1.3 Education Plan

14 *Del. C.* §§ 512(4)-(8) and (11)

The educational program should meet the requirements of 14 *Del. C. §*§ 512(4), (5), (6) and (7) and applicable regulations.

Curriculum and Instructional Design [14 *Del. C.* § 512(6)]

1. **Provide a synopsis of the proposed educational program, including key components of the education model and any unique or innovative features.**

The Montessori Method of education, developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, is a child-centered educational approach based on scientific observations of children from birth to adulthood. Dr. Montessori's Method has been time-tested, with over 100 years of success in diverse cultures throughout the world. While the Montessori Method is being used in schools on six continents, and in 400 + public schools in the United States it is still considered by most to be an innovative and new approach to public education.

Montessori schools are being sought by parents because they are known for their academic rigor while also addressing the development of key skills such as leadership, perseverance, self-efficacy and the ability to work collaboratively among others. These same skills are identified as important to students in Delaware in the Vision 2025 plan for education in Delaware.

Sussex Montessori School has updated the education plan approved by DDOE for the First State Montessori Academy in the 2012 application year with current research and understandings of how the Montessori classroom supports all children. The FSMA plan and updates are reflected throughout this section.

The following are specific characteristics highlighted on the American Montessori Society Website and the National Center of Montessori in the Public Sector outline the key components of the Montessori approach which support an environment that allows for both academic rigor and the personal social and emotional growth of children.

Curriculum/Instruction:
- Learning is aligned with a consistent coherent interdisciplinary curriculum.
- The Montessori curriculum is carefully structured and integrated to demonstrate the connections among the different subject areas focusing on critical thinking, innovation, and communication skills.
- A full complement of Montessori learning materials is meticulously arranged and available for use in an aesthetically pleasing environment.
- Learning takes place through manipulating materials and interacting with others. These meaningful experiences are precursors to the abstract understanding of ideas.

- Children experience sensitive periods, or windows of opportunity, as they grow; teachers match appropriate lessons and materials to these sensitive periods.
- The physical, emotional, social, aesthetic, and cognitive needs and interests of the learner are inseparable and equally important.
- Elementary students organize thinking through the Montessori materials and an interdisciplinary curriculum passing from the concrete to the abstract. Students apply knowledge to real-world experiences.

Environment:

- Montessori schools are based on the premise that children are naturally eager for knowledge and capable of initiating learning in a supportive, thoughtfully prepared learning environment.
- Multiage groupings are a hallmark of the Montessori Method: younger children learn from older children; older children reinforce their learning by teaching concepts they have already mastered mirroring the real world
- The teacher, child, and environment create a learning triangle. The classroom is prepared by the teacher to encourage independence, freedom within limits, and a sense of order. The child, through individual choice, makes use of what the environment offers interacting with the teacher for support or guidance as needed.
- Montessori schools are warm, supportive communities of students, teachers, and parents. Montessori education consciously teaches children to be kind and peaceful.
- Students in Montessori schools are encouraged to learn from their mistakes. It is this environment that promotes inquisitiveness and innovative thinking.
- Montessori students learn to collaborate and work together in learning and on major projects. They strive for their personal best.

REFERENCES
- Adams, K. (2005). "Sources of innovation and creativity". A paper commissioned by the National Center on Education and the Economy. Accessed 10/26/2011 at http://www.fpspi.org/Pdf/InnovCreativity.pdf.
- American Montessori Society Website; Retrieved from https://amshq.org/Montessori-Education/Introduction-to-Montessori .
- National Center for Montessori in the Public Center Website; Retrieved from http://www.public-montessori.org/what-public-montessori .

2. **Provide a synopsis of how the proposed instructional design reflects the needs of the school's target population, and how *all* students will meet or exceed the expectations of the Delaware Content Standards (English Language Arts, Mathematics, Next Generation Science Standards, Social Studies, Health, Physical Education, Visual and Performing Arts, and World Languages). The Delaware Content Standards are available at: http://www.doe.k12.de.us/domain/374**

Synopsis

While the Common Core Standards and Delaware Content Standards align well with the Montessori instructional approach. For example, the Delaware State Standards emphasize the importance of the passage from concrete to abstract understanding. They also emphasize the spiral approach to topics in which concepts are revisited in increasingly greater depth. The standards continually stress the conceptual understanding of key ideas and continually return to key organizing principles and procedural skills that structure those ideas. Each of the procedural skills are addressed in Montessori materials such as the Ten Bead Bars, the Short Bead Stair, the Tens Board, and the Golden Beads, the Moveable Alphabet, the Sandpaper Letters, to name a few (Montessori Compass).

The design of the Montessori classroom ensures that all children including ELL, special education students, and other children typically viewed as at risk will meet or exceed the expectations of the Delaware Content Standards. Specifically, the following are ways that ensure that all children are academically and socially successful in a Montessori classroom:

- Mixed age groups require a full array of materials at different levels for all children to access easily. This makes instruction easy to differentiate for all children.
- The entire approach is one of Small group and one-on-one work accommodating the various needs of individual children.
- Uninterrupted 3-hour work periods allow students to persevere with a task, reduce transitions, and allow for the easy integration of any support services in the classroom.
- Montessori Materials support children moving from the concrete to the abstract supporting many children who are not yet ready for the abstraction of paper and pencil concepts.
- All students learn from each other and learn to see differences and individual needs as a normal part of classroom life.
- ELL children can work in Small groups with typically developing students and native English speakers.
- As children are taught to navigate the independence of a Montessori classroom they increase their sense of success and sense of self-efficacy.
- The Montessori teacher is continually observing and assessing children's progress towards learning goals as established in the content standards. They routinely evaluate and reflect on individual children's progress adapting the classroom environment and materials to ensure that each child is successful.

More importantly, there is increasing evidence that students of similar background to the students in Western Sussex County excel in Montessori School environments. The National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector has collected district data from across the country. Specifically, they have found that children attending public Montessori Schools in Milwaukee, Cincinnati, Hartford, Denver, Dallas, and Chicago have performed above proficiency on state

mastery tests in Mathematics and English Language Arts. Of particular interest are the East Dallas Community Schools (2010) now known as Lumin Montessori which has operated two inner-city Montessori schools serving an ethnically and culturally diverse group of primarily low-income families for over thirty years. In comparison to their peers who experience an over 50% drop out rate, the children who attended the East Dallas Montessori program have graduated from high school at a rate of 94%, with 88% attending college. A long-term study of standardized test scores found that third grade students' average scores were in the top 36% nationwide in reading and math (East Dallas Community Schools).

References:
- East Dallas Community Schools Summer Newsletter (2010); Retrieved from: http://www.public-montessori.org/sites/default/files/resources/EDCS%20Outcomes%20Charts%20and%20Graphs.pdf
- Montessori Compass: Retrieved from http://montessoricompass.com/blog/common-core-standards-an-opportunity-for-montessori-to-shine
- National Center for Montessori in the Public Center Website; Retrieved from http://www.public-montessori.org/what-public-montessori .

a. **The description of the instructional design should include, as appropriate, the educational approach (or approaches), including class size and structure, teaching methods with a supporting research base, technology integration for all grades to be served, and how the design relates to the mission of the school.**

The Mission of the SMS is to nurture the development of empathetic, collaborative, persistent and innovative global and community leaders in accordance with the time-tested philosophy of Maria Montessori. The Montessori approach dates back to 1907, when Dr. Montessori opened the Casa dei Bambini, or Children's House, in a low-income district of Rome. Her unique philosophy sparked the interest of educators worldwide. A century later, there are more than 5,000 private, 500 + public and charter Montessori schools in the United States, and over 22,000 worldwide. Maria Montessori based her educational methods on scientific observation of children's learning processes, from birth through adulthood. Guided by her discovery that children teach themselves, Dr. Montessori designed a "prepared environment" (classroom) in which children could freely choose from a number of developmentally appropriate activities.

The strength of Montessori Schools is that they encompass the components of personalized learning and of classrooms that support creativity and innovation. Montessori trained teachers understand exactly how to support children's personalized learning. Kristen Vogt (2016) on The Next Gen learning website and Carri Schneider (2012) provide research and explanations of how Montessori is connected to personalized learning. The following are a few highlights from this work.

- <u>Student grouping that is dynamic, flexible, and responsive to student needs and based on data</u>. In Montessori classrooms, this is the day to day process as teachers continually

observe students as learners and serve as a resource to assist the child in making a constructive connection with the environment, with others in the classroom, and to show the children how to use the materials that form the curriculum in the Montessori classroom. Teachers spend considerable time observing the classroom individual children to inform instructional decisions that are responsive to children's needs. This is the heart of personalized learning.

The multiage classrooms typically are comprised of 24 to 26 children across two to three grade spans. Sussex Montessori will have a lead Montessori and State Certified teacher in each classroom as well as an assistant teacher. This structure allows for children to get the appropriate support from the adults in the classroom while maximizing the opportunity for children to learn and work collaboratively. The teachers are not the only experts in these classrooms; children have many opportunities to learn from each other.

- <u>Students have learning space that supports personalized learning</u>. Teachers provide environments where students have the freedom and the tools to pursue answers to their own questions while continually building their knowledge base in a variety of subject areas. Early access and instruction in the use of research tools broaden the possibilities for self-learning. A key premise of the Montessori approach is that knowledge is constructed from experience rather than delivered in a teacher centered classroom. The role of the teacher is to prepare an environment where children can access materials and opportunities to construct their understanding. Montessori students enjoy freedom within limits. Working within parameters set by their teachers, students are active participants in deciding what their focus of learning will be. They are free to advance through the curriculum at their pace guided by the teacher and an individualized learning plan. This develops internal satisfaction that drives the child's curiosity and interest and results in joyous learning that is sustainable over a lifetime.

- <u>Students discuss data and receive continual feedback.</u> In Montessori classrooms students focus on their personalized best. They learn to reflect on their own learning, their own products, and to determine their next steps. Montessori students use this data with their teachers to set their own personalized learning goals and work plan for the week. The feedback is immediate and on-going. Montessori lessons are set up to give students the chance to learn from mistakes in real-time and to self-check their progress as they work alone or with peers.

  Self-correction and self-assessment are an integral part of the Montessori classroom approach. As they mature, students learn to look critically at their work, and become adept at recognizing, correcting, and learning from their errors. Additionally, children become comfortable in providing constructive feedback to their peers in effort to work out social and academic problems.

- <u>Competency Based Learning.</u> Montessori teachers provide lessons with materials that induvial learners demonstrate that they are ready for. This readiness is the result of mastering a material that develops a concept that is required for mastering the next material in the sequence. Montessori classrooms provide for exploration of abstract concepts through carefully sequenced concrete materials designed to support the move to abstract thinking. The materials are hierarchical and recursive. This is the heart of competency based learning. Learning is student centered and motivation is high.

- <u>Hands on Didactic learning.</u> Unlike competency based learning in schools relying on technology as a delivery model, Montessori classrooms actively engage children in learning using their hands to manipulate materials.

- <u>Technology</u> is not the tool for personalized learning in Montessori schools; personalization is created by the teacher, the children and the classroom environment. Rather, technology is viewed as a tool to access information, construct knowledge, and to organize and communicate ideas. The Montessori classroom is ideally suited to support the goals of the International Society of Technology in Education which include the following: *empowered learner, digital citizen, knowledge constructor, innovative designer, computational thinker, creative communicator* and *global collaborator*. Montessori students to do not access technology only at specific times of the day, but when they most need to utilize technology to access information, communicate with others, and to develop new ideas. Coding, digital video, blogging, digital communication, and digital products are all easily integrated into the classroom allowing students to participate as a global collaborator and digital citizen with others around the globe.

Many of these same characteristics that are explored in the literature on personalized learning are identified by Karla Adams (2005) in her research on schools that support creativity and innovation. Montessori schools embody all the components of schools that support the development of innovation and creativity. Specifically, they:

- create communities of learners,
- they emphasize intrinsic motivation,
- they focus on "what did you learn" and not "how did you do" – one's personal best,
- they support interdisciplinary connections across big ideas and essential questions,
- they are classrooms that provide predictability and choice; safe places for children to explore and learn from mistakes, and
- foster self-efficacy through the teacher's belief that all children are capable and a classroom culture that supports peers in this same belief about each other.
- engage the teacher as guide or facilitator.

This focus leads to the mission of SMS which is the development of empathetic, collaborative, persistent and innovative global and community leaders. In addition, the

Montessori Classroom directly leads to the outcome of college and career ready children as defined by the Common Core Standards:

- Demonstrate Independence; demonstrated through Montessori's activities in self-choice, open exploration and self-correcting concrete materials.
- Build strong content knowledge across a wide range of subject matter; demonstrated through the daily choice of activities in practical life, sensory-motor, mathematics, language, science, culture, art, and music as well as through social interactions in a multi-age group setting.
- Respond to varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline through adaptive communication skills; demonstrated in Montessori's classroom structure through multi-age groupings, conflict resolution, peer mediation, cultural awareness and sensitivity, and early research.
- Ability to comprehend as well as critique; fostered in the classroom community as children demonstrate their understanding of the Montessori materials, teach others how to use a material, and work together to challenge each other to do their personal best.
- Value evidence; demonstrated through the continual focus on "what did you learn", using evidence to justify one's thinking, and the focus on self-assessment.
- Use technology and digital media strategically and capably: as demonstrated through early access to research tools and encouraged problem-solving strategies.
- Come to understand other perspectives and cultures: as demonstrated through early conflict resolution, a deep focus in the curriculum on culture and how culture impacts the way people participate in the global community.

- Adams, K. (2005). "Sources of innovation and creativity". A paper commissioned by the National Center on Education and the Economy. Accessed 10/26/2011 at http://www.fpspi.org/Pdf/InnovCreativity.pdf .
- Schneider, C. (2012) 5 Characteristics Connecting Montessori Ed & the Personalized Learning Movement. Retrieved from http://www.gettingSMSrt.com/2012/05/5-characteristics-connecting-montessori-ed-the-digital-learning-movement/.
- Vogt, K. (2016) 3 Must-Use Practices in Successful Personalized Learning Schools. Retrieved from http://nextgenlearning.org/blog/3-must-use-practices-successful-personalized-learning-schools .
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   b. **Present evidence that the proposed educational program is research-based and has been or will be rigorous, engaging, and effective for the expected student population. If evidence of effectiveness in other schools serving similar populations is not available, explain why the proposed program is likely to succeed with the targeted population.**

There are about 20,000 Montessori schools worldwide with 5,000 in the U.S. (more than 500 of them public schools) (National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector; retrieved December

6, 2017) providing substantial evidence—and demonstrated in academic research—that Montessori schools are highly effective.

A rigorous school, offering rigorous instruction, is defined as an institution "creating an environment in which each student is expected to learn at high levels, each student is supported so he or she can learn at high levels, and each student demonstrates learning at high levels (Blackburn, 2008)" (Blackburn & Williamson, 2013). To achieve rigor requires a thoughtful engineering of the classroom environment that values learning (Williamson & Blackburn, 2010) by encouraging exploration, individualized learning, and engagement—a hallmark of Montessori education. Montessori classrooms provide students with both shared/common project-based learning experiences, as well as individualized "work" that has been assigned according to students' current academic levels. Each student is provided with rigorous individualized instruction, guidance, and interventions that push them toward acquiring essential content knowledge as well as a development of critical thinking/problem solving skills.

The Montessori approach holds students to high standards and motivates them to *engage* in material, concepts, and the learning environment in new ways. The Great Schools Partnership (2016) defines student engagement as "the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education. Generally speaking, the concept of 'student engagement' is predicated on the belief that learning improves when students are inquisitive, interested, or inspired, and that learning tends to suffer when students are bored, dispassionate, disaffected, or otherwise 'disengaged.'" The U.S. Department of Education (retrieved December 4, 2016) noted, that curricular strategies such as project-based and community-based learning leads to "better student engagement because the content is relevant to each student and tailored to their unique learning needs," and "better student outcomes because the pace of learning is customized to each student." They note, in particular that "transitioning away from seat time, in favor of a structure that creates flexibility, allows students to progress as they demonstrate mastery of academic content." Montessori students rarely receives instruction or work to complete in a traditional "seat time" manner. Rather, as suggested, students are engaged via provocation, project and community-based learning, and an organization of their environment to be active seekers of knowledge, employ self-correction and self-assessment, and enlist the collaboration of other students and teachers (American Montessori Society).

As stated above, Montessori education has proven successful in diverse and high poverty communities. Montessori schools—with engagement anchored in rigorous individualized, project and community-based, and inquiry-based learning—establishes a primary culture of high expectations which is "necessary" for academic achievement in high-poverty communities such as Western Sussex (Barth et. al. 1999; Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Ragland et. al., 2002).

