.

Car Riders will be waiting with a staff member in front of the Carriage House. Please make sure you have your Car Rider Tag in your car window. You do not need to get out of the car. We will ensure that your child is safely buckled in. Children will not be allowed to ride home with friends or other family members unless they are on the approved list that you submitted and/or we have written consent from *both* families.

Parent Pick-up "Walker" Procedure:

If you live near-by and would like to walk to pick up your child, please bring your "walker" tag with you and meet your child in front of the Carriage House. Your child will not be released to you without showing your "walker" tag.

Emergency Dismissal Changes: If change occurs during the school day, please call or email the main office – dismissals@sussexms.k12.de.us. We ask that all emergency dismissal changes be called in as early as possible, preferably before noon.

Tardiness and Early Dismissal

All students are expected to be on time for school. Classrooms open at 8:00 a.m. and students are expected to be in the classroom by 8:15 a.m. and remain until the end of the school day at 3:30 p.m. If a student arrives after 8:30 a.m., they are tardy. For safety reasons and accountability, a parent/guardian must accompany a tardy child into school and sign the child in at the main office. Reasons such as personal illness, medical appointments, and appearances in court will be considered as excused tardiness when verified by a note from a recognized official (i.e., physician, judge, etc.). Late arrivals are closely monitored by the student's teacher and the Head of School (HOS). Parents/guardians will be contacted to discuss excessive tardiness. Families should recognize that a written explanation from home does not automatically cause the tardiness to be excused. Such reasons as car trouble, personal business, heavy traffic, home obligations, etc., while understandable, are not acceptable excuses and will be listed as unexcused.

“I have studied the child; I have taken what the child has given me and expressed it, and that is what is called the Montessori Method.”

María Montessori

Instructional time is lost when a student misses any portion of the academic day. After 5 unexcused late arrivals or early dismissals, a letter will be sent home. A conference with the administration may be requested after 10 or more unexcused late arrivals or early dismissals. When a student accumulates any combination of 12 unexcused late arrivals and/or unexcused early dismissals, a meeting with the Head of School will be required. Cases of excessive absence or tardiness, not resolved after a meeting with the HOS, may be referred to the Board of Directors for further action.

Attendance

Forming responsible habits regarding attendance and promptness is important. Parents are expected to support the goal of punctuality by having their children arrive on time, remain in school for a full day, and schedule appointments after school hours whenever possible. Sussex Montessori requires that students attend school in accordance with these laws. Punctual and regular attendance is extremely important. Unless it is impossible to do so, each student should attend school every day. *Please see the Attendance Policy (appendix) for details concerning excused and unexcused absences.*

Enrollment/Re-enrollment procedures

Enrollment - The Sussex Montessori School (SMS) application window for each school year is from the first Monday in November through the second Wednesday in January. All materials must be received by this date, accurate and in full, to be considered. Applications may be submitted online at www.schoolchoicede.org.

Application materials may be completed online, sent via email (scanned with hand-written signatures), standard post, or hand-delivered to the school. If materials sent via standard post are postmarked by the deadline, they will be accepted.

Important Dates – School Year 2020-2021		
Online Choice Application Opens	Monday, November 2, 2020	7:00 a.m.
Online Choice Application Closes	Wednesday, January 13, 2021	4:00 p.m.
Lottery for SMS	Saturday, January 30, 2021	8:00 a.m.
Parent Notification	Saturday, February 28, 2021	n/a
Parent Notify District/School	Friday, March 19, 2021	n/a

Re-enrollment – Currently enrolled families do not need to complete an online application each year, however, a re-enrollment commitment will be required each year for students to remain enrolled in the school for the following year.

Transportation

Sussex Montessori School (SMS) contracts bus service for its students. The bus ride is an extension of the school day and behavior consistent with Montessori Grace and Courtesy is expected. The principles, procedures, and policies included in the Family Handbook remains in effect anytime a student is on a school bus (including the bus to and from school, field trip buses, etc.). Riding the school bus is a privilege for each student. If the following rules and regulations are not followed, the student may no longer



be given the opportunity to ride the bus. If the privilege to ride the bus is suspended or revoked, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be responsible for transporting his/her child to and from school. While riding the bus, students are to adhere to the following rules:

