

# FAMILY HANDBOOK



**SY 2022 - 2023**

August 2022



## 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 2022-2023 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 potential. 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, do not 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](http://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 child to Sussex Montessori. We are committed to ensuring that our school will be a very special place for you and your 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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# 2022-23 School Year Calendar

## September 2022

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

- 1-Readiness Fair- 4th & 5th Grade
- 5-Labor Day No School
- 6-First Day 1st, 3rd & 5th ONLY
- 7-First Day of School for K, 2nd & 4th Grade ONLY!
- 8-First Day of School for ALL Students
- 15-Open House K & 1st 6PM
- 22-Open House 2nd & 3rd 6PM
- 29-Open House 4th & 5th 6PM

## October 2022

S	M	T	W	T	Fr	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

- 7- No Schools for Students - UDMTR Teacher Training
- 26- Early Dismissal - 1:00 p.m. - Teacher Professional Day
- 31- No School for Students - Goal Setting Conferences

## November 2022

S	M	T	W	T	Fr	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

- 1- No School for Students - Goal Setting Conferences
- 8-School Closed - Election Day
- 10-School Closed - Return Day
- 11- School Closed - Veteran's Day
- 21- No School for Students- Teacher Professional Day
- 22-25-School Closed - Thanksgiving Holiday

## December 2022

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

- 21- No School for Students - Teacher Professional Day
- 22-30-School Closed - Winter Vacation

## January 2023

S	M	T	W	T	Fr	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

- 2-School Closed- Winter Vacation
- 3-School Closed for Students- Teacher Professional Day
- 13- No School for Students UDMTR Teacher Training
- 16-School Closed - Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday

## February 2023

Su	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

- 17- No School for Students - UDMTR Teacher Training
- 20-Presidents' Day
- 21- School Closed for Students- Teacher Professional Day

## March 2023

S	M	T	W	T	Fr	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

- 3- No School for Students - Professional Development
- 16- No School for Students - Conferences
- 17- No School for Students - Conferences

## April 2023

S	M	T	W	Th	Fr	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

- 7-School Closed - Spring Break
- 10-14-School Closed - Spring Break
- 21-No School for Students- UDMTR Teacher Training

## May 2023

S	M	T	W	T	Fr	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

- 26-No School for Students - Professional Development
- 29-School Closed - Memorial Day
- 31-Field Day- 4th & 5th Grade (Rain Date 6/5)

## June 2023

S	M	T	W	T	Fr	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

- 1-Field Day 2nd & 3rd Grade (Rain Date 6/5) 2-Field Day K-1st Grade (Rain Date 6/7)
- 7-Last Student Day
- 8-Portfolio Day
- 9-Portfolio Day

Color Key	
SCHOOL CLOSED FOR STUDENTS	[Red]
READINESS FAIR BEFORE SCHOOL BBQ	[Green]
FIRST & LAST DAYS OF SCHOOL	[Light Green]
OPEN HOUSES BY GRADE	[Blue]
TEACHER TRAININGS/ PROFESSIONAL DAY NO SCHOOL	[Yellow]
EARLY DISMISSAL TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DAY	[Diagonal Stripes]
GOAL SETTING CONFERENCES NO	[Purple Stripes]
FIELD DAY	[Orange]

# 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, 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 from the State of 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 their 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 model 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 rigorous, 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:

- Create a challenging interdisciplinary curriculum combining the Delaware 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 the structure of the curriculum and with close guidance by the teacher.
- Facilitate 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.
- Understand and celebrate the diversity that makes Sussex Montessori School so unique.

## Characteristics of a Montessori Education

- **Multi-Age Classrooms** are two and three-year age spans: 5-7, 7-9 and 9-12-year-olds in the upper elementary program. This maximizes curriculum options, encourages cooperation, and fosters self-confidence by allowing children to sometimes lead and sometimes follow. (6<sup>th</sup> grade will be added in 2023-2024)
- **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, individuals or small group 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.”*

*María 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, guardian, or caregiver - you are welcome.

It is our hope at SMS that you are involved with our school in a way that is meaningful to you and positively impacts our students. Each family is asked to do what they 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. You are always welcome!

### *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 need to 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.

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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 begins once all 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. Please get involved!