The following are selected studies (summarized by the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector: http://www.public-montessori.org/resources/does-it-work-what-research-says-

about-montessori-and-student-outcomes) that demonstrate effectiveness in Montessori programs, many in communities similar to Western Sussex:

Dohrmann, K., et. al. (2007), "Outcomes for Students in a Montessori Program: A Longitudinal Study of the Experience in the Milwaukee Public Schools," *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 22(2), 205-217.
This longitudinal study of Milwaukee high school graduates showed that students who had attended Montessori preschool and elementary programs significantly outperformed a peer control group on math/science scores. "In essence," the study found, "attending a Montessori program from the approximate ages of three to 11 predicts significantly higher mathematics and science standardized test scores in high school.

East Dallas Community Schools: Montessori Outcomes
East Dallas Community Schools operates two inner-city Montessori schools that serve an ethnically and culturally diverse group of primarily low-income families. In over 30 years of using the Montessori approach to education, EDCS has proved that all children, regardless of race or income, can succeed in school when you start young and involve parents.   In a neighborhood in which the high school dropout rate is over 50%, children who attend EDCS have graduated from high school at a rate of 94%, with 88% of those graduates attending college. A ten-year study of standardized test scores found that third grade students' average scores were in the top 36% nationwide in reading and math. Even though many of these children start school without speaking any English, 100% of the children test as fluent in English by the end of the third grade.

Lillard, A. & Else-Quest, N. (Sept. 29, 2006). "Evaluating Montessori Education,"   *Science* 131: 1893-94.
Researchers compared Montessori students with students in other school programs, and found that 5-year-old children who completed the three-year cycle in the Montessori preschool program scored higher on both academic and behavioral tests than the control group.   The study also found that 12-year-old Montessori students wrote more sophisticated and creative stories and showed a more highly developed sense of community and social skills than students in other programs.

Lillard, A. (2005). Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius, New York: Oxford UP.
A comprehensive review of the scientific literature that demonstrates how current research validates Dr. Montessori's observations about how children learn, particularly with regard to movement and cognition, the detrimental effect on motivation of extrinsic rewards, the beneficial effect of order in the environment, and the academic and emotional benefits of freedom of choice.

Rathunde, K. (Summer 2003) "A Comparison of Montessori and Traditional Middle Schools: Motivation, Quality of Experience, and Social Context," *The NAMTA Journal* 28.3: pp. 12-52.
This study compared middle school students in Montessori programs with students in traditional middle schools, and found significantly higher student motivation and socialization among the

Montessori students. "There were strong differences suggesting that Montessori students were feeling more active, strong, excited, happy, relaxed, sociable, and proud while engaged in academic work. They were also enjoying themselves more, they were more interested in what they were doing, and they wanted to be doing academic work more than the traditional students."

Diamond, A. & Lee, K., (Aug. 19, 2011). "Interventions Shown to Aid Executive Function Development in Children 4 to 12 Years Old," *Science* 333:959-964.
To be successful takes creativity, flexibility, self-control, and discipline. Central to all those are executive functions, including mentally playing with ideas, giving a considered rather than a compulsive response, and staying focused. This review compares research results from various activities and curricula that have been shown to improve children's executive function, including computerized training, aerobic exercise, martial arts and mindfulness practices, and classroom curricula including Montessori education. In a comparison of curricula and curricula add-ons, the Montessori approach is shown to meet more criteria for the development of executive function for a more extended age group.

Diamond, A. (2010). "The Evidence Base for Improving School Outcomes by Addressing the Whole Child and by Addressing Skills and Attitudes, Not Just Content," *Early Education and Development*, 2: 780-793.
Dr. Adele Diamond, Professor of Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience at the University of British Columbia, is one of the world's leading researchers on the development of cognitive function and a supporter of Montessori education. In this article she discusses effective strategies for advancing academic achievement, and advises: "Programs that address the whole child (cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs) are the most successful at improving any single aspect – for good reason. For example, if you want to help children with academic development, you will not realize the best results if you focus only on academic achievement (though at first glance doing that might seem the most efficient strategy); counterintuitively, the most efficient and effective strategy for advancing academic achievement is to also nurture children's social, emotional, and physical needs."

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Barth, P., Haycock, K., Jackson, H., Mora, K., Ruiz, P., Robinson, S., et al., (Eds.). (1999). Dispelling the myth: High poverty schools exceeding expectations. Washington, D.C.: Education Trust.
Blackburn, B. (2008). Rigor is not a four-letter word. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.
Blackburn, B. & Williamson, R. (2013). Four steps to increasing rigor in the classroom. *Leadership, 42*(4), 8-9.
Diamond, A. (2010). The evidence base for improving school outcomes by addressing the whole child and by addressing skills and attitudes, not just content. *Early Education and Development*, *2*, 780-793.

Diamond, A., & Lee, K. (2011). Interventions shown to aid executive function development in
        children 4 to 12 years old. Science, 333(6045), 959-964.

Dohrmann, K. R., Nishida, T. K., Gartner, A., Lipsky, D. K., & Grimm, K. J. (2007). High school
        outcomes for students in a public Montessori program. *Journal of Research in Childhood
        Education, 22*(2), 205-217.

 East Dallas Community Schools. (2010). Summer newsletter 2010. Retrieved from the National
         Center for Montessori in the Public Sector: www.public-montessori.org.
         Great Schools Partnership. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://edglossary.org/student-
         engagement/

Kannapel, P. J. & Clements, S. K. (2005). Inside the black box of high-performing high-poverty
        schools. Lexington, KY: Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.

Lillard, A. S. (2005). Montessori: The science behind the genius. New York: Oxford University
        Press.

Lillard, A. S., & Else-Quest, N. (2006). Evaluating Montessori education*. Science, 313*, 18931894.
         National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector. (n.d.). Retrieved from:
         http://www.public-montessori.org.

Ragland, M.A., Clubine, B., Constable, D., & Smith, P.A. (2002). Expecting success: A Study of
        five high-performing high- poverty schools. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State
        School Officers.

Rathunde, K. (Summer 2003). A Comparison of Montessori and Traditional Middle
        Schools: Motivation, Quality of Experience, and Social Context. *The NAMTA Journal
        28*(3), 12-52.

U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). Competency-based learning or personalized learning.
        Retrieved from: http://www.ed.gov/oii-news/competency-based-learning-or-
        personalized-learning.

Williamson, R. & Blackburn, B. (2010). Rigorous schools and classrooms: Leading the way.
        Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

3. **Provide an overview of the planned curriculum, including, as Attachment 4, 1 scope and
    sequence per content area per grade band (K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12) the school plans to serve.
    The scope and sequence documents should identify course outcomes and demonstrate
    clear alignment with the Delaware Content Standards (English Language Arts,
    Mathematics, Next Generation Science Standards, Social Studies, Health, Physical
    Education, Visual and Performing Arts, and World Languages). If the proposed school
    commits to joining the Science Coalition, then a signed MOU would replace the scope and
    sequence requirement for Science. If the proposed school commits to joining the Social
    Studies Coalition, then a signed MOU would replace the scope and sequence requirement
    for Social Studies.**

Sussex Montessori School will be joining the Science Coalition and the Social Studies Coalition.
A signed MOU will be included in the attachments.

SMS will use an updated version of the education plan approved by DDOE for the First State Montessori Academy in their 2012 application with current research and understandings of how the Montessori classroom supports all children. The curriculum maps (scope and sequence) found in attachment 4 are the documents approved for FSMA by the state of Delaware on the DDOE site for approved charter applications.   These curriculum maps are aligned to essential questions and big ideas as outlined in the Delaware State Standards. By the nature of the Montessori approach, the scope and sequence is not a month by month or week by week document. This would defeat the goal of personalized learning as outlined in the research above. It instead serves as a guide for the classroom teacher to monitor children's explorations of the essential questions, big ideas, and underlying conceptual understandings in each content area. The following modeled on the First State Montessori application provides an overview of the curriculum in each content area. The following modeled on the First State Montessori application provides an overview of the curriculum in each content area.

The Montessori curriculum is carefully structured and integrated to demonstrate the connections among the different subject through these key ideas:

- **Unity of Human Beings**: Students develop an understanding of the similarities and differences of cultures across the world; that people interact with the natural world in distinct ways that produce cultural uniqueness; that people, places, and environments are integrated; that life involves producing and consuming.
- **Unity of all Living Things on Earth**: Students gain an understanding of the development of life on earth. They will explore how living organisms, through time, met their needs for survival, responded to the changes in their surroundings, and contributed to the development of other living organisms. Students will discover and develop a respect for the beauty and wonder of nature. Montessori instills in students a love for the natural world. Natural science and outdoor education are important elements of our children's experience. They develop an understanding of how, through science, we learn how nature works.
- **Unity of the Universe Itself**: Students develop an understanding of their relationship and place in the development of the universe; how the earth has changed over time through physical, chemical, and geological processes.

Because Maria Montessori framed the curriculum with essential questions and big ideas, it is natural for the Montessori teacher to prepare for units with the format of Understanding by Design as developed by Grant Wiggins. The Montessori curriculum is carefully structured and integrated to demonstrate the connections among the different subject areas. Through these curriculum units students are taken on a journey which integrates the Delaware Science and Social Studies standards, as well as various Common Core speaking and listening, writing, reading, and mathematics standards.

Math: The self-correcting math materials sequentially highlight isolated concepts moving from more concrete ideas to more abstract ideas. Math is connected to other parts of the

curriculum; for example, the study of time leads naturally to the study of History and the study of evolution in Biology. Considered as a unique branch of mathematics, geometry is given expanded emphasis in the Montessori curriculum. These Montessori hands-on materials augmented by replacement units from materials such as TERC investigations provide a rich and comprehensive math program covering all of the math strands as well as the big ideas of mathematical problem solving and communication.

English Language Arts in the integrated Montessori curriculum includes the History of Language, Parts of Speech, Sentence Analysis, Written Composition, Reading, Literature Study, Oral Language and Creative Drama. At all age levels in the Montessori classroom, there is emphasis on discussion, free-speech bounded by the classroom rules, and on oral reports given to various individuals, and group projects. The goal of the Montessori ELA area is to promote the use of language as part of reasoned thought. Instruction in Reading involves a balanced approach with an emphasis on the development of phonemic awareness and phonics as well as vocabulary and comprehension.

Science and Social Studies: While SMS will be joining the Science and Social Studies Coalitions, it is important to understand how the big ideas in these subject areas are supported by the coalitions units and instructional practices. As explained above, the Montessori Curriculum is integrated around major concepts of understanding. At the Elementary levels, science and social science topics such as anthropology, astronomy, biology, botany, chemistry, civics, economics, geography, geology, government, history, politics and sociology are not only treated as discrete topics but are interwoven in the curriculum. History provides the framework which gives order to the information acquired in the other areas. Biology gives the children a system of classification to structure and relate facts. Geography shows how the physical configurations of the earth contribute to the history of all people.

Because the Montessori Philosophy encourages exploration and hands-on learning, the community and environment are natural extensions of the classroom. Each subject area can be enhanced through field trips: to farms, marshes, beaches, quarries, museums, zoos, etc. so that instead of merely reading about rocks or amphibians, children have actual first-hand experience with them.   The Sussex community allows for a rich exploration of agriculture, land conservation, and beach environments.

4. **Provide, as Attachment 5, 1 Mathematics unit with corresponding summative assessment and scoring rubrics, and 1 English Language Arts (ELA) unit with corresponding summative assessment and scoring rubrics to demonstrate alignment of instruction to the Delaware Content Standards. If the proposed school does not intend to join the Delaware Science or Social Studies Coalitions, then 1 Science unit and 1 Social Studies unit with corresponding summative assessments and scoring rubrics to demonstrate alignment of instruction to the Next Generation Science Standards and Delaware Social Studies Content Standards are also required.**

See attachment 5

5. **Describe how the school will ensure that all students have equitable access to the curriculum.**

As an open enrollment school, Sussex Montessori welcomes students of all aptitudes and needs. As shared above, the Montessori curriculum is based on the needs of the students and not on "dishing out curriculum" because of the child's grade level. The classroom is designed to allow children to explore various areas throughout an extended work period. A full range of materials for English Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies are available throughout the day and are easily accessible to children during this work period. This creates a unique situation where all students in Montessori classrooms have access to all areas of the curriculum throughout the day unlike the traditional teacher centered classroom.

The Montessori curriculum allows for teachers to be aware of the needs of each student, guiding them through the learning process based on the student's innate desire to learn. In many cases, students can pick those activities for which they are most comfortable. Since the classes are multi-aged, students working in different modalities, with different content and at different paces is not unusual.   Teachers assist students to develop and monitor a daily work plan for younger children and a weekly plan for older children. Teachers discuss the child's strengths and challenges with them helping them to build a plan that both builds on their strengths and develops their challenges.   Some children will need more guidance and introduction to the choices in a Montessori classroom than others. They will need modified work plans and other structures to help them learn to manage the independence of the classroom. Some may need modifications of the materials to ensure that they are able to work successfully with them.   These are all a natural part of the Montessori classroom environment.

Sussex Montessori teachers will have received specialized training in the unique observation and pedagogy necessary to insure that ALL students in their classroom are able to access the curriculum and ultimately reach the required level of proficiency. In addition, it is expected that the Sussex Montessori School teachers will receive support from the Shelton School in Texas which has been providing specific training to teachers working with learning different children for over 35 years. Any lessons learned by our colleagues at First State Montessori in Wilmington will also be considered.

6. **Describe the methods and systems that teachers will use to provide differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students, including those who are gifted and talented.**

The primary approach to working with all children in a Montessori classroom is one of inclusion and differentiation. The Montessori classroom naturally supports this model for all children because:

- The classroom provides a full array of materials to support children across multi-grade levels. The nature of Montessori materials is such that they are designed to support a first exploration of a concept, a later relation of that concept to a more abstract understating and a final abstract understanding of a concept. In this way, one materials such as the binomial cube can support a child at various stages of understanding. Some children will explore the cube as a puzzle to be put together. Others will begin to receive lessons using the cube to help them solve mathematical challenges. Finally, students move to being able to approach mathematical challenges related to binomials with paper and pencil (full abstract thinking). All children can access this material at their developmental level.
- The primary focus of instruction is one-to-one and small group lessons tailored to the needs of the children. Teachers group and regroup children based on their observations, the children's interests, and their learning goals. When needed, teachers with special education certification, speech therapists, and others may join a classroom to support the individual needs of children. These therapists work side by side with the other teachers and children in the classroom easily fitting in to the classroom design with Small group and individual lessons designed to support a particular need of a child.
- This model of inclusion supports the social and emotional needs of all children as well. Gifted students consolidate their understanding of concepts as they consider how to explain ideas to other students in the classroom while also having the independence to explore new ideas and grow themselves in areas of interest to them. Exceptional and ELL students learn from all children in the classroom creating friendships and an appreciation and reducing social stigmas across the classroom community.
- Transitions are reduced as accommodations are made to support individual children within the classroom environment thereby maximizing learning and instructional time.

The rare exception to the inclusion approach to meeting the needs of all children in a Montessori classroom would one of the following:
- The child is highly distracted and benefits from having the first lessons with a material given in a separate environment before working with it in the classroom.
- A child with emotional outbursts who needs a quiet place to regain his or her composure before returning to work in the classroom.

In either case, the goal is to support the child so that they can learn to navigate the Montessori classroom developing self-regulation and independence.

7. **Provide a synopsis of plans for additional academic support for at-risk students, including a description of how the school plans to implement procedures to determine whether a student responds to scientific, research-based interventions for reading and mathematics.**

Working with at-risk students is not unusual for Montessori schools. Based on a sample of schools across the country, public Montessori schools have approximately 47% of their students under free and reduced lunch programs while 51% are Title I schools. Montessori district and

magnet schools, however, have a higher concentration of lower income students, with 55% of students being eligible for free and reduced lunches and 64% being Title I schools.

We anticipate higher than normal concentrations of lower income students in Sussex Montessori due to its location in the western portion of the County. Sussex County has an estimated 35,231 children under the age of 14, according to the Delaware Population Consortium. Sussex County has the lowest median income among the three counties. It also has a poverty level higher than the state average. However, according to the US Census, poverty among children under 17 is much higher. School districts on the western side of the county (Woodbridge, Seaford, Laurel and Delmar have higher levels of poverty than the eastern side, particularly Seaford at 30% of current estimate of children under 18 in poverty. Students will receive individualized assessment of progress to inform their educational plan.

The school will use a response-to-intervention (RTI) which is aligned with the philosophical stance of the Montessori method. Teachers will evaluate students' progress, and makes continuous changes in the environment, materials, or interactions that might better meet the child's needs.   As explained by the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities in Understanding Responsiveness to Intervention in Learning Disabilities Determination, the following core features are important and consistent with the Montessori approach:

- high quality research based classroom instruction
- student assessment with classroom focus
- universal screening of academics and behavior
- continuous progress monitoring of students
- implementation of appropriate research-based interventions
- progress monitoring during interventions {effectiveness)
- teaching behavior fidelity measures

SMS will insure that these best practices are integral to our approach. A systematic approach to interacting and intervening with students will combine a multi-tiered assessment approach with a multi-tiered instructional approach. (Outlined in more detail in 1.3 Special Populations and At-Risk Students 2B). Done well, this model will prevent some students from needing to participate in the IEP process and for those that do require an IEP, it will provide data to support the decisions of the Instructional Support Team.   Sussex Montessori will use the RTI Essential Components Integrity Rubric (Center on Response to Intervention, 2014) to conduct a biannual review of the Response to Intervention model. This will ensure that SMS continues to adhere to the best practices of RTI.