- The bus driver is in charge of the bus and students are expected to follow all instructions given by the driver.
- Students must always remain properly seated (back to back; bottom to bottom), keep voice volume low, and keep hands and arms inside the windows.
- Students are to keep their hands and feet to themselves (no horseplay, fighting, etc.).
- Students may engage in ordinary conversations in a normal tone; however, the driver has the authority to prohibit any conversation.
- Students are to conduct themselves on the bus in such a way that will not distract the driver. (Distracting the driver puts everyone on the bus at risk. Students who do not follow the reasonable requests of the bus driver jeopardize their riding privileges.)
- Students are not to eat or drink while on the bus.
- Students are not to throw objects of any kind inside, outside or around the bus.
- Students should keep the bus clean, sanitary, and orderly. They must not damage or abuse bus seats or equipment.
- Students are not to use abusive language or profanity, obscene or rude gestures or spit while on the bus.
- Students are not to leave the bus without the driver's permission, except on arrival at their assigned bus stop or at school.

Minor bus misbehaviors will result in a warning and parent contact. Subsequent minor bus misbehaviors will result in suspension of bus riding privileges for a period of time determined by the administration and the bus company. Third offenses for bus infractions may result in permanent revocation of bus riding privileges. Any major disruptive behavior such as fighting, vandalism, etc. will result in immediate suspension of riding privileges for a period of time determined by the School Leadership Team and could result in permanent revocation of riding privileges and other consequences.

Weather

Sussex Montessori School (SMS) follows the Seaford School District's schedule for school closings due to inclement weather. Families who sign-up with our school messaging system will receive text, email, and voice mail alerts in the case of delays or cancellations. SMS will be in contact with directions concerning sign-up.

You may call the school at (302) 404-5367 after 6:00 a.m. to hear a recorded message of the day's arrangements. If you do not hear a message by that time indicating a change to regular school hours, then SMS is operating under normal hours. Additionally, 92.7 FM and WGMD.com will list SMS delay/closing plans for the day.

"... The child is the builder of man. There is no man existing who has not been formed by the child he once was."

María Montessori

Birthdays and Holidays

Birthdays are a very special event in a child's life. Often, however, the true meaning gets lost in the festivities and presents. As a Montessori School, we celebrate a child's birthday in a unique and meaningful way by having a celebration of life ceremony. The child's teacher will provide a candle (battery operated) and invite the child to walk around the circle symbolizing the passage of time while the child shares special events in his/her life over the years. This moving celebration honors each child's unique life experiences. *As a safeguard for children with food allergies and out of respect for varying family traditions, classroom birthday celebrations will not include food, treats or snacks.* Please do not send your child with these items on their birthday.

If you are hosting a celebration outside the class and inviting some families from school, please be mindful of the impact of such celebrations on class life. Please do not send birthday invitations to school. Rather send the invitations through the regular mail or other means, out of sensitivity to children not included in the celebration.

Holidays in a Montessori classroom provide opportunities for the study of history, culture, and geography. As a Montessori community, we encourage the understanding and acceptance of diverse cultures. If your family has a special holiday that you would like to share with your child's classmates, please check with your child's teacher first to confirm the specifics.

Field Trips

Sussex Montessori School (SMS) believes in creating many opportunities for children outside of the classroom. Throughout the school year, children will be given opportunities inside and outside of the school to enhance their learning. Some of these may have an associated fee. We will work with families to make these opportunities accessible and will ensure that all children have access to field trips and special programs. Note that many of our fall field trips will be virtual per current public health guidelines.



Permissions slips must be turned in at least one day prior to the field trip. Children are required to travel with the class to and from the field trip unless special arrangements have been made and approved by the Head of School. For your convenience, SMS offers a one-time permission slip that will allow your child to attend all on-site and off-site activities that occur within the school day.

Food Services

Lunches brought from home should be nutritious and well-balanced. Students may not bring candy, soda, or caffeinated beverages to school. Lunches will be kept in the classroom refrigerator. A microwave is available for use, however limited time is available so please only bring in items with a short heat-up time. Each month, you will receive a form to fill out to order breakfast and lunch. You may also view the monthly menu on the school website. You will choose between a hot and cold option. By ordering, you are also committing to pay for the meals at the price you qualify for (free/reduced/full price). School meals are brought in from a nearby School Food Authority. We ensure that all meals are not only appealing to children, but also meet the national guidelines

To pay for breakfast and lunch meals, visit www.k12paymentcenter.com. To register a new account, you will need each student's ID number. You may obtain this number from your child's classroom teacher or by calling our main office at (302) 404-5367.