Department	Name	Email
Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)	Angelica Burlingame, SMS PTO President	<a href="mailto:Angelicatorres1771@gmail.com">Angelicatorres1771@gmail.com</a>
Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)	Sarah MacCoy, SMS PTO Vice President	<a href="mailto:ssmaccoy@gmail.com">ssmaccoy@gmail.com</a>
Special Education	Megan Centineo, Special Education Coordinator	<a href="mailto:Megan.centineo@sussexms.k12.de.us">Megan.centineo@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>
English Language Learners	Sylvia Sanchez Special Education Coordinator	<a href="mailto:Sylvia.sanchez@sussexms.k12.de.us">Sylvia.sanchez@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>
Homelessness Liaison	April Harmon, School Counselor & Social Worker	<a href="mailto:April.Albury-harmon@sussexms.k12.de.us">April.Albury-harmon@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>
School Health	Lori Short, School Nurse	<a href="mailto:Lori.short@sussexms.k12.de.us">Lori.short@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>
After School Clubs	Jonas Geneste RJ Johnson	<a href="mailto:Jonas.Geneste@sussexms.k12.de.us">Jonas.Geneste@sussexms.k12.de.us</a> <a href="mailto:Ronald.Johnson@sussexms.k12.de.us">Ronald.Johnson@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>
Enrollment	Kaneisha Savage, Community Engagement	<a href="mailto:Kaneisha.savage@sussexms.k12.de.us">Kaneisha.savage@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>
Transportation	Kaneisha Savage, Community Engagement	<a href="mailto:Kaneisha.savage@sussexms.k12.de.us">Kaneisha.savage@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>
Food Services & Student Health	Anita Mitchell	<a href="mailto:Anita.mitchell@sussexms.k12.de.us">Anita.mitchell@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)	Precious Benson, Parent	<a href="mailto:Preciouscarter20@gmail.com">Preciouscarter20@gmail.com</a>

Title I	Kaneisha Savage, Community Engagement	<a href="mailto:Kaneisha.savage@sussexms.k12.de.us">Kaneisha.savage@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>
Teaching Director	Jori Martinez-Woods Director of Teaching and Learning	<a href="mailto:Jori.Martinez-Woods@sussexms.k12.de.us">Jori.Martinez- Woods@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>

### *Family Investment*



Families 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. Email is the preferred method of contact. If it is an emergency, please call the office at 302-404-5367.

Student performance will be shared in a variety of ways throughout the year:

- Progress Reports are shared three times a year – we conduct two in person conferences annually.
- Weekly INDIVIDUAL updates will be sent from classrooms on an as needed basis.
- 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
- Classroom volunteers and mentors
- Special event helpers
- Parent Camp

### *Parent Education Opportunities:*

- Parenting Series (offered throughout the school year)
- Open House
- Parent Camp and Parent Education

### *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 sleep, plenty of exercise and nutritious meals
  - Read together every day
  - Attend all parent conferences and end of the year portfolio presentations, 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
  - Volunteer at Sussex Montessori School
  - 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 will need to 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*** in exchange for a visitor tag which will need to be returned to the office when your visit is complete.

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

*Maria Montessori*

**Unscheduled visits:** If you are stopping by the school unexpectedly, you will need to 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 they are available, he/she will meet you in the lobby. If you are dropping an item off, please leave the item with main office staff. They will make sure the parties involved are informed and the items are collected.

## **Arrival and Dismissal**

### **Arrival**

Sussex Montessori School (SMS) classrooms open 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.

Carline drop off begins no earlier than 7:30 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 in the front parking lot and walk together with your child.**

**Bus Drop Off:** Students will be dropped off in the designated area on campus. They will be met by teachers and escorted and welcomed into their classroom.

Any students not in the building by 8:00 a.m. will need to be escorted into the office by an adult and signed in. Children arriving **AFTER** 8:00 a.m. will be recorded as tardy.

### **Dismissal**

Dismissal begins at 3:10 p.m.

Having a safe dismissal 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](mailto:dismissals@sussexms.k12.de.us) or 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.

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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 either Carline A or Carline B. 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.

Emergency Dismissal Changes: If change occurs during the school day, please call, or email the main office – [dismissals@sussexms.k12.de.us](mailto:dismissals@sussexms.k12.de.us). We ask that all emergency dismissal changes be called in as early as possible before **noon**. There is a process that needs to happen on our end to ensure your child is safe.

## Tardiness and Early Dismissal

All students are expected to be punctual to school. Classrooms open at 7:45 a.m. and students are expected to be in the classroom by 8:00 a.m. and remain until the end of the school day at 3:10 p.m. If a student arrives after 8:00 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. Parents do not need to bring students to their classrooms after they have signed in. 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 or guardians will be contacted to discuss the student's tardiness. Families should recognize that a written explanation from home does not automatically excuse the tardy. 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. *Please see the [Attendance Policy](#).*

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## 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. Parent and doctor notes can be sent to [attendance@sussexms.k12.de.us](mailto:attendance@sussexms.k12.de.us). *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](http://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.

<b>Important Dates – School Year 2022-2023</b>		
Online Choice Application Opens	TBD	7:00 am
Online Choice Application Closes	TBD	4:00 pm
Lottery for Sussex Montessori	TBD	8:00 am
Parent Notification	TBD	n/a
Parent Notify District/School	TBD	n/a

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

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## 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 their 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 remain properly seated at all times (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.
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- Students and parents will be required to sign a bus etiquette form.

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 determined by the School Leadership Team and could result in permanent revocation of riding privileges and other consequences. Families may be asked to restore any damages.

## Weather

Families who sign-up with our school messaging system will receive email and voice mail alerts in the case of delays or cancellations. SMS will be in contact with directions concerning signup. Cancellations and delays will be noted on the school website as well.