A multi-tiered process will begin with data gathered via tools for screening, progress monitoring (formative assessment) and diagnosis. The curriculum documents for reading, writing, and mathematics include assessment tools for ongoing daily formative assessment.   Also, teacher observations of students, relating to goals for learning, will be noted. An additional means of

assessment is more formal, though easily administered, standardized assessments. These can be used periodically to monitor children's progress. This information will indicate whether a child is or is not "on-track". Thus, the consistent use of specific screening tools and progress monitoring will promote early identification of students who may be at risk for learning difficulties. In this way teachers will have pertinent information to facilitate adapting the educational environment to better support the child.

Sussex Montessori teachers will administer both the DIBELS Reading and Math Assessments during the first two weeks of the school year. It is anticipated that screening will be completed for all children during the first four weeks of the school year. Children identified as potentially have special education needs will be reviewed in September or within two weeks of enrollment with an IEP meeting or IST meeting to follow. In the first few years of operation SMS will administer the identified assessments within two weeks of enrolling all students to ensure that students needing additional intervention, IEP reviews etc. are identified in a timely manner and receiving the interventions most appropriate for their needs.

Teachers at Sussex Montessori will continually monitor progress of children. This will include particular attention to the areas of reading and mathematics (using the curriculum-based tools listed in Attachment 4). The DIBELS Reading assessments and AIMS Web Math Assessments will be administered to children again in January and again in March. This data will be used to monitor the overall progress of children and identify children who may not have been identified in the September screening assessments.

For children who were identified at any time in the school year as needing additional supports, Sussex Montessori will implement a more intensive and regularly scheduled progress monitoring program to ensure that the child is making progress. This progress monitoring will be based on the structure of the three-tiered approach for RTI. (Outlined in more detail in 1.3 Special Populations and At-Risk Students 2B)

Sussex Montessori will contract with an Educational Diagnostician, Speech Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, and will have trained special education and ELL teachers as part of the school staff to support students within the context of the typical classroom as described above.

8. **Explain how the graduation requirements will ensure student readiness for college or other post-secondary opportunities (trade school, military service, or entering the workforce).**

This is not applicable. Sussex Montessori will not enroll high school students.

Student Performance Goals [14 *Del. C.* § 512(4) and (6)]

Outline the clearly measurable annual performance status and growth goals that the school will set in order to monitor and evaluate its progress accelerating student achievement.

Respond to the following with regard to the proposed school's student performance goals and the Delaware School Success Framework (DSSF).

1. Describe the student performance standards for the school as a whole.

All students will perform to their creative and intellectual best. The criteria for the student performance is not only to perform well on state standardized tests, but to demonstrate behaviors and attitudes consistent with our mission. At this time, there are not specific reliable and valid assessments for leadership, innovation and responsible global citizenship. As research informs the development of such assessments, SMS will explore their use to measure our mission appropriate outcomes. Specifically, SMS will aim to achieve the following goals:

Performance Goal 1:
SMS will demonstrate that its students are increasing in academic achievement, as measured by the Delaware System of Student Assessments (DeSSA) and other assessment tools as follows:

> **Target**: By the third year of operation, and for each year thereafter, 70 to 89 % of students will make growth sufficient to maintain or achieve proficiency.
> **Target:** by the third year of operation, and for each year thereafter, SMS will have between 60 and 79 % of all students meeting their growth targets.
> **Target:** by the third year of operation, SMS will have between 60 and 79 % of students in the lowest quartile of performance meeting their growth targets.
> **Target:** By the end of the third year, the school's average proficiency rate on DeSSA of reading and math will meet or exceed the statewide average student performance of schools serving the same grades.

Performance Goal 2:
SMS students will exhibit positive behaviors related to academic success through:

> **Target**: Each year the school will have fewer reportable incidents pursuant to Delaware Code, Title 14, Section 4112, then the average for public schools in Sussex County with a similar grade configuration.

Performance Goal 3:
Given SMS's emphasis on the development of character, innovation, and global citizenship each student will:

> **Achievement Target**: Demonstrate growth on the continuums of development in each of these areas as documented by teacher observations, student portfolios, student reflections on their work, and parent surveys documenting their observations of their children's growth in these areas.
> **Achievement Target**: Beginning year three, SMS 6th graders will demonstrate the development of these skills and their academic achievement through a year-long study or service project culminating with a performance presented to the school community.

2. **In addition to the State's mandatory assessments, identify the primary interim assessments that the school will use to assess student learning needs and demonstrate academic progress throughout the year. Explain how these interim assessments align with the school's curriculum, performance goals, and Delaware Content Standards (Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Next Generation Science Standards).**

Observation is a cornerstone of the Montessori Method. Each student is frequently and regularly observed while working with the Montessori materials and while participating in recess and special classes such as art, music, or physical education. The teacher takes notes on the students and records descriptions of learning style, attitudes towards school, habits of concentration, initiative and persistence, abilities to form and sustain friendships, self-discipline, and sense of responsibility to other members of the class and community. Through observation and careful tracking of the student's work with the materials, the teacher can assess which skills a child has mastered and determine their readiness to advance in the curriculum or provide additional supports for those who are challenged.

In practice, the Montessori teacher is trained in a response to intervention model based on daily teacher observations and records, which leads to decisions about the classroom environment, materials needed to support each child, and specific lessons.   The quality Montessori school enhances these observations with a comprehensive classroom-based assessment system that monitors and documents outcomes against goals for learning using results to improve learner outcomes and school effectiveness from entry through sixth grade. An effective assessment system to support student growth is one that focuses on multiple classroom-based formative assessments allowing teachers to interact with and observe children individually with tools that focus their observations on specific aspects of learning and development {Salinger, 2001; Zankowsky, 2006).

With this in mind, Sussex Montessori School will use formative and summative assessments providing tools for progress monitoring, screening, diagnosis, and for program evaluation focusing primarily on the individual development of the child. These assessments will include Montessori classroom-based individual assessments, student portfolios, teacher observations, and anecdotal records, complementing standardized assessments to evaluate individual student progress against the goals for learning and to document programmatic strengths to develop improvement plans. Each academic year's data, including Smarter Balanced results, will be compared to past data to measure current progress, the objective being that each child will meet or exceed their goals for annual yearly progress. The DIBELS Math and ELA Assessments and the TERC Assessments used for progress monitoring are all aligned to Common Core Standards.

Reading/Writing (Please refer to attachment 4 for charts outlining the timing of formative and summative assessments):

Assessment will address the following areas identified in the Common Core State ELA Standards: phonemic awareness, phonics acquisition, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, self-monitoring, and increased student awareness of meta- cognitive strategies. Sussex Montessori will use the DIBELS and the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). In addition, teachers will use running records, think-aloud, reading logs, written retellings and summaries, and spelling assessments.

Assessment in writing will view student writing through the lenses of the six traits of writing; ideas, conventions, word choice, organization, sentence fluency, and voice. A writing continuum will be used to determine where a child is making progress and where he may need additional support. Rubrics available on the DDOE website based on the genre of the Common Core State Standards including Argumentation/Opinion Text based writing, Informational or Explanatory Text Based Writing, and Narrative Text

Math (Please refer to attachment 4 for charts outlining the timing of formative and summative assessments):
In addition to Montessori Lesson Observation, which is designed to allow the teacher to assess a child's progress using standardized Montessori materials, SMS will use a variety of assessments for progress monitoring. As is annotated in the submitted Mathematics unit, SMS teachers will rely on additional information from the TERC Investigations 3 / Connections Assessment Checklists, Portfolios and Embedded Benchmark Assessments. In addition, the DIBELS for Math will be administered 3 times per year.

These classroom-based formative and summative assessments will be used to provide a frame of reference to confirm and enhance the teacher's observations in the classroom. Each assessment will be individually administered. The assessments will be used to inform the next steps for instruction as well as to confirm a teacher's observations that a child may be "at risk" leading to further interventions to support the child.

Integrated Science/Social Studies/ The Montessori Social and Cultural Curriculum:
SMS will use the resources of the Delaware Science and Social Studies Coalitions to monitor progress in these areas. In addition, SMS will use any required state assessments in these areas to evaluate the program, alignment of the curriculum and monitor student achievement.   In addition, Montessori classrooms rely on specific classroom performance-based formative and summative assessments. These assessments allow the demonstration of the students' integration of their knowledge in reading, writing, speaking/listening, and mathematics with their developing understanding of the essential questions in these areas. Several specific assessments used in the Montessori classroom are:

• Classroom presentations: Classroom presentations by students enhance planning skills, give opportunities for public speaking, increase confidence, and give children the chance to experience pride in their accomplishments.

- Peer/Reciprocal Teaching: Whether or not a student has sufficient knowledge of a work material to be able to teach it to peers is an important Montessori assessment tool that is employed on a constant basis. Peer teaching allows a child to solidify learning and place the educational gains in a meaningful context aiding long-term retention and the transfer of knowledge.
- Portfolio: Students at SMS will create electronic portfolios that reflect the development of their understanding of the essential questions embedded in the cultural curriculum. These portfolios will be self-evaluated against rubrics, shared by students with parents, and be a cumulative record of the child's development.

3. **If the school plans to adopt or develop additional academic performance goals or assessments beyond the State's mandatory assessments, explain what standards the school will use, and describe the adoption or development process that has taken place or will take place. Include the timeline for achievement of student performance goals and the assessment of such performance.**

Sussex Montessori School does not plan to adopt or develop additional academic performance goals beyond the State's mandatory assessments. All assessments listed in question 2 are designed to be formative in nature and will guide instruction and interventions throughout the year.

4. **Explain the school's policies and standards for promoting students' from one grade to the next. Describe how and when promotion and graduation criteria will be communicated to parents and students.**

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 and teachers work closely to support children; 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 Education Director to develop benchmarks (RTI model below) 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. The Sussex Montessori School handbook will include a section on promotion and the available supports for a child who may need additional intervention.

5. **Explain the process for ensuring that all students in grades 8-12 have a complete student success plan. Describe how the success plans will be monitored as required by 14 *Del. C*. § 5.0.**

Not applicable

High School Graduation Requirements *(High Schools Only)* **[14** *Del. C.* **§§ 512(4), (5), (6) and (7)]**

1. **High schools will be expected to meet the Delaware Graduation Requirements, which may be amended from time to time. The requirements can be found at:**

   http://regulations.delaware.gov/AdminCode/title14/500/505.shtml#TopOfPage

Not applicable

2. **Explain how the school will meet these requirements and monitor them through the use of the State's pupil accounting system. Explain how students will earn credit hours, how grade-point averages will be calculated, what information will be on transcripts, and what elective courses will be offered.   If graduation requirements for the school will exceed those required by the State of Delaware, explain the additional requirements.**

   Not applicable

3. **If applicable, also explain how the school will meet the requirements for any and all Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways courses.   Requirements include, but are not limited to:**

   Not applicable

   a. **Programs must follow a State-approved Pathway Standard and be of sufficient size and scope to be effective for graduates;**
   b. **Applications must be approved;**
   c. **Documented and appropriate labor market opportunities must sufficiently exceed the current training supply;**
   d. **Laboratory facilities and equipment must meet all safety requirements pursuant to 14 DE Admin. Code § 885 and reflect current industry standards;**
   e. **Curriculum must follow current standards and include a State-approved end-of-pathway assessment;**
   a. **Student access to the program must follow the Office of Civil Rights CTE (vocational education) guidelines for admission and recruitment available at: http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/vocre.html;**
   f. **Pathways must follow an approved Program of Study;**
   g. **A Program of Study document must be submitted with the application. The state template is available through this link: http://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/435; and**
   h. **Programs must include student participation in the related Career and Technical Student Organization.**
      This website will provide further information on Delaware CTE requirements:

http://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/435

4. **Explain how the school's graduation requirements will ensure student readiness for college or other postsecondary opportunities (trade school, military service, or entering the workforce).**

   Not applicable

School Calendar and Schedule [14 *Del. C.* § 512(6)]
1. **Provide, in Attachment 6, the school's proposed calendar for the first year of operation. Include the length of the school day, as well as start and dismissal times. Explain how the calendar will support the success of the educational program.**

Daily start time is 8:30 am. Children will have an opportunity to have breakfast if desired, settle in to the classroom, and participate in morning meeting. Daily end time is 3:30 pm whereby students will participate in a closing circle in the classroom and transition to transportation or after school activities. It will be a goal of the school to create extended work periods with few transitions during the course of the day in adherence with the Montessori model. The school calendar will be designed to allow for parent conferences after the first six weeks of school to establish common goals for each child, and again when approximately 75% of the year has been completed. Families will receive progress reports at the mid-year point and end of the school year.

Two week long professional development periods are provided in the summer before the first school year to give Sussex Montessori Teachers and Administration adequate time to work on curriculum, ready the classroom environment, and orient themselves to the Sussex Montessori culture. The remaining professional development days are spread throughout the school year and will focus on curriculum/instruction, assessment, and other priorities identified by teacher leaders.

SEE ATTACHMENT 6 - SCHOOL CALENDAR

Supplemental Programming [14 *Del. C.* § 512(6)]

1. **Describe the extra- or co-curricular activities or programming the school will offer; how often they will occur; and how they will be funded.**

SMS will be providing after school and camp opportunities for students throughout the year. If a cost is involved, students with financial need will be assisted by a fund established by Sussex Montessori to support all children who wish to participate. Among the types of programming that enhance and support a Montessori approach are:

- Art and Drama Clubs (grades 3 to 5)

- Color Your World (1st – 6th grade): A coloring and design workshop
- Lego Club (1st – 3rd grade)
- P.E. Club (K – 1st grade)
- Open Computer Labs (1st – 6th grade)
- Yoga (3rd – 6th grades)
- Drama Kids Club (1st – 4th grade)
- Choir (3rd – 6th grade)
- International Culture Workshops (3rd – 5th grades)
- Instrumental lessons (3rd-6th grade)
- Odyssey of the Mind
- Cross-age classroom buddies and book clubs

It is expected that most programs will be offered for two sessions of 10 weeks across the school year. Some may be offered for the full year. Sussex Montessori intends to partner with local community agencies to provide daily after school activities to families in need of such services. Application for after school programming grants will be considered as well.

2. **Describe the school's programs or strategies to address student mental, emotional, and social development and health.**

SMS will be replicating the Responsive Classroom Approach, a research-based approach to K-8 teaching that focuses on the strong link between academic success and social-emotional learning (SEL). High-quality education for every child is built on the foundation of a safe and joyful learning community.   The Responsive Classroom is characterized by for main pillars:

- Engaging Academics - Teachers create learning tasks that are active, interactive, appropriately challenging, purposeful, and connected to students' interests.
- Positive Community - Teachers nurture a sense of belonging, significance, and emotional safety so that students feel comfortable taking risks and working with a variety of peers.
- Effective Management- Teachers create a calm, orderly environment that promotes autonomy and allows students to focus on learning.
- Developmental Awareness - Teachers use knowledge of child development, along with observations of students, to create a developmentally appropriate learning environment.

The principles of Responsive Classroom and the Montessori approach highlight many of the school components identified by the National Association of School Psychologists for supporting stude4nts' social and emotional welfare leading to positive mental health. These include:

- A school wide community emphasizing multi-age opportunities.
- A physical environment that is beautiful and welcoming

- Classrooms that support student engagement matching opportunities for learning to students' abilities, enhancing their self—efficacy, and is under their control. Classrooms where students have choice and help to determine rules, schedules, and what they learn are classrooms that support healthy development.
- Strong teacher – student relationships
- Supportive peer relationships
- Positive home- school relationships
- Parent involvement and support with parenting

Trained in observation, Montessori teachers are particularly adept at noticing when a child is under stress or acting in ways that are subtly different from their normal behaviors. They do not ignore these signs but will often engage the child in conversation to explore and seek to understand what might be happening. Children that have various behavior signs that may seem disruptive to the classroom will be redirected and engaged by Montessori teachers to help them find ways to recognize when they are stressed and alternatives to release that stress.

The Montessori classroom is particularly supportive of children who are under emotional or mental stress because it is predictable and consistent. The routine for the day is clearly established and understood by the child. The expectations of the teacher and logical consequences are understood.   When needed, the Montessori teacher will find a way for a child to take a walk to deliver something to another teacher, use a quiet spot in the classroom to regroup, or other such strategy to relieve their stress.   Finally, Montessori teachers provide support to all the children in the class with class meetings that emphasize the individual needs of children, how others in the class can support their peers, and ways to handle stress (Williams, B.R., Boyle, K., White, J. M., and Sinko, A., 2010)

Initially, SMS will contract with a local agency to provide guidance support and counseling for students for whom such support is needed. Such services will be offered with parent approval. At such time that the school is fully enrolled through grade 6 a full-time counselor/student support staff member will be considered.

