SUSSEX MONTESSORI
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

Schoolwide Plan 2026-2027

Comprehensive Needs Assessments

Curriculum assessments, including Amplify's MClass, Renaissance's STAR, and the State required Smarter Balanced, continue to show a need for continued improvement in students' literacy skills. During the 2025-6 school year, we incorporated Science of Reading best practices into our language arts curriculum across all levels of our school, required all of our K-3 teachers to take AIM Pathways to Proficiency literacy training, and solidified our PLC practices to focus on data analysis and progress monitoring. In addition, we were able to have a state provided Early Literacy Coach work with us full time throughout the entire year. End of the year assessment results showed positive growth across all grade levels. At our Upper Elementary level, we worked with the New Teacher Center with the Smarter Balanced toolkit to help our students with their higher end literacy skills. Over the 2026 – 2027 school year we will provide more foundational reading skills professional learning to our K-3 teachers, as well as continue to refine our higher end literacy skill practices for our Upper Elementary students. In addition, we have been a partner in the development of an approved HQIM alternative Montessori Literacy curriculum, which we will be piloting this year.

Schoolwide Reform Strategies

The core philosophy, pedagogy and curriculum of Sussex Montessori is the Montessori Method. Key components of a Montessori classroom include a 2 ½ to 3 hour uninterrupted work period focused on content base and standards aligned learning that usually happens in the morning; student independent work time, which allows students the time to authentically engage and practice what they learn in order to approach mastery, develop problem solving skills as well as collaborate in all curricular areas; daily opportunities for small group and one-on-one learning throughout the school year with classroom and support teachers; and cross-curricular hands on project learning in all subjects, including science and the arts. In addition, Sussex Montessori employs an SDI approach for Special Education support, where Special Education educators work with classroom teachers to ensure that identified student needs are met during the work period. When necessary, our Special Education team also provides separate opportunities for learning when required by individual IEPs, as well as OT, PT, Speech, and Counseling services.

Student assessment plays an important part in providing our teachers with the knowledge of where their students are academically and the areas where they need to continue to build their skills. In addition to observational data and individual classroom assessments, Sussex Montessori primarily uses Amplify MClass assessments for foundational literacy skills, and Renaissance Star assessments for literacy and math. In addition to three yearly benchmark assessments, students are regularly progressed monitored as well.

Instruction by Highly Qualified Teachers

The expectation for lead teachers in our classrooms is that they are both Delaware and Montessori certified, or in the process of getting their certification. Sussex offers Montessori training to Lead and Associate teachers. The training occurs over a three-year span, at the end of which they should receive their Montessori certification. The majority of our lead teachers have either training or are in the last year of the training process. In addition, we offer

other academic training as well, requiring all K-3 teachers to pass the AIM Pathways to Proficient Reading course, UFLI foundational literacy training, and other courses as the need arises. In addition to the work that they do outside the classroom, all Lead Teachers attend weekly PLC meetings that are focused on professional support around literacy and other curricular areas, using data analysis and lesson studies. All teachers must also attend school wide Professional Development days throughout the school year.

This year we will also have the services of an Early Literacy Coach, who worked with our K-3 teachers last year, and will continue to work with them in the same capacity this year. Currently, one of our teachers is also a trained Montessori coach, who will be working with our new and younger teachers to ensure that they are applying Montessori with fidelity in their classrooms. Teachers who are still in the Montessori training program also have coaches provided by the training program that work with them on applying what they are learning to their classroom.

Recruitment and Retention of Highly Qualified Teachers

Sussex Montessori School has a partnership with the University of Delaware's Montessori Teacher Training Program to ensure the school has a direct pipeline to highly trained Montessori teachers as well as to provide on-going coaching support and professional development. The school covers the cost of the training for the teachers to attract and retain the very best trained Montessori educators. In addition, for the past two years, the school has partnered with Del Tech's Bachelor of Science in Education Program to provide residency opportunities for their students as Associate Teachers. The partnership has already provided us with a lead teacher who first arrived at our school as a student observer, continuing on to a residency, and leading her to her own classroom this year.

Parent Involvement

SMS has a very engaged and active parent engagement group that meets regularly throughout the school year. This group helped develop our School-Parent Compact that is signed by parents, students and administration. Montessori Family Visit Days, Coffees with the Head of School and Director or Teaching and Learning, student led conferences, ParentCamp events, and our PTO partnership ensure a close parent/school relationship.

Coordination with Early Childhood Programs

Sussex Montessori School continues to have a partnership with local child-care centers, early childhood programs (i.e. ECAP), Head Starts, and the Boys and Girls Clubs. We work closely together in areas as simple as shared bus hubs but also for the good of our students' academic growth. We have opened our campus and facilities to local childcare and youth-serving organizations to host events and conferences at our school as well as to hold workshops on Montessori philosophy and pedagogy for their staff.