Homework



Our goal in Montessori is to inspire in children a sense of wonder and purpose—and joyful learning in their lives. We encourage our students to pursue things that interest them: researching and seeking information to build knowledge of that which inspires them most.

Research over the years suggests that traditional homework does not increase student learning, nor does it increase student motivation. It is our job to prepare children for life so homework may be “practical life” activities that give children experience

in life-long skills but also support their family with family responsibilities. Montessori homework will also include frequent opportunities to read and write. Reading as homework should have a routine, an established time that is set aside for children to read that which interests them most. Regular writing will be a part of their homework routine and might be in the form of a journal or freely chosen creative or expository writing.

Homework will be discussed together as a class at the beginning of the school year and together each class will brainstorm as to how best to handle homework. Once the class has developed their homework policy, this will be written up and sent home so that our students can share their homework policy with their parents, caregivers, and/or other family members.

In general, however, you can expect:

- Daily Reading
- Daily Writing (in a variety of forms)
- Research and projects related to units of study in the classroom
- Family games/activities/challenges
- Practical life activities

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Personal Property

The Montessori classroom is an enriched “prepared environment” of specifically selected materials that lead children toward abstraction of the concepts being studied. We discourage children from bringing articles to school that may distract them from their learning experience, such as toys, electronic devices, trading cards, fidget spinners, and cell phones (see cell phone policy below). **Sussex Montessori is not responsible for the loss of these items.** We welcome books or other supplemental materials which have been discussed with the teacher and are related to the work of the classroom.



Communication Devices

With the technology available on many cellular phones today, students can be tempted to visit non-academic sites on the internet, use non-school related apps and/or communicate unnecessarily via text messaging, etc. Therefore, we feel that cell phone use can often be a negative influence on school culture and can distract students from their academic and community responsibilities. As such, Sussex Montessori School (SMS) prohibits the use of cell phones by students at school, unless specifically approved by a teacher for a specific project or assignment.

Cell Phone Policy (when deemed necessary and with prior approval)

There will be no unauthorized use of cell phones for any purpose during school hours. Cell phones must be turned off during school hours. Cell phones must remain in student backpacks during the school day, including during recess and field trips. If a student chooses not to follow the conditions outlined above, his/her phone will be confiscated. A parent or legal guardian will be required to speak in person with school staff for the phone to be returned to the student. Any student who must call home may use a school phone with permission from faculty/staff. We ask that you speak directly with your child to be certain that he/she understands this policy and how any violation will affect him/her and his/her parents/guardians.

Dress Code

Children need comfortable and appropriate clothing to participate fully in all classroom and outdoor activities. Classrooms require “indoor” shoes (shoes that keep the child’s feet dry, are non-

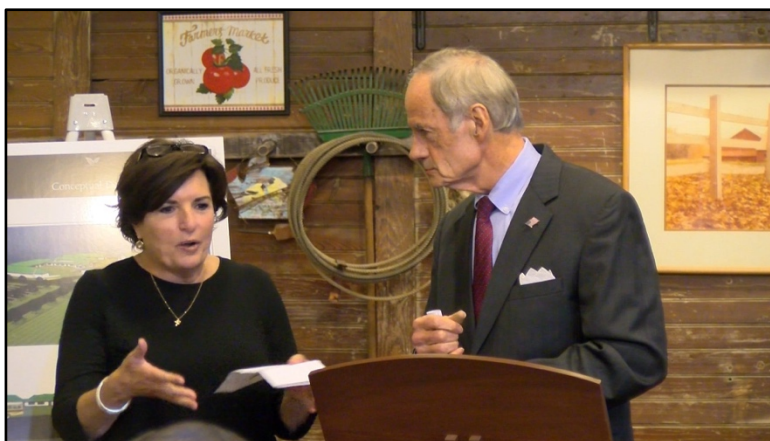
slip, are close-fitting, and have a back) be worn for students to be comfortable and safe and to help keep classroom floors clean. Personal appearance, dress or grooming must not disrupt the educational process or threaten the health or safety of any individual. Attire worn to school should be respectful of others and free from profanity.

Lost and Found

Parents/guardians should put nametags or labels on student clothing, supplies (lunchboxes, backpacks, water bottles, etc.) and other easily misplaced items. Lost items are regularly collected from key areas (such as the playground) and returned if labeled. Typically, all lost and found items are displayed during school conferences and parents/guardians are encouraged to look through them to identify items belonging to their child(ren). Unclaimed items will be donated to a local charity at the end of the school year. Teachers and other staff are not responsible for students' items.