Williams, B.R., Boyle, K., White, J. M., and Sinko, A.(2010). *Children's mental health promotion and   support: Strategies for educators*. Retrieved from www.NASPonline.org .

3. **If applicable, describe any other student-focused activities and programs that are integral to your educational and student-development plans.**

    Not applicable

4. ***For schools offering summer school.* Describe the extra- or co-curricular activities or programming the school will offer, how often they will occur, and how they will be funded. Describe the program(s) to be offered. Identify how many students are expected to attend summer school and how will they be selected for participation. Identify how**

many hours and weeks of summer school will you provide, and how will it be funded. Explain how the school will provide Extended School Year services (ESY) for eligible students with disabilities.

Sussex Montessori School does not intend to offer summer school. If a child's IEP calls for Extended School Year Services Sussex Montessori will work with the family to insure the child has access to an appropriate educational setting and program during the summer months. Depending on the child's needs that programming may or may not take place at SMS.

Special Populations and At-Risk Students [14 *Del. C.* § 512(4)-(7)]

1. **At-Risk Students**
   a. **Identify the special populations and at-risk groups that the school expects to serve, whether through deliberate targeting or otherwise.**

SMS will not deliberately target to serve any particular kind of disability, but expects that a portion of the student's enrolling to attend SMS will be students who have been identified through the special education process. This group of children is likely to have been identified as having learning disabilities, emotional disabilities, speech and language needs, sensory or motor function differences, etc. In addition to children identified as needing special education services, SMS also expects that a significant portion of the student body will be living in poverty. Additionally, Sussex County schools also frequently enroll a large percentage of students for whom English is not their first language. Finally, SMS expects to have some families identified as undocumented immigrants. Each of these groups of students will require support from the Sussex Montessori School teachers, leadership and community. In preparation for providing this support SMS will insure that the staff hired are adequately certified, trained and experienced in these areas. Preference will be given in the hiring process for individuals with certifications, training and/or experience in special education, ELL, trauma informed instruction and/or multilingual.

The Montessori Model is uniquely suited to work with children with disabilities because its method involves individual child identification within the context of the educational program, rather than advancing a curriculum that may not be attune to particular child attributes. Thus, the Montessori model couples naturally with the concept that IDEA was not intended as a "one size fits all" approach ("Gordon, S. "Making Sense of the Inclusion Debate Under IDEA", *BYU Law Journal*, 189-225).

Upon enrollment, SMS faculty/staff will conduct a records retrieval process to efficiently gain access to a student's cumulative record and IEP/504, if applicable, from the sending school. The faculty/staff members will then review all screening results and records review findings and follow established protocols for RTI or IEP implementation. If it is determined that a child needs additional support/intervention SMS faculty will initiate a series of meetings. These meetings will be attended by the SMS Head of School (or designee), Educational Director,

special education teacher(s), other appropriate personnel or consultants to the school (i.e. nurse, counselors, school psychologist (contracted services), etc.), as well as the student's parents. These individuals will comprise the Instructional Support Team (IST). If appropriate they will effect an evaluation of the student and a determination of their eligibility under IDEA 2004. Subsequently, for applicable students, an IEP will be developed and identified services implemented with re-evaluations effected. This team will also be convened upon receipt of records from a sending school indicating that a child shall receive special education services. This meeting will take place within the regulated time frame to insure any modifications needed will be documented before the IEP is implemented at SMS.

SMS will ensure it adheres to statutes related to the identification, evaluation, eligibility and education of children with disabilities.

b. **Describe how the school will implement Response to Intervention procedures, including a plan for how data will be collected, progress will be monitored, and instructional decisions made related to student performance in accordance with 14 DE Admin. Code § 925.12.0.**

A response to intervention (RTI) model is in alignment with the philosophical stance of the Montessori teacher. The Montessori teacher continually evaluates students' progress, and makes any changes in the environment, materials, or interactions that might better meet the child's needs. The teacher then evaluates those adjustments, making new adjustments as necessary. This is the fundamental concept of Response to Intervention.

As explained by the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities in, Understanding Responsiveness to Intervention in Learning Disabilities Determination, the following core features of a strong RTI are:

- high-quality research-based classroom instruction
- student assessment with classroom focus
- universal screening of academics and behavior
- continuous progress monitoring of students
- implementation of appropriate research-based interventions
- progress monitoring during interventions (effectiveness)
- teaching behavior fidelity measures

SMS will ensure that these best practices are followed. A systematic approach to interacting and intervening with students will combine a multi-tiered assessment approach with a multi-tiered instructional approach. Done well, this model will prevent some students from needing to participate in the IEP process; while for those that do require an IEP, this method will provide data to support the decisions of the Instructional Support Team. SMS will use the RTI Essential Components Integrity Rubric (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2011) to conduct a biannual review of the Response to Intervention model. This will ensure that SMS continues to adhere to the best practices of RTI.

Assessment

A multi-tiered process will begin with data gathered via tools for screening, progress monitoring (formative assessment) and diagnosis. The curriculum documents for reading, writing, and mathematics include assessment tools for ongoing daily formative assessment. Also, teacher observations of students, relating to goals for learning, will be noted. An additional means of assessment is more formal, though easily administered, standardized assessments. These can be used periodically to monitor children's progress. All the aforementioned will provide information on when a child is "on-track" as well as indication about when a child may be "off-track." Thus, the consistent use of specific screening tools and progress monitoring will promote early identification of students who may be at risk for learning difficulties. In this way teachers will have pertinent information to facilitate adapting the educational environment to better support the child.

The formal screening and progress monitoring assessments include but are not limited to:
- DIBELS Reading Assessments
- DIBELS CBM Mathematics Assessments
- Curriculum Based Measurement in Reading
- Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement

Of note, for children that are known to be at risk, SMS teachers will administer both the DIBELS Reading Assessments DIBELS Math Assessment during the first two weeks of the school year It is anticipated that screening will be completed for all children during the first four weeks of the school year. Children identified as potentially have special education needs will be reviewed in September and a response to intervention plan then developed.

Recognizing that children may fall behind at any point on the learning continuum, the teachers at SMS will continually monitor progress of children. This will include particular attention to the areas of reading and mathematics (using the curriculum-based tools listed in the appendices). For children who were identified at any time in the school year, as needing additional supports, SMS will implement a more intensive and regularly scheduled progress monitoring program to ensure that the child is making progress. This progress monitoring is further defined below in the discussion of the three Tiers. This progress monitoring may lead to the use of specific diagnostic tools in order to better understand why a child may not be making progress.

Ongoing Data Collection

Monitoring of student progress during the RTI and tiered approach will occur in line with that described by Brown-Chidsey, Rachel and Steefe, Mark W. (2005) in *Response to Intervention: Principles and Strategies for Effective Practice*:
- target the skill or behavior of concern addressing specifically its components, its display, and to what degree of intensity it is exhibited.

- establish the settings where the target behavior will be observed and recorded.
- data recording procedures will be established along with assignment of data collection personnel
- monitoring materials will be defined and continued access ensured
- analyze the data collected to determine whether the desired change in skill/behavior has been achieved; and/or to assess whether revision or continuation of the current intervention is appropriate.

SMS teachers will be trained in the collection of data obtained during screenings, observations, and other classroom based assessments. The data from formal formative assessments will be admixed with information from teachers' observations as well as evidence from, other classroom-based assessments (as described in the curriculum documents). Ultimately, the data from these multiple sources will be collected in spreadsheets. Teachers will analyze this information and will then plan appropriate instruction tailored to the child's needs.

Interventions

Interventions will vary widely according to the needs of the child. As stated earlier, Montessori teachers are continually adapting the classroom environment in efforts to meet the educational needs of students. Adaptation tools to assist with writing, ear muffs to assist children in focusing, and ensuring quiet private work areas are among the many interventions that Montessori teachers can implement in order to support individualized learning. Also, SMS teachers will be trained in the "Mind at a Time" model which connects brain research, knowledge of learning styles, and classroom adaptations. In addition, interventions may include but not be limited to:

- focused research-based reading/math curriculums that will supplement the Montessori curriculum. These will include resource sites approved by the DOE such as:
  - http://www.fcrr.org/
  - http://rading.uoregon.edu/
  - http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/reasearh/pubs/rigorousevid/index.html
  - http://www.w-w-c.org
  - http://www.promisingpratices.net
- focused small group instruction to promote reading or math skills (120 minutes per week for children below the 25th percentile)
- environmental adaptations such as enhanced classroom work space
- additional support from the school nurse or counselor
- specialized equipment such as e-readers or computer access
- adjustments in the pacing of instruction
- adjustments in the presentation of Montessori lessons
- adjustments in class work plans
- scheduling and work-management tools
- the use of social skills groups

The Multi-Tiered Approach

Tier 1: Will focus on all students, ensuring catchment of those that fall into minority, low income, and English language learner categories. The goal will be to ensure academic achievement by all students at SMS. Each child at SMS will have a personal learning plan that focused on their strengths as learners. This plan will be developed by the classroom teachers as they establish goals for each student during the school year. These goals will include academic and social development. Importantly, as outlined in the preceding section (7a), the Montessori model inherently includes a wide variety of classroom adaptations including student choice, multi-age groupings, peer collaboration, and multi-sensory learning.

Special attention with the above will be given to children who fall between the 25th percentile benchmark on the screening assessments. Teachers will ensure these children are brought to the attention of the IST, so as to develop tailored academic or social support plans. In addition, these students will receive at least 90 minutes per week of targeted small group instruction in areas of need.

Tier 2: Children continually falling at or below the 25th percentile will be considered Tier II. An analysis of student related data as well as other diagnostic assessments will facilitate teachers in understanding the specific needs of these children. Specifically, the IST will meet to review the screening and other progress monitoring data collected by the teachers. A list of research-based social and academic interventions will then be developed and prioritized. As much as possible, the interventions will be done within the classroom environment. Children will receive at least 90 to 120 minutes of intensive small group instruction at least twice a week, relating to the specific academic areas of concern.

A member of the IST will conduct a weekly review of the implementation of interventions and decisions will be made regarding any necessary adjustments. Also, formal progress monitoring assessments (DIBELS) will be administered weekly, if appropriate to the child's plan. Lastly, the IST will meet monthly to review the child's progress and to problem-solve with the teacher.

Tier 3: For students who demonstrate persisting difficulties despite initial Tier 2 interventions of 12 weeks or more, the IST may move the child to Tier 3. Tier 3 involves increasing both the intensity (perhaps individual instruction) and duration (no less than 150 to 180 minutes of targeted instruction over four sessions) of the interventions used in Tier 2. If after 12 weeks of intensive instruction, a student continues to demonstrate difficulties in not meeting either academic or behavioral benchmarks, the IST will request permission from the family to administer further evaluative testing for Special Education Placement.

c. **Describe how the school will organize and use instructional support teams to engage in a problem solving process to ensure the behavioral and academic success of all students in accordance with 14 DE Admin. Code § 923.11.9.**

Throughout the response to interventions process, teachers will be supported by the Instructional Support Team. Utilizing a child study model, the IST (Education Director, Teachers

(both the child's teacher and others who are trained for this team), Special Education Teacher, Counselor, and others as appropriate) will meet to review the screening data and other progress monitoring data collected by the teacher. A variety of research-based accommodations and adaptations will then be accessed to help the teacher select and monitor those that may best support their student's needs. In addition, members of the IST will observe in the classroom and provide feedback to the teacher regarding the instructional plan's implementation. In essence the IST will provide a structure for the professional learning community; one that focuses on children's educational needs while helping teachers to succeed in meeting these learning disabilities.

The IST will also convene meetings, to ensure the behavioral and academic success of all students, for the following purposes:

- To review the child's evaluation results and determine if the child is a "child with a disability"
- If a child is found to be a "child with a disability" the IST team will convene within 30 calendar days of the completed IST evaluation to match proposed special education services with the child's identified disability; and to ensure the child's disability is being appropriately matched to such proposed services an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will be developed. In constructing an appropriate educational program for a child with a disability, an IEP team will consider the child's involvement and participation in three main areas of school life: the general education curriculum, extracurricular activities, and nonacademic activities. From this:
  - o The IEP will be developed jointly by the IST, the child's classroom teacher, and the parent(s) of the child.
  - o The team will review formal and informal pieces of gathered data (e.g. state tests, homework, assessments) and determine the child's academic and functional needs.
  - o The IEP will create reasonable learning goals for the child, and will identify the services SMS will provide.
  - o If parents do not agree with the developed IEP and placement, a request for mediation can be made. In addition, parents may file a complaint with the Delaware Department of Education and request a due process hearing, at which time mediation must be available.
  - o The IEP document will be used throughout the child's educational process to guide the delivery of related services, accommodations, modifications, and supports. (See Providing Services below)
  - o The IEP will be reviewed at least one time a year, however, SMS supports that a request to have an IEP related meeting can be made at any time to review the child's progress, discuss problems, share strategies or make necessary revisions to further the child's educational program.
- Personnel to be involved with the above "eligibility" process, (other than the IST members described) will include the student's classroom teacher, the child's parents, and at least one

person qualified to conduct individual diagnostic examinations of children (i.e. school psychologist, speech-language pathologist, or remedial reading teacher).

2. **Students with Disabilities**

Charter schools are responsible for hiring licensed, certified, and highly qualified special educators as required by 14 *Del. C.* Ch. 1 and 14 DE Admin. Code § 900. School personnel must participate in the IEP Process including identifying students who may be eligible for special education services, evaluating students for special education services, developing an Individualized Education Program (IEP), and providing special education supports, services, accommodation, and modifications. Schools must comply with all applicable laws as outlined in the Compliance Certification Statement.

A. **Identification**
   a. **Describe how the school will ensure compliance with Child Find responsibilities. Explain how the school will identify students in need of special education services and the steps required to determine eligibility for special education services and avoid misidentification.**

High standards and expectations will be set for all students attending SMS. As required by PL.94-142 and Section #504, teachers at SMS will develop, implement and update Individual Educational Plans (IEP) for students who require them. The student case manager in conjunction with the special education teachers, reading and math specialists will in accordance with the established RTI timelines, review student data (to include test scores, classroom grades, teacher observations/checklists) to ensure student success. Students who are ascertained to be falling behind or not meeting the standard will be referred to the IST (Instructional Support Team) team for intervention recommendations. Also, as part of the IEP updating process, meetings will be held and goals will be reviewed and reassessed. Students entering SMS in their Kindergarten year will be screened using the statewide universal Kindergarten screening tool as well.

   b. **Describe the multi-tiers of evidenced-based academic and behavioral interventions and supports that will be provided prior to identification.**

Evidence-based academic and behavioral interventions found in typical Montessori classrooms include: the individual pacing of students' progression through curriculum; adjusting the sequence of instruction; repetition of key points; checking for comprehension; visual tools; physical prompt and cues; customizing the materials available to the child; paraphrasing; reflection time; simplified instructions and demonstrations.

The Multi-Tiered Approach

Tier 1: Will focus on all students, ensuring catchment of those that fall into minority, low income, and English language learner categories. The goal will be to ensure academic achievement by all students at SMS. Each child at SMS will have a personal learning plan that focused on their strengths as learners. This plan will be developed by the classroom teachers as they establish goals for each student during the school year. These goals will include academic and social development. Importantly, as outlined in the preceding sections, the Montessori model inherently includes a wide variety of classroom adaptations including student choice, multi-age groupings, peer collaboration, and multi-sensory learning.

Special attention with the above will be given to children who fall between the 25th percentile benchmark on the screening assessments. Teachers will ensure these children are brought to the attention of the IST, so as to develop tailored academic or social support plans. In addition, these students will receive at least 90 minutes per week of targeted small group instruction in areas of need.

Tier 2: Children continually falling at or below the 25th percentile will be considered Tier II. An analysis of student related data as well as other diagnostic assessments will facilitate teachers in understanding the specific needs of these children. Specifically, the IST will meet to review the screening and other progress monitoring data collected by the teachers. A list of research-based social and academic interventions will then be developed and prioritized. As much as possible, the interventions will be done within the classroom environment. Children will receive at least 90 to 120 minutes of intensive small group instruction at least twice a week, relating to the specific academic areas of concern.

A member of the IST will conduct a weekly review of the implementation of interventions and decisions will be made regarding any necessary adjustments. Also, formal progress monitoring assessments (DIBELS, AIMS WEB) will be administered weekly, if appropriate to the child's plan. Lastly, the IST will meet monthly to review the child's progress and to problem-solve with the teacher.

Tier 3: For students who demonstrate persisting difficulties despite initial Tier 2 interventions of 12 weeks or more, the IST may move the child to Tier 3. Tier 3 involves increasing both the intensity (perhaps individual instruction) and duration (no less than 150 to 180 minutes of targeted instruction over four sessions) of the interventions used in Tier 2. If after 12 weeks of intensive instruction, a student continues to demonstrate difficulties in not meeting either academic or behavioral benchmarks, the IST will request permission from the family to administer further evaluative testing for Special Education Placement

c. Describe the IEP team who will be determining eligibility including required roles.

