

# FAMILY HANDBOOK



**SY 2024 - 2025**

Revised August 2024



**SUSSEX  
MONTESSORI**  
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL



## 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 2024-2025 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 family.

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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## School Schedule and Calendar

### START DATES:

- Wednesday, September 4<sup>th</sup> for: 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 6th Graders
- Thursday, September 5<sup>th</sup> for: Kindergarten, 2nd, and 4th Graders
- Friday, September 6<sup>th</sup> for: All Students

### DAILY SCHEDULE:

- 7:45 am: Drop-off Begins
- 8:00 am: School Day Starts
- 3:15 pm: School Day Ends
- 3:15 pm: Car Pick-up Begins

### Full Year Calendar:

For a full year calendar that includes special events and school closures, please refer to the 2024-25 School Year Calendar that was enclosed in the August 22nd mailing or visit our website, <https://sussexmontessoricharter.com/calendar-info/>.

This calendar may be updated throughout the year, so please pay attention to messages from your teacher, the Head of School, or the school-wide newsletter for these revisions. You can also check the website monthly, where schedule highlights will be on the homepage, <https://sussexmontessoricharter.com/>.

## 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 parent/guardian/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 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 parent/guardian/guardians. 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.
- **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 and 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

*“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*

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, 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 their 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 (found on our website). These forms authorize the school to complete a thorough background screening of prospective volunteers.

This policy applies to all school activities during the school day, except for parents/guardians 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. Please get involved!

Department	Name	Email
After School Clubs	Jonas Geneste and	<a href="mailto:Jonas.Geneste@sussexms.k12.de.us">Jonas.Geneste@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>
	RJ Johnson	<a href="mailto:Ronald.Johnson@sussexms.k12.de.us">Ronald.Johnson@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)	Precious Benson	<a href="mailto:Precious.Benson@sussexms.k12.de.us">Precious.Benson@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>
Enrollment	Kaneisha Trott-Savage	<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>
Homelessness Liaison	Brandon Barnes, MSW	<a href="mailto:Precious.Benson@sussexms.k12.de.us">Precious.Benson@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>
Medical Related Services	Miranda Lee	<a href="mailto:Miranda.Lee@sussexms.k12.de.us">Miranda.Lee@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>
Multiple Language Learners	Cheryl Martin	<a href="mailto:Nazaneen.Khalilnaji.Otto@sussexms.k12.de.us">Nazaneen.Khalilnaji.Otto@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>
Special Education	Dr. Stephanie Reissner	<a href="mailto:Stephanie.Reissner@sussexms.k12.de.us">Stephanie.Reissner@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>
Student Behavior Support	George Waters	<a href="mailto:George.Waters@sussexms.k12.de.us">George.Waters@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>
Teaching and Learning	Peter McClure	<a href="mailto:Peter.McClure@sussexms.k12.de.us">Peter.McClure@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>
Title I	Kaneisha Trott-Savage	<a href="mailto:Kaneisha.Savage@sussexms.k12.de.us">Kaneisha.Savage@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>
Transportation	Kaneisha Trott-Savage	<a href="mailto:Kaneisha.Savage@sussexms.k12.de.us">Kaneisha.Savage@sussexms.k12.de.us</a>



## Family Investment



Families are welcome to reach out to teachers and staff at any time. We are here to ensure that all families have 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 (Transparent Classroom) – we conduct two in person conferences annually.
- Weekly updates will be sent from classrooms.
- Individualized Education Program (IEP) and 504 meetings will be held as required for children with special needs.

### *Parent/guardian Engagement Opportunities:*

- Fundraising, parent/guardian engagement, and staff appreciation (Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) volunteers)
- Field Trip Chaperones
- Classroom volunteers and mentors
- Special event helpers
- Parent/guardian Camp

### *Parent/guardian Education Opportunities:*

- Parent/guardian Series (offered throughout the school year)
- Open House
- Parent Camp and Parent/Guardian Education

### *Parent/guardian 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/guardian/guardian conferences and end of the year portfolio presentations, and participate in student-led goal setting
- Read and review student reports
- Read weekly classroom newsletters
- Assist students in completing homework activities
- 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.

Family Visiting Days: Family Visiting Days are a unique opportunity for the Sussex Montessori community to come visit our students in their classrooms and get a better sense of the work they do daily. Students set up their workstations and present academic content areas such as math, language, cultural, and practical life to visitors. It is a great opportunity for our students to practice their grace and courtesy, public speaking, and proficiency with Montessori materials. Family members have the opportunity to ask questions and engage with the materials themselves! Family Visiting Days are listed on the school calendar, and as the date approaches, classroom teachers will send with more details and links to sign up.

