



**Sussex Montessori School
Board of Directors
November 18, 2025, 6:30 p.m.**

Board of Directors Present: Linda Zankowsky, Trish Hermance, Taquil Foster-Lewis, Sean Steward, Mason Falligant, Penny Short & Jessica Bradley
Absent: Bob Wheatley & Kyle Morgan

Others Present: Siza Mtimbiri (Head of School), Michelle Hastie (Finance), Debra Smullin (HR/Benefits), Courtney White (Special Education), Kim Oswinkle (2/3 Lead Teacher)

The meeting was called to order at 6:37 p.m.

Approval of Agenda-

A Motion to approve the agenda was made by Linda Zankowsky and seconded by Jessica Bradley. The Motion was approved unanimously with no objections and no abstentions.

Public Comment – No public comment

Minutes-

The Minutes from October 2025 (technical difficulties) and November 2025 meeting will be reviewed and voted on in the December 2025 meeting.

A Motion to approve the September 2025 meeting minutes was made by Jessica Bradley and seconded by Mason Falligant. The Motion was approved unanimously with no objections and no abstentions.

Montessori Moment- Kim Oswinkle

Kim reviewed and described the importance of understanding the school's needs and community engagement. She demonstrated activities being taught in her class.

Meeting Student Needs- Courtney White

Courtney reviewed the progress, purpose, and the path moving forward for meeting students needs.

Topics reviewed:

- Celebrations
- Who we serve
- Increased SDI in LRE
- Progress toward DOE compliance
- Strengthened Systems
- Professional Development
- Structural Support Needed
- Goals for 6-12 months

Committee Reports-

Community Engagement/Enrollment- Jessica Bradley

- Marketing/Outreach Plan- Focus on digital marketing; considering WBOC, Targeted campaign developed for the local Hispanic radio station.
- Recent and Upcoming Events- Enrollment Night attended by 7 families (all signed up). - School participating in local fall festival, book fair, “Bunny Hop”, and other campus-based events.
- Enrollment Numbers- Enrollment currently at 386 (official unit count at 392) Goal: 420 students. Open Enrollment Stats: 29 applications currently, compared to 67 (2023-24) and 42 (2024-25) at similar points.
- Recruitment Focus- Priority on “Kindergarten pipeline”-outreach to daycares, libraries, reading group - Red/Yellow/Green process (family intent survey) to be reinstated January to gauge who is likely staying/leaving - Potential to focus marketing on existing transportation hub areas due to limited resources for expanding routes.

Finance Committee-

Financials – Michelle Hastie

Precious presented the financials to date through October 31, 2025

- October 31, 2025, represents (4 /12) months actual or 33 % of the current fiscal year.
- We have received 72.3 % of our State and Local revenues.
- We have received 5.4 % of our federal revenues.
- We have spent 38.1% of our Total operating budget.
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A Motion to accept October 31, 2025, financial report was made by Sean Steward and seconded by Linda Zankowsky. The Motion passed unanimously with no objections and no abstentions.

Development- Linda Zankowsky

- Donor Recognition: Unrecognized donor responsible for the extra property acquired, suggestion to host an event recognizing them, potentially in conjunction with school fundraiser.
- Bridge to Practice Grant: -
 - Strengthen teacher understanding of the Science of Reading; provide hybrid online/in-person training, especially K-3, expanding to 4-6 as possible.
Requested: \$201,000
 - AIMS Pathways for Proficient Reading full-staff participation, stipends for training, development of in-house curriculum for literacy, decodable texts, parent reading camps, after-school literacy clubs, and sub coverage for staff attending training.
 - Funds must be expended by June 2026.
 - Decision Expected- December 19, 2025.
 - Additional extension for trainer training, multilingual literacy course for all staff, continuation of parent/literacy clubs, maintaining state-assigned literacy coach for another year.
 - Coordinated with First State Montessori on curriculum and training alignment.
 - All current kindergarteners reading on grade level by 3rd grade.
 - Chose AIMS Pathways over other programs for alignment with Montessori philosophy and willingness to adapt for school context.
 - Plan for parents' literacy camps and literacy clubs to potentially extend into Boys and Girls Club.

Student Success Committee-

- Committee emphasizes continued need to define and communicate “mastery” for learners and measure student growth distinctly.
- Integration of committee work with goals around reading/literacy mastery.
- January Meeting- Will focus on a deeper dive into student achievement data, grant utilization, and communication of success metrics.

Facility Committee-

- No new major concerns reported- Alan and Bob are primary contacts for current projects.
- Safety/security grant for \$23,000 submitted and pending follow-up.
- Reflection on recent high costs for custodial and equipment due to necessary upgrades (HVAC, mold remediation, air filtration).

Executive Committee- Trish Hermance

- Board/leadership attended meetings hosted by DOE Secretary, who emphasized early literacy as state focus. Opportunity for Sussex Montessori to showcase its approach and current initiatives directly to state leaders. Secretary and staff with Montessori backgrounds- positive engagement but strong push for measurable results.
- Board and head of school committed to addressing areas of growth and not leaning on “excuses” tied to being a newer school.

Head of School Report- Dr. Siza Mtimiri

- Enrollment- 392 Current: 386- losses due to moves and attrition. Retention efforts ongoing. Open Enrollment- Good turnout at kickoff; numbers being tracked year-over-year for improved decision-making.
- Ongoing digital and local radio/TV campaigns.
- Two associate teachers departing; coverage plans in place.
- Notable work with state literacy coach and coaches for continuous improvement. State visit to observe testing procedures and student learning outcomes.
- Professional Development: Ongoing with coach Emily; staff PD in partnership with state/county literacy initiatives.

A Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Sean Steward and seconded by Jessica Bradley. The Motion passed unanimously at 8:30 p.m.