The required members of the IEP team will include:

- Education Director – responsible for ensuring that the IEP plan is understood by all staff who work with the student, is knowledgeable of the general education curriculum and authority to commit available resources.
- Lead Teacher – Responsible for the implementation of the plan within the Montessori classroom.
- Special Education Teacher responsible for specific educational goals requiring specialized training and knowledge.
- Counselor as appropriate to assist with social and emotional needs.
- Parent(s) of the child to ensure that the plan is understood and to advocate for child if appropriate.
- Any individuals the parents feel have knowledge or expertise about a child.
- The team will also include at least one person qualified to conduct individual diagnostic examinations of children to interpret results of the assessments and their implications for instruction (i.e. school psychologist, speech-language pathologist, or remedial reading teacher).

All required IEP team members must attend IEP meetings unless: 1) the parent and SMS agree in writing that attendance is not needed because the member's area of curriculum or service is not being modified or discussed, or 2) the team member's area of curriculum or service is being discussed and the SMS and the parents agree in writing that the team member can submit input in writing to the parent and IEP team prior to the meeting.

B. Program Plan
  a. Describe the school's plan for ensuring compliance with state and federal statutes and regulations related to the identification, evaluation, and education of students with disabilities. Include a description of the school's specific action steps to ensure compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Specify the programs, strategies, and supports you will provide for students with basic, intensive, and complex needs.

The Montessori Model is uniquely suited to work with children with special education disabilities because its method involves individual child edification within the context of the educational program, rather than advancing a curriculum that may not be attune to particular child attributes. Thus, the Montessori model couples naturally with the concept that IDEA was not intended as a "one size fits all" approach ("Gordon, S. "Making Sense of the Inclusion Debate Under IDEA", BYU Law Journal, 189-225).

The special education process at Sussex Montessori School will develop through several levels of meetings. These meetings will be attended by the Head of School (or designee), Educational Director, special education teachers, other appropriate personnel or consultants to the school (i.e. nurse, counselors, school psychologist, etc.), as well as the student's parents. These individuals will comprise the Instructional Support Team (IST). If appropriate they will

recommend an evaluation of the student and a determination of their eligibility under IDEA 2004. Subsequently, for applicable students, an IEP will be developed and identified services implemented with re-evaluations effected.

SMS will ensure it adheres to statutes related to the identification, evaluation, eligibility and education of children with disabilities.

Identification - If a school professional requests that a child be formally evaluated in determination of a potential learning disability, this request will typically occur after a series of response to intervention strategies have been already implemented. (See RTI Section for additional detail). Another avenue of identifying children with potential learning disabilities will be to reference any prior "Child Find" program assessments. Finally, a request for special education evaluation may also be made by a child's parents. This can be communicated verbally or in writing.

When a child is identified as possibly having a special education need, the child's parents will be asked for permission to effect an evaluation. Of note, parental rights under IDEA include the right to receive prior written notice from the school each time the school proposes to take (or refuses to take) actions with respect to a child. Thus, SMS will ensure, a.) full notification of the child's parents regarding the proposed special education evaluation, and b.) written parental consent for the evaluation. Parents whose native language is other than English will be provided with the necessary support including translators to ensure that they understand the school's informed consent request.

Once parental consent is received SMS will complete evaluations within 45 school days or 90 calendars days, whichever is less.

Evaluation –   An Instructional Support Team (IST) will conduct a full and individualized special needs evaluation. An important prerequisite of this evaluation is to ensure assessment tools are not discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis.

The purpose of the IST evaluation is to, a.) Determine if the child is a "child with a disability" as defined by IDEA; b.) Gather information that will help ascertain the child's educational needs, and; c.) Serve as a later reference for decision-making about appropriate educational programming for the child.

The IST will utilize a variety of methodologies (e.g., observations, interviews, tests, curriculum-based assessment) and a variety of sources (parents, teachers, specialists, and at times, the child) to gather relevant developmental and academic information about the student. All areas potentially impacting on the suspected disability, including health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities will be assessed as indicated.

In complying with IDEA, SMS will use technically sound processes in the evaluation of its students. Technically sound processes are defined as assessments that have been shown through research to be valid and reliable (71 Fed. Reg. at 46642). Technically sound processes require that assessments and other evaluation materials be:

- administered by trained and knowledgeable personnel;
- administered in accordance with any instructions provided by the producer of the assessments, and
- used for purposes for which the assessments or measures were proved valid and reliable.

In line with IDEA statute, once completed, parents will be provided a copy of the evaluation. If the parents disagree with the results of their child's evaluation, SMS will inform parents of their right to obtain an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE). Further, SMS will provide information about where an IEE may be obtained.

To ensure comprehensive participation of all relevant individuals in identified children's special education, the completed IST evaluation and the actions proposed will also be provided to appropriate staff.

Eligibility – subsequent to the above evaluation process**,** the IST will convene a meeting for the following purposes:

- to review the child's evaluation results and determine if the child is a "child with a disability"
- if a child is found to be a "child with a disability" the IST team will convene within 30 calendar days of the completed IST evaluation to match proposed special education services with the child's identified disability; and to ensure the child's disability is being appropriately matched to such proposed services an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will be developed:
    - In constructing an appropriate educational program for a child with a disability, an IEP team will consider the child's involvement and participation in three main areas of school life: the general education curriculum, extracurricular activities, and nonacademic activities. From this:
    - The IEP will be developed jointly by the IST, the child's classroom teacher, and the parent(s) of the child.
    - The team will review formal and informal pieces of gathered data (e.g. state tests, homework, assessments) and determine the child's academic and functional needs.
    - The IEP will create reasonable learning goals for the child, and will identify the services SMS will provide.
    - If parents do not agree with the developed IEP and placement, a request for mediation can be made. In addition, parents may file a complaint with the Delaware Department of Education and request a due process hearing, at which time mediation must be available.

- o The IEP document will be used throughout the child's educational process to guide the delivery of related services, accommodations, modifications, and supports. (See Providing Services below)
- o The IEP will be reviewed at least one time a year, however, SMS supports that a request to have an IEP related meeting can be made at any time to review the child's progress, discuss problems, share strategies or make necessary revisions to further the child's educational program.
- o personnel to be involved with the above "eligibility" process, (other than the IST members described) will include the student's classroom teacher, the child's parents, and at least one person qualified to conduct individual diagnostic examinations of children (i.e. school psychologist, speech-language pathologist, or remedial reading teacher).

Education - In line with educating students under the IDEA, integration of the child with a disability to within the general education environment, will be undertaken to the maximum extent appropriate. This goal requires implementation of "supports, modifications, and accommodations," as well as use of "related services." The IDEA describes these principles as necessary to facilitate the education of children with disabilities. SMS understands and plans implementation of these special education principles. "Supports" relates to the assistance educators need to help them help the child (e.g. accessibility to educational conferences, having access to specialized equipment, etc.). "Modifications" relates to necessary changes made in the education or expectations of students, (e.g. making assignments less involved for special education children). "Accommodations" relates to alterations in manner of student performance (e.g. allowing a child with writing difficulties to answer questions orally). "Related services" is defined by the IDEA as "…such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a child with disability to benefit from special education…" Examples include speech-language pathology, physical and occupational therapy, school health services, and social work services.

Importantly, Montessori education provides students, including those with disabilities, an individualized educational experience while focusing on doing so within an inclusive albeit broader environment. To meet this aim**,** the Montessori model ensures lower teacher to student ratios. Significantly, this allows many of the "supports, accommodations, and modifications" described above to take place within the generalized classroom. Furthermore, in recognizing the importance of "supports, accommodations, and modifications" in the education of children with disabilities, special education teachers versed in these principles will be available to monitor IEP implementations as well as assist teachers. More, when necessary special education teachers will provide specific instruction to help maintain "special education" within the LRE.

Of note, Montessori education employs "supports, accommodations, and modifications" in its regular curriculum. Specific examples include: co-operative learning, peer learning, hands-on education, opportunities for choice, learning centers, multi-sensory learning, physical

demonstration, as well as the use concrete materials. More, in maximizing the benefit of these education tools, a Montessori education includes repeated opportunities to practice as well as providing regular feedback. Lastly, to promote each child's individuality, regardless of disability, self-advocacy skills encouraged. In all, a Montessori education is illustrative of IDEA principles.

Specific examples of Montessori classroom education in the implementation of IEPs are:
- pacing of individual student's education
- adjusting the sequence of instruction
- repetition of key points
- checking for comprehension
- visual tools
- physical prompt and cues
- accustom the materials available to the child
- paraphrasing
- reflection time
- simplified instructions and demonstrations.

SMS plans on full compliance with current statutes regarding the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

b. Describe how the school will provide a continuum of educational placements for students with disabilities. Include a description of the instructional strategies and supports that will be implemented to ensure placement and meaningful progress in the least restrictive environment. In addition, describe how students who require a more restrictive setting will be served within the school in accordance with 14 DE Admin. Code § 925.27.0.

As described in the IDEA, special education involves implementation of "supports, modifications, and accommodations," as well as use of "related services." Thus based on a child's IEP, as well as their response to the tiered interventions described above, a continuum of educational placements will be utilized for students with disabilities. Relevant questions will be clarified facilitating appropriate placement. Namely, can the child be educated in a regular classroom environment; are all appropriate aids and supports being utilized while in the current LRE; have all other types of relevant accommodations within the LRE been considered and effected?

Ultimately, if the child cannot be educated in the regular classroom despite use of appropriate "supports, accommodations, and modifications," the IST placement group will consider other educational environments for the child. Importantly, SMS recognizes that relevant laws/statutes denote use of special classes, separate facilities, or the removal of children from the regular educational environment to occur only if the child's disability is such that their education cannot be achieved satisfactorily in a LRE despite the use of supplementary "supports, accommodations, or modifications."

With the above in mind, depending on the needs of the child, the IEP will be carried out primarily in a regular class with supplementary aids and services as needed using the push-in model described in earlier sections of the curriculum and instructional design items 5,6, and 7 with one to one instruction, small group instruction, accessible Montessori materials, and services from specialist within the classroom environment. The rare exception to the inclusion approach to meeting the needs of all children in a Montessori classroom would one of the following:

- The child is highly distracted and benefits from having the first lessons with a material given in a separate environment before working with it in the classroom.
- A child with emotional outbursts who needs a quiet place to regain his or her composure before returning to work in the classroom.

In either case, the goal is to support the child so that they can learn to navigate the Montessori classroom developing self-regulation and independence.

Ultimately, if the child cannot be educated in the regular classroom despite use of appropriate "supports, accommodations, and modifications," the IST placement group will consider other educational environments for the child. Importantly, SMS recognizes that relevant laws/statutes denote use of special classes, separate facilities, or the removal of children from the regular educational environment to occur only if the child's disability is such that their education cannot be achieved satisfactorily in a LRE despite the use of supplementary "supports, accommodations, or modifications." With this in mind, depending on the needs of the child, the IEP will be carried out in:

a. a regular class with supplementary aids and services as needed – This will be the primary form of services for children at SMS.
b. a special class where every student in the class is receiving special education services for some or all of the day
c. a special school
d. at home
e. a hospital or other institution
f. another clearly defined educational setting

Also, as documented in special education regulatory statutes, SMS anticipates meeting its obligation of appropriate placement of children with special needs by either:
- providing an appropriate program for the child on its own;
- contracting with another agency to provide an appropriate program, or
- utilizing other mechanisms or arrangements that are consistent with the IDEA in providing or paying for appropriate programs for the child.

SMS's IST will provide continued direct oversight over the myriad of child placement interventions that might occur.

c. **Describe how the school will ensure that students with disabilities have access and make meaningful progress in the general education curriculum and Common Core State Standards.**

SMS will hold fast to the following IDEA principles: special education is a service, not a place; all students with disabilities will have access to the general education curriculum; a broad range of services will be provided, addressing the needs of all students with disabilities; IEP teams will first consider providing each student with services in the general education classroom, with supplementary aids and services appropriate to that student's needs; and a continuum of options will be provided that vary in the extent to which they provide education for a student with a disability alongside his or her non-disabled peers.

IEP goals and assessments will be aligned to the Common Core State Standards to ensure that students' academic interventions support the student in reaching the level of proficiency required by the standards. For those students with disabilities who are likely to succeed with the help of well-designed, carefully implemented and rigorously assessed general education interventions, special education services will be delivered in the general education classroom through a full inclusion model. Where services delivered in the general education classroom are not likely to result in student success, a continuum of alternative options will be provided for all students with disabilities.

At all times, SMS will comply with DE code 14 Del.C. §3110 for definitions of least restrictive environments. Educational placement options shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Services in the General Education Classroom 27.1.1 Inside Regular Education Class >=80 percent of the day;
- Children with disabilities receiving special education and related services outside the regular classroom less than 21 percent of the day. This may include children with disabilities placed in: regular class with special education related service provided within regular classes;
- regular class with special education related services provided outside regular classes;
- or regular class with special education services provided in resource rooms.

At SMS, general education services with supplementary aids and services, when needed, will be conducted in conjunction with related services, special education teacher support services, and collaborative team teaching. As stated earlier, the Montessori classroom provides an ideal setting for inclusion and push-in services for children.

d. **Describe how the school will provide multi-tiers of academic and behavioral supports for students with disabilities.**

Tiers of support will be determined on an individual basis, in response to what would be the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) ensuring academic and behavioral success. Instructional and behavioral support will be provided by qualified staff. Data will be organized in record-keeping systems (e.g., such as, I-TRACKER). This will allow teachers to keep track of students' progress through various forms of progress monitoring throughout the year. As such, SMS will hold fast to the following IDEA principles: special education is a service, not a place; all students with disabilities will have access to the general education curriculum; a broad range of services will be provided, addressing the needs of all students with disabilities; IEP teams will first consider providing each student with services in the general education classroom, with supplementary aids and services appropriate to that student's needs; and a continuum of options will be provided that vary in the extent to which they provide education for a student with a disability alongside his or her non-disabled peers.

Evidence-based academic and behavioral interventions found in typical Montessori classrooms include: the individual pacing of students' progression through curriculum; adjusting the sequence of instruction; repetition of key points; checking for comprehension; visual tools; physical prompt and cues; customizing the materials available to the child; paraphrasing; reflection time; simplified instructions and demonstrations. These are available to all children, regardless of whether they have an IEP/504.

SMS Montessori classrooms, aligned with evidence-based academic and behavioral interventions, specifically offer:
- Mixed age groups and fully differentiated instruction— A full array of materials at different levels of work is available within each multi-grade classroom. Instruction is differentiated for all students, making the differentiation for those with ELL and special education needs an easily incorporated and natural part of the classroom (Katz, 1992).
- Individual and small group lessons—The entire Montessori classroom is set-up around one-on- one and Small group work. When an interventionist comes in and offers such lessons, it fits well within the norm of the classroom and in no way disrupts or stands out from the usual flow of the classroom (Tilly, 2008).
- Uninterrupted 3-hour work period— Montessori classrooms are structured around an extended uninterrupted work period during which students move freely between work areas and materials. This structure allows the interventionist to work with students at a mutually agreeable time, minimizing interruptions, supporting student choice and thereby enhancing learning (Lillard, 2007).
- Materials that move from the concrete to abstract— Montessori materials begin with concrete representations and then move to abstract for all students. These same materials are easily accessible to ELL and special education students and can be used by push-in teachers to reinforce regular lessons.
- Montessori teachers are continually adapting the classroom environment in efforts to meet the educational needs of students. Adaptation tools to assist with writing, ear muffs to assist children in focusing, and ensuring quiet private work areas are among the many

interventions that Montessori teachers can implement in order to support individualized learning. In addition, interventions may include but not be limited to:

These interventions will be monitored for effectiveness. If they are not having the desired results, the teacher and student along with special education faculty, will look to implement additional supports. These could include increased frequency of modifications, scaffolding, additional modeling, etc. Related services may be consulted as well to determine if additional language supports or occupational therapy supports would be helpful. These could include visual cues, weighted blankets, increased physical activity, etc.

e. **Explain how the school will ensure parent participation in the IEP process in accordance with 14 DE Admin. Code § 900.925.22.**

SMS will take steps to ensure that one or both of the parents of a child with a disability are present at each IEP Team meeting or are afforded the opportunity to participate. Parents will be notified of the IEP meeting no less than ten (10) school days prior to the IEP meeting, and the meetings will be scheduled at a mutually agreed upon time and place. The notice sent to parents and the student about the meeting will include the purpose, time, and location of the meeting and who will be in attendance from the school or other agencies. Parents will be invited to extend the meeting invitation to other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise about the child. When appropriate, the meeting invitation will also indicate that a purpose of the meeting will include the consideration of the post-secondary goals and transition services for the child.