### ParentCamp

ParentCamp offers a unique and exciting opportunity for families, community members, and school partners to come together, face to face, and connect through meaningful dialogue and social interaction. Participants share strategies and ideas in a safe space to benefit student learning, teaching, and parenting!

## 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 7:45 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 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 3:15 p.m., please do not arrive before 3:00pm. This helps our buses get in.

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. We will not allow your child to go home with anyone other than already approved individuals unless we have written confirmation from the parent/guardian (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. Please do not get out of the car, as this will slow down the line. 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 a 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. We appreciate your cooperation with this.

We have also created an electronic form to send these communications. Below are the directions.

- Step 1:** Visit the School's Homepage <https://sussexmontessoricharter.com/>.
- Step 2:** Locate the links on the school's homepage. There are two buttons “Report Absences” and “Dismissal Changes.”
- Step 3:** Click on the link that corresponds to the action you want to take – whether it is reporting an absence or making a dismissal change request.
- Step 4:** Complete the requested information on the form.
- Step 5:** Submit the Form.
- Step 6:** Once your submission is successful, you should receive a confirmation message or email.

## **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 3:15 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/guardians do not need to take 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. 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 constitute an excused absence. 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.”*

*Maria Montessori*

Instructional time is lost when a student misses any portion of the academic day. When a student accumulates any combination of 10 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. Parent/guardian/guardians 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 A) for details concerning excused and unexcused absences.*

## Enrollment/Re-enrollment procedures

*Enrollment* - The 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).

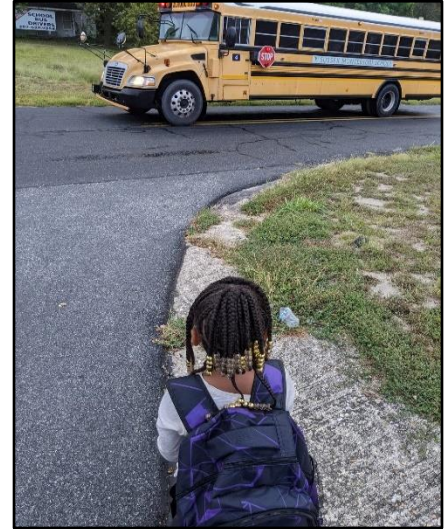
Application materials may be completed online, sent via email (scanned with hand-written signatures), standard post, or hand-delivered to the school. If materials sent via standard post are postmarked by the deadline, they will be accepted.

<b>Important Dates – School Year 2024-2025</b>	
Online Choice Application Opens	TBD
Online Choice Application Closes	January 8, 2025
Lottery for Sussex Montessori	January 20, 2025
Parent/guardian Notification	February 14, 2025
Parent/guardian Notify District/School	TBD

*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.

## Transportation

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.
- Students and parent/guardian/guardians will be required to sign a bus etiquette form.

Minor bus misbehaviors will result in a warning and parent/guardian 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. Families may be asked to restore any damages.

## Weather

Families will receive email and voice mail alerts in the case of delays or cancellations via phone call and email. Please ensure that your voice mailbox isn't full. 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.”*

*Maria 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/guardian/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 a treat to celebrate, please check with your child's teacher first. Only healthy snacks will be permitted that are store bought and already individually wrapped. Candy will not be permitted in the classroom. 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 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

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.



### Food Services

Lunches brought from home should be nutritious and well-balanced. **Students may not bring candy, soda, or caffeinated beverages to school.** Lunches should be ready to eat. They will be stored in student cubbies. 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.

Sussex Montessori School participates in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs called the Community Eligibility Provision.

The Community Eligibility Provision was enacted as a result of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act 2010 and provides universal meal service to students in schools/districts that qualify. The Community Eligibility Provision is an alternative to collecting, approving, and verifying household eligibility applications for free and reduced-price meal benefits.

All students enrolled at Sussex Montessori can receive a nutritious breakfast and lunch at school at **no charge** to your household. No further action is required of you. Your child(ren) will be able to receive breakfast and/ or lunch without having to pay a fee or submit a meal benefit form.



We are using a new system and parent portal where you can view menus and pay for ice cream and other school fees. The system is called LINQ Connect. To create a new account, go to <https://linqconnect.com>.