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, WBOC and SMS's website 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 or parent/guardian shares special events of one photo in his/her life for each year of life. This moving celebration honors each child's unique life. If you wish to bring in a treat for the birthday celebration, they must pre-package (sealed) and healthy options. Some suggestions are fruit slices and dip, small bagels and cream cheese, prepackaged pretzels, veggies and ranch dip.

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

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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.

\*\*\* If you wish to bring a treat to celebrate, check with your child's teacher first. Only healthy snacks will be permitted that are store bought and already individually wrapped. Candy, donuts, and cupcakes will not be permitted in the classroom. Attention to allergies will be considered.

## 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 ensure that all children have access to field trips and special programs.

Permissions slips must be turned in at least three days 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 (energy) 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

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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 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 and to submit free and reduced lunch forms, visit <https://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. Once you have your student ID number, you may go to the payment center website mentioned above to set up your account; click the orange "Sign Up Free" button in Center of the screen and simply follow the steps. It will prompt you to find our school, if you have any further questions, please contact [anita.mitchell@sussexms.k12.de.us](mailto:anita.mitchell@sussexms.k12.de.us). Please do not send cash in with your child to put onto their account.

## 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 train children 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 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, guardians, caregivers, and/or other family members.

In general, however, you can expect:

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- 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 designed 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. Toys, electronic devices, trading cards, fidget spinners, and cell phones (see cell phone policy below) are not permitted. **Sussex Montessori is not responsible for the loss of these personal items.** Teachers may offer opportunities to bring in personal items for special events or projects. If this is the case, they will inform families about expectations and usage of the items during the school day. 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)*

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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 and/or offensive images. All upper body wear must cover the entire abdomen. Shorts, skirts, and dresses should be knee length.

## Lost and Found

Families, please **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; families 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 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 and teachers would work with the Director of Teaching and Learning to develop benchmarks using the Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS), referred to as Child Study, 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 the [Attendance Policy](#) for more details.*

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# Health and Medical Information

## Illness

- In the event your child becomes ill while at school, the school nurse will contact the family/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
- Children who vomit at school must also be picked up and taken home. Children must go 24 hours without vomiting and keep food and liquids down 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 family/guardian or the child's doctor is required for the absence to be excused. Send to [attendance@sussexms.k12.de.us](mailto:attendance@sussexms.k12.de.us)
- For COVID-19... SMS will follow CDC and DOE guidance criteria.

## Medications

- For a child to receive prescribed medication while at school, the [Request to Have Prescription Medication Administered in School.pdf](#)
- Each form must be completed and on file in the child's chart. You may print off and sign the yellow sections. The other will be completed in the nurse office. 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 a doctor.
- The prescription must be prescribed currently (within a year, preferably within the current school year) by a licensed health care provider.
- The prescription must be provided in the original labeled container by the pharmacy.
- The prescription cannot be expired or out of date.
- The prescription 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. This is documented on the medication form.
- Over the counter medications require parent/guardian permission, which is given on the health history form required for enrollment.
- Prescribed medication must be brought in by parent or guardian. Children cannot carry medication to the school.

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

*María Montessori*

## Food Allergies

- Please call and speak to the school nurse if your child has any food allergies.
  - For substitutions to be made for the child's school prepared meals, the Prevention & Emergency Response Plan for Students with Allergies Form must be completed by a
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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 Notification of Child Food Allergy letter will be distributed to the child's class. An EpiPen is to be provided by the family/guardian.

## COVID-19

The school will follow the guidelines set forth by the CDC and the Department of Education.

## Student Support

### Homelessness

Sussex Montessori School's (SMS) Homeless Liaison is responsible for guaranteeing students experiencing homelessness receive a free, appropriate public education. The family/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, April Harmon ([April.albury-harmon@sussexms.k12.de.us](mailto:April.albury-harmon@sussexms.k12.de.us)) for more information.

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## 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 the support and opportunities offered 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. [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)

Please see 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.

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# 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. Meeting minutes are posted on the school's website within 48 hours of the board meeting where they are approved. More information on board members can also be 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 families, educators in the school, board members, and a representative of the Department of Education. More information on CBOC can be found on the school 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. We believe 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.)

*Progress Reports* – Families will receive three progress reports throughout the year. These reports 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](http://www.sussexmontessoricharter.com)) is an important resource, particularly as it relates to key dates and events, forms, enrollment, and health related concerns or updates. Please visit our website regularly to stay abreast of all of Sussex Montessori School's happenings!

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## **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](#)**

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# Family Handbook Acknowledgement Form



I,

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**Parent or Guardian of**

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**Learners Name(s)**

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**Learners Teacher- Grade**

**have received, read, and understand all the information  
presented in the SY 2022-2023  
Sussex Montessori School Family Handbook.**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

*Once completed, please print off, sign, and return this form to your child's teacher.  
Due date 11/15/2022. Thank you.*

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