Promotion and Retention

Because Montessori Schools are multi-age classrooms, children's individual needs are typically met in a classroom with the appropriate age groupings. Curriculum is not based on the grade that the child is in but on the development and needs of the child to succeed in a classroom with age appropriate peers. Because of this, retention is typically not a consideration in a Montessori School.



Parents/guardians and teachers work closely to support children in Montessori schools and this consistent collaboration will ensure that parents/guardians are well informed of their child's progress and needs. If there was a reason to consider keeping a child in a given age-range for an additional year, parents/guardians and teachers would work with the Director of Teaching and Learning to develop benchmarks, using the Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) model, for improvement and goals for the child from mid-year of the last year in the multi-age classroom until the close of the school year when a final mutual decision would be made. Please see Attendance Policy for additional details.

Health and Medical Information

Illness

- In the event your child falls ill while at school, the school nurse will contact the parent/guardian to arrange for pickup.
- A child with a fever over 100 degrees Fahrenheit will be sent home.
- Children must be fever-free for 24 hours, *without* using fever-reducing medications such as Tylenol or Motrin, before they may return to school. Note: See Covid-19 learning plan for return to school policy related to diagnosed or suspected cases of Covid-19.
- Children who vomit at school must also be picked up and taken home. Children must go 24 hours without vomiting before returning to school.
- If sent home by the school nurse, a note is not needed for your child to return to school unless they remain home for more than one subsequent school day.
- If you keep your child home due to illness, a note from the parent/guardian or the child's doctor is required for the absence to be excused.

Medications

- For a child to receive prescribed medication while at school, the [Parental Request / Permission to Have Medication Administered in School form](#) must be filled out and on file in the child's chart. To avoid unnecessary disruption of the child's learning, medications prescribed for twice per day administration will not be given during the school day unless required by the doctor.
- The prescription must be prescribed currently (within a year, preferably within the current school year) by a licensed health care provider.
- It must be provided in the original labeled container by the parent/guardian.
- It cannot be expired or out of date.
- It must be counted in the presence of both the parent/guardian and the school nurse at the time it is brought to the school and when returned to the parent/guardian.
- Over-the-counter medications require parent/guardian permission, which is given on the health history form required for enrollment.

“Early childhood education is the key to the betterment of society.”

María Montessori

Food Allergies

- Please notify the school nurse of any food allergies the child has.
- For substitutions to be made to the child's school prepared meals, the Prevention & Emergency Response Plan for Students with Allergies Form must be completed by a licensed healthcare provider. This form is available online and via the school website for download.
- In the event a child suffers from a life-threatening allergy (i.e., peanuts) a confidential Notification of Child Food Allergy letter will be distributed to the child's class.

COVID-19

On August 4, 2020, Governor Carney shared that schools should open this fall with a hybrid model (face to face instruction and remote learning) and a fully remote learning plan for parents/guardians who desire to continue with remote learning for their child. An opening guide has been prepared as a resource for staff, students, and the families of Sussex Montessori School (SMS) as we navigate the 2020-2021 school year during the presence of COVID-19 in our communities. *Please see the Covid-19 [Opening Plan](#) for full details.*

Student Support

Homelessness

Sussex Montessori School's (SMS) Homeless Liaison is responsible for guaranteeing students experiencing homelessness receive a free, appropriate public education. The parent/guardian must be informed of educational and related opportunities available for their child. Students are to remain in the school they have been attending whenever possible, although they may not meet residency requirements. The Liaison must ensure that proper enrollment occurs, contacting the previous school to assist in the determination of placement, obtaining the necessary documents, such as immunizations, and arranging transportation. The Liaison shall support the child's full participation in school activities including clubs, sports, homework help, etc. The role of the liaison is to:

- Assist with student enrollment and obtainment of needed documentation
- Support families and students identified under [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act](#)
- Provide related educational materials and resources for staff including teaching staff, registrars, secretaries, counselors, nurses, bus drivers, food service workers, facilities staff, administrators and tutors
- Enter information in the Department of Education database
- Ensure that posters and outreach material are displayed in common areas of the building(s)
- Obtain resources for students through grants, local partners, community, and neighboring schools
- Collaborate with community agencies, law enforcement, legal aid, housing agencies, mental health agencies, libraries, youth services, motels, campgrounds, and health centers to provide outreach and resources
- Attend professional development to support their knowledge and understanding

Please contact the Homeless Liaison, Cierra Cox (cierra.cox@sussexms.k12.de.us), for more information.