- 1) Click on “REGISTER” to create a new account.
- 2) You will need the following information to successfully link your student(s) to your account:
  - a. First Name: As registered with the school
  - b. Last Name: As registered with the school
  - c. Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY)

For Technical Assistance, please call Sussex Montessori Public Charter School’s LINQ Connect Administrator at 302-404-5367ext 215 or the support line for LINQ Connect at 916-467-4700 option 2. For other questions, please contact Mrs. Anita R. Mitchell at 302-404-5367 ext.215 or email [anita.mitchell@sussexms.k12.de.us](mailto:anita.mitchell@sussexms.k12.de.us).

## 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 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.

Teachers may assign work to be completed at home on a case-by-case basis for a variety of reasons, such as:

- The student didn’t finish the work assigned during class time.
- The student could benefit from additional practice to build skills.
- There is a home – school connection.
- Special projects or events that require more time and support.

It is strongly recommended that students have practical life responsibilities (household chores) and daily reading and writing expectations at home.

## Student Rights and Responsibilities

### Title I

Sussex Montessori School qualifies to receive federal funding through the Title 1 program. “Title I, Part A (Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the “Every Student Succeeds Act” (ESEA) provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards.” (US Department of Education, 2018)

Title I schools are identified as:

- Schools with 40% or more low-income students, or
- Schools with an equal to or higher low-income percentage than the total district or charter.
- Charter schools (with any low-income percentage) and district schools (with a low-income percentage of at least 35%) can also be identified as Title I schools with an approved schoolwide waiver.

After being identified as a Title I school by population, the district or charter must agree to provide Title I Funding directly to the school. [Title 1 Annual Meetings](#) will take place during each of the open houses in September.

The updated Schoolwide Plan and Family Engagement Policy is available on the Title 1 Resource page of our website at [Title 1 Resources - Sussex Montessori School \(sussexmontessoricharter.com\)](#).

### Title IX

Title IX of the federal [Education Amendments Of 1972](#) is the major federal statute prohibiting sex discrimination in education. Title IX is primarily known for its impact on gender equality in sports, but it also extends to other areas of education.

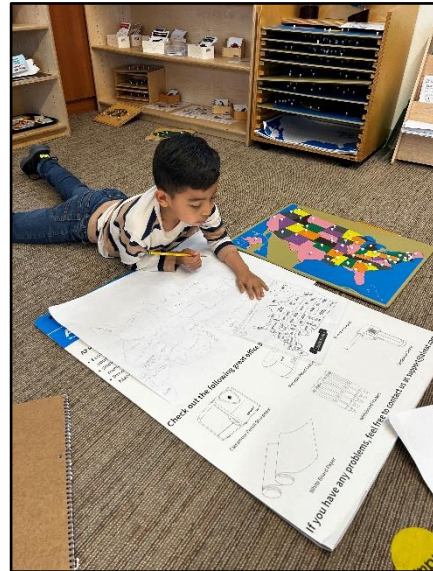
Title IX states: “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal assistance.”

Under Title IX, schools are required to provide equal opportunities and treatment for both male and female students. This includes, but is not limited to, admissions, academic programs, counseling, financial aid, student housing, and athletics. Schools must ensure that there is no discrimination based on sex in any of these areas.

For more information on Title IX please go to Delaware Department of Education website at [Title IX – Delaware Department of Education](#).

## 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, 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***

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 or other designated area 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 parent/guardian.

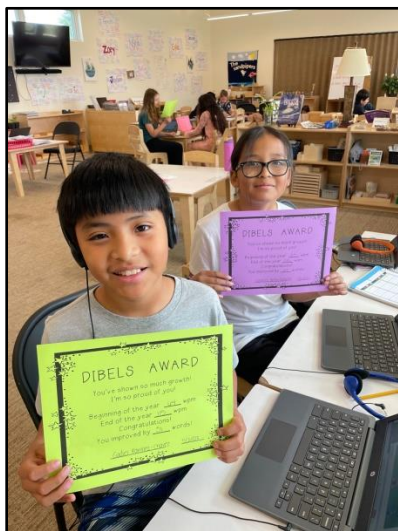
## Dress Code

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. **Outdoor shoes must be closed toe and have a back.** 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/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), 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 our Retention Policy (Appendix B) for additional details.

## 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.
- 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 family/guardian or the child's doctor is required for the absence to be excused.
- For COVID-19 SMS will follow CDC and DOE guidance criteria.

### Medications

- For a child to receive prescribed medication while at school, the [Parent 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 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.

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

*María Montessori*

- Prescribed medication must be brought in by parent or guardian. Children cannot carry medication to school.

## 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 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 (e.g., 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.