Teacher Involvement in Decisions

Currently, we have a Site-based Decision-making Team of teachers who meet monthly with school leadership to flesh out important school-wide decisions regarding curriculum, systems, processes, procedures, and other school related topics. The school also has a school planning team of stakeholders, the Student Success Committee, whose members may include representatives from the Sussex Montessori Board, school leaders and staff, SMS families, representatives of youth-serving community partners and community-based organizations, as well as local government agency representatives. The Student Success Committee reviews the school plan, needs assessments

and summaries of academic and non-academic data to help prioritize goals, strategies, and action steps to address the academic and non-academic needs of students. The team may also assess teacher and staff professional development needs as well as budgets and the coordination of resources. Together, this committee of invested stakeholders will help jointly develop and/or inform the Schoolwide Improvement plan for Sussex Montessori School.

Additional Timely Assistance

Recognizing that children may fall behind at any point on the learning continuum, the teachers at Sussex Montessori School continually monitor the progress of all children. This includes particular attention to the areas of reading and mathematics. For children who are identified at any time in the school year as needing additional support, Sussex Montessori School implements a more intensive and regularly scheduled Child Study program to ensure that the child can be successful in their learning. Building off the guidance provided by the Delaware Department of Education for MTSS as well as Montessori best practices, The Child Study teams hold weekly meetings where teachers have the opportunity to share their concerns about a student. The Child Study team works with the teacher to come up with readily applicable strategies to assist the student during a set time frame. The Child Study team then reconvenes to gauge the student's progress and to assess if other strategies might be necessary.

Coordination with Federal, State and Local Services

Title programs funds are used to supplement, not supplant the programs and services delivered to Sussex Montessori students. All Title fund allocations are used to support the identified needs for improving teaching and learning using the Montessori method for the maximum benefit of each child.

Title I-A Schoolwide Program Plan Development

Input from all the stakeholders at Sussex Montessori, including but not limited to school leadership, the School Board, the Student Success Committee and the Site-based Decision-making Team informed the development of the current plan. Sussex Montessori will continue to engage families and community partners through a variety of focused activities to get the greatest number of families involved. For teachers and staff, opportunities for input focused on needs and planning for any revisions to the school plan/consolidated grant can be scheduled during all school staff meetings. Because we are a small school, it is important to involve all staff members and give credence to their input.

Curriculum-based assessments will be reviewed regularly throughout the year. and are key in helping the team determine root causes for any identified needs. In addition to this data, the school community will review Smarter Balanced Assessment and Access assessment data to determine needs for professional development and instructional changes for the following year. Because Sussex Montessori regularly reviews and makes plans based upon regular data assessment cycles, the state level assessment results should only serve to confirm what yearlong data is showing. The data will also be used to determine intervention needs for the coming year and grouping of students based on needs. In addition, discipline and attendance data will be reviewed to gauge our success in creating a positive community-based climate and culture. Information from all data sources will be considered to identify needs for implementation of interventions and professional development. Surveys to families will also be used to provide feedback on parent satisfaction, student growth, and a sense of school safety and comfort.

Montessori schools use a continual growth model for their students in all areas. Focusing on long term growth is essential to measure the success of the program when reviewing the data and making recommendations for large scale changes.

Identifying Needs and Defining Success in the Montessori Environment

As a public Montessori School, we are tasked to meet State Standards and use diagnostic assessments to identify specific areas of strength and areas for growth for each learner. These practices along with powerful observational skills give us a well-rounded understanding of each of our learners' needs and allow us to address them holistically.

While our work involves increasing the number of students who meet and/or exceed the state's standards proficiencies in Math, Language Arts (Reading/Writing), Science, and Social Studies, our primary goal is to see meaningful, positive growth in each learner from the start to the end of the year, as well as from year to year. Previous year's data trends tell us we can expect to see 10% gain in progress from year to year for every learner.

The Montessori curriculum gauges students' progress and strategies for effective improvement through daily, in-depth, teacher observation, and qualitative data analysis across a period of time. In the Montessori curriculum, there are no numerical or letter grades involved, but rather, the goal is mastery of skill or content. To experience and identify what success looks like in a Montessori environment is to observe it in real time. Learners are progressing towards becoming self-motivated, well-adjusted and prepared for anything life brings them. Through the development of life skills, students gain the ability to appreciate a variety of strengths in themselves and others, share enthusiasm and joy in everything they do, contribute their talents to others, and have a lifelong interest and enthusiasm in learning. Montessori students build a growth mindset that allows them to persevere when met with a challenge, set and attain their own goals for life, think critically and collaboratively, and care for the universe around them. Through implementation of the Montessori method, coupled with explicit instruction, regular assessment and fidelity to the curriculum, Sussex Montessori is able to develop sophisticated, independent, self-aware, skilled and prepared students.