If the parent is not able to attend the IEP meeting, then the Special Ed. Teacher will talk with the parent via phone calls or conference telephone/web based calls. In the event that the parent(s) refuse to attend the IEP meeting, the Special Ed. Teacher will keep a record of the attempts to arrange a mutually agreed on time and place. The Special Ed. Teacher will arrange for an interpreter for parents with deafness or whose native language is other than English. At the IEP meeting and whenever requested, the Spec. Ed. Teacher will give the parent a copy of the child's IEP at no cost to the parent.

f. **Describe how the school will ensure that IEP accommodations are provided for students with disabilities on the Delaware System of Student Assessment (DeSSA) and on the Alternate Assessment.**

All IEPs will include any accommodations required for a student to participate in DeSSA and Alternate Assessment as necessary. The IST team and the Education Director will be responsible for the implementation of the accommodations as required. Specific accommodations may include but are not limited to:

- Extended time to complete the assessment
- Testing in a separate area
- Small group testing
- Individual testing

- Use of Braille or oral reading for sight impaired children
- Use of calculators
- Print size enlarged
- Text to speech support

g. Describe how the school will ensure that IEP services, supports, and accommodations are implemented by all staff working with students with disabilities

The IEP team will be responsible for a minimum of quarterly reviews of individual students' IEPs and the students' progress toward goals. The Education Director will be responsible for communicating to all staff who work with the student including related arts teachers, assistant teachers, and others as relevant about particular accommodations that may relate to their areas of focus with the student. All such communications shall be viewed as confidential and for instructional and behavioral supports only as outlined in the IEP. SMS will also provide training and support for teachers to meet the needs of individual students with disabilities within the Montessori Classroom setting.   This includes such topics as:

- Understanding brain-based research related to various topics, specifically children's educational development
- Monitoring responses to interventions, specific interventions and or adaptations
- Specialized focus on models such as the All Kinds of Minds training and Responsive Classroom Training
- Understanding the regulatory aspects of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act

Accommodations and interventions will also be monitored when teachers are observed during classroom walk-throughs and formal observations.

h. For students with disabilities who are age 14 or older, or who are entering the eighth or a higher grade, explain how the school will address transition planning/provision of transition services.

Not applicable

C. Monitoring and Accountability

a. Describe how the school will regularly evaluate and monitor the progress and success of students with disabilities to ensure the attainment of each student's goals set forth in the IEP and to ensure mastery of the Common Core Standards. Include a description of how the school will address students not making progress on IEP goals or toward mastery

High standards and expectations will be set for all students attending SMS. As required by PL.94-142 and Section #504, teachers at SMS will develop, implement and update Individual Educational Plans (IEP) for students who require them. The student case manager in conjunction with the school counselor, teachers, reading and math specialists will periodically (at least monthly) review student data (to include test scores, classroom grades, teacher

observations/checklists) to ensure student success. Students who are ascertained to be falling behind or not meeting the standard will be referred to the IST (Instructional Strategies Team) team for improvement recommendations. Also, as part of the IEP updating process, meetings will be held and goals will be reviewed and reassessed.

   b. **Describe how the school will ensure that required participants, including parents, will attend IEP meetings.**

Meetings will be scheduled in advance and reminder calls, emails and letters will be sent. Substitute coverage may be needed so that teachers can attend meetings. Although not ideal, IEP meetings may be conducted via telephone or internet if parents are unable to meet in person. Two or more staff members would then have to follow up with the parent and ensure that all necessary signatures are received. This may also require a home visit.

   c. **Describe the strategies that will be used when parents do not respond to school staff attempting to schedule IEP meetings, or when parents cannot or do not attend IEP meetings**

All measures will be exhausted to ensure parental involvement at IEP meetings, as the law requires parent permission to test, report results and offer services. SMS staff will communicate to parents the importance of their role as a member of the IEP team. Public transportation passes may be supplied, two or more staff may provide transportation for parents, notes will be supplied to employers for days missed at work, or home visits may even be necessary to obtain parent support and participation. SMS will also offer video and phone conferencing for parents who are physically unable to attend IEP meetings.

   d. **Describe how the school will ensure participation of general education in the IEP meeting. For students who turn 14 or enter the 8ᵗʰ grade during the IEP year and who are participating in a career and technical education program, describe how the school will ensure that a CTE teacher/career technical teacher coordinator attends the IEP meeting.**

SMS is an elementary program, therefore, transition plans/services (for 14 year olds/students entering 8ᵗʰ grade) are not required. The general education teacher will be part of the IST and will then continue to serve on the IEP team. Due to SMS's commitment to inclusion, general education teachers will be an integral part of the IEP team/meetings.

   e. **Describe the school's system of accountability to ensure compliance with IDEA, provision of special education services and procedural safeguards, along with a process to monitor student records and staff practices for regulatory compliance across the school.**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. To ensure compliance, teachers will complete "Student Accommodation and Supplementary Aid Logs" / Accommodations Trackers (see attached) for each student with disabilities. This will help them document when students are offered accommodations and when those accommodations are used or refused. These trackers will also provide useful information for the IEP/504 team when determining which accommodations are needed for individual students.

References
- Brown-Chidsey, Rachel and Steefe, Mark W. (2005). *Response to intervention: Principles and strategies for effective practice*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
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- Lillard, A. S. (2007). *Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Tilly, W. D. (2008). The evolution of school psychology to science-based practice. In A. Thomas & J.
- Grimes (Eds.). *Best practices in school psychology V* (pp. 17–36). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

D. **Staffing and Professional Development**
   a. **Describe how the school will employ qualified special education staff, including, but not limited to, certified and highly-qualified special education teachers, and related service providers (including but not limited to Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Speech/Language Pathologist, and School Psychologist). Include a list of the staff positions and a description of the duties for each position.**

Sussex Montessori School will employ a minimum of one certified, highly qualified special educator who will work with classroom teachers to write, revise and implement IEPs and 504 plans. In addition, the Education Director will be recruited with a strong preference for a special education certification and experience. All teaching positions will be advertised with a preference in dual certification as well. Related services (OT, PT, Speech) will be provided through contracts with certified and experienced providers. A School Psychologist will also be contracted as needed for evaluations, IEP meetings, etc.

Staff Position	Description of Duties
Special Education Teacher	Write, revise and Implement IEP and 504 plans in collaboration with classroom

	teachers and assistants. Provide direct service for children needing alternative settings; attend IST as necessary
Education Director	Provide leadership and support in all academic areas; ensure IEP and 504 plans are being implemented with fidelity; attend IEP and 504 meetings; oversee RTI process; ensure professional development for all instructional faculty and staff; attend IST as necessary
Speech Pathologist	Conduct evaluations as needed; Write IEP for children needing speech and language interventions, provide direct service; attend IEP meetings as necessary; attend IST as necessary
PT/OT	Conduct evaluations as needed; Write IEP for children needing PT/OT interventions, provide direct service; attend IEP meetings as necessary; attend IST as necessary
School Psychologist	Conduct formal assessments for children identified through the RTI process or who come to SMS needing a reevaluation; Consult on IEP writing; Attend IEP meetings to discuss testing results and provide input into plans; attend IST as necessary

b. **Describe how the school will ensure that all staff (including but not limited to administrators, special education teachers, regular education teachers, guidance counselors, and support staff) are adequately trained and properly implementing state and federal law related to the identification, evaluation, and education of students with disabilities.**

In order to meet the individualized needs of its students with disabilities, SMS will ensure continual special education training of its teachers. This reflects both traditional Montessori practice, as well as meeting state and federal regulations.

Training of teachers and staff will involve instruction across various content areas, including:
- understanding brain-based research related to various topics, specifically children's educational development,
- monitoring responses to interventions, specific interventions and/or adaptations
- specialized focus on models such as the *All Kinds of Minds* training and *Responsive Classroom Training.*

- understanding the regulatory aspects of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

SMS recognizes the responsibility of Charter schools to monitor their special education programs. SMS will serve as its Local Educational Agency (LEA), which will then be monitored by the Department of Education. Relevant quantifiable and qualitative indicators to be used in monitoring will include (Delaware General Assembly: Delaware Regulations: Administrative Code: Title 14 Education, 900 Special Populations):

- the provision of FAPE in the LRE
- the use of resolution meetings, mediation, and transition services
- assessing any disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services, to the extent the representation is the result of inappropriate identification

SMS plans accountability within its special education programs. In serving as its LEA, the accountability process will start with a self-assessment to reviews its implementation of every special education requirement. Program data and outcomes will be reviewed. In addition SMS will document:
- specific outcomes of students with disabilities,
- fiscal practices related to special education,
- timelines related to development and implementation of special education services
- qualifications of faculty and staff
- resolution of parent complaints.

Importantly, SMS recognizes that resources are available to charter schools to assist them in being successful in special education monitoring. SMS anticipates utilization of these resources in order to ensure a strong and accountable special educations program. Examples of available resources include:
- State Educational Agency, (SEA)
- other LEAs
- regional resource centers
- other charter schools
- National organizations.

Another strategy to be explored in assisting SMS with its special education programs monitoring and accountability is the use of "monitoring mentors." These experienced special education personnel, with specific expertise in charter school special education programming will be instructional in the day to day operations of the special education programs.
Finally, in the event, that through the above monitoring and accountability reviews SMS is found to have any special programs deficiencies, remediation will occur no later than one year after the reported deficiency (in accordance with state DOE regulations).

3.   English Language Learners

Charter schools are responsible for the identification of English language learners, the provision of English language services, and the annual assessment of English language proficiency as required by 14 DE Admin. Code 920. Additionally, charter schools are responsible for hiring certified English as a Second Language (ESL) and/or bilingual educators to provide services to English language learners. Paraprofessionals and tutors may serve English language learners only under the supervision of a certified ESL or bilingual teacher. In addition, ESL/bilingual school personnel must participate in the IEP Process of students who are dually identified for both Special Education and English language learners (SWD/ELL).

There is evidence that Montessori Classrooms positively impact the academic learning of ELL students. Researchers Arya Ansari (UT-Austin) and Adam Winsler (George Mason) explored how Montessori pre-K programs affected the school readiness of African-American and Latino children. The researchers measured student progress on pre-academic skills as well as social-emotional and behavioral metrics. In this study, Latino students were, on average, the least prepared on school readiness metrics when they began pre-K. Yet they responded particularly strongly to Montessori programs—by the end of the year, their school readiness scores were above national averages. The researchers speculated that the results could reflect the language backgrounds involved. The Montessori curriculum focuses heavily on phonics, which may help Latino students whose families speak Spanish at home. What's more, Montessori programs emphasize student-driven, individualized instruction, which may best suit these students' unique developmental paths. Finally, Montessori's commitment to cultural openness may make these programs more naturally prepared to take an assets-based view of students' home languages and cultural backgrounds.

In addition, the East Dallas Community Schools sited above in the research section, serve a number of children classified as ELL. Many have very limited English skills when they begin in the school. At the end of third grade, 100% of the children are fluent in English.

   a.   **Explain how the school will identify English language learner students in need of English language services, including the steps required to screen and assess the English language proficiency level and the timeline for completion.**

Because Sussex Montessori School is proposing to locate in Western Sussex County, we expect to serve a significant number of students who will be English Language Learners. We will follow the guidelines as outlined by the state of Delaware in the Delaware Department of Education Title III/ESL Guidebook. Specifically, we will identify students using the DDOE Home Language Survey for all students registering for the school. This survey will be included in the registration packet. Parents will provide the language information and sign and date the form. A translator will be enlisted if needed. The Head of School or Education Director will work closely with the parents to be sure that they understand the questions and respond accurately for each child. If

responses indicate that the use of a language other than English is used by any person in the home, SMS will conduct further assessment to determine the student's proficiency level and make instructional decisions. A review of the information provided by the family and the assessment will be completed within the 10-day window required by the state. The HLS will remain in the student's cumulative files.

SMS will require the Head of School, Education Director, and at least one lead teacher to be qualified to administer the World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA). This assessment will be administered in the first 10 days of a student's enrollment. The WIDA-Access Placement Test will be used for children in grades 2-6 while the WIDA Measure of Developing English will be used for grades K and 1. SMS will follow the guidelines for administration as outlined in the DDOE Title III/ESL Guidebook page 28 – 30.

In addition to the DDOE Home Language Survey, the school will use the Student with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) to screen the child's educational history. This will be done during the first 30 days of a student's enrollment if the student is an immigrant student, a migrant student, a binational student, a foreign exchange student, or a refugee student as defined in the DDOE Title III/ESL Guidebook.

b. **Explain how the school will schedule the contact hours for instruction based upon the English language learner's proficiency level.**

Since Sussex Montessori School expects to serve ELL students from the community around the school, we will strive to hire state certified ELL teachers who will do their Montessori Training. This will allow the teacher to serve the students within the Montessori classroom setting. This would be the least intrusive model for supporting ELL students. However, if there should be ELL students in the school and the school leadership is unable to fill all classroom positions with ELL teachers, the school will be prepared to hire a sufficient number of ELL teachers to serve the children within the classroom in an inclusion model.

c. **Describe the program model(s) the school will use to deliver the English language services to students.**

As stated above, SMS will use an inclusion/co-teaching/push in model for supporting ELL students in the Montessori classroom. This model will primarily instruct students in English but we will seek teachers who are bilingual and able to support the child in their native language when needed. The multi-age environment is uniquely situated to support ELL students. Children are constantly working in small groups, using oral language skills, and collaboratively using the Montessori hands on materials. This language rich environment provides a natural support and structure for the ELL student. In addition, there is a wide variety of materials at various levels in the classroom. It is very easy for an ELL teacher to support the child to use the materials within the classroom environment. The Montessori materials are actually universal and not dependent on any one language. They are used across six continents and many

languages. In order for this model to work well for the child, the school will need to ensure that there is sufficient time for the teachers to work together to plan to meet the needs of the ELL students within the context of the classroom.

    d. **Describe the minimum English proficiency level scores required for enrollment into the ESL/bilingual program and the minimum exit level criteria to transition out of the program.**

Students at WIDA levels Entering, Beginning and Developing will be enrolled in the ESL program with parent consent. These students will typically be in Tier A for services. Students in the Developing Level and Expanding Level will be moving to Tier B. Students at the Expanding or Bridging levels who are socially adept and require some support for academics will be transition out of the program once they are able to be academically successful. All guidelines for Exit Criteria as outlined in the DDOE Title III/ESL Handbook will be followed (pg. 55).

    e. **Describe the school's plan for addressing parent involvement for English language learners, including immigrant students.**

Parents will be notified when their child is classified as an ELL student and informed of the services being provided to support the child. Parents have the right to refuse services. All notifications as required by the DDOE Title III handbook will be followed (pages 45 and 46) A copy of these annual notifications will be kept in the student's cumulative record. In addition, parents will be welcomed as an active part of the school community. Montessori classrooms are distinctly focused on understanding the global community, the basic needs of man that cross all cultures and respect of the similarities and differences across cultures. Parents are a vital part of sharing about their own background and experiences in the Montessori community.

    f. **Describe how the school will ensure that English language learner students receive instruction and support to access and make meaningful progress in the general education curriculum and Common Core State Standards.**

ELL students increase English proficiency when given multiple opportunities for speaking and listening during peer interactions. The Montessori educational model is designed to allow for peer interaction throughout the day. For example:

- Morning Meeting addresses the social language needs of students including peer models, lots of peer interaction with models of appropriate social language (i.e. sentence stems). This is also a time when the ELL child can share their own language with other children in the classroom.
- Montessori uses the multi-age classroom and peer teaching. Montessori children are taught how to give help and how to receive help from peers. ELL students in the

Montessori classroom benefit from working with or alongside peers with greater English proficiency.

- Montessori content is delivered by teachers to children in small groups or in individual lessons based on the learning needs of the child. ELL children are not frustrated with large group instruction that they cannot participate in.

As shared above, the Montessori materials are hands on and universal across many cultures and countries. However, there is a language rich component to the Montessori language materials which help ELL children to develop strong English Language skills. For example,

- Montessori language work includes a wealth of picture supports that the ELL teacher can use to assist ELL children to acquire new vocabulary.
- Children sort and name objects increasing their verbal and reading vocabulary.
- Montessori materials for math and language help ELL students learn with concrete models of abstract concepts. The materials are consistent across all grade levels helping children to internalize concepts and vocabulary.
- Grammar manipulatives are especially helpful to ELLs by providing a visual representation to the parts of speech and their combinations to form English grammatical structures.

These are just a few of the many ways that ELL children participate in the curriculum regardless of their language proficiency in a Montessori Classroom.

g. **Describe how the school will ensure that all English language learners, including those dually identified as students with disabilities who are also English language learners, will be assessed annually for English language proficiency.**

All students will be assessed annually with the Access for ELL assessment schedule as outlined on page 54 of the Title III/ELL handbook. This assessment will be used to determine the level of ELL support needed for the child regardless of any other identified disabilities. Accommodations in taking the assessment will be made as appropriate to the disability.

h. **Describe how the school will ensure that English language learners, including those dually identified as students with disabilities who are also English language learners, will be provided services for both programs.**

Sussex Montessori School will have a team approach to serving all children but most importantly those children who have dual identifications in ELL and another disability. A special education teacher will provide guidance and support to the child for the disability while the ELL teacher will work to ensure that the child's ability to use English improves over time. These teachers will work closely with the Montessori classroom teacher (they may even be the classroom teacher) to ensure that the child's needs are supported. Biweekly meetings will be

held to discuss the child's progress reflecting on observation data and formative assessments to set goals for the next few weeks.