## Student Support

### Homelessness

Sussex Montessori School's 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:

- 1) Assist with student enrollment and obtainment of needed documentation
- 2) Support families and students identified under [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act](#).
- 3) 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
- 4) Enter information in the Department of Education database
- 5) Ensure that posters and outreach material are displayed in common areas of the building(s)
- 6) Obtain resources for students through grants, local partners, community, and neighboring schools
- 7) 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
- 8) Attend professional development to support their knowledge and understanding

Please contact the Homeless Liaison for more information. Delaware’s commitment and policies on education for students experiencing homelessness can be found at [Education for Students Experiencing Homelessness – Delaware Department of Education](#).

## 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/guardian 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.

## Multiple 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 Multiple Language 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 Multiple Language Learners policy. [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)

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

## **Communication**

### **Board of Directors**

Sussex Montessori School 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 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 – There are three scheduled Parent/Teacher Conferences scheduled throughout the year (Please see the school Calendar for exact dates.)

- 1) **The Fall conference** is set aside for goal setting. Teachers share what they have observed and learned about their students and collaborate with their parents/guardians on establishing goals for their student for the year.
- 2) **The Spring conference** provides the opportunity to check in on the student's progress.
- 3) **The end-of-the-year** conference is Portfolio Day. Every student self-selects examples of their work from throughout the year to share with their families. The selected works showcases the student's growth and progress throughout the year and allows them to share what they have learned through reflection and discussion. The portfolio grows with the students as they advance through the school, providing them with insight and documentation of their learning path at SMS.

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!

## Appendices

- I. Appendix A: [Attendance Policy](#)
- II. Appendix B: [Retention Policy](#)
- III. Appendix C: [Discipline and Bullying Policy](#)
- IV. Appendix D: [Crisis Assessment](#)
- V. Appendix E: [Wellness Policy](#)
- VI. Appendix F: [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)
- VII. Appendix G: [Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\)](#)
- VIII. Appendix H: [McKinney-Vento Procedures](#)
- IX. Appendix I: [Title 1 Rights and Procedures](#)

## Family Handbook Acknowledgement Form



I,

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**Parent/guardian/guardian or Guardian of**

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**Student's Name(s)**

**have received, read, and understand all the information  
presented in the SY 2024-25  
Sussex Montessori School Family Handbook.**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

*Once completed, please return this form to the Front Office.*



# SCHOOL PARENT COMPACT

## As a student I promise to...

<input type="checkbox"/> Follow the School Wide Principles	<input type="checkbox"/> Respect and cooperate with my teacher, Follow Directions
<input type="checkbox"/> Show Respect to all individuals	<input type="checkbox"/> Participate in lessons
<input type="checkbox"/> Act Responsibly, Do My Best	<input type="checkbox"/> Do my class work
<input type="checkbox"/> Ask questions to get help	<input type="checkbox"/> Do my homework
<input type="checkbox"/> Keep a home reading contract	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete class projects
<input type="checkbox"/> Come to school prepared each day with all necessary supplies	

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of student

## As a parent I promise to...

<input type="checkbox"/> Attend and participate in Conferences	<input type="checkbox"/> Control TV-Video time
<input type="checkbox"/> Monitor health/wellness of my child	<input type="checkbox"/> Encourage Outdoor Play/Learning
<input type="checkbox"/> Support the teachers	<input type="checkbox"/> Participate in Family Learning activities whenever possible
<input type="checkbox"/> Make a time and place for home study	<input type="checkbox"/> Make sure my child attends daily and is prepared for school
<input type="checkbox"/> Communicate with the teacher	
<input type="checkbox"/> Encourage/Submit quality work on-time	

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of parent/guardian

## As a teacher I promise to...

<input type="checkbox"/> Report student progress frequently	<input type="checkbox"/> Notify parents of any change in behavior or academics
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide high quality lessons and materials in a supportive and effective learning environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Be available to parents
<input type="checkbox"/> Respect my students and families	<input type="checkbox"/> Participate in Family Learning activities whenever possible
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide activities and materials to support parent involvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Hold conferences where student work, achievement, behavior, and social development are discussed at least annually
<input type="checkbox"/> Communicate with parents	

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of teacher

## As a school, we promise to...

<input type="checkbox"/> Provide parents reasonable access to staff to discuss issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide a range of acceptable times when classes can be visited by parents
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunities to become involved with the school and school decision-making	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide a safe learning environment for all students
<input type="checkbox"/> Share the Safety Plan with families	<input type="checkbox"/> Coordinate access to resources to meet students' needs

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Principal