Student Support Teams and Special Education

“We discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being.”

Maria Montessori

Sussex Montessori School (SMS) believes that students with disabilities should be served in regular classrooms whenever possible. Special education is viewed as an integral part of the general education program offered to all students.

The objective of the special education program is to provide the most appropriate educational program for each student in the least restrictive environment, consistent with the school’s obligation to provide an appropriate learning environment for all students.

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed to meet the individualized needs of each student with special needs. The educational services are provided at no cost to the family. The IEP will be updated yearly and all teachers will monitor and note progress towards the objectives written into each IEP in accordance with federal law.

Please see Delaware Procedural Safeguards: Parent and Child Rights in Education, located on the policy resources page of the school’s [website](#), learn more about supports and opportunities on the [Special Populations page](#) of our website, or contact the Special Education Coordinator for more information.

English Language Learners

The Supreme Court of the United States determined that in order for public schools to comply with their legal obligations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), they must take affirmative steps to ensure that students with limited English proficiency (LEP) can meaningfully participate in their educational programs and services.

SMS is committed to meeting the unique needs of all enrolled English learners. In compliance with the above-named laws, SMS will implement the standardized entrance procedures set forth in Delaware’s Every Student Succeeds Act plan and will adhere to the procedures and policies outlined in our English Language Learners policy.

Please see the English Language Learners policy, located on the policy resources page of the school’s [website](#), or contact the English Language Learners Coordinator for more information.

Communication

Board of Directors

Sussex Montessori School (SMS) is governed by a Board of Directors in accordance with Delaware Department of Education regulations. The Board of Directors holds monthly public meetings on the third Tuesday of the month. Agendas are posted on the [agendas and minutes page](#) of the school's website seven days prior to each board meeting. . A recording of them meeting and approved financials are posted within 48 hours of the meeting. Meeting minutes are posted on the school's website within 48 hours of board meeting where they are approved. More information on board members can also found on the school website (<https://sussexmontessoricharter.com/board-of-directors>).



Citizen's Budget Oversight Committee – SMS also has a Citizen's Budget Oversight Committee that meets quarterly. This committee consists of five members including parents, educators in the school, board members, and a representative of the Department of Education. More information on the COB can be found on the school's website.

Questions, Comments, and Concerns

Please know that your questions, comments, and concerns are important to Sussex Montessori School (SMS) staff, Head of School and Board of Directors.

- If you have information pertaining to your child's development or progress, please leave a message with the Office Manager and your child's teacher will contact you within 48 hours.
- If the matter does not pertain to your child's development or progress, please contact the Office Manager who will ensure you are placed in contact with the Head of School or the appropriate school personnel.

Student Conference Days and Report Cards

Sussex Montessori School (SMS) believes that a partnership with families includes clear and ongoing communication. It is a belief that at Sussex Montessori School families should have a clear understanding of their child's academic and social/emotional well-being, as well as a deep understanding of general classroom curriculum and procedures. Your child's teacher will share their communication plan with you early in the school year which will include:



Scheduled Conference Days – Conferences will be scheduled for all students and the adults in their lives in both the fall and the spring. (Please see the School Calendar for exact dates.)

Report Cards – Families will receive three report cards throughout the year. These report cards will include growth towards [state approved curriculum standards](#) in all subjects as well as characteristics defining an engaged learner and citizenship within the class and school-wide community.

School Website

The school website (www.sussexmontessoricharter.com) is an important resource, particularly as it relates to key dates and events, forms, enrollment, and Covid-19. Please visit our website regularly to stay abreast of all of Sussex Montessori School's happenings!

Additionally, each teacher will their own web page, accessible from the [Learning Together page](#) on the main school website, that will house current projects, assignments, and the class schedule.

Appendices

[Attendance Policy](#)

[Discipline and Bullying Policy](#)

[Crisis Assessment](#)

[Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)

[Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\)](#)

[McKinney-Vento Procedures](#)

[Title 1 Rights and Procedures](#)

[Wellness Policy](#)

Family Handbook Acknowledgement Form



I,

Parent or Guardian of

**have received, read and understand all of the information
presented in the SY 2020-2021
Sussex Montessori School Family Handbook.**

Signature

Date

Once completed, please return this form to the Office Manager.