4. **Gifted Students**
   Explain how the school will identify and meet the needs of gifted students, including:
   a. **The specific research-based instructional programs, practices, strategies, and opportunities the school will employ or provide to enhance their abilities;**
   b. **How the school will provide qualified staffing for gifted students; and**
   c. **How the school will assess and monitor the progress and success of gifted students.**

SMS will not be creating a separate program for gifted children but will meet their needs in the least restrictive environment, the Montessori classroom. Gifted students are generally identified as children who show exceptional levels of performance in one of the following: general intelligence, specific academic aptitude, creative thinking, leadership, and visual or performing arts.

Gifted students will be accommodated within the multi-age Montessori classroom with learning activities that are engaging, allow the child to explore concepts in depth, and provide for various ways to approach the task. In this way, the classroom provides a balance among academic, social and emotional learning and critical and creative problem solving. General consensus is that the gifted child benefits in classrooms where:
- Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable
- Curriculum is flexible
- Students can work in areas emphasizing their abilities rather than age/grade for placement
- Where hands-on learning is emphasized instead of rote memorization
- Parent participation is encouraged

Each of these is typical of a Montessori classroom. The prepared environment encourages gifted children to be self-directed and to move to the next step when they are ready. There is opportunity for students to follow their own interest. In other words, if a student is totally engrossed in writing a play based on a story she read, she can keep writing until it's done or take a break and work on something else for a while. These extended periods of time give students the opportunity to study a topic in depth or to make great jumps in progress through intensive and prolonged involvement.

As shared above, Montessori classrooms are ideally suited to the development of individual goals for learning. Teachers work closely with parents and children to identify strengths and challenges and strategies children will use to work on those challenges and grow their strengths. This approach supports the gifted child's desire to set goals within areas of personal interest to explore and work on. In addition, the social and emotional needs of a gifted child are supported in the Montessori classroom where children are accepted for who they are and

the gifts they bring to the classroom. Students learn to appreciate the unique gifts of all children participating in the classroom community.

The Montessori classroom environment's ability to support a gifted child could preclude the necessity of a specific identification of the child as gifted. However, if it is felt that further information about the child would benefit their educational development and plan, SMS will collect both quantitative and qualitative data including individual tests, interviews and questionnaires, work samples, evidence from students and peers, and pertinent information on factors that could impact the opportunity of a child to fully engage in the curriculum such as economic, linguistic, or cultural background.

SMS expects that teachers will need support to understand the unique attributes of gifted children and how best to support them in the Montessori classroom. Resources and professional development opportunities will be provided to teachers to assist them in understanding how to support the gifted child's unique needs in the Montessori classroom.

SMS will access the DDOE Gifted or Talented Education Program Resource Guide to evaluate its program to support gifted education.

5. **Homeless Students**
    Explain how the school will identify and meet the needs of homeless students. Describe the training that the staff members will receive to meet the needs of homeless students.

    SMS will provide education for its staff members in the identification of and services for children who are homeless. In particular, we will access the National Center for Homeless Education web site for training resources and webinars.

    We will use the definition of homeless as described in Title 14 – 901 Education of Homeless Children which includes children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are awaiting foster care, are living in a private or public place not typically designed for human beings such as cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, etc.

    The first step in identification will typically come at registration. The school office personnel will be trained to support parents in the completion of a residency questionnaire at this time. If a child is already enrolled in the school, the teacher or other staff may be the first to notice changes that may indicate that a child is homeless. When it is determined that a child is in fact homeless, the school will enlist the assistance of the appropriate authorities to assist that family.

    SMS will adhere to the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act including the following:

- Understanding that homeless children have a right to stay in their school of origin, we will work with families to determine the best ways to transport the child to SMS. If the family desires, we will facilitate the transfer of records to the school in which they are temporarily residing.
- Enroll a homeless child in school regardless of ability for produce required records.
- Work with community services and programs to acquire services for the family.
- If SMS finds that there are a large number of homeless students enrolled in the school, we will determine a local homeless education liaison to work with these families.

We will support the educational needs of the child by:
- Providing a safe and consistent Montessori School and classroom environment to support both the academic and social/emotional needs of the child,
- Ensuring that the child has needed school supplies,
- Accommodating issues such as tardiness, absenteeism, and other behaviors by providing supports to address the issues.,
- Linking the family and child to community services to support them,
- Provide free meals,
- And maintaining confidentiality.

Reference:
National Center for Homeless Education, "Serving Homeless Children and Youth in Charter Schools". Retried from: www.serve.org/nche

Student Recruitment and Enrollment [14 *Del. C.* § 512(6) and (8) and 14 DE Admin. Code 275.4.4.2]

1. **Describe your plan to recruit students in your pre-opening year, including the strategies, activities, events, responsible parties and benchmarks and timelines that will demonstrate suitable progress over time. (Note! Be sure to reference https://www.schoolchoicede.org/.)**

Sussex Montessori School intends to become a cornerstone organization in the community it resides. This will require knowledge of and commitment to the current families living and working in the community and recognition of the needs and wants of the community as it grows.

To fully execute a successful recruitment plan SMS will consider the current and projected demographics of the potential student body and the importance of community commitment/engagement. The composition of the board of directors includes residents of the community we intend to serve and the board will continue to recruit the support of more local parents and community leaders to actively engage in the recruitment efforts once the application is approved.

Sussex Montessori School has already begun the community engagement efforts as required in the application. Advertisement and media coverage of our efforts have already shown increased energy and excitement in the community. Through both social and print media additional parents, community leaders and career educators have become engaged in the cause. Please see **Attachment 7 for parent interest forms**.

A case statement (Attachment 7a) has been prepared in both English and Spanish and is being widely distributed throughout Sussex County. These efforts will continue and increase once the application is approved.

Based on what we know about the proposed community, and what we propose in the educational plan, the board and ultimately the Head of School will focus on the following in the first year:

Strategies	Timeline	Events/Activities	Benchmark	Responsible Party
Social Media/Web Engagement	January 2017 - ongoing	Montessori Works Facebook and Twitter posts about Montessori education	Monthly posts	Montessori Works Board Member
	October 2017	Creation of a Citizens for Sussex Montessori Facebook page that would be renamed Sussex Montessori School upon application approval	Weekly Posts	Currently MW board, transitioning to SMS board and then ultimately to Head of School or their delegate
	October 2017 - ongoing	Grow the number of followers on the Citizens for Sussex Montessori Page	Current = 91 Followers June 2018 = 150 followers June 2019 = 300 followers	Currently MW board member, transitioning to SMS board member and then ultimately to the Head of School or their delegate

	April 2018 - January 2019	Widely advertise the open enrollment period for the school choice application available at www.schoolchoicede.org	January 2019 = 200 applicants on www.schoolchoicede.org	SMS Board transitioning to Head of School or their delegate
	May 2018 - June 2018	Creation of a Sussex Montessori School Website	Hire a consultant to design and launch a website - May 2018 Launch website including information about the school in addition to links to www.schoolchoicede.org including the Choice timelines and enrollment process	SMS Board Chair
In-Person Parental Engagement	April 2018 - August 2019	Montessori Information coffees for parents/children	One per month	SMS Board transitioning to HOS to engage presenters
	October 2017 - January 2019	Visits to local preschools	100% of preschools provided with information about Montessori education and Sussex Montessori School 2x within the timeline	SMS Board and HOS
	July 2018 and July 2019	Montessori "classroom" at the Delaware State Fair	Interest forms completed during visits to the "classroom"	SMS Board and HOS
	September 2017, 2018 and 2019	Festival Hispano Georgetown	50 interest forms each year	SMS Board and HOS
	October 2018 - March 2019	Sussex Montessori School Open Houses	25+ attendees at each month's open house	HOS
	May 2018 - March 2019	Partner organization events	25 attendees at each event	SMS Board and HOS
Print media	October 2017 - September 2019	Media coverage in local newspapers (Cape Gazette, Sussex Post, Hoy en Delaware, etc.)	Articles on SMS efforts or letters to the editor bi-monthly	SMS Board and HOS
	October 2017 -	Wide distribution of case statement in both English and Spanish	Monthly meetings with partner organizations,	SMS Board and HOS

	September 2019		potential board members, funders, etc.	
	October 2017 - September 2019	Advertisements in local newspapers and at local community organizations	Bi-monthly advertisements in local newspapers and flyers in community meeting spaces/organizations	SMS Board and HOS
	October 2018	Direct Mailing targeted to families with children in the target community - invitation to open house and announcement of online choice application	500 direct mail announcements	SMS Board

The SMS Board and, once hired, the SMS school leader will be monitoring enrollment targets throughout the course of the planning year. In addition to the benchmarks included in the chart above, the following benchmarks will be used as an assessment of efforts and as an indicator of their effectiveness. If particular targets are not met the SMS Board and HOS will make adjustments to the strategies/events/activities as needed.
April 2018 - Charter Approval and 330 interest forms
July 2018 - 400 interest forms
September 2018 - Hiring of Head of School
November 2018 - 50 choice applications
December 2018 - 100 total choice applications
January 2019 - 200 total choice applications
March 2019 - 300 applications

2. **Explain the plan for student recruitment and marketing that will provide equal access to any family interested in the new school.   Specifically describe the plan for outreach to families in poverty; academically low-achieving students; students with disabilities; linguistically diverse families and other youth at risk of academic failure. The response should include the following:**

    a. **A brief description of the recruitment strategies that the school will employ to attract each of the students described above to the school; and**

Throughout the application process SMS has researched the current and projected demographics in an effort to best understand the students and families who will populate the school. It is expected that SMS will enroll students who are living in poverty, academically low achieving, students with disabilities, linguistically diverse families and other youth at risk. The following statistics help to frame the demographics of the community SMS will serve.
General Population Statistics

Basic Statistics	State	Sussex	Kent	New Castle
Population	945,934	215,622	173,533	556,779
Age 0-4	56,033	11,435	11,280	33,318
Age 5-9	58,617	12,160	12,507	33,950
Age 10-17	59,280	11,636	13,105	34,539
African American	22.4%	12.8%	25.5%	25.1%
Hispanic	9.0%	9.5%	7.0%	9.5%
Median Income	$ 60,231	$ 53,505	$ 55,169	$ 64,875
Poverty:	12.5%	13.9%	14.1%	12.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2015 estimates)
Delaware Population Consortium (2016 estimates)

Sussex County has an estimated 35,231 children under the age of 14, according to the Delaware Population Consortium. Sussex County has the lowest median income among the three counties. It also has a poverty level higher than the state average. However, according to the US Census, poverty among children under 17 is much higher. School districts on the western side of the county (Woodbridge, Seaford, Laurel and Delmar have higher levels of poverty than the eastern side, particularly Seaford at 30% of current estimate of children under 18 in poverty.

2014 Poverty Estimates for School districts Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Program (SAIPE) Release date: December 2015				
Name	Estimated Total Population	Estimated Population 5-17	Estimated number of children 5 to 17 years old in poverty	Percentage of Children 5 to 17 in poverty
Cape Henlopen School District	49,355	5,620	904	16.1%
Delmar School District	6,754	1,228	178	14.5%
Indian River School District	79,564	9,906	2,164	21.8%
Laurel School District	16,760	2,822	538	19.1%
Milford School District	29,805	4,902	953	19.4%
Seaford School District	25,213	4,265	1,286	30.2%
Woodbridge School District	16,026	2,799	598	21.4%

According to the Delaware State Housing Authority Housing Needs Assessment, which split Sussex County in to eastern and western sections (submarkets), incomes are significantly lower and poverty rates are higher in West Sussex than other submarkets except for South Kent County, its most similar neighbor. More than a third of all households (36%) earn less than $25,000 per year, compared to 28%in Delaware. West Sussex is also sharply contrasted with East Sussex in terms of race; 18% of households are African American and 11% are Hispanic, compared to 10% and 7%, respectively.

Considering these statistics and it is imperative that our efforts to date and those that will be launched immediately upon application approval be sensitive to the unique needs of the

children and families in Sussex County.   We will be comprehensive in our approach to ALL parents, including those in underserved neighborhoods and towns.

To ensure that we are recruiting and enrolling students from diverse backgrounds we will partner with community organizations where families are already present to receive social service supports, engage their children in preschool or after school care, etc. Some of our established community partners include the Summer Collaborative, First State Community Action and La Esperanza. An aggressive campaign of distributing literature through mailings, handouts, and door to door campaigns will be accomplished in diverse communities and with interpreters and translated documents whenever necessary.

We will use Spanish-language materials and a Spanish-speaking teacher to attend the public events to ensure that we can meet the informational needs of the potential parents. Among the materials to be used to recruit are brochures, cards, mailers, video, radio and television. PowerPoint and video displays will be used on a rotating basis.   We will also have a sample classroom established for children to come and explore materials that we use in the classrooms.   All events will be done in disability accessible environments.

When holding community events for parents and students to familiarize themselves with the application of Montessori materials and approaches we will make an effort to insure these events will take place in public arenas, such as libraries, community centers (e.g. PAL centers, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc.)

> **b. A brief explanation of the efforts, resources, structures, or programs that the school will take to retain these students and how the school will monitor the efficacy of such efforts, including disaggregation of student performance data for each subgroup. Identify your target re-enrollment rate for each year.**

It is expected that parents and children will continue to support the school so long as SMS provides them with a high quality, academically challenging, safe and positive environment. Recruitment and enrollment will be easier once a record of success is achieved. Once opened, the program, if done well, will yield word-of-mouth interest from parents.   Returning and newer children will benefit from a well- executed and coordinated program.

Nonetheless, SMS intends to aggressively market the school each year. We will participate in the choice period events (Charter School Network Open House), perform community events in the school, encourage siblings and other family members to apply and work with day care and pre-school providers to encourage enrollment. Strategies identified for the first year's recruitment efforts as effective will be repeated each year to retain a stable student body.

Consistent communication throughout the school year and regular engagement of families in the school culture traditionally keeps families satisfied with their child's school. These efforts

are worked into our calendar and strategies and the Montessori school environment is historically designed to create a strong community.

Academic performance is monitored closely in a Montessori setting and communication of each child's progress with the child and with their family is a consistent feature in every Montessori classroom. In addition, the teachers, Education Director and Head of School will monitor in both the aggregate and disaggregate forms, all student assessment data annually. Some assessment data will be monitored quarterly when available. As a whole, the faculty and leadership will identify trends and implement interventions to address them.

Target re-enrollment each year is 95%.

3. **In Attachment 7 (Parent Support Survey), provide evidence of demand for the proposed school among prospective parents/guardians. (Note! The Department is looking for evidence that your proposed school is wanted by the local community, and that enough pupils would come to your school to make it financially viable. This evidence takes the form of a survey that parents sign expressing support for the school. Specifically, you should aim to show that you have support from parents for at least as many pupils as the number of seats in your school in its first two years of opening. This is a minimum and your application will be rated more strongly if the school is significantly oversubscribed.)**

See attachment 7 - spreadsheet indicating all interest forms received to date

Original documentation of each interest form has been submitted to the DDOE Charter Schools Office. These interest forms contain personal directory information and are therefore not included here to ensure privacy.

4. **Describe the ongoing student recruitment work that you will do once your school has opened. Identify the ways in which it will be different than your pre-opening year in terms of the strategies, activities, events, persons responsible and benchmarks.**

Many of the year one activities will continue in the early years of the school. Some may be able to be tapered back in terms of frequency for example Open Houses and print media advertisements may not be needed as often once there is a parent base that is recruiting within their communities.

The biggest change once the school has been opened is the persons responsible section. In the planning year the SMS Board and the Head of School bear the vast majority of responsibility. Once an Education Director, teachers and other school staff have been brought on board the responsibilities can be more broadly distributed. In addition, as partnerships grow SMS will seek to structure partner support in the recruitment and enrollment process.

5. **Provide, as Attachment 8, the school's Enrollment Policy and Withdrawal Policy, which must include the following:**
   a. **Any admission requirements, including an explanation of the purpose of any pre-admission activities for students or parents;**
   b. **Any admission preferences in accordance with 14 *Del. C.* § 506(b) and how they will be used, including how the school will identify Founding Group members and how the preference to children of the school's Founding Group members will be used, if applicable;**
   c. **Establish a timeline for its application and admissions processes identical to any such timeline set forth in 14 *Del. C*. Ch. 4 for the operation of a public school choice program. Provide an approximate date for the lottery and describe the procedures for conducting a fair lottery process;**
   d. **Policies and procedures for student waiting lists, withdrawals, re-enrollment, and transfers.**
   e. **A timeline and plan for student recruitment and enrollment;**
   f. **Plans to maintain on file a written statement, signed by the parent or guardian of each enrolled child, that acknowledges that the child will attend the charter school for at least one complete school year pursuant to 14 *Del. C.* § 506(c)(3).**

See Attachment 8

School Culture [14 *Del. C.* § 512(6)-(7) and *14 Del. C.* §4112D]

1. **Describe the culture or ethos of the proposed school and how this culture or ethos will promote a positive academic environment and reinforce student intellectual and social development.**

Sussex Montessori School will use the Responsive Classroom Approach to develop a consistent and coherent positive school environment across the school community. This approach is based on seven guiding principles:
- The social and emotional curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum.
- How children learn is as important as what they learn.
- Great cognitive growth occurs through social interaction.
- To be successful academically and socially, children need to learn a set of social and emotional skills: cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control.
- Knowing the children we teach—individually, culturally, and developmentally—is as important as knowing the content we teach.
- Knowing the families of the children we teach is as important as knowing the children we teach.
- How we, the adults at school, work together is as important as our individual competence: Lasting change begins with the adult community.

This research based approach has been shown to positively impact student achievement, improve teacher-student interactions, and increase the amount of time children are engaged in the classroom. The Responsive Classroom approach provides a framework for the social climate of the Montessori classroom and school. The Responsive Classroom C.A.R.E.S. (Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy and Self Control) will guide interactions across the school community fostering a positive and healthy learning environment based on:

- Respect and appreciation for what each member contributes to the community.
- Mutual respect and trust in communications, no matter what our roles may be.
- Teamwork and support of each other in our personnel growth.

Specifically, the Responsive Classroom C.A.R.E.S. statement will encourage the adults and children in the school community to teach and develop the following skills:

Cooperation

1. Listening respectfully and actively to all perspectives
2. Collaborating to share resources, information, and ideas
3. Participating positively and actively in the process to support a positive outcome
4. Compromising to achieve a common goal

Assertion

1. Setting healthy boundaries and expressing needs honestly, directly and respectfully
2. Considering appropriate time, place and participants when addressing concerns
3. Behaving in a manner that is mutually safe and respectful
4. Stating ideas clearly using a calm voice and respectful tone
5. Staying on topic and focusing on solutions

Responsibility

1. Keeping our commitments to each other and the community
2. Acting as positive role models for others in the school community
3. Approaching challenges from a solution-oriented perspective
4. Inviting and including all parties who need to be part of, and could be affected by, our conversations and decisions.

Empathy

1. Being responsive to the needs of others, supporting, encouraging, or assisting as necessary
2. Seeking to understand other points of view

Self-Control

1. Taking time to reflect on a situation before responding to it
2. Maintaining confidentiality in communications
3. Accepting differences gracefully and speaking positively about others in our school community.
4. Being mindful of our commitment to the C.A.R.E.S. principles.

References

Rim-Kaufman, S. (2006). *Social and Academic Learning Study on the Contribution of the Responsive Classroom Approach.* Curry School Of Education And Center For Advanced Study Of

Teaching And Learning: University Of Virginia. Retrieved October 24, 2011, from
http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/sites/default/files/pdf files/sals booklet rc.pdf .

2. **Explain the systems, practices, and traditions that the School Leader and staff will implement to foster this culture for students, teachers, administrators, and parents, starting from the first day of school. (Note! You will be asked to describe your discipline policy in the next section).**

The Responsive Classroom approach provides a structure of systems, practices, and traditions that the Sussex Montessori School teachers and school leaders will draw from. These range from classroom practices to school wide practices. These practices help children to feel safe in school. When children know routines, what to expect and when to expect it they develop confidence in themselves.

Classroom Practices:
- Morning Greetings – each child will be greeted at the classroom door by the teacher who shakes the child's hand, is at eye level with the child, and welcomes them to the classroom.
- Morning Meeting – each classroom will begin the day using the Responsive Classroom structure for Morning Meeting which allows children and teachers to transition from home to school.
- Developing Rules – each classroom will develop rules using the Responsive Classroom approach tying rules to each child's goal for learning. At most, classrooms will have three to five rules based on the idea of taking care of each other, taking care of yourself, and taking care of the environment. These rules mesh exactly with Maria Montessori's goals for children in schools.
- Interactive Modeling – teachers will be trained in this explicit practice to teach procedures and routines across the school year.
- Logical Consequences – teachers will work to help students learn from their mistakes by helping them to maintain their dignity. Punishment is not an option in a Montessori classroom.
- Quiet times and spaces – the day will be structured with quiet spaces that allow for purposeful and relaxed transitions.
- Closing Circle – Each day will close with a brief gathering at the end of the day to reflect and celebrate the accomplishments form the day.

Sample School Wide Practices
- School Wide Gatherings – the school leadership will work with the teachers to determine a pattern (weekly, biweekly, monthly) for school wide gatherings. These gatherings include the components of a morning meeting school wide. Different classrooms may take a leadership role in the school wide gatherings.
- Montessori Schools value and celebrate diversity. The school leadership and teachers at Sussex Montessori Academy will determine several cultural celebrations to focus on throughout the year based on the children and their families.

- Greeting children as they enter the school – the school leader or other adult when necessary will greet children as they enter the school community each day.
- A focus on how we talk to children. The adults in the school will engage in a school-wide focus on the use of empowering language with children developing an understanding of the power of their words to shape the culture of the school community.

References:

https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/

3. **Describe the key elements of the school's bullying prevention and anti-hazing policies. Explain how the school will develop this culture and use scientifically researched-based practices for students, educators, administrators, and parents starting from the first day of school.   Resources to ensure compliance with state requirements are available at: http://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/delaware.html**

Because a Montessori School focuses on the social curriculum equally with the academic curriculum, bullying is minimized. However, this does not mean that it does not exist. Sussex Montessori encourages students to show respect for differences in others, including but not limited to race, gender, and religion while fostering a school environment free from all forms of bullying and intimidation. In partnership with families the school's focus, based on Montessori pedagogy, is on preventative measures for such behaviors, by teaching children how to:

- Be caring and courteous.
- Cooperate with others.
- Deal with negative feelings (anger, jealousy, etc.).
- Stand up for themselves and others without being aggressive.
- Engage in discussions to resolve differences, express feelings, and show empathy.
- Respect and celebrate the unique qualities of every person.

Sussex Montessori's commitment is to:

- Encourage non-violent communication.
- Encourage teachers to embody peaceful programs against bullying and violence in their classroom curriculum in order to develop a positive educational approach to minimize such behavior.
- Encourage parents to work as a member of a peaceful team with teachers, staff, other parents, and administration to resolve issues in a way that respects the individual needs of all children and adults involved.
- Respect the privacy of student and family information, including discipline issues.
- Discuss appropriate standards of behavior and school rules with all students.
- Involve the other agencies as necessary.

While Montessori schools do not tolerate bullying and teachers take actions immediately to address such situation, they also understand that this is an opportunity to teach. Sussex Montessori School teachers will teach children what bullying looks and sounds like and how to

address it whether they are in school or in the community around the school. Because Peace Education is an integral part of the Montessori curriculum, Sussex Montessori School will focus on how to solve problems in a peaceful way rather than through bullying or violence. Specifically, the school will use the Responsive Classroom structure of class meetings and interactive modeling to provide a framework for how to address various situations children may find themselves involved in including: physical bullying, verbal bullying, and cyber bullying. Specifically, Sussex Montessori School will work to prevent bullying by:

• Ensuring that all adults in the school community understand what constitutes bullying
• Ensuring that all adults in the school community understand that they have a responsibility to stop bullying
• Explicitly teaching and providing opportunities for children to practice kind and respectful behavior and language.
• Teaching about bullying school wide, classroom wide, and to individual children.
• Empowering children to stop bullying with words that will support them in redirecting a situation.

In addition, Sussex Montessori School will follow all state required protocols for observing, intervening, and reporting incidences of bullying.   We will include specific information about bullying and the state requirements for addressing bullying in the student handbook. We will require all employees, and encourage parents, to report any known incidents of bullying or willful or deliberate violence to their child's teacher and/or the Head of School within 24 hours. When such an incident is observed, employees are required to complete an Incident Report and to send copies to the Head of School. Families of the children involved in bullying or willful violence will be notified. Incidents of normal peer conflict may or may not be reported, depending on the details and events.

Based on the Responsive Classroom Approach from the Northeast Foundation for Children (http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/about-northeast-foundation-children).

4. **Explain how the school culture will serve and support students with special needs, including students receiving special education services, English Language Learners, homeless and migrant students, and any other students at-risk of academic failure.**

Peer relationships are very important in the Montessori approach. We strive to have students understand cultural aspects of other students and respect these aspects as they interact. In fact, we look at these aspects as assets to be used to create understanding in differences of culture, abilities and skills, language, living environment, and behaviors.   As mentioned above, SMS will be replicating the Responsive Classroom Approach, a research-based approach to K-8 teaching that focuses on the strong link between academic success and social-emotional learning (SEL). High-quality education for every child is built on the foundation of a safe and joyful learning community.   The Responsive Classroom is characterized by for main pillars:

- Engaging Academics - Teachers create learning tasks that are active, interactive, appropriately challenging, purposeful, and connected to students' interests.
- Positive Community - Teachers nurture a sense of belonging, significance, and emotional safety so that students feel comfortable taking risks and working with a variety of peers.
- Effective Management- Teachers create a calm, orderly environment that promotes autonomy and allows students to focus on learning.

- Developmental Awareness - Teachers use knowledge of child development, along with observations of students, to create a developmentally appropriate learning environment.

Student Discipline [14 *Del. C.* §512(6)-(7) and (11), 14 *Del. C.* § 4112F]

1. **What will be the key elements of the school discipline policy, and how will it support the school culture that you describe above? Include plans regarding limitations on seclusion and restraint with respect to all students, including training and reporting requirements in accordance with 14 Del. C. § 4112F and related regulations at 14 DE Admin. Code § 610.**

Our policy is to assist children in arriving at inner discipline through concentrated work. In all areas, the child is assisted in developing the skills necessary to control their own actions to develop self-discipline. Natural or logical consequences are used as a means of helping the child to develop inner limits. However, there will be times when a child struggles to maintain control in a classroom. In this case, the following general classroom guidelines will be followed:

- If a child is disruptive or endangers others, staff immediately intervene in as positive manner as possible.
- If a child has trouble settling into the class, they are redirected to an activity by the teacher.
- If the child is still unable to settle in, the teacher will intervene and may have the child remain beside her/him until the child is able to calm down and make respectful choices.
- When an incident occurs, the teacher or staff involved will submit a summary of the incident on an Incident Report form. Behaviors that require removal from the classroom will be documented in eschool as required by regulation.
- If the behavior becomes extreme, the teacher will schedule a meeting with the parents and, depending on the circumstances, with the Head of School or appropriate staff, while the incident is still fresh in the child's mind. Staff, parents, and child will respectfully work together to modify the behavior. It is important to note that modifying the behavior will take time as the child develops inner limits.

If a pattern of willful, disruptive behavior develops:
- Teachers will record behavioral observations.
- The teacher will inform the student's parents.
- Appropriate staff will be notified.

- The student, teacher, parents, and Head of School will work together on a plan to modify behavior and when/if appropriate additional professional help with be solicited.

Unacceptable conduct is defined as any willful, deliberate behavior that creates unsafe conditions including, but not limited to, acts of bullying, willful and deliberate physical violence, harassment, and illegal acts. It does not include normal, developmentally appropriate peer conflict.

The following procedures will be followed when an occurrence or pattern of unacceptable conduct is identified:
- Verbal notification to each parent involved.
- Consultation between parent and teacher, and when appropriate Head of School or appropriate staff.
- Written plan for subsequent action and follow-up review.
- Normal, developmentally appropriate peer conflict is not included in the definition of Unacceptable Conduct, and therefore the procedures outlined above do not apply to such circumstances.

If a child persists in the unprovoked, willful, and deliberate hurting of others it may be necessary to remove the child from school to allow time for the parents, teachers, and other professionals to work on a plan to support the child. Extreme negative behavior may result in the school requiring a behavioral evaluation by a professional and alternatives to support the child.

Professional development for teachers will include all required discipline training in addition to the Responsive Classroom training.

Annual training in the discipline policy including record keeping, reporting, teacher rights and responsibilities and limitations on seclusion from classrooms or school activities and/or physical intervention clarified in **14 Del. C. § 4112F**. It will be emphasized that teachers and administrators utilize physical intervention only when there is an immediate risk to the safety of the child or the children and adults near them.

SMS will comply with the 2014 regulation requiring that at least one person in the building be trained in Crisis Prevention consistent with nationally recognized training programs that address prevention and de-escalation techniques along with positive behavioral intervention strategies and supports. A hiring preference will be included for those who have already had this training. Trained individuals will conduct the teacher training annually.

SMS will document which staff have received the appropriate training in this area each year.

1. **How will the discipline policy be practiced in the classroom in order to ensure that students are working on task and focused on learning?**

The word "discipline" means to "teach". Many situations in a Montessori School are viewed as opportunities to teach. Many situations found in less engaging learning environments are avoided because children are engaged in learning. Maria Montessori initially discovered that children involved in deep, uninterrupted concentration did not disrupt or misbehave. They learned instead to "self-regulate". Research shows that children who have the capacity for self-regulation decrease their negative, attention getting behaviors (Rathunde, K. & Csikszetnmihalyi, M., 2005 & 2006). The goal in developing a school environment that supports children is to:

- Establish a calm, orderly, and safe environment for learning;
- Foster an appreciation for the role of rules in school;
- Help children develop self-control and self-discipline;
- Teach children to be responsible, contributing members of their school community, and
- promote respectful, kind, and healthy teacher-student and student-student interactions
- provide an engaging environment for learning

The Montessori approach does not rely on punishment or rewards to "get students to behave". Teachers at Sussex Montessori School will offer clear expectations for behavior, actively model and role-play behaviors that teach children how to live up to those expectations, and provide opportunities for the children to practices the rules. In fact, during the first week of school, students will participate in creating the ground rules for their classroom and classmate to follow throughout the year. These classroom rules are organic and differ year to year, classroom to classroom. When students break rules, teachers incorporate natural and logical consequences to help students learn from their mistakes.

Teachers also incorporate other strategies for resolving problems such as classroom meetings, problem solving meetings between students involved in a conflict, and positive time out spaces within the classroom for a child to regain composure.

- Rathunde, K. & Csikszetnmihalyi, M. (2005A), "Middle school students' motivation and quality of experience: A comparison of Montessori and traditional school environments", *American Journal of Education* 111 (3): 341–371, doi:10.1086/428885.
- Rathunde, K. & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2005B), "The social context of middle school: Teachers, friends, and activities in Montessori and traditional school environments", *Elementary School Journal* 106 (1): 59–79, doi:10.1086/496907.
- Rathunde, K.; Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2006). "The developing person: An experiential perspective". In Lerner (ed.), R.M.; Damon (series ed.), W. Theoretical models of human development. *Handbook of Child Psychology* (6 ed.). New York: Wiley.

2. **How will you ensure that minority students and students with disabilities are not disproportionately represented in disciplinary procedures such as suspensions and expulsions? How will you measure or track this data?**

As outlined above, Responsive Classroom will be the framework for developing a school culture, rules, and logical consequences. This approach has been shown to be particularly positive for students at risk of school failure and supportive of students with disabilities being part of a positive and accepting school culture. In addition, the concept of acceptance of all children and families is one that is inherent in this approach.   Sussex Montessori School will continually support teachers to address issues of diversity in the classroom, equity in response to situations requiring the implementation of the discipline code, and proactive approaches to building a positive school community for all.

It will be the responsibility of the Head of School or their designee to maintain accurate records on suspensions and expulsions if they should occur and report these as a part of the annual school reporting to DDOE. This data will be analyzed each year by the leadership team and teachers in order to quickly identify any trends and to determine what steps, if any, need to be taken to ensure proper training, fair application of policies, cultural sensitivity, etc.

3. **Who will be responsible for implementing the school's discipline policy? What position will be responsible for electronically reporting discipline incidents in accordance with state requirements?**

All adults employed at Sussex Montessori School will be responsible for implementing the school's discipline policy. The Head of School or their designee will be ultimately responsible for reporting discipline incidents in accordance with state requirements. SMS Board of Directors will only be involved in school discipline if a child's behavior is subject to potential expulsion.

4. **How will the school ensure that staff are adequately trained and properly implementing state and federal law related to the discipline of students with disabilities? Include a description of the school's specific action steps to ensure compliance with the disciplinary provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Delaware statutes and regulations.**

In the case of students with disabilities, Sussex Montessori School will follow the process outlined by the Department of Education in the Administrating Manual for Services for Exceptional Students. In the case of behaviors that are related to the child's disability, the Individualized Educational Plan team will create a plan for Positive Behavior Support which will be monitored by the team and teachers. Following the Response to Intervention Model, teachers will closely monitor the child's response to various interventions suggested by the team and make resulting changes and modifications based on their data. The School will work closely with parents to determine what the best approaches are to helping a child shape their

behavior. When required, reports will be filed with the appropriate agency relating to the guidelines of DOE and the state law.

The teachers and staff at Sussex Montessori School will receive training in the various aspects of the Disabilities Education Act and Delaware statutes and regulations to ensure that the school follows all aspects of the law. New staff will have a routine introductory training and once every three years veteran staff will receive a refresher course updating them on any changes in the law.

(Note! If approved, you will be required to submit a student Code of Conduct prior to opening in accordance with 14 DE Admin. Code § 600.)